

The Perfect Duty to Oneself Merely as a Moral Being (TL 6:428-437)

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1. Explaining a duty through three vices

Some of the most innovative aspects of Kant's account of duties to the self, which he presents as crucial to his ethics and as fundamentally different from the picture given of them by previous accounts,¹ are expounded in the chapter of the *Doctrine of Virtue* on the "Human Being's Duty to Himself merely as a Moral Being". The *idea* of a duty to oneself merely as a moral being is itself an innovation, since it does not appear in the traditional subdivisions of duties, which Kant rejects as inappropriate.² This chapter also significantly extends the *scope* of duties to oneself, discussing topics which had previously been treated primarily as other-regarding acts. The innovations of the chapter become more evident when it is compared with the significant example of the previous approach provided by Baumgarten's *Ethica philosophica* (along with Georg Friedrich Meier's extended development), which was not only the textbook for Kant's lectures, but also a main target of his critical remarks.

Before analyzing Kant's main points concerning one's duty to oneself as a moral being, however, his approach to this subject requires some attention. The chapter simply provides an examination of three vices and says surprisingly little about the duty mentioned in the title. Indeed, Kant expounds this duty *per negativum*, examining its three most relevant violations. As with the issues addressed in the previous chapter (see AA 06: 421), this duty can be examined negatively, because it is a perfect duty, which does not command any positive end, but requires omissions (AA 06: 419). An analysis of the corresponding violations, thus, puts us in a position to grasp the complex meaning of this duty to oneself. As Kant remarks in the lectures about duties to oneself in general, "the better to appreciate such duties, if we picture to

¹ See e.g. *V-Mo/Mron*, AA 27: 1479, *V-Mo/Kaehler*, p. 169; *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 604.

² See AA 06: 418ff.; see also e.g. *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 607. English translations of Kant's writings are taken from the Cambridge Edition of the Work of Immanuel Kant, when available.

ourselves the evil consequences of violating them”, as they “help [...] to provide better insight into the principium” (*V-Mo/Collins*, AA 27: 347, cf. *V-Mo/Kaehler*, p. 182).

In the present case, different ways of acting share a common feature; namely, all of them deprive the agent “of the prerogative of a moral being, that of acting according to principles”. Paradoxically, “they make it one’s basic principle to have no basic principle” (AA 06: 420). All such vices are grounded in choices that affect one’s capacity to make moral choices. An important innovation of the whole *Metaphysics of Morals* is that ethics should deal with the *maxims* of our conduct, not with the resulting actions.³ As we shall see, this also provides the key to Kant’s position on the issues of this chapter. Furthermore, in the present case, the analysis must focus specifically on the *formal* features of the corresponding maxims (see AA 06: 419; cf. 420)—that is, it must focus on the structural implications rather than the intended objectives of the choice.⁴ In each of these cases, the decision involves a violation or a rejection of the status in virtue of which a human being is capable of moral choices. In Kant’s language, these are ways in which a human being violates his dignity (see AA 06: 420.22-23), and thus the topic of the chapter is properly a “duty with reference to the dignity of humanity within us, and so to ourselves” (§ 12, AA 06: 436; cf. *Päd*, AA 09: 488.30-37). Thus Kant’s analysis provides us elements that are important to better understand his notion of dignity.⁵

The novel idea of a duty to ourselves merely as moral beings adds a further dimension to the traditional basic obligation of self-preservation, which, in Kant’s view, is not limited to our properties as living beings. After having examined the vices of physical self-destruction or mutilation, Kant here abstracts from such properties (“without taking his animality into consideration”, AA 06: 420) and takes into consideration the main ways in which we can violate our moral nature and commit a sort of a “moral suicide”.⁶ The analogy with the traditional emphasis on self-preservation is also suggested by his vocabulary: Kant speaks of “moral self-preservation” and “moral health”.⁷

This is the general issue underlying the apparently divergent topics of the chapter. Although they yield different kind of acts, these vices share such implications. Hence, they

³ See *TL*, AA 06: 388f. On this general feature, see Esser, 2004; Bacin, 2006, pp. 240f.

⁴ See e.g. the use of “formal” in *Refl.* 8096, AA 19: 641.

⁵ On the general features of Kant’s notion of dignity, see Sensen, 2009.

⁶ See Atwell, 1986, p. 133.

⁷ See § 4, AA 06: 419.20 and 419.25-26. Cf. *TL*, AA 06: 384.10ff.

should not be examined separately, like prior moral philosophy did, but together, insofar as they concern one fundamental obligation, whose conceptual unity Kant also emphasizes by always referring to it in the singular. The sections of the chapter deal with its most representative violations: lying (§ 9), avarice (§ 10), and servility (§§ 11), while other examples are alluded to in the lectures (see the list in V-MS/Vigil, AA 27: 605-607) and, here, in § 12.⁸

2. “On Lying”

Here, for the first time (albeit quite briefly), Kant develops his idea that lying must be regarded foremost as a violation of a duty to oneself. While in the *Groundwork* he, quite close to previous ethical theories, considered lying merely as a way of acting towards others, using it as an example of how to deal with duties to others from the perspective of the categorical imperative (see *GMS*, AA 04: 429), in his lectures (including those given prior to the *Groundwork*) he had suggested that a different point of view should be adopted.⁹ Yet such a point of view was never developed until the *Doctrine of Virtue*.¹⁰ As they focus on this new perspective, his remarks in this section must be distinguished from the essay *On a Supposed Right to Lie From Philanthropy*: as Kant points out in the latter text, “what is under discussion here is a duty of right” (AA 08: 426), and, in this context, Kant does not consider lying as a violation of a duty to oneself. In order to see the peculiar features of the *Doctrine of Virtue* clearly, these two perspectives should not be confused. A novelty of Kant’s approach in this work lies precisely in the fact that the act of lying is not examined from the traditional standpoint of natural law, but as an ethically wrong self-regarding act.

Kant introduces his view by excluding the usual accounts. Firstly, he insists that ethics must not examine lying with regard to its effects and the possible damage it causes to other people: “the harm that can come to others from lying is not what distinguishes this vice (for if it were, the vice would consist only in violating one’s duty to others).”¹¹ Rather than as a lie, the damage to others caused by a lie should be considered as a juridical violation of their

⁸ Since the further examples in § 12 cannot be entirely subsumed under servility, but concern the “duty with reference to the dignity of humanity within us” in general, the section seems to belong not before, but *after* the casuistical remarks on servility. (On the grounds of some uncertainty about the text of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, see Parma, 2000.)

⁹ See V-PP/Herder, AA 27: 59f.; V-Mo/Collins, AA 27: 341; V-MS/Vigil, AA 27: 604f.; see also Br, AA 11: 332.

¹⁰ Accordingly, Kant gradually abandons the analysis of lying as an other-regarding violation: see Mahon, 2006.

¹¹ AA 06: 429; cf. AA 06: 430 and 403; V-MS/Vigil, AA 27: 700.22-25. See also *KpV*, AA 05: 87f.: “an otherwise harmless lie”.

freedom,¹² or as a violation of one's ethical duty of benevolence toward them (see *TL*, AA 6: 403). Indeed, the moral quality of lying is not determined by the consequences of the act. If we tell a lie, we can still be properly blamed for it if the addressee is not damaged by it, and even if the lie turns out to be favorable to him (see *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 605). Thus, "in ethics [...] no authorization [*Befugnis*] is derived from harmlessness" (AA 06: 429). The same applies with regard to ourselves. While previous moral philosophers regarded the act of lying as a violation of our duty to ourselves only in consideration of the possible harm to ourselves and our reputation,¹³ for Kant this is no real moral matter: such consequences make lying "a mere error in prudence" (AA 06: 429), not a vice. Finally, the relationship between our words and the state of affairs we are talking about is not essential to lying either, since it is obviously possible that we intend to hide a *false* belief we have (or even that we declare something that is true, but which we do not believe). Kant stresses this point by distinguishing between truth and truthfulness, a distinction that is already present in the philosophical vocabulary, but with a different connotation.¹⁴

What is morally essential to lying is, then, the relation between the declaration and the belief,¹⁵ namely the truthfulness of the *subject*. Ethics should thus define lying as the "contrary of truthfulness".¹⁶ Therefore Kant's analysis does not rely on the presupposition that truth is an independent value that should always be respected, as is often alleged.¹⁷ On the contrary, because the morally determinant feature of lying is the intentional lack of truthfulness, lying affects the agent first of all, who thereby causes "dishonor [*Ehrlosigkeit*]" (AA 06: 429) to himself. Thus, ethics must focus on the self-regarding features of lying. Kant develops this

¹² See *RL*, AA 06: 238. Juridically, a lie "always harms another, even if not another individual, nevertheless humanity generally, inasmuch as it makes the source of right unusable" (*VRML*, AA 08: 426). On the distinction between the ethical and the juridical standpoint on lying see also *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 604f. and 700f.

¹³ See e.g. Baumgarten, 1763, § 342, and Meier, 1762-1774, § 863, IV, p. 276. The other common way to relate lying with the duties to oneself in previous moral philosophy was to consider *lying* as a duty to oneself, in the cases where a *Notlüge* is necessary to save the own life: see e.g. Baumgarten, 1763, § 344.

¹⁴ Truth regards namely the content of the discourse, while truthfulness only is to be understood as a virtue. See Wolff, 1740-1748, III, § 181, and 1750-1753, V, § 522; and Pufendorf, 1673, X, § VII. See Annen, 1997, p. 27.

¹⁵ See AA 06: 429.24f.; *MpVT*, AA 08: 267, and e.g. *Refl.* 6309, AA 18: 603.

¹⁶ AA 06: 429; cf. AA 06: 433. See also *VNAEF*, AA 08: 421.30-31 and *VRML*, AA 08: 426.2-4.

¹⁷ See e.g. Macintyre, 1995, pp. 315 and 337 (repr. 2006, pp. 106 and 123 f.), who thus associates Kant with Aquinas.

insight through two quite different lines of reasoning: on the one hand, he refers to the purpose of language, and on the other he refers to the notion of an inner lie.¹⁸

Kant's first point recasts a well-known argument against lying (maybe *the* most traditional argument, since it already occurs in Augustine, had a preeminent role in the modern natural law tradition,¹⁹ and is still endorsed by some authors),²⁰ namely the argument according to which lying is condemnable because it perverts the natural function of language (see AA 06: 429). This has generally been regarded as a weak and unsatisfying argument, mainly because such teleological considerations seem especially out of place in Kant's moral theory.²¹ Nevertheless, this remark does not really seem to be Kant's crucial argument. Here, Kant might rather intend to show that the most traditional account of lying also implicitly construes it as a fundamentally self-regarding act, in a way that can easily be rephrased using his notions of *homo phaenomenon* and *homo noumenon* (see AA 06: 430). Kant's transition from the traditional perspective to the new one thereby goes a step further; as the re-interpretation of the language argument can show that the perversion of the communicative function of language is grounded on a misuse of the *subject's* capacities, it can show that lying is a violation of ourselves, not of language in general.²²

However, this first approximation is not yet sufficient to provide a direct justification of any duty to oneself merely as a moral being. If we refer to the use of a natural capacity, we can at best discern an obligation towards the physical being (the *animal rationale*), but not towards the moral being, which is what should be at issue here.²³ Towards himself as a moral being, man is rather "under obligation [...] to truthfulness [*zur Wahrhaftigkeit verpflichtet*]" (AA 06: 430.19). The ethically relevant point is not that the purpose of language is disrespected, but the *decision* to breach "the condition of the agreement with the declaration [*die Bedingung der Übereinstimmung mit der Erklärung*]" (AA 06: 430.17-18; translation slightly modified)

¹⁸ In the edited text, these two issues seem to run parallel through the section, without merging. Yet, given the textual issues concerning the *Metaphysics of Morals*, it is possible to propose a change of the text order which, among other advantages, provides a more plausible distribution of the two main points: see Bacin and Schönecker, forthcoming. However, the present analysis is independent from that conjecture.

¹⁹ See e.g. Pufendorf, 1673, X § 1; Wolff, 1750-1753, V, § 533.

²⁰ See the examples mentioned in MacIntyre, 1995, pp. 311ff. (repr. 2006, pp. 103 f.).

²¹ See e.g. Gregor, 1963, p. 150; Atwell, 1986, p. 133; Denis, 2001, p. 94; Timmermann, 2000, p. 280; Dietz, 2002, pp. 98f.; Kerstein, 2008, pp. 215f.

²² See also V-PP/Powalski, AA 27: 231; V-MS/Vigil, AA 27: 605; Refl. 7082, AA 19: 245.

²³ Notice that in § 11 Kant underscores that all rational capacities as such belong merely to the set of properties of man as a living being, and do not possess *per se* a moral relevance. See below, § 4.

delivered through that capacity,²⁴ namely the decision to hide one's own thoughts. The alleged language argument shows only what is (mis)used as the organ of lying, in every case.²⁵ What is special about language is not that its function has a higher value than other natural capacities, which can give rise to an ethical prohibition, but merely the fact that it happens to be the crucial instrument of insincerity. Yet, insincerity is the ethically relevant issue.

Thus, in order to understand the conscious lack of sincerity – which is the proper definition of the “contrary of truthfulness” (see AA 06: 429.33-36, RGV AA 06: 190.22-23) – it is not sufficient to refer to language, and Kant's analysis has to go a step further. He does this through his second point, which proceeds from the distinction between an external lie and an inner lie (AA 06: 429; cf. *VNAEF*, AA 08: 421), which is a significant innovation of the *Doctrine of Virtue* with respect to the lectures. While the terminological distinction was not Kant's invention, he gives it a very different meaning and a much more important role than earlier philosophers give it. Thereby, he further emphasizes the relevance of the dishonor which lying causes to the agent. According to the previous version of the distinction, *both* kinds of lies offend *other* people: what can be external or internal is precisely the offense, and the external is taken to be the worst one.²⁶ On the contrary, Kant differentiates the two cases with regard to the range of the liar's dishonor: by lying a man “makes himself an object of contempt *in the eyes of others*” or “*in his own eyes*” and thus he “violates the dignity of humanity in *his own person*” (AA 06: 429). An external lie and an inner lie are not different because of their addressees, as if the former were a technical term for a lie told to others and

²⁴ Cf. *VAMS*, AA 23: 267: “speaking is the faculty to communicate the own thoughts united, at the same time, *with the will* that the communication fully corresponds to what one thinks. Thus, [it is] at the same time [the] promise of this agreement. Sincerity is the condition without whom speaking would involve a usefulness without any possible use [Sprechen ist das Vermögen seine Gedanken mitzuthemen zugleich *mit dem Willen* daß die Mittheilung dem was man denkt völlig gemäs sey. Also *zugleich Versprechen* dieser Einstimmung. Aufrichtigkeit ist die Bedingung ohne die das Sprechen eine Brauchbarkeit ohne allen Möglichen Gebrauch enthalten würde].” See also Esser, 2004, p. 262.

²⁵ This applies also to the lies told to ourselves, as “declarations, which a human being perpetuates upon himself [*Erklärungen, die man gegen sich selbst verübt*]” (AA 06: 430.36, and *MpVT*, AA 08: 270.33), since Kant understands thinking as “speaking with oneself”: see *Anth*, AA 07: 192, *Refl.* 3444, AA 16: 839. Such cases are already included as Kant refers to what is told “another (even if the other is a merely ideal person)” (AA 06: 429.25). On the contrary, Esser, 2008, p. 294, holds that lying is not bound to a use of language.

²⁶ See Baumgarten, 1763, § 344: “falsiloquium morale alios homines laedens est mendacium externum, externe, internum interne laedens”. Meier, 1762-1774, § 863, IV, pp. 273f.: “alle Lügen sind entweder äusserliche, oder innerliche Lügen. Durch jene wird ein anderer Mensch äusserlich beleidiget, indem er dadurch entweder um seinen ehrlichen Namen, oder um seine äusserliches Eigenthum, oder um sein Leben u.s.w. gebracht wird. Solche Lügen sind die allerschändlichsten Lügen. [...] Durch innerliche Lügen werden andere Menschen nur innerlich beleidiget, indem dadurch die Ehre anderer Leute geschmälert, oder irgend eine Liebespflicht gegen sie übertreten wird”. On the notion of inner lie prior to Kant, see Annen, 1997, pp. 236f.

the latter were a technical term for a lie told to oneself, or for self-deception, as the text is usually understood.²⁷ Since it dishonors the liar in front of others, the external lie is the kind of lie which one has to avoid in order to protect one's own reputation. Because this is a matter of prudence (see AA 06: 429.21-23), it should not be examined here, and this explains why the external lie is not mentioned again after the distinction. The morally relevant case is, instead, that of the "inner lie", which makes the agent dishonorable regardless of any consequences of his conduct, such as damage to his reputation.²⁸ Insofar as ethics understands lying as a way of acting which "*by its mere form*" amounts to a "worthlessness that must make him contemptible *in his own eyes*" (AA 06: 430.7-8; cf. *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 700.30-31), every lie has to be reduced to an inner lie. This is why this notion becomes the central issue.²⁹

This turns out to be Kant's main argument to construe lying as a self-regarding vice, and his real attempt to explain why lying involves self-disrespect. Lying makes the liar dishonorable in his own eyes since it is grounded on insincerity, which involves the deliberate choice to adopt a maxim that he cannot declare even to himself and to his own conscience. By lying, the agent wants to display an intention that does not correspond to his real one, and projects a fictive identity ("a mere deceptive appearance of a human being": AA 06: 429.33-34), which is an expression of a different maxim than the one he actually adopted, under the assumption that the real maxim would not be judged as a good one.

This central point is clarified by Kant's examples, which may be somewhat unexpected, but deserve special attention. Both concern a profession of faith that is not grounded on genuine belief or conviction, but on some prudential reasoning. The first example concerns someone who brings himself to believe in "a future judge of the world" because he considers that it could be useful and prudent to do so. The second concerns someone who makes himself believe that his fear of God's punishment is in fact genuine faith.³⁰ As Kant observes in the *Religion* with regard to corresponding examples, we may have "truth in what is believed, yet at

²⁷ Some interpreter claim that, speaking of inner and external lie, Kant simply discusses *two* different problems: see e.g. Denis, 2001, p. 91f. But the external lie is here not really an issue. Schleiermacher (1803, p. 227) remarked that Kant, "diverging from everyone else [*von allen andern abweichend*]" and "doing violence to the language as well [*auch der Sprache Gewalt anthuend*]", here employs "two quite different concepts [*zwei ganz verschiedene Begriffe*]".

²⁸ On the non-correspondence between inner and external lie see *VNAEF*, AA 08: 421: "both may occur united together, or also in contradiction to one another".

²⁹ The priority of the inner lie (understood, however, as a self-lie) has been stressed also by Esser, 2004, p. 263, and 2008, p. 295; Gamberini, 2006.

³⁰ AA 06: 430, cf. *MpVT*, AA 08: 268. See also AA 22: 64, AA 17: 188.

the same time untruthfulness in the belief” (AA 06: 187), as when someone tells (himself) something true that he does not believe.

An inner lie involves, therefore, faking a persuasion (see also *MpVT*, AA 08: 268n). However, this fictive identity is not merely useful for pragmatic purposes. Its deeper function is, in Kant’s analysis, to deceive the agent’s conscience. This crucial point is also expressed in Kant’s examples. Indeed, he does not mention ordinary private convictions, but cases which, in prior ethical doctrines, belong specifically to one’s duties to God.³¹ While Kant excludes such duties from the scope of proper moral obligations, because we cannot interact with God, he re-interprets them as a duty to oneself concerning our inner moral disposition, that is, as a duty “not objective, an obligation to perform certain services for another, but only subjective, for the sake of strengthening the moral incentive in our own lawgiving reason” (AA 06: 487, see *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 713). The examples are meant to stress how lying affects one’s disposition to recognize the authority of a superior moral verdict, since Kant equates religion (in the subjective, or “inner” sense) and conscientiousness (*Gewissenhaftigkeit*; see *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 574f. and 718f.; cf. *RGV*, AA 06: 190.19-20). Since the insincerity towards God is a “violation of conscience [*Verletzung des Gewissens*]” (*RGV*, AA 06: 188), the sincerity of our faith in a judge of the world, and of our conduct, is, in the perspective of the agent, equivalent to his acceptance of the scrutiny of conscience, which is at the same time an authority we take part in. Therefore, in any ethically relevant lie we violate our conscientiousness, because we decide to deny the “subjective conviction [*subjectives Fürwahrhalten*]” (*V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 719) that it consists in: we know our belief or purpose, but we express another – maybe even in our own thoughts – in order to elude the condemnation, even though, at the same time, we are aware that the judging authority is *our own* conscience. Insofar as untruthfulness is a falsification of a *Fürwahrhalten*, it always affects the subject and his conscience first (see *MpVT*, AA 08:267.32-33). What the previous moral philosophers improperly called *conscientia erronea* (see AA 06: 400f.) – that is the application of an inappropriate moral norm, or the application of the law to the wrong act³² – must rather be understood as an inner lie (see *MpVT*, AA 08: 268; *V-PP/Powalski*, AA 27: 197f.): its alleged error follows from a deliberate deception, as the agent manipulates the inner judge and its verdict. But, by regarding the conscience as “an other person” (AA 06: 430; cf. the “merely ideal person” in AA 06: 429.25 with AA 06: 439.3), the liar rejects both the authority of the moral law and his moral identity as a person.

³¹ See e.g. Baumgarten, 1763, §§ 115, 119 and 141, and the remarks in *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 724f.

³² See Baumgarten, 1763, § 177.

Thus, Kant, who has often stressed that man has a tendency to try to escape his own moral judgment through captious reasoning (see e.g. *GMS*, AA 04: 405), here presents lying as one distinctive (though not the only) outcome of such a tendency, and at the same time clarifies why he considers lying the most evident manifestation of an original bad propensity in man (see AA 06: 431, and *MpVT*, AA 08: 270.16ff.).³³ Every lie is grounded on the decision to be untruthful in front of the own conscience in the first place. Deciding to be untruthful towards others means that the agent chooses to deceive his own conscience, namely himself as a moral being, as he does not recognize himself as involved in the self-legislation underlying the verdict of conscience. For this reason Kant understands sincerity as “the ground of every virtuous intention” (*MpVT*, AA 08: 269.1-2). The conscious rejection of both one’s own identity and the basis of one’s own moral status explains Kant’s special insistence on the gravity of lying, as the first and worst vice; it affects the basic structures of the endorsement of moral principles, in a way that also seems to spread through other people, so that this fundamentally self-regarding vice undermines the collective fulfillment of moral demands.³⁴ Furthermore, the combination of the rejection of one’s own moral status and the rejection of the moral law is the fundamental similarity that lying has with the other vices examined here.

While we deceive our conscience by using cases to make room for acting notwithstanding moral principles (see e.g. *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 620), Kant’s analysis of lying focuses entirely principles, without taking into consideration if we could make any distinction between lying and alleged morally permissible lies. In an earlier note Kant remarks: “When I ask, “Should I lie or not?” what is at stake is not a motive, but a rule [*Wenn ich frage: soll ich lügen oder nicht?, so ist nicht die Rede von einem Bewegungsgrunde, sondern von der Regel*]” (*Refl.* 7019, AA 19: 228). This section of the *Doctrine of Virtue* develops that thought, as it examines merely how lying affects the genuine adoption of maxims (cf. AA 06: 420). Precisely because this is the proper level of the issue, the prohibition of lying must not leave any room for exceptions (see e.g. *V-PP/Powalski*, AA 27: 231.34-35; *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 701.5-6). If an

³³ Therefore, I believe that it is right (and necessary) to stress the connection between the inner lie and radical evil, but without identifying them, as some interpreters do (see Allison, 1990, pp. 271f.; Gamberini, 2006). See on this also AA 19: 640f. and 646.19.

³⁴ Therefore the inner lie is the fundamental vice (the “rotten spot”, AA 06: 430; cf. *VNAEF*, AA 08: 422; *MpVT*, AA 08: 269.5-6) from which “the ill of untruthfulness spreads into his [sc.: a human being’s] relations with other human beings [*in Beziehung auf andere Menschen verbreitet*]” [oder: “with reference to other people”?] (AA 06: 431; cf. *RGV*, AA 06: 38.25-26. It is noteworthy that, in Kant’s view, lying has also a specific relevance in philosophy: the key for the “perpetual peace in philosophy” would be provided by the command, not to lie: see *VNAEF*, AA 08: 422.8ff.; see also *Refl.* 8096, AA 19: 641.10, and the quotation of the latin definition mentioned in the *Doctrine of Virtue* also in the *Erklärung in Beziehung auf Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre*, AA 12: 371.22-23.

act is permissible, it is not to be understood as lying, as it relies on a different maxim. Kant does not analyze lying in such a general and strict way in order to be pedagogically or rhetorically efficacious,³⁵ but because his interpretation does not focus on the diversity of acts, but on the underlying maxim. Providing a detailed classification of morally permissible acts that do not contradict the prohibition of lying remains extraneous to his aims. Even his casuistical remarks do not add much and refer to rather unproblematic cases.³⁶ The novelty of Kant's approach also lies in the fact that, while the other accounts lead to discussions about the admissibility or excusability of the different possible kinds of alleged lies, he focuses entirely on the matter of principle which lying is all about.

3. "On avarice"

The section on avarice seems to be the least original part of the chapter. Unlike lying and servility, indeed, avarice was already treated in the context of duties to oneself, as we can see in Baumgarten's *Ethica philosophica* (§§ 285-289). However, Kant contradicts the usual account and develops a divergent interpretation of the vice of avarice, drawing implications closely connected with his general position about the features of virtue. Maybe Kant's intention to stress his opposition to then current accounts explains the peculiar disposition of this section: the bulk of the text concerns the unsuitableness of gradual distinctions between virtue and vice while Kant's remarks about why avarice must be considered a violation of a duty to oneself are quite brief and appear last, in the subsection on casuistical questions (which, in this case, does not suggest cases to consider). For clarity's sake I shall first examine Kant's definition of the topic, then examine his argument for including it among the duties to oneself, and then examine his observations against the idea of a qualitative difference between avarice and the corresponding virtue.

In the first place, Kant tries to define the kind of avarice that must be seen as a self-regarding vice. On this matter, the text of the *Doctrine of Virtue* is perhaps not as clear as it could be. At the beginning of the section, Kant remarks that the topic to be discussed is not "greedy avarice [*habsüchtiger Geiz*]", that is, the "acquiring the means to good living in excess of one's true needs", since this is to be construed as a violation of a duty to other people; but, he adds, also "miserly avarice [*karger Geiz*]" violates our obligations to others when it becomes

³⁵ This is suggested by Wood, 2008, p. 252.

³⁶ See Annen, 1997, pp. 238ff. on the debate about the *Höchlichkeitslüge*.

“stinginess or niggardliness [*Knickerei oder Knauserei*]” (AA 06: 432).³⁷ A violation of a duty to oneself, instead, is the kind of avarice which consists in “restricting *one’s own* enjoyment of the means to good living so narrowly as to leave one’s own true needs unsatisfied” (AA 06: 432), which is the genuine miserly avarice, and which could have no negative consequences for other people. So, when Kant later refers to *karger Geiz* or *Kargheit* (miserliness) generally (AA 06: 432ff.) – which, at a first reading, Kant seems to suddenly reintroduce, after having explicitly put miserly avarice aside –, he means the third kind of avarice of the initial distinction, which he also calls *Filzigkeit* or *filziger Geiz*.³⁸ The miserly avarice examined here as a vice towards ourselves, therefore, is a way of acting which consists merely in striving to possess money, forgetting any possible aim to use it.

Some of Kant’s first critics already objected that his analysis of avarice must follow from undeclared eudaemonistic presuppositions, in spite of his claims concerning the foundations of ethics.³⁹ If avarice is wrong, it must be because it hinders our pursuit of well-being, which then turns out to be a positive moral value, after all. Accordingly, this vice should be understood, at best, as a violation of a duty to ourselves as *animal* beings. Kant addresses this predictable objection in the casuistical section: “it may be asked whether either prodigality or miserliness should called a vice at all, or whether both are not mere imprudence” (AA 06: 434). Here again, what must be examined, and what makes this way of acting morally reproachable, is not its consequence (the fact that eventually we are not able to live a decent life), but the maxim that this way of acting is grounded upon (see AA 06: 423).⁴⁰ If we take the maxim into consideration, we can see that miserly avarice precludes us from living according to “the principle of independence from everything except the law” (AA 06: 434). Therefore, Kant’s point is that avarice leads to “slavish subjection of oneself to the goods that contribute to happiness” (AA 06: 434; cf. § 29, AA 06: 452.19). If we fall in miserly avarice, Kant claims, this is because we have completely forgotten the genuine moral order of ends and means and take

³⁷ This very brief comment on stinginess (*Knickerei*) should also be seen as Kant’s correction of Baumgarten’s definition, since Baumgarten connects *Knickerei* with *Filzigkeit* – which for Kant is the self-regarding miserly avarice – as different grades of “*intemperantia in servandis opibus*” (1763, § 288; see also Meier, 1762-1774, § 746, III, p. 614). Kant’s opposition to the idea of quantitative distinctions in moral worth, which he discusses in the following, seems then to be implicitly present since the opening of the section.

³⁸ See e.g. *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 606. On the different sorts of avarice see also *V-PP/Powalski*, AA 27: 220 and *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 659.

³⁹ See Schwab, 1800, p. 80; Schleiermacher, 1803, p. 226.

⁴⁰ See also Esser, 2004, p. 365.

what should be merely a means (although a means to everything)⁴¹ as *the end* we have to lead our life according to (see *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 659; *V-Anth/Mron*, AA 25: 1306). Miserly avarice, therefore, is grounded on a perversion of the moral practical use of reason, which is, at the same time, a profound injury to our status as moral beings.⁴² The morally relevant implication of avarice, therefore, is not that we cannot enjoy life's pleasures, but that we eventually forget to be moral beings and treat ourselves as something worth less than a thing like money. Such perversion is so deep, in Kant's view, that here "one enjoys the power in thought" (*V-Mo/Collins*, AA 27: 399; cf. *V-PP/Herder*, AA 27: 87; *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 606.24; *V-Anth/Mron*, AA 25: 1261f.), without using money as a means to some real pleasure. In order to emphasize the significance of this reversal of the structure of morality and its connection with our moral integrity, Kant even claims in his lectures, that the moral damage caused by avarice is "incorrigible", since "the miser is [...] a stranger to himself; he does not know his own nature", so that "he can in no way be persuaded of his fault" (*V-Mo/Collins*, AA 27: 402, cf. *V-Mo/Kaehler*, p. 264; see also *V-Anth/Mron*, AA 25: 1358).

Miserly avarice represents for Kant the most appropriate occasion to make clear, with regard to a precise aspect of moral life, why no gradual differentiation should be applied to virtue. The issue was already discussed in the Introduction to the *Doctrine of Virtue*, and avarice was mentioned there as well (see AA 06: 406, cf. *VAMS*, AA 23: 397). The target of Kant's criticism is what he calls the "Aristotelian principle": "that virtue consists in the middle between two vices" (AA 06: 432), which was also endorsed by Baumgarten, among others.⁴³ Most likely, Kant did not suspect that this traditional principle cannot be identified with Aristotle's genuine position; however, his aim was to criticize the modern ethicists and to eradicate a sort of philosophical commonplace, which, in his view, involves an improper understanding of morality.⁴⁴ Indeed, Kant's criticism of the quantitative idea of virtue also concerns a more general point, namely that the traditional idea of moderation and

⁴¹ See *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 658: "Among all means of acquisition, none has a value so predominant as money, since it is taken as a *sign for everything open to acquisition*". See also *V-PP/Powalski*, AA 27: 220f. Equivalently, the following § 11 states that money has a "*pretium eminens*" (AA 06: 434) and therefore is more worth than other things.

⁴² Taylor, 2006, p. 34, argues that miserly avarice cannot be interpreted in the light of this logical fallacy, which, she claims, should be seen rather as its consequence and not as its cause. But Kant's point is that this is not just a logical fallacy, but a real reversal of our thinking about ends and means.

⁴³ See Baumgarten, 1763, § 170. For Kant's criticism of the alleged Aristotelian principle, beside AA 06: 406, see e.g. AA 27: 195; *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 611f. and 654.

⁴⁴ On the limits of Kant's knowledge of Aristotle's practical philosophy see Ferrarin, 2004, pp. 64ff.

temperance, which was usually the outcome of the analyses of avarice, and which was often considered the main issue of duties to oneself in general,⁴⁵ has no crucial role in his account of morality. The inner strength of virtue does not consist in mediating opposite extremes, but in reaching, maintaining and consolidating a fundamental recognition of ourselves (and others) as moral beings.

Kant's objections against the common version of the *mesotes* doctrine are a further development of the fundamental point that the moral worth of our conduct depends on the maxim that it is grounded on, not on our specific acts in the physical world ("If a vice is to be distinguished from a virtue, the difference one must cognize and explain is not a difference in the degree of practicing moral maxims but rather in the objective principle of maxims [*das objective Princip derselben*]", AA 06: 432). Thus, the moral evaluation of a way of acting does not consider any quantifiable aspect of this way of acting. While there is a quantitative distinction between the amount of money that we can acquire, spare, or spend, the moral wrongness of the maxim of denying ourselves everything else in order to enjoy the mere possession of money is not determined by such details, and this maxim is thus fully incomparable with any maxim that justly regards our money as a means to morally pursuable ends. Analogously, Kant underscores (see AA 06: 433n), that there are no grades in the corresponding virtue: our conduct is not worth more if we make proper use of a greater amount of money. The alleged Aristotelian principle, then, is useless (or "tautological": see AA 06: 433), since it cannot tell us anything about the moral worth of our possible actions. Ethics cannot tell us exactly which acts we ought to perform to be moral (here, how much we ought to spend or spare), since it can only explain to us which maxim we ought to act on and must then leave us and our capacity to judge to determine how the principle should be applied (see AA 06: 433n). Thus like the (pseudo-)Aristotelian principle, Kant also rejects the result of its application to avarice, which leads us to regard thrift as the corresponding virtue.⁴⁶ In the *Doctrine of Virtue* Kant only alludes to this common view through a question at the end of the casuistical section, which he does not answer (as he often does in the casuistical remarks in this work): "or is thrift as such a virtue?" (AA 06: 434). But his position on the matter is explicit in other texts: thrift "is not a virtue" (*V-Mo/Collins*, AA 27: 405; cf. *V-Mo/Mron*, AA 27: 1531; see also *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 612). Since thrift relates to the quantity of money it is

⁴⁵ See e.g. Walch, 1727, § XLIX, p. 424; Eberhard, 1786, § 157, p. 186.

⁴⁶ See Baumgarten, 1763, § 289. Meier (1762-1774, § 743, III, pp. 601f.; cf. § 748, pp. 620f.) sees the obligation to thrift as an implication of the more general obligation to moderation.

advisable for us to spend, it is not a virtue, but belongs merely to prudence. Kant observes that sometimes thrift could even be connected with avarice (see *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 660; *V-PP/Powalski*, AA 27: 220), which implies that it cannot be regarded as a virtue.

4. “On servility”

Kant’s further broadening of the scope of the duties to oneself in § 11 shows that he does not conceive of them as merely private obligations.⁴⁷ In presenting what he calls servility or false humility as a violation of the moral self, he proposes a double correction to the prior accounts. On the one hand, he rectifies the traditional inclusion of humility among duties to oneself and, on the other hand, interprets flattery, which was understood as a violation of others, as a self-regarding vice. In doing so, Kant unifies issues that were previously considered separately and divergently: humility was presented as duty to oneself, while flattery was seen as a violation of others.

As to the first point, humility was traditionally prescribed as the demand not to overestimate our moral perfection in comparison with others.’ Accordingly, Baumgarten defines it as “*habitus de imperfectionibus suis recte iudicandi*” (1763, § 168; cf. § 169).⁴⁸ Kant develops a contrasting view. According to his analysis of moral motivation, humility is a core aspect of our moral self-knowledge insofar as it arises from our consciousness of morality, its authority, and our status in front of it (see *KpV*, AA 05: 73 and 158). This inescapable humility relies on the fact that, as moral beings, we have to compare ourselves with the moral law itself (see AA 06: 435). Even if we feel and express genuine humility in front of a virtuous person, this is not because we are led to feel the limits of our moral strength in comparison with that person as a paragon, but because we see the moral law embodied in that good example (see *KpV*, AA 05: 77; see also *GMS*, AA 04: 401n). Thus, humility is an underlying feature of moral life, but not a specific duty.

The crucial failure of the traditional account of humility is that it requires us to evaluate ourselves according to the improper standard represented by other people (see also *V-PP/Powalski*, AA 27: 194f.; *V-Mo/Collins*, AA 27: 349). This is one of the cases where, in Kant’s view, an inadequacy of moral philosophy has negative consequences on the common

⁴⁷ See Hill, 1973. While Hill holds that, from the standpoint of a conceptual analysis, “if there are duties to oneself, it is natural to expect that a duty to avoid being servile would have a prominent place among them” (p. 87), Kant is the first to deal with the issue from this perspective.

⁴⁸ See also Meier, 1762-1774, § 444, II, p. 488.

understanding of morality and on conduct. Therefore, he proposes specific corrections to previous accounts of morality. The traditional conception of humility, which overlooks its essential connection with the moral law, leads to a morally inconsistent practice of humility in our interaction with others, so that we tend to see only the limit of our “moral perfection” and not our dignity as moral beings.⁴⁹ Thus, this merely interpersonal conception of humility eventually leads to consequences in one’s moral life that are contrary to genuine moral humility, since the latter involves the equality of all persons as such (see AA 06: 435), who share the same dignity as moral beings. For these reasons, Kant can claim that what moralists usually mean by humility is only an apparent virtue, a “monkish virtue”⁵⁰ (while he also confirms his point through a biblical quote: “Be no man’s lackey”: see AA 06: 436, cf. I Corinthians 7:23.).

As to the second aspect, if we construe flattery as an other-regarding violation (hence, not just as servile behaviour), we cannot really see why it is a vice, since we cannot see that it is grounded on adopting the comparison with others as one’s moral standard. Like other authors before him, Kant remarks that this kind of humility can be false in a double way, since it can be not only morally wrong, but also deceptive towards others;⁵¹ nevertheless, this is not his main point. Whether or not we act this way in order to achieve some purpose, the relevant fact is that we adopt the judgment of others as our moral standard (even if only functionally). We thereby compromise our dignity as persons, not just because we adopt an inferior standpoint,⁵² but because our dignity rests only on the genuine standard given by the moral law. Deceiving others involves, therefore, a deeper self-deception about our status as persons.⁵³ The connection with false humility lets us see that servile conduct does not amount to any wrong done to others, but to an inadequate appreciation of ourselves as persons.⁵⁴ A “parasite”, or a

⁴⁹ An analogous violation of ourselves as moral beings is involved in humiliating ourselves in front of religious symbols, if this does not express our awareness of our inferiority to an ideal, but the devotion to an idol: see § 12 AA 06: 436.28-437.2; cf. *RGV*, AA 06: 185; *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 607.4-9.

⁵⁰ *V-Mo/Collins*, AA 27: 349, cf. *V-Mo/Kaehler*, p. 185 and *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 703; see also *TL*, § 53, AA 06: 485. On Kant’s position on humility, see Loudon, 2007.

⁵¹ See e.g. Wolff, 1750-1753, III, § 213; Baumgarten, 1763, § 352.

⁵² Eylon and Heyd (2008, p. 688) remark that “flattery is made from a position of inferiority or need – material or psychological”. However, they refer mainly to Plato and Aristotle, separating flattery from servility, and do not mention Kant, even if they eventually see in servility “the lack of self-respect” (p. 696).

⁵³ See *VAMS*, 23: 403: “Any cringing is at the same time false. For every human being is aware of the undetachable right of equality” [“Alles was krieucht ist zugleich falsch. Denn ein jeder Mensch ist sich des unverlierbaren Rechts der Gleichheit bewusst.”]

⁵⁴ See also Durán Casas, 1996, pp. 292ff.

beggar, who behaves servilely without deceiving others, falls into the same vice.⁵⁵ The same applies, interestingly, to the apparently opposite case of a “conviction of the greatness of one’s moral worth”, which can be called “moral arrogance [*Tugendstolz*]”, as it derives “from failure to compare it with the law” as well (AA 06: 435, see *V-Mo/Collins*, AA 27: 349). This is an analogous violation, because it breaches the condition of our moral status (comparing ourselves with the moral law) for some individual purpose. Thus like in the case of avarice, this vice does not consist in a quantitative defect which can be rectified by increasing the self-respect or moral self-awareness expressed in our conduct.⁵⁶ This vice also consists in its underlying maxim, which is fundamentally incompatible with our “moral health”.

Both false humility and flattery (as well as arrogance), thus, involve discarding our status as moral beings, as well as the genuine moral standard it relies on. Kant emphasizes that we have to consider these issues from this new perspective by introducing § 11 with a recapitulation of the axiological status of human beings, which recalls and further develops the distinction between price and dignity drawn in the *Groundwork* (AA 04: 434). Here, Kant draws a conceptual distinction not only between animal and human beings, but also between human and moral beings, in a way that parallels the tricotomy of the predispositions characterizing the human condition in the *Religion* (see AA 06: 26ff.). If, as a living being, man has only “an ordinary value (*pretium vulgare*)” like any other “offspring of the earth”, whose worth depends only on their physical properties, even as a rational being man has only “extrinsic value” (a “*pretium usus*”), depending on how his pragmatic abilities can serve as means to possible ends.⁵⁷ In contrast to the traditional priority given to the *animal rationale*, in Kant’s view rationality as such is merely functional and does not provide any special worth (cf. § 3, AA 06: 418).⁵⁸ Indeed, man has a superior value, that is, “dignity (an absolute inner worth)”, only since he is capable to recognize and set himself obligatory ends, in virtue of his moral practical reason (AA 06: 434f.).⁵⁹ The normative implications developed in § 11 result from this fundamental distinction.

⁵⁵ See § 12, AA 06: 436.20-23; *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 605.27-38 and 606.30-33

⁵⁶ See Dillon, 2003, p. 201. The quantitative pattern of the mean between two opposite vices is applied to humility and arrogance by Baumgarten, 1763, § 382 (cf. §§ 171 and 173).

⁵⁷ The notions of *pretium vulgare* and *pretium usus* might amount to Pufendorf’s doctrine (1673, ch. XIV).

⁵⁸ The contrast with the traditional view becomes very clear in Schwab’s reaction (see 1800, p. 81).

⁵⁹ Correspondingly, in the same years, Kant positions the theoretical use of reason at the inferior level of technical rationality, and sees the fulfillment of rationality only in its moral practical use; see e.g. *OP*, AA 22: 64. On technical vs. practical, see *KpV*, AA 05: 26; *KU*, AA 05: 172 and 455; *EEKU*, AA 20: 199ff.; *VAZef*, AA 23: 163.

The special emphasis Kant adds here to his view on the status of moral beings lies in the remark that a person in the full sense of the notion “exacts respect for himself from all other rational beings in the world” and “can measure himself with every other being of this kind and value himself on a footing of equality with them” (AA 06: 435).⁶⁰ While considering rationality, or other abilities, as the source of value would not allow any equality (see AA 06: 434.27-21), the status of moral being involves a direct demand for respect and an assertion of equality with any person, since moral considerations rule out every other comparison.⁶¹ The analysis of an interpersonal way of acting like servility requires us to focus on this aspect of our moral status. Nevertheless, this statement on the dignity of persons is meant to explain why servility must be seen as a *self*-regarding vice. Foremost, that restatement about our moral status should show that our way of acting undermines our entitlement to exact respect. If in acting, we reject the genuine moral standard, we also lose the equal status granted by that standard. Correspondingly, the duty to respect others is ultimately grounded on the self-respect which *they* owe *themselves*.⁶² An offense, and our reaction to it (a demand for apologies, or an offer of forgiveness), are conceptually possible only if we respect ourselves as moral beings.⁶³ Therefore, unlike in prior moral philosophy, “how I ought to let the others treat me [*wie ich mich von andern soll behandeln lassen*]” is a matter of one’s duties to oneself (*Br*, AA 11: 307, cf. 399).

5. A human being’s virtue towards oneself as a moral being

Through the examination of these three vices, the reader should grasp the content and relevance of the duty everyone has towards oneself merely as a moral being. In the *Doctrine of Virtue*, only a few words are devoted to the fulfillment of this duty: “the virtue that is opposed to all these vices could be called *love of honor* [*Ehrliebe*] (*honestas interna, iustum sui aestimum*) [...] genannt werden” (AA 06: 420, cf. VAMS, AA 23: 403). The phrase “could be called” does not express some hesitation, but the necessity to carefully distinguish *Ehrliebe*

⁶⁰ On this aspect see Darwall, 2008, pp. 188ff. See also Darwall, 2006, pp. 120ff.

⁶¹ See e.g. *KpV*, AA 05: 73.18-24.

⁶² See *TL*, § 38, AA 06: 462: “But as he cannot give himself away for any price (this would conflict with his duty to self-esteem), so neither can he act contrary to *the equally necessary self-esteem of others* as human beings”.

⁶³ See *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 606f.: if one “wishes [*will*] others to have respect for his person, he must likewise hold fast to it, and show that he respects himself. He must at least bring the offending party to the point of an apology, so that he may be forgiven”.

from other related notions.⁶⁴ While Baumgarten equates *Ehrliebe* with the Greco-latin notion of *philotimia* and mentions it as an aspect of our duties to ourselves concerning the *cura existimationis*, the care for the reputation we enjoy as individuals,⁶⁵ Kant understands it as a virtue that does not at all concern an individual's standing and thus distinguishes it from the *honestas externa*.⁶⁶ The genuine love of honour, in his view, does not depend on merit, like in Baumgarten, but on the esteem of oneself as a moral being, as it is expressed by the connection between *honestas interna* and *iustum sui aestimum*, which were previously separated notions.⁶⁷

The distinction between *Ehrliebe* (“love of honour”) and *Ehrbegierde* (“ambition”) (see AA 06: 420; cf. AA 06: 465), which is almost all the *Doctrine of Virtue* says about it,⁶⁸ points in the same direction, and recalls the distinction between valuation according to the law and valuation according to the moral views of others: while *Ehrbegierde* pursues merely the esteem of others and is essentially a social passion, which leads us to violate our duties to others, the *Ehrliebe* is an inner disposition concerning the own moral stance. So, “he who is ambitious cannot stay alone, because he wants always to be honoured by someone. He who loves honour seeks to be alone and unknown [*ein Ehrbegieriger kann nicht alleine seyn, denn er will immer von jemandem geehret werden. Ein Ehrliebiger sucht ganz allein und unbekannt zu seyn*]”.⁶⁹ Kant also draws a corresponding distinction between two kinds of pride: *Ehrliebe* should be understood as “pride” (AA 06: 465; cf. § 36, AA 06: 459.23), that is, as the right way to be affected from the awareness of the own worth as a person.

Kant's normative concern in this chapter is to explain how some ways of acting involve a lack of *Ehrliebe*, that is a fundamental failure to appreciate one's own status as a moral being. To sum-up the main examples, by lying I hide my principles from myself in the first place;

⁶⁴ From a completely different perspective, Kant's use of this notion is stressed by Anderson, 2008. Interesting critical remarks (which cannot be discussed here) on the underlying role of honour in Kant's ethical thought in Skorupski, 2005, pp. 341ff.

⁶⁵ Baumgarten, 1763, § 293: “habitus existimationem appetendi”. In his *Metaphysica* (§ 684) *Ehrliebe* (*gloria*) is defined, from the standpoint of psychology, as “gaudium ex honore”.

⁶⁶ See *V-Mo/Collins*, AA 27: 408f.: “we might call the love of honour honesty, though it would then need to be distinguished from respectability [*Ehrbarkeit*]”.

⁶⁷ Compare Baumgarten, 1763, § 168 (where *iustum sui aestimum* is translated as “gehörige Selbstschätzung”) and § 300.

⁶⁸ See e.g. *V-Mo/Kaehler*, p. 272f. (and Werner Stark's note on Kant's use of these terms), and *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 664.

⁶⁹ *V-PP/Powalski*, AA 27: 222; cf. *V-Mo/Collins*, AA 27: 409; *V-Anth/Parow*, AA 25: 424.

through avarice and servility I assume false moral standards and make my participation in morality impossible. Thus, while it is common to equate the “inner lie” with the phenomenon of self-deception,⁷⁰ in Kant’s view *all* these vices are construed as forms of self-deception about the own moral status. Of course, every vice makes the agent unworthy insofar as it causes *demerit*, but what is distinctive about the vices regarding ourselves as moral beings is that they *directly* affect the capacity to act on good maxims and jeopardize the *dignity* he has as a being capable of morality.⁷¹ Most importantly, such dignity turns out to be endangered foremost by *our* own decisions, not by the conduct of others, whose disrespect for us does not obliterate our moral status. Only self-regarding vices can directly injure our dignity.

A vice towards oneself as a moral being is thus a way of acting which deprives the agent of his access to morality. Therefore it is here especially important to underscore their implications, showing that such vices deprive the agent of the recognition owed to moral beings. This chapter thus expounds what is probably the most crucial aspect of the priority which Kant ascribes to duties to oneself: they express some fundamental conditions of morality, whose violation deprive our conduct of a moral relevance.⁷² The reason why our actions “*must* spring from a love of honour [*aus der Ehrliche*]” (*V-Mo/Collins*, AA 27: 412) seems to be that only an agent who, in acting, maintains his awareness of his moral status can be recognized as a moral agent.

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⁷⁰ See e.g. Denis, 2001, p. 92; Potter, 2002; Gamberini, 2006; Wood, 2008, p. 255.

⁷¹ It seems questionable, then, that the duty to bear physical pain should apply “especially” if we know that we deserve it, as in the case of the death penalty, where Kant believes that “a criminal’s death may be ennobled [...] by the resoluteness with which he dies” (AA 06: 436.26-27). Accordingly, Kant holds that, if the condemned could choose between death penalty and “convict labor”, the proper awareness of his dignity, namely love of honour, should lead him to choose death. For he “is acquainted with something that he values even more highly than life, namely honor” (*RL*, AA 06: 334.2-3).

⁷² See e.g. *V-MS/Vigil*, AA 27: 604, *V-Mo/Mron*, AA 27: 1482; *V-Mo/Collins*, AA 27: 360. On this issue, see Bacin, 2008, pp. 206ff.; Reath, 2002, p. 352; Timmermann, 2006, pp. 512ff.; Loudon, 2006, p. 83.

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