Article

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# KANT'S THIRD COPERNICAN REVOLUTION

## THE TRANSITION FROM MORALITY TO RELIGION

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EACH of Kant's three famous questions: (1) What can I know?, (2)What ought I to do?, and (3) What can I hope?,[1] initiates a 'Copernican Revolution'.[2] The answer to the first question shifts attention from the object known to the mind that knows. Instead of arguing that human cognition must conform to the constitution of the object, Kant proceeds in the other direction, arguing that the object must conform to the faculty of human cognition.

The answer to the second question, What ought I to do?, shifts attention from the object chosen to the will that chooses. Instead of looking for the highest good and deriving a principle of its acquisition or realization for man, Kant derives the principle of morality and then proceeds to develop an understanding of the highest good of a being who finds himself subject to that principle.

The answer to the last question, What can I hope?, evokes perhaps the most bold and interesting of the three Revolutions. According to it one cannot move from a speculative demonstration of religion to morality for the intelligible sphere is closed to speculative reflection. Rather one must proceed in the other direction, arguing from the facts disclosed in morality to the necessary assumption of religion. Instead of arguing that man is religiously obligated to obey morality Kant argues that morality establishes the necessary grounds for the acceptance of religion. This third Copernican Revolution is the subject of this paper.

1. Immanuel KANT, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith, (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 635, (A 805, B833).

2. Kant refers to Copernicus' methodology only with regard to the answer to the first of his three questions. (The "Preface to the Second Edition" of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kemp Smith translation, p. 22, (B XVI).) John Silber applies the term Copernican Revolution to the methodology which Kant employs to answer the second question. ("The Copernican Revolution in Ethics: The Good Reexamined," *Kant-Studien*, LVII (1960) pp. 85–101.) I think that the term is clearly applicable to Kant's methodology in his attempt to answer the third question.

The first Revolution provides for the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves. What we can legitimately claim to know is not things as they are in themselves, that is, as noumena, but rather only things as they appear under the forms of space and time and the categories of the understanding, that is, as phenomena. The second Revolution provides for the reality of human freedom. The will must be understood to have the capacity to will itself not for a naturally determined end but according to an internal rational principle of correct willing. The will be understood to be rationally self-determining or, in other words, free.

One must, therefore, assume man to be free. In Kant's analysis, however, freedom cannot be attributed to man as he appears to be for the categories of the understanding require the universal application of natural determinism. Exploiting the distinction established by the first Revolution Kant argues that determinism applies to man only as he appears to be, that is, as phenomenon. Freedom can then be attributed to man as he is in himself, that is, as noumenon.

Freedom is a "transcendental predicate".[3] As such it establishes the "enigma" of the critical philosophy, that the sphere of the intelligible which is denied to speculative reason is made available to practical reason.[4] Morality provides what metaphysics cannot — "a view into a higher immutable order of things."[5]

This view into the intelligible, which is the chief purpose and highest accomplishment of Kant's second Copernican Revolution, is extended and completed with the introduction of the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. This extension is made possible not by an analysis of the moral law as such but by an analysis of the end or good of a being who is understood to be subject to the moral law. The second Revolution establishes this distinction between the law and the good. In the third Revolution Kant moves out from this distinction, arguing that this good is composed of two elements, virtue and happiness. The good of a being subject to the moral law consists of virtue to the extent that one can achieve it and happiness to the extent that one deserves it.

In this way, Kant believes that he has answered the last of his three questions. What can I hope? I can hope for happiness to the extent that I am virtuous or deserving of happiness. This hope which arises within morality can be fulfilled only within religion.

The weight of the transition from morality to religion rests less on the understanding of virtue *per se* than on the understanding of the connection between virtue and happiness. How can this connection, in which Kant construes virtue as the efficient cause of happiness, be understood to obtain? Kant expends great effort in his attempt to answer this question. This connection is possible only within a religious framework, specifically only with the assumption of the existence of God.

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3. Immanuel KANT, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril, 1956), p. 97, (Prussian Academy Edition, p. 94).

4. *Ibid.*, p. 5, (P.A.E. p. 5).

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112, (P.A.E. p. 107).

Kant expends conspicuously less effort on a more fundamental question, namely, Why must one assume that there is a connection between virtue and happiness at all? Why must one believe that the moral subject contributes to his happiness through his dedication to morality? This question and the answer to it constitute the Archimedean point in Kant's Copernican transition from morality to religion.

Kant's reasoning on this question is limited and not well focused. There is, however, a basic insight at the core of his thinking. This insight can be expressed in terms of a question, Is morality intelligible in a morally incoherent universe? This question and the issues which it raises are at the root of Kant's understanding of the connection of virtue and happiness and the consequent transition from morality to religion.

The purpose of this paper is to argue that the importance of Kant's transition from morality to religion lies in the transition itself. The significance of Kant's position, and its claim to address us today, lie not in the religion which Kant introduces but in the Copernican reorganization of our understanding of the relationship between morality and religion. One moves not from religion to morality, but from morality to religion. One finds in the analysis of morality reasons which make that transition necessary.

## II

For Kant the archetypal instance of morality is the individual standing at a parting of the ways: Either he chooses out of regard for his own desire or contentment, or he chooses out of respect for duty or the law of morality. The individual is confronted with an irreconcilable choice between the demands of virtue and those of happiness. Morality, for Kant, is the trial of the will.

Moral goodness or virtue is a condition of the will. It is that condition of the will in which the will unfailingly determines itself in accordance with the moral law. A virtuous individual is one who has survived the trial of the will, even at the expense of his happiness.

Virtue, which is the good will, is the highest good. This does not mean, however, that this good must be "the sole and complete good" of a creature subject to the moral law.[6] Indeed it could not be. A creature for whom the choice between oughts and wants, virtue and happiness, is a reality must be understood as being a rational finite being[7] — rational and hence capable of choosing out of respect for an ought, and natural and hence capable of choosing out of regard for wants and

6. Immanuel KANT, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H.J. Paton, as *The Moral Law: Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (London: Hutchinson, 1956), p. 64, (P.A.E. p. 396).

7. KANT, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 114, (P.A.E. p. 110).

desires. The complete good of such a being cannot ignore this natural dimension. It must include happiness.[8]

The concept of the "highest" (*Höchsten*), Kant argues, contains an ambiguity. The highest can mean the supreme good (*das Oberste*), that which is "subordinate to no other".[9] The highest can also mean the perfect good (*das Vollendete*), "that whole which is no part of a yet larger whole".[10] The highest in the sense of the supreme good of a finite rational being is virtue. The highest in the sense of the perfect good of such a being includes virtue, the supreme good, and it also includes happiness. "[V]irtue and happiness together constitute possession of the highest good for one person".[11]

Virtue and happiness are not simply self-contained elements within the complete good. They are related. Virtue is the unconditioned or unqualified condition: it is good in every circumstance. Happiness is the conditioned condition: it is dependent upon virtue. The complete good of a finite rational being is virtue to the extent that one can attain it and happiness conditional upon the degree to which one has achieved virtue.

Happiness, within the complete good, is the consequence of virtue. In a conclusion surprising to many of his commentators Kant contends that virtue is the efficient cause of happiness.[12] A being who is subject to the moral law is understood, through the 'mechanism' of the complete good, literally to produce his happiness.

How can a human subject, however, be understood to produce his happiness through his adherence to the moral law in a universe which must be understood to happen according to natural laws, laws which are impervious to moral considerations? One alternative would be to argue the case for what Kant calls Stoicism, that is, to argue that virtue is the complete good and that happiness is simply consciousness of the possession of this good.[13] Kant rejects this position, however, for he sees it as confusing contentment regarding moral performance with contentment regarding one's condition of life.[14] Happiness requires the participation of nature, but how can nature be affected by the moral performance of the individual? The solution to the problem, Kant believes, requires the acceptance of two mutually exclusive causalities, natural causality and moral causality.[15]

Kant resolves the problem by appeal to the noumena-phenomena distinction established by the first Copernican Revolution and exploited by Kant in the attempt

8. Kant understands happiness as a thoroughly natural or sensuous concept. "Where one places his happiness is a question of the particular feeling of pleasure (*Lust*) or displeasure (*Unlust*) in each man...". (*Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 24, (P.A.E. p. 25).)
9. KANT, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 114, (P.A.E. p. 110).
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, p. 115, (P.A.E. p. 111).
12. *Ibid.*, p. 118, (P.A.E. p. 113).
13. *Ibid.*, p. 115, (P.A.E. p. 111).
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132, (P.A.E. p. 127).
15. This problem is "The Antinomy of Practical Reason," *ibid.*, pp. 117-118, (P.A.E. p. 113-114).

to explain how man can be understood to be both determined from the standpoint of science and free from the standpoint of morality. As phenomenon, Kant argues, man must be understood as subject to natural causality, but as noumenon man may be understood as subject to a supersensuous causality which connects "the morality of intention" with "happiness as an effect in the sensuous world".[16]

This supersensuous causality is not sufficient in itself to ground the complete good. In order to explain the possibility of free willing. Kant argues the case for freedom as a characteristic of the moral subject's noumenal or intelligible existence. In order to explain the possibility of the complete good, he argues that one must broaden the foothold in the intelligible sphere established by freedom. The possibility of the complete good cannot be explained within the limits of morality alone. It requires a religious framework. Virtue requires the immortality of the soul. Happiness, or more specifically the connection between virtue and happiness, requires the existence of God.

Complete virtue, Kant observes, is "holiness".[17] The achievement of holiness is impossible for a creature who is finite. For such a being holiness can mean only endless progress towards perfection. This "infinite progress is possible", Kant declares, "only under the presupposition of an enduring existence and personality of the same rational being; this is called immortality of the soul."[18]

The happiness of the human subject, Kant reasons, depends on the capacity of that subject to satisfy his particular wants and desires. These are satisfied through nature; happiness requires the cooperation of nature. In terms of the character of the complete good, happiness must be proportional to virtue. The cooperation of nature, therefore, must be measured or appropriate. The degree to which nature must be brought into harmony with virtue must exactly reflect the subject's degree of perfection. For this task an 'agency' is required which is omnipotent and omniscient. Hence, Kant reasons, "the existence is postulated of a cause of the whole of nature, itself distinct from nature, which contains the ground of the exact coincidence of happiness with morality" — namely God.[19] If such a being did not exist, the hope for happiness would be empty for there would be no cause adequate to the task of bringing it about.

The concept of the complete good of a being subject to the moral law requires that one assume the objective reality of the immortality of the soul and the existence of God. In this way, Kant concludes, "through the concept of the highest good as the object and final end of pure and practical reason, the moral law leads to religion."[20]

16. *Ibid.*, p. 119, (P.A.E. p. 114).
17. *Ibid.*, p. 126, (P.A.E. p. 122).
18. *Ibid.*, p. 127, (P.A.E. p. 122).
19. *Ibid.*, p. 129, (P.A.E. p. 125).
20. *Ibid.*, p. 134, (P.A.E. p. 129).

## III

There are serious difficulties in Kant's understanding of religion. Kant's transition from morality to religion depends more on the existence of God than on the immortality of the soul. The difficulties with regard to the latter concept are both more obvious and less damaging to Kant's argument than those regarding the former.

For a finite creature, according to Kant, holiness can mean only an infinite process of becoming holy. Rather than bringing virtue within the confines of human finitude, Kant extends human finitude to accomodate virtue. Would the problem not be solved by arguing that virtue is a realizable end rather than that the process of its realization is eternal? Why must virtue be anything more than an 'ideal' of conduct? If one dedicates oneself to achieving thorough mastery of a musical instrument, for example, one may be said to adopt, at least implicitly, the goal of perfect musicianship. One knows, of course, that this goal is not realizable. This knowledge does not undermine the goal, however, because its status as an ideal distinguishes it as unattainable. One need not assume the immortality of the soul in order to make the moral ideal possible, because impossibility is part of its meaning as an ideal.

Even if the status of virtue as a necessarily realizable ideal is accepted, Kant's interpretation of the soul's immortality poses another interesting difficulty. If the human subject is to make progress toward perfection or holiness he must feel within himself the demands of happiness. Without these demands obligation could have no meaning for him. The infinitely enduring subject must be understood to desire happiness, which for Kant, is rooted in the senses. According to Kant's analysis of immortality, however, it is not the body but the soul which is assumed to be immortal.

It is often argued that the introduction of happiness into the concept of the complete good of a creature subject to the moral law undermines the integrity of the law. Morality as a discipline of virtue, it is argued, gives way to morality as the pursuit of happiness.[21] What is at issue here is the status of happiness (*vis-à-vis* virtue, specifically, whether happiness has been made the motive for virtue. It has not. Happiness is introduced not as the motive for virtue but as its consequence. Happiness is the conditioned condition of the complete good ; virtue is the unconditioned condition. According to Kant only the individual who does his duty for the sake of duty, and who would do so even when so doing involved a definite loss of happiness, can be said to be worthy of happiness. Paradoxically, it is the individual who does not need happiness as a motive for virtue who is judged to deserve happiness.

It should also be pointed out that criticisms developed above with regard to virtue as the ideal of morality do not apply to the existence of God. God is not

21. For instance, see Theodore M. GREENE, "The Historical Context and Religious Significance of Kant's *Religion*," in Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. T.M. Greene and H.H. Hudson, (New-York : Harper and Row, 1960), pp. lxii-lxiii.

introduced into the argument as an ideal of conduct but rather as the necessary condition of the possibility of the hope for happiness proportional to virtue. Kant's argument for God's existence is not like that for the immortality of the soul. Rather it is similar to the argument for human freedom. 'I experience myself as obligated, but if I cannot claim that my will is free, then I must admit that I am not obligated at all, that obligation is simply a fiction.' Similarly, 'I hope for happiness to the extent that I am worthy of it.' This hope is nothing but an illusion unless there exists in the world an agency capable of effecting a harmony, based upon moral worthiness, between an individual's wants and the events of his life. Just as the second of Kant's questions, What ought I to do?, would be meaningless without freedom, so the third of his questions, What can I hope?, would be meaningless without the existence of God.

The God which Kant introduces, however, is an artificial construct brought into the argument in order to fill the specific function of insuring the distribution of happiness in proportion to worthiness. This being must be omniscient — for it is necessary to know the exact moral worth of all moral agents and what for each of them would constitute happiness, and omnipotent — for it is nature and the events which take place in the natural world which determine an individual's happiness and which, therefore, must be made to yield that unique happiness appropriate to a particular individual to the degree that he is worthy of it. This God is the perfect judge in what has been referred to as the trial of the will. He knows the 'rules' and with unerring accuracy judges the winners and the losers and gives each his due.

Kant does not conceive of God as a being who, like the God of the Book of Job, would subject a virtuous individual to suffering simply for the purpose of trying him. This would be 'against the rules', and it is clear that Kant's God can conduct himself only in accordance with the rules. He is not free to do otherwise. This God must be unforgiving of human weakness, oblivious to humain prayer, unmoved by human repentance. Mercy cannot be one of his attributes, for mercy is, in effect, giving something to one whose conduct in the strict sense does not merit it.

Kant's position turns out to be very much like the one expressed by Job's 'comforters'. They assure Job that God punishes the unjust and rewards the just and that if he, Job, has been made to suffer it must be that he has done something to deserve it.[22] Like the God of Job's comforters Kant's God is a mechanism, mindlessly apportioning happiness to virtue into eternity. While Kant believes that human worth and dignity center in the will and in choice he conceives of God as a willess mechanism.

The religion which Kant introduces is artificial and unconvincing. This does not mean, however, that Kant's transition from morality to religion is devoid of philosophical insight and value. The nature of the religion is only in a sense the 'how' of Kant's attempt, ant the fate of the 'how' need not affect the 'why'. The 'why' is found in the contention that the facts of morality require the transition to

22. *The Book of Job*, 4: 7-8.

religion, that unless virtue is understood to be the efficient cause of happiness then virtue and the moral law are not possible. Obligation requires the hope for happiness and is unintelligible without that hope.

## IV

Although Kant says a good deal about the necessity of assuming the existence of God, he says surprisingly little about why virtue and happiness must be understood to be related within the complete good such that they require the introduction of God's existence. This is the central point of Kant's transition, yet the answer is only sketched or suggested. Perhaps Kant simply stumbled over the difficulty. Perhaps he assumed that there was no difficulty, that the reasoning is obvious and not in need of large scale argumentation or clarification. Whatever the reason, Kant devotes much attention to the 'how' of the connection of virtue and happiness, giving little attention to the 'why'.

In the "Dialectic" of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, where one finds Kant's most detailed and sustained treatment of the connection between virtue and happiness, the argumentation is as follows:

> [H]appiness is also required, [for the complete good] and indeed not merely in the partial eyes of a person who makes himself his end but even in the judgment of an impartial reason, which impartially regards persons in the world as ends-in-themselves. For to be in need of happiness and also worthy of it and yet not to partake of it could not be in accordance with the complete volition of an omnipotent rational being, if we assume such only for the sake of argument.[23]

That happiness is required for the complete good, and that it must be understood to be produced by virtue, are not judgments of a self-interested individual who might feel 'cheated' if he did not receive happiness. The inclusion of happiness in the complete good is not a subjective but an objective judgment. It is made by "an impartial reason" (*einer unparteiischen Vernunft*) and is, therefore, not based on considerations such as 'the inevitable psychological weakness of man' or the need to provide mechanisms to insure socially acceptable conduct. It is based on a logical analysis of the concept of morality and its implications for man, that being who is subject to morality.

The most important fact which Kant's impartial reason uncovers in its appraisal of man's situation is that man is not simply a natural creature, but an end-in-himself; man is a moral creature. We find, Kant believes, for reasons which are beyond our comprehension (although we can know why they are beyond our comprehension) that we are obligated. Our choices and actions and indeed our very persons are subject to a criterion of judgment, the moral law, which requires not our happiness and fulfillment but our strength of will, our courage to choose the moral good no matter what may befall us as a consequence. Morality requires that

23. KANT, *Critique of Practical Reason*, pp. 114-115, (P.A.E. p. 110).

we judge ourselves according to an objective criterion which places adherence to principle above fulfillment and happiness. To acknowledge oneself as subject to the moral law is to regard oneself as subject to more than the natural law in the determination of one's choices. The law of survival of the fittest reigns among natural creatures; the law of morality must be understood by moral creatures to reign among them.

Oughts over wants, virtue over happiness. This is man's task. But what of man's fate? This question is anything but rhetorical. It emerges out of the logic of man's condition as a being both natural and rational. Can a creature who is subject to the law of morality in terms of his choices be subject only to the law of the survival of the fittest in terms of his fate? Is the moral subject to choose and act as if he lives in a kingdom of ends, a moral meritocracy, but yet acknowledge that he lives in a 'jungle' where the only criterion is strength?

Kant has argued that there can be no answer to the question, Why be moral?, other than a moral answer. To explain morality in terms of a non-moral consideration would reduce morality to that non-moral consideration. Hence one cannot appeal to happiness as the justification for morality without reducing virtue to happiness, morality to prudence. Kant's overriding point is that while being obligated to virtue and hoping for happiness would be 'reasonable' although quite 'unexplainable', being obligated to virtue if there were no hope for happiness would be not simply unexplainable but unreasonable. Obligation without hope suggests not only a situation in which personal wants and needs are completely frustrated by an uncooperative nature, but a condition of life such as Kafka portrays — man trying himself in a universe which cares for neither innocence nor guilt.

The question is not 'What is the purpose of morality if there is no 'payoff'?' It is not a question directed to a Thrasymachus or a Polus who must be shown that morality is in his best interest. The question is 'Is morality intelligible in a morally incoherent universe?' This question and the issues it raises constitute the underlying rationale for the contention that virtue and happiness must be related in such a way that virtue is the efficient cause of happiness.

Kant's answer is that morality is not intelligible in a morally incoherent universe. Such a universe would render obligation a mere illusion and the moral law a fiction of the mind.[24] For Kant, however, operating in terms of his Copernican methodology, these conclusions do not undermine morality but indicate the conditions necessary for the acceptance of morality, conditions which can be accepted so long as they do not contradict what is known about the world from the standpoint of theory and speculation. Just as morality requires autonomy of the will and consequently freedom, so it also requires the coherence of the universe and consequently the existence of God as the possibility of that coherence.

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24. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant writes "If... the highest good is impossible according to practical rules, then the moral law which commands that it be furthered must be fantastic (*phantastich*), directed to empty imaginary (*eingebildete*) ends, and consequently inherently false." (p. 118, (P.A.E. p. 114).)

Morality requires that one assume that hope is at least a possibility, that there may be a correspondence between virtue and happiness, between what an individual does and the natural environment in which he has his life.

## V

Just as an act of moral conviction is an expression of human freedom and is illogical without that freedom, so an act of moral conviction is an expression of religious faith and is illogical without that faith. In order to clarify the role that the concept of moral coherence plays in Kant's argument it is helpful to consider briefly a position diametrically opposed to Kant's, namely, one which begins with a morally incoherent universe and attempts to work from that fact to an appropriate standpoint regarding human conduct. One finds such a position in Camus' *The Plague*. A brief consideration of Camus' position, and of what would constitute a Kantian response to that position, will prove helpful in clarifying Kant's position on the relations among morality, moral coherence and religious belief.

Camus' Dr. Rieux, the hero of *The Plague*, is the opposite of Mersault, the 'absurd hero' of *The Stranger*. Mersault's ethic is a sensuality which is above the categories of right and wrong, an ethic which turns experience into a tapestry of feelings in which no distinction is made between things and people. For Rieux, on the other hand, other human beings and their suffering are precisely his task. He identifies himself as being among those who 'refuse to bow down to pestilence' and instead insist on healing.[25] One's task is to be not simply for oneself but also for others, and one must be for them in the manner of one who seeks to alleviate suffering, who seeks to heal.

Healing is resistance, not to death, since death is inevitable, but rather to the randomness of death. All men die, but the times and the manners of their deaths are not the same. Death obeys no laws — certainly no moral or human laws. Healing is the attempt at human intervention in the capricious machinery of a silent universe. Rieux has Sisyphus' capacity for ceaseless activity in the face of inevitable defeat. Death will be no less random. Suffering will be no less present. Rieux is Sisyphus with a doctor's black bag.

One might make a case for Rieux as the individual who accepts a moral task, who accepts healing as an expression of conscience, and who does so with deliberate and open rejection of Kant's conviction that without the moral coherence of the universe individual moral action would make no sense. The absence of hope and the lack of a religious framework which could sustain hope do not undermine Rieux's efforts, at least in Camus' eyes. Quite the contrary, Rieux's efforts are given a certain nobility. Rieux is as insistent on the moral incoherence of the universe as he is on the notion of healing.

Camus is sensitive to the ambiguity of this position. Intensification of the sensual, the orientation of Mersault, may make sense in an incoherent universe, but

25. Albert CAMUS, *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert, (Penguin, 1975), p. 252.

does healing make sense? Tarrou, Rieux's friend and collaborator, expresses this ambiguity. Close to death, he declares, "What interests me is learning how to become a saint." Rieux, taken aback by this remark, replies, "But you don't believe in God." "Exactly," says Tarrou, "Can one be a saint without God? — that's the problem...".[26] Rieux, however, has no use for the question. He identifies himself as one of those who "while unable to be saints but refusing to bow down to pestilence, strive their utmost to be healers."[27] Healing is not connected to or dependent upon the possibility of saint-hood, or God, or the moral coherence of the universe.

The issue from the Kantian point of view is not whether Rieux is, in fact, an individual of conscience in a morally incoherent universe, but whether the notion of such an individual is anything other than a contradiction. Kant's argument is not a psychological argument but a logical one. Nor would Kant impugn the moral integrity of Camus' archetype. He would say of Rieux what he said of Epicurus, namely, that he was indeed a moral individual although he advocated the wrong theory of morality.[28]

If the universe is indeed incoherent, Kant would have us ask, then what reason is there to believe that the impulse to heal is anything more than a manifestation of some great struggle with oneself? Ought not the right thinking individual in such a circumstance wonder that he should be aware of himself as motivated to sacrifice his life for others in obvious contradiction with the laws of nature? At the very least ought not the individual who advocates a Rieux like position acknowledge that his choice is simply arbitrary? Rieux indeed expresses reluctance to impose his choices on others. His choice is indeed only his choice. If, however, one's response to the plague is simply subjective then healing is no more objective a response than the production of suffering. Healing becomes no more plausible than harming.

Kant would say that Tarrou's question cannot be brushed aside. It is logically impossible, Kant believed, to be a saint without God, logically impossible to be an individual of moral conscience in a morally incoherent universe. Tarrou's unease is justified. The theory of morality which he advocates is incompatible with his conduct and that of Rieux.

Another issue raised by Camus' position brings us closer to the intent of Kant's argument. Rieux's ethic, to be against suffering, to heal, moves beyond categories pertaining strictly to the individual. It involves categories which evaluate the fate or happiness of that individual with reference to his worthiness. The 'randomness' of death or the 'suffering of a child' are judgments about the moral worth of an individual on the one hand and his fate in the world on the other. The term 'suffering' connotes a lack of proportion between merit and fate. Such a concept is possible only where there is an understanding of the necessary and appropriate participation of those conditions which are beyond the control of the individual, participation which is based on an understanding of the moral worthiness of the individual.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

28. KANT, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 120, (P.A.E. pp. 115-116).

Like the concept of worthiness, Kant would argue, the concept of suffering brings together merit and fate, with the contention that fate ought to be conditioned by merit, happiness by virtue. Kant would argue that suffering is the other side of worthiness and is, therefore, no more intelligible than worthiness if the moral coherence of the universe and the religious framework which underlies that coherence are denied. Camus does not understand the logic of his own position, Kant would argue. Neither the commitment to heal nor the experience of the suffering of others is intelligible in a morally incoherent universe.

## VI

The religion introduced by Kant in his transition from morality to religion is a religion of morality. Morality is not just one aspect of it; morality exhausts it. Kant's religion adds nothing to morality except the conditions which make morality possible, and religion is accepted only to the extent that these conditions require it.

Paradoxically, Kant's religion does not provide for hope, although the attempt to provide for hope is what constitutes the rationale for the introduction of religion. Kant's analysis provides for the expectation of happiness rather than the hope for happiness. Kant introduces an omniscient and omnipotent entity in order to provide for the distribution of happiness proportional to virtue. This 'Author of Nature's lacks an independent will or faculty of choice and therefore cannot help but apportion happiness to the extent that an individual is worthy of it. In this case, one need not hope for happiness; one need only expect it. It is not a matter of 'if' but of 'when'. One cannot, as Kant knows, hope for the impossible, nor can one hope for the inevitable. One hopes for the possible. But the merely possible has no place in Kant's analysis.

Kant's understanding of religion is fraught with difficulties. These difficulties, however, do not present the final word on the Kantian transition from morality to religion. The significance of Kant's transition lies in the Copernican methodology itself. The fate of morality does not depend on a prior decision about the moral coherence or incoherence of the universe, but rather morality — specifically, the presence to us of the moral imperative — constitutes a reason to conclude (although only for the purposes of practice and not for those of speculative knowledge) that the universe is morally coherent. One moves, in effect, not from God to the moral law, but from the moral law to God. Not 'We know that we are obligated because God exists', but rather 'We are obligated and therefore God must exist as the precondition of the possibility of our being obligated.'

Nietzsche would have observed in this Kantian enterprise the curious attempt to reconstruct the religious tradition of the West in rational terms as a necessary condition of the possibility of the acceptance of the ethics associated with that tradition. Nietzsche would have believed it obvious that obligation makes sense only if there is one who obliges, only if there is equitable or just distribution of happiness in terms of moral achievement. Obligation is indeed intelligible only

within a religious framework. But God is dead, and hence obligation must be abandoned.[29]

This is not the time to enter into a defense of Kant's notion of obligation. Briefly, Kant would argue that what underlies our admiration for Camus' Dr. Rieux is that we see in him an individual of conscience. At the parting of the ways between oughts and wants, virtue and happiness, he chose oughts and virtue. What is unique to man, in Kant's view, is that he can perceive his needs on the one hand, and can perceive what is right in itself on the other and, further, can consciously and deliberately choose the latter regardless of the consequences for the former. The capacity to dedicate oneself to healing even when one may perish as a consequence is the ground of human worth and dignity. It is this capacity which ought to be central to man's attempt at self-understanding. Man is man because he sees suffering in the world and can respond to it with the willingness to heal.

In his time, Nietzsche may indeed have been the radical thinker, the critic willing to subject accepted beliefs to a sustained and uncompromising challenge. In our time, however, when religion is increasingly thought of as belonging to a past epoch of human history, when religious institutions seem impelled to secularize themselves in order to remain 'relevant', Nietzsche is no longer the radical. He is simply the spokesman for conventional wisdom or for the reigning orthodoxy. As Nietzsche knew, conventional wisdom may find justification in the fact that it is conventional, and reigning orthodoxy may find justification in the very fact that it does reign.

I would suggest that in our time Kant is the radical, the one who challenges us to subject our beliefs on the relationship of morality and religion to a new critique. Does the analysis of moral experience require the acceptance of a religious framework? Kant's third Copernican Revolution is a good place to begin such an inquiry.

29. Neitzsche has some particularly direct and interesting remarks specifically on Kant in Sections 10–12 of *The Antichrist.*