

# Passions: Kant's psychology of self-deception

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**Abstract:** Kant's radical criticism of the passions has a central but largely overlooked moral-psychological component: for Kant, the passions promote a kind of self-deception he calls 'rationalizing'. In analysing the connection between passion and rationalizing self-deception, I identify and reconstruct two essential traits of Kant's conception of the passions. I argue (1) that rationalizing self-deception, according to Kant, contributes massively to the emergence and consolidation of passions. It aims to resolve a psychological conflict between passion and moral duty when in fact, it does not resolve but perpetuates this conflict. I then argue (2) that rationalizing does not necessarily aim to devalue moral duty, as Kant seems to suggest in the *Groundwork*. It can also aim to revalue the 'counterweight'. By analysing Kant's presentation of several individual passions in the *Anthropology*, I demonstrate that rationalizing here is concerned with elevating these passions and making them pass as morally (or at least prudentially) justified.

**Keywords:** Kant, passions, self-deception, rationalizing, moral psychology

## Introduction

According to Kant, passions are a great obstacle to developing a moral character. Feelings may certainly play a positive role in character formation; the feelings of the beautiful and the sublime, for example, are credited with promoting moral conduct (CPJ 5:267; MS 6:443), and cultivating sympathy is even an indirect duty (MS 6:457). Kant's judgement on the passions, however, is devastating: they are 'cancerous sores for pure practical reason' (Ant 7:266) and 'without exception evil' (Ant 7:267).<sup>1</sup> From our twenty-first-century perspective, where being passionate has become a hallmark of interesting personalities, it is difficult to follow this wholesale condemnation. Kant's concept of passion clearly differs from ours, which often has positive connotations. Yet why is his judgement of passion so negative?

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<sup>1</sup> There is one surprising exception to this sweeping condemnation after all, namely the mania for possession; delusion, too, is an exception in Kant's conception of the passions but not with regard to this condemnation (see below, sections 3.3 and 3.4). On the indirect duty to cultivate our capacity for sympathy, see Baron 1995, Cohen 2017, Seymour Fahmy 2009, and Wehofsits 2017. For criticism of the view that emotions can play a positive role in Kantian morality, see Thomason 2017. For a detailed account of the relationship between passions and other emotions in Kant, see Wehofsits 2016. Building on my work there, my aim here is to explore more precisely how passions and rationalizing self-deception are connected.

According to Kant, someone is said to be impassioned when they consistently give priority to following their passion (the desire for power or wealth, or both, for instance) over other reasons to act. He understands passions not as feelings but as a subgroup of maxim-based inclinations that are 'pragmatically ruinous' and 'morally reprehensible' (Ant 7:267) because they contravene the principles of instrumental, prudential, and moral reason. As I wish to show, the decisive element here is that this irrationality of the passions is not openly manifest. Passions do not prevent reflection; they manipulate it and lead to pseudo-rational reflection. Kant's condemnation of the passions is not limited to the rather abstract reproach that they violate the principles of instrumental, prudential, and moral reason. A central component of his criticism is a moral-psychological problem largely neglected in the existing literature:<sup>2</sup> passions promote a form of self-deception Kant calls 'rationalizing' (*Vernünfteln*). In what follows, I shall explain how this problem emerges; how rationalizing self-deception works in the context of the passions; what consequences it has; and why addressing these questions is important to understanding Kant's condemnation of the passions. I will argue that this condemnation is not a reprobation of the sensible components of the passions but of their rationalizing elements. In doing so, I shall identify and reconstruct two essential features of Kant's account of passion. (1) Rationalizing self-deception massively contributes to the emergence and consolidation of passions. It primarily aims at resolving a psychological conflict between passion and moral duty but, according to Kant, achieves the exact opposite: the conflict is not resolved but perpetuated, and a resolution of the instrumental, the

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<sup>2</sup> Kant's conception of the passions is most often discussed in the context of his theory of evil. Formosa 2009, 201–207, argues that Kant's account of passion explains why the worst evildoers are often imprudent or even self-destructive. Frierson 2014, 100–113, examines Kant's distinction between passions and affects and explores the claim that passions, in contrast to affects, are 'properly evil' (MS 6:408). Rohlf 2013, 751–768, reads Kant as a weak cognitivist whose rejection of the passions reflects the importance he assigns to the human propensity for evil. Sussman 2001, 193–205, argues that Kant's account of passion helps us solve the puzzle of fragility or weakness of will. My analysis aims at the passions themselves and at the moral-psychological problem they pose. It focuses on the connection between passion, self-deception, and rationalizing, on the significance of this connection for Kant's rejection of the passions, and on the concrete functioning of impassioned self-deception, which I develop by way of examining Kant's presentation of individual passions. Such an analysis is lacking in the literature. While Frierson 2014, 106–109, develops a psychology of passion, he does not discuss self-deception and rationalizing. Formosa 2009, 198–201, 205, emphasizes the importance of self-deception for Kant's moral psychology but does not describe how impassioned self-deception functions concretely. Van Ackeren, Sticker (2015 and Sticker 2012), Guyer 2000 and Moran (2014) provide insightful analyses of rationalizing and self-conceit but do not discuss the passions.

prudential, and the moral problem of the passions is blocked. (2) Rationalizing does not necessarily aim at devaluing moral duty, as a famous passage in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* suggests. Rather, in the context of the passions, rationalizing is concerned with elevating passions and making them pass for being morally (or at least prudentially) justified. This connection between passion and rationalizing becomes apparent in Kant's presentation of particular passions in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. I present the case for the first part of this interpretation in section 2. First, however, I outline how giving priority to passion leads to conflicts on the instrumental, prudential, and moral levels. I then show what the moral-psychological conflict consists in and how impassioned people, through rationalizing self-deception, prevent themselves from overcoming their passion. In section 3, I defend the second part of my interpretation. I give a detailed analysis of a number of Kant's presentations of particular passions and demonstrate how the procedure of rationalizing and elevating a passion works concretely. This allows for reconstructing what Kant sees as the moral-psychological problem of the passions and it helps refine and extend our understanding of his conception of rationalizing. Such a detailed analysis is worthwhile because the general part of Kant's discussion of passions is short and rudimentary; a precise understanding of his condemnation of the passions can only be obtained from his more elaborate and psychologically more subtle presentations of particular passions, which Kant scholarship studies only rarely.<sup>3</sup> The analysis of these presentations helps us obtain a more differentiated conception of Kant's moral psychology. Moreover, it also contains an important contribution to current debates about self-deception: as I will show, Kant, with great psychological precision, describes how the desire (positive in itself) to be a moral person can motivate self-deception. Discussing particular passions, he demonstrates a pattern of self-righteous rationalizing that, I argue, constitutes the tragic aspect of impassioned self-deception. This pattern remains widespread today.

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<sup>3</sup> Allen Wood 2014, 143–150 and 1999, 253–270, is an exception, yet he is most concerned with a different question, namely Kant's distinction between natural and social passions.

## Passion and self-deception

For Kant, passions are a special kind of inclination, namely 'lasting inclinations' that readily 'enter into kinship with vice' (MS 6:408). They are directed toward empirical ends and rest on lasting maxims, i.e. on subjective principles of the form: to achieve end E, I perform, in situations of type S, actions of type A. As maxim-based inclinations, they are 'always connected with [...] reason' (Ant 7:266); the use made of reason in the service of the passions, however, defies the principles of practical reason (Ant 7:267) and is therefore unreasonable in three respects.

Kant conceives of passions as inclinations so strongly overvalued that the agent places them above other reasons to act. This one-sided fixation on a given passion leads, first, to neglecting other interests and needs. Impassioned people are entirely focused on the end of their passion and become 'blind' for other ends they have or ought to have (Ant 7:266). They follow their passion without 'comparing it with the sum of all [their] inclinations' (Ant 7:265). They thereby violate the regulative principle of prudential reason that enjoins them to assess and balance their inclinations in such a way that, taken together, they promote one's own happiness in the best possible way.

Second, as we can gather from Kant's discussion of the mania for honour, fixation on one's passion can become so extreme that impassioned people even fail to attain the immediate end of their passion. Those who unduly strive for glory run the risk of making fools of themselves and of earning not glory but ridicule. They also, Kant says, incur the danger that others recognize their thirst for glory as a weakness they can in turn exploit for their own ends. Accordingly, at least certain passions can lead to instrumental irrationality: it is precisely through their passion that impassioned people can prevent themselves from recognizing and doing what is necessary to further the end of their passion.

Since Kant thinks that promoting one's own happiness, within the bounds of what is morally permissible, is an indirect duty (because dissatisfaction may entice us to engage in immoral acts), the prudential problem of the passions also has moral relevance.<sup>4</sup> The most important

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<sup>4</sup> The idea that promoting or at least not neglecting one's own happiness is an indirect duty (MS 6:388) may seem strange. It is entirely plausible, however, that a lack of contentment becomes morally relevant when, for instance, it leads to envy and unfairness or when it has become so strong as to restrict our ability to think and act autonomously. Kant in this context is especially concerned with preserving autonomy and moral integrity.

problems the passions pose in his view, however, are the moral and the moral-psychological ones that reciprocally influence each other. For Kant, we are duty-bound to make following the moral law the invariable condition of all our decisions to act. That means that we may follow our inclinations only so long as they are morally permissible and that, should a conflict arise, we must always decide in favour of what morality demands. The acquisition of a morally good character, in Kant's view, presupposes a fundamental decision in favour of the moral law's priority over all maxims of self-love. In *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant presupposes a hierarchy of maxims. Maxims are adopted for specific reasons, and these reasons themselves take the form of maxims (R 6:20). According to Kant, then, every maxim is based on a superordinate maxim, all the way to a highest, general maxim. This 'supreme subjective ground' of all maxims (R 6:32) holistically reflects our attitude toward the moral law and determines the moral quality of our character.

For Kant, there are only two possibilities. Either, out of respect for the moral law, I make observing the moral law the invariant condition of all my actions, in which case the moral law has priority over self-love in my highest maxim and my character is morally good. Or I do *not* make observing the moral law the invariant condition of all my actions, in which case self-love has priority over the moral law in my highest maxim and my character is 'evil' (R 6:32, 36).<sup>5</sup> An evil character is thus defined in purely negative terms by a lack of conscious and invariable commitment to the priority of the moral law. For Kant, in fact, no human being ever '*sanctions* the evil in himself, and so there is actually no malice from principles; but only from the forsaking of them' (Ant 7:293–94).

The formation of a moral character, according to Kant, is a demanding and never-ending task. For the moral law has exceptionless priority over self-love in my highest maxim only if I indeed do not allow myself in any situation to act according to immoral maxims. The decision to make the moral law the invariant condition of all actions is necessary but not sufficient for acquiring a morally good character. It distinguishes a person as 'a subject receptive to the good', yet it is only in a sustained effort at leading one's life accordingly, 'only in incessant

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How content we are, however, of course depends not only on ourselves but also on external factors we cannot control (as Kant, too, would admit).

<sup>5</sup> Within this binary conception of character, Kant distinguishes three grades of evil: frailty, impurity, and depravity (R 6:29). On the relationship between maxims and character, see Timmermann 2003, 145–188.

labouring and becoming', that one becomes a better person (R 6:48, 51). The impassioned person is characterized by making the opposite decision: in allowing one (or more)<sup>6</sup> of her inclinations to turn into a passion, she does not subordinate these inclinations to the moral law but posits them as more important. She thus violates the mandatory hierarchy of incentives in her highest maxim and thereby violates her moral duty.

Entirely in keeping with Kant's negative definition of an 'evil' character, giving priority to passion does not imply a fully conscious decision against the moral law. Instead, as I will argue in the next section, it can lead to an inner conflict the impassioned person seeks to resolve by pretending to herself that her passion can be reconciled with the moral law. Passions are 'evil' because they go hand in hand with a 'propensity to pervert the incentives in the maxims of our power of choice' (R 6:50, cf. 6:93-94). For Kant, even impassioned beneficence is, 'according to form[,] [...] morally reprehensible' because, like all passions, it is based on a perverted prioritization of one's incentives to act (Ant 7:267).<sup>7</sup>

Given Kant's view of passions, their condemnation necessarily follows from his conception of what constitutes a morally good character. Kant, however, does not leave it at this abstract account of the relationship between passion and moral character. His reprobation of the passions has a moral-psychological dimension that cannot be deduced directly from his conception of morality. He articulates this dimension with reference to subtle psychological mechanisms whose concrete functioning becomes clear only in his presentation of particular passions.

Before I turn to the latter, I would like to show that these mechanisms can be seen as an attempt to cover up an inner conflict. According to Kant, passions entail a loss of inner freedom and self-control for which we are ourselves responsible (Ant 7:267; CPJ 5:272). Even if he speaks of addiction, disease, madness, chains, and slavery and says that the passions

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<sup>6</sup> Even if Kant does not explicitly address the point, it does seem possible and realistic that one person has several passions that may conflict and vie for priority.

<sup>7</sup> This clearly goes too far. For even if, for example, someone is more obtrusive than helpful in taking care of others to the point of self-denial, this impassioned benevolence surely is less problematic than a mania for honour or possession would be. The addition 'according to form' might be read as a restriction, but it seems too weak to capture the moral difference between a passion for benevolence and mania for honour or possession adequately. At best, it could be said in defence of Kant's judgement here that a passion for benevolence, too, poses a threat to the autonomy of the person in question. After all, it also entails a one-sided fixation on a particular inclination.

tend to be incurable (Ant 7:253, 265, 266, 267, 274, 275), that does not mean that we are innocent victims of our passions. On the contrary, Kant presents this slavery as an auto-enslavement, and holds 'the sick person' accountable for the incurability of her disease as well: 'Passions are cancerous sores for pure practical reason, and for the most part they are incurable because the sick person does not want to be cured and flees from the dominion of principles, by which alone a cure could occur.' (Ant 7:266) Similarly, we read two paragraphs earlier that 'passion is an illness that abhors all medicine, and it is therefore far worse than all those transitory emotions that at least stir up the resolution to be better; instead, passion is an enchantment that also refuses recuperation' (Ant 7:266).<sup>8</sup>

Kant then goes on to make the remarkable claim that impassioned people are unhappy not only because they fail to meet the holistic demand of prudential reason but also because they disregard the demands of *moral* reason, a disregard that leads to persistent inner conflict:

Affect does a momentary damage to freedom and dominion over oneself. Passion abandons them and finds its pleasure and satisfaction in a slavish mind. But because reason still does not ease off with its summons to inner freedom, the unhappy man groans in his chains, which he nevertheless cannot break away from because they have already grown together with his limbs, so to speak. (Ant 7:267)

The cause for unhappiness here is an inner conflict between the 'chains' of passion and an unremitting 'summons to inner freedom' issued by reason; inner freedom consists in a strength to actually exercise our capacity for moral self-determination and to implement moral demands even when we have opposing desires (MS 6:405). The subject, however, is

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<sup>8</sup> Yet does a moral responsibility for a loss of freedom not presuppose freedom? How can we both be 'slaves' to our passion and be responsible for this slavery? To understand the simultaneity of responsibility and loss of freedom we must remember that Kant conceives of the loss of freedom as the consequence of a free decision. Passions are based on freely chosen and evaluated maxims such that the loss of freedom is a freely chosen loss for which we are entirely responsible, with all its consequences, even if we are hardly capable of controlling them. Even if, as Kant thinks, life in a community is conducive to the development of passions (R 6:93–94), no one can force us to give priority to particular inclinations. According to Kant, it is our obligation to verify whether we have inclinations that tend toward turning into passions and, as the case may be, to counteract such tendencies. If we fail to do so, we have, to stick with Kant's metaphor, 'enslaved', put ourselves in the 'chains' of passion.

hardly capable of answering this summons, given that the chains 'have already grown together with his limbs'. How are we to understand this conflict?

Kant thinks that no one can ignore the moral law. No 'human being (even the worst) [...] repudiate[s] the moral law, whatever his maxims, in rebellious attitude (by revoking obedience to it). The law rather imposes itself on him irresistibly, because of his moral predisposition' (R 6:36, cf. MS 6:438). According to Kant, every human being feels respect for the moral law,<sup>9</sup> and no one can permanently ignore the calls of conscience. For impassioned people, however, this is precisely what becomes problematic because their respect for the moral law competes with their passion's claim to priority. So long as they are unwilling to give up the latter claim – which would imply fundamental changes in their lives – reason's persistent summons inevitably leads to a profound inner conflict between the moral demand for self-control, which is acknowledged to be justified, and the opposing demand of passion. They are painfully aware of the discrepancy between moral duty and their way of living. This is a powerful psychological incitement to deceive themselves, that is, to make their passion seem morally justified – to others but above all to themselves. 'Rationalizing' (Ant 7:265) allows them to make it seem as if the irreconcilability of passion and moral duty had been overcome and to present the immoral maxim of passion as morally justified.

In a much-cited passage from the *Groundwork* in which he talks about inclinations generally, not about passions in the narrow sense, Kant defines 'rationalizing' as an attempt at casting doubt on the validity or the purity and strictness of moral duties in favour of needs and inclinations:

The human being feels within himself a powerful counterweight to all the commands of duty, which reason represents to him as so deserving of the highest respect – the counterweight of his needs and inclinations, the entire satisfaction of which he sums up under the name happiness. Now reason issues its precepts unremittingly [...]. But from this there arises a natural dialectic, that is, a propensity to rationalize against those

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<sup>9</sup> Formosa 2009, 197, argues that Kant denies the possibility of an 'evil reason' and a diabolic disposition in humans but not the possibility of violating duty for violation's sake ('diabolic perversity'): 'the moral law which one respects can also directly motivate, in at least some individuals, the desire to break the law for its own sake [...]. All that Kant needs to maintain is that even such a perverse person must, at some level, also feel respect for the law and must be able to act morally for the sake of that law.'

strict laws of duty and to cast doubt upon their validity, or at least upon their purity and strictness, and, where possible, to make them better suited to our wishes and inclinations. (G 4:405)

Rationalizing is thus an attempt to make moral duties compatible with opposing needs and inclinations. According to this passage, the agent rationalizes *against* the strict laws of duty in order to reconcile them with their 'counterweight'. By questioning their validity, purity, or strictness she makes moral duties seem weaker than they actually are; she devalues duty. Kant, moreover, develops a second model of rationalizing with regard to the passions in the *Anthropology*. The function of rationalizing – reconciling moral duties with a powerful counterweight – remains the same. But I shall argue that in Kant's presentation of particular passions, rationalizing serves this function not by *devaluing duty* but rather by *revaluing and elevating passion*: the attempt at reconciling the demands of moral-practical reason with the demands of a given passion does not seek to play down the obligatory nature of moral duties or to cast doubt on their 'purity and strictness'. Instead, it starts from the passions: the impassioned person does not alter her conception of morality but the perception of her passion. Rationalizing here means to provide the demands of passion with an underlying narrative that makes them seem morally justified – Kant speaks of an achievement of fantasy that makes use of certain analogies between a given passion and a vaguely corresponding concept of reason (Ant 7:269, 270, 275). An analysis of Kant's presentation of particular passions extends and refines our understanding of his conception of rationalizing. Rationalizing can either serve to devaluing duty (this is what Kant describes in the *Groundwork*) or it can serve to revalue the 'counterweight', which is what I see Kant as arguing in the discussion of particular passions in the *Anthropology*. (In addition, rationalizing can also serve to make the demands of reason seem merely prudentially justified. In this case, it does not produce an apparent conciliation with the binding principles of moral-practical reason but at least an apparent conciliation with the advice of prudential reason.) What morally revaluing means as opposed to a devaluing and a distancing from morality may be illustrated by the example of abusive relationships in which the perpetrators justify their controlling, patronizing or even violent behaviour to themselves as care and protection.

Generally, rationalizing a passion serves the impassioned person to understand herself as a moral (or at least prudential) person without having to reassess her passion accordingly. It aims at deceiving oneself about the irreconcilability of passion and moral duty. Yet the more successful it is, the more the passion consolidates, since it becomes harder and harder to recognize it for what it is according to Kant: a grossly overvalued inclination that prevents the consideration of practical reasons. Once rationalized, a passion, Kant says, 'is often violent to the point of madness' (Ant 7:271). He understands madness (*Wahnsinn*) as a habitual form of delusion (*Wahn*) which he defines as 'the inner practical illusion of taking what is subjective in the motivating cause for objective' (Ant 7:274). Madness thus is the persistent illusion that a merely subjective motive – some empirical end – is morally justified and thus represents an objective reason. It is this persistent, distorted conception of one's motives – not the immediate attractiveness of the impassionedly desired object or state of affairs – that accounts for the tendency of passions to be 'incurable'.

The fact that the 'summons' of reason to inner freedom does not cease acts as a corrective to self-deception, but it can also be counterproductive and reinforce the tendency toward rationalizing. Its repeated occurrence prevents the self-deception from ever becoming so comprehensive as to render 'the enchanted human being' incapable of seeing 'the reasons against his favourite inclination' (MH 2:261). According to Kant, the inner conflict between passion and moral duty can be covered up and temporarily repressed, but it can never be completely deleted from consciousness. When a passion is very pronounced, however, it is unlikely that the moments when the inner conflict is perceived or at least suspected become occasions for gaining rational control over the 'favourite inclination' and make the necessary changes in one's life. There is a danger, rather, that the unpleasant, more or less conscious insight into fundamental inconsistencies of one's way of life (which is possibly connected with the no less unpleasant, more or less conscious insight that one has been deceiving oneself for quite some time) even reinforces the tendency to rationalize and thus serves to consolidate the passion in question. So long as the inner conflict between passion and moral duty remains unsolved and is merely covered up by means of rationalizations, it will time and again give

rise to new rationalizations and thus perpetuate the problem.<sup>10</sup> The act of rationalizing self-deception plays a major role in the emergence and consolidation of passions. Passions thus are 'morally reprehensible' and 'evil' (Ant 7:267) not simply because they violate the mandatory hierarchy of incentives to act but also because they favour self-deception and moreover prevent a correction of one's misguided hierarchy.

According to Kant, not only passions but other forms of evil, too, combine with self-deception (at R 6:42, for example he discusses a variant of evil that seems to require the propensity to rationalize *against* the laws of duty such as he describes it at G 4:405). There is no consensus in the literature on whether self-deception is a necessary condition of evil.<sup>11</sup> I leave this question open – addressing it would far exceed the scope of this essay – and concentrate on the particularities of impassioned self-deception. My analysis of particular passions seeks to present a specific and, I think, particularly interesting form of self-deception that can help us better understand how evil is possible according to Kant. This form differs from the self-deceiving devaluing of moral duty that, according to Kant, characterises other forms of evil. The impassioned person neither seeks 'to evade responsibility' (Allison 1996, 179) nor 'to minimize the categorical force of moral reasons' (Grenberg 2010, 165). Rather, she acknowledges both but does so in a self-deceiving way. Because she is unwilling to act in accordance with her own moral convictions, she tries to revalue her behaviour by an analogy-based rationalizing. This difference is important because 'evil' here does not consist in a (partial) distancing from the categorical demands of morality. Rather, it consists in self-righteousness or in the attempt at maintaining a specific moral image of oneself without having to conform to it in practice.

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<sup>10</sup> Today's debates focus mainly on the question of whether self-deception can be thought without contradiction (for an overview, see Deweese-Boyd 2016). Kant raises this question as well but primarily takes a practical approach to the subject and never queries 'that man is actually guilty of many inner lies' (MS 6:430).

<sup>11</sup> Henry Allison 1996, 179, Jeanine Grenberg 2010, 162–165, Andrews Reath 1989, 298–299, and probably also Matthew Caswell (who calls self-deception 'evil's hallmark', 2006, 645) conceive of self-deception as a necessary condition of evil. Formosa 2009, 197 and Wood 2010, 156 by contrast allow for the possibility that evil occurs without self-deception. Laura Papish 2018, 87–115 offers a detailed and instructive discussion of the various positions. She concludes that self-deception is a necessary condition of an evil disposition and helps us understand how such a disposition develops and consolidates.

## Particular passions

The psychological conflict presented above and the inconsistent strategies of dealing with it explain why Kant, marking a difference with the Stoics, argues that the true 'enemy' of the formation of a moral character is not to be sought out in the sensible nature of the human being but rather 'hides behind reason' and is, therefore, 'all the more dangerous' (R 6:57). Kant's condemnation of the passions is not a condemnation of what is sensible about them because '[t]he senses do not deceive. This proposition is the rejection of the most important but also, on careful consideration, the emptiest reproach made against the senses' (Ant 7:146). He condemns the passions because they operate in a self-deceptive, hidden way (Ant 7:252); the impassioned person prevents herself from attaining the moral self-knowledge that he considers to be the highest duty we have toward ourselves and the indispensable condition for forming a moral character (MS 6:441).

But what does the 'enemy behind reason' look like concretely? How do the psychological mechanisms of impassioned self-deception function? Kant's detailed discussion of particular passions tells us that impassioned people endow their passion with the 'appearance of reason' (Ant 7:270) by relying on certain analogies between their passion and moral or prudential reasons to act: between a subjective inclination toward freedom and the moral concept of freedom, between a desire for revenge and a desire for justice, between the impassioned effort to manipulate others to serve one's own end (which is manifest as a mania for possession, domination, or honour) and the general principle of prudential reason (Ant 7:268–274). It is these concrete depictions that turn Kant's general repudiation of the passions into a well-founded anthropological conception that details the social and psychological conditions for the emergence of passions, the different forms they take, and the strategies employed for justifying them.

In what follows, I analyse Kant's presentations of freedom as passion and mania for honour to show how the procedure of an analogy-based rationalizing and elevation of passion works. For reasons of space, I refrain from demonstrating the same procedure in Kant's depictions of the manias for domination and revenge. Instead, I contrast the analysis of freedom as passion and mania for honour with Kant's surprising presentations of two other passions: the first is Kant's depiction of the mania for possession, a depiction that *ex negativo* points to the importance of rationalizing for his condemnation of the passions. The second is delusion,

which Kant presents as an independent passion, but which, I suggest, is more in line with his general conception of the passions if we conceive of it as the strongest manifestation of passion.

### ***Freedom as passion***

Kant distinguishes between two kinds of passions. Passions are either excessive forms of natural or inborn inclinations or excessive forms of acquired inclinations, which are socially induced and represent the flipside of human culture (Ant 7:267). As an example of the first kind I will discuss the passion for freedom, which is particularly conducive to retracing the process of analogy-based rationalizing.

For Kant, the passion for freedom is the most violent of the natural passions. It rests on a claim to freedom' that is not based on practical reason but arises from a sensible 'representation' of external freedom, an inborn 'impulse' to become independent from external constraints and obstacles (Ant 7:268 & footnote). For Kant, new-born children already have such a natural desire for freedom: they experience their physical dependence as a constraint and 'enter the world with loud cries' only to express their natural claim to freedom (Ant 7:268, cf. 7:327n). This claim to freedom conflicts with the unavoidable social dependencies of human life. New-born children depend on the care of others, and in social communities no one can 'avoid making reciprocal claims on others' (Ant 7:268).

In societies without a system of positive laws whose authority protects external civil rights and liberties, Kant sees individuals exposed to the danger of arbitrary transgressions and, not unlike Hobbes, to a 'state of continuous warfare'. For him, anyone who involuntarily finds himself in a relationship of dependency with others 'rightly feels that he is unhappy' (Ant 7:268). Yet the claim to not being subjected to arbitrary constraints is justified not by the inborn 'impulse' toward freedom but by pure practical reason. It is justified only as a general claim that obtains for all human beings equally. That means, however, that to secure the external freedom of the individual is simultaneously to limit that freedom: the valid claim to protection from having one's *own* external rights and liberties violated goes hand in hand with the obligation not to violate the external rights and liberties of *others*. One's own claim to freedom may not be used to limit the rights and liberties of others, as is the case if the fear of arbitrary violence is used as a pretext for oneself exercising arbitrary violence and subjecting

others. Following Kant, the fear of being dominated by others easily turns into an offensive, impassioned readiness to use force (Ant 7:327).

The example of the passion for freedom makes it possible to show how rationalizing leads to a particularly violent form of passion:

Thus it is not only the concept of freedom under moral laws that arouses an affect, which is called enthusiasm, but the mere sensible representation of outer freedom heightens the inclination to persist in it or to extend it into a violent passion, *by analogy with the concept of right*. (Ant 7:269, my emphasis)

As regards their normative status, the inclination toward freedom and the concept of freedom are fundamentally different: as a concept of reason, the moral concept of freedom includes all human beings and justifies moral demands. The inborn representation of external freedom and the inclination toward freedom based on it, on the contrary, are directed merely toward one's own external freedom (or that of the group one belongs to); that is why they cannot warrant moral claims. Nonetheless, Kant evidently sees a certain resemblance between the two: the sensible representation of external freedom is 'analogous' to the concept of reason of freedom, even if it does not amount to much more than a merely instinctive sense of right and wrong, 'an obscure idea [...] of freedom' (Ant 7:268n).

As we can see in the passage cited above, what turns the inclination toward freedom into a violent passion is not the sensible representation of external freedom as such. It becomes a violent passion only 'by analogy with the concept of right'. The analogy evidently participates in the development of the passion. We may think of this process like this: impassioned people use the (alleged) similarity between the subjective inclination toward freedom and the objective concept of reason to confer the normative status of the latter onto the former in an act of rationalizing. As a result, they revalue their subjective inclination toward freedom and, at some level, believe it to have the same moral significance as the objective concept of freedom. They are, however, only concerned with their *own* freedom (the analogy is pushed only as far as required by the impassionedly pursued ends), and this, precisely, is what makes their passion so violent and dangerous. They believe themselves entitled to satisfy their desire for external freedom without heeding anyone else's interest and even to employ force, if needed.

The problematic alignment of subjective inclination toward freedom and objective concept of reason demonstrates how impassioned people rationalize: they are not concerned with devaluing moral duties but rather with revaluing their passion. The validity and strictness of moral duties is not put into question. Instead, a subjective inclination is apparently elevated in being normatively equated with an analogue objective concept.

There is a remarkable point to this analogy-based rationalizing: the passion for freedom is 'natural' insofar as it is based on an inborn 'impulse', yet it only becomes a 'violent passion' when the impassioned person has an objective concept of freedom and, by taking recourse to this concept, revalues and elevates the passion. Analogy-based rationalizing reveals itself to be quite sophisticated. It presupposes differentiated rational skills and requires some effort: contrary evidence must be ignored or explained away, and even the slightest hints are inflated to support one's own point of view. The danger thus arises that in the long run, rationalizing leads to more comprehensive cognitive distortions.<sup>12</sup> Kant himself does not explicitly point out this danger. As I shall show, however, his description of delusion as passion can be interpreted as a warning against expanding self-deception.

### ***Mania for honour***

Paradigmatic examples of the 'social passions', for Kant, are passions of power that aim at manipulating others at will. To illustrate them, he discusses the 'unholy trinity' (Hirschman 1977, 20) of the manias for honour, domination, and possession, which had been central to the debate about the passions for centuries. On this view, it is above all '*honour, authority, and money*' (Ant 7:271) that give us power over others and allow us to control them as we please.

By mania for honour (*Ehrsucht*), which he also calls arrogance, Kant means a base form of thirst for honour. Those it affects want 'to be always *on top*' (MS 6:465). They are condescending toward others and demand of them, by comparison with the arrogant, to think little of themselves (Ant 7:272, 203). The mania for honour is to be distinguished from

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<sup>12</sup> In the ongoing debate about possible positive effects of self-deception, Neil Van Leeuwen 2009, 123–124, emphasizes that self-deception is not a clearly delimited phenomenon but rather one that 'undermines knowledge beyond the specific proposition about which one is self-deceived'.

moderate, morally permissible variants of thirst for honour such as the need to be loved by others (Ant 7:266). Above all, however, it is to be distinguished from love of honour or noble pride, 'an esteem that the human being is permitted to expect from others because of his inner (moral) worth' (Ant 7:272, cf. MS 6:465).

Implied in Kant's elaborations on mania for honour is that this mania offers a double starting point for morally elevating it by rationalizing (Ant 7:272–73). In the first instance, a certain analogy allows for morally elevating mania for honour by equating it with love of honour. Both love of honour and mania for honour are based on a claim to being appreciated. The analogy, however, overlooks that this claim is expressed in entirely different ways. Those with a mania for honour lay claim to an appreciation that *distinguishes* them from others. Their mania can be satisfied only by forms of acknowledgment that (most) others do not enjoy. It aims for distinction and high social status. In contrast to mania for honour, love of honour in Kant refers to a kind of appreciation that every human being as a rational being may expect from others, one that does not lead to rivalries. Unlike mania for honour, love of honour is not competitive. Instead, it is based on the egalitarian claim to treat all human beings, because of their inner moral worth, with equal respect. Mania for honour on the contrary demands an appreciation that disparages others and thus violates the duty toward them that consists in not treating them as 'mere means' for satisfying one's passion. According to Kant, it also violates a duty toward oneself: by renouncing inner freedom, mania for honour entails instrumentalizing one's own person for the purpose of satisfying the passion, which amounts to debasing oneself, to treating oneself 'merely as a means' (G 4:429).<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, this leads to the absurd situation that the impassioned desire for excessive appreciation pushes those maniacally seeking honour to debase themselves.

Moreover, and this is the second way of rationalizing, they may refer to special talents or merits to back up their demand for special appreciation and to justify it to themselves. This, too, is rationalizing, for no talent and no merit can in fact legitimate the debasement of others.

From the moral perspective, then, the elevating rationalization and consolidation of the mania for honour poses such a problem because it leads to debasing oneself and others to

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<sup>33</sup> The problem of instrumentalization arises not only in the case of the mania for honour but for all passions.

mere instruments of one's passion. From the prudential perspective, mania for honour, like all passions, leads to neglecting all other needs and thereby prevents a prudential pursuit of one's own happiness.

Interestingly, Kant also criticizes the mania for honour as instrumentally irrational. He claims that it is structurally set up even to undermine its own end:

Arrogance is an inappropriate desire for honour that acts contrary to its own end, and cannot be regarded as an intentional means of using other human beings (whom it repels) for one's ends; rather the arrogant man is an instrument of rogues, and is called a fool. (Ant 7:272-73)

In Kant's model, the more violently the passion is pursued, the more surely it will fail to attain the hoped for appreciation, which is supposed to allow for using others to serve one's own interests: the greater the disparagement of others, the more strongly it repels them (MS 6:466, Ant 7:262). Accordingly, not only is there no appreciation, its opposite emerges. The disparagement of others implied in someone's mania for honour is insulting and 'provokes others to undermine his self-conceit in every possible way, to torment him, and to expose him to ridicule because of his offensive foolishness' (Ant 7:203). The 'arrogant man' is thus presented by Kant not only as a 'fool' who seems ridiculous to others and therefore earns only mockery and scorn but also as a 'buffoon' who, in his foolishness, insults them and thereby incurs their hatred (Ant 7:210-11). As a consequence, his superordinate concern with using others to his own ends is frustrated and even inverted: he makes himself the 'instrument of rogues' who flatter his desire for honour and thereby reinforce his dependence on the opinion of others. In other words, it is 'by means of this passion' that they gain 'control over the fool' (Ant 7:272) and are able to manipulate *his* inclinations to serve *their* ends.

### ***Mania for possession***

According to Kant, mania for possession (*Habsucht*) immediately aims at an excessive accumulation of money and mediately it also aims, like the mania for honour, at influencing others at will. Yet he does assign it a special status insofar as the desire for wealth quickly transforms into an end in itself that consumes all the attention of those stricken with it – even leading to 'the renunciation [...] to make any use' of the wealth accumulated. At the same

time, even unexploited wealth confers a power that seems to surpass all other forms of power (Ant 7:274). Thanks to their independence and the variety of their options, the rich are admired by others with humility because '[e]verything that human forces can produce may be had for money' (V-Mo/Collins 27:398).

Kant provides a psychological explanation for money's becoming an end in itself and for the immense attraction it exercises. He conceives of it as an illusory pleasure taken in unexploited opportunities for enjoyment: the rich

nourish themselves on the thought of the enjoyment they have in their power; they all go about in fine clothes, ride in a carriage with six horses, and eat twelve-course dinners every day; but all this in thought, merely [...]. Possession of the wherewithal serves them in place of the real possession of all pleasures; by merely having the means thereto, they can enjoy these pleasures and also forgo them. (V-Mo/Collins 27:400)

It is precisely limiting oneself to a merely possible enjoyment that seems permanently to guarantee this enjoyment. We find this idea a hundred years later in *The Philosophy of Money* by Georg Simmel, who accounts for it by defining money as 'a thing absolutely lacking in qualities'. The accumulation of money overcomes the infamous discrepancy between wish and fulfilment because money one does not spend 'cannot, as can even the most pitiful object, conceal within itself any surprises or disappointments' (Simmel 2004, 245). Kant, too, stresses money's lack of quality when he writes that it gives us the greatest pleasure when it is *not* used since in that case it seems to offer infinite possibilities for using it. Since for Kant we tend to understand this possibility not 'disjunctively' but 'collectively' and thus succumb to the error of thinking we could buy *everything*, we experience every concrete expense as a limitation of our possibilities and thus as a loss (V-Mo/Collins 27:403).

Unlike the mania for honour, the mania for possession is not imprudent for provoking resistance. On the contrary, Kant writes with reference to Alexander Pope, even usurers are admired (Ant 7:274n). This admiration not only heightens the power of those excessively striving for possession but also renders it more secure than the power of those excessively striving for honour. Of course they, too, are in danger of failing to attain their end when others manage to use their interest for their own ends (Ant 7:272), but given the general admiration, they attract less rancour than if they sought honour. Yet although they may thus achieve their

mediate end of influencing others, as may be expected, they, too, like every impassioned person, ignore the holistic principle of prudential reason. In their fixation on money they make 'part of [their] end the whole' (Ant 7:266). In so doing they neglect all other needs and neglect them all the more drastically the more avaricious they are.

That is why it comes as a surprise that Kant's moral judgement of the mania for possession turns out to be ambivalent and, in part, rather lenient. Whereas in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, we read that the mania for possession violates the duty of beneficence toward others and, in the case of extreme avarice, the duty of meeting one's own fundamental needs as well (MS 6:432),<sup>14</sup> Kant writes in a perplexing passage of the *Anthropology*:

This passion is, *if not always morally reprehensible*, completely banal, cultivated merely mechanically, and is attached especially to old people (as a substitute for their natural incapacity). On account of the great influence of this universal means of exchange it has also secured the name of a faculty purely and simply, and it is a passion such that, once it has set in, no modification is possible. And if the first of the three passions makes one hated, the second makes one feared, and the third makes one despised. (Ant 7:274, my emphasis)

What prompts Kant to suggest that the one passion that for centuries had counted as 'the deadliest Deadly Sin' (Hirschman 1977: 41) might be 'not always morally reprehensible'?<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, the name for the avaricious version is not mania for possession but 'miserly avarice', which Kant distinguishes from 'greedy avarice'. Miserly avarice aims at procuring all means for living well in order to possess them (wealth as an end itself). Greedy avarice, on the contrary, seeks to procure all means of living well in order to derive the greatest possible enjoyment from them ('prodigality'). In the *Anthropology*, Kant passes over this difference and evidently sees in both kinds of avarice versions of the mania of possession (Ant 6:432).

<sup>15</sup> In the English translation the phrase 'if not always morally reprehensible' can also be read subjunctively: even if mania for possession were not always morally reprehensible, it would have to be criticised, from an aesthetic point of view, as banal when in fact it is also objectionable from a moral point of view. For the German original, this ambivalence seems less plausible. With the phrase '[d]iese ganz geistlose, wenn gleich nicht immer moralisch verwerfliche [...] Leidenschaft' (my emphasis), Kant suggests that mania for possession is not always morally reprehensible. 'Even though', or 'although' might render the meaning of the conjunction 'wenn gleich' more appropriately. But even without this problem of translation, the subjunctive reading, too, raises the question why Kant is ambivalent about the mania for possession at all. Moreover, the moral assessment is more important for Kant than the aesthetic assessment. A negative aesthetic assessment would be relevant only if the moral assessment were not secure. Finally, it is worth noting that although Kant warns that mania for possession exposes one to manipulation (Ant 7:272) and makes one worthy of moral contempt (Ant 7:274n), he

Kant articulates the idea in a strikingly delicate way. Yet even if mania for possession is a morally acceptable passion only under certain conditions, this blatantly contradicts not only the tradition but fundamental theses of Kant's own conception of the passions as well. After all, for Kant even beneficent inclinations are 'evil' once they become passions (Ant 7:267). Why should the very passion that gives the greatest power to manipulate others be morally acceptable under certain conditions? Kant's claim that mania for possession is 'completely banal' and 'cultivated merely mechanically' hardly provides a convincing reason. Since like all passions, this mania presupposes a maxim (Ant 7: 266, MS 6:432), 'banal' and 'mechanically' cannot mean that the avaricious person is determined by her inclination without so much as unconsciously making it her maxim to follow this inclination.<sup>16</sup> For without such a maxim, mania for possession would not be a passion at all but an habitual, externally determined compulsion that is not morally reprehensible only because it cannot be morally imputed to the avaricious person. It is thus more likely that Kant's talk of a banal and mechanically cultivated *passion* implies that the passion is pursued without wasting too much ingenuity on figuring out which means are best suited to increase one's wealth (e.g. an astute use of one's power over others) and, it would seem, without strong and sophisticated rationalizing, since the ability 'to obscure things is an art practiced by clever fellows' (V-A/Pillau 25:737, my translation).

It is remarkable that Kant does not explicitly designate any rational analogue on which to base a supposed prudential or, more importantly, moral legitimation. This may be taken to indicate that in his conception, the need for justification is less pressing in the case of mania for possession than in those of mania for honour or passion for freedom. (Such a claim is of course contestable from a systematic perspective, which is why in what follows I offer a historical explanation.) He seems to imagine the avaricious person as a dull and boring pedant who, in contrast to other impassioned people, hardly makes any effort to morally revalue and elevate his passion through analogy-based rationalizing and to secure it against possible

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overall presents it as more harmless than the other passions. Given the unequivocally negative moral judgement passed even on a passion for benevolence, this presentation alone is surprising and requires explanation.

<sup>16</sup> Not all maxims are chosen consciously, which is why the active voice of 'to make something one's maxims' here only means that maxims are not forced on us by our sensible nature; and that, according to Kant, is the condition on which we can be held accountable for our actions at all (see Timmermann 2003, 155).

objections.<sup>17</sup> Kant's – comparatively lenient – assessment of the mania for possession goes hand in hand with a curious dismissal. It is in downright mocking tones that he describes the mania for possession as a passion of old age aiming to compensate for natural inabilities (Ant 7:274). In this description, too, he is playing down one of the passions with the most far-reaching social effects.

Kant's tendency, despite the assertion that money confers the greatest power, to think of mania for possession as less pernicious than the other two passions of power – the manias for honour and domination – may be surprising from the perspective of today's philosophical economic critiques but it fits in perfectly with an ideological transformation of his own time. In his brilliant study, *The Passions and the Interests*, Albert O. Hirschman traces the transvaluation of mania for possession, or avarice, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a process in which it is conceptually upgraded as well. Whereas it was considered in the Middle Ages to be the worst of all passions, avarice turns into a tolerated, eventually an approved 'interest' (Hirschman 1977, 31–63). In this transformation, the idea that the desire for wealth is 'calm' and 'calculating' plays a decisive role, for it is 'supposed to repress certain human drives and proclivities and to fashion a less multifaceted, less unpredictable, and more 'one-dimensional' human personality'. According to Hirschman, contemporary worries about the destructive powers of the passions admitted only one exception: the 'exception, so it seemed at the time, of "innocuous" avarice' (Hirschman 1977, 132; cf. 63–66). All of a sudden, the radical revaluation as a (comparably) harmless interest allowed for seeing in what had for centuries been a condemned and despised passion a useful means for fighting and curbing other passions such as the lust for power or honour. It could thus be credited as

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<sup>17</sup> In fact, the perception of those with a mania for possession, too, is distorted when they wilfully make 'part of [their] end the whole' (Ant 7:266) and suppose that money not only has instrumental value but is an end in itself that is more valuable than everything else or even the only value. Idealizing money as the highest or even the only value, however, would not amount to a moral revaluing and elevation but to a devaluing and distancing of moral demands as Kant describes them at G 4:405. According to Kant, all impassioned persons de facto grant priority to their passion. Nonetheless, as I have argued, the examples of the mania for honour and passion for freedom allow for discerning a pattern of rationalizing by means of which impassioned people indeed try to avoid admitting to themselves that they have adopted a hierarchy of incentives that by their own standards is wrong. Morally elevating mania for honour and passion for freedom via a loose analogy with the justified demands for freedom and appreciation serves to keep up moral appearances, that is, to appear to grant priority to the moral law. The claim that money is the highest or even the only value would, on the contrary, imply a clear denial of the priority of the moral law.

beneficial not only on the individual level but with respect to societal developments as well (Hirschman 1977, 40–42, 70–87).

Hirschman in his reflections does not make the connection with Kant.<sup>18</sup> It is all the more astonishing, then, how well his account is applicable to and confirmed by Kant's position, often down to details: Kant's avaricious pedant, too, has a less multifaceted, less unpredictable, and rather one-dimensional personality. Moreover, Kant explicitly speaks of 'interest' in the context of the mania for possession (Ant 7:272). There is even a hint at the notion that it might neutralize other passions: money 'contains a power that people believe satisfactorily replaces the lack of every other power' (Ant 7:274). Mania for possession thus might very well counterbalance the two other passions of power, the manias for honour and domination. This does not suffice, however, for Kant to call it a useful passion. He explicitly repudiates a positive view of the passions (Ant 7:267). And yet his conception of the mania for possession undeniable bears traces of the general tendency, identified by Hirschman, of playing avarice down, a tendency that seems to be responsible for the uneasy coexistence of condemnation and leniency in Kant's moral evaluation of the mania for possession.

It seems no coincidence that Kant minimizes mania for possession as a 'banal' and 'mechanical' passion and at the same time does not say what its moral rationalization might look like. Not trying to make one's passion seem moral does not render it unproblematic but it avoids what Kant considers the great danger of reinforcing and consolidating the passion by a sophisticated moral rationalization. In Kant, mania for possession is the least complex, the most 'banal' of the passions. For that very reason, it makes an important contribution to understanding his conception of the passions: it is, at least for Kant, comparatively harmless because it is not closely linked with analogy-based rationalizing and moral revaluing.

### ***Delusion as passion***

For Kant, 'delusion' (*Wahn*) is an independent passion (Ant 7:274). This comes as a surprise, for what he seems to mean by 'delusion' in the context of the *Anthropology's* discussion of the passions is nothing other than the result of a successful, rather stable form of self-

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<sup>18</sup> Hirschman mentions him once early in his book, but Kant does not play a role in the elaboration of his argument; see Hirschman 1977, 21.

deception through rationalizing, which is characteristic of strong passions and accounts for their tendency to be incurable. As mentioned, Kant defines delusion as 'the inner practical illusion of taking what is subjective in the motivating cause for objective' (Ant 7:274), which corresponds to the second, revaluing and elevating variant of rationalizing.<sup>19</sup> The close conceptual link between delusion, rationalizing, and passion is also apparent in the conceptual correlation he establishes between rationalizing and delusion ('raving with reason' is defined as a strong, delusional form of rationalizing) and in his explicit identification of passion with delusion (Ant 7:200, 252, 253; CPJ 5:275). While Kant elsewhere states more cautiously that passions 'can even co-exist with rationalizing' (Ant 7:265, my emphasis), he nonetheless stresses that passions are 'often violent to the point of madness' (*Wahnsinn*) (Ant 7:271) or even to be considered, as a matter of principle, 'as a *dementia* that broods over a representation which nestles itself deeper and deeper' (Ant 7:253). At the very least, then, delusion must be considered a characteristic of violent passion and thus as a characteristic of those passions Kant holds to be particularly dangerous.

Yet if delusion is a characteristic of violent passions, how can it be a passion itself? Kant does not provide an answer to this question. For delusion to fit in coherently with his other reflections on the passions, it cannot be a genuinely independent passion. I would like to suggest instead to conceive of delusion as the superlative or strongest possible manifestation of passion. It occurs when the rationalization of a passion distorts the agent's view of reality to such an extent that she is hardly able to correct the distortion anymore. In delusion, fantasy is what Kant calls a 'self-creator'. The agent takes 'an interest of mere delusion' in the end of her passion and has increasing difficulties to distinguish between reality and imagination (according to Kant this happens especially under competitive social conditions) (Ant 7:275). 'Deception due to the strength of the human power of imagination often goes so far that a person believes he sees and feels outside himself that which he has only in his mind' (Ant 7:178).

Even if her passion is delusional, however, the agent must still be able to correct the distortion of her perception. Passions do not lead to a loss of agency; we are not passively at their mercy,

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<sup>19</sup> See p. XXX

even when they are 'incurable'. Rather, we ourselves ensure their 'incurability' (Ant 7:266) by answering the repeated calls of conscience with ever new rationalizations.

If we understand delusion as a particularly strong manifestation of various passions, it can be seamlessly integrated into Kant's conception of passions. This interpretation is supported by the fact that Kant devotes the *last* section of his treatment of the passions in the *Anthropology* to delusion. It is also supported by the fact that in this section he again refers to 'honour, control, and money' and describes them as inclinations of delusion; thus, no empirical end of its own is assigned to delusion.

How a passion can become delusional may be illustrated by the proverbial 'Caesarian madness', a combination of megalomania and paranoia attributed to several Roman emperors including Caligula and Nero. The expression translates *furor principum*, the notion Tacitus employs to explain the decline of Rome. It is very likely that Kant was familiar with Tacitus's account. Today, the term generally denotes an excessive overestimation of their power and abilities on the part of authoritarian or totalitarian rulers, of which there still are, unfortunately, many examples.

### **The tragic dimension of impassioned self-deception**

Kant's discussions of particular passions are partly elaborations, partly corrections of his general condemnation of passion. His explanations of the passion for freedom, of the mania for honour, and of delusion underscore his negative assessment of the passions. The mania for possession, in turn, benefits from a partial moral reevaluation. Since there is no good reason within Kantian theory for the ambivalent evaluation of the mania for possession, I have argued, drawing on Hirschman, in favour of attributing the positive moment of this ambivalence to an ideological change taking place in the Enlightenment. This change, by separating avarice from the other passions, creates the conditions necessary for closely connecting the idea of individual and societal progress with the pursuit of economic interests. At least in part, of course, Kant's analysis of the passions is contestable. This is particularly the case for his harsh judgement of the passion for benevolence. His criticism of the mania for honour, too, is certainly exaggerated. Against the background of general experience, his depiction of those excessively striving for honour as ludicrous figures that thwart their own plans is one-sided. In many circumstances, arrogance is an effective means for imposing one's

goals. On the other hand, however, Kant outlines a differentiated and plausible psychological model of self-deception. In the detailed discussions of particular passions, he presents self-deception with great precision as a rationalizing process in which a certain similarity between a given impassionedly pursued inclination and a concept of reason is used to elevate the inclination by normatively equating inclination and concept.

The tragic aspect of self-deception is that it is precisely the wish to have a clear conscience which constitutes the most important motive for the rationalization and elevation of passion. The (at least implicit) concern with not being immoral is fundamental to most people's self-image. Most of us would like to think of ourselves as someone whose actions and general way of life are morally legitimate, and for many, this is a constitutive condition of their identity. Yet it is this very concern that provides a powerful incentive to present immoral maxims to oneself as if they were at least morally permissible – and thereby bolsters them. Kant persuasively shows how a concern that as such is to be judged positively can have destructive consequences when it is implemented in an inconsistent manner. For Kant, the formation of a moral character requires us to overcome impassioned self-deception; it begins with 'the descent into the hell of self-cognition' that 'penetrate[s] into the depths (the abyss) of one's heart' (MS 6:441)

### Abbreviation Key

Ant	<i>Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View</i> . [Numbers refer to volume and page numbers in the Akademie edition (see bibliography)]
CPJ	<i>Critique of the Power of Judgement</i>
CPrR	<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>
G	<i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>
MH	<i>Essay on the Maladies of the Head</i>
MS	<i>The Metaphysics of Morals</i>
R	<i>Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason</i>
V-A/Pillau	<i>Pillau lecture notes</i>
V-Mo/Collins	<i>Collins lecture notes</i>

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