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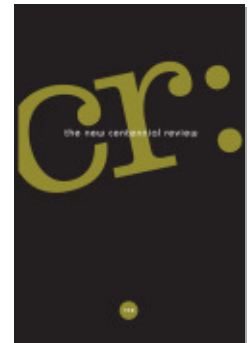
## Kant's Aliens: The Anthropology and Its Others

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# Kant's Aliens

## *The Anthropology and Its Others*

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*for Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick*

Let us then believe in our star friendship even if we should be compelled to be earth enemies.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

### THINGS TO COME: THE ALIEN SUPPLEMENT

My title is inspired by a tellingly reflexive turn that Kant takes in the final pages of the last book that he saw published, his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* [*Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*] (1798). Kant's concluding argument, entitled "On the Character of the Species," opens by frankly conceding the impossibility of completing the project to which he has by this late point already devoted considerable time and energy. "In order to sketch the character of a certain creature's species," he begins, "it is necessary that the species be compared with and referred to in terms of other species already known to us."<sup>1</sup> As a generality about the empirical method and object of taxonomic analyses, Kant's observation seems harmless enough. But the particular *Wesen* called "man" presents a unique

epistemological and classificatory problem, since “he” is—as yet—without compare in the order of things:

The highest concept of species may be that of a terrestrial rational being [eines irdischen vernünftigen], but we will not be able to describe its characteristics because we do not know of a nonterrestrial rational being [nicht-irdischen Wesen] which would enable us to refer to its properties and consequently classify that terrestrial being as rational. It seems, therefore, that the problem of giving an account of the character of the human species is quite insoluble [sie schlechterdings unauflöslich], because the problem could only be solved by comparing two species of rational beings on the basis of experience, but experience has not offered us a comparison between two species of rational beings (AP, 237–238; VIII, 215).

Much could be said about this remarkable passage, the first of two allusions to alien others haunting the end of the *Anthropology*, and the last instance of an off-world interest going back to Kant's first major work, the 1755 cosmological treatise entitled *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* [Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels], a text to which I will return. Each of these allusions calls for a slow reading, and that will be my task and my method in this essay, parsing the body (and bodies) of Kant's texts both for the cultural contexts that determine and overdetermine his evocations of nonterrestrial rational life, and for the different and overlapping political unconsciousnesses that they offer up for thought. These allusions form an optic through which to discern what I will argue is the violently “pragmatic” intersection of knowledge and power at which the *Anthropology* is situated and by which it is animated: for Kant, the task of determining “what man makes of himself” (AP, 2) is indistinguishable from what the anthropologist reiteratively—and, sometimes, with palpable anxiety—makes of others, especially those others who are deemed to be more or less nonterrestrial, more or less *not* the true inhabitants of an imagined, cosmopolitan Earth. Kant half-heartedly dismisses the instrumentalization of “man” by “man” as mere “shrewdness,” the “techno-practical use of reason” [technisch-praktischen Vernunft] (AP, 179; VIII, 162), yet his own text is quick-

ened through and through by that inclination and by that productivity. The craving or striving after the power to have “influence over others” is, as Kant admits, fundamental to the ambitious makeup of humanity (*AP*, 179). Certainly it is fundamental to the smooth functioning of the emerging Prussian *Bürgertum* whose interests the *Anthropology* serves and for whose prejudices it operates as an alibi. What interests me here, then, is the array of rational beings that Kant presses into service to speak on behalf of “man.” Dreaming of nonterrestrial life so as to name and to know humanity, Kant spectacularly confirms Derrida’s suspicion that “the work of anthropology *realizes* the imaginary variation in search of the essential invariant.”<sup>2</sup> Yet this gesture of mastery is complexly motivated and ambivalently executed, evidence of which is palpable first in the mixed discourse of its presentation, at once fantastic and pragmatically sensible. For a moment, the *Anthropology*, whose *raison d’être* is precisely giving an account of the character of the human species, and whose fundamental assumption is that, as rational beings, “we” possess the capacity to become the subjects of our own knowledge, refuses not only its completion but also its own condition of possibility. For rationality is not one characteristic of the species among many, but its exemplary origin and end, the being-human of humanity. If earthly rationality cannot be held up against its unearthly equivalent, that is, if the anthropologist cannot experientially confirm the classification of “that terrestrial being *as* rational,” then what can we really know of that being?

This is an almost Nietzschean question—one asked, we might recall, by Friedrich in the essay “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense” that spookily begins by imagining what “man” might look like through the pitiless eyes of an alien zoologist. It is true that Kant more often treats the absence of another rational being against which to compare “man” not as a problem but as a virtue. Nonterrestrial rational life no doubt exists—Kant was hardly alone in this belief—but the absence of experiential proof only makes the current task of “assigning man his place within the system of animate nature, and thereby characterizing him,” all the more ennoblingly solitary. In any case, it is always best to be cautious: “[A]ll that is safe for us to say is that he has a character which he himself creates . . . Consequently, man as an animal endowed with capability of reason (*animal rationabile*) can

make himself a rational animal (*animal rationale*)” (AP, 238). Without the supplement of the alien, “man” is left to his own devices, which is to say, cast into the lonely but virile and self-sufficient condition that most suits the philosopher. Knowing no example and having no peer, the human is the very definition of grandeur and sublimity. As Kant says earlier in the *Anthropology*, “We cannot think of any form that would be suitable for a rational being than the form of a human being” (AP, 68), an inability he attributes to the paucity of the imagination without regretting that lack for a moment. Yet Kant *does* fantasize about other “forms” of rational life, not only in the *Anthropology* but also at numerous other locations in the oeuvre, as we shall see. The fact that the *Anthropology*'s work continues unabated suggests that the “insoluble” problem figured forth by the aliens is engineered into the project, a staged obstacle around which the work could be said to form and flow like an eddy. Necessary yet extraneous, missing yet accounted for, the aliens evoke other human or quasi-human alterities that are not elsewhere, on a distant world, but here, on Earth—and that threaten to make of here an elsewhere. In a thinker who is fundamentally invested in separating what has been mixed, perhaps never more so than in a compellingly normative text like the *Anthropology*, the nonterrestrial rational being is at once too far and too close for comfort, not so much marking the outer limits of the anthropological project as being Kant's weird way of saying that it is irreducibly haunted from within. As Roland Barthes once said, “probably if we were to land in our turn on the Mars we have constructed, we should merely find Earth itself, and between these two products of the same History we could not determine which was our own.”<sup>3</sup> In the mirror of Kant's anthropological imaginary, I shall argue, aliens are always closer than they appear.

Let us imagine for a moment, then, the strange drama that Kant has staged for us in the dying moments of his investigation. A fussily thorough collector and curator of human minutiae, Kant looks at the final arrangement of his natural history table (think of Nietzsche-as-alien peering at his human abductee “stretched out as in an illuminated glass case”) and, under the genus “rational beings,” sees that there is one blank space left, one last specimen to mount and to freeze in an eternal moment of clarifyingly tabular juxtaposition.<sup>4</sup> By his own account, Kant was an obsessively organized

person who could be distracted even by the sight of a missing button on another man's coat: we must come back to this. Here perhaps he feels the pangs of a much more consequential asymmetry, the compulsive's sense of an incompleteness that threatens to mar both the comparative order of his taxonomic edifice, as well as the pleasure to be taken in it. More: the rational being for which he *does* have experiential knowledge—"man"—cannot but begin to fade and waver, "his" essential "characteristics" now rendered indeterminate without having an extraterrestrial specimen at hand with which to throw their specifically human features into sharp relief. Perhaps these "characteristics" were never clear in the first place, certainly not as clear as Kant makes them out to be. "Man," Kant will say in the last sentences of his investigation, must "not reveal himself completely" (*AP*, 250)—perhaps especially to the scopophilic gaze of the anthropologist himself. In putting into question the possibility of "classifying . . . terrestrial beings as rational," Kant unavoidably casts a strange pall over both the *Anthropology*, which presupposes what it now says cannot be confirmed, *and* the fastidiously rational self with whom Kant clearly identifies in this often autobiographical text. The question at hand is not only what is "man" in the face of this "insoluble" problem, but also who is the man called "Kant"?

Not until 1877, when Giovanni Schiaparelli glimpses the *cannali*, or channels, criss-crossing the surface of Mars, will there be experiential "proof" of the existence of nonterrestrial rational beings. (Revealingly, the first face that the aliens present to humanity is that of engineering triumphs in the service of commerce.) But even if for Kant these creatures are not yet visible, they reflect "man" in the phantom form of a *promise* to bring his uniqueness into visibility. In a strange temporal twist (it seems aliens have always been associated with rifts in time), the nonterrestrial names the future point at which the originality of the human will be constituted after the fact. Will that day come? In a certain sense it has already happened, for, distant though they are, the aliens unsettle the propriety of the name of "man" at the moment that Kant brings his system of interplanetary differences and names into play. The non-terrestrials form part of a continuous field of meaning that subjects the human to a certain "violence of difference" (*OG*, 110), a classificatory forcefulness that Kant registers in his refusal of

"*Mensch*" in favor of the more coldly taxonomic and pointedly relational term of "terrestrial being." This pledging of humanity to the other—*pledging* seems necessary here to convey how this constitutive process is already underway for Kant; human being in its rationality is being-promised *to*—is of course all the more interesting from the philosopher who famously affirmed the isolating independence of "man." He is the creature who alone feels the harsh imperative to give birth to himself, who rightly struggles to sever the "leading strings" binding him to nature, and to the planet inhabited by women and mothers. Notwithstanding his claim to "the highest concept of species," Kant suggests, "man" is what he is by virtue of another who always and already carries alongside him in the universe. He is the creature whose uniqueness lies finally in being unique *and* dependent, alone *and* a citizen in a cosmopolitan community now imagined to reach to the stars.<sup>5</sup>

If the *Anthropology's* relationship to the alien is structured as a promise, then so too is its relationship to the human, since, in the absence of the experience of nonterrestrial rational beings, Kant must proceed *as if* the subject of his text were empirically available to knowledge. But this duplicity has a history in the *Anthropology*, or rather a genealogy that becomes apparent when we examine the drafts of the text. Kant acknowledges the provisionality (or "as if-ness") of the *anthropos*, but does so only in manuscript:

[M]an does not know himself through experience, because experience can never teach him the absolute necessity of what he is supposed to be. Experience can only teach him empirically what he is or what he is supposed to be under empirical conditions. Man only knows about himself via pure reason (a priori), he recognizes the ideal of humanity, which, in comparison to him as a human being, makes the character of his species visible and describable through the frailties of his nature that limit the archetypal image. However, in order to appreciate the character of the species, a comparison is necessary with an entity which cannot be found anywhere else but in perfect humanity. (*AP*, 287 n108)

In its published form, the anthropological project faces an empirical problem whose solution is improbable but not impossible, deferred as it is until

“man” meets his rational counterpart from another planet. (We might recall that Kant lived in an age that hardly wavered in its belief in the existence of rational life on other planets. It was never a question of *whether* such life existed, but instead *how much* of it and *what forms* it might take.) In manuscript, on the other hand, the “insolubility” that Kant confronts is of quite a different order, making the erasure of this passage as significant as its content. For here Kant acknowledges that the limitations of the anthropological investigation are structural or irreducible in nature. As an empirical rather than a transcendental analysis, the *Anthropology* can treat only a posteriori properties, for example, evidence drawn from the sociological and psychological conditions of human life. These are indeed the experiences that stuff the pages of Kant’s analysis (and that account for its quirky particularity). For “man” properly and fully to know himself, however, he requires another form of comparison, one that is neither available to an empirically based investigation (even if it makes the outlines or limits of that investigation available to thought), nor, strictly speaking, of interest to it. Kant is always careful to reiterate the boundaries between the two projects, since it is only in such reiteration that something like pragmatic anthropology becomes possible. Published one year before the *Anthropology*, *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) insists upon the scrupulous separation of anthropology and moral philosophy:

[J]ust as there must be principles in a metaphysics of nature for applying those highest universal principles of a nature in general to objects of experience, a metaphysics of morals cannot dispense with principles of application. . . . But this will in no way detract from the purity of these principles or cast doubt on their a priori source. This is to say, in effect, that a metaphysics of morals cannot be based upon anthropology but can still be applied to it.<sup>6</sup>

In the earlier *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), Kant similarly argues that it is “of the utmost necessity to work out for once a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything that may only be empirical and that belongs to anthropology.”<sup>7</sup> (A telling and often repeated move, this call for hygiene in thinking: Kant’s *Anthropology* will make clear how



intellectual and bodily regimens are complex figures for each other.) Allen Wood argues that by the 1790s Kant had “abandoned this whole way of looking at the relation between metaphysics and anthropology in moral philosophy,”<sup>8</sup> a claim belied by Kant’s insistence, in the opening pages of the *Anthropology*, that great care be taken to distinguish his project from an “investigation [that] belongs to metaphysics” (*AP*, 27). The deleted passage from the *Anthropology* suggests that it was a relation whose disciplinary hygiene remained of concern for him. Kant will subsequently concede that “principles of application” must be developed to mediate between the metaphysical and anthropological endeavors. As Susan Shell points out, it is the peculiar “status of these ‘principles of application’ that remain open to question,” as the jointure or vanishing mediator that both divides and combines their respective worlds.<sup>9</sup> In Kant’s manuscript the metaphysical project remains important enough to evoke and to describe the a priori investigation, in effect playing the role of the “other-worldly” alien that supplements and haunts the human, all too human a posteriori analysis that we actually get in the published version of the *Anthropology*. In its supplemental role, we see the first sign of how difficult it is to maintain an oppositional limit between the a priori and a posteriori projects. For, in the end, Kant crosses this passage out, and in so doing replaces the “the archetypal image” of “perfect humanity” that comes from “man’s” apprehension of himself through and as “pure reason (a priori)” with the lurid figure of intelligent aliens. In other words, to maintain the integrity and the autonomy of the empirical anthropological project, Kant feels obliged to efface any reference to the transcendental project, and, more importantly, to do so not only by deleting the manuscript passage but also by substituting the figure of an a priori concept of the human with an a posteriori concept of the non-human. The alien other displaces the “perfect humanity,” at once marking the boundary between an anthropology and a transcendental investigation, but also registering the inevitability of their mutual contamination. Indeed, it could be said that the alien facilitates the passage from the a priori to the determination of empirical facts and so embodies, in its spectral way, the “principles of application” that Kant imagines making a traversal of a metaphysics of morals and an anthropology possible. That the alien so readily takes the

place of the ideal human in this revision reminds us, however, that the concept of extraterrestrial rationality is but a figure of understanding in the text—not so much an empirical referent, or even the *promise* of an empirical referent (which is how it is presented to us as readers; strange empiricism, this, one whose experiential content is the not-yet-experienced), as a spectral figure for the transcendental investigation Kant’s anthropological project would otherwise wholly exclude.

Indulging in a bit of Freudian kettle logic, Kant conjures up and then disavows nonterrestrial rational life. He says: the aliens are or rather would be necessary to the task of “characterizing” “man,” had I experience of them; in any case, I have never needed them since the unique “character” of “man” is that he is of his own making. But Kant’s turn from alien difference, far from consolidating the identity of the human, only brings out human being’s irreducible difference from itself. For Kant’s claim to be prudent in the present, in anticipation of the close encounter to come, masks the scandalously duplicitous nature of the past that he evokes for “man”: this parthenogenesis, this self-generation without the strangling and meddling interference of mothers and women, when could it have taken place? Lacking the outside confirmation of the humanity of “man” figured forth by the aliens, “man’s” assertion that he is the author of his own humanity is grounded solely in that claim. But what paleo-anthropologist could meaningfully determine whether “man” exists at the moment of this assertion . . . or just after it, as the product of that assertion? Who but “man” ratifies his claim to make himself? He cannot be there, or perhaps *all* there, not while he must become what he must already be to become “man.” Operating as the agent *and* the product of his own making, “man” is a curious entity whose fate it is to be a missed encounter with himself, or perhaps some version of himself that is always somewhere else, at some unimaginable distance. What name to give to that other being, to the otherness that haunts “man” with the specter of his incompleteness? Kant’s text helpfully yields up a name.

For Kant to conduct his anthropological research he must presuppose a human addressee, even if, finally, that creature can only be posited as a placeholder—“rational terrestrial being”—in a classificatory system that is lacking its master key. Denied empirical confirmation, and required to

authorize himself, “man” operates in the *Anthropology* as a kind of running simulation, a hologram, posited as the object of its analysis, but a provisional entity in its rationality only until confirmed by an (alien) other. Yet how can we know that human being is rational without already being rational in the first place? Alien intelligence provides Kant with the means by which to acknowledge that constitutive duplicity; it is his way of retroactively configuring the text as an extended apostrophe whose addressee is always somehow ahead of and behind itself, anticipating the classification that he must already be to anticipate that classification. (To modify a curious form of address to which Kant refers in the *Anthropology*, among other texts: “My dear fellow ‘men,’ there is no ‘man.’”)<sup>10</sup> As such, the *anthropos* is a kind of fiction, if by fiction we mean what Marc Redfield has cogently described as “not just . . . an entity superior to the possibility of empirical experience, but in the more turbulent sense of being a making, a *poiesis* that is always at once belated and proleptic with respect to the concept it presupposes.”<sup>11</sup> As Kant says in “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” (1784), a definitive answer to the question “What is man?” is all but precluded because the species in its concept is so *eingebildeten*—that is, “fanciful/imaginary.”<sup>12</sup> The concept of “man” that emerges at the conclusion of Kant’s text is the subject, strictly speaking, neither of the a posteriori anthropological project (since he possesses only the *simulation* of empirical confirmation), nor of the a priori transcendental project (since the ideal of humanity cannot be confirmed through empirical means), but instead emerges as a third thing, a phantasmatic textual effect appropriate to the dreaminess of Kant’s story of first contact. Kant is so invested in maintaining the distinction between the two projects, and in preserving the integrity of the anthropological investigation at hand, that he is willing not only to forgo the grounding consolation of a priori principles but also to erase all evidence of that consolation from the extant text. Yet that move introduces its own complications, for the aliens—“unknown to us”—are not anything like the empirical evidence with which the character of the species could be made visible, as Kant readily concedes. In this sense, the imagined aliens, *as* imagined, function as displaced figures for the fictionality of “man.” To put it differently: the fiction of “man” finds an uncanny simulacrum in the

science fiction of the aliens whose very absence keeps “man” from being known as an experienced “fact.” “Man” is not only indebted to the simulated alien; “he” is a simulation of himself, a trope for the conflation between what the *Anthropology* promises via the circuit of the alien and what it must posit as already in place to make that promise.

In the crossed-out manuscript passage, “perfect humanity” functions as a regulatory ideal whose non-empirical status as an “archetypal image” is precisely what explains its phantasmatically binding power over humans (and, it could also be argued, over the anthropological project as such) who, in their “frailties,” are held accountable to it and who are compelled to approximate its purity in their lives. This reiteratively imposed subordination Kant frankly calls “the disciplining process of the people” (*AP*, 251), a process of subjection with which the *Anthropology* collaborates, anxiously prescriptive as its narrative often is. When Kant tells us that the “Comparison . . . with an entity which cannot be found anywhere else but in perfect humanity” makes “the character of [the human] . . . species visible and describable” (*AP*, 287), it is clear therefore that he means the “frailties” of that character in particular. When the figure of the alien displaces the “archetypal image” of the human, however, the normative thrust of Kant’s argument is momentarily suspended. Amid the putatively value-free space of Kant’s interplanetary natural history table, we could say, aliens are not better than humans, just different, and valuable to the *Anthropology* mostly for the classificatory power of their difference in a system of binomial nomenclature. But this relational neutrality proves difficult to sustain, and when Kant next alludes to nonterrestrial rational beings, a few pages later, it is as if the normative force, once held at bay by the substitution of aliens for the phantasm of “ideal humanity,” now proves irresistible.

#### STAR FRIENDSHIP, EARTH ENEMIES

In some remote corner of the universe, flickering in the light of the countless solar systems into which it had been poured, there was once a planet on which clever animals invented cognition.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense”

Perhaps not surprisingly, as the *Anthropology* comes to a close, Kant expresses a mixture of remorse and hope for “man.” “If we now ask whether the human species can be considered a good or bad race (it can be called a *race* only when one thinks of it as a species of rational beings on earth, compared to those rational beings on other planets, sprung as a multitude of creatures from one demiurge);” he says wearily, “then I must confess that there is not much to boast about” (*AP*, 249). Kant’s elaborate parenthetical aside shows that he continues to find a specifically taxonomic clarity in the alien, but the body of his sentence is already shepherding the nonterrestrial creature toward other uses—even if, in the shadow of his allusion to the “demiurge,” they now have about them the stagily fantastic aura of emanationism and Gnosticism. Rapidly maneuvering for a critical position from which to ascertain the moral nature of man, Kant first considers two human—albeit mythical—figures of blame. The evils of human history, both past and present, call for the summary misanthropic judgment of Timon of Athens; but Kant is no hater of “man,” and would prefer to play the role of Momus, the god of ridicule and fault finding. Neither will finally do, however, since “human behavior” is a subtle knot of both foolishness *and* evil, and nowhere is that more evident than in our willingness and ability *to deceive*. “[S]ince foolishness combined with traces of evil cannot be ignored in the moral physiognomy of our species,” he continues, “everyone in our race finds it advisable to be on his guard, and not to reveal himself completely” (*AP*, 250). Discretion and non-disclosure are for Kant a pragmatic defense against human nature as well as a symptom of its worst disease, the first step in a process of degradation “from pretence to intentional deception, and finally to lying” (*AP*, 250). As a kind of counter-memory to this sad picture of “evil-minded[ness],” Kant offers up the image of an alien community of absolute honesty and sincerity:

It could well be that on another planet there might be rational beings who could not think in any other way but aloud. These beings would not be able to have thoughts without voicing them at the same time, whether they be awake or asleep, whether in the company of others or alone. In what kind of different behavior toward others would this result, and what kind of effect would it have in comparison with our human species? (*AP*, 250)

We need to pause for a moment, delaying Kant's revealingly preemptive answer to his query, so as to explore the ample space of thought that this overdetermined passage opens up. What I want to argue is that Kant's curious extraterrestrial dream functions as a kind of charged relay point across which overlapping desires, anxieties, and assumptions about speaking, secrecy, and sociability flow. But let us begin with the two questions that Kant poses. Together they augur the modern anthropological gesture *par excellence*: the apprehension of difference is indistinguishable from the anticipation of being seen and judged from the point of view of that difference. As Derrida says, "Rousseau would have taught the modern anthropologist this humility of one who knows he is 'unacceptable,' this remorse that produces anthropology" (OG, 101). Kant *hallucinates* the other so as to admonish his own "species," and thus to subject "man" either to "good-natured ridicule" or "contempt"—the two critical attitudes Kant offers on the next page, remembering the earlier choice of Momus and Timon, respectively—via the circuit of the alien. This is at least the ambivalently anti-anthropocentric gesture that Kant will eventually make in the wake of his dream of the extraterrestrials who cannot tell a lie, a gesture with a long history in his work.<sup>13</sup> The aliens, simply by virtue of their exoticism, their physical and "cultural" distance from the concerns of humanity, throw into relief the relative (un)importance of those concerns. Whatever faults characterize the extraterrestrials (and Kant will not hesitate, a moment later, to condemn them for these faults), the mere possibility of other rational creatures in the universe, creatures with abilities and weaknesses that are utterly unique to themselves, aids in clarifying what makes "man" unique at the same moment that it puts his preoccupation with that uniqueness—a preoccupation that presumably includes pragmatic anthropology itself—in a larger, cosmological perspective where human beings are but one kind of rational creature among many. How different, so it might seem, from *all* of the *Anthropology's* other allusions to others, in which Kant expresses nothing but outright contempt for the foreigner: the Jews, the "primitive" cultures, women, the aristocracy, all of the questionably rational and questionably human beings that *differently* haunt the margins of the *Anthropology* as so many phantom menaces. Together these allusions form what we could call the "non-modern" or archaic strand of the *Anthropology*,

the unashamedly anthropocentric text that contrasts with its more “modern” counterpart, the anthropocentric text that *thinks* itself as anti-anthropocentrism (OG, 120), if only for a moment. The unusual figure of an extraterrestrial community in which deception is impossible helps to propel Kant, by virtue of its placing in the narrative of the text, toward the conditional “admission that this race of terrestrial rational beings deserves no honorable place among other rational beings of the universe (unknown to us)” (AP, 251). “Unknown,” yes, as Kant’s parenthesis is careful to point out, but unknown in a way that divides these “other rational beings” from humanity in a manner that does not make them inaccessible to the anthropologist’s judgmental gaze. The parenthesis marks the unstable line dividing Kant’s empirical imperative to speak of what is known from his dreamy desire to exploit that unknowability, to make of the aliens a cipher to which any anthropocentric significance might be attached. Appropriately, Kant’s gesture is cast in the conditional: the irreducibly deceptive nature of “man” “*would* lead to this admission,” he says, partly acknowledging the imaginary status of his aliens, and partly to open the way for other admissions, indeed the more hopeful ones with which the *Anthropology* eventually concludes.

When Kant asks how different things might be on a planet populated by radically sincere aliens, he opens up the theoretical possibility of a comparative judgment of humanity. The anthropological logic of this moment in the text is nothing if not compelling: if not Timon or Momus, then extraterrestrials might name the looked-for vantage point from which to assess the foibles of their terrestrial counterparts in the order of things. The alien constitutes the “absolute” foreigner whose glance might swiftly expose our lying nature to ourselves. In their honesty the extraterrestrials would indeed seem to embody the purity and completeness of what Kant elsewhere calls “perfect friendship” (MM, 262). Such fraternity is so rare as to seem not of this world, as rare as “black swans” (MM, 263), to recall the philosopher’s wonderful figure of speech, drawn from Juvenal. If perfected friendship mostly remains the “hobby horse of writers of romance” (including, we might presume, the writers of that special form of romance called science fiction), it nevertheless obliges rational creatures with the force of law. Kant readily concedes that rational beings are compelled to possess feelings of

“sympathy” and “communication.” Yet when Kant imagines an entire society actualizing this ideal, as he does with the aliens, the black swans turn out to be ugly ducklings. The aliens speak with the utter frankness that Kant reserves for the best of friends, *yet they are not friends*; for

unless they are all as pure as angels, we cannot conceive how they would be able to live at peace with each other, how anyone could have any respect for anyone else, and how they could get along with each other. (AP, 250)

In the next sentence Kant will go on to say that the natural, human capacity to conceal one’s thoughts leads inevitably to the malignity of lying. But that does not mean that a community founded upon absolute disclosure would be any less self-destructive. The aliens are pointedly not allowed to form the virtuous mirror image of humanity, reminding us that for Kant proper sociality does not mean simply acting on the impulse to reveal ourselves to each other, but on the scrupulous and prudent economizing of that will to disclosure. The aliens are not perfected beings, and unless they were, their uncontrollable will to truth and their inability to be alone with their own thoughts could only lead them into trouble. And not just any trouble, but precisely the same foolishness and evil-mindedness, the same lack of respect that befalls “man” and that necessitates the “condemning judgment” of a Timon or Momus . . . or, we might have thought, in the manner of anthropology, a naively honest alien. It is as if at some imagined extremity the alien inability to lie and the human inability *not* to lie find a common self-destructive ground.

How could an excess of truth-telling lead to the same problems as an excess of lying? Why does radical sincerity figure forth a world bereft of respect? Kant’s consideration of the alien community is extremely short, to be sure, but extraordinarily suggestive. To repeat: the aliens are first of all *not* angels. Kant knows only too well that there are spirit-seers in his audience, both professional and amateur, for whom a nonterrestrial rational being could be nothing but an angel. Kant refuses that identification, or perhaps he makes his refusal explicit, since his silence about angels vis-à-vis aliens up until this point in the *Anthropology* has in fact already said a great deal.



As he had written more than forty years earlier, human beings have no need to “envy the angels.”<sup>14</sup> Purely intelligible beings like angels mark the boundary of the *Anthropology's* reach—or rather one of its boundaries—since, unlike other rational beings in Kant's universe, it is in their nature not to possess sublunary desires that could conflict with the moral law. Like animals in Kant, they are beyond good and evil. Yet as with all of Kant's disavowals, this one is ambivalently executed, for angels function, even in their rebuke, as the exoticized other of the extraterrestrial, *its* “anthropological” phantasm, against which alien sociality will be measured and found wanting. What then makes these radically candid extraterrestrials so devilishly warlike and disrespectful . . . so, well, human? What prevents them from creating the kind of civil society that Kant's infamous strictures elsewhere suggest should flow naturally from the inviolable duty of rational beings *not* to dissemble—their obligation, precisely, to say what they think?

Kant's summary judgment of the aliens is all the more peremptory and authoritarian for having to hide several kinds of discomfiture. One key to Kant's allergy is the excessively communicative quality of the nonterrestrial society, a society that could readily be described as *telepathic* in nature. *Die Telepathie* is not a word that is yet available to Kant, no more, strictly speaking, than *die Gedankenübertragung* (“thought transference”), the cognate term with which Freud will wrestle in his ambivalent disavowal of telepathy as psychoanalysis' proximate other.<sup>15</sup> Yet the negative connotations of this as-yet-unnamed concept for Kant are fairly clear: a society in which no one can keep their thoughts to themselves, and where individuals are compelled to voice their thoughts, *even while asleep*, models a hyper-communicative collectivity for which the philosopher could only have had the most extreme contempt. In his *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* (1786), for example, Kant speaks critically of an innate “urge” to converse and commune with others. Although this is a desire that accounts for the origins of human sociability, it lives on in the rational community that it founded as the cause and symptom of a certain senselessness:

While as yet alone, man must have been moved by the urge for communication to make his existence known to other living beings, particularly to such

as utter sounds. These sounds he could imitate, and they could later serve as names. A similar effect of the above urge may be observed even now. Children and thoughtless persons are apt to disturb the thinking part of the community by rattling, shouting, whistling, singing and other kinds of noisy entertainment, often also by religious devotions of such a nature.<sup>16</sup>

Kant's biographer, Gulyga, recalls Kant's disgust with the religious devotions sung by the prisoners who were incarcerated in the city jail adjacent to his house in Königsberg. Because these prayers interrupted "the thinking part of the community"—i.e., the part that Kant plays—he petitioned the police to have the windows of the jail shut up.<sup>17</sup> It seems Kant was always demanding that mystagogic congregations—whether composed of suddenly converted prisoners or the followers of dream-seers—to lower their voices, to pipe down. And when he does, calling *die Polizei* is never far from his thoughts. Do the noisy aliens remember that group of men as well as Kant's bitterness about being forced to over-hear them on summer days? Speaking uncontrollably and unthinkingly, the aliens behave like mad people or pious criminals or babies (infantilism is of course the master trope in Kant for the social-political-intellectual state of immaturity that is claimed to be overthrown by the Enlightenment). At a psychological level, they suffer what Kant earlier in the *Anthropology* calls "fanaticism," a pathological state "akin to insanity," in which "judgments and insights" proceed "directly from the inner sense, without the mediation of the understanding" (*AP*, 31). No doubt speaking out of his anxiety as a member of the *Weltbürgertum*, Kant right away gives this incontinent psychological condition a social expression, comparing it to "the rabble (*ignobile vulgus*)" and to "the mob since it does not think" (*AP*, 29, 30). More than a century later, Freud too will associate "passionately excited mobs" with a form of telepathic sociality, and even suggest that its archaic and organic origins lie in the "direct psychical transference[s]" characterizing communication within "the great insect communities."<sup>18</sup> Forming an unthinking and unmediated *polis*, Kant's aliens do in fact behave like insects. And only a page prior to the one in which Kant finds fault with the alien telepaths, he calls for terrestrial rational beings to model themselves upon the insect world: "Man was not meant to belong to a herd

like domesticated animals, but rather, like a bee, to belong to the hive community. It is necessary for him always to be a member of some civil society" (*AP*, 247). As attracted as Kant (like Schelling) is to the orderliness, equality, and busyness of insect organization, it is clear from the brief account of the aliens that not all hives are created equal. The nonterrestrial nest lacks civility: its inhabitants are killer *Bienen*. In such close proximity to Kant's unqualified affirmation of hive existence, however, alien sociality comes across not so much as the contrary of human civility as the more troubling sign that that civility harbors a profound incivility within itself.

What are the origins and the significance of that irreverence? In saying exactly what they are thinking, the aliens uncontrollably mix the private and public regions of their existence in an ecstasy of communicability. Overcome by an irresistible compulsion to voice their own thoughts while at the same time compelled to listen to the thoughts of every one else, they threaten to dissolve into the mechanism of their relationality. In other words, the aliens are but epiphenomena of the semiosis that disperses them into the social whole by which they are also irrevocably bound. Reduced to relay nodes in a *polis* that is—in theory at least—indistinguishable from a perfectly efficient telecommunication network, the extraterrestrials constitute an incorruptible memory of themselves. They are, one could say, uncanny precursors of what Henri Lefebvre calls the "cyberanthrope," the (negative) ideal of "man" that is the dream of the human sciences: as transparent to themselves as they are to each other, Kant's creatures similarly realize the triumph of "man's" knowledge of "man," the total penetration of "techno-practical reason" (*AP*, 179) into the affairs of sentient beings.<sup>19</sup> Under such extraordinary conditions, how might one meaningfully distinguish between one's "own" cogitations and those of another? The transmission of thoughts through extraordinary means; the subjection of individuals to a non- or extra-subjectivizable law of communication (the imperative to talk is always in excess of any particular alien's desire to speak); the machine-like automaticization of social intercourse: as Redfield has argued, these are but three of the counterintuitive features of telephenomena that will prove to be a subject of increasing fascination in the nineteenth century. For Kant it is a parodic image of sociality, from which the philosopher shrinks with knowing apprehension and disdain.

Kant's suspicion of the aliens is also undoubtedly informed by his long-standing distrust of being held hostage to enthusiasms of all kinds, whether the compulsion to listen comes from within, in the form of "fanatical and inflammatory inner sensations" (*AP*, 50), or from more remote sites of transmission. Like Hume, whom he cites, Kant is repulsed by "credulity, or a too easy faith in the testimony of others" (*AP*, 265 n81). In the First Book of the *Anthropology* Kant classifies these experiences as borderline mental states that make individuals peculiarly vulnerable to "the deception practiced by ventriloquists, gassnerists, mesmerists, and other pretended necromancers" (*AP*, 36). We could call them the "other Prussians," recalling a phrase from Stephen Marcus made memorable by Foucault. Kant's list—one gets the sense that it could go on and on—recalls for us the hurly-burly mix of scientists and pseudo-scientists in which Kant's audience moved and in which even one so prestigious as the great philosopher would have had to struggle so as to make himself heard.<sup>20</sup> In his roll call, Kant rounds up the "insolent" and "injurious" doubles of the pragmatic anthropologist, the usual suspects and minor perverts who traffic in illicit communications and other speech acts that have somehow evaded "the tribunal of the understanding for final decision" (*AP*, 30). Kant's taxonomy reminds us that telepathic experiences are not only the object of his condemnation; they are also to some degree *managed* and (re)created by the *Anthropology*—this in a way that is analogous to the multiplication of peripheral sexualities that Foucault associates with the consolidation of the bourgeoisie at the turn of the eighteenth century. The chaotic mix of the pleasures of psi-phenomena silently passes over into the order of things that are counted. This interest in taxonomizing altered states of awareness, and thus subjecting them to rational scrutiny, continues unabated in Hegel's "Anthropology," the most substantial section of his *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*.<sup>21</sup> We might then describe the *Anthropology's* police action against unauthorized and undigested telecommunications, culminating in Kant's censure of the aliens in the text's last page, its *rationalization of perverse sensibilities* (recalling Foucault's "rationalization of perverse sexualities," the parsing of the body of desire into "zoophiles and zoerasts, . . . mixoscopophiles, gynecomasts, presbyophiles, sexoesthetic inverts," etc. . . . [*HS*, 43]). Kant characterizes as irrational or superstitious or

obsessive anything that complicates or impedes “man’s” ascent to world-citizenship, his ability freely to determine “himself.” Enlightenment for Kant means freedom from “the practical telecommunication of interpellations”—to cite Althusser’s suggestive phrase—by the mysticism, cant, and dogma of all authorities, whether ecclesiastical, political, or new age.<sup>22</sup> The telepathically inclined aliens are in effect the *Anthropology’s* concluding case study of rational beings who are unable or unwilling, at the expense of their rationality and autonomy, to *think for themselves* (trapped, as they are, listening to the thoughts of everyone else).

Of course, Kant knew personally what costs were involved in such free thinking. His *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793), triggered the royal reproof of Frederick William II, who extracted from Kant a promise not to write on religion again. Set in that context, the aliens who live in a world of total “free” speech almost seem an after image of Kant’s intellectual life under Frederick the Great, Frederick William II’s much more tolerant predecessor. In being the addressee of an irresistible royal command, Kant directly experienced—albeit in a much higher tone—the summoning power of interpellation by external authority that he found so risible in the credulous who were spellbound by “apparitions, enchantment, and prodigies” (*AP*, 265 n81). Conceding to that call, Kant justified his decision on the principle that “while all that one says must be true, this does not mean that it is one’s duty to speak out the whole truth in public.”<sup>23</sup> The operative distinction between truth-telling and telling the whole truth is a crucially important one to Kant, and it goes to the heart of his understanding of the rights of “man” and the obligations of honesty and secrecy that compete asymmetrically for “man’s” consideration within the context of a civil society. I shall return to it in a moment. For now it is worth emphasizing that this distinction depends upon a more fundamental oppositional limit between public and private realms of articulation, as it does between speaking and not speaking. Kant saw fit to acquit himself only in an unpublished note, but whether that speech act constitutes the preservation or the betrayal of a secret, whether it transgresses or abides by the distinction between thinking and saying what is thought remains far from obvious, even if Kant sometimes proceeds as if it were. But it cannot be accidental that the last

sentence of the *Anthropology* comes in the form of a footnote in which Kant precisely collapses the gap between “private” thought and “public” speech. In the aftermath of the king’s death, Kant feels obliged not simply to speak his mind *but to do so in the mode of compelling the dead monarch to speak his mind as well*: “While publicly professing that he was merely the first servant of the state,” Kant remarks, “Frederick William II could not conceal the contrary in his agonizing private confession, but he excused his own role by attributing this depravity to the evil race called the human species” (*AP*, 251).

Speaking for a moment like one of his otherwise denigrated aliens, Kant cannot prevent himself from outing both the king and himself. Against the cosmopolitan ideal of thinking for oneself, which we know from texts like “What is Enlightenment?” means scrupulously organizing one’s speech acts, under the watchful eye of the Prussian censor, around the twin poles of public and private utterances, stands yet another menace. This one is not royal but republican; it is the hazard of political communities or class others organized around principles not of blood and inheritance but of fraternity, sympathy, and vocality. Suspicious sympathetic and telecommunicative societies include the sansculottes who claimed that France constituted a mystical brotherhood, or the revolutionary democracy imagined by the Marquis de Sade, who, deliberately eschewing earthly customs (for example, the belief that *toute vérité n’est pas bonne à dire*), indeed asked, “Have we not acquired the right to say everything [*le droit de tout dire*]?”<sup>24</sup> But Kant’s extraterrestrials remind us that Sade’s laudable dream of speaking one’s mind harbors a form of despotism, for citizens who assume the right to say everything may forfeit the right to keep a thought to themselves. Thinking *for* oneself must include the ability to think *to* oneself; for Kant the privacy of a person’s ideas is a fundamental matter of “right” and “respect” (*MM*, 258). In the hyper-Enlightenment ideals of Jacobin politics, Kant sees the abolition of this *Recht* and *Achtung*, and the threat of what Derrida calls “the inverse perversion of politicism, an absolutization of the political, [and] a limitless extension of the region of the political” into the hearts and minds of its citizenry: in other words, totalitarianism.<sup>25</sup> As Willi Goetschel points out, although Kant lives in an age when the rational instrumentalization of the social body becomes theoretically possible, he opposes “a one-dimensional

understanding of the enlightenment,” and he distinguishes himself from those “who generally had a technological and political orientation.”<sup>26</sup> Yet we miss an important complication if we forget that Kant’s *own* anthropological project forcefully helps usher that age in, and that its imperatives are, at a certain level, nothing but “technological”—i.e., orthopedic—and “political” in nature. Not for nothing does Gianni Vattimo argue that the human sciences, and the “intensification of the exchange of information” that has characterized the modernity in which those sciences have found their unique privilege, owe their origins to Kant’s late work.<sup>27</sup> Kant is among the first to claim a theoretical dignity and legitimacy for the investigation into what humanity “has made of itself, its institutions, culture, and symbolic forms.”<sup>28</sup> But that pragmatic *Kehre* from a philosophical anthropology concerned with the “essence” of the human opens the door to the positivist sciences of “man” that have since been devoted to the task of making him yield up all of his secrets.<sup>29</sup> Alien sociality, I would argue, also registers Kant’s discomfiture with that future. Theirs is a republic of letters gone quite mad; but Kant’s insistence that the extraterrestrials nevertheless remain “rational” beings reminds us that this insanity is not the opposite of reason but somehow the result of its unfettered amplification. On another world, Kant imagines, the day has already come in which *even* our dream-thoughts will yield themselves to the scrutiny of fellow rational beings: a strange and chilling possibility for the philosopher, and a prospect that is not without ethical consequences. In *The Metaphysics of Morals* Kant indeed concedes that the investigation of the inner life of the human is shadowed by something malignantly resembling surveillance and subjection: the “mania for spying on the morals of others (*allotrio-episcopia*)” is, he writes, “by itself an offensive inquisitiveness on the part of anthropology, which everyone can resist with right as a violation of the respect due him” (*MM*, 258). Vattimo identifies the informational matrix of modernity in its dream of “absolute transparency,” a dream of perfected discourse networks that appears to have been realized today by the ubiquity of mass media and telecommunications but which was already palpably reshaping what it meant to be (a literate, European) human in 1800, as Friedrich Kittler’s analyses have evocatively demonstrated.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps Kant recoils from that prospect. Safely locating the actualization of

that vision of communicative rationality on a remote planet, he distances himself from the “offensive inquisitiveness” of “anthropology,” and from its pragmatic desire to transform the human into a set of phenomena without secrets. That the aliens also constitute the missing piece of the taxonomic puzzle of “man,” as I have argued, only enriches their curious role in the text, for without knowledge of them, Kant concedes, there is something about him that will always escape the inquisitive and inquisitorial eyes of the anthropologist. For that loss, there is abundant recompense. If alien sociality affords Kant’s readers an unsettling premonition of a world of rational beings for whom nothing about themselves remains out of sight, their invisibility to the gaze of the philosopher is what saves his anthropology from devolving into an empiricist science that claims punctually to name and know “man.” There *are* limits to the pragmatic goals of Kant’s project, limits which Kant characterizes not as epistemological but as ethical in kind: in an absolutely transparent society, rational beings know everything about each other *but* how to get along, how to act respectfully with one another.

Rather than being the principal sign of our humanity, as Rousseau had argued, amiability and self-disclosure, when taken to an extreme, prevent human beings from becoming the properly reserved and dutiful citizens of a cosmopolitan community. The extraterrestrial *polis*, with its weirdly *pot-latch* notion of the production and circulation of (intellectual) capital, is a parodic reversal of that taciturn polity. Its dreamy evocation and sharp rebuke remind us that the *Anthropology*, with its hypochondriacal attention to bodily and mental regimens, and to strategies of self-stylization for which the keeping of a secret stands as the exemplary instance of healthful and productive self-control, is part of the explosion of late eighteenth-century writings devoted to the consolidation of bourgeois subjectivity. It is, in other words, a conduct-book for the emerging Prussian middle class, written, as Kant says, not for “specialists”—a learned audience—but for the consumption and edification of the “general reading public” (*AP*, 6), that phantasmatic mirror in which the learned bourgeoisie typically affirms the normality, universality, and unanimity of its desires. As Foucault suggests, this class of writings inaugurates the age of “biopower,” with its emphasis on the technology of the body, “its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extor-



tion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls.”<sup>31</sup> As unlikely as it might at first appear, Kant’s book shares some of the same motivations as handbooks like *The Housewife in All her Occupations*, a manual on domestic affairs that Kant sent to his sister-in-law. (No doubt savvy in the gendered ways of biopower, she knew enough to thank him repeatedly for this earnest disciplinary gift.)<sup>32</sup> With its focus on the practicalities of men managing themselves and others, and in particular on the need for the government of what Foucault calls “the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations within a world where one is thrifty not only with one’s resources and riches, but also with one’s discourses and their significations,” the *Anthropology* might well have been called *Husbandry in All Its Occupations*.<sup>33</sup> Kant, after all, frames his dream of alien sociality with two warnings—“everyone in our race finds it advisable to be on his guard, and not to reveal himself completely” (*AP*, 250); and “it belongs to the concept of the species to explore the thoughts of others, but to conceal one’s own” (*AP*, 250)—that have particular significance in a mercantile social universe founded upon gaining advantages and on being the scrupulous proprietor of one’s capacities. The play of exploration and concealment that Kant finds lacking in the extraterrestrial community is what opens and constitutes the scrappy social order of exchange and debt, procurement and appropriation. Kant remembers Rousseau’s argument in the *Second Discourse* that the calculated withholding of one’s thoughts is among the “evils” that accompanied the invention of property: “For one’s own advantage,” Rousseau says, “one had to seem other than one in fact was. To be and to appear became two entirely different things, and from this distinction arose ostentatious display, deceitful cunning, and all the vices that follow in their train.”<sup>34</sup> But where Rousseau palpably regrets the deformations of the social body for which the power of dissimulation is at once a symptom and cause, Kant is somewhat less remorseful. Although he concedes that the need to husband one’s thoughts “betrays the tendency of our species to be evil-minded toward one another,” he is *pragmatically* more interested in advising his practical middle-class readers in the skills of successfully conducting their lives (*AP*, 250). If there is (or was) a world without property and without duplicity, it is

as fantastically removed from the concerns of “man” as the lives of the inhabitants of a distant planet. Meanwhile, here on earth, in thriving Königsberg—a center of political, intellectual, and commercial traffic as Kant points out in the opening paragraphs of the *Anthropology* (AP, 4-5)—being human, for better or for worse, has always meant remembering to be on guard, and not revealing too much. The last paragraph of the *Anthropology* goes on to make the case that the phenomenon of knowing the thoughts of one’s neighbor while concealing one’s own is, properly speaking, *constitutive* of “man,” an intrinsically “nice quality” that only “deteriorate[s] gradually from pretense to intentional deception” (AP, 251). The vampirically asymmetrical relationship with others that Kant insists is “part of the original composition of the species” thereby provides a phenomenological alibi for the structure of rapacious mercantilism and surplus value, the competitive process of the acquisition of goods without oneself becoming acquired as a good, and the consumption of things by rendering others as things. We might recall Kant’s personal stake in preserving the ownership rights of his thoughts; to the end of his career, he spoke as an entrepreneur who needed to protect the value of the most problematically private of private properties, the idea reproduced for public consumption.<sup>35</sup> Kant was categorical about the fact that “the unauthorized publishing of books is forbidden as a matter of Right.”<sup>36</sup> He vigorously championed the creation and the maintenance of intellectual property rights for authors, rights he saw wholly abrogated in the unregulated, Napster-like free-for-all that constituted the book trade at the end of the eighteenth century. Alien sociality, on the other hand, fails to recognize anything like the personal ownership of ideas: it belongs to the concept of their species to consume the thoughts of others, and to be *unable* to protect one’s own. Theirs is something resembling a *gift economy* in which the distinction between a theft and a purchase, as between production and consumption, so important to Kant as he forges a place in the publishing marketplace, has been rendered meaningless. Committed to giving up advantages and to the profligate circulation of words and ideas beyond calculation and commerce, the extraterrestrials cannot but seem economically other-worldly from a bourgeois point of view.

## THE DEATH AND LIFE OF LUXURY

The class inflection of Kant's position is confirmed when we consider his closing disavowal of the extraterrestrials in light of his criticism of the landed gentry in the *Anthropology's* opening pages. Because the nobility constitutes a social organization radically different from the one produced and policed by bio-power, its position vis-à-vis the *Anthropology* is problematic, to say the least. Do the aristocrats form part of the "general reading public"? Probably not, for as Kant declares before the project gets underway, they are presumed to be clubbily indifferent to the philosopher's good work. Kant retaliates by announcing that they are mostly irrelevant to him, reminding us that the politics of superiority for which he condemns the nobility is often indistinguishable from the politics with which he executes that condemnation. Kant: "the anthropologist finds himself in a very unfavorable position for judging the so-called *high society*, the world of aristocrats, because the aristocrats are too close together among themselves and too distant from everybody else" (*AP*, 4). Lying at the outer limits of the *Anthropology's* purview, then, the nobility is near enough to be rebuked but too far away from the project's resolutely bourgeois interests to be analyzed or managed advantageously. The impudent implication of Kant's remark is that the aristocrats are not quite human. The principal signs of their exotic difference from the family of "man"? Their suspiciously intimate sociality, and the way in which their easy intercourse sets them off from the rest of the working world. "Too close together among themselves, and too distant from everybody else," the nobility forms the very definition of extraterrestrial rational life.

The Germans, Kant regrets, have an anxiously self-abasing taste for that life; too many are what we would today call "royal watchers." Only a few pages before sighting the telepathic alien community, Kant chastises his contemporaries for their unreasonable "mania" for monarchical structures, their "inexhaustible" need to order the social body vertically according to a "ladder" of arbitrarily invented titles (*AP*, 235). This peculiarly *germanisch* fetish underlines for Kant the irrationality of attributing authority to creatures who behave as if they are not of this world, certainly not of the philoso-

pher's world of *Aufklärers* and of thinking for oneself. The time has come for the *Bürgertum* to tend to the disciplined administration of itself, and to forget the nobility. After all, as Kant establishes in the concluding pages of *The Doctrine of Right* (1797), the aristocracy is only "a temporary fraternity [*Zunftgenossenschaft*] authorized by the state, which must go along with the circumstances of the time" (*MM*, 174; VII, 177). For generations, the nobility had claimed what Foucault calls "the special character of its body, but in the form of *blood*, that is, in the form of the antiquity of its ancestry and of the value of its alliances" (*HS*, 124). "[T]he circumstances of the time"—the desire for democratic reform, the self-affirmation of the bourgeoisie—call on the contrary for a true and lasting "fraternity," one grounded in reason and the moral law rather than lineage, and maintained through meritorious work rather than inherited privilege.

But the aristocrats of the Holy Roman Empire are only part of the problem; Kant is troubled by *all* communities that appear to be constituted like sects. Christian enthusiasts, philosophical mystagogues, affluent and impoverished blue-bloods: in *On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy* (1796), all are subject to his forceful condemnation, because all are jealously protective of the putative "secrets" that bind them together. Kant: "Who does not see here the mystagogue—the one who does not merely rave on his own but at the same time is a club member [*Klubbist*] and, when he speaks to his disciples, in contrast to the people (among whom all uninitiated are to be counted), acts *superior* with his supposed philosophy!"<sup>37</sup> Even those who profess political equality can harbor a form of crypto-monarchism: "[T]he egalitarians of the political constitution," Kant argues, "are not only those who, in accordance with Rousseau, want all citizens of a State to be equal to one another, because each is all, but also egalitarians who want everyone to equate with one another, because they are all nothing except One and who are [therefore] monarchists out of envy; conscious of their own inability to think on their own, sometimes they exalt Plato on the throne and sometimes Aristotle in order not to suffer a despised comparison with those who are currently alive" (*ON*, 57–58 n2). The admirable precision of Kant's formulation, his prescient sense of the dialectic of Enlightenment, is worth remarking: democracy is menaced not only by the nobility, but also and more

pressingly from within by a seductive imposter with which it could all too easily become confused in the aftermath of the French Revolution. As Kant suggests, the cosmopolitan community of being-in-common competes with an other species of egalitarianism, namely the communion of the *Volk* as the “One.”<sup>38</sup> This convocation around an imagined singularity is fueled by a *ressentiment* that expresses itself in an “aristocratic” nihilism, a will to self-dissolution that doubles as an obscene self-affirmation. For every “One” there must of necessity be the “Many,” the vulgar foreigners whose violent, arbitrary, and reiterated disavowal will always be deemed essential to preserving the integrity and self-sameness of the “One.” Kant recognizes that an entire people can be mobilized around this dream of auto-affection, and knows from experience with the nobility that this dream is indistinguishable from a disdain for the others within and without its pristine body. Perhaps thinking of Kant, Freud will argue that an aristocraticism underwrites the self-assertion of all societies, for, as he says, once having formed a “narcissistic ideal” of itself, “every culture claims the right to look down on the rest.”<sup>39</sup> From Kant’s perspective, this exclusionary condescension, the anathema—in principle—of cosmopolitanism, can only mean that one aristocracy has replaced another. He consequently winces at the “Jacobin” and proto-fascistic prospect of the cult of culture, just as he disavows the envious egalitarians whom he imagines living as a single, telepathically linked organism on another planet. In both cases, citizens live “too close together” for Kant’s comfort. This squeamishness about proximity will require further analysis, but for now it is important to emphasize that what is intolerable to Kant, what most calls for a dietetics of spirit and flesh in his last works, is the seemingly universal impulse toward aristocratic idleness: the inability or unwillingness of citizens—whether egalitarians or noble persons—to think for themselves springs from an allergy to sober *industry* and an addiction to leisure. The noble families of the Holy Roman Empire are simply the most garish and galling instance of that studied indolence, setting a bad example for the many Germans who, to Kant’s chagrin, cannot stop chattering about them. As he claims in *On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone*, “It lies not merely in the natural laziness but also in the vanity of human beings . . . that those who *have a living*, whether it be a wealthy or a poor one, consider themselves

*superior* in comparison to those who must work” (ON, 52). In other words, what *really* separates the aristocrats from all other human beings is neither their inherited privileges nor their slothfulness, as dismaying as those traits were to Kant; it is rather that they believe themselves to be quite above labor. As a class constituting itself primarily around leisure, the nobility consume goods and services, and do so in an ostentatiously conspicuous manner (that the emerging bourgeoisie will soon appropriate to themselves), but they *produce* nothing; even their titles, Kant maintains, are given to them to use as they will. Late in his life, Kant saw, or thought he saw, luxuriating “aristocrats” everywhere, whether in the wilds of Arabia, or among “the forest people of the *Tunguses*,” or on cultured streets of Königsberg: “all think themselves superior to the degree that they believe themselves exempt from work” (ON, 52). Kant is so offended and fascinated by the spectacle of this absolution from employment that he returns to it four times in the opening paragraph of his text, as if willfully to fill that void with the labored work of its righteous denunciation.<sup>40</sup>

Kant is hardly alone in this emphasis on the dignity of work, and on its fundamental importance to *Bildung* and to the cultural formation of a still amorphous middle class.<sup>41</sup> But otherwise quite different late texts, such as *On a Newly Arisen Tone*, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, and the *Anthropology*, share an underlying interest in securing a significant role specifically for *philosophical* work within a German public sphere now increasingly made over into the image of the bourgeoisie. Kant expresses this pragmatic desire for a habitus of philosophy in the new world order not only negatively in the form of an attack on the spectacular indolence of the aristocracy, but also positively by recalibrating his late publications for the consumption and edification of a non-learned audience. In this endeavor, he resembles Wordsworth, who, as Tilottama Rajan argues, “tried to make a place for poetry in bourgeois culture” by employing a diction really spoken by men.<sup>42</sup> Analyzing the evolution of the poet’s conception of self-fashioning, Clifford Siskin similarly argues that Romanticism marks the point at which the notion of work was “rewritten from that which a true gentleman does not have to do, to the primary activity informing adult identity; the tales that tell of it and the features associated with it were altered to produce the myth of

vocation. This was not just a work ethic, for it made work more than necessary; it made work desirable—and necessary for personal happiness.”<sup>43</sup> Kant's *Anthropology* at once investigates and exemplifies this reconfigured notion of human labor from a bourgeois point of view. As a treatise devoted to the task of analyzing what “man” actively makes of himself, it could only be felt as a harsh rebuke to the aristocrats whom he had attacked less than two years before as the “men” who passively “have a living,” and who are therefore perversely unwilling to make anything of themselves.

In Kant's old age, the university became a battleground in which the future of philosophy in that world would be decided, caught as it was between being a medieval institution of aristocratically sanctioned privilege and becoming an institution worthy of European modernity, largely devoted to training up an emerging managerial class. With *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant weighs in on the debate by linking matters of university governance and the curriculum to the question of the social role of the philosopher within a rational(ized) culture serving the interests of governmental power. As the university becomes more integrated into the Prussian state apparatus, Kant sees a clash between the social responsibilities of philosophy and the “higher” faculties that more readily lend themselves to the administrative requirements of the bourgeoisie. The quarrel about the precedence of philosophy is a competition not only for the minds but also for the purses of the students, who, as Schiller argued, were divided between “the *Brotgelehrte* (literally, bread-scholars) and the *philosophischer Kopf* (the philosophical mind), with the difference being that between the student who comes to the university to learn some skills in order to enter a profession (the *Brotgelehrte*) and the student who comes solely from the love of learning (the *philosophischer Kopf*).”<sup>44</sup> In *The Conflict of the Faculties* Kant argues that the research of the right-minded philosopher exemplarily transcends the interestedness of the members of the managerial classes and the faculties that serve them, but it is revealing that he concludes by offering these same members—this, in a conspicuously autobiographical manner—a dietetics of body and mind that resembles so much of the experientially referenced social work of the *Anthropology*.<sup>45</sup> In other words, Kant certainly sees a problem for the future of philosophy amid the competing “higher”

faculties of theology, medicine, and law, and he responds to this crisis by vigorously making a case for its necessary “autonomy . . . to judge freely (according to principles of thought in general).”<sup>46</sup> But he also sees an opportunity to find a less remote habitus for that work in the new world order, modulating his voice so that he begins the text as the philosopher who seeks to police the boundaries between knowledge-workers and “the businesspeople, or technicians of learning” (CF, 248), but he *ends* the text as the pragmatic anthropologist addressing a readership that falls indeterminately between or perhaps across the “civil” and “learned” communities with which Kant identifies the “higher” and “lower” faculties respectively. Kant’s conclusion, written as a series of plain-speaking and personal observations on subjects ranging from “hypochondria” to “sleeping” and “eating,” instead registers his strong solidarity with the interests, the anxieties, and the dailiness of the “general reading public.” Nowhere are those interests more clearly aligned, both in *The Conflict of the Faculties* and in the *Anthropology*, than in Kant’s desire to make middle-class life, through an orthopedics of its thrifty prolongation, into a kind of work.<sup>47</sup> As Foucault argues, this is the class signifier that sets the bourgeois body off from that of the aristocrat (HS, 124). But the *pathos* with which *The Conflict of the Faculties* ends is especially arresting, as if Kant were appealing on an affective level for the mixing of the public and private roles of reason that his theoretical articulations on the same subject otherwise forbid. In the form of his *Diätetik*, Kant plays physician to the physicians, and to all those who would seek a panacea from them without considering the succor “that philosophy, or the spirit of philosophy, can give” (CF, 313). Yet Kant can offer no ultimate reassurances, and, indeed, subjects his own “medical” claims to the most corrosive of ironies: “Why do I prolong a feeble life to an extraordinary age by self-denial,” he asks, “and by my example confuse the obituary list, which is based on the average of those who are more frail by nature and calculated on their life expectancy?” (CF, 326). In other words, Kant’s strange trans-disciplinary conclusion reconfigures *The Conflict of the Faculties*, transforming it, on the fly, as it were, *from* a text that is committed, as Rajan has argued, to keeping the heterogeneous knowledges of the “lower” faculty “under control,” *to* a text whose frankly speculative and exploratory last pages evoke a “Kant” who



seems quizzically open to—and all but overcome by—this heterogeneity in the form of his own degrading bodily processes and unpredictable psychic life.<sup>48</sup> As the self-consciously experimental subject of his own self-fashioning, is Kant speaking in the “public” mode of reason as a philosopher or in the “private” mode as a dutiful citizen? Does he exemplify biopower or a care of the self? No unequivocal answers are forthcoming as the text trails off into a note in which Kant describes strange apparitions haunting his sight. “Now, where was I? Where did I come from? [*Wovon ging ich aus?*]” (CF, 325; VII 428), he asks at one point in this free-wheeling reflection on the strengths as well as limitations of “the power of the human mind to master its morbid feelings merely by a firm resolution” (CF, 314). But the question is itself very suggestive, not least for putting to us that the indeterminate place from which he speaks at that moment cannot, strictly speaking, be located in either the “lower” or “higher” faculty.<sup>49</sup>

Viewed from the perspective of its equivocal allegiances, *The Conflict of the Faculties* is then what de Man would call “a text that pretends to designate a crisis when it is, in fact, itself the crisis to which it refers.”<sup>50</sup> What Kant treats as a disciplinary and societal question of the differing imperatives of the faculties is also a professional and vocational, not to say personal, question for a philosopher whose faculty and faculties are felt to be in a state of emergency. In *On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone* Kant outlines how the body of German philosophy has been infected with the pleasure-seeking idleness and condescension that makes it structurally indistinguishable from the actual aristocracy. Kant is palpably dismayed by having to compete for the attention of readers in a European intellectual scene that is crowded with faux philosophers claiming that “one need not work but only listen to and enjoy the oracle within oneself in order to bring all the wisdom envisioned with philosophy into one’s possession” (ON, 52). These pretenders are the newest and most subtle form of nobility, and thus, from a bourgeois point of view, “semi-citizens” who threaten to marginalize philosophy at the moment that Kant seeks to secure its pragmatic place.<sup>51</sup> “Under the influence of a higher *feeling*,” they treat knowledge as if it were a drug to be hungrily consumed in an act of private pleasure rather than a rational object of sustained work and subjected to the scrutiny of public

discussion. The “would-be” philosophers pose the same threat to work as that of intoxicants in general, namely “a pleasure that is at once solitary, desocializing, and yet contagious for the socius”—as Derrida notes in another context.<sup>52</sup> And like an addict, the mystagogues represent the limit case of something like commodity fetishism, devouring the oracular visions that they also produce. Kant responds by arguing for philosophical temperance and sociality, but he consistently sets that scene of sobriety and comradeship in mercantile terms. Why? The discourses of a market economy and those of philosophical value stray toward each other in ways that encourage us to read each through the other. Briefly, on the one hand, in their ravenous individualism the philosophers of feeling embody the rapaciousness of uninhibited consumption, once symptomatic only of the luxurious aristocracy, as I have argued, but soon to be quality of life that the bourgeoisie would ambivalently assume for itself. In calling for the eradication of such vice in the mystagogues, Kant uses a philosophical register to express an anxiety about the *Bürgertum* in which he hopes the faculty of philosophy will play an important part. John Guillory smartly describes this discomfort as “the uneasiness of the first consumer society with the lack of any systematic regulation of consumption.”<sup>53</sup> Guillory argues that the European bourgeoisie introduces the “work of art” and the “faculty of taste” into the realm of consumption as a way of superintending its excesses from within, as a form of governing without government, but I would suggest that texts like *On a Newly Arisen Tone* put to us that the “work” of the “faculty of philosophy” plays a roughly analogous role, epitomizing for the bourgeoisie the value of consumption tempered by laborious production. On the other hand, in bringing a mercantile language to bear on the problem of European philosophy, Kant expresses his desire for philosophy’s place in the self-affirmation of the *Bürgertum*. This is the cut of Kant’s language that I want to explore briefly here.

The devolution of hard thinking into pleasurable feelings and intuitions, and the replacement of the dialectic by the effortless reception of “supernatural communications (mystical illumination)” [*übernatürliche Mitteilung (mystische Erleuchtung)*] (*ON*, 62; *VI*, 487) breeds a monarchial contempt among the community of thinkers, dividing it from itself and therefore

risking its further relegation to the borders of the public sphere: “Yet no one but the philosopher of *intuition*, who does not demonstrate his power through the Herculean labor of self-knowledge, which goes from the bottom up, but shows his power, as he flies above all labor, through an apotheosis that comes from above and that *costs him nothing*—no one but this philosopher can come up with the notion of action *superior*, because, being up there, he speaks from his own viewpoint, and so he is not bound to speak with anyone” (ON, 53; emphasis mine). Who is it that Kant, his feet firmly planted on terra firma, sees when he looks “up” into the heavens? Who are the noble denizens of that other-worldly place where philosophers can afford to eschew the “labor” of “the discursive understanding,” indulging instead in the telepathic powers of “an intellectual intuition [that] would immediately present the object and grasp it all at once” (ON, 51)? Count Friedrich Leopold zu Stolberg, for one: a nobleman who happened also to be a “Plato-enthusiast,” Stolberg constitutes a double threat to Kant’s enterprise, being twice removed from the concerns of the philosophical *Bürgertum* by virtue of his high social status and his Christian mysticism.<sup>54</sup> (One gets the sense that if Stolberg had not existed, Kant would have had to invent him.) On earth, Kant informs us, nothing is without “cost,” the dearest item being philosophy itself. Those who profess the “exalting vision” [*schwärmerische Vision*] and the mystical communication, those who imagine that they can transcend the surly defile of words and work, and who therefore claim to soar above the labored exchanges of teaching, reading, and writing, these other-worldly creatures spell nothing less than the “death of philosophy” (ON, 62). Kant’s judgment of his colleagues, his “comrades in the guild” [*Zunftgenossen*] (ON, 58; VI, 483), is insistent: the visionaries claim to apprehend “truth,” but because they fail to subject it to the exchanges of labor and cost, where its true merit or value might be produced and determined, what they do cannot be treated as *work*. Naturally, Kant witnesses this negative transformation with considerable alarm. His denunciation of the faculty of philosophy’s self-darkening reminds us of what goes without saying less than two years later in the *Anthropology*; namely, whatever else the telepathic aliens represent (and I am arguing that they represent a great many things), they are a rational community *without philosophy*. They are what a

community looks like in the total absence of its sober work, a socius entirely given over to the madness of consumption.

Kant wants only of course to prolong the *life* of philosophy, and it cannot be an accident that so much of his last work models that hope in the form of tending to the self-fashioning—i.e., the life—of his bourgeois readers. Kant will not confuse or “mistune” his fellows with mystical visions, and instead reassures those purchasing his books and working with his prosaic words that under his “shop-sign” [*Aushängeschilder*] (*ON*, 69; VI, 493) only the straight goods will be created and sold.<sup>55</sup> Like the aristocrats, the philosophers of feeling are answerable to no one. Kant invites his bourgeois readers to consider the inequities of the newly arisen tone in philosophy in class terms as a problem in governing the value of cultural capital; the mystagogues, he writes, “can henceforth speak in the tone of a lord who is so lofty as to be exempted from the burden of proving the title of his property (*beati possidentes*)” (*ON*, 58). It is not so much the illegality as the *paralegality* of the philosophical nobility’s claims that troubles Kant and that he assumes—hopes—will also dismay his non-noble and litigious audience; too far from everyone else, the mystagogues conduct philosophy as if the truth of truth were a deeply private and personal matter *to the side of* the public mechanisms by which knowledge-capital is properly constituted, regulated, and distributed. “Think for yourself” here means less “Take possession of your ideas” than “Fit yourself into a public economy of knowledge capital where claiming title to intellectual property is intelligible.” “*Beati possidentes*” [i.e., “Blessed are those who have (for they shall receive)”], Kant says, thereby giving his blessing to the system of propertied exchange which guarantees the life and worth of philosophy. That the “would-be” philosophers were themselves often professors only raises the stakes, both for “truth” and for the role of the university as the primary location of these mechanisms. How do these fantasists establish their credentials, much less the value of their assertions outside of the political economy of the faculty of philosophy, or worse, *within* that faculty as its fraudulent double? The very thought baffles Kant, and he assumes it baffles his readers, some of whom might well have been surprised to know that the father of disinterestedness has a lesson to teach about the shared interests of the professoriate and the merchant class in preserving

and extending the value-producing mechanisms—and thus the constitutive inequities—of the realm of consumption.

In speaking the way that they do, so loftily superior to others, so tonally inappropriate, the aristocratic philosophers disrupt the knowledge economy of the university, based as it is on the tuned exchange of linguistic capital, or what Guillory calls “a socially credentialed and therefore valued speech.”<sup>56</sup> Kant’s litigious desire here is to teach the “would-be” philosophers a lesson in what comes from failing tonally to write philosophy in something like “Standard Philosophical German.” “At bottom, all philosophy is indeed prosaic,” he insists, “and the suggestion that we should now start to philosophize poetically would be just as welcome as the suggestion that a businessman should in the future no longer write his account books in prose but in verse” (ON, 72). Kant’s analogy says as much about the underlying similarities between the salaried work of the philosopher and that of the merchant-class as it does about the difference between philosophy and poetry: in point of fact, he relies upon an existing association of poetry with aristocratic luxury in order to confirm a homology between the ways in which philosophical and non-philosophical work are properly valued. But the “mis-tuned heads” of the philosophers do not make them illiterates; nor are their pronouncements without value. What Kant finds most threatening is that the mystagogues have attracted an enraptured spectatorship, and that they have established a *competing* knowledge economy that can only appeal to the analogously rapacious, individualistic desires of the *Bürgertum*. Kant does *not* object to the concentration of knowledge capital as such; on the contrary, the consistent metaphorical identification of knowledge with property and ownership assumes as a given the legality of its unequal apportionment. In other words, no attempt is made to oppose aristocratic opulence to a democratic communitarianism of ideas; the abolishment of intellectual property rights is, as we have seen from the telepathic community in the *Anthropology*, the stuff of a science fiction dystopia. What irks him is instead the apparent abolishment of the right of the faculty of philosophy (as Kant conceives of this saliently phantasmatic projection) to protect and patrol those rights, and thus its chance to control the means of the consumption and production of its knowledge-capital. Not for nothing does

Kant momentarily consider summoning the “police,” as if the crisis of legitimation he was facing were indeed a matter bound for the civil courts, a question of unfair trading practices and consumer fraud. As Derrida remarks, this “police in the realm of the sciences” [*die Polizei im Reiche der Wissenschaften*] (ON, 69; VI, 493) “will have to stay vigilant to suppress—symbolically—not only the individuals who improperly adorn themselves with the title of philosopher, who take hold of and bedeck themselves with the overlordly tone in philosophy, but also those who flock around them: for that haughtiness with which one settles on the peaks of metaphysics, that wordy arrogance, is contagious: it gives rise to aggregations, congregations, and chapels” (ONAT, 130). Kant stages a sober counter-scene to these frightening mobs, and gives thanks to the aristocratic philosophers who defect, and, as it were, climb down from their high horses so that they too can philosophize dutifully, in a civic-minded and even dully familiar manner. Praise is due to those who were lost but now are found to be mingling with the shopkeepers and merchants, strolling the bustling streets of Königsberg “in the same shoes of *bürgerlichen* equality” (ON, 57; VI, 482). A franker image of complacent middle-class self-consolidation played out at the expense of aristocratic forms of sociality, not to mention Kant’s unqualified accession to its normative values, would be difficult to imagine. The *Bürgertum* does not need to colonize the other classes; rather it can wait for them to come to it . . . once these others have come to their senses. Still, zero tolerance will be shown to those who perversely continue to put on superior airs, who thereby “lift themselves above *their comrades in the guild*” [*Zunftgenossen*] (ON, 58).

The complexity of Kant’s desire for a philosophical habitus in the new social order of producers and consumers resonates perhaps most revealingly in the choice of this turn of phrase, *Zunftgenossen*, a term that allows Kant to negotiate with class divisions without abandoning their clarifying and self-consolidating force. He gives it typographical emphasis, and well he might, for it is an overdetermined trope with which to figure the exemplary sociality and arduousness of the philosophical work that the “would-be philosophers,” at their peril, have shunned. We might begin by recalling that the first constitution ever assumed by a German state identifies the guilds,

along with serfdom, aristocratic privilege, closed courts, and summary trials as the disfiguring remnants of a social order that impedes the fulfillment of what it calls the “emancipatory promises of the revolutionary age.”<sup>57</sup> The guilds are the laboring collectivities that have yet to be brought fully under the increasingly rationalized legal-administrative aegis of the Prussian state.<sup>58</sup> Kant’s term therefore has a somewhat stagily anachronistic feel because it recalls the university political culture of professorial guilds that had strangled the German-speaking universities, the very fraternities that a new breed of education reformers, administrators, and researching teachers (the latter appointed—in theory at least—on the basis of merit not privilege) would shortly attempt to dismantle. Hegel and Friedrich Niethammer will count themselves among these reformers, as will Schelling and Fichte, who, while at Jena, found a “Kant Club” to compete with the existing professorial fraternities.<sup>59</sup> *Zunftgenossen*: it is as if through this word Kant partly shelters the philosophical faculty from the rationalized ethos of this coming social order, not so much nostalgically longing for the return of the university’s feudal past as hoping that there will be a habitus for philosophy’s particular form of work in the disciplinary regimes and emergent practices of the future. How *does* the solitary and exploratory labor of the university professor fit into a universe of production and consumption? Nietzsche always said that Kant’s great “secret” was that he remained an aristocrat at heart—it takes one to know one, I guess—pretending to speak to the general reading public, but in fact writing only for a small coterie of philosophers, his comrades in the guild.<sup>60</sup> To say that Kant hopes not to appear as an aristocrat is of course an understatement, and for that reason too, paradoxically enough, *Zunftgenossen* also serves his purposes. As if in a showy disavowal of aristocratic privilege, Kant claims through the use of this term a solidarity with the smaller, home-town artisanal communities. It is in these guilds, as Marx notes, that the “petty bourgeoisie” is concentrated, those who will quickly find themselves “bow[ing] to the might of the great merchants and manufacturers.”<sup>61</sup> But the guilds in still economically backward Prussia are not yet in precipitous decline, making them more readily available to Kant’s self-stylization here. So anxious is he to dis-identify with the “higher class,” he tries passing as a member of a “lower” one, about which he had some

small knowledge. He thereby figures himself, if only ironically, as sharing in the commonality of like-minded men going about their daily work. That work is imagined to possess a certain intensity and satisfaction and, above all, integral *usefulness* to the operations of the socius that Kant then attributes more or less self-consciously to himself and those like him. Saddle-maker (like Kant's accomplished father), baker, wheel-wright, . . . philosopher: all workers whose labor is imagined to take place in "an idealized preindustrial workspace of task orientation, work continuity, and the relatively meaningful choice of tasks based on perceptible need and aptitude."<sup>62</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, whose words I recall here, points out that even today it is possible to fantasize about an association between intellectual and artisanal work; the patent false consciousness of such a cross-class invention may not entirely negate its usefulness in thinking about the curious specificity of (tenured) academic labor. What is clear to Kant is that the philosophers of feeling abandon membership in the enduring and sociable fraternity of workers, preferring instead the "temporary co-fraternity" of the mystagogues and their followers. Kant's motivation is to claim that publicly minded intellectuals, far from living in ivory towers, *labor* for a living, contrary to popular opinion. His identification with *Zunftgenossen* belies an underlying anxiety, familiar to certain privileged university workers today: namely, how easily those towers might be mistaken for the castles and great houses of a shiftless nobility.

The aristocrat Stolberg remains curiously unnamed in *On a Newly Arisen Tone*, as if he has hoisted himself so far from his colleagues in the guild that his name no longer matters, just his aristocratic pretensions. Or perhaps the mere pronunciation of his rank risked mimicking the addictive "mania" for titles that he will shortly diagnose in the *Anthropology* as the "German" problem. But Stolberg is not the only would-be philosopher whose name will not be spoken. There is of course the other "Emanuel," namely Swedenborg, the dark angel with whom Kant had struggled many years before in *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* (1766), and whom he characterizes as an exemplary instance of "fanaticism" in the *Anthropology* (84). Swedenborg is arguably the original aristocratic deviant for Kant, upon whom the philosopher will still be modeling outlaws like Stolberg at the end of his life. He is a fascinating charlatan



whose strange case history frames Kant's investigation into the ways in which metaphysics and intuitional mysticism are the recto and verso of the same *méconnaissance*. What especially attracts and offends Kant is Swedenborg's claim that he was in telepathic intercourse with the spirit world, and it is here in particular that we glimpse the beginnings of his sensitivity to the absence of work. "The enormous distance between the rational inhabitants of the world is . . . from the point of view of the spirit-universe, as nothing," Kant writes, trying to keep a straight face: "it is [as] easy for him to converse with an inhabitant of the planet Saturn, as it is with the soul of a human being who has died" (ss, 350). Böhme and Böhme are certainly right to suggest that Kant returns to this fantastic scene of unmediated communication when he imagines the telepathic aliens.<sup>63</sup> The focus of Kant's incredulity and impatience is then what it will be many years later, the luxurious ease of these supposed exchanges. And it is worth noting that the intelligent creatures of Saturn, as with all spirit-seers, have so profoundly exempted themselves from labor that they know nothing even of *the work of mourning*.<sup>64</sup> They communicate with the dead as freely as if they were the living; impossibly, they forget nothing and no one. In an age that witnesses the birth of the clinic, Kant's decisive response to Swedenborg's claim to commune with the farthest reaches of the *geistig* universe "by means of an immediate intuition" (ss, 350) is predictable enough: the man, he summarily announces, is a "candidate for the asylum" (ss, 335). Faced with philosophical suspects at the end of the century, as I have noted, Kant thinks less of calling a doctor and more about contacting the police. Hospital ward and prison yard: these are the institutional spaces in which subjects are most efficiently patrolled within the limits of reason alone. In a gesture that we already have seen in *On a Newly Arisen Tone*, Kant counters Swedenborg's aristocratic indolence, his mad abstention from the proper work of philosophy, with a claim to be part of the mercantile world of laborers, communicating not through immediate intuition but via the mediation of the discourse networks of the day, including, inevitably, the cash nexus: of his own daydreams, Kant promises, "I have made a faithful selection, offering it to the reader who is careful of his comfort and his purse (he may not be *that* ready to satisfy his curiosity by sacrificing £7 sterling)" (ss, 353). Kant's

strange vision of the aliens in the *Anthropology* puts to us that, thirty years later, he is still looking “up there,” frowning impatiently at the spectacle of thinkers who do not think, the would-be philosophers for whom knowledge appears, inexplicably, to cost nothing.<sup>65</sup>

#### ALIENS AND THEIR EFFECTS AT A DISTANCE

Does the anthropologist write anything other than confessions?

—Claude Lévi-Strauss, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Founder of the Sciences of Man”

“Too close among themselves”: both the communitarian desire to reveal oneself completely to others and the belief in unmediated forms of communication are often felt by Kant to be a kind of alien and “feminine” impulse against which “man” is obliged heroically to strive. With no space of separation, no chance to be alone with one’s thoughts without their always already being publicized (the aliens, we might recall, are said to speak their minds even when they are asleep), Kant reasons, there could be no *peace*. But most damagingly—both the source and expression of this unruliness—there can be no “respect,” a term, of course, whose rigorous reconfiguration in the philosopher’s work could not be overestimated, especially around the questions of community and sincerity. “Unless they are all as pure as angels, we cannot conceive how they would be able to live at peace with each other, how anyone could have any respect for anyone else, and how they could get along with each other” (*AP*, 250). Kant renders this judgment so summarily, so self-evidently, as if what were being violated here were a kind of law: an excess of fellowship *necessarily* means the abrogation of duty and the destruction of fellowship.

Kant’s somewhat phobic reaction to the imagined intimacies of the aliens, as indeed to the aristocrats that they appear to resemble, directly recalls arguments about the dangers of familiarity that he makes in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, a text for which (as Sarah Kofman suggests) the *Anthropology* could be seen as an “addendum or appendix.”<sup>66</sup> Excessive familiarity, like “woman” in Hegel, is “the everlasting irony of the community,” the primary

source of its internal (dis)integration.<sup>67</sup> The “kingdom of ends” or “corpus mysticum,” the ideal socius that Kant always characterizes as the triumph over all that is womanly and creaturely, is on the other hand a community in which the desire for intimacy exactly matches the need for distance:

In speaking of laws of duty (not laws of nature) and, among these, of laws for men's external relations with one another, we consider ourselves in a moral (intelligible) world where, by analogy with the physical world, *attraction* and *repulsion* bind together rational beings (on earth). The principle of *mutual love* admonishes men constantly to *come closer* to one another; that of the *respect* they owe one another to keep themselves *at a distance* from one another; and should one of these great moral forces fail, “then nothingness (immorality), with gaping throat, would drink up the whole kingdom of (moral) beings like a drop of water.” (*MM*, 243-4)

The oddly visceral figure to which Kant resorts suggests that what is at stake here is felt as well as known.<sup>68</sup> Kant's “analogy with the physical world” implies that a properly civil society is one whose members feel equally the obligation to love and to respect one another—that is, simultaneously to draw closer together and to stay separated from each other. In finessing such an equilibrium, human beings honor and reproduce a balance that also characterizes the nature of things. This, even though Kant's peculiar parenthetical aside—“on earth”—leaves open the question of whether or to what degree rational beings on other worlds are subject to these same “universal” principles. Kant seems to say that the two moral-natural forces are equal, but the remainder of his argument puts to us that one is more equal than the other, since the desire for intimacy is always the graver threat and the shorter route to being swallowed up by vice. It is a threat with which Kant consistently associates unmediated forms of communication and social interaction, going so far as to claim that under certain conditions sympathy can be a kind of social dis-ease that spreads like an infection. Between men, there are two kinds of sympathy, Kant suggests, one which strengthens an individual's moral powers, the other only dissipating them in a waste of shame. This latter or “unfree” form of community, which Kant traces to a

spontaneous “susceptibility . . . to feel joy and sadness in others,” “can be called *communicable* (since it is like the susceptibility to warmth or contagious diseases), and also compassion, since it spreads naturally among men living near one another” (*MM*, 250). Much could be said about the philosopher’s complex pathogenic figure of transmissibility, not the least being the way in which it is all but overtaken by its corporeal ground: are the proximate (male) bodies that Kant evokes a metaphor for improper forms of communication or are they precisely the sites and conditions of such intimacies? Moreover, there is a telling confusion between compassion as the cause and as the effect of the sickness of sympathy; that is, do men who otherwise “healthily” resist opening themselves to the feelings of other men spontaneously *become* ill in close quarters (as in the military, for example), or is this a sickness whose chief symptom is the desire to come together? It is possible here to see the outlines of a particularly modern incoherence about homosociality, one requiring it to be both infectious and innate, pathological and natural. Kant’s revulsion for the body and its effects becoming the basis for the inappropriate circulation of signs—here, literally, the transmission of feelings, *tele-pathos*—is presumably rooted in his suspicions about same-sex desire. In an earlier section of *The Metaphysics of Morals* he had denounced such desire as a dehumanizing vice that needed to be “repudiated completely” (*MM*, 96), but Kant’s queer rhetoric at the text’s conclusion reminds us that the prospect of an absolute disavowal of the phenomenon of “warm brothers” [*warme Brüder*] does not yet lie within the philosopher’s grasp.<sup>69</sup>

Kant’s imagined intimacies between men become all the more intriguing once he turns his attention from more general considerations of the principles and problems of civil society to the question of what he calls “the Most Intimate Union of Love with Respect in Friendship” (*MM*, 261). Significantly, it is the subject with which *The Metaphysics of Morals* concludes. As Derrida notes, Kant’s “formidably complex” remarks contain “not the slightest allusion to woman, nor even to sexual difference.”<sup>70</sup> Kant’s model for the kingdom of ends is here resolutely homosocial.<sup>71</sup> Comparing sympathetic relationships of love to the dutiful relationships of friendship, he finds the latter much more satisfactory, since it is only in friendship that the amorous

desire for reciprocal control is checked and corrected by an assertion of difference and resistance. Properly constituted friendships demand a carefully regulated play between domination and submission:

Although it is sweet to feel in such possession of each other as approaches fusion into one person, friendship is something so delicate (*teneritas amicitiae*) that it is never for a moment safe from interruptions if it is allowed to rest on feelings, and if this mutual sympathy and self-surrender are not subjected to principles or rules preventing excessive familiarity and limiting mutual love by requirements of respect. Such interruptions are common among uncultivated people, although they do not always result in a split (for the rabble fight and make up). (*MM*, 262)

Excessive intimacy is unsafe because it breeds the same disorderliness that Kant finds contemptuous among the aliens. The rabble—yet another phobic figure for men that “are too close together among themselves” (*AP*, 4)—are here made to feel Kant’s added censure for having the audacity to succumb to fusional love (and thus, according to the law that declares *immoderate love means war*, necessarily to quarrel), but then not to dissolve completely from its internal dissent. Monstrous social organism, this *ignobile vulgus*; like a polypus or a body without organs, it can be rent but not killed. When Kant speaks of “cultivated people,” as he does on the previous page, the question of friendship and class difference is still pressing, but differently modulated:

For love can be regarded as attraction and respect as repulsion, and if the principle of love bids friends to draw closer, the principle of respect requires them to stay a proper distance from each other. This limitation on intimacy, which is expressed in the rule that even the best of friends should not make themselves too familiar with each other, contains a maxim that holds not only for the superior in relation to the inferior but also in reverse. (*MM*, 261)

The friendships of the underclass had earlier attracted Kant’s interested disgust; here, on the other hand, friendships *within* or *across* an unspecified social difference call for social and mental hygiene. What is remarkable is

not so much that “a maxim” holds equally for a superior’s friendship with an inferior as well as inferior’s with a superior, as that the question of management is raised around what Foucault calls an “isomorphism” of homosocial relation at all.<sup>72</sup> In other words, at the precise moment that Kant imagines the “most intimate union of love with respect in friendship,” it is a particular form of friendship, with its own noble history—the fondness between men of distinctly different social stations—that catches his eye, and that most obviously calls for a courtship practice, a moral reflection, and a philosophical asceticism. Without paying attention to the practice of a certain social and mental hygiene, such relations collapse the space of the ethical, not only making “the respect of the other” impossible but also leading precipitously to the social disintegration that he also imagines tearing the alien community apart. The kingdom of ends requires loving and dutiful friends who are up to the rigors of distance and difference. It is a rigor that *The Metaphysics of Morals* explicitly identifies with the ability not only to keep a secret, but also with the prudent sharing of those secrets within a small circle of like-minded men. What might those secrets be? Kant does not say—or rather, he does not say, in the manner of those disrespectful aliens, everything that is or could be on his mind.

The primary figure for that intimate—but not too intimate—gathering in the *Anthropology* is the dinner party, a bourgeois fantasy of scrupulously managed conversation—“the good meal in good company” (AP, 186)—among men for which alien sociality can only be a violent parody.<sup>73</sup> If non-terrestrial rational beings resemble anyone, they resemble women, for whom keeping a secret is impossible—unless it is the secret of themselves:

The man is easy to fathom; but the woman does not reveal her secret, although she keeps another person’s secret poorly (because of her loquacity).  
(AP, 217)

Kant’s axiomatic claim crosses openness with privacy in a strange chiasma of sexual difference. On the one hand, “man” is a (mostly) open and re-readable book. The *Anthropology* in its intimate details is the proof of that legibility. But therein lies a threat; “the wish to spy upon oneself,” and therefore

to focus on all the things that might more prudently remain overlooked, is not only “a disease of the mind,” namely “hypochondria” (*AP*, 17), but also the very malady with which the *Anthropology* constantly flirts, with its odd pre-occupations and fussy attention to the nature of the man named “Kant.” “Man” cannot be too open and surrender too much lest he succumb to the disruptions we see among the aliens of the *Anthropology* or among the close friends of *The Metaphysics of Morals*. So “man” also does not or should not reveal his secret. On the other hand, “woman” is an open book too. Because she is “poorly” (as opposed to *nobly* or at least *prudently*) equipped to keep to herself, she is liable to indiscriminately sharing the thoughts of others with others. At the very least, this promiscuity renders her incompetent for the contentious mercantile world of getting and spending, founded as it is on the ability to say one thing and be thinking another. Her world-poverty is nevertheless the key to her “character,” and forms the primary source of her social power; as Kant will go on immediately to say, woman possesses “the loquacity and passionate eloquence which together disarm the man” (*AP*, 217). Yet she, “woman,” for all of her talkativeness and persuasiveness, mimics the virtuous “man” because she too holds something back, namely “her secret.” Her “own” unspoken “thought,” the thought at least that Kant is nominally willing to leave within her possession, remains a secret. Perhaps this is a confidence that is not so much withheld as one that does not need to be spoken, at least in so many words. The putative “mystery” of the feminine is the secret that is arguably most available for scrutiny; it is the very openness of “femininity,” the privileged space of coy visibility within a culture of men in which woman is required to be the always visible object of male heterosexual desire. As a “secret,” she is rendered infinitely vulnerable to the prying eyes of the pragmatic anthropologists who have come specifically to identify knowledge of her with *sexual knowledge*.<sup>74</sup> For Kant woman *is* embodied loquacity; she does not offer up her secret in so many words because she is in her appetite for mastery imagined to *be* that secret and nothing else. Woman’s social existence is a sustained, desirous speech act, or what Edelman characterizes in Kant as “a temptation to every comer, an alien and cruel invitation.”<sup>75</sup> Not unlike the extraterrestrials for whom every thought is expressed, she cannot but broadcast what she is, both

capturing the eyes and ears of men, and, once obtaining men's undivided attention, forming the instantiating circumstance of the turn away from their carnal desires toward respect and sociability. Her words, her wordiness, interpellate "man" into the symbolic realm of eloquence and loquacity. For in calling for "gentle and polite treatment by men," women bring the opposite sex "if not quite to morality itself, then at least to that which cloaks it, moral behavior, which is the preparation and introduction to morality" (*AP*, 219-220). The secret to genuine respect is thus its managed stealth. Respectful distance is secreted into the relationship between men and women in the form of a counterfeit or surrogate of respect. Through such attention to appearances "man" is introduced, in confidence, to truer and more lasting forms of responsibility. Even and especially when woman speaks softly, or does not simply say outright what she is thinking (for Kant "the inclination to dominate is the real goal" of women, i.e., what is *really* on their minds [*AP*, 219]), she reveals her secret by virtue of her machinations, her indirectness, her modesty, all the social graces whose principal effect is to blunt and displace the sexual appetites of men and thus to secure an openly secreted and relatively safe place for herself within culture. Her secret, her investment in acting and speaking secretly, turns rough desires into beautiful phrases and respectful social moves, and this in turn fosters similar confidentialities in men, now obliged to hide what they think—what Kant believes unequivocally they are always secretly thinking—about women. To betray woman's secret would therefore seem to strike at the heart of culture if it were not for the fact that its betrayal, in the form of its constant rearticulation and recirculation through the discourse networks of polite speech, is the very root of that culture's stability and discipline.

Kant seems almost to say that men in their morality are women's work, but this is of course a masculinist affectation whose secret Kant is quick to betray when he says exactly the reverse: "Civilization does not establish these feminine characteristics, it only causes them to develop and become recognizable under favorable circumstances" (*AP*, 216). "Woman" is therefore more precisely the work of man, but not one kind of work among many. "Feminine characteristics" are like "the characteristics of crab apples or wild pears," Kant says; they "disclose their potential only through grafting and



inoculation" (AP, 216). As bioengineers of culture, men adapt what is given them in the form of woman, wringing and wrangling something docile and productive from the "wild" yet wholly passive stuff that is given to them to manipulate. A strange fantasy, this: the "hommo-sexual" dream of men laboring together to beget "women" in their own image, disavowing sexual difference by instrumentalizing it perfectly.<sup>76</sup> Using what could only be called a political technology of the body, they transplant woman's alien nature into culture, thereby speeding their development into rational terrestrial creatures. For good reason, then, Kant will not allow woman to reveal her secret, except, of course, grafted into his own words. More study is needed, he says, tantalizing his listeners with the prospect of more confidences and knowledges, and knowledges *as* confidences, to be unveiled, if not by him (for he is very old), then by others in the same research field: "Therefore in anthropology the nature of feminine characteristics, more than those of the masculine sex, is a subject for study by philosophers" (AP, 216), as if to say that men have revealed their secrets already, and now it is their task to make woman do the same. But when she does (and this is claimed to be the future of anthropology!), will she be necessarily "woman"—as Kant conceives of her, as Kant demands that she be—any more? And what therefore of "man"?

#### ON TRUTH AND LYING IN A NON-MORAL SENSE

On a distant planet, rational beings suffer human, all too human, indignities of war and enmity. But they tell each other no lies. And was not Kant the most rigorous thinker of the lie, of the specificity and the reprehensibility of the lie? In his response to Benjamin Constant, "On the Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy," published only months before the first edition of the *Anthropology*, Kant had insisted upon the inviolable duty of rational beings to tell the truth. "To be *truthful* (honest) in all declarations is therefore a sacred command of reason prescribing unconditionally," he insists, "one not to be restricted by any conveniences" (OS, 613). The specificity of the lie, Kant argues, lies neither in its deleterious or wayward effects, nor in its distortion of what is true. The truth of the lie rather rests with the *intent* to deceive, meaning that the opposite of the lie is not truth or "actuality" but truth-saying,

meaning-to-say-the-true [*Wahrhaftigkeit*]. Lying is an inward act of deception, a meaning-to-say-the-untrue. The obligation to veracity therefore does not apply to statements that are untrue but not purposively designed to mislead. Chief among those speech acts are “the play of pretences” by which polite society is joined together. “Compliments,” “bowing and scraping,” and even “all” acts of “courtly gallantry” are crucial to social intercourse. Even the “warmest verbal assurances of friendship” are “not always truthful,” Kant adds, citing a passage from the *Eudemian Ethics* as his authority:

“My dear friends,” says Aristotle, “there is no friend.” But these demonstrations of politeness do not deceive because everyone knows how they should be taken, especially because signs of well-wishing and respect, though originally empty, gradually lead to genuine dispositions of the soul (*AP*, 39).

Kant’s confidence about the incremental but inevitable passage from the hollowness of words to the fullness of truth is belied by the strange example from Aristotle with which he begins: the constative claim of his address (“there is no friend”) is contradicted by its performative utterance (“My dear friends”). Questions proliferate, as Derrida has explored at length in *Politics of Friendship*. Is Aristotle lying or telling the truth when he posits the existence of the audience that he simultaneously denies? What to make of Aristotle’s putative intent here, i.e., sincerely to prohibit sincerity, this, Kant asserts, in earnest of recovering a greater sincerity at a later point? Strictly speaking, can Kant’s text remain uncontaminated by the irreducible indeterminacy that we glimpse here between knowing that what is said is a lie and knowing that what is said is telling the truth? As Derrida points out, “for structural reasons, it will always be impossible to prove, in the strict sense, that someone has lied even if one can prove that he or she did not tell the truth” (*HL*, 131). What makes lying *lying*, its interiority as an intention, is also what makes its demonstration, its outing, as it were, impossible or at least unverifiable. We will never be able to tell the truth, absolutely, about telling the truth, which puts the lie to Kant’s position in the *Anthropology*, resting as it does on the belief that one can meaningfully distinguish between the lie, the meaning-to-tell-a-lie, and the lie that everyone knows to be a lie. How

could anyone know for certain that there had been no intent to deceive, that, for example, the lie that openly declares itself to be a lie is in fact true, the telling of a truth? The fabric of civil society, the genesis of morality, rests upon a knowledge that cannot finally be ascertained, not as long as terrestrial rational beings are free not to mean what they say or say what they mean.

The (impossible) certainty of intention that allows Kant safely to introduce “the play of pretences” into the heart of culture, and, indeed, to attribute to this play the genesis of “genuine dispositions of the soul,” is not to be found in this world, not while there are secrets, which is to say while there is anything like intentionality and the phenomenality of consciousness (*AP*, 39). But among nonterrestrial rational beings Kant imagines this confidence is warranted, since on their planet it is possible to read someone else’s mind, to hear their (private) thoughts and thus to discern whether those thoughts correspond to their (public) pronouncements. On that world there is no possibility, much less need, for the affectation that Kant believes knits up terrestrial rational society. Neither can there be the summons of the sacred duty of veracity because, one could say, the aliens are *already* this truth-telling and therefore know nothing *of* it as something *other* by which they might be summoned. As such, they offer no “resistance”—if that is the right word—against which the obliging force of the imperative of veracity might be felt or have any significance. What Kant’s condemnation of alien truth-telling puts to us is that the specificity of terrestrial rational life lies not negatively in *not* telling the truth—although this seems initially to be exactly why Kant would conjure up the honest aliens—but positively in having the wondrous capacity *not* to tell the whole truth, which is to say, quite beyond the capacity to lie or to tell the truth, to hold a thought within consciousness without divulging it to others. As Derrida rightly points out, “To keep something to oneself is the most incredible and thought-provoking power.”<sup>77</sup> It is the very secret of humanity, but in such plain view as to require the anthropological distance that is momentarily provided by Kant’s dream of nonterrestrial life for it to become an object of reflection. The aliens play the role that is more often dreamily attributed to animals, especially when these creatures are imagined—as Derrida says—to be “incapable of keeping or

even having a secret, because they cannot *represent as such*, as an *object* before consciousness, something that they would then forbid themselves from showing” (HAS, 86). Axiomatically denied what is claimed to be a human privilege, animals, like the aliens, cannot tell a lie. But then they cannot, in all strictness, tell a truth either, since the idea of veracity, of *intending* to speak the truth, always implies the faculty of thinking one thing, of holding, in so many words, an objective representation within consciousness, but saying nothing or at least saying something else. According to this schema (whose features Derrida has forcefully disclosed and critiqued in numerous places),<sup>78</sup> animals “can neither choose to keep silent, nor keep a secret” (HAS, 87). Of course, much needs to be said about the origins and implications of the oppositional limits that divide what is imagined to be “man” from what is imagined to be “animal,” starting with the massive assumption that either entity exists as such. What bears emphasizing here is how the duty of veracity is meaningful, not in spite of the fact that intentions remain interior, mental phenomena, inaccessible as such, but *because* of this inwardness, because there is “consciousness” or something like “consciousness.” The intentionality of the intention to tell the truth (or not to tell the truth) rests with a certain minimal inviolability about the interiority of what is perhaps too quickly called “consciousness,” and thus the inability utterly to hear and to know what someone is thinking and intending. Kant characterizes the duty of veracity as purely formal, yet the strange example of the aliens suggests that that formality is never completely pure, at least among human beings, but depends upon a certain spectral “materiality” or difference that divides the inwardness of thinking from whatever world is thought to be that thinking’s “outside,” the trace that both joins and divides the phenomenon of thinking and the phenomenon of speaking those thoughts aloud. In other words, the secret to being human is having and holding a secret. And if Kant speaks “aloud” of the unconditional duty to tell the truth, and therefore of the obligation not secretly to think one thing while saying another, he speaks also, *sotto voce*, in the form of his condemnation of alien sociality, of a supplementary unconditional right that limns that duty like a shadow and as its political unconscious: namely, the right to keep to oneself, to the privacy of one’s ideas. Derrida calls this *Recht* “an

unconditional right to the secret, . . . the right to secrecy as a right to resistance against and beyond the political" (*HL*, 154). As Kant makes clear in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, the anthropological gesture as such stands as a kind of figure for the threat of publicity, the profound injustice of having one's secrets betrayed: "a mania for spying on the morals of others (*allogrio-episcopica*) is by itself an offensive inquisitiveness on the part of anthropology, which everyone can resist with right as a violation of the respect due him" (*MM*, 258).

One may have the unconditional right to hold a secret, but can one say unconditionally that a secret has ever been held? The complaint that the aliens uncontrollably speak their minds presupposes that on earth, in Königsberg, there are virtuous moments of silence in which a thought is not spoken, that no anthropologist's prying ears and eyes have looked and listened where, by rights, they should not. But what is speaking and listening, and what is a thought that it might not be spoken to an other (perhaps too quickly assumed to be an other elsewhere than ourselves)? Earlier in the *Anthropology*, Kant describes the interiority of thought in linguistic terms, which is to say terms that precisely open up the relation to the other:

Thinking is speaking to ourselves. (The Indians of Tahiti call it "the language inside the body.") Consequently, there is also hearing ourselves inwardly . . . (*AP*, 85).

Three times he makes the point (I pass over in silence Kant's aboriginal example—never without significance in a pragmatic anthropology), as if to emphasize that thought is never not spoken, never a secret either to itself or to the space and time of language. So evident is it to Kant that thinking is irreducible to the play of call and response that he goes on to claim that a deaf person is "without thinking or concepts" (*AP*, 85), and thus incapable of a genuinely social existence. If ethics and politics emerge out of the space between speakers and listeners, this distance happens at all because of its appearance first within a heterogeneously articulated subject. Read against his rebuke of the alien telepaths, Kant's observation raises an uncanny possibility (that happens also to be a science fiction cliché): namely, that thought

itself is strangely alien, and that the aliens are a hyperbolic figure for the secret of consciousness, the structure of thought-transmission and of thought-*as*-transmission that constitutes in advance all communication and sociality. This is the secret that Kant would keep by abjecting as alien those rational beings who cannot keep and manage a secret: women, children, and the insane, to name three examples. As Derrida argues, the real secret, the secret of the secret, as it were, is that there can be no secret as such, no absolute secret, since the secrecy of the secret relies upon the structural possibility of its being transmitted, of its being-betrayed. “No *mortal* can keep a secret,” Freud writes, recalling for us that un-concealment is a displaced name for a semiotic predicament, the predicament of finitude itself.<sup>79</sup> While “man” remains an earthly entity, an absolute secret is an impossibility, since it would be a secret even to itself, a thought withheld from its being articulated, and thus without suffering the indignities of communication, difference, spacing, and language. The secret is rather always told, this, precisely because the thought of it is already spoken, abandoned from the beginning to the exigencies of language and transmission even if it is never betrayed, as we say, to “an other.”<sup>80</sup>

If, as Kant suggests in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, the secret of true friendship lies in sharing secrets among friends, then one must somehow already *be* friends to *become* friends; like “man,” friendship is a curiously virtual and pluralistic phenomenon, at once ahead of and behind itself, never enough and always too many. Who then holds the secret of how many friends is too many? Tea for two, a party of five, a whole race, a race of aliens, for instance? The alien that seems so much like “man” figures forth the haunting of fraternity—of *Zunftgenossen*—founded upon the stout-hearted and economical sharing of the secret by its phantom other, the sorority of profligacy and promiscuity in which thoughts are always articulated—which is to say the irreducibly linguistic phenomenon of transmission that structures thought, including the thought of rationality, community, and fraternity. And it may be that Kant’s figure of the alien telepaths registers the fact—kept at a safe distance from earth—that there is no secret, even if secrecy remains, as Derrida argues, the principle around which “Kantian ethics and politics of friendship” are organized (*PF*, 257).<sup>81</sup>

## THE KANT FILES

Concerning the humiliating and discrediting effect of astronomy Kant has left us a remarkable confession: "It annihilates my importance."

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

The *Anthropology's* last pages, indeed, its last sentences, are haunted by the absent presence of aliens. But the same could be said of several other texts in the Kantian corpus. The philosopher's interest in the figure of extraterrestrials remains remarkably consistent, a fact that reflects the pervasiveness and the vigor of the discussion concerning off-world life that flourished in the eighteenth century. We see quite intriguing allusions to the existence of that life, for example, in writers as diverse as Locke, Swedenborg, Pope, Wordsworth, Herder, and Fontenelle.<sup>82</sup> In the age of Enlightenment the paucity of empirical evidence for extraterrestrial beings seemed only to fuel the debate about "pluralism," the claim that this world was not uniquely the dwelling place of sentient life but only one of many inhabited planets in a superabundant universe. (Defined also as the condition "in which the self, instead of being enwrapped in itself as if it were the whole world, understands and behaves itself as a citizen of the world," "pluralism" is for Kant the "frame of mind" that properly "belongs to anthropology" [*AP*, 12]). The debate had quite ancient origins—going back to classical antiquity—but was undoubtedly given new impetus—and imbued with more anxiety—in a time of increasing colonial exploration and appropriation. In Kant and others, aliens function in part as a safely displaced screen upon which European literate culture might project its fantasies about race, embodiment, and nationality—much as the figure of aliens presumably functions in popular culture today.

Kant's interest in extraterrestrials is evident as early as his first major work, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755). Notwithstanding the significant differences between this text and the *Anthropology*, one a pre-critical work most well known for its theory—new to Kant's day—that the Milky Way was a "congress of an enormous number of stars confined within a flat disk," the other an empirical lesson on social and mental

hygiene, there are points of similarity that draw them into unexpected convergences.<sup>83</sup> Ostensibly a treatise on the physics of planetary bodies, *Universal History* concludes by morphing into a reflection on the nature of “man” in the form of a supplemental “phantasy” about beings living on other worlds. In early as well as late Kant, it seems, wherever there is anthropological discourse, so too are there thoughts about aliens. In *Universal History* the vividness of these thoughts has a curiously retroactive effect on the narrative of the text as a whole. The “Appendix” on “the inhabitants of the stars” (*UH*, 183) looks at first like so much eye-candy, a harmless extravagance with which to finish up a work of cosmology. Yet the philosopher makes his turn toward the *anthropos* and its others seem so inevitable, so compelling, that the relationship between the text and its addendum is in effect reversed, with the argument on planetary bodies reading, finally, like a strangely digressive preface to its short—but startling—conclusion about the wondrous creatures who live there.

Kant frames his remarks with gestures that convey a mixture of confidence and circumspection. The text’s epigraph, drawn from Pope’s *Essay on Man*, evokes the philosopher’s ambitiously panoptic desire: “He who recognizes the various inhabitants from each and every star,/To him alone is possible to grasp and to explain to us,/Why things are as they are” (*UH*, 182). But *Universal History* will not finish quite so boldly. As with the *Anthropology*, Kant approaches the subject of these “inhabitants” with both fascination and wariness, happily providing details about them that are as fantastic as anything found in Swedenborg, but not without signaling his fear—partly stagy, to be sure—that he may have inadvertently wandered into uncharted regions. “Should we permit ourselves one more escapade . . . into the field of phantasy?” Kant asks, albeit quite late in the game: “Who shows us the limits where the well-founded probability ends and arbitrary fictions begin?” (*UH*, 194–5).<sup>84</sup> When on the same page we also read that “It is not really known to us what man is today, however self-awareness and reason should instruct us on this point” (*UH*, 195), it is hard not to conclude that Kant’s sudden caution about aliens is a means by which to hold away an analogous anxiety about his pursuit of “man.” If “man” remains unknowable, who is to say which escapades about “him” are an arbitrary fiction and



which are not? What if “man” in his concept were but a fantasy? These are questions that will preoccupy Kant for another forty years, being the very lure of anthropology; what is revealing is that their articulation is from the start so intimately involved with the thought of nonterrestrial creatures. Kant finally disowns what he confesses are his “undemonstrable conclusions.” But as Kant’s translator, Stanley Jaki, notes in passing, this gesture of disavowal is “incompatible with the repeated and emphatic assertions of the practical certainty of [his] . . . ideas.” (*UH*, 296 n32). How could one ever discern if Kant were telling the truth? As we also see in the *Anthropology*, a text that several times evokes and then swerves from knowledges that are said to be beyond its declared scope, Kant’s claim to be concerned about transgressing imagined disciplinary boundaries is an excuse to open up his project to speculative possibilities to which he is drawn but about which he feels a certain feigned embarrassment. When it comes to aliens, Kant doesn’t really know what he is talking about, or at least says so; yet the previous pages, filled with mesmerizing details about the habits, strengths, and weaknesses of alien life, amply demonstrate that simulacra or no, they remain not only attractive but crucially useful to thinking about human beings. Perhaps it is their status as fictions conjured up by the philosophical imaginary that makes them handy, for it is in the nature of fantasy to have the delirious power to clarify the real while remaining so insubstantial as to dissolve in an instant under the touch of cold philosophy. The supplemental status of the aliens as relevant as well as unreal no doubt explains why the more otherworldly they look, the more they appear human, all too human.

Comparing “man” to a hubristic insect for which the non-insect world is irrelevant (is this not the very trope to which Nietzsche will resort?),<sup>85</sup> Kant sets the scene in a mood of humiliation, or at least the *fiction* of humiliation: “Man, standing immensely removed from the uppermost rank of beings, it is indeed bold to flatter himself in a similar delusion [i.e., similar to that of the blithe bug] about the necessity of his own existence” (*UH*, 185). As with the 1798 text, though, never for a moment does the thought of the other offer Kant more than an opportunity, via the circuit of a certain pretence of modesty, to reassert the exemplarity of the *anthropos*: “Man, among all rational beings is best known to us, although at the same time his inner nature

remains for us an unexplored problem, should in this respect serve as the foundation and general reference point” (*UH*, 185). From the queer security of that ground (“man” is both familiar and unfamiliar; like the aliens, “he” is paradigmatically *un-heimlich*), Kant is free to speculate about the nature of sentient life in the universe, and to play at the remorse that might come from comparing the perfections of that life to an imperfect humanity, without for a moment unsettling the heroically agonistic place of human beings in the order of things. Perhaps in no other Enlightenment philosopher is so much made of *Dasein* being *in medias res*, neither refined into substancelessness nor drowned in matter but squarely, proudly, occupying what Kant calls, without a trace of irony, “the dangerous middle road” (*UH*, 185). The singular value of extraterrestrial lives, above and below that rung (and never, it goes without saying, are these lives imagined to exist on a different ladder altogether!), brings out more clearly what life in the middle means. Giving the chain of being a nice Copernican twist, Kant observes how “the excellence of the thinking nature” of extraterrestrials varies according to their relative distance from the sun. Closer to the sun, for example, the creatures of Mercury are stupid, weak, and lawless (*UH*, 195), while those of Venus possess bodies and spirits whose coarseness would make their life on Earth difficult, if not fatal:

The inhabitants of the earth and Venus cannot exchange their habitats without mutual destruction. The former, whose [bodily] building stuff is proportioned to the measure of heat of his distance [from the sun] and is therefore too light and volatile for a greater heat, would in a hotter sphere suffer enormous upheavals and a collapse of his nature, which would arise from the dissipation and evaporation of his fluids and from the violent tension of his elastic fibers; the latter, whose grosser build and the sluggishness of the elements of his structure needed a greater influence of the sun, would in a cooler celestial region grow numb and perish in lifelessness. (*UH*, 188-9)

Earthlings are “lighter and finer” (*UH*, 189) beings who suffer the enervating effects of hotter worlds, but the Venusians are shiftless and stunned creatures, it seems, whether at home or after having been transported—as Kant

imagines here—to temperate, more familiar climes. All of this, it seems to me, functions as a barely displaced allegory of Europe's close encounters with Africa and other equatorial regions of the universe. Kant imagines that there is a fearful symmetry between the burdens facing the *geistig* men of the “civilized” world as they penetrate those inclement regions and the fatal horrors awaiting those unfortunates who might be carried back to Europe. One cannot but feel that certain fundamental fantasies that will become crucial to the colonial imaginary are being sketched out in these pages: on the one hand, the white man succumbs, Kurtz-like, to “dissipation” in the wilds of the “hotter sphere;” on the other, the non-Europeans collapse in a state of animalistic *Benommenheit* upon being introduced to the “cooler celestial region” of the realm of the *Aufklärers*. And is Kant's hapless Venusian not an uncanny premonition of the woman (re)named the “Hottentot Venus,” the southern African called Sarah Baartman, who, fifty-five years later, was exhibited in a cage before European audiences eager to see and touch a creature from another world—that is, until she too perished in lifelessness?<sup>86</sup> What is politely described as an “exchange of habitats” may well be a euphemism for slavery and for the emerging traffic in human beings binding together the new worlds with the old.

Farther away from the sun, the inhabitants of Saturn attain a kind of angelic freedom from matter and from the cares of the body, while those of Jupiter are agile and productive. With a shorter day and a more refined nature, the Jovians accomplish in five hours what takes ten hours on earth; they conduct “the business of awakening, dressing, and . . . eating” (*UH*, 191) with a dietetic efficiency that Kant will idealize as the proper mental hygiene of humans when he writes his *Anthropology*. To be sure, it smarts to know that more “elevated classes of rational creatures” inhabit Saturn and Jupiter. Looking admiringly at these disciplined beings, Kant concedes, “human nature” “hurts its pride and humiliates it through the knowledge of its lowliness” (*UH*, 190). Yet there is abundant recompense for this loss of face, for in Kant's plenitudinous universe, human beings are never without subalterns against which to claim and forge their superiority: if a look up the chain of being brings condemnation, “a look at the lower rungs would bring [humanity] . . . satisfaction and peace [because] those on the planets Venus

and Mercury are lowered far beneath the perfection of human nature” (*UH*, 190). Nor is this the only occasion in which Kant indulges in such interplanetary *Schadenfreude*. As Kant suggests a few pages later, if human beings are execrable creatures, then Martians are put in the universe “so that we would not be deprived of the miserable comfort of having companions in misery” (*UH*, 190).<sup>87</sup>

Kant’s delight in the economy of the universe is immediate and palpable. “What an outlook worthy of wonderment!” (*UH*, 190) he exclaims, leaving it slightly unclear whether such marvel comes from the spectacle of the fully inhabited cosmos or from the darkly pleasing way in which the experience of being shamed is balanced by the experience of shaming someone else. Wonderment is a word too to describe the evocative scenes with which Kant punctuates his dreamy conclusion to *Universal History*. On distant planets, for instance, there may be creatures of such happiness and unsullied rationality that they exist as “calm oceans quietly receiving and reflecting God’s image” (*UH*, 190), a scene of quiet grandeur whose very language Kant will remember when he speaks of the sublime thirty years later in the *Critique of Judgment*. In a kind of companion scene, he wonders aloud about the extraordinary day when human beings will stand with their faces bathed in the reflected light of one of Jupiter’s moons, an image of silent beauty even if its effect is to aestheticize the occupation and colonization of Jupiter that *will already need to have taken place* for Europeans to be enjoying such a spectacle in the first place. Notwithstanding—or perhaps *because* of—the appeal of such images, Kant concludes his discussion by tearing himself away from his subject, having filled his eyes—and those of this readers—with these lurid and tantalizing visions. Perhaps it is all “phantasy.” If one must look, Kant suggests, look not with the gob-smacked passivity of those he dismisses as the “lowly” and the “vain.” “The spectacle of a starry heaven in a clear night,” he warns, “gives a kind of pleasure which only noble souls can absorb” (*UH*, 196). What has been implicit all along in Kant’s discussion comes clearly into the open: the oppositional limits between humans and their more refined counterparts on other planets only repeats a similarly hierarchical difference that must be maintained among human beings. By the time Kant next visits the stars, in his 1764 *Observations on the Feeling of*

*the Beautiful and the Sublime*, we will know that the difference between the “vain” and the “noble” is precisely that which divides women from men.

STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND:  
KANT'S CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

Whatever delights are to be found in looking into the heavens, they will not be of the gawking kind. Alien life tantalizes Kant, to be sure, but it also excites his desire to impose upon that enjoyment a strict and ennobling regimen; in the philosopher's hands, the parsing of pleasure is often indistinguishable from the pleasure of parsing. By the *Anthropology*, however, Kant's willingness and ability to abstract himself from extraterrestrials is registered in his refusal to indulge in anything like the “phantasy” we see staged in *Universal History*. Indeed, he makes a point of warning his readers to resist the temptation to invest too much, psychologically speaking, in the fantastic details of alien existence: “[O]ur imagination populates all other planets with nothing but human forms although it is probable that they may be formed very differently because of the diversity of soil which supports and nourishes them and because of the variety of the elements of which they are composed. All other forms which we might give them are caricatures [*Fratzen*: also *grotesque faces, grimaces*]” (AP, 62; VIII, 59). Kant has just been speaking of drinking and of the delusions that come from being intoxicated. The inability to resist such speculation Kant treats as a symptom of the “derangement” or “distraction” of the cognitive faculty by “the inventive imagination,” an anti-social loss of self-control that he associates with addicts, children, mad people, and women who read books. “He who doesn't look away with manly courage from these thoughts will never become properly happy with life,” he writes (AP, 285). Nor successful in completing the *Anthropology*, we might add, since too hard a look at the spectral presence of the aliens in Kant's natural history table makes knowledge of the *anthropos*, the surety of that knowledge, waver and fade. Where aliens are concerned, Kant seems always to be looking *and* looking away, or looking while demanding that others look away. Both forms of (non-)observation exemplify the positive power of “abstraction” (AP, 14-15), or what he calls “*negative attentiveness* [*negative Aufmerksamkeit*],”<sup>88</sup> the

focused capacity *not* to dwell too closely on the objects of one's desirous thoughts and perceptions. To the end of his life, Kant attributed his physical, mental, and philosophical health to this ability to see without staring, this willingness to proceed as if "with his eyes closed, he turned them to a different place" (CF, 319-20).

Yet Kant would here appear to be saying more than he knows, since, of the very few details we *do* get about extraterrestrials in the *Anthropology*, the one that stands out is that they are rational, which is to say, "similar to men" in the only way that truly matters. It is precisely that not-so-hidden similarity that makes them uncannily useful, useful *because* uncanny. Kant's late, imagined close encounter is finally much closer than he suggests, and the alien, stripped of its special effects (now no longer crawling around like a snail or flying around like a spirit), is revealed to be what it no doubt always was—less an *other* than a kind of mirror-form of humankind, a glass in which "man" is always already glimpsing a simulacrum of himself. Ineluctable aliens, characterized as somehow necessary to the analysis of "man" but just far enough away that their spectral presence does not disable that analysis, in fact inhabit all regions of the *Anthropology*, as if the evocation of extraterrestrial life were simply a hyperbolized way of modeling "man's" problematic and supplemental relationship with a host of terrestrial, all too terrestrial entities whose otherness is figured as non-human or not-quite-human. Creatures who look like "us" and who walk among "us" but who are not, finally, to be confused with "us"—that is, the "us" that Kant models in the *Anthropology* as virile, rational, self-controlled and controlling men—phantasmatically populate the world of Kant's text at every turn. They are creatures who trigger Kant's most dogmatic claims about human and non-human life and test the limits of their coherence. Each species of these alien mimics, as well as the manner and motivation of their complex refusal, deserves careful scrutiny. In addition to the Prussian aristocracy, these include not only women—to whom I have already alluded, and to which I will return momentarily—but also: "the mob" (this includes the "mob" of mass literacy, the thoughtless, "feminized," and addicted consumers of the literatures of entertainment (AP, 134), the sufferers of the much-discussed *Leseseuche* ["reading epidemic"] and *Lesesucht* ["reading

addiction”] who model for Kant both a distressing exemption from work and the rhythms of exchange *and* the fulfillment of the logic of capital in the form of unbridled consumption, consumption for the sake of itself); the non-Europeans (the “Caribs,” for example, whose putative lack of foresight, incentive, or inclination toward evil, although contributing to a “careless” and contented life (*AP*, 78), does so precisely at the cost of their humanity); and his own body (in his last works Kant often speaks as if he were possessed by a second self, an alien intelligence in the form of obscure and potentially habit-forming impulses, inclinations, cravings, and feelings).

Let me focus, by way of conclusion, on two of these species of non-terrestrials: non-Christian Europeans and women.

(i) *The Non-Christian Europeans*. Kant devotes the longest footnote in the *Anthropology* to a consideration of the presence of the Jews in “Europe,” those whom he calls the “Palestinians, living among us” [*Die unter uns lebenden Palästiner*] (*AP*, 101; VIII, 94). On the margins of his text, neither wholly inside nor outside its shifting boundaries, Kant again speaks of the foreigner who is also an alien resident. It is axiomatic for him that the Jews form a discrete “nation” within the habitus of another imagined community, one that goes without saying here, namely cosmopolitan Christian “Europe.” He gives not the slightest thought to the dangerous politics of the “One” that energizes his claims. The Jews, “composed of nothing but merchants,” and with nothing but their mercantile interests in mind, parasitize the body of their European host, whose *Geist* is assumed to be radically different from the “usurious spirit” [*Wuchergeist*] by which the “deceivers” and “merchants” of the Jewish “nation” are possessed. That extortionate revenant renders them “non-productive members of society”: without explanation, without *needing* to explain, Kant points to “the Jews of Poland” as an embodiment of this worklessness. The Jews “do not crave any civil honor” [*keine bürgerliche Ehre sucht*], he complains, “but rather wish to compensate their loss by profitably outwitting the very people among whom they find protection, and even to make profit from their own kind.” “Us” and “them,” Kant says emphatically throughout the footnote, (re)producing and policing a phantasmatic Europe

that is populated by two species of rational creatures, creatures who walk the same streets and compete for the same goods and services, and who “share certain holy books,” yes, but who are nevertheless separated by an abyss of essence. The terms of this division are as crudely familiar and fantastic as they are war-like: one group is guided by the profit motive, the other by Enlightenment principles of bourgeois civic-mindedness. Jews lend and hoard resources and fail to tell the truth, while Christians save and share resources and do not lie. Jews bring wealth to Europe but the usurious means of its production somehow contaminates and empties it; in any case, this wealth is asymmetrically opposed to the immeasurable cultural capital—the lessons in responsibility and freedom—that have been generously provided to them by their Christian hosts. Much needs to be said here about the dangerous aura of illegitimacy, simulation, non-productivity, and auto-predation that is legendarily identified with the Christianized philosopheme of *usury*, and about the complex ways in which Kant’s reflections on the nature of lying and truth-telling are caught up in the warp and woof of his raciological thinking. A good place to begin would be to unpack the relationship between his notion of a naturally fraudulent people and what Derrida calls the “Kantian obsession” with “currency *qua* devalued currency” and “counterfeit money” (*PF*, 275). Suffice it to say that one violence begets another; or perhaps they are the same violence, for the self-affirmation and self-idealization of Christian “Europe” that underwrites Kant’s remarks is indistinguishable from the summary denial of its virtues (“civil honor,” honesty, productivity, Enlightenment, among others) to the Jews who also live and work there.

But where is “there”? Kant proceeds as if it were self-evident what Europe is, *where* it is, yet his own proceeding belies that certainty, or rather registers the many ways in which such conviction is always a special case of in-certitude, the uncertainty of “culture” “itself,” we could say—a vast problematic, one whose uneasy course would need to be traced across Kant’s *oeuvre*. Werner Hamacher argues that “for the sake of its own identity and ideality, every culture . . . becomes . . . a comparative science of culture and pursues a politics of segregation, of depreciation, contempt, and defamation.”<sup>89</sup> Is the *Anthropology*, are not all anthropologies, implicitly and explicitly, examples of this science, the cultured product of culture’s exclusionary ferocity? The



condition of possibility of Kant's footnote, and of the *Anthropology* as a whole, is the remorse over the fact that "Europe" is not wholly "Europe"; it has not (yet) become the ideality Kant proclaims it to be, not while the Jews haunt its streets. And yet it must also *be* this cultured place for Kant to know and name that which threatens its spirit and sanctity with such confidence. The limits of a cosmopolitanism, of cosmopolitanism-*as-culture*, could not be more visible than at this point; in Kant's hands, it is nakedly the last and most rarefied form of what he imagines to be its un-Enlightened and "Jewish" opposite, namely nativism and parochialism. In a reaction formation that is as predictable as it is brutal, Kant expresses his aversion to the Jews as the Jews' aversion to Europe: it is they who refuse to become assimilated into the Christian *Bürgertum* of Europe, not the Christians who disavow them. (And the symmetry of these exclusions and incorporations is of course infinitely complicated by the fact that both terms, "Jews" or "Europeans," summarily exclude not only each other but the other, the others, "within" themselves.) Kant pretends not to notice this reversal, abruptly telling "us" that rather than pursuing "the futile project of moralizing about this nation with regard to the matter of deception and honor" (but why is this project "futile?" Because its conclusions are a given? Because those who are at this moment being incriminated are incorrigible?), he will return to the anthropological task at hand: a "conjecture" about "the origin of this peculiar condition (that is, of a nation composed of nothing but merchants)." But of course Kant's surmise is a continuation of the moralizing discipline by other means. At length, he maps the gradual colonization of the world by the Jews, and, in a reversal of perspective that will become the anthropological gesture par excellence, invites his Christian readers to imagine *themselves* as the inhabitants of "far-distant lands (Europe)," awaiting first contact with Jewish mercantile culture. A great part of the footnote is taken up with the fantastic history of their invasion, first of other hosts, "India" and "Egypt," for example, but then moving inexorably westward, culminating in Europe and the present. The superiority of the occident over the orient, about which Hegel will be similarly axiomatic, makes the coming of the Jews simultaneously self-affirming, profitable, and problematic for the Christian Europeans. The

Jews always bring wealth to Europe (but does this include cultural capital, for example, the teachings, the writings, the lifelong relationship with Europe's most prominent Jewish intellectual, Moses Mendelssohn?), a fact that Kant does not fail to acknowledge. The diaspora is thus not a "curse" but a "blessing," Kant says, leaving unclear from whose perspective—Jewish or non-Jewish Europeans—that characterization most applies. *Cui bono?* Who profits from the absent presence of the Jews, not only in the economies of Europe but here in this strangely quickened account of them? Kant feigns an anthropological wonderment at them, at their "peculiar" desire to create "a nation composed of nothing but merchants"—as if the Christian Prussian bourgeoisie with whom Kant identifies were not striving mightily for the same goal, the same class consolidation, the same vulgar pursuit of comfort and money. As is often the case in the *Anthropology*, the most unsettling other is the one that might in fact be oneself. Perhaps Kant abjects into "Jewry" the philistinism he fears dwells in the heart of the *Bürgertum* in general, even as he elsewhere outlaws its unbridled consumption by naming it "aristocratic." Let us say then that the Jews constitute a merchant class *within* the merchant class: they "have made the saying 'buyer be aware' the supreme principle of morality in their dealings with us" (*AP*, 101), Kant notes, smarting at the prospect of being treated as instrumentally rather than intrinsically valuable. Perhaps the *ressentiment* we see here springs from having been beaten at his own game. In one of the most remembered passages from the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant distinguishes between what he calls "price" or "value" and "dignity": "What has a price can be replaced by something else as its *equivalent*; what on the other hand is raised above all price and therefore admits of no equivalent has a dignity" (*GM*, 42). "Dignity" summons respect, but because the Jews attach a "price" to everything, because they fail to grasp how that "dignity" is beyond the calculus of getting and spending, they treat others and themselves without feeling the force of that obligation. In other words, for those who embrace the moral law ("us," in Kant's racial economics), the absolute worth of a person transcends the systems of economic exchange that otherwise articulate the social body. Under these ennobling conditions, Kant puts to us, true communities are sites where transactions certainly

occur but do not compromise the integrity and autonomy of the individual making those transactions: in the more pragmatic language of the *Anthropology*, it is crucially important to explore the thoughts of others while maintaining the security of one's own. To be human means to muck about in earthly exchanges without drowning in them, without losing the sight of the "dignity"—the "inner worth"—for which there is properly no price. One wonders if the Jews thereby become the exclusionary means by which Kant sublates—in his words, "lifts himself up above"—the real relations, the contradictions of surplus value, upon which a culture of capital is irreducibly founded. The Jews treat the Christians—and each other—with an eye to their utility and desirability, whereas Kant claims that human beings possess a worth that is intrinsic rather than conditional. But this is a strange lesson to be teaching in the *Anthropology*, a text that is otherwise unabashedly devoted to "knowledge of the world," precisely the "wisdom" that the *Groundwork* defines as the useful and important "skill to influence others in order to use them for one's own ends" (*GM*, 27n). The Jews are faulted for frankly perfecting this skill, and for subjecting the Christians to its effects. But does this not make the pragmatic anthropology a *Jewish science*?

(ii) *Women*. If aliens stand metonymically for the non- or not-quite-human others on the margins of the anthropological project, that displacement and refusal is perhaps no more pronounced or overdetermined than in the case of *women*. For it does strike me that the entirely phantasmatic being that Kant calls "woman" constitutes the alien other of the *Anthropology par excellence*, the creature with whom "man" wrestles for world domination in what could only be described as the greatest war of them all, the war of the worlds. There are numerous points in Kant's last works, which can be ferociously anxious about the question of women, in which "man" is characterized as a stranger in a strange land, an alien visitor to a sphere that is dominated by creatures who are fascinating but extremely dangerous. Earth is the forbidden planet of cloying women which Kant argues must be forsaken if a "man" is "to be a man" [*sich selbst zu ermannen*] (*CF*, 318; VII, 418) and thus become fully human. *She* is the imagined *other* rational creature,

so close and yet so far away, the simulacrum of the human whom Kant feels obliged to acknowledge but about whom he appears not to have had any direct experience. And, as is also the case with the aliens, her absence is precisely what makes—in Kant’s own words—“the problem of giving an account of the character of the human species . . . *quite insoluble*” (AP, 238). Bereft of that alterity, the anthropology cannot be completed. As Kant concedes, the future of anthropology, or perhaps one of its futures, lies in the study of women, even if he concludes by saying that it is aliens who hold the key to the question, “what is man?”

Kant can certainly be much more explicit about the identification of woman and alien sentient life, but never more so than in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*. With its quirkily empirical outlook, its interest in taxonomizing the vagaries of human behavior, and its concluding discussion on “national characteristics,” *Observations* constitutes a prototype of the *Anthropology*. But it is as the locus classicus of Kant’s hallucinations about sexual difference that *Observations* most anticipates the gendered argument of the later book. Women possess “as much understanding as the male,”<sup>90</sup> Kant allows, but because they evidence “nothing of duty, nothing of compulsion, nothing of obligation” (OF, 81), they lack the essential features of dignity that would make them fully human. Perhaps this explains their unsettling curiosity about life on other planets, this world having denied them so much. What do women want when they gaze so boldly at the stars? Kant insists that they possess at best a “*beautiful understanding*,” rather than a “*deep*” one (OF, 78), yet he clearly fears that they have been infected by impure thoughts about life on other worlds. “It appears to be a malicious stratagem of men that they have wanted to influence the fair sex to this perverted taste” (OF, 79), he grumbles. The French, as always, are to blame. “The fair can leave Descartes to his vortices to whirl forever without troubling themselves about them, even though the suave Fontanelle wished to afford them company among the planets” (OF, 79). Fontanelle’s widely circulated *Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes* (1686) seduces women into impersonating the kind of studious work that is properly reserved for thinking men. That Fontanelle’s book was “purported to be women’s conversations about astronomy”<sup>91</sup> no doubt complexifies and

intensifies Kant's gendered anxieties here, as does the fact that the philosopher himself clearly succumbed to its feminizing lures over the course of his long life, *Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes* being an informing pretext for Kant's allusions to aliens. "The fair" not only imagine life on other worlds but they also, more threateningly, identify with that life. Kant finds such conjecturing, about which he knew so much, at once laughable and repulsive: a female astronomer "might as well have a beard" (*OF*, 78), he snorts. Some kinds of observations of the universe are permitted, to be sure, but only within carefully circumscribed bounds: "It will *not* be necessary for women to know more of the cosmos than is necessary to make the aspect of the sky touching to them on a fine night," he asserts, adding that they may avert their eyes from this prospect once "they have grasped, to a certain extent, that there are more worlds, and on them *more* creatures of beauty to be found" (*OF*, 80)—"more creatures" meaning here, of course, more creatures like "yourselves." This sounds very much like what Kant says in the *Anthropology*, where he suggests that it is best not to speculate about alien life in any detail since that life ends up always looking so much like *us*. But what is a danger in the *Anthropology* is precisely the limiting astronomical objective in *Observations*, where women are counseled to surf the universe for "creatures of beauty" that resemble themselves . . . but nothing more. To acquire a deeper knowledge of extraterrestrial rational life would risk acquiring, as he well knows, a clearer perspective of the possibilities and the problems of human life on earth. Better for women to turn their sights to more pragmatic, Terran matters: "The content of women's great science, rather, is humankind, and among humanity, men" (*OF*, 78).

I have said, not entirely facetiously, that Kant has no direct experience of women, no more than "man" in the *Anthropology* has—or is said to have—of intelligent alien life. To speak here much too quickly, when Kant raises the specter of alien intelligence, but then tells his readers not to dwell on it, in effect to *turn away* from the lurid prospect of something to which he himself has just turned, and will turn again, he is relying upon a psychological mechanism that is uniquely important to his theory of the mind, and intimately related to his phantasmatic constructions of women. For we might recall that, contra Leibniz, Kant argues throughout his work that the psychic

power that is most crucial to healthful thinking, and to the rigorously manly application of reason to human life, is the power of abstraction. Abstraction, he insists, is not merely the absence of attention, but the active and productive ability to hold an object of thought and experience *away* from one's thoughts: it is, as he says, "a genuine doing and acting."<sup>92</sup> Abstraction or refusal is the power, as he says, to "leave out," and to leave out not any object but, precisely, the thing to which one feels uncontrollably, compulsively compelled to attend. For Kant, something like Attention Surplus Disorder is the paradigmatic threat to mental health. In finding the strength of mind to renounce the not-so-secret thing to which one seems secretly, passionately, attracted, Kant also argues that abstraction does not remove the essence of something, as one might imagine, but instead is peculiar for both holding away and for leaving something behind. In abstraction and refusal, as with any act of renunciation, there is both gain and loss; abstraction is the chief instance of "negative attentiveness," a striking precursor, perhaps, for denegation or repression, terms that take on new meanings in the wake of Freud's monumental discovery that forgetfulness is not the opposite of remembering but its own form of recollection.

Specifically in the context of the *Anthropology*, the power of abstraction is treated as the primary means by which the mind resists its hypochondriacal tendencies to fixate on one object. For Kant it is *women* in particular that form the vexed nexus most anxiously in need of refusal and abstraction, a process of leaving out that also leaves behind, that culminates, finally, in their being blasted into the orbit of the *Anthropology* in the text's concluding pages. As the alien other about whom Kant cannot stop talking in the *Anthropology*, the entity called "woman" constitutes the object of repulsion/attraction for which Kant's theory of abstraction may well have been invented. The humanizing power of abstraction is rarely described neutrally as the basis of cognition, but prescriptively in terms of the mind's capacity for and need of a *sensor* to protect itself from unwanted or surplus sexual stimuli. As Kant makes clear in the *Anthropology* as well as in texts like *The Metaphysics of Morals*, "man" comes into his own by refusing women, which in Kant's terms means attending to them and exerting mastery over them in the negative form of holding them away. Setting aside a discussion of Kant's

infamous fastidiousness (in particular, the complex repugnance he evidently felt about sexual relations between men and women), we might only recall his anxious insistence that women are properly experienced only through forms of indirection and abstraction and decorum, without which such close encounters are all a bloody horror show of mutual cannibalism whose gory details in Kant handily match anything we might see in a contemporary sci-fi movie (*MM*, 166). Arguing that women's supposed weakness is the artful means by which they control men, Kant tropes his denial of women as women's denial of men; through their modesty and coquetry, through "the *refusal* necessary to her sex" (*AP*, 224), as he puts it, they together form the abstracting social apparatus, as it were, that deflects man's self-demeaning instincts, thereby bringing him into civilization, morality, and humanity. Like the ineluctable aliens, they are the "creatures of beauty" whose "condemning judgment" is what is needed supplementally to complete "man's" anthropological project of becoming "man" without themselves being entirely human.

In a revealing illustration from the opening pages of the *Anthropology*, Kant explains the healthful powers of abstraction and refusal in gendered terms, and the high price that a "man" pays for failing to exercise these powers.

Many people are unhappy because they cannot engage in abstraction. Many a suitor could make a good marriage if he could only shut his eyes to a wart on his sweetheart's face or a gap where [her] teeth are missing. But it is a particularly bad habit of our faculty of perception to observe too closely, even involuntarily, what is faulty in other people. Likewise it is bad manners to fix one's eyes on the spot where the button is missing on the coat of a man who is directly in front of you. (*AP*, 15)

As Shell suggests, "assuming Kant's distaste for sex played a role in his own decision not to marry, the 'missing tooth' can easily be read as standing for another sort of female lack" (*ER*, 436). The failure to abstract himself from the body of a woman, a body here figured in terms of excrescence or absence—for Kant, women are always too much and too little—leads to

hypochondria and isolation rather than marriage and self-mastery. What is interesting here too is the slide *within* the illustration's three objects of obsessive interest—wart, tooth, button—a slide that constitutes its own kind of abstraction and looking away, as if the passage were rhetorically performing the psychological action whose failure it illustrates: from flesh to fashion, and face to waist, from the body of woman to the clothes of a man, from the heterosexual scene of the suitor to the homosocial scene of the lecture hall, where a man might well be distracted by the appearance of another man, “directly in front of” him. (What, we might ask, *is* the difference between a suitor and a lecturer, in the erotics of literate culture?) The inability of a “man” to abstract himself from a woman is a social catastrophe; but the inability of a man to stop staring at another man is merely a *faux pas*. Here the incapacity to look away may in fact constitute a secret glance on Kant's part, a look hidden within a look, an erotic interest paradoxically “left out” of the text by being left in but passed off as involuntary attention over which Kant finds it difficult to secure control. Gulyga recalls incidents in Kant's life where he indeed lost his train of thought in a lecture hall, and Kant himself admitted on at least one occasion that it was the missing button on the coat of the listener in front of him that had led him astray. The threat of being distracted by his auditors, of losing track of one's lecture, as if overtaken by alien impulses, is pressing enough that Kant returns to it later in the *Anthropology*, as he does in “On the Power of the Mind to Master its Morbid Feelings by Sheer Resolution,” the essay with which *The Conflict of the Faculties* concludes. What is curious about this essay is that it ends by pointing out the *inability* and finally *unwillingness* of the mind to master its morbid feelings, a slippage that might remind us that the negative attention of refusal or abstraction is a leaving out which is never complete—why else would it demand such incessant reiteration? Those other rational beings who are excluded from the lecture hall find their way there, but only after a fashion, and only at the precise moment in which the firmness of Kant's mental faculties slip. Perhaps the philosopher lets them slip. Kant tells us about trouble he is having with his lectures, but it is trouble we have heard about before: something about missing teeth and missing buttons. He looks out at this body of men, with whom he will no doubt dine later, speaks for a



while, . . . and then stumbles, suffering what he calls “an involuntary spasmodic condition of the brain” (CF, 325). He falters in mid-lecture, describing this aphasia as losing his “presence of mind in connecting ideas.” In the interstices of those broken thoughts, trying to find his place in his lecture notes again, Kant mumbles, to “my audience (or myself, silently): now where was I?” (CF, 325). The philosopher is momentarily discombobulated, spaced out. And at that instant the letter of a certain political unconscious insists itself, over-determining and over-taking those hesitant words, words that orient him involuntarily toward the (other) world of rational terrestrial beings from whose “leading strings” and cloying embrace he had long argued “man” *had* to escape if he was to be born a second time on this forsaken planet truly as a “man.” But there is no second birth as such, only the violent appropriation of what is imagined to be the “first” by a similarly phantasmatic “second,” a hallucinated paternity fearfully grafting itself on to an analogously uncertain maternity. Recalling Kant’s contemporary, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, Freud once said that paternity was the only hard thing to establish, comparable in its ambiguity to determining whether there was life on the moon.<sup>93</sup> Indeed. In a manner of speaking, Kant realizes that that is only half the truth. Philosophers in particular, he says, recognize that “it is not always easy to look back to one’s starting point” (CF, 325). Despite, or perhaps because of that fundamental obscurity about the nature of the origin, Kant presses on, looking without necessarily seeing. Eyes wide shut, he asks: “*Where did I start from?*,” unable to keep a secret, *the* secret, from himself.



#### N O T E S

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in those seminars for their insights and criticisms. Thanks also go to Haley Bordo, Christina Perez, and Patricia Simmons, who helped in the preparation of this manuscript, and to Peter Melville, whose work on Kant's *Anthropology* continues to teach me that my close readings are not nearly close enough.

1. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Victor Lyle Dowdell (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 237. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *AP*.
2. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 335 n4. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *OG*.
3. Roland Barthes, "Martians," *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 28.
4. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense," trans. Ronald Speirs, in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Guess and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 142.
5. Kant is explicit about this interplanetary sentiment in a note in "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose," in *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 47. I must reserve a discussion of its complexities for another occasion.
6. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 44. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *MM*.
7. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *GM*.
8. Allen Wood, "General Introduction," *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge University Press, 1996), xx.
9. Susan Meld Shell, *The Rights of Reason: A Study of Kant's Philosophy and Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 6.
10. For Kant's use of the address, attributed to Aristotle, "My dear friends, there is no friend," see *AP*, 38 and *MM*, 262. Derrida's *Politics of Friendship* could be described as a sustained reflection on the conceptual and ethical instabilities embodied by this often cited phrase.
11. Marc Redfield, *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the Bildungsroman* (Ithaca:

- Cornell University Press, 1996), 23. The subject of Redfield's discussion is "the nation" as "a fiction," but I think the same redoubled structure accounts for Kant's notion of "man."
12. Shell makes a similar point in *The Embodiment of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 373. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *ER*.
  13. Space does not permit an exploration of all the places in Kant's work where alien life forms an imagined point of ironic leverage on the weaknesses (but always also the possibilities) of human life. But see for example his remarks in *Investigations concerning Diseases of the Head* (1764): "To the fool, we oppose the *sensible* man; but whoever is without foolishness, is a *wise man*. This *wise man* can be sought, for example, on the moon; there, perhaps, people are free of passion and have infinite amounts of reason." Quoted in Goetschel, 83.
  14. Quoted in Shell's *Rights*, 19.
  15. For a discussion of Freud's ambivalent reflection upon the question of telepathy see Derrida's "Telepathy," trans. Nicholas Royle, *Oxford Literary Review* 10 (1998), 3–41.
  16. Kant, "Conjectural Beginning of Human History," trans. Emile L. Fackenheim, in *Kant on History*, ed. and intro. Lewis White Beck (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1963), 54–55 n1. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *CB*.
  17. Arsenij Gulyga, *Immanuel Kant: His Life and Thought*, trans. Marijan Despalatovic (Boston: Birkhäuser Boston, Inc., 1987), 149. In his *Life of Immanuel Kant* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1882), J. H. W. Stuckenberg similarly notes that in 1784 Kant "wrote a characteristic letter to his friend [T. G. von] Hippel, who was police-director and prison-inspector, asking to be relieved 'of the stentorian devotion of the hypocrites in prison'" (143).
  18. Sigmund Freud, "Dreams and Occultism," in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 22, ed. and trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth, 1953–74), 55. For an extremely useful account of the question of telepathy as tele-pathos, see Mark Redfield's *Phantom Formations*. See also Nicholas Royle's *Telepathy and Literature* (London: Blackwell, 1990).
  19. Tilottama Rajan drew my attention to Lefebvre's discussion of the "cyberanthrope" in *Position: contre les technocrates*. See her "Introduction," *Deconstruction and the Reminders of Phenomenology: Sartre, Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard* (forthcoming, Stanford University Press).
  20. It is interesting to note that when Kant speaks on behalf of the unmixed "purity" of a

- metaphysics of morals, i.e. from the lofty vantage point afforded by the a priori principles of reason, the conceptual distance between the disciplines of “anthropology” and the “occult” sciences proves negligible: “[A] completely isolated metaphysics of morals, mixed with no anthropology, theology, physics, or hyperphysics and still less with occult qualities (which could be called hypophysical), is . . . an indispensable substratum of all theoretical and surely determined cognition of duties” (*GM*, 22). Marshall Brown makes the highly suggestive argument that interpreters of Kant have ignored the ways in which his work indirectly connects with contemporaneous discussions of “what lies beyond or beneath experience” (155), whether by mesmerists, mystical enthusiasts, or physicians. The “Sage of Königsberg” is haunted, Brown writes, by this “other Kant” (162). See “From the Transcendental to the Supernatural: Kant and the Doctors,” *Bucknell Review* 39, no. 2 (1996).
21. For example, a significant portion of Hegel’s remarks about “the feeling soul in its immediacy” is taken up with a discussion of “magnetic somnambulism,” including the phenomena of “metal- and water-divining,” “catalepsy,” and “sleep-walking.” See G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Subjective Spirit*, Vol. 2, in *Anthropology*, ed. and trans. M. J. Petry (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1978), 243–323.
  22. Quoted in Thomas Keenan, *Fables of Responsibility* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 26.
  23. Quoted in Hans Reiss, “Introduction,” in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. and intro. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 2.
  24. Marquis de Sade, *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, and Other Writings*, trans. Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 329.
  25. Jacques Derrida, “History of the Lie: Prolegomena,” trans. Peggy Kamuf, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 19, no. 2–20, no. 1 (1997): 153. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *HL*.
  26. Willi Goetschel, *Constituting Critique: Kant’s Writing as Critical Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 147.
  27. Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, trans. David Webb (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 14.
  28. Vattimo, 17.
  29. I am grateful to Tilottama Rajan for pointing me to Vattimo’s argument. For a brilliant discussion of the complex relationship between Kant’s pragmatic anthropology, the human sciences, and contemporary theory, see Rajan’s *Deconstruction and the*

*Remainders of Phenomenology: Sartre, Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard*, especially Chapter 7, "Jean Baudrillard: From the Human Sciences to the Society of Communication" (forthcoming).

30. Vattimo, 15.
31. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980), 143. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *HS*.
32. Goetschel, 69.
33. Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," trans. Josué V. Harari, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 118.
34. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses together with the Replies to Critics and Essay on the Origin of Languages*, ed. and trans. Victor Gourevitch (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 180.
35. In *The Metaphysics of Morals* Kant notes the curious double life of book-property: "Because *on the one hand* a book is a corporeal *artifact* . . . that can be reproduced (by someone in legitimate possession of a copy of it), so that there is a *right to a thing* with regard to it. *On the other hand* a book is also a mere *discourse* of the publisher to the public, which the publisher may not repeat publicly without having a mandate from the author to do so, . . . and this is a *right against a person*" (*MM*, 107).
36. For a good discussion of Kant and the question of intellectual property, see Goetschel 151–153. Woodmansee provides a useful historical overview of the copyright issue in Kant's day. See *The Author, Art, and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), especially, 35–55.
37. Kant, "On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy," trans. Peter Fenves, in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, ed. Peter Fenves (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 63; VI, 487. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *ON*.
38. Kant anticipates Jean-Luc Nancy's argument that "the thinking of community as essence—is in effect the closure of the political. Such a thinking constitutes closure because it assigns to community a common being, whereas community is a matter of something quite different, namely, of existence inasmuch as it is *in common*, but without letting itself be absorbed into a common substance. Being *in common* has nothing to do with communion, with fusion into a body, into a unique and ultimate identity that would no longer be exposed." See *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor et al.

- (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1991), xxxviii.
39. Freud, "The Future of an Illusion," in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 21, ed. and trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth, 1953–74), 13.
  40. Kant's generalization of "aristocratic" idleness beyond class lines recalls Mary Wollstonecraft's argument that the class difference between the nobility and the bourgeoisie is repeated *within* the bourgeoisie along gendered lines as a distinction between (female) indolent consumers and those (male) members of the society who work for a living. See, for example, "Observations on the State of Degradation to Which Woman is Reduced by Various Causes," in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.
  41. The most remembered sections of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, for example, put labor at the center of human existence and cultural formation, and figure that struggle as one in which the aristocratic bondsman, who consumes the labor of others, is transformed in the presence of the bondsman who labors for him. The classic Marxist statement about Hegel's *Phenomenology* is of course Kojève's "Desire and Work in the Master and Slave." See *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. James H. Nichols Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1969). But see what appears to be a strong precursor to Hegel's argument (and Marx's and Kojève's reading) in Kant's *The Doctrine of Right*: "Whoever is another's tool . . . is a *bondsman* . . . and is the property . . . of another, who is accordingly not merely his *master* . . . but also his *owner* and can therefore alienate him as a thing, use him as he pleases (only not for shameful purposes) and *dispose of his powers*, though not of his life and members" (*MM*, 139).
  42. Tilottama Rajan, "Keats, Poetry and 'The Absence of Work,'" *Modern Philology* 95, no. 3 (February 1998): 337.
  43. Clifford Siskin, "Wordsworth's Prescriptions: Romanticism and Professional Power," *The Romantics and Us: Essays on Literature and Culture*, ed. Gene W. Ruoff (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 310.
  44. Quoted in Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92.
  45. For an informative discussion of Kant's blending of autobiography with dietetics in the last works, including the concluding section of *The Conflict of the Faculties*, see Shell's "Kant's Hypochondria: A Phenomenology of Spirit" (*ER*, 264–305). As Shell remarks, "Kant discussed the workings of his body as freely as other people talk about their clothes" (*ER*, 298).
  46. Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Mary J. Gregor and Robert Anchor, in *Religion*

*and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 33. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *CF*.

47. Pinkard argues that “the men who claimed *Bildung* for themselves were usually laying claim to an elite status that separated them both from nobility and from what they often took to be the philistine bourgeoisie. The man of *Bildung* often took himself to be ‘above’ both the nobility and bourgeoisie” (50). My argument is that Kant could figure himself differently in different texts at the end of his career, sometimes “above” the bourgeoisie and the nobility, sometimes only above the nobility.
48. Tilottama Rajan, “From Restricted to General Economy: Romantic Studies and a Kantianism Without Reserve,” *Literary Research/Recherche littéraire*, 29 (Spring-Summer 1998), 10. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *FRGE*.
49. Does Kant not model an alternative way of knowing here, a negative capability in which the thinker evokes what resists thinking, what exceeds the psychic economy of thrift that he also teaches, and with which he hopes to align himself with the bourgeoisie? What kind of “work” would this species of “philosophy” be—a form of dis-orientation or perhaps “dissipation” that somehow also remains spritely and mindful in the telling of it? More discussion about the formal hybridity and epistemological equivocalities of this text, and its relation to Kantian questions about “sobriety,” “idleness,” and “addiction,” must await another analysis. But a good place to begin is Rajan’s argument (in “From a Restricted to General Economy”) that in works like *The Conflict of the Faculties* and the *Anthropology*, Kant possesses a “double identity.” He is, Rajan suggests, “very much . . . a figure of the Enlightenment, anxious to close off the Romantic openings that his philosophy creates” (*FRGE*, 9). See also her discussion of the late Keats as modeling a radically reflective judgment, i.e., an unusual “openness to new epistemic material,” the same openness that Kant willy-nilly subjects himself to by virtue of the resolutely empirical thrust of texts like the *Anthropology*, in “Keats, Poetry, and ‘The Absence of Work.’”
50. Paul De Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays on the Rhetoric of Contemporary Theory*, rev. 2d ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 7.
51. Kant, “Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics,” in *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–1770*, ed. and trans. David Walford (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 335. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *SS*.
52. Derrida, “The Rhetoric of Drugs,” trans. Michael Israel, in *Points . . . Interviews*,

- 1974–1994, ed. Elizabeth Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 250.
53. John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 307.
  54. For a brief but rich discussion of Kant's relationship with Stolberg, see Fenves' "Notes on the Text" (ON, 74–75). Kant holds Stolberg away from his discussion in a manner that anticipates the treatment of the aristocrats in the *Anthropology*. But we might well then ask who is being "superior" to whom? Reading Kant's text, Derrida argues that "Each of us is the mystagogue *and* the *Aufklärer* of an other" (142); we might say, after Derrida, that "each of us is the aristocrat *and* the bourgeoisie of an other." See Derrida, "On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy," trans. John Leavey Jr., in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, ed. Peter Fenves (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated ONAT.
  55. Does Heidegger recall Kant when he stages an imaginary confrontation not between reason and the mystagogues but between "thinking" and "faith"? From the "Report of a session of the Evangelical Academy in Hofgeismar, December 1953," we have this: "Within thought, nothing can be accomplished which could prepare or contribute to the determination of what happens in faith and grace. If grace were to call me in this way, I should shut up shop." Quoted in Derrida's *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 115 n3.
  56. Guillory, ix.
  57. Pinkard cites the 1807 constitution of the kingdom of Westphalia, 245.
  58. Citing the work of Reinhart Koselleck, Jochen Schulte-Sasse makes this point in "The Concept of Literary Criticism in German Romanticism, 1795–1810," in *A History of German Literary Criticism, 1730–1980*, ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), 126–7.
  59. See Pinkard, 221–331.
  60. Nietzsche: "Kant's joke: Kant wanted to prove to the 'whole world,' in a slap-in-the-face way, that the 'whole world' was right—that there was the secret joke of this mind. He wrote against the scholars for the benefit of popular preconceptions, but for scholars, and not for the people." See *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 48.
  61. Karl Marx, "The German Ideology: Part 1," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2d ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 182.



62. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Gender Criticism," in *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn (New York: MLA, 1992), 295.
63. Hartmut Böhme and Gernot Böhme, "The Battle of Reason with Imagination," trans. Jane Kneller, in *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions*, ed. James Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 446.
64. Derrida notes that "the work of mourning would be coextensive with all work in general." See *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 178 n3.
65. The return of those aliens in the *Anthropology* reminds us that Kant's war with Swedenborg, and in particular with his followers, was still underway at the end of his life, and with good reason, for the *Schwärmerie* had only gained strength in the European philosophical scene since the original publication of Kant's satirical critique of the spirit-seers in 1766. In his early confrontation with Swedenborg we see Kant establishing the dialectic of political culture and knowledge-capital that continues to underwrite his work as late as the *Anthropology* and *On a Newly Arisen Tone*. In Derrida's words: "The hierarchized opposition of gift to work, of intuition to concept, of genius's mode to scholar's mode, is homologous to the opposition between aristocracy and democracy, [and] eventually between demagogic oligarchy and authentic rational democracy" (*ONAT*, 128).
66. Sarah Kofman, "The Economy of Respect: Kant and Respect for Women," trans. Nicola Fisher, in *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant*, ed. Robin May Schott (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1997), 357.
67. Hegel's characterization of woman is from paragraph 475 of *Phenomenology of Spirit*.
68. Kant cites Albrecht von Haller's *Unvollkommene Ode über die Ewigkeit*, a poem to which he also refers in his *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, a text I discuss in section VI of this essay.
69. As Robert Tobin notes, "warm brothers" [*warme Brüder*] is Johann Friedel's phrase (1782) for "men who love other men." See Tobin's important study, *Warm Brothers: Queer Theory and the Age of Goethe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 15.
70. Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London and New York: Verso, 1997), 253. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *PF*.
71. We might note here that Kant's insistence on the value of friendship (between men)

- over that of love (between a man and a woman) flies in the face of the discourse networks of 1800. As Niklas Luhmann argues, in the competition between “love” and “friendship” for the coding of intimacy, it is “love” that wins. See *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, trans. Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones (Cambridge, Mass.: Polity Press, 1986). Yet can “love” and “friendship” be separated so decisively in the case of Kant?
72. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: Volume Two of the History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 215.
  73. For a helpful discussion of Kant’s interest in fostering what could be called “the temporary co-fraternity” of the shared meal, see Peter Melville’s “Kant’s Dinner Party: Anthropology from a Foucauldian Point of View,” *Mosaic* (forthcoming); and “A Friendship of Taste: The Aesthetics of Eating Well in Kant’s *Anthropology*,” in *Eating Romanticism: Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite*, ed. Denise Gigante and Timothy Morton (forthcoming, St. Martin’s).
  74. I recall Sedgwick’s discussion, after Foucault, of the “process, narrowly bordered at first in European culture but sharply broadened and accelerated after the late eighteenth century, by which ‘knowledge’ and ‘sex’ became conceptually inseparable from one another—so that knowledge means in the first place sexual knowledge; ignorance, sexual ignorance.” See Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 73.
  75. Bernard Edelman, *The House that Kant Built: A Moral Tale*, trans. Graeme Hunter (Toronto: Canadian Philosophical Monographs, 1987), 12.
  76. I recall Irigaray’s argument in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 327.
  77. Derrida, “How to Avoid Speaking: Denegations,” trans. Ken Frieden, in *Derrida and Negative Theology*, ed. Harold Coward and Toby Foshay (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 87. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated HAS.
  78. See, for example, Derrida’s *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*; and “Reading Heidegger: An Outline of Remarks to the Essex Colloquium,” *Research in Phenomenology* 17 (1987): 171–88. For a discussion of Kant and the question of animality and obligation see David L. Clark’s “On Being ‘the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany,’” *Animal Acts*, ed. Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior (New York: Routledge, 1997), 165–98.
  79. Emphasis mine. See “Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria,” in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 8, ed. and trans. James Strachey et al.

(London: Hogarth, 1953–74), 77–8.

80. Thus we see why for Derrida what is problematical is not telepathy but that “non-telepathy is possible.” “Always difficult to imagine,” he writes, “that one can think something to oneself, deep down inside, without being surprised by the other, without the other being immediately informed” (“Telepathy,” 13).
81. This paradox is nicely captured by the situation in which Jim Carrey’s character finds himself in Tom Shadyac’s film, *Liar, Liar* (Universal Pictures 1997). On the one hand, the film’s narrative relies upon the assumption that telling the truth is virtuous, the very mark of virtue. Carrey’s character lacks that virtue, but through supernatural intervention is prosthetically provided with it as a prelude to actually becoming truthful, notably with his son. On the other hand, the humor in the film comes from the way in which such truth-telling dismantles civil society, and in fact throws into sharper relief the degree to which civility is dependent upon a kind of low level dissimulation, or what Kant calls the “play with pretences” (*AP*, 39).
82. For a discussion of the range of thinkers evoking alien life from the eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, see Michael J. Crowe, *The Extraterrestrial Life Debate, 1750–1900: The Idea of a Plurality of Worlds from Kant to Lowell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
83. Kant, *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, trans. Stanley L. Jaki (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1981), 33. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *UH*.
84. Ultimately Kant’s somewhat coy misgivings became real enough, and he expurgated the alien anthropology from editions published during the last decade of his life—which is to say, the very years that he was assembling his notes for the *Anthropology*. The highly determined and curtailed references to aliens in the *Anthropology* could be described as the trace effects of that self-censorship.
85. Nietzsche: “But if we could communicate with the midge, we would hear that it too floats through the air with the very same pathos, feeling that it too contains within itself the flying center of this world.” See “Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” trans. Ronald Speirs, in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Guess and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
86. The “Hottentot Venus” has been the subject of much discussion. See in particular Gilman’s “Black Bodies, White Bodies,” *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 204–41; and Balachandra Rajan’s *Under Western Eyes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 92–99.

87. Gayatri Spivak's hypothesis about the function of the "native informant" in Kant, Hegel, and Marx is useful to consider here: "the end of the 'German' eighteenth century . . . provides material for a narrative of crisis management: the 'scientific' fabrication of new representations of self and world that would provide alibis for the domination, exploitation, and epistemic violation entailed by the establishment of colony and empire." See *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 7.
88. Kant's insistence on the importance not only of attention but also the capacity to withdraw attention is remarkably consistent, and goes back as early as "Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy" (1763): "Every abstraction is simply the cancelling/sublating [*Aufhebung*] of certain clear representations; the purpose of the cancellation is normally to ensure that what remains is that much more clearly represented. But everyone knows how much effort that demands. *Abstraction* can therefore be called *negative attention*. In other words, abstraction can be called a genuine doing and acting . . ." (228). For discussions of "negative attentiveness" see Shell's *ER*, 283–287 and Goetschel, 53–56.
89. Werner Hamacher, "One 2 Many Multiculturalisms," trans. Dana Hollander, in *Violence, Identity, and Self-Determination*, ed. Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 291.
90. Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 78. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text and abbreviated *OF*.
91. John T. Goldthwait, translator's note (*OF*, 121).
92. Kant, "Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy," trans. David Walford and Ralf Meerbote, in *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 228.
93. Freud, "Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis," in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth, 1953–74), 255.

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