

## **The New Conflict of the Faculties: Kant, Radical Enlightenment, The Hyper-State, and How to Philosophize During a Pandemic**

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### **Abstract**

In this essay, I apply the Kantian (or at the very least, Kant-inspired) interpretation of enlightenment as *radical enlightenment* to the enterprise of *philosophy* within the context of our contemporary world-situation, and try to answer this very hard question: “As radically enlightened Kantian philosophers confronted by *the double-whammy* consisting of what I call *The Hyper-State*, together with *the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic*, what should we dare to think and do?” The very hard problem posed by this very hard question is what I’ll call *The New Conflict of the Faculties*. By way of a direct answer to this very hard question and by way of an effective solution to this very hard problem, I provide seven recommendations.

### **Key words**

Kant, Radical enlightenment, Hyper-State, Digital media, Civil disobedience, Voltaire, 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic

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Pangloss



Our age is the genuine age of **criticism**, to which everything must submit. **Religion** through its holiness, and **legislation** through its **majesty** [and, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, **the military-industrial-university-digital complex** through its ideological hegemony and coercive authoritarianism—RH] commonly seek to exempt themselves from it. But in this way they excite a just suspicion against themselves, and cannot lay claim to that unfeigned respect that reason grants only to that which has been able to withstand its free and public examination. (*CPR Axi n.*)<sup>1</sup>

## I. Introduction

In this essay, I want to apply the Kantian (or at the very least, Kant-inspired) interpretation of enlightenment as *radical enlightenment* to the enterprise of *philosophy* within the context of our contemporary world-situation, and try to answer this very hard question:

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this essay, for convenience, I refer to Kant's works infratextually in parentheses. The references include both an abbreviation of the English title and the corresponding volume and page numbers in the standard "Akademie" edition of Kant's works: *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Königlich Preussischen (now Deutschen) Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: G. Reimer [now de Gruyter], 1902-). I generally follow the standard English translations, but have occasionally modified them where appropriate. For references to the first *Critique*, I follow the common practice of giving page numbers from the A (1781) and B (1787) German editions only. A list of relevant abbreviations and English translations can be found at the end of the main text of the essay.

As radically enlightened Kantian philosophers confronted by *the double-whammy* consisting of what I call *The Hyper-State*,<sup>2</sup> together with *the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic*, what should we dare to think and do?

The very hard problem posed by this very hard question is what I'll call *The New Conflict of the Faculties*.

## II. What Enlightenment Is

To coin a question, *what is enlightenment?* In his equally famous and notorious, but in any case historically and philosophically seminal, same-named essay, Kant says this:

*Enlightenment is the human being's emergence from his own self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to make use of one's own understanding without direction from another. This immaturity is self-incurred when its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! Have the courage to use your own understanding! is thus the motto of Enlightenment. (WiE 8: 35)*

Following Kant's lead and elaborating a little, I will say that the concept of ENLIGHTENMENT, *as such*, says that (i) because we are, by virtue of a unified set of innately-specified cognitive, practical, and affective/emotional capacities, *autonomous rational human animal agents possessing dignity*, that is, *persons*, but (ii) because, tragically, against the backdrop of various more or less brute, goading material conditions of physical nature, human history, and social-institutional or political culture, we have also freely—even if unreflectively and self-deceivingly—put ourselves into a longstanding condition of cognitive, practical, and affective/emotional passivity, robotic subservience, mind control, and mental slavery, and thus into a longstanding state of *self-incurred moral and intellectual immaturity*, (iii) therefore, in order finally to advance beyond this tragic immature condition and to satisfy the categorically normative demands of our rational human nature as persons, *we ought to dare to use our own understanding and think for ourselves*, or as the classical slogan has it, *Sapere aude!*

But unfortunately, and fatefully, whether intentionally or not, Kant's seminal essay is *highly ambiguously written*, in such a way as to permit two sharply different readings of the concept of enlightenment, depending on whether one interprets it, as most casual readers, scholars, and Kantian or non-Kantian philosophers do, in the light of (i) Kant's neo-Hobbesian liberal Statist political philosophy in *The Doctrine of Right*, or instead, as a few contrarian “Left Kantians” (Hanna 2017a) do, in the light of (ii) Kant's

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<sup>2</sup> I'm borrowing this useful neologism from Otto Paans, who himself adapted it from the work of Marc Augé and Timothy Morton.

uncompromising non-egoistic, non-consequentialist, autonomy-driven, dignitarian ethics in the *Groundwork* and *Critique of Practical Reason*, his post-Statist, spiritually-inspired moral cosmopolitanism in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, and his defense of the absolute autonomy of philosophy in “The Conflict of the Faculties.” According to the first interpretation, which I call *Enlightenment Lite* (**EL**), you ought to “argue as much you like about whatever you like, but obey!” Correspondingly, **EL** is committed to an essentially *instrumental, empiricist* conception of cognitive and practical rationality, an essentially *deterministic* or at least *compatibilist* metaphysics of free will and autonomy, an essentially *egoistic utilitarian* conception of ethics, an essentially *individualist* conception of social life, and an essentially *intellectualist* or *dualist* conception of the nature of the human mind. But on the contrary, according to the second interpretation, which I call *Radical Enlightenment* (**RE**),<sup>3</sup> or *heavy-duty enlightenment*, you ought to dare to think and act for yourself, and in so thinking and so doing, thereby *exit the State* in order to create and sustain a cosmopolitan moral community that Kant calls the “ethical community”: hence **RE** is a Kantian version of *philosophical and political cosmopolitan anarcho-socialism* (Hanna 2017b). Correspondingly, **RE** is committed to an essentially *non-instrumental, apriorist* conception of cognitive and practical rationality (Hanna 2015), a *natural libertarian, source-incompatibilist* metaphysics of free will and autonomy (Hanna 2018b), an essentially *dignitarian, respect-based* conception of ethics (Hanna 2018c), an essentially *enactive and embedded* conception of social life (Maiese and Hanna 2019), and an essentially *embodied* conception of the human mind (Hanna and Maiese 2009).

Now the ideological allure of the first or **EL** interpretation is so powerful that you may find it hard to believe that there even *is* a second or **RE** interpretation. If so, then I hereby invite you, as a self-consciously critical Critical philosopher, to put the all-too-familiar **EL** interpretation in abeyance for a very brief moment, and recognize that the **RE** interpretation practically *leaps out* of these three juxtaposed texts:

When nature has unwrapped, from under this hard shell, the seed for which she cares most tenderly, namely the propensity and calling to *think* freely, the latter gradually works back upon the mentality of the people (which thereby gradually becomes capable of *freedom* in acting) and eventually even upon the principles of *government*, which finds it profitable to itself to treat the human being, *who is now more than a machine*, in keeping with his dignity. (WiE 8: 41-42)

A *juridico-civil* (political) *state* is the relation of human beings to each other inasmuch as they stand jointly under *public juridical laws* (which are all coercive laws). An *ethico-civil* state is one in which they are united under laws without being coerced, i.e., under *laws of virtue* alone.... In an already existing political community all the political citizens are, as

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<sup>3</sup> In his excellent but also highly controversial *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, and its two sequel volumes, Jonathan Israel (2001) traces the origins of the very idea of a radical enlightenment project back to Spinoza, pantheism, and metaphysical monism. I certainly agree with Israel that Spinozism is at least one important source of the radical enlightenment tradition. Kant’s own contribution to the controversy about Spinozism is presented in “What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” (OT).

such, still in the *ethical state of nature*, and have the right to remain in it; for it would be a contradiction (in *adjecto*) for the political community to compel its citizens to enter into an ethical community, since the latter entails freedom from coercion in its very concept. Every political community may indeed wish to have available a dominion over minds as well, according to the laws of virtue; for where its means of coercion do not reach, since a human judge cannot penetrate into the depths of other human beings, there the dispositions to virtue would bring about the required result. But woe to the legislator who would want to bring about through coercion a polity directed to ethical ends! For he would thereby not only achieve the very opposite of ethical ends, but also undermine his political ends and render them insecure. – The citizen of the political community therefore remains, so far as the latter’s lawgiving authority is concerned, totally free: he may wish to enter with his fellow citizens into an ethical union over and above the political one, or rather remain in a natural state of this sort.... THE HUMAN BEING OUGHT TO LEAVE THE ETHICAL STATE OF NATURE IN ORDER TO BECOME A MEMBER OF AN ETHICAL COMMUNITY. (*Rel 6: 95-102*)

When it is a question of the *truth* of a certain teaching to be expounded in public, the teacher cannot appeal to a supreme command nor the pupil pretend that he believed it by order. This can happen only when it is a question of action, and even then the pupil must recognize by a *free* judgment that such a command was really issued and that he is obligated or at least entitled to obey it; otherwise, his acceptance of it would be an empty pretense and a lie. Now the power to judge autonomously—that is, freely according to principles of thought in general—is called reason. So the philosophical faculty, because it must answer for the truth of its teachings it is to adopt or even allow, must be conceived as free and subject only to laws given by reason, not by the government. (*CF 7: 27*)

In any case, a striking contemporary example of **EL** is Steven Pinker's *Enlightenment Now* (2018) and, for better or worse, I have recently developed and defended **RE** in *Kant, Agnosticism, and Anarchism* (Hanna 2018d).

Very much in the spirit of **RE**, in “The Conflict of the Faculties,” Kant is fully critically aware of the real possibility of mind-control and mental slavery (aka “ideological hegemony”) *within* the university, especially via the faculty of theology; and he correspondingly asserts the absolute autonomy of the faculty of philosophy from the theology faculty, from other university faculties, and from the government. But, as radical as that is, perhaps suprisingly, Kant neglects to consider the equally real possibility of ideological hegemony *within faculties of philosophy themselves* (Hanna 2018e); nor—perhaps *unsurprisingly*—does he foresee the real possibility of almost unlimited mind-control and mental slavery via *contemporary digital media*, not only within States but also across States, worldwide.

Now when we combine (i) the coercive authoritarianism of all States, especially including all contemporary neoliberal nation-States, with (ii) global corporate capitalism, (iii) complicit, conformist, neoliberal universities and their faculties (Maiese and Hanna 2019: ch.4), and with (iv) globalized digital media, then we have what I will call “The

Hyper-State,” that is, *the military-industrial-university-digital complex* that nationally, internationally, and globally guides and shapes States and their governments, often more or less covertly and without our being self-consciously critically aware of it.<sup>4</sup>

In the rest of this essay, as I mentioned in the Introduction, I want to apply the Kantian interpretation of enlightenment as **RE** to the enterprise of philosophy within the context of our contemporary world-situation, and try to answer this very hard question: “As radically enlightened Kantian philosophers confronted by the double-whammy consisting of The Hyper-State, together with the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic, what should we dare to think and do?” And as I also mentioned in the Introduction, the very hard problem posed by this very hard question is what I’m calling “The New Conflict of the Faculties.”

### III. The Argument From Socialism: Log Off, Subvert, and Dismantle

As a necessary preliminary to our fully facing up to The New Conflict of the Faculties, I’m going to start with a recent critical analysis of *social media* by Benjamin Y. Fong in the American democratic socialist journal, *Jacobin*. Fong writes:

For the Left, ... social media presents an imminent threat: it attracts people who are natural fodder for socialist politics and then absorbs them in the unthinking narcissism of pseudo-political statement pronouncement, where they enter the negative feedback loop that distances them from the reality of everyday human engagement. Twitter is thus not just a *medium of expression* for the “psychic pathologies” of what Mark Fisher described so well as the “Vampire Castle.”<sup>5</sup> *It is the Vampire Castle*, doing capitalism’s work by further atomizing and distancing people from the kinds of conversations required for real political

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<sup>4</sup> The well-known phrase “military-industrial complex,” originally derives from US president Dwight D. Eisenhower’s “Farewell Address” in 1961:

[The] conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society. In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists, and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals so that security and liberty may prosper together. (underlining added)

See, e.g., (Wikipedia 2019). And for the closely-related notion of *the deep state*, see, e.g., (Herman and Chomsky 1988; and Lofgren 2014). Unfortunately, the neologism I was originally using for the Hyper-State, “the deeper state,” has been irremediably corrupted by the opportunistic, systematic misuse of the term “the deep state” by American right-libertarians and neo-fascists, during The Age of Trump.

<sup>5</sup> See (Fisher 2013).



engagement. The sooner we realize this about social media, the sooner we can get to the work of dismantling it. (Fong 2018)

Here, in turn, is a four-step rational reconstruction of Fong's argument:

1. Socialism—whether democratic socialism or social anarchism (aka *anarcho-socialism*, *libertarian socialism*, etc.)—is fundamentally concerned with respect for universal human dignity; with human freedom of thought, expression, choice, and action; with individual and collective creativity and flourishing; and with the universal satisfaction of true human needs.
2. Internet-based social media may appear to be highly promising and legitimate vehicles for the realization of socialist aims.
3. But in fact, social media are an essential part of the “military-industrial-university-digital complex” that not only produces widespread *mind-control and mental slavery*, but has also enabled a worldwide *mental health crisis* of social media addiction (Griffiths 2018; Nguyen 2018; Schulson 2015).
4. Therefore, anyone who recognizes the value of the fundamental concerns of socialism should (i) engage in a serious critical analysis of social media, (ii) “log the fuck off” on a regular basis, in order to resist their largely malign influence, and also (iii) wholeheartedly individually and collectively commit to subverting and dismantling the entire system of social media.

I think that this argument is sound. Moreover, I also think that its conclusion should be generalized so as to apply to *all digital media controlled by other parts of The Hyper-State*, not just social media, therefore all digital media, including all parts of the internet, that are controlled by (i) the governments of contemporary nation-States, especially including their coercive authoritarian enforcement-specialists, the military and the police, and/or (ii) global corporate capitalists, and/or (iii) universities and professional academic organizations. The rationale for this generalization is that premises 1, 2, and 3 of the above argument apply just as correctly and directly to *all* digital media controlled by The Hyper-State, as they do to social media in particular. Therefore, the generalized conclusion of the rationally reconstructed version of Fong's argument should be a starting point for all of us, including *all philosophers*, which in turn includes *all radically enlightened Kantian philosophers*.

Now we can advance to the philosophical main event of this essay, namely fully facing up The New Conflict of the Faculties: *specifically* as radically enlightened Kantian philosophers confronted by The Hyper-State, what should we dare to think and do?

#### **IV. One Thing That Radically Enlightened Kantian Philosophers Should Dare to Think and Do: Political Philosophy of Mind**

In section III, I argued that anyone who recognizes the value of the fundamental concerns of socialism should (i) engage in a serious critical analysis of all digital media substantially controlled by The Hyper-State, (ii) “log the fuck off” on a regular basis from the digital media substantially controlled by The Hyper-State, in order to resist their largely malign influence, and also (iii) wholeheartedly individually and collectively commit to subverting and dismantling the entire system of digital media substantially controlled by The Hyper-State. But these are things that *anyone*, not just radically enlightened Kantian philosophers, should dare to think and do, insofar as they are confronted by The Hyper-State. So we need to isolate some thing or things that radically enlightened Kantian philosophers are especially well-positioned to be able to dare to think and do, by virtue of their training and by virtue of their wholehearted commitment to *real philosophy*, aka *rational anthropology*, as a full-time, lifetime calling (Hanna 2018a).

Here is *one* thing, namely what, following the contemporary German philosopher Jan Slaby, I call *political philosophy of mind*. Political philosophy of mind, as I am understanding it, has two parts: (i) *the mind-body politic*, which is an extension of the theory of what Michelle Maiese and I call *the essential embodiment theory* of the mind-body relation (Hanna and Maiese 2009), to the critical analysis and radical emancipatory politics of *social institutions*, and (ii) *the political philosophy of cognition*, which is an extension of the theory of human cognition to the critical analysis and radical emancipatory politics of *ideologically-driven cognitive illusions*. Here is an example of the mind-body politic:

[The mind-body politic] fuses contemporary philosophy of mind and emancipatory political theory. On the philosophy of mind side, we draw from our own previous work on the essential embodiment theory and enactivism, together with work by Jan Slaby, John Dewey, Bourdieu, and J.J. Gibson. On the emancipatory political theory side, we draw from Kant, Schiller, Kierkegaard, early Marx, Kropotkin, Foucault, and Frankfurt School Critical Theory. We begin with the claim that human minds are necessarily and completely embodied, and inherently enactive, social, and environmentally embedded, and proceed from there to argue that social institutions partially determine and shape our essentially embodied minds, and thereby fundamentally affect our lives. Our focus is on social institutions in contemporary neoliberal societies, specifically higher education and mental health practice. We hold that although these social institutions shape our essentially embodied minds in a destructive, deforming, and enslaving way, yet it’s possible to create social institutions that are constructive, enabling, and emancipatory. According to our proposed enactive-transformative principle, enacting salient changes in the structure and complex dynamics of a social institution produces corresponding salient changes in the structure and complex dynamics of the essentially embodied minds of the people belonging to that institution. (Maiese and Hanna 2019: ch.1)



And here is an example of the political philosophy of cognition:

I am deeply and fundamentally interested in explaining how memory and sense perception can be ideologically manipulated for political purposes, and also how the philosophy of cognition can be deployed to indicate and justify practical, effective cognitive strategies for resisting this manipulation and for ideological self-deprogramming and cognitive self-liberation when the manipulation has already occurred. My proposal is that the overall value of those cognitive theories will be made retrogressively manifest through their ability to provide fruitful and robust consequences for political theories and real-world political frameworks that emphasize *individual and collective free agency* and *radical enlightenment*. (Hanna 2018f)

## V. Another Thing That Radically Enlightened Kantian Philosophers Should Dare to Think and Do: Philosophical Civil Disobedience

What else should radically enlightened Kantian philosophers dare to think and do? In recent work, I've argued (i) that a metaphilosophical "second copernican revolution" will occur when and insofar as radically enlightened philosophers *exit the professional academy* in order to emancipate themselves from the mind control and mental slavery of contemporary professional academic philosophy, which is itself fully embedded within and fully reflective of the mind control and mental slavery that pervades contemporary neoliberal universities and other social institutions of higher education (Hanna 2018e), and (ii) that the specific kind of philosophy that radically enlightened philosophers should be doing is *borderless philosophy*, or *anarcho-philosophy* (Hanna 2018g). Borderless philosophy, or anarcho-philosophy, is a sub-species of real philosophy, aka rational anthropology (Hanna 2018a), according to which (i) real philosophy is expressly *anti-professional-academic* or at least *extra-professional-academic*, (ii) real philosophy is expressly *cosmopolitan* or global, and (iii) there are *no in-principle restrictions as to the format or content of real philosophical works*.

But there's another aspect of borderless or anarcho-philosophy that is also closely connected with Martin Luther King Jr's doctrine of *civil disobedience* (King 2018), as per the following eight-step argument.

1. By *violence*, I mean *the use of actually or potentially destructive force*, and by *nonviolence* I mean *the refusal to use actually or potentially destructive force*.
2. Violence with respect to people is rarely if ever rationally or morally justified; indeed, except in last-resort cases of self-defense against violent attack or in order to protect the innocent from violent attack, universal nonviolence with respect to people is rationally justified and morally obligatory.

3. Nevertheless, sometimes it is not only permissible, but even rationally justified and morally obligatory, to be nonviolent with respect to *people* yet also violent with respect to *private property*, if the relevant private property represents a basic and widespread source of violations of respect for universal human dignity—e.g., if it's private property owned by big-capitalist conglomerates or corporations, that expresses and implements an inherently oppressive social system, such as the symbiotic combination of *racism, big capitalism, and the coercive authoritarianism of the State* (e.g., of the police and the legal justice system of mass incarceration)—and the purpose of the violence with respect to private property of this kind is solely to change this inherently oppressive social system into something fundamentally better, in that it sufficiently respects universal human dignity.

4. Martin Luther King Jr (henceforth MLK), argues that massive nonviolent (with respect to people) civil disobedience is required in order to effect fundamental social change for the better in inherently oppressive social systems, and also that this nonviolent civil disobedience can include “direct action” such as the disruption of the daily operations of the inherently oppressive symbiotic social system of racism, big capitalism, and the coercive authoritarianism of the State, perhaps even including violence with respect to private property owned by big-capitalist conglomerates or corporations (King 2018).

5. Although MLK does not explicitly draw this distinction, there is nevertheless a basic difference between (i) *coercion*, which is either (ia) imposing or threatening to impose violence on people or (ib) imposing or threatening to impose salient although nonviolent harms on people, in order to compel those people to do various things, or heed various commands or demands, in order to bring about egoistic or publicly beneficial ends of the coercer, and (ii) *noncoercion*, which is the refusal to engage in coercion.

6. Since coercion treats other people as mere means or mere things, and not as persons with dignity, it violates sufficient respect for human dignity; hence all coercion is rationally unjustified and immoral, *even if* it is beneficial for many people.

7. So only *nonviolent (with respect to people), noncoercive civil disobedience* is rationally justified and morally acceptable for the purposes of effecting fundamental social change for the better in inherently oppressive social systems, and *only nonviolent (with respect to people), noncoercive civil disobedient “direct action” or “disruption”* is fully consistent with MLK's overall moral and political philosophy.

8. Therefore, although MLK was a *serious* radical—indeed, he was an *anarcho-socialist*, since political anarchism is just a generalization of civil disobedience which says that we're *always* permitted or obligated to disobey the coercive

authoritarian commands of the State *whenever* those commands are rationally unjustified and immoral, hence the State as such, as inherently coercive and authoritarian, has no genuine rational and moral legitimacy—he was not a *dangerous* radical, except insofar as he peacefully but also rebelliously challenged the oppression of racists, big capitalists, and coercive authoritarian Statists.

Civil disobedience in MLK’s sense, then, is the refusal to heed, or the direct violation of, rationally unjustified and immoral commands or laws of the State, for the sake of sufficiently respecting universal human dignity. And anarcho-socialism is just a generalization of civil disobedience. Or to express this doctrine of anarcho-socialist civil disobedience in the refined MLK sense *pictorially*, via a famous image created by the British artist Banksy:



In turn, I think that there are at least five modes of civil disobedience: (i) *direct action or disruption*, for example, strikes, marches, sit-ins, occupations, etc., (ii) what I call *emancipatory* free speech or freedom of expression, that is, free speech or expression whose essential purpose is *to resist oppression for the sake of sufficiently respecting universal human dignity*, (iii) *counter-cultural escape into independent or unincorporated creative, meaningful activity*, for example, artistic activity of all kinds, crafts of all kinds, scholarship of all kinds, especially philosophy, and, more generally, J.S. Mill’s “experiments in living,” (iv) what the political anthropologist James C. Scott calls *weapons of the weak* (Scott 1985), for example, foot-dragging, covert noncompliance, theft, sabotage, defacement of property, etc., and finally (v) what I call *philosophical civil disobedience*.

As regards (v), we'll remember that according to the refined version of MLK's conception of civil disobedience that I sketched above, all civil disobedience must also be (i) nonviolent (with respect to people), and (ii) noncoercive. So what kind or kinds of civil disobedience in the refined MLK sense are *especially* appropriate for radically enlightened Kantian borderless or anarcho-philosophers? Looking back to the origins of western philosophy, Socrates and Diogenes, for example, were both *emancipatory free-speakers* and *counter-cultural escapees*: Socrates was a subversive philosophical market-place conversationalist; and Diogenes was an outrageous, Lenny-Bruce-style, philosophical sociopolitical critic, and a self-styled hobo or vagrant. In these regards, Socrates and Diogenes were both *civil disobedients* in the refined MLK sense, and correspondingly they were regarded by their contemporary governments and/or power-elites as *dangerous thinkers*. As we all know, Socrates was arrested by the government of Athens, imprisoned, tried, and executed; and Diogenes was banished from Sinope for defacing the currency, and later kidnapped by pirates and sold into slavery. But neither Socrates nor Diogenes, unlike *Voltaire*, lived in the time of natural disasters like the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, which killed 30,000 people—



Voltaire in turn, directly responding to the Lisbon earthquake disaster in the light of the rationalist optimism of 18<sup>th</sup> century Leibnizian-Wolffian professional academic philosophy, carried out an act of radically enlightened philosophical civil disobedience by creating and publishing his brilliantly satirical 1759/1761 anti-professional-academic philosophy novel, *Candide* (Voltaire 1981). Kant, of course, knew about the Lisbon earthquake disaster, and had also closely read *Candide*. So in the “Practical Conclusion” to his own Voltaire-inspired satirical essay of 1766, “Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elicucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics,” he wrote:

It seems more consonant with human nature and moral purity to base the expectation of a future world on the sentiments of a nobly constituted soul than, conversely, to base its noble conduct on the hope of another world. Such is also the character of *moral faith* (*moralische Glaube*).... [S]ince our fate in that future world will probably very much depend on how we comported ourselves at our posts in this world, I will conclude with the advice which *Voltaire* gave to his honest *Candide* after so many futile scholastic disputes: *Let us attend to our happiness, and go into the garden and work.* (DSS 2: 373)<sup>6</sup>

Correspondingly, in the next section, I'll apply what I think is the core radically enlightened philosophically disobedient thought in *Candide*—namely, “*il faut cultiver notre jardin*,” i.e., “we must cultivate our garden,” to our very hard leading question, namely, “As radically enlightened Kantian philosophers confronted by the double-whammy consisting of The Hyper-State, together with the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic, what should we dare to think and do?,” and also to the very hard problem posed by this very hard question, namely, The New Conflict of the Faculties.

## VI. II Faut Cultiver Notre Jardin Mondial, Or, How to Philosophize During a Pandemic

The history of [*Candide*'s] world-famous phrase, which serves as the book's conclusion – *il faut cultiver notre jardin* – is ... peculiar. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it didn't come into written use in English until the early 1930s – in America through Oliver Wendell Holmes and in Britain thanks to Lytton Strachey. But a long, unrecorded history of its oral use and misuse can be deduced from Strachey's announced desire to cure the “degenerate descendants of *Candide*” who have taken the phrase in the sense of “Have an eye to the main chance.” That a philosophical recommendation to horticultural quietism should be twisted into a justification for selfish greed would not necessarily have surprised *Voltaire*. (Barnes 2011)

In *Voltaire*'s *Candide*, the scathing critique of abstract, world-alienated, self-alienating, sanctimonious theoretical philosophy in general, and of professional academic philosophy in particular—specifically exemplified by 18<sup>th</sup> century Leibnizian/Wolffian rationalism and theodicy, or theo-idiocy, satirically represented by that iconic moralistic idiot of professional academic philosophy, Dr Pangloss—equally evocatively and provocatively concludes with the phrase “*il faut cultiver notre jardin*,” i.e., “we must cultivate our garden.” What does *Voltaire*'s world-famous phrase mean? As per the quotation at the beginning of this section, the novelist Julian Barnes aptly noted that a popular, vulgar misuse and twisting of it means “have an eye to the main chance,” that is, a “justification for selfish greed,” and then proposed that, contrariwise, its real meaning is “a philosophical recommendation to horticultural quietism.” *That* reading of its real meaning seems wrong

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<sup>6</sup> See also Kuehn (2001: 174).



to me, however, an anachronistic interpretation over-influenced by the later Wittgenstein's idea that real philosophy should only get clear on the confusions of classical philosophy as represented by mainstream professional academic philosophy, discharge all its bad pictures, engage in liberating self-therapy, and then just "leave the world alone."

Contrariwise to Barnes's Wittgensteinian contrariwise, I think that when Voltaire wrote "il faut cultiver notre jardin," fully in accordance with his radically enlightened realistically optimistic dignitarian humanism (Hanna 2020), he was really saying:

*In a world without an all-powerful (omnipotent), all-knowing (omniscient), or all-good (omnibenvolent)—aka 3-O—God, it's up to all of us to nurture everyone and everything.*

Correspondingly, Voltaire was *also* telling us to *revolutionize philosophy*, and transform it from abstract, world-alienated, self-alienating, sanctimonious theorizing into *a concrete, world-encountering, self-realizing, emancipatory, rational humanistic enterprise*: in a nutshell, *the real philosopher as a rational rebel for humanity*. Hence what Voltaire is really saying, in the context of *18<sup>th</sup> century radical enlightenment*, is essentially closer to what the early, humanistic Marx is saying in his 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and his 1845 *Theses on Feuerbach*—

The resolution of *theoretical* considerations is possible only through *practical* means, only through the practical energy of humanity. Their resolution is by no means, therefore, the task only of understanding, but is a *real* task of life, a task which philosophy was unable to accomplish precisely because it saw there a *purely* theoretical problem. (Marx 1964: 72)

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in different ways; the point is to *change* it. (Marx 1964: 69)

and to what Thoreau is saying in his 1854 *Walden*—

There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers.... To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically. (Thoreau 1960: 9)

—than it is to what Wittgenstein is (or at least seems to be<sup>7</sup>) saying in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

That being so, how do (i) the meaning of "il faut cultiver notre jardin," (ii) Voltaire's radically enlightened critique of professional academic philosophy as abstract,

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<sup>7</sup> Although the quietist reading of the later Wittgenstein's views is the most common one—hence it's not surprising that Barnes subscribes to it—it's also at least possible to give a "Left Wittgensteinian" reading of the later Wittgenstein that emphasizes moral and political activism, and not quietism. See, e.g., (Williams 2007). In fact, even my own essay, (Hanna 2010), could be interpreted as a step in this direction. In any case, I'm grateful to Fabian Freyenhagen for making this good general point in e-mail correspondence.



world-alienated, self-alienating, sanctimonious theorizing, and (iii) his corresponding radically enlightened 18th century recommendation about real philosophy, jointly apply to *contemporary philosophy*? **First**, I think it's entirely clear that the popular, vulgar misuse and twisting of "il faut cultiver notre jardin" as "have an eye to the main chance" applies directly to the *professionalization and neoliberalization* of academic philosophy in late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century liberal democratic, or not-so-liberal and and not-so-democratic States, whether in Europe, North America, or anywhere else in the world. **Second**, I think it's also entirely clear that Voltaire's radically enlightened critique of professional academic philosophy as abstract, world-alienated, self-alienating, sanctimonious theorizing applies directly to *the Ivory Bunker of professional academic philosophy in the USA in The Age of Trump* (Z aka Hanna 2016). **Third**, I think it's even self-evidently clear that Voltaire's radically enlightened recommendation about real philosophy directly applies to the three basic proposals made by members of the *Against Professional Philosophy* circle, including: (i) Robert Frodeman's and Adam Briggles's conception of [field philosophy](#) (Frodeman and Briggles 2016), (ii) Susan Haack's conceptions of *reintegration in philosophy* and [serious philosophy](#) (Haack 2016a, 2016b), and most radical of all, (iii) *borderless philosophy*, or *anarcho-philosophy*, as I've described it above. Therefore, 21<sup>st</sup> century philosophers, let's eradicate the infamy! (*écrasez l'infâme!*) that is the panglossian professionalization and neoliberalization of academic philosophy worldwide, together with the ivory-bunker-ization of professional academic philosophy in the USA in The Age of Trump, and cultivate our garden.

But that's not all. The 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic is obviously a *natural evil*, and to that extent a very bad thing for anyone and everyone who is adversely affected by it. Yet at the same time, I strongly believe that the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic is a *borderless or cosmopolitan* natural evil that demands an *unpanicked, radically enlightened, dignitarian, existential Kantian cosmopolitan anarcho-socialist* moral and political response, and not a *panicked, insular, nationalist, Statist, and merely instrumentalist (whether egoistic or utilitarian)* moral and political response. Moreover, the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic *also* vividly highlights large-scale moral and political issues such as (i) the oppressive, unfair healthcare system in the USA, (ii) massive income-disparity between the richest and the other 99%, not only in the USA but also in the rest of the world, (iii) Brexit-induced anti-EU nationalist insularity in the UK, (iv) the anti-dignitarian threats of so-called "populism" i.e., *neo-fascism*, worldwide, and other dire situations in the contemporary world, especially including (v) global poverty, (vi) the global refugee crisis, and (viii) global climate change. And finally, since the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic is being globally presented to us by The Hyper-State, we need to be able to distinguish critically and sharply between (i) what *what we really should be thinking and doing about the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic*, and (ii) what *The Hyper-State, via the digital media controlled by it, is telling us to think and do about the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic*.

Now what do I mean by the terminological mouthful, “radically enlightened, dignitarian, existential Kantian cosmopolitan anarcho-socialism”? Before I can explain *that*, I’ll need to define some *other* terms: *Statism*, *coercion*, and *authoritarianism*. As Kant (*MM* 6: 203-372) and Max Weber have famously pointed out (Weber 1994: 310), States possess a territorial monopoly on the (putatively) legitimate control of the means and use of coercion; and as philosophical and political anarchists have also somewhat less famously (or even downright infamously) pointed out, States are also inherently authoritarian. By *coercion* (also briefly defined, in passing, in section V above) I mean:

either (i) using violence (e.g., injuring, torturing, or killing) or the threat of violence, in order to manipulate people against their will according to certain predefined purposes of the coercer (*primary coercion*),

or (ii) inflicting appreciable, salient harm (e.g., imprisonment, termination of employment, or large monetary penalties) or deploying the threat of appreciable, salient harm, even if these are not in themselves violent, in order to manipulate people against their will according to certain predefined purposes of the coercer (*secondary coercion*).

So all coercion is a form of *manipulation*, and proceeds by following a variety of strategies that share the same core characteristic: treating people as mere means or mere things. Correspondingly by *authoritarianism*, I mean the doctrine that telling people to obey commands and do things is legitimated merely by virtue of the fact that some people (the purported authorities) have *told* them to obey those commands or do those things—“it’s right just because we say it’s right!”—and are *also* in a position to enforce this by means of coercion, not on any rationally justified or objectively morally defensible grounds. So authoritarianism and coercion per se are different things, because although all authoritarianism requires coercion, nevertheless the converse is not the case: coercion can occur without authoritarianism—e.g., if you’re threatened or attacked by some random thug on the street. Now all States are *coercive* insofar as they claim the right to compel the people living within their boundaries to heed and obey the commands and laws of the government, in order to realize the instrumental ends of the State, *whether or not* those commands and laws are rationally justified or morally right on independently ethical grounds. In turn, all States are also *authoritarian* insofar as they claim that the commands and laws issued by its government are right *just because* the government says that they’re right and possesses the power to coerce, *not* because those commands or laws are rationally justified and morally right on independent ethical grounds.

With those definitions in place as conceptual backdrop, I’m now in a good position to break down the complex phrase, “radically enlightened, dignitarian, existential Kantian cosmopolitan anarcho-socialism,” term-by-term.

1. *Radically enlightened*. See section II above.

2. *Dignitarian*. Dignitarianism, and especially the broadly Kantian version of it, says (i) that everyone, everywhere, has absolute, non-numerable, non-instrumental, innate moral value, aka *dignity*, simply by virtue of their being real persons (i.e., conscious, caring, cognizing, self-conscious rational animals with a further capacity for free will) (Hanna 2018b), and that dignity is—or at the very least, can be regarded as—a fundamental, irreducible, and therefore *primitively given* feature of persons that cannot either be erased by any bad actions or bad habits of character, or sanctified by any good actions or good habits of character, and (ii) that everyone, everywhere ought to treat themselves and everyone else with sufficient respect for their dignity.

3. *Existential*. By *existential*,<sup>8</sup> I mean the primitive motivational, or “internalist,” normative ground of the philosophical, moral, and political doctrine I defend, which is the fundamental, innate need we have for a wholehearted, freely-willed life *not essentially based* on egoistic, hedonistic, or other merely instrumental (e.g., utilitarian) interests, aka *the desire for self-transcendence*, while at the same time fully assuming the natural presence—aka the *facticity*—of all such instrumental interests in our “human, all too human” lives. In a word, the existential ideal of a rational human wholehearted autonomous life is the ideal of *authenticity*.

4. *Kantian*. By *Kantian*, in this context, I mean the primitive objective, or “externalist,” normative ground of the philosophical, moral, and political doctrine I defend, which is the recognition that the fundamental, innate need we have for a wholehearted, freely-willed, non-egoistic, non-hedonistic, non-consequentialist life, which we call *the desire for self-transcendence*, can be sufficiently rationally justified only in so far as it is also a life of *principled authenticity*, by which I mean *principled wholehearted autonomy*, or having a *good will* in Kant’s sense, guided by respect for the dignity of all real persons,<sup>9</sup> under the Categorical Imperative.

5. *Cosmopolitan*. Notoriously, there is no comprehensive, analytic definition of the term *cosmopolitanism* as it is used in either ordinary or specialized (say, legal, political, or scholarly) language, covering all actual and possible cases. It is variously taken to refer to globe-trotting sophistication; to nihilistic, rootless, world-wandering libertinism; to the general idea of “world citizenship”; to a single world-state with coercive power; to a tight federation of all nation-states, again with coercive power; or to a loose, semi-coercive international federation of nation-states and related global institutions concerned with peace-keeping, criminal justice, human rights, social justice, international money flow and

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<sup>8</sup> See also, e.g., (Crowell 2012). For an extended response to the classical “formalism,” “rigorism,” and “universalism” worries about Kant’s ethics, see (Hanna 2018c: ch. 2).

<sup>9</sup> By “real person,” I mean *an essentially embodied person*, or a rational minded animal, as opposed to either disembodied persons (for example, souls) or collective persons (e.g., business corporations). On essential embodiment, see, e.g., (Hanna and Maiese 2009). And for a general theory of real personhood, see (Hanna 2018b: chs. 6-7).

investment, or world-trade, like the United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the (plan for a) World Court of Human Rights, the World Bank, or the World Trade Organization (Kleingeld and Brown 2013). Nevertheless, the term “cosmopolitanism” has an original, core meaning. As Kwame Anthony Appiah correctly and insightfully points out:

Cosmopolitanism dates at least to the Cynics of the fourth century BC [and especially to Diogenes of Synope], who first coined the expression cosmopolitan, “citizen of the cosmos.” The formulation was meant to be paradoxical, and reflected the general Cynic skepticism toward custom and tradition. A citizen—a *politēs*—belonged to a particular polis, a city to which he or she owed loyalty. The cosmos referred to the world, not in the sense of the earth, in the sense of the universe. Talk of cosmopolitanism originally signalled, then, a rejection of the conventional view that every civilized person belonged to a community among communities. (Appiah 2006: xiv)

In short, the original, core meaning of *cosmopolitanism* expresses a serious critique of existing political communities and states; a thoroughgoing rejection of fervid, divisive, exclusionary, loyalist commitments to convention, custom, identity, or tradition; and a robustly universalist outlook in morality and politics, encompassing not only the Earth but also other inhabited worlds if any, and also traveling between worlds (as per, for example, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*), and, finally, the entire natural universe. By *cosmopolitan*, then, I mean the original, core meaning of that term. And, borrowing from Kant, I call the cosmopolitan universal ethical community, *The Real Realm of Ends*.

6. *Anarcho-socialism*. Finally, by *anarcho-socialism* (Hanna 2018d; Kropotkin 1910; Bookchin 1986; Bookchin 1995), I mean *philosophical and political social anarchism*, defined as follows. The thesis of *philosophical social anarchism* says that there is *no* adequate rational or moral justification for political authority, the State, or any other State-like social institution. Correspondingly, the thesis of *political social anarchism* says that we should *reject* and *exit* the State and other State-like institutions, in order to create, belong to, and sustain a real-world, *universal ethical community*, *The Real Realm of Ends*, in a world in which there are no States or other State-like institutions.

Now, finally, we’re in a position to dare to think for ourselves about the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic, by critically considering *a real-world thought-experiment*. Let’s consider two scenarios.

## SCENARIO 1.

In the **first** scenario, there’s a panicked, nationalist, bordered, coercive authoritarian, liberal democratic, or not-so-liberal and not-so-democratic, Statist response to the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic, employing all the medical and epidemiological knowledge and healthcare logistics expertise that any given State has as its command, in order to create a comprehensive plan to deal with the pandemic *only insofar as it*

*specifically affects that particular State*, a plan which is also such that, under a city-wide, state-wide, or national “state of emergency,” *individual city governments, individual provincial or state governments, and/or the central government, are granted temporary special powers, including the power to impose martial law, in order to implement it*, with individual mayors, individual state governors or leaders, and at the central level, so-called “populist” but in fact neo-fascist national leaders like Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro, the UK’s Boris Johnson, Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, Russia’s Vladimir Putin, and the USA’s Donald Trump, etc., or even neoliberal centrists like Joe Biden, etc., acting as, in effect, *temporary military dictators* for the duration of the pandemic as it specifically affects their own countries.

## **SCENARIO 2.**

By a diametric contrast to the first scenario, in the **second** scenario, there’s an unpanicked, borderless or cosmopolitan existential Kantian dignitarian anarcho-socialist response to the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic, not in any way restricted to national boundaries, *employing exactly the same amount of medical and epidemiological knowledge and healthcare logistics expertise in order to create a comprehensive plan to deal with it*, and then a worldwide implementation of the plan—say, by means of a worldwide, massively expanded *Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières* operation, so let’s call it *Super-Duper Doctors Without Borders*—but no authoritarian coercion whatsoever anywhere, rather only strong recommendations and strongly-worded requests for *voluntary compliance* with the plan, and *equally as much attention* paid to dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 virus on refugees, poor people, people put out of work due to the crisis, etc., etc., anywhere in the world, as is paid to well-off people in highly industrialized nations, and also *sufficient attention* paid to dealing with *the ecological side-effects, both local and global* (Koren 2020) of implementing the comprehensive plan.

And let’s also assume that in the second scenario, no force whatsoever is ever used, *except for* minimally effective defensive and protective responses to direct attacks on individuals or groups of innocent people, especially including direct attacks on the people working for *Super-Duper Doctors Without Borders* and/or on their medical installations and equipment (Hanna and Paans 2019). Granting all that, then my question is:

From a philosophical, moral, and political point of view, which scenario constitutes an all-around better and more effective response to the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic: **SCENARIO 1** or **SCENARIO 2**?

I think that it’s self-evidently and even gobsmackingly *obvious* that **SCENARIO 2** constitutes the all-round better and more effective response. In other words, we should be using **SCENARIO 2** as what Kant would call a rational practical *Idea*, that is, as a fundamental commitment of *moral faith (moralische Glaube)*, for guiding our critical thought and autonomous action about the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore,

correspondingly, we should *not* allow ourselves to be bamboozled into thinking and acting according to the panicked, nationalist, coercive authoritarian, liberal democratic, or not-so-liberal and not-so-democratic, Statist response that's represented by **SCENARIO 1** and delivered to us 24-7 via the digital media controlled by The Hyper-State. So in turn, *that's* what I mean by the Kant-inspired neo-Voltairean phrase, "il faut cultiver notre jardin mondial," in the context of the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic:

Not only *must we not panic*, and not only *must we not complicitly, obediently, and passively allow ourselves to be told what to think and do about the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic by the digital media controlled by The Hyper-State*, but also *we must cultivate our global garden*.

## VII. Conclusion

Now taking up the three radically enlightened Kantian proposals for thinking about and dealing with digital media that I made in section III, together with the proposal about political philosophy of mind that I made in section IV, and also updating the Socratic, Diogenesian, and especially Voltairean models of specifically philosophical civil disobedience in the refined MLK sense that I described in section V, together with the neo-Voltairean radically enlightened existential Kantian cosmopolitan anarcho-socialist version of Candide's famous last line, now updated to *il faut cultiver notre jardin mondial*, as applied to the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic, that I described in section VI, I'm hereby proposing that radically enlightened Kantian borderless or anarcho-philosophers should (i) wholeheartedly individually and collectively engage in a serious critical analysis of all digital media controlled by The Hyper-State, (ii) "log the fuck off" on a regular basis from digital media controlled by The Hyper-State, in order to resist their largely malign influence, (iii) wholeheartedly individually and collectively commit to subverting and dismantling the entire system of digital media controlled by The Hyper-State, (iv) wholeheartedly individually and collectively pursue political philosophy of mind, including *the mind-body politic* and *the political philosophy of cognition*, (v) like Socrates, Diogenes, and Voltaire, wholeheartedly individually and collectively engage in *emancipatory* free speech or freedom of expression, (vi) like Socrates, Diogenes, and Voltaire, wholeheartedly individually and collectively perform *counter-cultural escapes* into independent or unincorporated, *anti-* or at least *extra-*professional-academic real philosophy, and finally, (vii) as Kant-inspired neo-Voltaireans, *dare to think and act about the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic in radically enlightened existential Kantian cosmopolitan anarcho-socialist ways*. And then, since the world in which we live, move,



and have our being, is self-evidently *a thoroughly nonideal natural and social world*, we should simply *rationally hope for the best*, or at least *for the substantially better*.<sup>10</sup>

### Kant-Text Abbreviations and English Translations

- CF* *Conflict of the Faculties*. Trans. M. Gregor. Lincoln, NE: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1979.
- CPR* *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. P. Guyer and A. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997.
- DSS* “Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics.” Trans. D. Walford and R. Meerbote. In *Immanuel Kant: Theoretical Philosophy: 1755-1770*. Pp. 301-359.
- MM* *Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. M. Gregor. In *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996, pp. 365-604.
- OT* “What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?” Trans. A. Wood. In *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996. Pp. 7-18.
- PP* “Toward Perpetual Peace.” Trans. M. Gregor. In *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, pp. 317-351.
- Rel* *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. Trans. A. Wood and G. Di Giovanni. In *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology*. Pp. 57-215.
- WiE* “An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’” Trans. M. Gregor. In *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996. Pp. 17-22.

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<sup>10</sup> An earlier version of this essay was presented as a plenary address at the 12th *Kant-Readings* International Conference, “Kant and the Ethics of Enlightenment: Historical Roots and Contemporary Relevance,” sponsored by the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University’s Institute for the Humanities, Academia Kantiana, which took place in Kaliningrad, Russia, on 22-24 April 2019. I’m very grateful to the institutional sponsors of the conference and especially to its organizers: Nina Dmitrieva, Vadim Chaly, and Mikhail Zgirnyak. And I’m equally grateful to my father, Alan Hanna, for suggesting in March 2020 that I write something philosophical about the COVID-19 pandemic, which inspired me to update and extend the original essay. And I’m also very grateful to Otto Paans for suggesting in February 2021 that I use “Hyper-State” as a replacement term for “the deeper state,” which I’d used in earlier versions of this essay.

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