

Kant on Lying to God: The Intention to Deceive

Authors : James E. Mahon

Abstract : This paper addresses the important question in the philosophy of lies and deception of whether all lying requires an intention to deceive. It does by examining a recent attempt by two philosophers to argue that Immanuel Kant abandoned the view that all lying requires an intention to deceive, in order to be able to claim that lying to God was possible. Ian Proops and Roy Sorensen have recently argued that although Kant always held that it was impossible for anyone to intend to deceive God, late in his life he came to believe that it was possible to lie to God. Kant came to believe that this was possible, they argue, because Kant came to believe that lying is not always deceptive, and that it was possible to tell non-deceptive lies, including non-deceptive lies to God. In this paper their arguments will be broken down and analyzed. Based on a close textual reading of the published works and the Kant's lectures on ethics, it will be argued that Proops and Sorensen are wrong about what Kant believed about lying in general and lying to God in particular. This paper concludes that Kant never did abandon the Deceptionist position that all lying requires an intention to deceive.

Keywords : Kant, lie, deception, intention, God, ethics, belief, assertion

Conference Title : ICERP 2025 : International Conference on Ethics, Religion and Philosophy

Conference Location : Singapore, Singapore

Conference Dates : January 11-12, 2025