

Phil. This side is certainly the brilliant side of religion. If it is a _fraus_ it is indeed a _pia fraus_; that cannot be denied. Then priests become something between deceivers and moralists. For they dare not teach the real truth, as you yourself have quite correctly explained, even if it were known to them; which it is not. There can, at any rate, be a true philosophy, but there can be no true religion: I mean true in the real and proper understanding of the word, not merely in that flowery and allegorical sense which you have described, a sense in which every religion would be true only in different degrees. It is certainly quite in harmony with the inextricable admixture of good and evil, honesty and dishonesty, goodness and wickedness, magnanimity and baseness, which the world presents everywhere, that the most important, the most lofty, and the most sacred truths can make their appearance only in combination with a lie, nay, can borrow strength from a lie as something that affects mankind more powerfully; and as revelation must be introduced by a lie. One might regard this fact as the _monogram_ of the moral world. Meanwhile let us not give up the hope that mankind will some day attain that point of maturity and education at which it is able to produce a true philosophy on the one hand, and accept it on the other. _Simplex sigillum veri_: the naked truth must be so simple and comprehensible that one can impart it to all in its true form without any admixture of myth and fable (a pack of lies)--in other words, without masking it as _religion_.

Demop. You have not a sufficient idea of the wretched capacities of the masses.