

KANT
AND THE
NEW
PHILOSOPHY
OF
RELIGION



EDITED BY
Chris L. Firestone and Stephen R. Palmquist

Kant and the New Philosophy of Religion

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TO OUR PARENTS,
HAROLD AND ROBERTA, RICHARD AND DOLORES,
FOR GIVING US LIVING EXAMPLES
OF HOW TO RESPOND CONSTRUCTIVELY
TO THE CONFLICTS THAT INEVITABLY ARISE
AS HUMAN BEINGS TOGETHER SEEK
TO REALIZE A COMMON VISION.

From the whole progress of our Critique, one will have sufficiently persuaded oneself: that, even though metaphysics cannot be the foundation of religion, it must always stand firm as its fortification, and that human reason . . . could never do without such a science [i.e., metaphysics, tempered by Critique], which restrains it and . . . holds off the devastations that a lawless speculative reason, otherwise entirely infallible, would produce in morality as well as religion.

—Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (A849/B877)

[S]o I will inevitably believe in the existence of God and a future life, and I am sure that nothing can make this belief waver, because my moral principles themselves, which I cannot renounce without becoming detestable in my own eyes, would thereby be overthrown.

—Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (A828/B856)

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FOREWORD

Michel Despland

Everyone reading Kant today will sooner or later find passages that seem so ridiculous that one is tempted to meet them only with laughter and not bother with refutation. Three come to my mind. First, practically all his texts on women, and his definition of marriage. Then his view on lying from philanthropic motives, showing him singularly inept at weighing probabilities and lacking in *usage du monde*. Finally his praise of Enlightenment, making of an admittedly admirable but local and dated movement among a small élite, the sole bearer of a universal moral imperative.

And yet . . .

The collection of articles that follows is a clear demonstration that Kant's philosophy of religion remains of enduring interest. The authors touch upon a vast range of issues and give them first-rate discussions. They should convince anybody that Kant's philosophy of religion has a lot of staying power, more than, for instance, those of his two historical neighbors, Hume and Hegel.¹

The scholarship of the last decades on *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* shows that a rich variety of new perspectives has been opened up by readers who offer painstakingly detailed interpretations of Kant's philosophy of religion, but who nevertheless seriously differ on the overall assessment.² The collection here takes up a specific line of argument that makes important claims.³ The argument is advanced that Kant's work on religion is theologically relevant; put minimally, his work might be said to replace the common Enlightenment strategy of containing religion or seeking to regulate it with the help of rational principles external to it, with a genuinely positive appreciation for it. Most noteworthy, in my opinion, are the works of Ronald Green, Adina Davidovich, Stephen R. Palmquist, Chris L. Firestone, John Hare, and Ann L. Loades.⁴ The papers collected in this book also agree that the properly theological potential is found most clearly in Kant's works of the 1790s.

What interests me in this claim is not just that Kant brings water to some Christians' mills, but, more importantly, that he leads to some rethinking of Christian theism and opens important avenues for the theory of religion. His way of doing philosophy embodies an understanding of what it means to be human that is most relevant to any theological endeavor or any undertaking to study religions. Two planks seem to me to lie at the basis of his unique contri-

bution. First, Kant maintains a broad, generous view of possible human well-being, even at times kissing the hems of utopia. Second, he keeps a sharply critical view of our ability for working toward our own well-being.⁵ Thus his work formulates strong tensions and continues sustaining them.

The first and properly foundational tension is that found in the joint impact of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason*. Firm limits are set for knowledge. Noumena are distinct from phenomena. Room is made for faith of a moral kind. Warnings are issued against the tendency of the human mind to “press . . . monstrosities on reason,”⁶ religious imagination being identified as a major source of these pathological speculations. These arguments are momentous and have understandably given rise to canonical views of the Kantian philosophy: they provide a solid and indispensable framework for all readers.

Kant, however, moved beyond this framework, or, rather, pressed vigorously against the limits it established. It is at this point that the articles published here have a call on the attention of all Kantian scholars.

Their importance may be highlighted, it seems to me, by drawing attention to convergent developments in the world of Kantian scholarship in French. Much attention has been paid recently to the third *Critique* and its way of moving beyond the strict alternative established in the first two. Eric Weil coined the expression “a second Copernican revolution” to describe the advances made in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790).⁷ The expression is not entirely felicitous, since nothing in the third *Critique* is like the reversal of the respective positions of Sun and Earth accomplished in the first *Critique*, but the expression stayed because it made clear that Kant opened there a whole new field of inquiry.⁸ While the first two *Critiques* located themselves largely in the timeless truths of epistemology and metaphysics, the third one, examining judgment (aesthetic and teleological), moved into grounds where it could become apparent that, at the close of the eighteenth century, the relationship between reason and history had to be rethought. Humans must treat each other never merely as means but also as ends-in-themselves. A “highest good” therefore exists, argues the moralist, and we can aspire to it. But also, “humans must make real in the world the telos imposed by the law.” A “kingdom of ends” is therefore ahead of us, argues the reformist, a historical state of affairs where communication among humans and civil realities is such that treating each other also as ends is supported rather than hindered by the prevailing social realities. To the notion of *final end* present in the earlier writings in history, namely, to the vision of humans being “naturally” driven by war to create civil and legal institutions, is added the notion of *ultimate end*, free humans being led (providentially?) to bring about a morally (not just legally) better world for themselves (CJ 430–436 [§§83–84]). Kant thereby lays the basis for the innovative pages on the notion of a people of God in *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason*. With both types of ends, a bridge is built between the realm of nature and that of freedom. Kant is quick to stress that

teleological judgments do not describe facts: they are reflexive, not constitutive; they give rules for mental functioning. Aesthetic judgments likewise follow rules, but these too are not those that determine knowledge. The visibility of aesthetic activities is not that of phenomena. The necessity that teleological and aesthetic judgments follow is not that of the laws of nature. What they provide us with are legitimate representations. Thus Kant creates a philosophical status that rationalists must acknowledge for examples, exemplifications, stories, and symbols.

The attention thus paid to what humans make real in the world raises a whole new agenda for the philosopher. He encounters the problems of evil, of moral confidence and moral progress (or justification and sanctification, as theologians call it), and thus shifts, delicately, and sometimes unnoticed, from the problem of God, where positions had been staked for a long time, to problems of religion, where the situation was somewhat more fluid.

What is rendered possible with this status, as was to become clear in the works of the 1790s, is an inquiry into *the institutions of human culture*.⁹ When Jacobi and other pre-Romantics used “beauty” and “life” to praise “intuitive knowledge” and launch attacks against rationalism, Kant opposed to such calls a new extension of critical philosophy: what is irrational can, when structured by human minds or aesthetically constructed, be reflected upon and oriented toward a proper end, namely, historical and moral progress.¹⁰ Social or cultural facts are not to be treated only as things; they are also meanings which should be understood.¹¹ A new context is thereby established to read *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.

Not surprisingly much recent work in France draws attention to the doors that are opened in this book as well as to those that are closed.

In 1983 Monique Naar wrote an introduction to an older translation of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.¹² Pursuing the twofold question Can man hope and what can he hope? Kant explores the notion of radical evil, the result of a free, contingent choice made in the past and manifested now by a constant leaning, a disposition. This evil is not a fact of nature but no longer a contingent event: it has to be viewed, I would say, as a fact of culture (in our current sense of the word). Opened before our eyes is thus a foggy area of impurity of motives and imperfect institutions, which cannot be clarified with the evidences of science or of morality alone. The hope to overcome this ambiguous, unstable state of affairs is not forbidden, and the example proposed in Christ indicates what sort of victory over evil may become a positive ground for hope.

In 1986 Henry d’Aviau de Ternay published a dissertation exploring what he called the biblical traces in Kant’s writings.¹³ He learned from the *Critique of Judgment* that aesthetic ideas give much to think, or feature an excess of intelligibility. At the end of his meticulous catalog of biblical allusions and terms, d’Aviau de Ternay concludes that these traces are not just tidbits inherited from some catechism learned in childhood; they are not mere deposits

from the past since they also indicate a path. Cultural conditioning we might say, yes, but also resources for further thinking.

In 1986 Alexis Philonenko published *La théorie kantienne de l'histoire*.¹⁴ What Kant wrote on Christianity (as isolated from Judaism in particular and from all other religions) faces the problem of absolute beginnings, the issue that is most perplexing in all accounts of historicity. Is it possible that what is intelligible (noumenal) penetrated once into the phenomenal world? The person of Christ enables Kant to answer yes, since this one man who lived at one point in the past is always for us a temptation toward good. Christ pursued no purpose (against Reimarus, who attributed to him a political plot) and did not seek to die to take away the sins of the world (against orthodox Christian views). Cut off from the past and from the future alike, he is at the source of a decisive beginning in history and of a new “radical habit.” Church institutions keeping a memory of him provide aesthetic ideas of this moral perfection and thus strengthen faith and moral certainty. Unlike Rousseau, Kant never dreamed of abandoning churches to worship God in Nature.

In 1993 an international congress of French-speaking scholars focused on 1793, an important year in Kant's authorship (*Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason* and *Theory and Practice*), and a decisive one in the French Revolution with the execution of Louis XVI.¹⁵ The impact of these papers is clear: Kant, a cautious reformist, was passionately committed to the ideal of reason gaining a public foothold and judged that the French Revolution was institutionalizing a culture of practical reason. He thus elaborated what I would call a cultural anthropology and gave a date and place to a decisive turning point in the slow history of human progress.

Finally in 1992 d'Aviau de Ternay, a reader of Lévinas, Ricoeur, Derrida, and Lyotard, published a book in the style of an essay, *La liberté kantienne: Un impératif d'exode*, arguing that freedom, undeniably central in Kant, must not just obey the moral law, but must also meet the challenge of telos.¹⁶ Humans extricate themselves from the system of nature to do something, to go somewhere; hence the reference to Exodus in the subtitle. Humans as free and rational beings should think of themselves as the end of Creation; moral beings work within a system of ends. Law and morality jointly affirm that those who are victims of injustice must win their place in Creation.¹⁷

The gist of this line of scholarship is obvious. Kant established conceptual links between theory and practice and deemed that practical links were being established in the institutions that the French republicans were giving to their country. Enthusiasm is being carefully assessed. In a move reminiscent of the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates undertakes to show the difference between good and bad *eros*, Kant sorts out the difference between good, passionate enthusiasm that is empowering (e.g., that of the rationalist Spinoza, the disciples of Jesus in the days between Good Friday and Pentecost [CF I, Appendix I], or the French Jacobins [CF II, 6]) and the debilitating enthusiasm of the fanatic or the mystic with a bee in his bonnet.¹⁸ As Kierkegaard seems to have been the

first to sense, Kant, who stood “at the pinnacle of scientific culture,” wrestled seriously with orthodox Christian teachings of Fall and Redemption.¹⁹ And he did it for intrinsically philosophical reasons, since he undertook to show how practical reason could get to work in concrete histories, in that of States, societies, and churches. While the American interpreters of Kant act on a characteristically U.S. Protestant sense that religious institutions are theirs to shape as they decide (a sense now shared by many Catholics), the French interpreters place religion in a continuum of sociopolitical activities. And here we see Kant pressing beyond established boundaries, and thereby not accepting any version of the Wittgensteinian injunction of remaining silent when one cannot speak.

That Kant felt the need to press against limits established by his system leads me finally to draw attention to properly literary matters, the importance of style and tone.²⁰ Kierkegaard, a talented writer and severe judge of professors of philosophy, credited Kant with two qualities, exceptional in his mind among philosophers: a sense of humor and a rigorously honest way.²¹

Choosing not to remain silent, and talking on and on, runs the risk of chatter.²² Kant, I submit, is aware of this threat, as is shown by his three articles discussing the matter of tone.²³ Superior, aristocratic tones are most dangerous. The low tone practiced by Kant does not give rise to illusions of knowledge and can attest the prudence and veracity of the author. In any case, all utterances have tone; when the philosopher knows it, his reason can control its desire to move beyond its limits. Still, it remains that “tone is an unstable dimension of all cognitive discourse.”²⁴ The future of philosophy remains one of endless disputes over tones and what they leave unsaid. The path to eternal peace cannot be formalized. Any “treaty” will contain hidden clauses, because of the unspoken, unthought agendas of the participants. Hence the apocalyptic tone that can only beg: “Come!”

The highest task of reason is to identify and probe its own limits, wrote R. M. Green.²⁵ What we can see is that when the probing takes place, the dichotomies begin to get healed.²⁶ The impassable gulf between noumena and phenomena remains. This is the canon. But the opposition between reason and faith begins to fade, when the inquiry asks What reason? What faith?—when the rhetorical machine contrasting both (always to the advantage of one) is not allowed to gather momentum.²⁷ Philosophy does not exist without a linguistic medium and should remain conscious of the deceptive powers and limits of this medium. The dichotomy between legality and morality, like the dichotomy between religion and morality, ceases to be final when humans reflect on what new laws need to be formulated and implemented. And most importantly, the dichotomy between moral effort and divine grace, the issue that racked theologians’ brains since Augustine and Pelagius, begins to lose its finality. Instead of using antinomies to settle issues, Kant gets in the habit of starting with them to explore problems. *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason* expresses with perfect clarity the grounds for such need to overcome

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the initial simplicity of dichotomies: humans are *krumm*, bent—most negatively put, crooked. There is not a geometric formula to draw this curve; it is irregular. Kant stated that there would never be a Newton of the blade of grass; I might add there cannot be a Newton of the reed in the wind. Or, as d’Aviau de Ternay puts it, dramas occur at the boundaries.²⁸ And dramas can only be narrated. Narratives, of course, do not give new concepts but invite to renewed thinking.

We can now return to the three ridiculous passages I mentioned at the outset. The reforms wished by Kant have been realized, to some extent. We have new mores, new habits of the heart, new institutions of freedom. Women are present in the mainstream of public life; a greater measure of equality has been put in place. As citizens, no longer under the rule of some absolute monarch and some State Church with Faculties of Theology enjoying statutory authority, humans can participate in free political deliberation; they have the opportunity to acquire democratic virtues, learn the art of handling what is probable, and thus weigh the risks of lying. (More persons have acquired the Aristotelian virtue of prudence, namely, the art of judging in the absence of a criterion.) Finally, with the rise of historical consciousness, a variety of hinges of history have been identified and said to be of world historical importance. The question about the benevolent God who left millions of humans in the dark, without the benefit of the revelation in Christ, has lost some of its singularity. Millions are not bathing yet in the light issuing from Socrates, Francis Bacon, or the Principles of 1776, 1789, or 1948 (the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights). That this second type of injustice cannot be blamed on an allegedly benevolent god does not make it less of an injustice. The authors identified by authors in this collection as holding on to the “traditional views” about Kant and religion simply do not confront the hard questions about the historicization of reason. They might entertain the thought that humans arrive temporally at love of the good mainly through imitation.²⁹ (This is not to say that all humans do imitate.)

Kant’s great achievement, in my view, rests upon the fact that in 1789, when he was sixty-five and had a rich career behind him, he judged that he was the witness of a Revolution and seized the opportunity to philosophize from then on in the light of sudden historic change. He sensed that transitions were being effected, and he tried, in his writings, to work out *passages*. He was seized by a desire to arbitrate all emerging conflicts and broadened his range. In his *Conflict of the Faculties* he went as far as to admit into philosophical discourse the fact that humans have bodies and live in manmade institutions.³⁰ Having a sense of freedom means accepting to mourn when systems, even one’s own, no longer appear entirely adequate.³¹ The old Kant already knew something of the irreducible complexity of human reason, and of the fragility and vulnerability of the human mind.³² But after 1789 he took new risks—no discourse can secure itself from chatter³³—and he looked again at the rules

guiding the rational work of the human mind. This marks his difference from Hume, who did not see the Revolution (and would have disliked it if he had), and from Hegel, who considered it a thing of the past.

NOTES

1. The first rival is narrow in range, limited to the cognitive issues raised by theism. The second is tied to an ambitious phenomenology of the mind that, sweeping as it is, fails today to carry conviction.

2. The collection *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered* edited by Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991) is a good illustration of this; see the discussion in the Preface here.

3. The wealth of argument following this line of interpretation is particularly gratifying to me since, in some way or other, the scholars build on the case I made in 1973, namely, that our understanding of Kant's philosophy has much to gain from being placed in the context of his writings on history and theodicy. See my *Kant on History and Religion* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973).

4. See Ronald M. Green, *Religious Reason: The Rational and Moral Basis of Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Adina Davidovich, *Religion as a Province of Meaning: The Kantian Foundations of Modern Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Stephen R. Palmquist, *Kant's Critical Religion: Volume Two of Kant's System of Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Chris L. Firestone, "Kant's Two Perspectives on the Theological Task," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, no. 1 (March 2000): 63–78; John E. Hare, *The Moral Gap: Kantian Ethics, Human Limits, and God's Assistance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Ann L. Loades, *Kant and Job's Comforters* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Aveo, 1985).

5. See Ronald M. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 300. Green adds that this gives to Kant's thought a steadily critical character, something too frequently absent in current philosophical discussion.

6. *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Beck, 125 (CPrR 121).

7. Eric Weil, *Problèmes kantians* (Paris: Vrin, 1963, 1970).

8. For a discussion in English, see Davidovich, chap. 4.

9. With his notion of *Sittlichkeit*, Hegel was to rush into the opening made.

10. Alain Renaut, 33 of "Introduction" to Kant, *Critique de la faculté de juger* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1995).

11. Renaut, 68–69.

12. Monique Naar, *La religion dans les limites de la simple raison* (Paris: Vrin, 1983).

13. Henry d'Aviau de Ternay, *Traces bibliques dans la loi morale chez Kant* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1986).

14. Alexis Philonenko, *La théorie kantienne de l'histoire* (Paris: Vrin, 1986). Philonenko has since translated *Religion* in *Oeuvres*, vol. III (Paris: Gallimard, 1995).

15. Société d'Études Kantiennes de Langue Française, *L'année 1793: Kant sur la politique et la religion*, ed. Jean Ferrari (Paris: Vrin, 1995).

16. Henry d'Aviau de Ternay, *La liberté kantienne: Un impératif d'exode* (Paris: Cerf, 1992).

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17. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe finds in Kant grounds to elaborate a distinction between two kinds of stories: narratives of speculation and narratives of emancipation; to these two types correspond heroes of knowledge and heroes of freedom. Kant, of course, celebrates the latter. “Où en étions-nous?” in Jacques Derrida et al., *La faculté de juger* (Paris: Minuit, 1985).

18. Peter D. Fenves, *Arresting Language: From Leibniz to Benjamin* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001), 98–128, discusses the way Kant and his contemporaries have of establishing a “scale of enthusiasm.”

19. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, 74, 114.

20. Spinoza affirmed that “God does not have a peculiar style of speaking.” *Theologico-political Treatise*, quoted in Fenves, *Arresting Language*, 15. This does not mean that his interpreters shouldn’t have one.

21. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, 12, 75.

22. See the fine book by Peter Fenves, “Chatter”: *Language and History in Kierkegaard* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993); there is no understanding of philosophy (and of *logos*) without understanding of chatter, its companion.

23. The articles are “On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy” (1796), “Announcement of the Near Conclusion for a Treaty for Eternal Peace in Philosophy” (1796), “Other Exaltations” (draft written in the 1780s). Translations are gathered by Peter Fenves in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Emmanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). See the excellent introduction by the editor. The book also includes Derrida’s essay *On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy*, discussing the two 1796 articles.

24. Fenves, Introduction, *Raising the Tone*, 24.

25. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, 223.

26. Anselm Kyongruk Min, “Dialectic of Salvation in Solidarity,” in *Kant and Kierkegaard on Religion*, ed. D. Z. Phillips and Timothy Tessin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 290–291.

27. To oppose faith to philosophy is to sink into slogans; see Fenves “Chatter,” 142.

28. D’Aviau de Ternay, *La liberté kantienne*, 1.

29. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, 177.

30. D’Aviau de Ternay, *La liberté kantienne*, 115.

31. D’Aviau de Ternay, *La liberté kantienne*, 13.

32. Fenves, *Raising the Tone*, 1–4.

33. Fenves, “Chatter,” 13.

PREFACE

A myriad of important questions is bound to arise in the mind of any reader who, attempting to grasp the whole of Kant's philosophy, tries to make sense of his specific views on God and religion, especially those expressed in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793) and *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798). Does religion play a constitutive role in Kant's philosophical system, or is he merely addressing a side issue? Why does he focus so intently on this topic at the end of his career, whereas his earlier work tended to address such issues only indirectly? Is Kant's philosophy of religion more properly interpreted as a development of his ethical theory or of his transcendental theology? Or could it be regarded as an attempt to synthesize both? Does Kant's account of rational religion need traditionally religious concepts like grace and redemption? If so, how can this need be justified in terms that satisfy the transcendental conditions set out in his critical philosophy? Was Kant, after all is said and done, trying to *encourage* or *discourage* people from being religious? Answers to these and numerous related questions are proposed in *Kant and the New Philosophy of Religion*, a collection of original essays on Kant's philosophy of religion that explores the interface of his philosophy with theology and religion.

Standard portrayals of Kant's philosophy have tended to sideline theology and religion from the wider discussion of Kant's philosophical program. As a result, the field of Kant studies often has been bifurcated into two allegedly distinct types of inquiry: Kant's philosophy as such, and the religious and theological implications of this philosophy. The effect has been to eliminate religion and theology from the conversation over what Kant's philosophy means, even before the discussion is allowed to get off the ground. This consequence is rarely the result of rational argumentation, for it belies the fact that quite a significant movement toward viewing Kant as philosopher, theologian, *and* religious theorist has been burgeoning for at least thirty years. This book continues the process of bridging the gap in the literature on Kant's philosophy of religion that became all too apparent during the middle half of the twentieth century. During the past decade especially, a significant and growing number of Kant scholars have laid the groundwork for a reenvisioning of the traditional way of interpreting Kant's philosophy.

New interpretations of Kant's philosophy of religion, including its rela-

tionship to his philosophical system as a whole, to theology, and to real empirical religion, are changing the way we think about the relevance of Kant. This book highlights this new trend by bringing together for the first time in one volume some of the major writers involved in its espousal and development. As the Introduction will outline in greater detail, the watershed represented by this book is multifaceted. The various contributors nevertheless come together around one mutually agreed theme: *Kant's philosophy is religiously and theologically affirmative*.

When we (the editors) first met in Hong Kong, in the mid-1990s, we recognized that a massive shift toward theological affirmation was already well under way. The shift involves a movement away from the theological pessimism of the traditional interpretation of Kant and toward the vast array of theologically insightful interpretations and appropriations of Kant's thought that occupy the field of Kant scholarship. We decided to partner on a project we hoped would serve as a watershed for this new, theologically affirmative movement in English-speaking Kant scholarship. This book is the result of nearly seven years of work on that project. We would like to thank Hong Kong Baptist University, especially the Department of Religion and Philosophy, for providing Chris with a graduate student fellowship that enabled us to work so closely together for more than a year, before Chris decided to move elsewhere to complete his graduate work.

Our original idea was to complete this book in time for it to be one of the many events marking the two hundredth anniversary of Kant's passing, modeling it on an earlier collection edited by Philip Rossi and Michael Wreen, entitled *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered* (Indiana University Press, 1991). Our intent was to edit a collection of essays whose unified focus would contrast with that work by bringing together scholars optimistic about the prospect of grounding theology and religion in Kant's philosophical program. Our thanks to Philip Rossi for agreeing to write a critical epilogue assessing the overall project—he is the only person with essays in both volumes—and for his flexibility as this volume gradually transformed into its present shape. His essay fit so nicely into the parameters of our original intent that we simply included it as one of the contributions, though we preserved some of his comments on other essays. Although we have missed our initial goal of finishing the project twelve years after the prequel, in 2003, we are pleased to be writing these final words while it is still 2004, and so still technically 200 years since 1804.

Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered compiled essays from a 1987 conference on Kant's philosophy of religion at Marquette University. It provided a cross section of interpretations in the field of Kant studies. While several of the essays tend to view Kant's philosophy of religion as incompatible with traditional Christian theism, those by Leslie Mulholland, Sharon Anderson-Gold, and Philip Rossi argue that Kant's philosophy is more open to theological concerns than is typically supposed. Essays by Joseph Runzo, Walter Sparr, and Anthony Perovich, Jr., appear somewhat neutral. Upon closer inspection, how-

ever, there is a dominant theme running throughout the book. Whereas the essays tending toward the abandonment of theism are unified according to the clear and agreed-upon principles of Kant's philosophy found in the first *Critique*, the neutral essays and those tending in the opposite direction are not so unified. Each of these essays hedges against the theologically negative tradition, without really establishing a unified alternative to that view. Examining the essays closely reveals a prominent divide among readings of Kant: a tendency either to abandon theism, or, in the more diverse and harder-to-articulate approach, to affirm it.

The purpose of this book is to bring together an all new sampling of theologically affirmative interpreters of Kant with a view to articulating that alternative to the tradition more forcefully. As a work of philosophy, the book is not meant to be a work of theology per se and is not limited in any way to the theological agendas of any particular person or group. It instead includes essays from Kantians who interpret Kant's philosophy in a way suggestive of a constructive role in the ongoing dialogue between philosophers and theologians. It intentionally emphasizes interpretations that recognize the legitimacy and distinctiveness of an affirmative theological perspective. As such, it is meant to convince readers that this way of reading Kant—or something like it—is in fact the best and most accurate way. The Introduction comments in detail on the form and content of the book.

At this point we would like to thank all the contributors for the excellent work they have done in preparing such interesting and thought-provoking pieces. Special thanks go to the two scholars who agreed to contribute in a rather different manner: in addition to Philip Rossi (see above), we are pleased and honored to have Michel Despland write a Foreword that provides a helpful supplementary account of the theologically affirmative interpretations of Kant in recent French scholarship. As editors, we felt his support for this project put a historically significant “seal of approval” on the whole notion of a theologically affirmative and religiously viable trend in recent Kant interpretation—one that will point the way forward to encourage more and more scholars to explore the vast riches available to us in developing these connections and implications more fully.

A distinctive concern all the contributors to this volume share is the conviction that Kant's relevance as a religious thinker has been seriously misjudged by many, if not most, past interpreters (see §1 of the Introduction for details) and that the practical applicability of many of his ideas has been grossly underestimated as a result. Although each contributor approaches this concern in his or her own distinctive way, and none of us should be thought of as “following” any of the others in our respective ways of working out this concern, we believe all the contributors share the hope that this book will establish a firm foundation for many future scholars who wish to explore the positive support Kantian philosophy can give for a real, living religious faith. (Even as we were preparing the final version of the manuscript, one of us was

approached by a Kant scholar who, unaware of our work on this project, expressed a keen interest in compiling a collection of essays very much like this one. As word of such initiatives spreads, the number of scholars working on affirmative theological and religious applications of Kant's ideas looks likely to skyrocket in the near future.) For this reason, the editors hope this book will be of interest not only to Kant scholars and students of philosophy and theology, but also to philosophically minded pastors and ordinary religious laypersons who not only wish to improve their understanding of the rational foundations for religious faith, but also believe such philosophical understanding can make a real difference to the way religion is practiced.

We have carefully arranged the twelve essays appearing in this collection into three distinct parts in such a way that they tell a coherent story. Of course, the reader who is already familiar with Kant's philosophy of religion can treat these as independent essays and skip around at will. But for anyone who stands in need of some assistance in grasping what Kant calls "the idea of the whole" (including especially those readers who believe they are familiar with Kant's philosophy of religion merely because they know something about the relevant theories in the first and second *Critiques*), we highly recommend reading the essays in the order presented.

The division into parts already makes the nature of the book's progression quite clear. Part 1 addresses four key issues (enthusiasm, atheism, deism, and religious truth), each relating to the philosophical foundations for regarding Kant's position as theologically affirmative. This first set of essays essentially clears away the major obstacles that would otherwise stand in the way of interpreting Kant's philosophy of religion in a sufficiently affirmative manner to enable it to serve as a suitable foundation for theology. (1) We can no longer assume that Kant rejects all religion as a form of enthusiasm, once we recognize the latter is actually a natural part of the *philosopher's* psychological disposition. (2) Nor can we treat atheism as a viable option, for even though Kant admits it is *possible* for an atheist to be a good person, the moral gap that remains unfilled for such a person makes his or her position rationally unstable. (3) Kant's insistence on the need for "inscrutable assistance," especially in Book Two of *Religion*, likewise makes deism an untenable vehicle for religious hope. (4) Finally, that Kant views truth in a variety of equally legitimate ways explains why his denial of "knowledge" to make room for "faith" does not require giving up the search for distinctively theological truth.

With the possibility of a Kantian theology thus established, Part 2 examines four theological building blocks (grace, incarnation, revelation, and history) for adopting an affirmative interpretation of Kantian religion. (1) The subjective/dispositional orientation of Kant's arguments regarding our receptiveness for divine grace should be understood more along the lines of Augustine than of Pelagius. (2) Kant's doctrine of the "prototype" (i.e., of perfect humanity) can then be portrayed as a *transcendental* condition that makes possible human cognition with regard to God. (3) This paves the way for

theologians to adopt their own distinct perspective, based on revelation (“Word and Spirit”), and yet compatible with reason’s perspective. (4) And this, in turn, highlights the abiding need in Kant’s religious framework for some historical faith (such that Kant can be regarded as providing the philosophical foundation for Kierkegaard’s theology). With these building blocks in place, a clearer picture of Kantian religion, as a viable way of life, begins to take shape.

Part 3 therefore provides four examples (facing the reality of evil, experiencing deliverance, Quaker faith and practice, and pastoral philosophy) of how Kantian religion can be put into practice in a philosophically respectable way. (1) It enables us to face the age-old problem of undeserved suffering *without* needing to use a theodicy as a type of crutch. (2) A Kantian model for any religion emphasizing the need for deliverance likewise enables us to remain open to the basic human experiences that give rise to the traditional concepts of original sin and saving grace. (3) The religious tradition of Quakerism is shown to have strikingly Kantian features. (4) Finally, a report on a philosophical retreat on Kant’s *The Conflict of the Faculties* points the way forward to two explicitly Kantian instantiations of philosophically informed religious practice. The last (twelfth) essay concludes with a brief Appendix by an Anglican pastor sharing how Kantian ideals come into play in his own ministry in a Congregational parish in California.

In addition to thanking the contributors of these essays, without whom this book would not exist, we also want to thank our respective institutions for two generous grants that made some of the work on this project possible: a Summer Research Grant from Trinity College, Trinity International University, in 2002; and a Faculty Research Grant from Hong Kong Baptist University in 2003. Those two grants allowed us to keep momentum through some of the toughest years of hunting and gathering contributors, writing proposals, and evaluating essays. One of the pivotal points of the process was a five-day retreat held in July 2002 at the CIPHER Retreat Center near Mendocino, California, on the topic “Rethinking Kant’s Philosophy of Religion”; all but one of the participants eventually submitted essays. Three research assistants helped with editing (two of whom eventually became contributors as well): Christopher McCammon went to another CIPHER retreat, in June 2003, and helped edit the version of the manuscript submitted with the original proposal to Indiana University Press; Tavis du Preez assisted for several months in late 2003 on the task of editing the text for stylistic consistency and content corrections; and Nathan Jacobs spent a long week with us at Trinity in December 2003, completing the latter process for the second round of the submission process. During these (and other) times of intensive work on this project, our families had to get along without us, sometimes for several days at a time. For this sacrifice, especially on the part of Beth and Dorothy, the words “thank you” seem hardly sufficient to express our gratitude.

Finally, we want to thank the editorial staff at Indiana University Press for their assistance throughout this process. We particularly benefited from the

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suggestions of an anonymous reviewer; responding to these enabled us to hone the book into its final shape. We are truly grateful for IUP's commitment to making this a book of lasting significance for future generations of Kant interpreters, scholars of religion, theologians, and anyone else who is interested in a new understanding of how Kant paved the way for a new philosophy of religion.

CHRIS L. FIRESTONE, DEERFIELD, ILLINOIS
STEPHEN R. PALMQUIST, HONG KONG
NOVEMBER 1, 2004

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Each contribution in this book has been thoroughly edited to conform to a common style. This is most evident in the way references are made to Kant's writings. As is virtually unavoidable in any cooperative effort of this sort, contributors used a variety of different translations of Kant's writings (or in some cases provided their own translations, direct from the German). For the sake of consistency and ease of reference, we have standardized all citations so they refer to the German *Akademie* (Ak) pagination provided in margins of *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. When the author has used a translation other than the one provided in the *Cambridge Edition*, its bibliographical details are provided the first time a citation is made in that essay. The following abbreviations are used for any writings of Kant that are referred to more than once in this book, with citations included in the main text whenever possible:

Ak	<i>Akademie Ausgabe</i>
AP	<i>Anthropology from a Pragmatic Standpoint</i> (1798)
C	<i>Correspondence</i> (various years); Ak volumes specified
CB	<i>On a Conjectural Beginning of Human History</i> (1786)
CF	<i>The Conflict of the Faculties</i> (1798)
CJ	<i>Critique of the Power of Judgment</i> (1790)
CPR	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> (1781/1787)
CPrR	<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i> (1788)
DSS	<i>Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics</i> (1766)
FT	<i>On the Failure of All Philosophical Attempts at Theodicy</i> (1791)
GMM	<i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (1785)
LMM	<i>Lectures on the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (1793)
LMP	<i>Lectures on Moral Philosophy</i> (ca. 1780)
LPR	<i>Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion</i> (1783–1786)
MM	<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i> (1797)
OBS	<i>Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime</i> (1764)
PFM	<i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i> (1783)

List of Abbreviations

PP	<i>Perpetual Peace</i> (1795)
R	<i>Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason</i> (1793)
Rfl	<i>Reflections</i> (various years); Ak volumes specified
STP	<i>On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy</i> (1796)
WMO	<i>What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?</i> (1786)

Kant and the New Philosophy of Religion

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

English Kant Interpretation from Caird to Wood

Chris L. Firestone

In the two centuries since Kant's death, the interpretation and reception of his philosophy of religion have been characterized by two very different tendencies. According to Gordon Michalson, one tendency in reading and appropriating Kant is theologically affirmative, "veering off in the direction of constructive theological efforts to accommodate Christian faith and critical thinking."¹ Interpretations of this kind understand Kant's philosophy to be both chastening and supportive of traditional forms of religion and theology. The other tendency portrays Kant as advocating the "abandonment of theism." Interpretations of this kind understand Kant's philosophy and its influence on theology to be primarily negative. This interpretation, when adopted by theists such as Michalson, argues that Kant's "efforts to ameliorate the theologically destructive effects of the *Critique of Pure Reason* implicitly make things worse for Christian theism, not better."²

Throughout this book, interpretations of Kant's philosophy that have the tendency to be theologically negative will be called "traditional." Theologically negative interpretations of Kant either undermine in a fundamental way all conceivable theological efforts to stake a reasonable claim regarding the nature of God and of God's relationship to the world, or seek to reinterpret all such talk about God in terms of theological nonrealism or deism. Referring to the "traditional interpretation" of Kant's philosophy within these parameters is now common parlance in the field of Kant studies, just as it is in the broader philosophical academy. We will stake this book's first counterclaim to this position by arguing throughout the Introduction that theologically affirmative understandings of Kant's philosophy have just as much grounding in English-speaking Kant reception as do the so-called "traditional interpretations." We will also explain, at least in part, why the many theologically affirmative interpretations of Kant have not been as effective as the data warrant in mounting an effective challenge to the traditional read. In short, we will show that they are not as unified as the traditional interpretation. Because of their diversity of argumentation, they seem less pervasive, and because of their relative isolation, they have been less persuasive.

Before we take a brief survey of the history of Kant interpretation as it pertains to his philosophy of religion, it will be worthwhile to take a closer look at the seminal features of the traditional interpretation. Nicholas Wolterstorff identifies the traditional interpretation of Kant under two motifs.³ They are the metaphor of a boundary and the reduction of religion to morality. Henry Allison adds an additional component, namely, the two-world rendering of Kant's theoretical philosophy. We will have more to say about this view momentarily. As for the metaphor of a boundary, it goes something like this: some things, the *ding an sich*, freedom, God, the soul, are noumenal, and some things, particular manifestations of apple pie and hippopotami, are phenomenal. With the possible exception of freedom, the noumenal realm is made up of things that can't be known, and the phenomenal realm is made up of things that can be known. There is a strict separation or boundary between these realms. Our knowledge about the world is bound by the categories of the mind, making possible only the knowledge of phenomena (appearances). There are, for the traditionalist, no coherent and acceptable ways of thinking of or speaking about God. God-thought and God-talk, couched in terms that come from our knowledge of the phenomenal realm, are strictly prohibited. If they have any ground in reason whatsoever, it comes from our desire to be moral or to understand morality. Theoretically speaking, we can only speculate about God. We can never be said to *refer to* God in our thought or speech.

The metaphor of a boundary goes hand in hand with what Henry Allison calls the "two-world" reading of Kant's theoretical philosophy. On this view, "Kant's transcendental idealism is a metaphysical theory that affirms the unknowability of the 'real' (things in themselves) and relegates knowledge to the purely subjective realm of representations (appearances)."⁴ Kant's philosophy under the two-world reading recognizes a sharp ontological distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. Things in the noumenal world "affect" how we perceive the world of phenomena. Nevertheless, they cannot "as they are in that world" manifest themselves nor be known in any way in the phenomenal world. Nothing can ever be said of the noumenal world from the point of view of the phenomenal world without employing some kind of contradiction or pure speculation. Things in the phenomenal world and things in the noumenal world provide two related, but decidedly different, sets of entities for Kant's dichotomous philosophical whole. The former must be observed and studied as the proper objects of science, while the latter must remain radically unknown and subject only to fanciful speculation.⁵

Along with the metaphor of a boundary and its cognate, the two-world reading of Kant's theoretical philosophy, the traditional interpretation is also characterized by an exclusively moral explanation of religion. If the Kantian paradigm provides any rational justification for religion and theology, if it allows for anything intelligible to be thought or said about God, such affirmations can only be made, says the traditionalist, on the basis of Kant's practical philosophy. This limitation of the grounds for religion and theology to Kant's

practical philosophy is said to permeate his entire corpus. It therefore has a profound impact on the interpretation of Kant's writings on religion. Traditionalists commonly hold that Kant's writings on religion are either noncritical elaborations of his overall philosophical outlook, written disingenuously under the strict censorship of the Prussian state, or incomplete extensions of his moral philosophy, written hastily (and sometimes incoherently) in his years of failing health. These writings tend to be interpreted as being philosophically important only insofar as they cohere with or elaborate upon Kant's practical philosophy.

As for Kant's practical philosophy itself, the traditionalist usually interprets it as being both ingenious and disingenuous with respect to religion and theology. Kant's practical philosophy is theologically ingenious insofar as it allows the same God that was kicked out the front door of his theoretical philosophy to be let back in the back door of morality. This allowing God back into his philosophy, as the illustration would suggest, is not understood to be an affirmative theological maneuver on Kant's part. Traditional interpreters usually dub God thought of in this way as "Lampe's God," in honor of Kant's famous manservant. Lampe, so the story goes, was apparently so upset at the thought of God's demise in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that Kant, to enhance the psychological welfare of his helper, felt it necessary to provide a moral argument for God's existence.⁶ The traditionalist usually understands Kant's actual theological position to be somewhat removed from Lampe's God, somewhere between nonrealism and deism. Kant may have believed in God, but the content of that belief was either a concept of God constituted by its philosophical usefulness or a God with little philosophical import, infinitely removed from the Newtonian world inhabited by human beings.

Theologically affirmative interpretations of Kant, contrary to their negative counterparts, typically hold that Kant's philosophy provides a rationale for God-talk, God-thought, and even God-experience. The case cannot be made without referring beyond the first *Critique*, and sometimes to Kant's writing both before and after 1781. These arguments usually make a point of capturing a sense of the whole of Kant's philosophical enterprise, something that is lost in the all-too-common fixation on the first *Critique*. Among these theologically affirmative interpretations of the whole of Kant's philosophy, the way the arguments are articulated and defended varies greatly. What we hope to show in this Introduction is that this very diversity is the real legacy of Kant, and that the "traditional interpretation" is really nothing more than the largest unified minority report on how to understand Kant's philosophy of religion. This becomes apparent when one considers the nature of the large, though still manageable, amount of literature in English Kant studies produced around the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century. These early roots can then be traced as they progressed through to the present. The late nineteenth century is when Kant studies began to distinguish itself as a major subdivision of philosophy in the English-speaking academy. Corresponding to the "back-

to-Kant movement” in Germany,⁷ competent research on Kant in English showed its first significant signs of life at this time.⁸ The surge of interest in Kant led to a number of significant translations of his writings and notable secondary sources. These translations, in combination with several noteworthy original studies, established the legacy of interpretive disagreement over Kant’s philosophy that was to dominate the twentieth century.

One of the most important interpretations of Kant emerging from this period was Kuno Fischer’s *A Critique of Kant* (1888). This book provided, at the time of its translation into English, the fullest account of Kant in any of the standard histories of philosophy.⁹ Following Fischer’s publication, Edward Caird produced the first significant piece of Kant scholarship for our understanding of the history of English Kant interpretation. Caird’s two-volume work, *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* (1889), was the first substantial work on Kant in English covering the full extent of his philosophy. His interpretation of Kant’s philosophy is divided into four “books.” The first three correspond to the three *Critiques*, and the fourth addresses Kant’s *Religion*.¹⁰ For Caird, as for Fischer, the most natural reading of Kant is the holistic one.¹¹ “For the theoretical, the practical and the aesthetic and religious consciousness are not really independent things, or the products of independent faculties, which stand side by side with each other; they are different forms of one conscious life, forms which rise out of each other in a certain order determined by the very nature of the intelligence.”¹² Caird argued that the most appropriate way to understand Kant’s philosophy is to view it as a written manifestation of Kant’s critically self-examined intellectual life. Kant’s philosophy is best thought of as a work in progress. Its development depends upon a series of revolutionary insights temporally spaced in his work and related to one another in logical sequence. Caird understood Kant’s thought to be a coherent and dynamic whole, in which apparent contradictions find their resolution in the development and filling out of ideas, rather than in their relative demise due to logical inconsistency.

Another influential translation, Friedrich Paulsen’s *Kant*, was published in 1902. It provided an account similar to that of Caird’s in detail, but opposing it in its overall vision. Among their notable agreements was their emphasis on “system” or “critical wholeness” in the interpretation of Kant. Instead of understanding Kant as a philosopher of four realms, however, Paulsen stressed Kant’s early critical position of there being essentially two intellectual realms. At the time Kant wrote the first edition to the first *Critique*, he had hoped a complete critical philosophy would need only theoretical and practical explications. Kant’s transcendental philosophy, Paulsen thus believed, “falls into two branches: the metaphysic of nature and the metaphysic of morals or natural philosophy and moral philosophy. This corresponds to the great division of the objective world into spheres of nature and of freedom. The physical and moral world constitute as it were the two hemispheres of the *globus intellectualis*.”¹³ Paulsen downplays the importance of Kant’s work after the second *Critique*,

highlighting Kant's failing health and inability to construct an adequate metaphysics upon the foundation of his transcendental philosophy.¹⁴

The importance of Paulsen to the history of Kantian interpretation, and especially his influence on what I have called the traditional interpretation, is found in his defense of a dualism that he found at the heart of Kant's philosophy. One analogy he highlights is particularly illustrative. He points out that Kant uses the word "cyclops" to describe a certain kind of academic. For Kant, the one-eyed brute symbolizes those churlish scholars who are found in every faculty of learning. The obvious implication was that many scholars of the day saw the world "from a single standpoint, that of their speciality."¹⁵ The true task of critical philosophy, according to Kant, is to furnish the second eye. The immediate implication is that the second eye provides an enlightened vision enabling one to see past science; it "cause[s] him also to see his object from the standpoint of other men. On this depends the humanity of science."¹⁶ Now, the question immediately arises as to whether or not this second eye constitutes, as Paulsen argues, Kant's consecration of practical reason as the sole counterpart to theoretical philosophy. Given even a cursory understanding of Kant's works after 1787, one might presume that Kant had realized an extension of the analogy by recognizing that two eyes provide *three-dimensional vision*. Only three-dimensional vision actually allows us to imagine the world as a place where one day humanity could comprise an ethical community. Paulsen, however, believes the analogy to be a verification of the two-realm interpretation.

Henry Sidgwick's *The Philosophy of Kant and Other Lectures* provided a complement to Paulsen's work. The book was compiled posthumously from Sidgwick's lecture notes in 1905. His account of Kant's philosophy runs parallel to Paulsen's in that it too asserts the systematic sufficiency of Kant's theoretical and practical philosophies. It differs slightly, however, by rejecting the image of dual spheres in Kant's work, positing instead the idea that Kant's theoretical philosophy served as the foundation for the practical philosophy. To Sidgwick's mind, Kant believed the "ultimate aim of the whole of his philosophy is to establish the beliefs in 'Immortality, Freedom, and God,'" and he "establishes them primarily as postulates of the practical reason, resting ultimately on our certain, irrefragable conviction of duty, together with our equally strong conviction that, in order that morality may be more than an idle dream, reason must assume a supersensible world in which happiness depends on the performance of duty."¹⁷ Significantly, Sidgwick to my knowledge never mentions the third *Critique* or *Religion* in his published writings, and, when addressing topics such as the imagination or God, he limits himself to the technical applications of the first *Critique* or the postulates of the second.¹⁸

With the emergence of Kant's popularity, Caird and Sidgwick, like their German counterparts Fischer and Paulsen, set the early agenda in Kant studies. In an important way, their interpretations summarized nineteenth-century Kant scholarship and demarcated the parameters of Kant studies for the twentieth century. As we have seen, two distinct avenues of interpretive influence

emerged: Kant as the philosopher of four realms (theory, practice, judgment, and religion) and Kant the philosopher of two realms (theory and practice).¹⁹ John Watson forwarded a third possibility in his *The Philosophy of Kant Explained* (1908). He held that Kant's critical philosophy was in fact a consistent and coherent whole. He pointed out that an inordinate gap existed in the two-realm interpretation of Kant and that the largely ignored third *Critique* had only to be properly understood to see the adequacy of Kant's own three-realm resolution. In the theoretical philosophy, the phenomenal/noumenal gulf represented an impassable barrier. Practical reasoning compels us to go beyond sense perception, because nature must "permit . . . the realisation of freedom; in other words, the sensible and supersensible realms must be so adapted to each other that the former does not present an insuperable obstacle to the realisation of the latter."²⁰ For Watson, this clearly meant the third *Critique* was no simple corollary to the theoretical or practical philosophies, nor was it an afterthought of little consequence. Even though Kant had not envisioned the need for writing it in the early 1780s,²¹ the third *Critique* was, in Watson's opinion, the necessary and natural next step of Kant's critical inquiries: "We must therefore expect that Judgment will mediate between understanding and reason by bringing into harmony the realm of nature and the realm of freedom, and that it will also be related to the feeling of pleasure and pain as the link between knowledge and desire."²² Watson nowhere mentions religion with regard to the critical philosophy, but he does find consistency and completeness in Kant's three-realm understanding of reason.²³

Interest in Kant's philosophy of religion peaked in the decade following Watson's interpretation. The 1920s saw a revival of interest in the field of religion and religious experience due to the exceedingly popular work of Rudolf Otto. Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* of 1923 (*Das Heilige*, 1917) represented an attempt to extend Kant's program squarely into the realm of religious experience. Otto argued for four realms in his transcendental philosophy. According to Otto, Kant did not write a fourth *Critique* because he did not recognize that religious experience is a universal phenomenon. If he had, Kant would have been able to identify and articulate the unique sphere of religion. In short, Otto set out to do what he believed Kant did not do: discover the necessary conditions for the possibility of religious experience. According to Otto, "the holy" is the common denominator of all religious experience; it identifies the human as an essentially religious being and completes reason at its highest level. Suffice it to say that Otto was not a pure exegete of Kant's writings, but an innovator whose work bears closest resemblance to Caird's four-realm interpretation of Kant.

Spurred on by the work of Rudolf Otto, Clement Webb wrote an influential and timely book entitled *Kant's Philosophy of Religion* (1926). This book was Webb's attempt to clarify the philosophical importance of religion in a purely Kantian context. On one level, his view represented a tripartite synthesis of Kantian interpretation. It contained aspects of Caird's, Sidgwick's, and

Watson's views, but comprised yet a new vision of the whole of Kant's philosophy. Like Watson, Webb recognized the seriousness of the gap in Kant's natural and moral philosophies and found the bridge between them in Kant's writings of the 1790s. Unlike Watson, however, he ignored the pertinence of the third *Critique*,²⁴ finding the bridge instead in Kant's writings on religion: "To appreciate the position of Kant in the history of philosophy of religion it is well to bear in mind his threefold division of the interest of human reason into the scientific, the moral, and the religious."²⁵ Only religion, in Webb's estimation, could provide the successful mediation of reason's transcendental dichotomy. His work therefore brought the subject of religion back into a position of respectability in English Kant scholarship.

Unity in Kant's philosophy, according to Webb, "was essentially unattainable by the method of Science," and pure practical reason was of little help as well. Webb asserted that the essential bridge in Kant's philosophy "was apprehensible by faith, or, in other words, belonged to the sphere of Religion."²⁶ On a deeper level, however, Webb's interpretation displayed significant inconsistencies. His interpretation neglected the third *Critique* and, as a result, was unable to explain satisfactorily how the progression of Kant's thought might justify the distinctiveness of religion. He time and again conjoined religion and morality in a way reminiscent of the Paulsen/Sidgwick line of interpretation: "It is the distinctive feature of his philosophy of religion that it teaches us to seek in our moral consciousness and there alone the essence of Religion; for although in Religion there is, according to [Kant] . . . a certain connexion established between practice and theory, which are otherwise at odds, it is a connexion in which the practice determines the theory and not the theory the practice."²⁷ The integral connection between religion and morality, and the fact that religion provides Kant's philosophy with a kind of bridge between nature and freedom, seems to be why Webb believed that Kant held to the primacy of practical reason.

Webb's interpretation supplanted the earlier work of Caird, Sidgwick, and Watson and became the leading perspective on Kantian religion for most of the twentieth century. Its strength lay in its ability to synthesize features important to each of the three main previous interpretations of Kant, rather than its exegetical accuracy or explanatory virtues. Webb's interpretation integrated the systematic completeness of Watson's account, Caird's concern for the distinctness of Kant's philosophy of religion, and the two-tiered Kantian interpretation of Sidgwick. The third of these interpretive approaches, however, seems to have influenced Webb's understanding of Kant most significantly. A vital bridge between nature and freedom in the first two *Critiques* was absent in Webb's estimation, and Kant had not succeeded in providing one in the third *Critique*. Webb argued that religious faith was the principal resource in Kant's writings to solve the problem. This faith was not a religious faith based on distinctly theological resources; it was a moral faith in the postulates "God" and "immorality" based on practical reason.²⁸

Since the publication of Webb's *Kant's Philosophy of Religion*, this linking of faith to moral postulates, and religion to practical reason, has established itself as the traditional approach to interpreting Kant. In the interpretations of Sidgwick, Watson, and Caird, we find three quite different attempts to demarcate the fundamental contours of Kant's philosophy. Sidgwick held a two-tiered view, Watson suggested a three-realm view, and Caird argued for four forms of reason. Webb's interpretation marked a shift of balance toward Sidgwick's interpretation. The first major confirmation of this shift was the 1934 publication in English of *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft* as *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Even though the translation itself quickly became the new standard and proved quite reliable in this role,²⁹ Theodore M. Greene's introductory essay set the tone for its reception into the field of Kant interpretation. His essay certified Webb's moral interpretation of Kant's philosophy of religion and dismissed Caird's interpretation.³⁰ Instead of providing a balanced overview of the various ways one might read *Religion*, Greene simply prescribed the two-realm approach as the only legitimate way of reading Kant on religion. Webb's book and Greene's essay served to catalyze the trend toward what would later be called the traditional interpretation of Kant.

In the years leading up to the contemporary discussion of Kant's philosophy of religion that began, as we will argue below, with the publication of Allen Wood's *Kant's Moral Religion* (1970) and Michel Despland's *Kant on History and Religion* (1973), numerous publications and debates centering on the two- and three-realm interpretations dominated the field of Kant studies. An interesting comparison, typical of this period, can be made between the interpretations of Richard Kroner in *Kant's Weltanschauung* (1956) and Stephan Körner in *Kant* (1955).³¹ For Kroner, "Two great cultural powers are at the very foundation of the Kantian philosophy: natural science and moral life. The manner in which Kant pits these two powers against each other constitutes the dynamics of his system. For in their reality he sees the foci around which all philosophical thought moves, and he regards it as of the utmost importance to co-ordinate the two within a system."³² Kroner carried the theme of dualism throughout his interpretation of Kant's writings, seeing in them a complex system of dualisms based upon the scientific and moral emphases of the first two *Critiques*. This aspect of his interpretation permeates his view of theology as well. He writes,

God, and God alone, knows the full truth at a glance. He alone knows himself, the world, and the soul. Man knows only the Idea of God, the world, and the soul. It is this which constitutes the inevitable and definitive limitation of human knowledge. One can say that the entire separation of object and subject as well as that of theoretical and practical reason is only human; in the comprehension of God it does not exist. How far this comprehension can be fathomed by us is a difficult question.³³

Kroner's understanding of the dualisms in Kant's philosophy captures the radical difference between the divine and human standpoints. For him, Kant's prolegomena to metaphysics ends there, and the only way to say more is to move to Kant's practical philosophy.

Körner, on the other hand, held to a three-part view of Kant's philosophy. According to him, "The Critiques of theoretical and practical reason are a systematic survey of a priori principles of empirical knowledge and of morality. They are not the whole system and not even the whole outline of the critical philosophy . . . Another Critique had to be thought out and written by Kant."³⁴ Körner understood Kant to be holding to a close connection between morality and religion.³⁵ Yet he argued for the possibility of a "rational faith" that is more than just morality in the writings of Kant. It proceeds from a required connection between nature and freedom found in a separate realm:

[T]he two *Critiques* have prepared the ground for an act of faith which is in harmony with the findings of his critical philosophy. It can in this sense be called a rational faith. According to Kant it is rational also in the sense that it satisfies "an interest of pure reason," namely the connexion between the realms of nature and of moral freedom. However difficult it may be to understand Kant's notion of rational faith, he leaves us with no doubt that it is different from the apprehension either of the moral law or of the world of empirical fact. It belongs to the sphere of religion.³⁶

Körner highlights the importance of faith and the role of the third *Critique* for providing harmony among the critical components of the program. However, he does not elaborate on the possibility of a link between these two aspects. For Körner, Kant's philosophy of religion is distinct from his ethics in that it provides the vital unifying function. Nevertheless, it remains an enigmatic feature of Kant's thought; its only definitive place, "the realm of faith," remains outside the confines of standard philosophical dialogue.

A way forward between these conflicting interpretive schemes is hinted at in several of the better surveys of the history of modern philosophy during this period. Frederick Copleston's *History of Philosophy* (1963) captured many of the intricacies in Kant's understanding of religion. Copleston understood that, even though "morality, for Kant, does not presuppose religion," it does "lead to religion."³⁷ This leading to religion does not sidestep the question of hope and the third *Critique*, however. For Copleston,

The moral law commands us to make ourselves worthy of happiness rather than be happy or make ourselves happy. But because virtue should produce happiness, and because this completion of the *summum bonum* can be achieved only through divine agency, we are entitled to hope for happiness through the agency of God whose will, as a holy will, desires that His creatures should be worthy of happiness, while, as an omnipotent will, it can confer this happiness on them.³⁸

Copleston links religion and morality in Kant for reasons deeper than the reduction of one to the other. Religion involves faith and hope and the possibility of an actual God who is capable of making a difference in the lives of rational creatures. He summarizes his understanding of religion for Kant in the following way: "We can say, therefore, that Kant's interpretation of religion was moralistic and rationalistic in character. At the same time this statement can be misleading. For it suggests that in the content of true religion as Kant understands it every element of what we may call piety toward God is missing. But this is not the case."³⁹ Copleston's interpretation points out the interpretive dangers of explaining religion in terms of any single aspect of Kant's philosophy.

James Collins, in his *Interpreting Modern Philosophy* (1972), identifies the primary problem in achieving a consensus of opinion among Kant scholars and a more balanced approach to interpreting Kant's philosophy in general. In discussing the Kant conferences typical of his era, he highlights the limits of their scopes. Collins writes,

When a seminar centers around the philosophy of Kant, this further effort at unification is seen to be demanded both by the source thinker's own theme of the systematic unity of reason, examined in its several modalities, and by the difficult, partial perspectives opened up along the main routes. The seminar members are likely to feel, toward the close of their research, that they are well acquainted with this or that parcel of Kant's arguments but that a sense of the wholeness of his mind still eludes them.⁴⁰

According to Collins, Kant scholarship lost the interpretive art of locating the smooth transition between writings in Kant's thought and the sense of wholeness that this recognition affords: "Whereas every preliminary survey moves easily from one *Critique* to the next—from theory of knowledge and metaphysics to ethics and esthetics, and to theory of history and religion—this movement of tranquil passage becomes the first victim of the advanced Kant seminar."⁴¹

Collins's helpful summary points a way forward in trying to understand Kant's philosophy of religion in relation to his other critical writings:

For Kant as philosopher of religion, the community of persons is not only practical and ethical but also religious. Respect for the interpersonal community can be lost or deliberately attacked, or else confused with those affective states which enjoy intense peaks but show little staying power of a moral quality. Hence the Kantian foundation laying of the ethical relationship among persons leads, by its own internal dynamism and the stresses of the human condition, toward a religious interpretation of the human community.⁴²

Collins here captures a more complete sense of Kant's religious emphasis on a moral kingdom under God held together by a common faith in God's providential plan in history. His interpretation of Kant had been worked out in greater detail in his book *The Emergence of Philosophy of Religion* (1967).

There Collins had made important distinctions between *empirical* and *rational* theologies in Kant's use of the phrase "natural theology" and *informal* and *philosophical* theologies in Kant's understanding of "rational theology."⁴³ These are elements of Kant's thought specifically highlighted in his *Religion and Conflict*. Collins's key insight, however, is his recognition of hope as an important concept for religion. What may I hope? "is a purposive and religious type of inquiry, which Kant begins in the *Critique of Judgment*, continues in his briefer writings on the meaning of history, and brings to a climax in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*."⁴⁴

One of the most important contributions to recent Kant scholarship is Michel Despland's *Kant on History and Religion* (1973). In Despland's words, his book attempts to "bring out the full meaning of Kant's philosophy of religion not primarily through the study of his views on morality and on the source of the moral law, but rather through the study of his views on the philosophy of history and on the problems of theodicy."⁴⁵ His interpretation resists the temptation to understand Kant's philosophy of religion solely from the point of view of his three *Critiques*, not by rejecting the traditional interpretation outright, but by emphasizing the development of Kant's thought into insights and perspectives unique to his later work. If Webb's *Kant's Philosophy of Religion* marked a turning point in the history of Kant interpretation, then we could say that Despland's book marks a *returning* point. He fleshes out the concepts of community and hope in Kant's philosophy of religion and, in so doing, relieves much of the stress on Kant's moral philosophy for interpreting his philosophy of religion.

Grace and revelation, in Despland's reading of *Religion*, act as necessary supplements to the human striving after goodness and a perfect moral kingdom. In *Religion*, as Despland points out, the church plays a vital role in humankind's progression toward a perfect moral kingdom. The purifying and reforming of humankind via the church are made possible, on the one hand, by "reason as the focus that draws and attracts," and, on the other hand, by "revelation and grace [which are] the dynamic realities that move man along this progressive path."⁴⁶ According to Despland, Kant's posture with regard to religion is one of reform. His interpretation liberates Kant's philosophy of religion from the other philosophical spheres and shows that it contributes to the unification of the whole of his philosophy by regulating and chastening theology so that religion may, in the end, fulfill its proper function.⁴⁷ For Kant, reason and revelation are neither capable of nor warranted in dismissing the other. The key insight, according to Despland's view of Kant's philosophy of religion, is that a healthy interchange between the two is beneficial for both philosophy and religion.

Despland's interpretation marks the return of a dispute in contemporary Kant scholarship between two distinct ways of interpreting Kant's philosophy. By arguing persuasively for a more nuanced and affirmative interpretation of Kant's philosophy of religion, his work has opened the door for new dialogue

Kant and the New Philosophy of Religion

over precisely how to understand the relationship of Kant's philosophy and theology in all its manifestations. Despland summarizes his position as follows:

The whole thrust of my interpretation leads to one conclusion: the superiority of moral theism is to be found not in the purely moral but in religious considerations as well . . . Its merit lies in the fact that it gives meaning to faith which makes of faith an act which is both rational and religious. Faith is the free and personal act of affirmation which struggles against the split (inside the self and outside of it) between what is and what ought to be.⁴⁸

His arguments demonstrate that the traditional interpretation of Kant is too restrictive and that the road to a more theologically affirmative reading is both promising and complex. Kant's writings on religion and theology are certainly reliant upon the moral philosophy, but, more than this, they demonstrated a definite and positive intention to render the tenets of empirical Christianity meaningful, while assimilating elements of hope from the third *Critique*, and leaving partially unresolved, from the perspective of reason alone, questions regarding revelation and religious experience. Revelation, for instance, cannot be a source of empirical knowledge, but it may be considered as a potential source of "knowing," not in the strict sense of the union of intuition and concept according to the theoretical philosophy, but in a sense made possible by a reasonable faith.

First published around the same time as Despland's book, Allen Wood's *Kant's Moral Religion* presents another influential account of Kant's philosophy of religion. Its importance for our discussion is that, like Despland, Wood defends the claim that there is rational room, and perhaps even need, for the belief in revelation and grace in Kant's philosophy of religion. According to Wood, "Kant does not dogmatically *deny* the possibility of a divine revelation to man," even if knowing that God has revealed himself is another matter entirely.⁴⁹ He also makes the crucial point that "Trust in God's forgiving grace . . . is an important aspect of moral faith, and it is itself justified in the *Religion*."⁵⁰ He highlights Kant's assertions never to contest the "inner possibility of revelation" and "the necessity of a revelation as a divine means for the introduction of religion" as proof of this contention. However, a tension exists in Wood's reading that is absent in Despland's. For Wood, Kant's theoretical and practical philosophies combine to create a kind of antinomy in Kant's account of religion. He explains it in this way: "But though divine revelation itself is not possible [*sic*], it is impossible for any man to know through experience that God has in any instance actually revealed himself."⁵¹ Kant's critical decision not to dismiss the possibility of revelation makes for an uneasy tension with his theoretical philosophy. Is it both possible for God to be *revealed* and impossible to know it was God?

Wood's analysis of this apparent contradiction focuses on the distinction in Kant between "inner" revelation and "outer" revelation. He links the former to morality, saying it serves as a "touchstone" for any understanding of "gen-

uine revelation." The latter has to do with empirical religion and Kant's theoretical philosophy. Wood's interpretation in *Kant's Moral Religion* resonates with the two-realm understandings of Kant in its almost exclusive focus on the theoretical and moral dimensions of Kant's philosophy of religion. Yet, there is no *prima facie* reason why the concepts of taste, teleology, and history should be excluded at this crucial juncture. Wood's interpretation of Kant's philosophy of religion parallels Despland's, with the exception that Despland puts more emphasis on the historical dimension in Kant's writings on religion and views *Religion* as a complex and interwoven nexus of perspectives germane to Kant's entire philosophy. For instance, Kant certainly believed God could not reveal himself solely to a person's understanding or to the theoretical faculty of sense experience, but in light of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and later writings, whether Kant believed revelation of God to be impossible in any conceivable sense and for any conceivable reason is not nearly so clear.

Wood's tentatively optimistic position about Kant on revelation has gradually given way to a traditional, more pessimistic position. In his essay "Kant's Deism," for instance, Wood argues that Kant's intention was to transform Christianity into rational religion, "includ[ing] as much as possible of it within the religion of pure reason."⁵² Wood adopts the position that, for Kant, historical religion is derivative of rational religion, and rational religion likewise relies exclusively on Kant's practical philosophy. In Wood's interpretation, as it develops in the years following *Kant's Moral Religion*, religion becomes essentially an expression of morality. The primary exegetical evidence that Wood forwards in his article is based on a passage where Kant lays out the four logical positions—the "rationalist," "pure rationalist," "naturalist," and "supernaturalist"—that may be adopted toward revelation (see R 154–155). Wood argues in short order that "Kant is plainly a rationalist because he is simply an agnostic about supernatural revelation."⁵³ More affirmative interpretations, by contrast, argue that Kant would have to be considered a pure rationalist, for "The point of dispute can therefore concern only the reciprocal claims of the pure rationalist and the supernaturalist in matters of faith, or what either accepts as necessary and sufficient, or only as accidental, to the one and only true religion" (155).⁵⁴

One of the main reasons the traditional interpretation has been under increasing attack in recent years is that it lacks a comprehensive account of the whole of Kant's philosophy. At the beginning of *Kant's Moral Religion*, Wood notes well the dilemma of the traditional interpretation: "Much careful and fruitful labor has been devoted to the analysis of the subtle argumentation of Kant's epistemology and moral philosophy; but his philosophical outlook as a whole, his view of the world and man's place in it, is often grotesquely caricatured."⁵⁵ He follows that comment with an outline of the solution: "there is an area of Kant's philosophical thought—itself badly neglected by responsible scholarship—which though no less demanding on the reader than most of his writing, does give us a more or less direct access to Kant's outlook as a whole . . .

This area of thought is Kant's investigation of rational religious faith.⁵⁶ Like Despland, Wood highlights a problem with the traditional view and outlines a number of key features to be considered by any plan that might address this problem. Despland's subsequent work, however, never follows up on these features, and Wood, rather than developing the implications of the insights of his early work, has gradually moved closer and closer to the traditional interpretation of Kant's philosophy of religion.⁵⁷

Subsequent to the seminal works of Wood and Despland, efforts at interpreting Kant in a theologically affirmative and exegetically justifiable way have come in many different forms. On the basis of the foregoing analysis of historic interpretations of Kant's philosophy of religion and in anticipation of the second section of this Introduction, we can make two preliminary observations. First, the arguments arise out of and are centered on one dimension of Kant's philosophical program that is taken to provide for the critical incorporation of theological and religious discourse; second, one or two of Kant's texts, not including the first *Critique*, are understood to provide the primary arguments for the respective interpretation. The interpretations of Ronald Green, Adina Davidovich, and Stephen Palmquist represent three very different, theologically affirmative interpretations of Kant that serve as good illustrations.⁵⁸ If the above analysis has been correct so far, these three interpretations are a part of an underrecognized and underappreciated tradition of Kant interpretation and need to be consolidated if the theologically affirmative interpretations are ever to be united and thus capitalize on their collective resurgence in the tradition. These three specific examples will serve as helpful preparation for the detailed analysis of the history of interpretation of Kant's philosophy of religion over the last thirty years in the next section.

Green's interpretation comes the closest of our contributors to the traditional interpretation. His version of the moral hypothesis, however, argues for a theological opening in Kant's philosophy of the first *Critique* that is foreign to the traditional interpretation. The opening, or what Green calls "an aperture," is made apparent only by the internal logic of practical reason as articulated in the arguments of Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and *Critique of Practical Reason*. The reciprocal relationship between moral reasoning and this theoretical aperture in Kant's philosophy, Green argues, makes meaningful theological reflection and religious experience possible. Davidovich focuses not on Kant's second *Critique*, but on his third, the *Critique of Judgment*, making the case that the faculty of judgment became, for Kant, reason's most important faculty. Religion, in her view, became an expression of Kant's understanding of human teleological reasoning, leading to what she calls "contemplative faith."⁵⁹ Palmquist presents a third interpretation. He contends that Kant's philosophy is best construed as a system of three philosophical standpoints united by a single overarching "Perspective." His interpretation involves the assumption that Kant's entire philosophical project, as illustrated most explicitly in his writings on religion and his posthumous works, constitutes

what could be called a "Critical mysticism." We have access to God, and thus can speak and think meaningfully about God, because reason must finally engage the mystery of being in the world, and it must do this in accord with its overarching Transcendental Perspective.⁶⁰

The purpose of this book is to provide a platform for interpretations like these that have responded to Wood's call for more responsible scholarship in the area of rational religious faith. In his or her own way, each contributor has taken up the challenge left in the wake of the early work of Wood and Despland. In the second section of this Introduction, Stephen Palmquist will detail the contribution we hope the essays in this volume will make to the continuing debate between traditional and affirmative interpreters of Kant.

From Despland to the New (Kantian) Philosophy of Religion

Stephen R. Palmquist

The groundbreaking books by Allen Wood (in 1970) and Michel Despland (in 1973), both written near the beginning of their careers as authors (in their late twenties and mid-thirties, respectively), laid a foundation for the mushrooming of scholarship in the area of Kant's philosophy of religion that has transpired during the subsequent thirty years. Interestingly, however, neither scholar has taken his initial efforts much further in the direction of developing a comprehensive alternative to the traditional interpretation he so effectively challenged in his early work. Wood has become one of the world's leading Kant scholars, but has done little, if any, original new work on Kant's theology or philosophy of religion since 1978 (see note 57). Instead, his Kant studies (aside from his substantial contributions to the *Cambridge Edition* of Kant's collected works) have focused mainly on ethics,⁶¹ with his treatment of theological and religious issues gradually moving closer to the traditional interpretation he had initially questioned.⁶² Although Despland's scholarly interests have led him down different paths, focusing mainly on the interface between religion and literature,⁶³ he, by contrast, still embraces and supports the affirmative interpretation of his youth (as his Foreword to this volume clearly indicates).

Despite the founders' lack of sustained support for the affirmative interpretation they initiated, the past thirty years have seen the appearance of a growing number of scholars who *have* taken up the challenge to develop this new way of interpreting Kant, mostly in the form of journal articles numbering in the hundreds. The remainder of this Introduction will not attempt to sketch this trend in anything like an exhaustive way, but merely will take note of the books that have been published on (or have dealt in a major way with) Kant's theology and/or philosophy of religion. This will provide ample evidence of how widespread the recognition is becoming among scholars actually working in this field that the traditional interpretation is neither the only nor the best alternative available.⁶⁴

During the two decades following Despland's 1973 publication, a crucial new development in Kant interpretation provided previously unavailable fertile ground for the development of an affirmative interpretation in the areas of theology and philosophy of religion: a new, perspective-oriented hermeneutic, focused mainly on Kant's theoretical philosophy, demonstrated that some of Kant's most frequently rejected theories (such as the distinction between the thing in itself and appearances) make much more sense than most interpreters have appreciated. The first representatives (in English) of this new trend were Graham Bird in the United Kingdom and Henry Allison in the United States.⁶⁵ Although they themselves have written very little about Kant's philosophy of religion,⁶⁶ they developed a strategy for dealing with Kant's theoretical philosophy that enables the reader to see far more clearly the coherence between its various aspects. During my doctoral work in the early 1980s (initially before learning of the work of Bird and Allison), I adopted the same perspectival emphasis, and for the remainder of that decade I applied it for the first time to the interpretation of Kant's entire philosophical system.⁶⁷ This perspectival approach to interpreting Kant gave those interested in developing a more affirmative interpretation of Kant's philosophy of religion a promising philosophical basis for attempting to take the initial insights of Despland and Wood a step (or more) further, even though in their own subsequent publications the two groundbreakers themselves have not taken advantage of the great potential for added clarity and coherence provided by a perspectival interpretation.

The 1970s and 1980s were slow in this respect, with most new books on Kant's philosophy of religion still reflecting an almost exclusive acceptance of the traditional interpretation and little or no recognition of any alternative(s). Two books showed more affinity with Despland's emphasis on history than with Wood's more existentialist leanings, but were both far more dismissive of Kant as providing any grounding for serious theological reflection. In 1975 Carl Raschke's *Moral Action, God, and History in the Thought of Immanuel Kant* portrayed Kant as eventually reducing theology to philosophy of history and virtually doing away with the need for any real God.⁶⁸ But the best example of this backward-looking approach was Gordon Michalson's 1979 book *The Historical Dimensions of a Rational Faith*, because he followed it in the 1990s with two sequels that have shown no greater openness to an affirmative reading of Kant.⁶⁹ The great exception in the second half of the 1970s was Ronald Green's *Religious Reason*, the first book to go beyond Wood and Despland in its affirmation of Kant as a viable religious thinker worthy of adopting as the basis for a full-fledged theological system of belief.⁷⁰ With Green (whose essay in the present volume appropriately appears in the part focusing on theology) the birth of an unequivocally affirmative way of interpreting Kant's philosophy of religion was finally complete.⁷¹

After a gap of some six years extending throughout the first half of the 1980s, a spate of books appeared in the second half of the decade that were

progressively more promising in their emphasis, though none of them adopted an approach as thoroughly affirmative as Green's. Ann Loades picked up and developed Despland's emphasis on Kant's theodicy essay in her 1985 book *Kant and Job's Comforters*,⁷² where she compares Kant's early optimistic views on God to those of Job's naive comforters. Portraying the critical philosophy as having a religiously *healthy* influence on Kant's theological outlook, she focuses mainly on the negative side of this development, without acknowledging the full extent of Kant's construction of a new religious and theological path. Vincent McCarthy's 1986 book, *Quest for a Philosophical Jesus*, expounds on the distinctiveness of Kant's *Religion* from both a historical and a literary point of view, giving special emphasis to Kant's portrayal of Christianity as the best example of a historical religion and of Jesus as "practically indispensable in view of man's self-inflicted moral condition."⁷³ However, McCarthy overlooks many of Kant's affirmations, complaining (for example) that Kant has "dissolved" most of Christianity's most substantial doctrines and that any notion of religious experience is wholly absent in Kant's portrayal of religion.⁷⁴ Two books that appeared in 1988 both gave credit to Kant as a viable religious thinker; however, both also fell short of viewing his approach as fully compatible with that of a living religious (especially Christian) faith. Heinrich Cassirer's *Grace and Law* is important not only because it was written by the son of the great Kant scholar Ernst Cassirer, but also because its comparison of Kant with St. Paul comes in a book addressed explicitly to a *religious* (nonphilosophical, Christian) readership.⁷⁵ Bernard Reardon's *Kant as Philosophical Theologian*, by contrast, carries out a scholarly, Book-by-Book commentary on *Religion*, concluding that the elements of Kant's philosophy "do not present a consistent whole"; the religious and theological questions Kant raises were either "unanswered or answered unsatisfactorily by himself."⁷⁶ These books were followed in 1989 by one that took fully on board the significance of hermeneutics for Kant: Terry Godlove's *Religion, Interpretation and Diversity of Belief* convincingly demonstrates that the common assumption that Kant's philosophy leads to antireligious forms of relativism is utterly mistaken.⁷⁷

The 1990s witnessed a burgeoning of works challenging the traditional interpretation, with Michalson's two (see note 69) being the only books devoted solely to Kant's philosophy of religion that continued to lend it support. During this decade the contributors to the present volume have been among the most active supporters of various affirmative approaches to interpreting Kant. In the first half of the 1990s four books appeared that were all devoted to an explanation and analysis of Kant's philosophy of hope, with special emphasis on religion as the domain where hope is realized most fully. Gene Fendt's *For What May I Hope?* (1990) is cast in a Kierkegaardian frame of reference and appeared just before the veritable explosion of books over the next decade that interpreted Kantian religion affirmatively.⁷⁸ Perhaps as a result, its affirmations are somewhat tentative at times. Nevertheless, his two chapters on Kant do affirm the centrality of hope for Kant and highlight its

religious significance. The fact that Fendt (writing before Green's definitive 1992 comparison) linked Kant with Kierkegaard, widely respected as a philosopher with deep insights into the nature and meaning of religion, may have served as a "wake-up call" to many (especially Christian) philosophers. Fendt's tantalizing suggestion is that Kant may not be so much the antithesis as the *complement* of Kierkegaard in the realm of philosophical theology and religious philosophy.

Of the four books published during this half decade, the late Adina Davidovich's *Religion as a Province of Meaning* (1993) focuses least (despite its title) on Kant's *Religion*.⁷⁹ Instead, the first half of Davidovich's book focuses on the third *Critique*, employing it as the systematic lens for viewing "a contemplative conception of religion."⁸⁰ The second half shows how the religious theories of Rudolf Otto and Paul Tillich were developments out of precisely such a third-*Critique*-centered reading of Kant, whereby "belief in God is neither theoretical nor practical," but contemplative.⁸¹ Interestingly—and perhaps revealing a weakness in her position—Davidovich claims Kant "failed" in *Religion* to apply properly his own insights on hope from the third *Critique*, thus leaving the task of developing a truly Kantian theory of religion to others.⁸² But she affirms that her interest in all the scholars who form what she calls the "Kantian school" of religion is more than just academic; rather, she is motivated by the conviction that "they have something to say that is important for us to hear."⁸³

The next book, Curtis H. Peters's *Kant's Philosophy of Hope* (also 1993), argues not only that Kant's philosophy of religion is the expression of a "philosophy of hope," but that this expression is *complete* and "realistic," serving as "an integral part of his general critical philosophy."⁸⁴ Peters's study is the most wide-ranging of the four studies during this period, examining hope in each of the *Critiques*, and in Kant's philosophy of history, as well as in *Religion*. Chapter 3 examines Kant's view of religion thoroughly, concluding that the "fullest development and expression" of hope was here "in his philosophy of religion."⁸⁵ The chapter thus ends with a long and impressive account of what Kant got *right* about religion, followed by a much shorter (though serious) set of criticisms.⁸⁶ Although Peters's final assessment is that Kant had "too narrow a perspective on religion," he nevertheless sees it as being filled with "valuable insights" that ought to have continued influence even today.⁸⁷

In the following year Sidney Axinn published *The Logic of Hope*, the book (among these four that appeared in the first half of the decade) that gives the most sustained and careful analysis of Kant's *Religion*. Axinn is more cautious in his affirmations, but this is largely because of Axinn's own conviction that *ambivalence* is the most philosophically respectable attitude to adopt in matters religious. One of Kant's key insights, according to Axinn, was precisely that ambivalence is religiously *healthy*.⁸⁸ Understanding the nature of ignorance is therefore the key to delineating the realms of what we can and cannot hope to know. After a chapter providing a section-by-section commentary on *Religion*,

Axinn offers an excellent (though not strictly Kantian) logical analysis of the nature of hope. Hope requires both knowledge and ignorance in a peculiar interplay. "God," according to Axinn, is a concept that can be "mentioned" but cannot be "used." As a result, he sees Kant in the end (chapter 11) as a historical reductionist: for Kant "the philosophy of religion is essentially the philosophy of history."⁸⁹ Kantian religion as Axinn portrays it is so tightly squeezed between ethics and history that little, if any, room is left for anything distinctively religious or theological. As befits his own conception of philosophical integrity, Axinn therefore remains ambivalent about whether he is affirming or negating Kant's position.

Seven other books that have appeared since 1990 and exhibited varying degrees of awareness of the affirmative interpretation are also worth mentioning briefly. Wisniewski's *Our Natural Knowledge of God* (1990) develops an approach to natural theology that affirmative interpreters will recognize as highly Kantian, yet Wisniewski himself is so entrenched in the traditional way of reading Kant that he sees himself as *rejecting* Kant's position.⁹⁰ Lowe's *Theology and Difference* (1993), by contrast, offers a highly affirmative application of Kant to various postmodern themes, affirming Kant's emphasis on the absolute difference between God and human beings, as well as his treatment of radical evil, as good examples of the "wound of reason," the brokenness of the human condition that all genuine theology must grapple with.⁹¹ Dole's 1993 translation of Florschütz's work on Swedenborg amasses substantial proof (incontrovertible, for those who dare consider it!) that Swedenborg exercised far more influence on Kant than previously had been assumed by most scholars.⁹² Dell'Oro's *From Existence to the Ideal* (1994) questions another sacred cow by arguing against the "discontinuity thesis"—that mainstay of the traditional interpretation that assumes Kant experienced "a radical transformation" around the years 1768–1772—claiming instead that his philosophical approach in general and his theological/religious thought in particular "evolved slowly over time," always revolving around the problem of how the concept of "existence" relates to our understanding of God.⁹³ Morrison's *Science, Theology, and the Transcendental Horizon* (1994) is plagued by an unqualified acceptance of the "two *Critiques*" version of the traditional interpretation, thus leading to many claims that simply cannot stand up against the weight of current Kant scholarship, such as that Kant single-handedly "killed God" by relegating him to the status of a mere "metaphysical idea," a deistic "creature of reason's own thought."⁹⁴ This "latter-day" adoption of the traditional interpretation, together with Michalson's 1990 and 1999 books, make all the more remarkable the fact that most of Fackenheim's *The God Within* (1996) was originally written in the 1950s, yet it portrays Kant in a highly affirmative way, arguing against many of the misunderstandings perpetrated by the traditional interpretation: the key is to view "Kant's 'theology' or 'metaphysics' [as] a new *kind* of metaphysics," for "it appears as confused and inconsistent only so long as it is mistaken for the old kind."⁹⁵ And A. W.

Moore's *Noble in Reason, Infinite in Faculty* (2003) incorporates a variety of themes from Kant's religious philosophy (or variations on them), including evil, hope, eternal life, and God, in his attempt to present a rationally defensible ethical theory.⁹⁶ In addition to the above, numerous other books have appeared since 1990, relating only indirectly or partially to Kant's philosophy of religion, yet supporting the same general type of affirmative approach that stands in such sharp contrast to the traditional interpretation.⁹⁷

During the five-year period from 1996 to 2000, four of the twelve contributors to the present volume published books that developed affirmative interpretations of Kant's theology and/or philosophy of religion with a new boldness, taking it to a level of scholarly understanding that was heretofore unparalleled. As we have already seen (e.g., in notes 70 and 78), two other contributors, Green (1978, 1988, and 1992) and Fendt (1990), already had published books adopting affirmative stances, but neither's positions had been as well developed as in these latest books. Because each of these authors already has an opportunity to speak in his or her own voice elsewhere in this volume, here I shall give only a brief comment on each book. In 1996 Hare argued in *The Moral Gap* (see note 54) that religion performs a necessary function in Kant's philosophical system by providing human beings with a way of overcoming our fundamental inability to fulfill the strict demands of the moral law. Also in 1996 Galbraith went a step further in *Kant and Theology* by demonstrating that Kant very consciously aspired to construct a systematically complete *philosophical theology*, even though (perhaps because of the expectations imposed by his cultural and intellectual context) he seemed to be covering up this aim until near the end of his life.⁹⁸ In 1997 Kielkopf, in *A Kantian Condemnation of Atheistic Despair*, applied pragmatic arguments in the manner of William James in order to strengthen Kant's case for "moral autonomy" as a means of establishing a "rational, moral religious perspective" that can serve as a foundation for "genuine religion."⁹⁹ And in 2000 this editor (Palmquist), in *Kant's Critical Religion*, applied the perspectival hermeneutic established in his earlier book, *Kant's System of Perspectives* (1993), to demonstrate that the human encounter with God served as the key (though, in a sense, "mystical") focal point for Kant's entire philosophical project.¹⁰⁰

The main weakness of the many scholars who have participated in the development of this new, affirmative school of Kant interpretation up to now is that most have so far failed to take full advantage of the wealth of secondary literature supporting their position. They devote more attention in their writings to arguing against interpreters who accept the traditional interpretation than to giving supportive citations of those who agree with their own position—as if such an acknowledgment might make their "discovery" of an alternative way of reading Kant appear to be less original. Or perhaps this tendency is just an expression of the broader fact that philosophers are generally quick to admit (and explain why) they disagree with philosophers who oppose their position but reluctant to admit (and explain why) they agree with those sharing com-

patible positions. Be that as it may, this volume is a concerted effort to counteract such tendencies. The editors' hope is that when those scholars who still sit on the borderline between the traditional interpretation and its affirmative alternative see the direction this trend is clearly heading, they will be less reluctant to accept the new paradigm that views Kantian theology and religion in an affirmative light. The scholars included in this volume are certainly among the best representatives of this new paradigm, though numerous others could also have been included, given how popular this movement has become in recent years. The remainder of this Introduction will provide an overview of each of the twelve essays in this volume and will conclude by sketching four ongoing *disagreements* between proponents of the affirmative interpretation—issues that indicate promising new avenues for further research and debate, notwithstanding the substantial common ground shared by the contributors.

Part 1, on the philosophical foundations for an affirmative theology, opens with an essay by Gregory R. Johnson, demolishing what may be the most influential obstacle preventing many readers from considering even the *possibility* that Kant might have approved of the religious life of most ordinary believers: namely, the fact that Kant's harsh rejection of "enthusiasm" seems to reveal that he was psychologically averse to all religion, summarily condemning it to the graveyard of "fanaticism." Johnson's essay on "The Tree of Melancholy"—a natural outworking of his numerous other publications on the formative influence Swedenborg had on Kant¹⁰¹—traces the development of Kant's view of enthusiasm from his early writings through his mature critical philosophy. While Johnson admits Kant is ambivalent about the problems posed by enthusiasm in religious matters, he persuasively accounts for the fact that Kant himself had a lifelong fascination for these very issues. A close look at Kant's anthropology reveals that Kant believed enthusiasm and philosophy both derive from "the same melancholic temperament." In short, on Kant's account, "philosophy and enthusiasm are close kin. Both are fruits of the tree of melancholy." Furthermore, "[o]f all of the fruits of melancholy, . . . philosophy and enthusiasm are the closest." What this means is that philosophers cannot reject all enthusiasm whatsoever without severing the root that nourishes their own discipline! Religious enthusiasm may die out as a result of the way Kant's philosophy of religion has traditionally been interpreted; but in that event, so too will everything that is most valuable and humane about philosophy itself, for the archetypal philosopher's personality *shares* the very same melancholic temperament that naturally gives rise to enthusiasm.

For those who have come to adopt the traditional interpretation of Kant, Johnson's demonstration that Kant was far from condemning all forms of enthusiasm may be met with shocked disbelief. Yet the evidence is incontrovertible: the fact that many, if not most, forms of living religious faith seem to encourage, if not *require*, just such a grounding in feeling and experience (what Green's essay in Part 2 associates with Kierkegaard's "ethico-religious passion")¹⁰² can no longer be regarded as grounds for regarding them as con-

trary to Kant's understanding of critically enlightened religion. Quite to the contrary, the "tree" of our rational nature, rightly understood (in terms of the three *Critiques*), inevitably gives rise (for any thoughtful person) to melancholy: for we cannot immediately see how it can be that we might "climb" it without assistance—that is, how we can overcome the limits reason places on our knowledge and on our ability to accomplish our moral duty. These two challenges are therefore taken up in the next two essays.

The second essay, by John E. Hare, carefully analyzes "the rational instability of atheism" from a Kantian point of view. After examining Kant's views on morally good people who are not theists, Hare discusses Kant's moral *criticism* of atheism. He then responds to scholars such as Wood, who interpret various statements of Kant's as implying that religion does not require a belief that God exists. If Hare is right, then atheism fails to fulfill one very important role that Kant requires any religious philosophy to fulfill: it fails to provide a stable means of "standing in the gap" that opens up between our moral nature and our (in)ability to fulfill the demands it makes on us—a theme Hare develops more fully in his 1996 book *The Moral Gap*. Hare's fourth section gives a brief account of how he thinks Kant believed that Christianity, regarded as a morally centered theistic religion, can provide an effective means of standing in this gap. He concludes his paper with some challenging comments on what happens if we attempt to do Kantian ethics *without* theism.

Once the misconception that atheistic moralism can serve as a legitimate surrogate of Kantian religion is cleared up, the way is prepared for an attack on yet another obstacle that commonly leads readers to downplay the theological significance of Kant's philosophy: Christopher McCammon challenges head-on a claim that tends to function as the foundation of the traditional interpretation, that Kant is defending a form of *deism*. In demonstrating how this common assumption can (and should) be overcome, McCammon argues against the claims of Wood, Wolterstorff, and others, portraying "hope incarnate" as a necessary feature in Kant's understanding of rational religion. He interprets "the Christic archetype" as an essential component of Kant's argument, one that requires rational religion to take a definite theistic stand for a *living* religious faith. Touching on the role of religious symbols in this process, McCammon's essay prepares the way not only for a Kantian Christology, but also for the kind of real religious hope that functions as the engine driving the religious life of most ordinary believers.

Part I closes with Gene Fendt's reflections, from a literary point of view, on the different modes of truth implicit in Kant's writings. This fourth and final step in our preliminary consideration of what it means to "make room for faith" (CPR Bxxx) demonstrates that religious thought (i.e., theology) and practice (i.e., religion) are not rendered inconsequential by the limits Kant places on knowledge in the first *Critique*. Once the "anatomy of truth" is rightly understood, we find ourselves fully equipped by Kant's philosophical system to discover and uphold truth-preferring reasons in religious and theo-

logical matters. Carrying further an argument he began in his 1990 book *What May I Hope?* Fendt demonstrates that, far from denying the possibility of a vibrant theology and a living faith, Kant's epistemology "presumes a kind of faith or trust all along the way." As such, Fendt's essay removes the final philosophical/hermeneutic obstacle that might stand in the way of developing a complete Kantian theology—one that can, in turn, ground the kind of genuine religious practice Kant seems to have envisioned. Despite common claims to the contrary (usually by those who are familiar only with a narrow cross section of Kant's philosophy), Kantian religion *does* leave room for affirming the truth *and* reality of one's theological and religious commitments.

Part 2, on the theological foundations for interpreting Kantian religion affirmatively, begins with an essay by Philip J. Rossi, originally written as an epilogue to the whole book. As such, it contains some general reflections on the 1991 prequel (edited by Rossi and Wreen) as well as some brief commentary (mostly in the notes) on some of the other essays in this volume. However, Rossi's main message fits in so well with what the editors have dubbed the "affirmative interpretation" that we opted to reposition his essay (with the author's kind permission) as part of the book's main content. Its position as the first essay in Part 2 is crucial, because as a Catholic priest, Rossi relates the significance of this new hermeneutic to some of the oldest theological issues in the history of Christianity. In particular, Rossi appeals to some recent work by the Catholic philosopher Jacqueline Mariña to argue that Kant's understanding of divine grace is far closer to that of St. Augustine than it is to Pelagianism (an accusation all too frequently leveled against Kant by those who take for granted the traditional interpretation of Kant). The key insight here is that grace, for Kant, consists not only of the "divine aid" necessary to extricate us from radical evil, but also of the fundamental fact that every human being starts out with a "good predisposition"—something that has nothing to do with our own efforts or actions, but is an unmerited gift of *receptivity* whose absence would leave us wholly incapable of experiencing divine grace. Rossi's essay undertakes an invaluable service to theologically minded interpreters of Kant by showing how this crucial theological concept is not just present in Kant, but present in a way that can hold its own in dialogue with some of the mainstream classical and contemporary Catholic theologians.

The second essay in Part 2 tackles a problem many traditional interpreters of Kant would regard as rendering *all* Kant's talk of grace (or anything else that smacks of theology) otiose: given the strictures laid down in the critical philosophy (especially the first *Critique*), how can Kant presume to talk meaningfully about God *at all*? Nathan Jacobs meets this common objection to Kantian theology head-on by comparing two recent papers, by Nicholas Wolterstorff and Jeffrey Privette. Wolterstorff adopts the traditional interpretation to argue that any reference to God is impossible on strict Kantian principles; Privette takes an affirmative approach, claiming under a perspectival interpretation of Kant's epistemology that Christian theology, rooted in Jesus Christ

as God incarnate, has a basis for God-talk that survives the Kantian noumenal-phenomenal distinction. Jacobs forges a path between these two extremes by making a careful distinction between transcendental theology, with the limits of reference Kant places on it in the first *Critique*, and the “prototypical” theology Kant develops in Book Two of *Religion*. Privette’s position, though affirmative, is mistaken inasmuch as “the empirical manifestation can never be adequate to the idea of God”; nevertheless, Wolterstorff is also mistaken, for he wholly neglects Kant’s separate arguments for the transcendental necessity of the prototype of “perfect humanity.” This prototype, Jacobs argues, serves to establish the fundamental condition that makes possible human cognition of God; it alone, therefore, makes God-talk possible for Kant.

Next in Part 2 comes Chris L. Firestone’s groundbreaking work on the essentially *optimistic* character of Kant’s philosophical approach to the discipline of theology. His essay—carrying on the work of his published articles on Kant—shows how both *Religion* and *Conflict* require an ongoing reciprocal relationship to exist between philosophy and theology, as the lower and higher “faculties” of the university. Far from doing away with the possibility or legitimacy of theological reflection, Kantian philosophy *requires* it, as an independent sounding board (or partner in dialogue) for its own religious aspirations. Firestone’s essay is written as a companion to Jacobs’s essay. Firestone agrees that Kant grounds theology in the rational/transcendental, but presses the argument further by focusing on the role of theology proper in Kant’s philosophy of religion. He argues that the discipline of theology (relative to philosophy) does have a distinct and significant role in Kant’s vision of “the university of learning.” He locates this role in the awakening and deepening influence of theology in the area of religious truth. After spelling out this role, Firestone concludes his essay by summarizing Kant’s rules for conflict as a model for how philosophers and theologians might fruitfully engage one another within the academy.

A good illustration of Firestone’s claim that Kant’s philosophy encourages constructive conflict with theologians comes in Ronald M. Green’s essay, an imaginary dialogue between Kant and Søren Kierkegaard. The two greats have both been “reanimated” thanks to the wonders of modern technology and happen to meet as they wait out a snow delay in an airport lounge. The resurrected Kant has had a chance to acquaint himself with Kierkegaard’s works, and he strikes up a conversation about their respective views on historical faith. Kierkegaard is at pains throughout the conversation to emphasize how thoroughly he was influenced by Kant—a theme Green has explored in great detail in his 1992 book *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt* (see note 58). The futuristic Kant, in turn, offers various insights into the motives that led him to write his *Religion* and how he intended his views to be interpreted. The uncomfortable implications of our radical freedom in matters of both action and belief—quite irrespective, in certain respects, of what reason demands—are what Kant says prompted him to write a book on religion. Ethics

on its own, he came to realize (as Kierkegaard later highlighted even more forcefully), is a futile pursuit. When asked a leading question about his apparent rejection of divine assistance, Kant explains how he does, in fact, lend support to just such a possibility: grace, for him, is essentially the same thing as willing, only viewed from a different perspective—a view Kierkegaard dubs *mystical*, without any denial coming from Kant. The second half of Green's essay depicts Kierkegaard as taking up the offensive and arguing that Kant's religious writings contain the seed of a philosophical justification for the very sort of historically grounded faith that he (Kierkegaard) later attempted to develop. Kant is beginning to be convinced just as they are informed it is time to board their planes.

By pitting Kant the religiously minded philosopher against Kierkegaard the philosophically minded Christian theologian, this final paper in Part 2 reflects a sentiment that is evident in virtually all the contributions in this book, especially those in Part 2. The editors' hope is that this collection of essays will convince the reader that Kant, no less than Kierkegaard, can be regarded as a religious reformer who deserves to be taken as seriously by Christian philosophers and theologians (and, indeed, by philosophically enlightened members of any religious or theological tradition) as is Kierkegaard—if not more so. Green highlights the common concern these two great “Ks” had for establishing a grounding in “ethico-religious passion.” Each of the other essays in this volume highlights other features of Kant's approach that, taken together, substantially confirm what might otherwise appear to be mere imaginative musings, were Green's essay to be read on its own.

The four essays that constitute Part 3 address various aspects of what a real Kantian religion might look like. The first essay clears a path for more specifically religious applications by examining the appropriateness of Kant's tools for dealing with the most negative of all theological problems: evil (i.e., undeserved suffering). Elizabeth C. Galbraith picks up this theme as one that was left underdeveloped in her 1996 book *Kant and Theology*. In that work she interpreted Kant's attitude toward theodicy as involving a break with Leibniz's position, referring to the former as a “deferred theodicy.” According to this interpretation, Kant chooses to defer comprehension of evil, trusting that divine justice will ultimately prevail. In the present essay Galbraith assesses how effectively Kant's 1791 position on the problem of innocent suffering can inform post-Holocaust theodicies, by comparing it with the “theodicy of protest” by the Christian theologian John K. Roth. She concludes that Kant's approach ultimately satisfies the religious protestor's desire for justice, not in a rigorous philosophical (i.e., theoretical/theological) manner, but by demonstrating the need for religious *thinkers* to preserve a real living *experience* of the God they claim to write about.

In the second essay in Part 3, Charles F. Kielkopf picks up where Galbraith leaves off by setting up what he calls a “Soteriological Predicament” that arises out of Kant's writings on morality and religion, then develops a Kantian

model for solving this predicament through a “religion of deliverance.” Although his essay has clearly theological implications and uses some analytical argumentation along the way, its main thrust is to encourage what he calls “a type of personal religious thinking sometimes called ‘faith seeking understanding.’ Its ad hoc utility is to help individuals reappraise claims of their religions.” This, too, is the purpose of the two concluding essays in Part 3: each addresses this possibility of religious application at a more concrete and personal level, demonstrating that Kantian religious philosophy is capable of providing meaningful theological structures that are effective and workable in the real context of a community of faith.

Along these lines, in the third essay in Part 3 Leslie Stevenson testifies to his own commitment to British Quakerism, arguing that Kantian philosophy and Quaker faith and practice go hand in hand in a variety of ways. The claim that Quakerism represents the closest thing Christianity has to offer to Kant’s ideal of a pure moral faith is well worth considering by Christians and religious believers of all persuasions—if not to convert everyone to Quakerism, at least to point the direction in a concrete way to how other denominations and faiths would need to be revised in order to approach more closely to the Kantian ideal. Stevenson concludes by pointing out that the one reservation that could be raised by Quakers seeking to ground their faith and practice in Kant’s philosophy—viz., that it seems to offer little if any room for interpreting religious experience as a genuine experience of God (the very core of the Quaker tradition of Silent Meeting for Worship), an issue that is one of the deepest concerns many religious believers have about Kant—is largely unfounded, given the many hints Kant gives that such experience may be possible, as long as it is not viewed as producing *theoretical knowledge*.¹⁰³

The twelfth essay, the last in Part 3, begins by clearing away one final misconception that tends to prevent readers (and sometimes nonreaders!) of Kant from taking seriously the relevance his ideas have for anyone who wishes to adopt a life of healthy and vibrant religious belief and practice. Kant tends to be portrayed as the epitome of all academic philosophers, the philosopher for whom the university was the sole context for carrying out the philosopher’s duties. Kant’s last book, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798), provides a highly significant window into his most mature views on religion and theology; but it tends only to reinforce the notion that Kant did not take religion *as a way of life* very seriously, for the book seems to portray the philosopher’s vocation as one of speaking only to other academics. Stephen R. Palmquist’s essay starts out as a report on some of the key insights that arose during a philosophical retreat the author organized during the summer of 2002: five scholars, most of them contributors to this book, spent four intense days in the depths of the Mendocino forest, north of San Francisco, striving to understand Kant’s *Conflict*. One of our most surprising conclusions was that Kant’s account of the struggle between the “higher faculties” of the university and the “lower faculty” of philosophy implies *not* that philosophers are and ought to remain out of touch

with the general public, but rather that they have both the responsibility and the duty to ensure that the public is challenged by the voice of reason.

After offering a summary of the perspectival method of interpreting Kant's philosophy—as set out in detail in his 1993 book, *Kant's System of Perspectives*, and as applied to theology, religion, and religious experience in the 2000 sequel *Kant's Critical Religion*—Palmquist's essay concludes with some brief suggestions as to how a recent movement, often called “philosophical practice,” might relate to Kant's views on the philosopher's responsibility to the public. He suggests that the purest Kantian way of practicing religion would be to participate in religious groups, such as Quakerism, that do not require clergy at all but distribute the priestly role to all members. A more widely acceptable way of applying Kantian religion, Palmquist argues, would be to recognize and encourage the possibility of Kantian philosophers taking up the profession of *pastors*, yet without sacrificing their calling as philosophers. Because in some contexts this would put them under subjection to a church hierarchy, this would have the effect of reproducing aspects of the academic “conflict of the faculties” in the context of the church.

In a short Appendix to the twelfth and final essay, a philosophically minded pastor of a parish church in Berkeley, California, offers a synopsis of what can result when Kant's approach to philosophy and religion is interpreted poetically, as a *way of life*, and used to inform not only the beliefs and practices, but also the *government*, of a religious community. Richard W. Mapplebeck-palmer weaves into his pastoral account of “Kant's Copernican Revolution in Religion” the symbols he has grown accustomed to using to enliven his own personal faith. Originally part of a much longer, seven-part manuscript, this Appendix merely highlights the main features of the first (theoretical) part on the grounding of church government in Kant's theory of religion. Only with a philosophically sound constitution can religious communities be established without lapsing into ideological cults or separatist sects—two of Kant's greatest concerns. Part 2 (not summarized) describes in greater detail how the religious community based at Grace North Church (having both Congregationalist and Anglican roots, but attracting participants from all manner of religious traditions) has evolved during the past two decades into a paradigm case, proving that Kantian religion can be practiced in a vibrant and living community of faith. When free from submission to cult or sect, the natural bonds of kinship and stewardship that characterize such a religious community become the means to the rational and universal religion that Kant commended.

The foregoing summary highlights the similarities and compatibilities between the contributors to this volume that led the editors to arrange the essays in a particular order, as if they were “telling one consistent story.” This should not be taken to imply, however, that these (and other) affirmative interpreters of Kant's philosophy of religion agree with each other on *all* the issues. On the contrary, the editors themselves have disagreed, sometimes strongly, over such fundamental issues as what “counts” as an “affirmative

interpretation.” What we decided, in the end, is that any scholar who interprets Kant as *affirming* theology and/or religion *and* interprets that affirmation as a position *worthy of being affirmed* by theologians and/or religious believers belongs to the group or *trend* we are presenting here. These two similarities may be the only features that unite *all* contributors to this volume and distinguish us from those interpreters of Kant who (a) think Kant was trying to negate theology (and/or destroy religion), and/or (b) agree that Kant was seeking to affirm theology (and/or religion) but regard that *kind* of affirmation as so dangerous that practicing theologians (and/or religious believers) ought to reject it. Since all philosophers should affirm the value of a good argument, the remainder of the Introduction will outline four broad areas of *disagreement* between different affirmative interpreters, as represented by the contributors to this volume.

First and perhaps foremost is the crucial issue of the role history plays in religion and theology. Rossi’s essay notes that this issue also arose between contributors to the 1991 prequel of this volume. Some interpreters think Kant’s view of reason as a nonhistorical faculty for obtaining timeless truth brackets history out of the picture, while others see Kant as merely giving reason the kind of stability a ring provides for the gem (the history) it shows off. Adopting an affirmative interpretation does not, on its own, presuppose one or the other of these options, largely because different kinds of theologians as well as different kinds of religious believers come to Kant with different presuppositions in this regard. Some (mainly those who align themselves closely with a particular tradition) *would not affirm Kant* if he were denying any significant role to history, while others (mainly those whose theology and religion is more ecumenical or nonsectarian) affirm Kant *precisely because* they believe he is doing something of this sort. What this means is that affirmative interpreters will sometimes strongly disagree with each other about what exactly is wrong with the traditional ways of interpreting Kant. Although such disagreements are not highlighted in this book, the perceptive reader will be able to detect differences between the contributors in this regard. Green’s essay tackles this issue head-on, portraying the inner struggle any Kantian religious believer (like Kierkegaard) is bound to have over the precise role given to history.

A second argument that is intensified rather than solved by adopting an affirmative interpretation is the related issue of whether Kant’s approach to theology and religion aligns itself (or can be aligned) more closely with one particular religious tradition, or whether it *must* be nonsectarian and/or ecumenical. The fact that Kant himself openly states on numerous occasions that Christianity is the tradition he prefers would seem to militate against the latter option, especially in light of the sometimes rather uncharitable caricatures he gives of other traditions. Yet Kantian “moral religion” is *supposed* to be “universal,” so the second option cannot simply be discarded without a thought. Traditional interpreters of Kant have rarely *cared* whether his position does or does not support one particular tradition. But affirmative interpreters

do care about this issue, almost by definition (because they are affirming Kant!), so they are much more likely to argue over it. Within this volume we have representatives of both camps; and among the former, there are avowed Catholics (such as Rossi), various kinds of mainline Protestants (such as Hare and Galbraith), and advocates of more radical denominations (such as Stevenson, a Quaker). Corresponding to these differences is a wide range of preferences in theological disposition from very conservative to ultra-liberal. Would Kant himself, if he were (as Green imagines) brought back to life today, align more closely with one of these religious traditions than the others? Or would he simply encourage each tradition to do its best to transform itself into something that more closely resembles the ideal of moral religion? While this debate has previously been conducted in a mostly “hidden” way, with interpreters’ views often discreetly tucked into obscure footnotes, the publication of this volume should fan this spark into a flame of open and more rigorous debate.

Third among the many disagreements that remain not only unsettled but *intensified* by affirmative interpreters of Kant is the pair of (closely related) problems regarding *theological knowledge* and *religious experience*. Does Kant allow room for us to *talk meaningfully* about God? What about *experiencing* God? Theologians are more likely to be concerned about the former, while ordinary religious believers tend to care more about the latter. The traditional interpretation typically portrays Kant as ruling out *both* of these crucial features; philosophers of religion have tended to reject Kant because most wish to preserve the legitimacy at least of knowledge, if not also of experience. Nearly all affirmative interpreters of Kant will portray him as enabling philosophers of religion to preserve the integrity of one or the other (or occasionally, both) of these features. However, *which one(s)* provide(s) the key to affirming Kant remains a matter of significant debate. On the former, interpreters such as McCammon view Kant’s efforts to “deny knowledge” as inapplicable to the special “symbolic knowledge” theologians can have at their disposal quite legitimately, while others, such as Kielkopf, treat the denial of knowledge more literally, as an anxiety-producing feature of reality that nevertheless has affirmative implications for religious *experience*. And on the latter, some, such as Stevenson, tend to view Kant’s critical principles as severely limiting the possibility of experiencing God, while others, such as Palmquist, argue that an implicit affirmation of such experience is *present* in Kant’s overall philosophical framework, though we must resist the “fanatical” temptation to regard it as providing us with *knowledge* that can be scientifically proved.

Finally, and arguably most significant of all, affirmative interpreters disagree on the precise implications of the *conflict* Kant believed exists between theologians and philosophers. Does an affirmative interpretation work best if we regard Kant’s portrayal of the conflict as applicable “only for his time” and attempt to blur the distinction between the roles philosophers and theologians should have today? Or does an affirmative interpretation work best if we (phi-

losophers and theologians) *intensify* this conflict by holding all the more firmly to our different perspectives, as based on reason or the authority of a tradition, respectively? This issue is highlighted in several essays presented here, including those of the two editors, who themselves tend to disagree over this point. Indeed, one of our main reasons for dividing the book into three parts is to highlight this disagreement. While the issues addressed in Part 1 do not impinge directly on this dispute, Part 2 (on theology) tends to take the latter stance, while Part 3 (on religion) takes the former. The question here—to use the theological term—is one of *eschatology*: at what point in the historical development of religion do we find ourselves today? Firestone argues that we are not in a significantly different position from Kant himself, so that the perspectives of “Word and Spirit” versus “reason and freedom” must remain distinct. Jacobs develops some possible implications of this position by showing how a philosophical theologian in Kant’s sense can continue to talk, and talk confidently, about God, in spite of the conflict that remains with *biblical* theologians over the issue of authority. Palmquist, by contrast, argues that recent developments in philosophy may encourage Christian philosophers in particular to find their “callings” *within* the church, where they can serve as Christ-like agents of transformation, in a manner that might be described in terms of *realized* eschatology (cf. Kant’s vision of the religion of reason, *practiced now*). Mapplebeckpalmer suggests some possible implications of this position by showing how a pastor can (and does, in an actual parish church) use Kantian principles to organize the government of a real, living body of religious believers.

NOTES

1. Gordon Michalson, Jr., *Kant and the Problem of God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 4–5.

2. Michalson, *Kant and the Problem of God*, 5.

3. See Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Is It Possible or Desirable for Theologians to Recover from Kant?” *Modern Theology* 14, no. 1 (January 1998): 1–18, and “Conundrums in Kant’s Rational Religion,” in *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michel J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 40–53.

4. Henry E. Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983), 3–4.

5. Two main sides of the debate are represented in the work of P. F. Strawson and H. A. Prichard on the traditional/analytic side, and Graham Bird and Henry Allison on the revisioned/idealistic side. See P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen, 1966); H. F. Prichard, *Kant’s Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909); Graham Bird, *Kant’s Theory of Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962); and Henry Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*. Although the argument here is about the distinction between things-in-themselves and appearances, it clearly extends its reach into the realm of theology. Two questions arise: Is Kant’s philosophy, as Allison claims, about two ways of considering reality, namely, according to phenomena as revealed by the subjective conditions of

human sensibility and according to noumena independent of these conditions? Or is Kant's philosophy, as the traditionalist claims, about the possibility of knowing entities in the world of phenomena and the impossibility of knowing entities in the world of noumena?

6. For further information, see Stephen Palmquist, "Kant's 'Appropriation' of Lampe's God," *Harvard Theological Review* 85, no. 1 (1992): 85–108, where the appeal to Lampe is traced back to the writings of Heinrich Heine. A revised version of this article appears as Chapter IV in *Kant's Critical Religion: Volume Two of Kant's System of Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

7. One of the most important developments in the dissemination of Kant's philosophy was the founding of the preeminent Kant journal *Kant Studien* in 1896.

8. For an account of the earlier history of English Kant interpretation, see Stephen Palmquist's "Editor's Introduction" in *Four Neglected Essays by Immanuel Kant* (Hong Kong: Philopsychy Press, 1994), 70–85. Palmquist notes that while Kant was still alive scholars such as A. F. M. Willich and John Richardson lectured and published (books and translations) on Kant in London. Indeed, Richardson was by far the most prolific translator of Kant until Lewis White Beck. In addition, the American *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* also published numerous articles on various aspects of Kant's philosophy during the eighteenth century. However, in none of these cases did the portrayals of Kant reach the level of scholarly achievement that became the norm from Caird onward.

9. See the comments by the translator, W. S. Hough, in Kuno Fischer, *A Critique of Kant* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey, 1888), esp. page v. *A Critique of Kant* was vol. 5 of Fischer's *History of Modern Philosophy*.

10. Edward Caird, *The Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, vols. I and II (Glasgow: James Maclehose & Sons, 1889). Caird's interpretive divisions closely follow Kant's own. The titles of his four main divisions are "The *Critique* of Pure Reason" (in vol. 1) and "Kant's Ethical Works," "The *Critique* of Judgment," and "Kant's Treatise on Religion Within the Bounds of Mere Reason" (in vol. 2).

11. Fischer, *Critique of Kant*, 146. See also "Translator's Preface," vi.

12. Caird, *Critical Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, 644.

13. Friedrich Paulsen, *Immanuel Kant: His Life and Doctrine* (London: J. C. Nimmo, 1902), 110.

14. See, for instance, pages 43 and 111. "Thus in all respects the 'doctrinal' construction fell far short of the 'critical' foundation" (Paulsen, *Immanuel Kant*, 111).

15. Paulsen, *Immanuel Kant*, 64.

16. Paulsen, *Immanuel Kant*, 64.

17. Henry Sidgwick, *The Philosophy of Kant and Other Lectures* (London: Macmillan, 1905), 17 and 18, respectively.

18. Sidgwick, *Philosophy of Kant*, 63, 184–195.

19. These two positions roughly separate two German schools of thought in the Neo-Kantian tradition: the Marburg School of Herman Cohen and the Baden School of Paul Natrop. Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, vol. VII (New York: Doubleday, 1963), 362.

20. John Watson, *The Philosophy of Kant Explained* (Glasgow: James Maclehose & Sons, 1908), 396.

21. In some of Kant's earlier letters, he does mention the possibility of a book on aesthetics as being an important part of the coming critical philosophy. Lindsay, in

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support of the three-*Critique* interpretation, writes, “It will be remembered that Kant, in his letter of June 1771 to Marcus Herz, where he first talks of the work which was to become the *Critique of Pure Reason*, says that he has been concerned with what is ‘involved in the theory of taste, metaphysics, and moral theory.’” Lindsay points out other references in Kant’s earlier letters that suggest “aesthetics ranked with metaphysics and moral theory as part of the general Critical program” (A. D. Lindsay, *Kant* [London: Ernest Benn, 1934], 215–220).

22. Watson, *Philosophy of Kant Explained*, 396–397.

23. In Watson’s earlier work he links morality and religion, but writes that Kant in the third *Critique* “points beyond the abstractions of the sensible and the supersensible to their actual concrete unity; but . . . the most he can persuade himself to say is, that man is entitled to a rational faith in God, freedom and immortality, though these are objects which lie beyond the range of his knowledge.” John Watson, *Christianity and Idealism* (London: Macmillan, 1897), xxxvi.

24. Clement C. J. Webb, *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 71–72. Webb called the third *Critique* an “artificial ‘architectonic’” and claimed that many of its arguments properly belonged to one or the other of the earlier *Critiques*. He believed the most important function of the third *Critique* was as a precursor to Kant’s work on religion (72): “[W]e shall not therefore be surprised to find in the *Kritik der Urtheilskraft*, and especially in the second part of it, which deals with teleology, passages of great importance to the student of his philosophy of religion.”

25. Webb, *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion*, 2.

26. Webb, *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion*, 2–3.

27. Webb, *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion*, 17.

28. Any consideration of “Kant’s general view of the world . . . must bear in mind his conception of faith as a sufficient ground for action, though not for demonstration to the theoretical intelligence; and also his doctrine of the primacy of the practical reason over the theoretical” (Webb, *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion*, 76).

29. Prior to Greene and Hudson’s work, the only complete translation of this text was J. W. Semple’s 1838 effort (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark), revised in 1848. In 1799 John Richardson had translated paraphrased extracts of a summary originally prepared in German by one of Kant’s students, J. S. Beck (see Part 4 of *The Principles of Critical Philosophy* [London]), and published them along with translations of eighteen other works by Kant (see vol. 2 of his *Essays and Treatises* [London, 1799], 367–422).

30. Theodore M. Greene, “The Historical Context and Religious Significance of Kant’s *Religion*,” in Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper & Row, 1934), ix–lxxviii. In a footnote on xxxvii, Greene highlighted Webb’s contribution to the interpretation of Kant’s view of religion. For his summary dismissal of Caird’s interpretation, see lxxviii.

31. Richard Kroner, *Kant’s Weltanschauung* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), and Stephan Körner, *Kant* (London: Penguin Books, 1955).

32. Kroner, *Kant’s Weltanschauung*, 2.

33. Kroner, *Kant’s Weltanschauung*, 81–82.

34. Körner, *Kant*, 175.

35. Körner, *Kant*, 168–171.

36. Körner, *Kant*, 169.

37. Frederick Copleston, S.J., *A History of Philosophy*, vol. VI (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 343.
38. Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, VI:343.
39. Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, VI:344.
40. James Collins, *Interpreting Modern Philosophy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), 327–328.
41. Collins, *Interpreting Modern Philosophy*, 328.
42. Collins, *Interpreting Modern Philosophy*, 343.
43. James Collins, *The Emergence of Philosophy of Religion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967), 98, 102–103, respectively. Collins's 1967 account of Kant's *Religion* marks a significant reversal of his earlier work on Kant in *God in Modern Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960). On page 183 of the latter work, Collins had argued that Kant's philosophy succeeds in “destroying every philosophy of God.”
44. Collins, *Emergence of Philosophy*, 96.
45. Michel Despland, *Kant on History and Religion* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 1.
46. Despland, *Kant on History and Religion*, 242.
47. Despland, *Kant on History and Religion*, 246.
48. Despland, *Kant on History and Religion*, 145.
49. Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), 204.
50. Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion*, 248.
51. Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion*, 204. Wood has confirmed in private correspondence with the author that he meant to write “not impossible” in the first part of this sentence.
52. Allen W. Wood, “Kant's Deism,” in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 9.
53. Wood, “Kant's Deism,” 11.
54. For example, see John E. Hare, *The Moral Gap: Kantian Ethics, Human Limits, and God's Assistance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 41–45, and Stephen R. Palmquist, *Kant's Critical Religion*, 124–126.
55. Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion*, 1.
56. Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion*, 1–2.
57. Allen W. Wood's *Kant's Rational Theology* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978) represents an affirmative sequel to *Kant's Moral Religion*. His general thesis is that “Kant's argument for the rational inevitability of the idea of an *ens realissimum* is an original and well thought out one, making use of concepts that belong to the metaphysical tradition” (Wood, *Kant's Rational Theology*, 147). After this initial step toward theological affirmation, Wood's interpretation of Kant gradually moves closer and closer to traditional negation.
58. Ronald M. Green, *Religious Reason: The Rational and Moral Basis of Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), *Religion and Moral Reason: A New Method for Comparative Study* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), and *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Adina Davidovich, *Religion as a Province of Meaning: The Kantian Foundations*

of *Modern Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Palmquist, *Kant's System of Perspectives: An Architectonic Interpretation of Kant's Critical Philosophy* (Lanham, Md.: University of America Press, 1993) and *Kant's Critical Religion*.

59. Davidovich summarizes her interpretive strategy in her prefatory remarks (xv): "I contend that in his last systematic works Kant considered religion an essential bridge between the worlds of theory and praxis and elevated its status as such to that of a necessary principle through which alone the unity of reason is established." For an assessment of Davidovich's project of using "contemplative faith" to interpret Kant's philosophy of religion, see Chris L. Firestone, "Kant's Two Perspectives on the Theological Task," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, no. 1 (March 2000): 63–78.

60. For Palmquist (*Kant's Critical Religion*, 313), "[Kant] not only *believed* in the reality of a transcendent God represented by our theoretical idea, manifested in our practical reason (speaking to our conscience), and communing with us in prayer, but also actively *experienced* this reality in his daily life." On the distinction between the overarching (thus, capitalized) Transcendental Perspective that governs all three *Critiques* and the specific (thus, uncapitalized) transcendental perspective operative within each *Critique*, see Palmquist's *Kant's System of Perspectives*, chap. 2, §4.

61. Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Wood does refer to religion and God occasionally, but not for their own sake. His primary concern is to examine the role religion and God play in Kant's ethics, especially in "the historical vocation of morality" (283). However, he does not revert to the simplistic traditional view that Kant *reduces* religion to morality, for he acknowledges (318): "Kant is a fundamentally *religious* thinker. For his highest hopes for human history are pinned on religious values and religious institutions." For a thorough refutation of the view that Kant reduces religion to morality, see Chapter VI of Palmquist, *Kant's Critical Religion*.

62. Wood's article on deism in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered* (see note 52) is probably the best example of this reversion to the traditional view of Kant—a point Wood has confirmed in private correspondence. Another good example is his article "Rational Theology, Moral Faith, and Religion," influentially placed in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 394–416. For an assessment of this book that includes a critique of Wood's disappointingly imbalanced contribution (referring to no secondary literature on Kant other than his own writings), see my review in *Kant-Studien* 87 (1996): 369–374.

63. See, e.g., Michel Despland, *Reading an Erased Code: Romantic Religion and Literary Aesthetics in France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

64. In recent years the fact that more and more Kant specialists are adopting the affirmative interpretation has begun to have a "trickle-down" effect on nonspecialists who deal with Kant as part of more wide-ranging studies. For two examples of books that devote one substantial chapter to Kant and adopt an affirmative interpretation, see Chapter 9 of James M. Byrne's *Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), and Chapter 6 of Paul D. Janz's *God, the Mind's Desire: Reference, Reason and Christian Thinking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). See also Hent de Vries, *Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Unfortunately this effect is still far from universal, especially among scholars born

prior to 1960 (who were therefore likely to have had their educational initiation to philosophy prior to the 1980s. For example, Philip Clayton's book *The Problem of God in Modern Thought* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2000) says Kant's "challenge to God-language represents the most serious threat to theology in the modern era" (25) and then molds his whole argument (including one entire chapter [263–346]) around an attempt to discredit Kant so that theology can move forward. Whereas Clayton (born in 1956) simply takes for granted the traditional interpretation, showing no awareness of a serious alternative (see, e.g., 270n), Byrne (born in 1960) is cautiously affirmative about Kant's *Religion* in spite of his misgivings regarding the aspects of Kant's project traditionally labeled as incoherent, and Janz (even younger, having only recently finished his doctoral work) is unreserved in his affirmation of Kant's positive contribution to "Christian thought" on God. What Clayton was taught by his training in the traditional paradigm—we were classmates in an undergraduate class that surveyed Kant's influence on contemporary theology—to view as the "deflowering role" Kant played in Western thought (263), Janz portrays (in typical affirmative fashion) as a recovery of the true "integrity of reason . . . which does not 'do violence' to . . . empirical reality" (Janz, *God, the Mind's Desire*, 167). For affirmative interpreters, Kant is regarded not as one who violates the archetypal Christian scholar's purity, but as one who *exposes* the scholarly deflowerers so that Christians (and all truly religious thinkers) can be restored to their true intellectual virginity! It seems that Thomas Kuhn's observations regarding paradigm shifts in science are also evident in interpretive trends: those trained in the old paradigm rarely change their minds; they are simply replaced by younger scholars who have learned to see the old material in a new way.

65. See note 5 for details. Bird's book actually appeared almost a decade before Despland's, but was in many ways underdeveloped in its perspectival emphasis; as a result, it had its major influence from the 1970s onward. Allison's work was published in a series of articles during the 1970s but did not come out in book form until 1983, when he published *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*. Much of Allison's initial approach appealed to the work of Gerold Prauss in Germany, especially his *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1974).

66. Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), includes a chapter on Kant's view of radical evil, but makes no attempt to interpret or state the overall significance of Kant's view of religion as such.

67. In the third section of my essay in this volume (chap. 12), I summarize the comprehensive application I have made of the perspectival strategy to the entirety of Kant's mature philosophical System. Perspectival thinking has always come naturally to me, so I began interpreting Kant's philosophy in this way upon first reading and writing about Kant's works in 1981–82, prior to discovering the like-minded work of Allison and Bird. From 1984 to 1990 I published twelve articles developing various aspects of a more systematic application of the perspectival interpretation that could be applied to the entirety of Kant's Critical philosophy. Revised versions of most of these were eventually included as chapters or appendices in *Kant's System of Perspectives*. During the 1990s I published an additional twelve articles applying the perspectival method to the interpretation of Kant's philosophy of religion. Revised versions of most of these were included in *Kant's Critical Religion*.

68. Carl A. Raschke, *Moral Action, God, and History in the Thought of Immanuel Kant* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press and American Academy of Religion, 1975), esp. 225–227.

69. Gordon E. Michalson, Jr., *The Historical Dimensions of a Rational Faith* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979). His next two books were *Fallen Freedom: Kant on Radical Evil and Moral Regeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and *Kant and the Problem of God*. In all three of these books Michalson expends so much effort demonstrating how utterly mistaken Kant was that the reader is left wondering why Michalson has bothered to devote so much effort to studying Kant in the first place! I address some of the grossest of Michalson's misinterpretations at various points throughout *Kant's Critical Religion* (see, e.g., 145n–147n, 159n, 169n).

70. On page 77 of *Religious Reason*, for example, Green states that Kant's "own thinking on religion reveals a constant movement between various traditional theistic affirmations and what could be called a mysticism of reason—a profound regard for the internal voice of reason and conscience." See the third section of my essay in the present volume for a summary of how *Kant's Critical Religion* (especially Part 4) fully develops this theme. Green himself further developed his ideas on how to apply an affirmative interpretation of Kant to the study of comparative religion in *Religion and Moral Reason* (1988; see note 58), though here he merely assumes his previous reading of Kant, rather than defending or developing it any further. His focus then shifts to Kierkegaard in *Kierkegaard and Kant* (1992), but his affirmation of Kant as a secure foundation for the study of religion and theology is maintained no less emphatically. A similarly affirmative study of the Kant-Kierkegaard relationship can be found in C. Stephen Evans, *Subjectivity and Religious Belief: An Historical, Critical Study* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Christian University Press, 1976).

71. Two other books from this time period are worth mentioning only in passing, because neither book examines Kant's philosophy in depth: both Louis K. Dupré, *A Dubious Heritage: Studies in the Philosophy of Religion after Kant* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), and Robin Attfield, *God and the Secular: A Philosophical Assessment of Secular Reasoning from Bacon to Kant* (Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1978), cast Kant's role in the history of religious thought in the primarily negative light typical of those under the influence of the traditional interpretation. Dupré, for example, simply dismisses Kant's own attempt to solve the alleged "challenges" he made to religious belief: "Kant's solution . . . satisfied no one, not even himself" (3).

72. Ann L. Loades, *Kant and Job's Comforters* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Averro, 1985).

73. Vincent A. McCarthy, *Quest for a Philosophical Jesus: Christianity and Philosophy in Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Schelling* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1986), 217. Chapter 2 (55–106) focuses mainly on Kant's *Religion*, referring to Kant's other works only as necessary for contextualization. As with Michalson (see note 69), I attempt in *Kant's Critical Religion* to correct a number of McCarthy's significant misconceptions.

74. McCarthy, *Quest for a Philosophical Jesus*, 97–100. For thoroughgoing refutations of these claims, see *Kant's Critical Religion*, Chapter 8 and Part 4, respectively.

75. Heinrich Walter Cassirer, *Grace and Law: St. Paul, Kant, and the Hebrew Prophets* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1988), was published posthumously at the author's request (Cassirer died in 1979). Although he was careful to point out certain weaknesses in Kant's approach, the younger Cassirer viewed it as sufficiently worthy of affirmation by *religious believers* to subtitle his chapter on Kant "Intended for

Use by the Laity" (50). For a further development of this theme, see Chapters 11 and 12 in the present collection.

76. Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Kant as Philosophical Theologian* (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble Books, 1988), 178. Part Two (chaps. 6–9) is a sustained look at how Kant interprets Christianity, devoting one chapter to a commentary on each of *Religion's* four "Books." Reardon goes so far as to claim that *Religion* was not a forward-looking book at all, but merely "marked the end of an era" (178). Nevertheless, his concluding section (178–187) traces Kant's influence on liberal theology from Schleiermacher to Harnack. The fact that appreciation for Kant's philosophy of religion during the first century following his death was limited almost exclusively to liberal theologians (even though these scholars were largely attempting to get *beyond* Kant) probably explains why so few conservative theologians have regarded Kant as anything but a terrible threat (see, e.g., note 64)—until recently.

77. Terry F. Godlove, *Religion, Interpretation and Diversity of Belief: The Framework Model from Kant to Durkheim to Davidson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Unfortunately, despite the title, Godlove's main focus is on the nature of a conceptual scheme; Kant's actual views on theology and religion receive only cursory (though implicitly affirmative) attention. See my review of this book in *Kant-Studien* 86 (1995): 365–369.

78. Gene Fendt, *For What May I Hope? Thinking with Kant and Kierkegaard* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990).

79. See note 58. Were it not for her untimely passing, the editors believe Davidovich would have wanted to contribute an essay to the present collection. A good example of the type of essay she might have contributed is her article "How to Read Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone," *Kant-Studien* 85 (1994): 1–14. This article advances a reading of Kant's *Religion* through the eyes of the third *Critique*—a possibility that unfortunately is not very well represented by the essays in the present collection.

80. Davidovich, *Religion*, xi. She expresses this view on page 135 as follows: "The interests of Reason lead us . . . to contemplate the world as a divine creation embodying a moral purpose."

81. Davidovich, *Religion*, xv. As a result of this rather extreme emphasis, Davidovich tends to overlook or underemphasize whole areas of Kantian theology that are, in fact, plainly theoretical or practical. For example, Jacobs's essay in this volume is a direct refutation of her claim that for Kant there can be no cognition of God.

82. Davidovich, *Religion*, xv. Her cursory treatment of Kant's *Religion* occupies less than ten pages of text (135–145), even though the main topic of her entire book is religion as a contemplative *experience*. My essay in this volume argues, by contrast, that religious experience is at the very heart of Kant's conception of religion *even in Religion*, properly understood.

83. Davidovich, *Religion*, xvii, xvi.

84. Curtis H. Peters, *Kant's Philosophy of Hope* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 104, xv.

85. Peters, *Kant's Philosophy of Hope*, 75.

86. Peters's main criticism is that Kant does not make clear why the idea of God is needed at all (105–106). Hare's essay in this collection provides an effective response to this common misconception.

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87. Peters, *Kant's Philosophy of Hope*, 164–165.

88. Sidney Axinn, *The Logic of Hope: Extensions of Kant's View of Religion* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 1994), 3.

89. Axinn, *Logic of Hope*, 4. At one point (286) he says “matters of history” and those of religion “are synonymous,” as far as hope is concerned.

90. Ned Wisnefske, *Our Natural Knowledge of God: A Prospect for Natural Theology after Kant and Barth* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990). At one point he claims that for Kant natural theology is “fruitless if not illusory . . . Human understanding . . . bore no witness to God . . . Kant's thinking foiled the interests of the traditional supporters of natural theology . . . Kant, however, had driven those ideas [God, freedom, and immortality] to the very fringes of responsible philosophy” (19). See my review of this book in *Kant-Studien* 87 (1996): 118–122.

91. Walter Lowe, *Theology and Difference: The Wound of Reason* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

92. Gottlieb Florschütz, *Emanuel Swedenborgs mystisches Menschenbild und die Doppelnature des Menschen bei Immanuel Kant* (1991), trans. G. F. Dole as *Swedenborg and Kant: Emanuel Swedenborg's Mystical View of Humankind, and the Dual Nature of Humankind in Immanuel Kant* (West Chester, Penn.: Swedenborg Foundation, 1993).

93. Regina O. M. Dell'Oro, *From Existence to the Ideal: Continuity and Development in Kant's Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 7. See my review of this book in *Kant-Studien* 89 (1998): 109–113, where I point out several tantalizing hints Dell'Oro gives that could be developed into even more significantly affirmative claims—such as that Kant's famed transcendental arguments may have their root in Kant's early reasoning about God's existence.

94. Roy D. Morrison, *Science, Theology and the Transcendental Horizon: Einstein, Kant and Tillich* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 85–88. See my review of this book in *Kant-Studien* 90 (1999): 239–243.

95. Emil L. Fackenheim, *The God Within: Kant, Schelling, and Historicity*, ed. John Burbidge (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 9. Writing from a Jewish perspective, Fackenheim affirms that for Kant “Authentic religion consists in the acceptance of the contradictory condition of moral finiteness, an acceptance made possible by the faith that this condition is not ultimate” (19). After expounding the general features of Kant's religious philosophy, Fackenheim devotes separate chapters to an affirmative assessment of Kant's paradoxical doctrines of radical evil and conversion (“whenever a man makes such a decision [between good and evil], the universe, so to speak, holds its breath” [33]) and to a more cautious examination of the religious aspects of his philosophy of history, with its “Messianic prophecies” (34). He concludes: “while Kant's analysis of historicity is profound and of lasting value, his construction of the historical process is a failure” (49).

96. A. W. Moore, *Noble in Reason, Infinite in Faculty: Themes and Variations in Kant's Moral and Religious Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2003).

97. Examples of scholars who have published books in this category are Gary Banham (on Kant's practical philosophy), Gerd Buchdahl (on Kant's view of reason), Peter Fennes (on Kant's late writings), Michelle Grier (on Kant's concept of transcendental illusion), Rudolf Makkreel (on Kant's view of imagination), and Felicitas Munzel (on Kant's conception of moral character). If those who have published individual articles were also to be included, then this overview would become genuinely un-

manageable. One significant example (in addition to that of Davidovich, mentioned in note 79) is Merold Westphal's excellent affirmation of Kant's much-maligned theoretical philosophy in "Christian Philosophers and the Copernican Revolution," published in C. Stephen Evans, ed., *Christian Perspectives on Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993). Of course, most of the contributors to the present volume have also published articles developing various affirmative interpretations, but these are simply too numerous to list here. Two collections of articles on Kant's philosophy of religion both contain a mix of essays adopting traditional and affirmative interpretations: Rossi and Wreen's *Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered* was already examined in Part 1 of this Introduction; also of note in this regard is D. Z. Phillips and Timothy Tessin, eds., *Kant and Kierkegaard on Religion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000). Affirmative interpreters of Kant with essays in the latter volume include Green (with an early version of the essay he has contributed to the present collection) and myself, among others.

98. Elizabeth Cameron Galbraith, *Kant and Theology: Was Kant a Closet Theologian?* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1996). In her concluding chapter, for example, Galbraith argues that Kant's *Opus Postumum* reveals "Kant's final realization that the goal which he has spent his entire life working towards, has its basis in God. And together with this, the theology which has always been present in his writings, if in certain cases less apparent, finally comes to the fore" (186).

99. Charles F. Kielkopf, *A Kantian Condemnation of Atheistic Despair: A Declaration of Dependence* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 11. Kielkopf's essay in the present volume is an attempt to rework and extend the argument of his book's concluding chapter, entitled "Hell, Damnation, & Christian Hope," so that it may pave the way for actual religious practice in a Kantian mode.

100. See notes 6 and 60. *Kant's Critical Religion* is divided into four parts, demonstrating (respectively) that the problems posed by Kant's encounter with Swedenborg were essential to the outworking of the critical philosophy, that Kant's theology has a specific and definite form that is neither agnostic nor morally reductionist but rather is centered around "symbolic knowledge," that Kant's *Religion* is both systematically complete and affirmative of Christian religious practice, and that the ultimate goal of critical philosophy is to establish a philosophically sound way of understanding and responding to our *experience of God*.

101. For a detailed discussion of this influence, see Chapter II of *Kant's Critical Religion*; Johnson's work is discussed most thoroughly in Appendix II.

102. The fruitfulness of considering the relationship between Kant and Kierkegaard has been one of the most important aspects of the recent trend away from the traditional interpretation of Kant and toward a more theologically affirmative approach. Indeed, the stark contrast between these two methods of interpretation was one of the main features of the 1998 Claremont Conference on Philosophy of Religion, whose topic was this relationship. For details, see Phillips and Tessin, *Kant and Kierkegaard on Religion*.

103. This is a point I have argued elsewhere in considerable detail. See *Kant's Critical Religion*, Part 4, for a defense of the claim that Kant's philosophy can be regarded as a foundation for what could be called "Critical mysticism."

PART 1. PHILOSOPHICAL
FOUNDATIONS FOR
KANTIAN THEOLOGY

one The Tree of Melancholy

Kant on Philosophy and Enthusiasm

Gregory R. Johnson

Kant is commonly regarded as a partisan of the Enlightenment and an opponent of religious and philosophical enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*).¹ I wish to argue, however, that Kant's attitude toward enthusiasm throughout his philosophical career is better described as ambivalent fascination rather than unalloyed hostility. My case is based upon two considerations regarding Kant's account of enthusiasm's basis in human nature. First, Kant held that the enthusiast possesses the same melancholic temperament as the fanatic, visionary, crank, hypochondriac, and *philosopher*. So on Kant's account of temperament, philosophy and enthusiasm are close kin. Both are fruits of the tree of melancholy. Of all of the fruits of melancholy, I will establish furthermore that philosophy and enthusiasm are the closest to one another, because they are both motivated by the drive to attain absolute knowledge of the supersensible. Second, Kant did not just recognize the kinship of philosophy and enthusiasm in the abstract; he recognized it in the degenerations his own melancholic character was prone to exhibit—degenerations that included crankiness, hypochondria, and a morbid fascination with the grotesque, pathological, and paranormal. These degenerations, along with Kant's understanding of the melan-

cholic temperament of the philosopher, point to the fascinating possibility that, as I will argue, Kant's critical philosophy can be seen as a philosophical therapy for his own melancholy nature.

A proper understanding of Kant's view of enthusiasm helps bring the critical project into focus. There was, and still is, a prominent secularizing strain of Enlightenment thought that is categorically hostile to and dismissive of religion, mystical experience, and metaphysical speculation. Such thinkers are attracted to Kant's arguments in the *Critique of Pure Reason* against the possibility of knowledge of the supersensible, particularly knowledge of God and the immortality of the soul. They are also attracted to Kant's case for the limitation of reason's employment to the realm of sense experience. These philosophical conclusions are seen as necessary steps toward a completely secular, this-worldly culture.

But confining reason to the sensory realm was not Kant's ultimate goal. Nor did Kant think mankind's highest aim is the "mastery and possession of nature." Instead, as Kant famously said in the first *Critique*, he found it necessary to limit reason in order to make room for faith—not necessarily traditional religious faith, but a moral faith based in practical reason—in the very things the philosophers claimed to demonstrate and the enthusiasts claimed to perceive, namely, the existence of a provident God and the immortality of the human soul. To see Kant's project properly, we must appreciate that, while his mind may have belonged to the Enlightenment, his heart belonged with the enthusiasts.

What Is Enthusiasm?

According to Kant, "Enthusiasm," a term he associates with mysticism and illuminism, "is . . . a pious arrogance, and is induced by a certain pride and quite excessive self-confidence to get nearer to heavenly natures and to elevate itself by an astonishing flight over the usual and prescribed order. The enthusiast speaks only of immediate inspiration [*Eingebung*] and of contemplative life."² Kant does not use *Schwärmerei* to refer merely to religious enthusiasm, for the desire to know "heavenly natures" is a philosophical as well as a religious concern—hence Kant's references to the contemplative, that is, philosophical life. For Kant, enthusiasm refers to all attempts to achieve immediate, intuitive knowledge of the supersensible, including those of such philosophers as Plato and Spinoza, who appeal to mystical or intellectual intuition (OBS 108–109).

Unfortunately, the enthusiast's direct knowledge of the supersensible is not available to the rest of us. In Kant's words, "there is no longer any public touchstone of truth."³ But Kant holds that reason cannot work unless there are common, publicly available standards of truth and falsehood. Thus Kant branded all claims of direct knowledge of the supersensible "the death of all philosophy."⁴ Furthermore, Kant regarded enthusiasm as not only bad for

philosophy, but bad for the public, for conflicting claims about religion that cannot be settled by reason tend to be settled by force. Thus it would be natural to conclude that Kant was an implacable enemy of enthusiasm.⁵

But this is not the whole story, for as Arnulf Zweig notes, “Kant did not always use this word [*Schwärmerei*] abusively.”⁶ First of all, Kant maintained friendly relations with people whom he described as enthusiasts, such as Johann Georg Hamann, Maria von Herbert, Johann Caspar Lavater, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, and Heinrich Jung-Stilling. Still more to the point, Kant claimed *Schwärmerei* was a weakness that men with “greater genius” (*grosser Genie*) and “good minds” (*gute Köpfe*) are prone to exhibit. He admitted that enthusiasts “may one and all have genius, be full of sensibility [*Empfindung*] and spirit [*Geist*], even some taste [*Geschmack*].”⁷ Kant even described Plato, Spinoza, and Rousseau, philosophers for whom he had enormous respect, as enthusiasts; hence Giorgio Tonelli claims that Kant’s apparently “indiscriminate indictment of enthusiasm seems to have been attenuated in respect to some personalities whom Kant wished not or dared not disavow, and only accentuated in respect to some inexcusable ‘black sheep.’”⁸

Furthermore, in contrasting enthusiasm and superstition (*Aberglaube*), Kant states a clear preference for enthusiasm. Kant claims that enthusiasm is most frequently found in Germany and England, which are predominantly Protestant, whereas superstition is widespread in Italy, Spain, and France, which are predominantly Catholic. Kant then claims that enthusiasm is a perversion of “the noble feeling that belongs to the character of these peoples [the English and the Germans].” He asserts, moreover, that enthusiasm

is on the whole far less pernicious than the superstitious inclination even though it is violent at the outset, because the inflammation of the enthusiastic spirit gradually cools and by its nature must finally reach an orderly moderation, whereas superstition unnoticed takes deeper root in a quiet and passive constitution and completely takes away from the enchained man the confidence ever to free himself from a pernicious delusion.⁹

The Melancholic Temperament

Kant’s earliest discussion of enthusiasm appears in his 1764 book *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. The book’s title seems to classify it as a work of aesthetics, but most of the book is devoted to anthropological observations organized in terms of the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. Chapter 2, “Of the Attributes of the Beautiful and the Sublime in Man in General,” is an essay in moral psychology. In Plato’s language, it is an essay in “erotics,” the study of the different types of souls, the different “temperaments.”

Kant classifies four moral traits in terms of the beautiful and the sublime: (1) virtue (*Tugend*), (2) goodheartedness (*Gutherzigkeit*) (which divides into sympathy [*Mitleidens*] and complaisance [*Gefälligkeit*]), and (3) love of honor

(*Ehrliche*). A fourth spring of action which Kant thinks important but not strictly moral is self-interest (*Selbstsucht*). Kant then relates these traits to the four temperaments: the melancholy temperament is conducive to virtue; the sanguine temperament is conducive to goodheartedness; and the choleric temperament is conducive to the love of honor. The phlegmatic temperament is not correlated with any moral characteristic, but with the relative lack of moral sensibility. It, therefore, may be correlated with the principle of acting from self-interest, although Kant does not explicitly say so.

Kant claims that “among moral attributes true virtue alone is sublime” (OBS 57). The other moral attributes—goodheartedness and honor—though not sublime, can be called beautiful insofar as they harmonize with virtue. Virtue is distinguished from the other moral attributes because it is grounded in principle:

[T]rue virtue can be grafted only upon principles such that the more general they are, the more sublime and noble it becomes. These principles are not speculative rules, but the consciousness of a feeling that lives in every human breast and extends itself much further than the particular grounds of compassion and complaisance. I believe that I sum it all up when I say that it is *the feeling of the beauty and the dignity of human nature*. (OBS 60)

Virtue is sublime because respect for the beauty and dignity of humanity as such leads us to identify the good with the common good, and to value our own selves and our own interests only insofar as they harmonize with the common good. Such a broadened view inevitably requires that we struggle to suppress and transcend all particular inclinations that do not harmonize with the common good. The struggle for self-transcendence means the moral life will always contain an element of unease, even pain. This accords perfectly with Kant’s description of the sublime: “The sight of a mountain whose snow-covered peak rises above the clouds, the description of a raging storm, or Milton’s portrayal of the infernal kingdom, arouse *enjoyment* [*Wohlgefallen*] *but with horror* [*Grausen*]” (OBS 47; emphasis added). “The sublime is . . . sometimes accompanied with a certain dread, or melancholy [*Schwermut*] . . . I call [this] the terrifying sublime [*Schreckhaft-Erhabene*]” (OBS 47–48). “Bold acceptance of danger for our own, or country’s, or our friends’ rights is sublime” (OBS 56). “Subduing one’s passions through principles is sublime” (OBS 57). Were virtue free of the struggle between inclination and right, then we could describe it as beautiful: as “a pleasant sensation . . . joyous and smiling” (OBS 47), not alloyed with pain and dread, melancholy and terror, as is the sublime.

Kant holds that “genuine virtue based on principles has something about it which seems to harmonize most with the *melancholy* [*melancholischen*] frame of mind” (OBS 63). Kant claims that the melancholic “is not so named because, robbed of the joys of life, he aggrieves himself into dark dejection” (OBS 64). Melancholy is not a *state* of sadness, even an enduring sadness, but

something far more fundamental than particular feelings; melancholy is a kind a character, a predominant style of feeling. The melancholy person feels all the normal passions, but they are sluggish and not easily roused; they are reticent and not easily displayed; but when they are stirred, they are deep, powerful, and long-lasting. Kant describes melancholic emotions as “earnest” (*ernsthaft*), “gentle” (*sanften*), and “noble” (*edlen*). The melancholic finds his well-being in deep “satisfaction” (*Zufriedenheit*) stirred up slowly and savored long, becoming internalized, rather than in shallow “pleasure” (*Lustigkeit*), pleasures that depart as quickly as they come, leaving their patient relatively unmarked by their passage.

The melancholic style of feeling is the ideal emotional foundation for virtue, because the melancholic finds his emotions far easier to master and subordinate to principle than do sanguine, choleric, and phlegmatic types. Thus Kant claims that virtue “draws close to melancholy [*Schwermut*]” insofar as virtue is “grounded upon the awe that a hard-pressed soul feels when, full of some great purpose, he sees the danger he will have to overcome, and has before his eyes the difficult but great victory of self-conquest” (OBS 63). “He [the melancholic] is resolute [*standhaft*]. On that account he orders his sensations under principles” (OBS 64). Given the melancholic’s facility for self-mastery, he “has above all a *feeling of the sublime*” (OBS 64).

Melancholy and Philosophy

Hans Vaihinger and Hannah Arendt, among others, see Kant’s description of the melancholic as a self-portrait.¹⁰ It is certainly unlikely that Kant would have classified himself as sanguine, choleric, or phlegmatic—if only because his descriptions of these types are so unflattering. But Kant’s image of the melancholic is less a portrait of any *particular* melancholic than it is of a *type* of melancholic. Kant’s melancholic is concerned above all with truth—and not just with any truth, but with the truth about permanent things. In short, Kant offers us a portrait of the most exalted type of melancholic: the philosopher.

Ever since Aristotle, melancholy has traditionally been regarded as the temperament of the thinker. Book 30 of the pseudo-Aristotelian work *Problems* begins with the question “Why is it that all men who have become outstanding in philosophy, statesmanship, poetry, or the arts are melancholic?”¹¹ The answer is that any great achievement—intellectual, artistic, moral, or political—requires self-discipline, and the melancholic finds his emotions far easier to master than do others.

According to Kant, the melancholic philosopher tends toward inwardness, reflection, and therefore toward autonomy, individuality, and personal integrity; hence he “cares little for what others judge, what they consider good or true; he relies in this matter simply on his own insight.” Because he finds it relatively easy to subordinate the particular to the universal and passion to reason, “his grounds of motivation take on the nature of principles, he is not

easily brought to other ideas . . . He looks on the change of fashions with indifference and their glitter with disdain.”

This propensity toward the settled and contempt for change is not, however, unproblematic for Kant: “occasionally his steadfastness degenerates into self-will.” Elsewhere Kant remarks that melancholic men of principle are very rare, “which is extremely good, as it can so easily happen that one errs in these principles, and then the resulting disadvantage extends all the further, the more universal the principles and the more resolute the person who has set it before himself” (OBS 74).

The philosopher is practiced in the ascent from the particular to the universal, from the accidental to the necessary, from evanescence to permanence; he is therefore capable of rising above parochiality and prejudice and subordinating his private interests to identify himself with humanity as such. But the philosopher does not just *know* common humanity; he *esteems* it, as he esteems all universals over particulars. Hence the philosopher has “a high feeling of the dignity [*Würde*] of human nature. He values himself and regards a human being as a creature who merits respect [*Achtung*].”

Because the philosopher esteems common humanity over particularity and parochiality, he has a strong sense of human equality and solidarity and regards all merely artificial distinctions with suspicion. Kant alludes to Terence’s beautiful expression of the extensive benevolence that springs from the Stoic recognition of the dignity of common human nature: “He is a human being; nothing human is foreign to me” (OBS 65). Because the philosopher sees reason and freedom as distinctly human characteristics, he holds autonomy, liberty, and the rights of man to be sacred: “He suffers no depraved submissiveness, and breathes freedom in a noble breast. All chains, from the gilded ones worn at court to the heavy irons of galley slaves, are abominable to him.”

Degenerate Melancholia

Kant claims that degenerations of the melancholic character lead to a number of pathological states, the five principal ones being enthusiasm, fanaticism, visions, crankiness, and hypochondria.¹² Enthusiasm is the claim to direct knowledge of the supersensible. Fanaticism is an abnormally strong attachment to an idea or activity and does not necessarily involve claims about the supersensible. Visions (*Phantasterei*) arise when images of the imagination are unconsciously projected into the external world and then experienced as external objects. Those visionaries who claim knowledge of supersensible realities are enthusiasts, so Kant often uses the words interchangeably. But visionaries need not claim knowledge of supersensible realities, nor do enthusiasts necessarily appeal to the modality of vision. Crankiness is the tendency to hold eccentric opinions about trifling matters.¹³ Hypochondria is crankiness regarding one’s health.¹⁴

Kant's explanations of these states appeal to both physiological and characterological, that is, psychological and ethical, causes. Specifically, his explanation of fanaticism is purely characterological, but his explanations of enthusiasm, visions, crankiness, and hypochondria appeal to both types of causes. This psycho-physical duality is in keeping with the traditional conception of melancholy. As a physiological concept, melancholy is situated among the four humors or vital fluids: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. The word "melancholy" is derived from the Greek for black bile (*melaina chole*). As a characterological concept, melancholy is situated among the four temperaments: the sanguine (correlated to blood), the phlegmatic (correlated to phlegm), the choleric (correlated to yellow bile), and the melancholic (correlated to black bile).

The relationship of the physiological and characterological dimensions of melancholy has never been clearly defined. The relationship is problematic, because the physiological dimension of melancholy lies outside the range of the melancholic's volition; he, therefore, cannot be praised or blamed for it. Melancholy, as a characterological concept, however, lies on the boundary of the physiological and moral realms. It therefore relates closely to the philosophical problems associated with the relationship of matter and spirit, soul and body, freedom and determinism.

The common characterological root of the five principal forms of degenerate melancholia is the pathological intensification of the melancholic's tendencies toward inwardness and independence of judgment. Kant, however, holds that rationality is not purely private and individual, but intersubjective, public, or dialogical; the standard of truth may be agreement with reality, but the criterion we use to determine whether we have truth is the dialogical convergence of a plurality of investigators on a rationally motivated consensus. Therefore, rationality demands that even the most independent thinker must both formulate his ideas in the language of public reason and refer them to it for judgment. To fail to do so is to flirt with madness:

The one universal characteristic of madness is the loss of common sense (*sensus communis*) and the substitution of logical private sense (*sensus privatus*) for it . . . For we have to attach our own understanding to the understanding of other men too, instead of isolating ourselves with our own understanding and still using our private ideas to judge publicly so to speak.¹⁵

Kant calls the common physiological root of enthusiasm, visions, crankiness, and hypochondria *Verrückung*. I translate it as "delusion." Delusion arises from the perversion of an otherwise healthy function of the soul:

The soul of every human being, even in its healthiest states, is busy painting all sorts of images of things that are not present, or also completing any incomplete resemblance between representations and things presented, through one or another chimerical stroke with which the creative power of the imagination inscribes sensation.¹⁶

This activity goes on whether we are awake or asleep, but can be most clearly observed in sleep. When we are awake, the “vivacious sensuous impressions” supplied by our senses eclipse the creative power of the imagination. In sleep, however, the outer senses are shut down, and the creative power of the imagination has free play. The result is dreaming.¹⁷ This analysis presages Kant’s account, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, of the productive imagination and of the spontaneity of consciousness in general.

Delusion takes place when, during waking life, the normal priority of external sensation over creative imagination is inverted, causing one to experience the creations of one’s imagination as objects in the external world. Kant offers a physiological explanation of this inversion, an explanation that makes no reference to the agency of the humors:

Now, if one allows that certain chimeras, however they may be caused, have, so to speak, wounded one or another organ of the brain, to the extent that the impression becomes deep and settled, as only a sensation can make, then this figment may nevertheless be taken for a real experience, even in waking, by a good, sound reason. This quality of disturbance, in which one is habituated, in the waking state, without an especially marked degree of violent sickness, to certain things presented as clear perceptions, which nevertheless are not present, is called *delusion*. The deluded one is thus a dreamer while awake.¹⁸

This analysis similarly presages the *Critique of Pure Reason*’s account of the origin of dogmatic metaphysics in the reification of the Ideas of Reason that consciousness projects in order to guide its synthetic activities.

In *Reflections* from the 1770s, Kant refers to other physiological factors behind delusion. In *Reflection* no. 936 he claims that in enthusiasm the imagination undergoes “convulsions” (*Zuckungen*) and “ecstatic raptures” (or epileptic fits; *Verzuckungen*); in *Reflection* no. 899 he claims that the enthusiast’s imagination is overheated.¹⁹

Kant admits that even people of “good, sound reason” can fall victim to delusion. The difference between a person of sound reason who just happens to suffer from delusions and a person who is habitually deluded seems to be a matter of character: the person of sound reason submits his delusions to the judgment of the *sensus communis*; the *sensus communis* rejects them, and the sound reasoner puts the delusion behind him. The melancholic who suffers from delusions is less likely to submit his experience to the adjudication of the *sensus communis*. The cure, however, also draws upon the melancholic temperament. In *Reflection* no. 771 (1774–1775) Kant opposes the melancholic’s “dryness and laboriousness and cold-bloodedness of judgment” to the overheated imagination of the enthusiast.²⁰

In addition to physiologically based delusions, Kant also appeals to other physiological factors to explain hypochondria. In the “Essay on the Sicknesses of the Head,” he refers to melancholy not as a temperament, but as a humor:

“The hypochondriac has an illness that may also have its headquarters in a particular place, yet more probably wanders unfixed through all parts of the body through the nervous system. It chiefly draws a melancholy vapor [*melancholischen Dunst*] around the seat of the soul.”²¹ In *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, Kant quotes a passage from Samuel Butler’s *Hudibras* which gives a much more earthy account of this “melancholy vapor” and connects it to enthusiasm: “if a hypochondriacal wind should rage in the guts, what matters is the direction it takes: if downwards, then the result is a f— [fart]; if upwards, an apparition or heavenly inspiration” (DSS 248; emphasis deleted). In *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant claims that the hypochondriac’s imagination is stimulated by flatulence (*Blähung*) and constipation (*Verstopfung*) (CF 103).

Kant’s Kinship with Enthusiasm

Thus far I have shown that Kant held philosophy to be akin to enthusiasm, visions, fanaticism, crankiness, and hypochondria, because all of them are outgrowths of the melancholy temperament. Kant’s sense of kinship with enthusiasm is not, however, based solely on this abstract genealogy. Kant also drew upon experience of his own melancholic character.

First of all, Kant makes it clear that he shares not only the enthusiasts’ melancholy temperament, reflectiveness, independence of mind, and feeling for the sublime; he also shares their restless drive to know heavenly natures and secrets. Kant held that reason has a proper aim and an internal drive to reach it. He speaks frequently of reason’s ends, tasks, vocation, interests, and destiny—of its needs, conditions, requirements, aspirations, and striving—of its impulsiveness, pretentiousness, restlessness, and ultimate satisfactions.²²

In his 1786 essay “Conjectural Beginning of Human History,” Kant offers an account of the role of reason’s drives in first separating man from beast.²³ If the presence of a desire can be seen as an absence in the being of the desirer, an absence that can be filled only by something outside of the desirer, then one can understand all desiring beings as internally divided and alienated from themselves; what makes a desiring being whole is the object of its desire, which lies outside of it. Kant accordingly conceives of bestial existence as one of relative self-sameness, unself-consciousness, and self-satisfaction, insofar as the beast’s needs are strictly delimited by nature, and the identification and fulfillment of these needs are strictly controlled by instinct. Once a beast is endowed with reason, however, this introduces a force of self-differentiation and temporal extension into its being, raising the beast out of a mere animal existence into a new world. Reason, operating specifically through the faculty of imagination, serves as a prism that refracts the white light of natural need into an infinitely varied spectrum of artificial desires that no longer enables the light of nature to be distinguished. The achievement of human wholeness and satisfaction becomes a question that instinct can no longer answer.

Reason, however, does not just pose the question; it also seeks to answer it.

Reason contains not only a principle of restless self-differentiation, but also an erotic longing for recaptured unity. The recovery of unity is a project carried out by reason in a new realm of being that reason itself opens up, a realm animal existence lacks: a historical and cultural world where the recovery of unity appears as an open-ended, progressive task. Kant speaks of the historical and cultural world as an “abyss” (*Abgrund*) of freedom and possibilities; reason could not retreat into the bliss of bestial contentedness, so instead it plunged in, seeking to discover and to win its heart’s content (CB 112).

In his 1784 essay “Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View,” particularly in the second and third theses, Kant shows that his quest, suitably methodized, gives rise to the modern Baconian project of the mastery and possession of nature.²⁴ Reason seeks its lost unity in the interpretation and transformation of given reality, giving rise to the modern world of science and technology, of artifice and culture, a world that Kant, following Rousseau, regards as alienating and reified. Our hearts are just not in it.

In order to regain primordial unity, reason therefore cannot be satisfied merely to change the world; it must interpret it as well, that is, it must raise and answer metaphysical questions. Thus Kant writes in the opening lines of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: “Human reason has this peculiar fate that it is burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer.”²⁵ In the language of *eros*, human reason is destined always to fall in love with metaphysics, but never to possess her. In *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* Kant speaks of “Metaphysics, with which, as fate would have it, I have fallen in love [*verliebt*] but from which I can boast of only a few favors” (DSS 367). In CPR A850/B878 he writes fetchingly that, no matter how unsuccessful our metaphysical efforts may be, “we shall always return to metaphysics as to an estranged beloved [*entzweiten Geliebten*].”

Not by accident does Kant claim, along with Plato, Robert Burton, and Shaftesbury, that the three areas where enthusiasm is most commonly found are unrequited love, religion, and metaphysics, for all three are characterized by a powerful longing for an object that can never in principle be possessed.²⁶ This longing can be so intense, the frustration so painful, that the sufferer may delude himself into thinking his desire has been fulfilled. This is the essence of enthusiasm. To reconcile oneself to unrequited longing is a difficult task.

Second, ample evidence suggests that Kant was not merely inclined toward, but actually suffered from, another form of degenerate melancholia: hypochondria.²⁷ Throughout his long life Kant complained of precarious health. He was an avid reader of medical books and a meticulous, even morbid, observer of his own condition—though ironically, he did not notice for three or four years that he had lost the sight in his left eye. His publications and correspondence dealing with medical matters range from the “Essay on the Sickneses of the Head” of 1764 to the *Anthropology* and *The Conflict of the Faculties* of 1798.²⁸

Reading through this material, one cannot help suspecting that many of Kant's ailments were imaginary. Biographer J. H. W. Stuckenberg reports that Kant complained of catching colds simply from the dampness of freshly printed newspapers.²⁹ He complained perpetually of indigestion, constipation, and flatulence. In one place he claims he is never sick; in another, he claims he is never well; in yet another, he claims that, strictly speaking, he is at all times never really sick and never really well. Kant claimed to some that he never took medicines; he told others he did. Late in life he became a devotee of the Scottish physician John Brown (1735–1788), whose methods are said to have killed more people than the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars combined—including Brown himself, who died of an overdose of one of his favorite remedies: opium and whiskey.³⁰

Kant bored his friends with constant talk of diet and hygiene. He was always trying new regimens and recommending them to others. In addition to his famous daily walks, Kant resolved to breathe only through his nose, even when asleep, and to drink only one glass of water a day, a habit that left him so dehydrated by the time of his death that he seemed almost mummified (CF 107–108, 111–112). The most telling evidence of hypochondria, though, is that in the years 1770–1798—the period when he produced his entire critical corpus—Kant complained constantly that his physical indispositions made it impossible for him to work!

Kant was not unaware of his hypochondria. Indeed, he was a bit of a hypochondriac about it too, engaging in careful self-monitoring, self-diagnosis, and self-treatment. In the “Essay on the Sickesses of the Head,” Kant tips his hand, describing hypochondriacs on one page as avid readers of medical books, morbid self-monitors, and tireless talkers, and then describing himself in the same terms a few pages later. Kant's description in the same essay of the hypochondriac as one who forgets his troubles when he dines and converses with others also has a ring of self-portraiture, calling to mind Kant's habit of dining in company. In *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant admits his hypochondria outright: “I have a natural disposition to hypochondria,” but then he gives a somewhat hypochondriac diagnosis of the cause, “because of my flat and narrow chest, which leaves little room for the movement of the heart and the lungs” (CF 104).

Third, in his later years, Kant's hypochondria was joined by another form of degenerate melancholia: crankiness. As Stuckenberg reports, Kant was a crotchety old man:

For years [Kant] complained of a pressure in his head, sometimes speaking of it as a kind of cramp of the brain, which interfered greatly with his intellectual activity. In 1796, there had been an unusual mortality of cats in Basel, Vienna, Copenhagen, and other places, which was ascribed by a learned paper to the electric condition of the atmosphere. Not only did Kant adopt this view, but he also explained the peculiar feeling in his head, which began at that time, in the same way: “Even the sicknesses of other

persons was now also attributed to this cause . . . Now he ascribed nearly everything to the electricity of the atmosphere; and though the sky might be perfectly clear or in any measure cloudy, it was equally regarded by him as an indication of that state of the air which was dangerous to life or at least injurious to health. Only from a change in the atmosphere did he expect convalescence.” He thought that he had noticed peculiar appearances in the clouds, which were caused by electricity; and that these electric phenomena were the cause of his ill health was a notion to which he clung with such tenacity that no amount of argument could change his opinion.³¹

Kant was weaned from this cranky notion only by the onset of senile dementia.

Finally, Kant claims that a degenerated melancholic temperament is inclined toward morbid fascination with the grotesque, pathological, and paranormal—inclinations he himself shared. This is evidenced by the intense interest he took in Swedenborg’s psychic powers and in the so-called “goat prophet,” Jan Pawlickowicz Komarnicki, a religious enthusiast who appeared in the neighborhood of Königsberg in the winter of 1763–1764 with a motley collection of animals and a feral child.³² In *Observations* and *Dreams* Kant mentions—with evident familiarity—the cabinets of historical, scientific, and ethnographic curios collected by the gentlemen of his time: cabinets where a glove of Charles XII and a lamp of Epictetus might be arrayed alongside such exotica as stuffed birds, jars of pickled barnyard oddities, and fetuses dressed in baby clothes floating in formaldehyde (OBS 71–72; DSS 366). In 1766 Kant became the curator of one such collection.³³ A voracious reader of scientific, ethnographic, and travel literature, Kant culled accounts of hundreds of odd, quaint, and grotesque phenomena to create his own literary cabinet of curios in the form of his most popular lecture courses, those on anthropology and physical geography.³⁴

It may seem odd to focus on such facts from Kant’s biography, but they make it clear that Kant was not interested in melancholy and its sundry fruits for purely abstract and theoretical reasons. He was interested in self-knowledge and used the concepts of the temperaments and their degenerate forms to illuminate his personal experience. Kant was haunted by the degenerative tendencies of his own temperament. He felt a certain kinship with—and even attraction to—some of his fellow sufferers, such as Rousseau and Swedenborg.³⁵ But he also wished to retain what he saw to be rationality’s essential connectedness to the *sensus communis*. I wish now to argue that this highly self-conscious tension and ambivalence, this volatile mixture of attraction and revulsion toward enthusiasm, was one of the sources of Kant’s mature critical project.

Kant’s Critique of Enthusiasm

Although Kant shares the enthusiasts’ melancholia, inwardness, independence, and erotic openness and impulsion toward the supersensible, he differs

from the enthusiasts on at least three essential counts. First, Kant insists that metaphysics must ultimately speak the language, and submit its insights to the judgment, of common human reason; the enthusiast, however, loses touch with the *sensus communis* through an intensification of inwardness and independence of mind that often approach solipsism. As Kant writes in *Dreams*, the enthusiast's direct knowledge of the supersensible

would seem to be a gift like that with which Juno honored Tiresias: she first made him blind, so that she could grant him the gift of prophecy . . . [I]ntuitive knowledge of the *other* world can only ever be attained here by forfeiting something of the understanding which one needs for this *present* world. (DSS 341)

Second, Kant adheres to a kind of philosophical “work ethic,” a precursor of Hegel’s “hard, patient labor of the negative.” Kant describes philosophy as “the Herculean labor of self-knowledge, which goes from the bottom up” (STP 390 [53]). By contrast, the philosopher who appeals to intellectual intuition “flies above all labor, through an apotheosis that comes from above and costs him nothing” (STP 390 [53]). In short, intellectual intuition is for human beings an illegitimate shortcut, often arising from laziness, dilettantism, and the vain desire to appear wiser and more learned than one actually is.

This theme appears as early as *Observations*, where it is treated as a special vice of French and female contributions to scholarship: “The French man loves the bold in his declarations; but in order to obtain truth, one must be not bold but cautious.”³⁶ The theme recurs over the next decades in scattered *Reflections*³⁷ and is developed most extensively in the late essay “On a Newly Arisen Noble Tone in Philosophy” (1796), centered around the analogy that intuition is to leisure what concepts (and conceptual articulation) are to work:

[T]he discursive understanding must expend a great amount of labor to analyze its concepts and then arrange them according to principles, and it must climb many difficult steps in order to make progress in knowledge; instead of this labor, an intellectual intuition would immediately present the object and grasp it all at once. (STP 389 [51])

Third, largely through the influence of Rousseau, Kant was a kind of intellectual populist:

I am by inclination an inquirer. I feel in its entirety a thirst for knowledge and a restless desire to increase it, along with satisfaction in each forward step. There was a time when I thought that this alone could constitute the honor of mankind, and I despised the people, who know nothing. Rousseau has set me right. This blind prejudice vanished. I learned to honor mankind, and I would be more useless than the common worker if I did not believe that this view could give worth to all others to establish the rights of mankind.³⁸

From this populist point of view, *Schwärmerei* appears as a vice intellectual elitists are prone to exhibit. Intellectual elitism is the view that the highest

human activity is the pursuit of pure theoretical or speculative knowledge as an end in itself. This reflects the priorities of an aristocratic society, prizing leisure over work, the beautiful and useless over the prosaic and useful. Intellectual populism prizes practical, specifically moral, knowledge over pure theory, reflecting the priorities of the oppressed and toiling masses, rather than their aristocratic masters.

Kant's populism and work ethic are related insofar as men of humble origin, like Kant, have to work for their livings and their insights, whereas noble men of leisure (like Baron von Swedenborg), because their living is provided for them, are more inclined to spurn honest intellectual labor and take mystical shortcuts to knowledge. As Kant puts it in "On a Newly Arisen Noble Tone in Philosophy": "It lies not merely in the natural laziness, but also in the vanity of human beings (a misunderstood freedom) that those who have a living [without work], whether it be a wealthy or a poor one, consider themselves superior to those who must work" (STP 390 [53]). Hence,

Whoever believes himself to be in possession of intellectual intuition will look down upon the former procedure [the conceptual labors of the understanding] with contempt; and, conversely, the very ease of such an employment of reason is a powerful lure to boldly assume a faculty of intellectual intuition and likewise to recommend that philosophy be founded on it. (STP 389 [51–52])

Kant's criticisms of enthusiasm all point to a desire to maintain what Eric Voegelin calls "the balance of consciousness."³⁹ Thomas Prufer has described this balance as the task of maintaining "the polarity or tension between openness to the plenitude of being, on the one hand, and situatedness in the phenomenality of finite beings, on the other hand."⁴⁰ The philosophical *eros* Kant shares with the enthusiasts is what Prufer refers to as "openness to the plenitude of being." Kant's concern with the labor of articulating metaphysical insights in conceptual terms, his concern with making metaphysics speak the language of common human reason and remain in touch with the *sensus communis*, and his populist emphasis on the primacy of practical reason or moral knowledge: all of these reflect his desire to balance his erotic openness to the plenitude of being with "situatedness in the phenomenality of finite beings." As Prufer puts it, "The philosophical act breaks down when either pole, openness to plenitude or situatedness in phenomenality, becomes exclusive of the other."⁴¹ When openness to the plenitude of being uproots itself from situatedness in finite beings, then one has what Kant calls *Schwärmerei*.

But if *Schwärmerei* is ultimately undesirable, how does one who has a temperamental inclination toward it resist its intoxicating charms? Around the same time Kant formulated the problem of *Schwärmerei*—the years 1763–1765—he also formulated his solution. In the "Essay on the Sicknesses of the Head," Kant suggests that we may alleviate mental illnesses and infirmities—to the extent that they can be subjected to volitional control—by first developing

a nosology (*Onomastik*) of different maladies and then developing a mental regimen (*Diätetik*) to control them. Since Kant himself suffered from one of these maladies, hypochondria, he spoke not in the abstract, but from personal experience; Kant's nosology was constructed to help him understand himself; his regimen was designed in order to cure himself.

Kant offers essentially the same advice for curing philosophical maladies: to preface any metaphysical investigation with a propaedeutic delimitation or critique of the nature, powers, and limits of the rational faculty, that is, with a critique of pure reason, in whose light we can discipline our philosophical eros.⁴² For only by knowing the limits of reason can we use it wisely, rather than pushing it beyond its limits, causing it to undergo a dialectical inversion from hyperrationalism to irrationalism. In 1765, around the same time he was writing *Dreams*, Kant announced this project in a *Reflection* appended to his desk copy of *Observations*: "One could say that metaphysics is a science of the limits [*Schranken*] of human reason."⁴³ A similar phrase appears in the fall of 1765, in "Magister Immanuel Kant's Announcement of the Program of his Lectures for the Winter Semester of 1765–1766." This text describes logic as "the critique of reason" (A310), that is, "so to speak, a quarantine (if the expression be permitted) which must be observed by the apprentice who wishes to migrate from the land of prejudice and error and enter the realm of a more enlightened reason and the sciences" (A 310). At the end of 1765, a similar phrase also appears in *Dreams*: "metaphysics is a science of the limits of human reason [*Grenzen der menschlichen Vernunft*]" (DSS 368). In his later writings Kant consistently maintains that "The cause of *Schwärmerei* is a lack of critique of reason itself."⁴⁴ It is the task of critical philosophy to replace the ecstatic possession of enthusiasm with sober self-possession. In Kant's words: "Man muss niemals ausser sich, sondern bei *sich selbst* sein" (One must never be outside of, but rather in *possession* of, oneself).⁴⁵

As with hypochondria, so too with enthusiasm, I would argue that Kant knew whereof he spoke: far from being evidence of Kant's supposedly summary dismissal of all living religion, his critique of enthusiasm demonstrates that the origin and the end of the project of critical philosophy is to be found in Kant's self-conscious desire to discipline the daimonic excesses of his own philosophic soul.⁴⁶

NOTES

1. On the etymology of *Schwärmerei*, see Gregory R. Johnson, "The Kinship of Kant and Swedenborg," *The New Philosophy* 99 (1996): 407–423, esp. 407–409.

2. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 108.

3. CF 7:46; in *Kant on Swedenborg: Dreams of a Spirit-Seer and Other Writings*, ed. Gregory R. Johnson, trans. Gregory R. Johnson and Glenn Alexander Magee (West Chester, Penn.: Swedenborg Foundation, 2002), 108.

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4. “On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy,” in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique* by Jacques Derrida, ed. and trans. Peter D. Fenves (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 62 (STP); CF 398.

5. Two recent works that have argued vigorously and at great length for Kant’s opposition to *Schwärmerei* are Robert Butts’s *Kant and the Double-Government Methodology: Supersensibility and Method in Kant’s Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht: Riedel, 1984), esp. the Appendix, “Central Nervous System: Philosophers as Dieticians of the Mind”; and John H. Zammito’s *The Genesis of Kant’s Critique of Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), esp. chap. 1, “Kant and the Pursuit of *Aufklärung*,” and chap. 11, “The Pantheism Controversy and the *Third Critique*.” A work that depends heavily upon this presumption, but offers no support for it, is Peter D. Fenves, *A Peculiar Fate: Metaphysics and World History in Kant* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), esp. chap. 3. See also Fenves, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, xi.

6. Arnulf Zweig, “Introduction” to *Kant, Philosophical Correspondence 1759–1799*, ed. and trans. Arnulf Zweig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 14. As evidence, Zweig cites Kant’s reference to his correspondent Maria von Herbert as “die kleine Schwärmerin” in a letter to Elisabeth Motherby, dated February 11, 1793 (Zweig, 204, n15). The letter to Elisabeth Motherby is number 559 in the Akademie edition. Fräulein von Herbert was mentally unbalanced and eventually committed suicide.

7. RfH 771 [15:337], 1774–1775; my translation.

8. Giorgio Tonelli, “Kant’s Early Theory of Genius (1770–1779): Part I,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 4 (1966): 109–132, 122. See also Tonelli’s “Kant’s Early Theory of Genius (1770–1779): Part II,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 4 (1966): 209–224. These articles are a gold mine of information and speculation, not only on Kant’s theory of genius, but also on his understanding of its degenerations, including *Schwärmerei*. A complete account of Kant’s attitudes toward philosophy and enthusiasm must take this material into account. Such a complete account, unfortunately, would be too lengthy to offer in this essay.

9. OBS 108–109. David Hume makes virtually identical claims in his essay “Of Superstition and Enthusiasm,” in his *Essays, Moral and Political* (London, 1741). See Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller, rev. ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987), 76–79.

10. Hans Vaihinger, “Kant als Melancholicus,” *Kant-Studien* 2 (1898): 139–141; Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 25–26; and Paul Arthur Schilpp, *Kant’s Pre-Critical Ethics*, 2nd ed. (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1960), 3–4. Cassirer points out the similarity of Kant’s portrait of the melancholic to Rousseau. See Ernst Cassirer, “Kant and Rousseau,” in *Rousseau, Kant, Goethe*, trans. James Gutmann, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall, Jr. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1945), 12.

11. Aristotle, *Problems*, 30. As Cicero puts it in the *Tusculan Disputations*, I xxxiii 80: “Aristotle indeed affirms, all ingenious men to be melancholic.” For an account of the tradition connecting melancholy and philosophy, see Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1964). See also Rudolf and Margot Wittkower, *Born under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Docu-*

mented *History from Antiquity to the French Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1963), chap. 5, “Genius, Madness, and Melancholy.”

12. OBS 55, 66–67; “Essay on the Sicknesses of the Head,” Ak 2:266; *Kant on Swedenborg*, 78–79.

13. Kant’s word for the crank, *Grillenfänger*, derives from *Grille*, meaning “cricket.” Figuratively, Grillen are cranky, eccentric, or whimsical notions, equivalent to the English “crotchet,” as in “crotchety old man.” *Grillenfänger* literally means “cricket trapper.” A cricket-trapper is less what the *Grillenfänger* does than what he is. Cranky obsessions obsessively recur in his head like a cricket chirping in a box. See *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), 75 (AP 203).

14. Kant’s terms for hypochondria are *Grillenkrankheit*, literally “cricket sickness,” *Hypochondrie*, and occasionally *Melancholia*. According to Kant (AP 212 [82]), “Hypochondria is called *Grillenkrankheit* from its analogy to listening, in the quiet of the night, to a cricket chirping in the house, which disturbs our mental repose and so prevents us from sleeping.”

15. AP 219, 117 [88]. Kant also makes this point in many *Reflections* (e.g., RfI 771, 778, 812, 897, 899, and 936, all in Ak 15) and throughout “On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy,” e.g., STP 389–390, 401.

16. “Sicknesses of the Head,” Ak 2:264; *Kant on Swedenborg*, 76–77, my translation.

17. In *The Conflict of the Faculties* Kant claims that during sleep life would cease for lack of nervous stimulation, were it not for the generation of nervous energy through the free play of the imagination in dreaming; were it not for dreams, we would die in our sleep; we can thus infer that we are dreaming all the time, even if we do not remember; there is thus for Kant a close connection between the power of imagination and the life force itself. *The Conflict of the Faculties*, bilingual ed., trans. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Abaris, 1979), 191, 193 (CF 105–106).

18. “Sicknesses of the Head,” Ak 2:264–265; *Kant on Swedenborg*, 77, my translation.

19. See Tonelli, “Kant’s Early Theory of Genius,” 217.

20. RfI 771 [15:337], 1774–1775; my translation.

21. “Sicknesses of the Head,” Ak 2:266; *Kant on Swedenborg*, 78.

22. On the teleology and drives of reason in Kant, see Yirmiahu Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 15–19.

23. “Conjectural Beginning of Human History,” trans. Emil L. Fackenheim, in *Kant: On History*, ed. Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

24. Kant, *On History*.

25. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1929), Avii (CPR).

26. See Plato, *Phaedrus*, and Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 867. Burton discusses enthusiasms in love, religion, and philosophy in the Third Partition of his book *Love-Melancholy*, in his *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5. See also Shaftesbury, *A Letter concerning Enthusiasm*, 12; “Sicknesses of the Head,” Ak 2:267, 268; *Kant on Swedenborg*, 79, 80.

27. For a brilliant and comprehensive analysis of Kant’s hypochondria, see Susan Meld Shell, “Kant’s Hypochondria: A Phenomenology of Spirit,” chap. 10 of her *The*

Embodiment of Reason: Kant on Spirit, Generation, and Community (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

28. In addition to the previously cited “Essay on the Sicknesses of the Head,” Kant’s principal writings regarding medical topics include “*Nachricht an Ärzte*,” Ak 8:5–8; “On Philosophers’ Medicine of the Body” (15:939–953), trans. Mary J. Gregor, in *Kant’s Latin Writings: Translations, Commentaries, and Notes*, ed. and trans. Lewis White Beck, Mary J. Gregor, Ralf Meerbote, and John A. Reuscher, 2nd ed. (New York: Peter Lang, 1992); “On the Power of the Mind to Master Its Morbid Feelings by Sheer Resolution,” in CF 202–220. Kant’s correspondence with Marcus Herz, a former student who pursued a career in medicine, is a rich source of medical comments.

29. J. H. W. Stuckenberg, *The Life of Immanuel Kant* (London: Macmillan, 1882), 96. Unless otherwise noted, all facts pertaining to Kant’s health are drawn from Stuckenberg, chap. 4.

30. Cited in Mary Gregor, Introduction to Kant’s “On Philosophers’ Medicine of the Body,” 191.

31. Stuckenberg, *Life of Immanuel Kant*, 439. Stuckenberg is apparently quoting from E. A. C. Wasianski’s account of Kant’s last years, “Immanuel Kant in den letzten Tagen” (Königsberg, 1804), in *Immanuel Kant: Sein Leben in Darstellungen seiner Zeitgenossen*, ed. Felix Gross (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1912). Kant speaks of his brain spasms in CF 106, 112–113.

32. Kant published a brief *Raisonnement* on the goat prophet in the *Königsbergische gelehrte und politische Zeitung* in January 1764. In the Akademie edition it is relegated to a footnote: Ak 2:489n. Kant’s encounter with the goat prophet, along with his contemporaneous readings of Rousseau and Swedenborg, clearly motivated the composition of the “Essay on the Sicknesses of the Head,” published in serialized form in subsequent issues of the *Königsbergische gelehrte und politische Zeitung*.

33. Stuckenberg, *Life of Immanuel Kant*, 83–84.

34. After he retired from teaching, Kant published his anthropology lectures in 1798 as *Anthropology in Pragmatic Perspective* and physical geography lectures in 1802 as *Physische Geographie*, 2 vols. (Königsberg: Göbbels und Unzer, 1802), Ak 9:151–436.

35. I deal with Kant’s connection to Swedenborg in the following essays: “Kant’s Kinship with Swedenborg,” cited above; “Kant on Swedenborg in the Lectures on Metaphysics: The 1760s–1770s,” *Studia Swedenborgiana* 10, no. 1 (fall 1996): 1–38; “Kant on Swedenborg in the Lectures on Metaphysics: The 1780s–1790s,” *Studia Swedenborgiana* 10, no. 2 (spring 1997): 11–39; “Strange New World” (review of Gottlieb Florschütz’s *Swedenborg and Kant*, Henry Corbin’s *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, D. T. Suzuki’s *Swedenborg: Buddha of the North*, and four other books on Swedenborg), *Reason Papers* 22 (1997): 140–143; “Kant’s Early Metaphysics and the Origins of the Critical Philosophy,” *Studia Swedenborgiana* 11, no. 2 (1999): 29–54; review of Gottlieb Florschütz, *Swedenborgs verborgene Wirkung auf Kant*, *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 13 (summer 1999): 545–549; “Did Kant Dissemble His Interest in Swedenborg? The Esotericism Hypothesis,” *The New Philosophy* 102, no. 2 (July–December 1999): 529–560; “Swedenborg’s Positive Influence on the Development of Kant’s Mature Moral Philosophy,” in *The True Philosophy and the True Philosopher*, ed. Stephen McNeilly (London: Swedenborg Society, 2002); and my Introduction to *Kant on Swedenborg*.

36. OBS 101, n. On female scholars, see OBS 78–79.

37. See, e.g., Rfl 775 [15:345]; 6050 [17:434–436]; and 6053 [17:458].
38. *Remarks*, Ak 20:44; my translation.
39. See Eric Voegelin, “Reason: The Classic Experience,” in his *Anamnesis*, ed. and trans. Gerhart Niemeyer (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990).
40. Thomas Prufer, “The Philosophical Act,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (1962): 591.
41. Prufer, “The Philosophical Act,” 591.
42. Kant refers to critical philosophers as physicians of the soul (*Seelenärzte*) in a letter to Ludwig Ernst Borowski written sometime between March 6 and March 22, 1790 (Ak 11:138–140). This letter was occasioned by the publication of Borowski’s book *Cagliostro, One of the Most Remarkable Adventurers of Our Century: His Story and Reflections on Him and the Enthusiastic Mischief of Our Time in General (Cagliostro, einer der merkwürdigsten Abentheurer unsres Jahrhunderts. Seine Geschichte nebst Raisonement über ihn und den schwärmerischen Unfug unsrer Zeit überhaupt)* (Königsberg: Nicolovius, 1790). The letter was republished in subsequent editions of the book, and in collections of Kant’s works, under the title “On Schwärmerei and Its Remedy.” The letter has been translated in Zweig, 159–161, and Fenves, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, 106–109. The reference to *Seelenärzte* is found at Ak 11:138; Zweig, 159; Fenves, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, 107.
43. *Remarks*, Ak 20:181.
44. Rfl 6052 [17:438], in Fenves, *Raising the Tone of Philosophy*, 105. Cf. Rfl 6050 [17:437], in Fenves, 103–104.
45. Rfl 335 [15:132]; my translation.
46. Monique David-Menard, in *La folie dans la raison pure: Kant lecteur de Swedenborg* (Paris: Vrin, 1990), and Hartmut and Gernot Böhme, in *Das Andere der Vernunft: Zur Entwicklung von Rationalitätsstrukturen am Beispiel Kants* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), argue a similar thesis, to wit: that the origin of the critical project lies in Kant’s desire to exorcise the “other of reason.” However, our arguments diverge on many points, the pivotal one being that David-Menard and the Böhmes believe they are penetrating into Kant’s subconscious and essentially neurotic motivations, whereas I regard Kant’s project of intellectual genealogy and critique as a deliberate attempt at self-understanding.

two

Kant on the Rational Instability of Atheism

John E. Hare

I

This essay has five sections. In the first I will talk about Kant's view of morally good people who are not theists. In the second I will discuss his moral criticisms of atheism. The third topic is some passages in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* that have been taken to deny that the moral life requires believing that God exists. In the fourth section I will mention briefly some ways Kant thinks theism helps in the attempt to lead the moral life. Finally, in the fifth section I will make some even briefer remarks about the attempt to do Kantian ethics without theism.¹

I am going to start by discussing Kant's view that one can be a good person without believing in the existence of God, and that even someone who denies the existence of God can lead a virtuous life. Kant's prime example is Spinoza, whom he takes to be a conspicuously good person but not to believe in God in the way Kant approves of. The exegesis of Spinoza is not my purpose here; perhaps Kant is being unfair to him. My point is just that Kant *does* believe it is possible to be a good person without believing in God. To be clear that those who do not believe in God can be good people is even more important now than it was for Kant, since there are now so many more such people.

Kant on the Rational Instability of Atheism

Kant talks about Spinoza in the third *Critique* (CJ 452), but before discussing this passage it will be useful to mention Kant's remark, recorded in Collins's notes of Kant's lectures on ethics, about speculative atheists, who are dogmatic atheists in their theoretical beliefs, but are able to venerate God through their actions.² In this passage the central example is again Spinoza. Kant's view of him seems to be that his error extends to theology but not to religion. He "did what a man of religion should do. His heart was good, and could easily have been brought to rights; he merely had too much trust in speculative argument." By contrast, in a later passage in the same notes, Kant talks about a practical atheist

who lives in such a way that one would take him to maintain that there is no god. Those who live thus are called practical atheists, though that goes too far. The practical atheist is the godless man, for godlessness is a kind of shameless wickedness which bids defiance to the punishments that the idea of God inspires in us. (Collins, LMP 327)

The distinction seems to be between two kinds of atheism or two kinds of atheist (it doesn't matter which way we put it). One kind, like Spinoza, has his heart right. Even if, because of speculative mistakes or confusions, he ends up saying, "There is no God," this error can be remedied easily. He needs to be shown the limits of human understanding, and then the moral faith he already has in germ will be free to express itself in terms of belief in God. On the other hand is a person who says he believes in God, but does not have moral faith. Such a person is in effect an atheist, though Kant admits it is a stretch to use the term, and Kant does not hold out hope for him.

In the passage about Spinoza in the third *Critique*, Kant's point is that it is possible to be a good person and say, "There is no God," but there is something rationally unstable about such a state. Significantly, after describing the evils Spinoza and, indeed, any good person will recognize in the world, Kant says: "And so, this well-meaning person *would* indeed *have to* give up as impossible [*müsste er als unmöglich allerdings aufgeben*] the purpose that the moral laws obligated him to have before his eyes, and that in compliance with them he did have before his eyes" (emphasis added). Kant does not say Spinoza *did* this giving up, or that such a person *will* do it. I think his point is that reason will present a dilemma to such a person, and to resolve it requires giving up either the sense of the real possibility of the highest good or the refusal to believe in God. The passage from Collins's notes suggests that Kant thinks Spinoza, given the removal of his speculative confusions, actually would be likely to resolve the dilemma in the direction of theism.³

A nontheological analogy might be helpful here. Suppose you have two friends, James and Joanna, who are becoming increasingly fond of each other. At some point you realize that in their hearts they both have made a commitment to spending the rest of their lives together. But James has not yet admitted this to himself, or declared himself to Joanna. What is holding him back is a

certain exaggerated trust in his own rationality, preventing him from acknowledging the validity of any impulse in himself that he cannot completely understand. You are sure that once he comes to see how misplaced this trust is, he will realize that he has in fact been committed to a life with Joanna for some time and this commitment has been controlling the way he already lives his life and his decisions about how to spend his time and devote his energies. Now, does James *believe* he is going to get married to Joanna? You are not clear what to say. If you ask him to profess such a belief, he will probably say he does not know, one way or the other. But his life-choices indicate the condition of his heart, and in that sense he does already have the belief. Another thing you do not know is how things are actually going to turn out for James. It all depends on which of the two dispositions prevails, his love for Joanna or his pride in his intellect.

To go back to Spinoza, suppose the speculative confusions remain. If he comes to see the dilemma he is in, he still has three options. One is to reject the pursuit of the highest good, one is to reject his atheism, and the third is to stay in the dilemma, unable to be happy with either alternative that presents itself. In the third *Critique* passage Kant goes on to say that if someone like Spinoza responds to the dilemma by refusing to give up the real possibility of the highest good, then he *must* assume (*so muss er annehmen*) the existence of a God. The modality is significant. It is not that such a person will do this, but that he must. He must, that is to say, if he is to be rational. This is what I mean by saying atheism is, for Kant, *rationally* unstable.

To conclude this point, I interpret Kant as saying that to be a good person and disbelieve in God is not impossible, but presents a dilemma. Which way out of the dilemma a person takes will depend, first, on whether he has got rid of his speculative errors, and second, on whether he is in fact committed to the moral law and the pursuit of the highest good. If he has and he is, then the atheism is easily corrected.

II

The second part of this essay is about Kant's moral criticisms of atheism. I will mention four of these criticisms: that it makes the moral life harder because it removes the ground for belief in the real possibility of being good,⁴ that it rids atheists of incentives to morality, that it leads them to moral despair about the possibility of the highest good, and that it corrupts their moral character both individually and socially.

(a) The most helpful text in connection with the first of these criticisms is *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. This is because if we are considering Kant's views on the moral dangers of atheism, we need to look at the relation between ethics and religion from the point of view of someone who (unlike Kant himself) is proposing to leave historical religion behind in the entry into ethics.⁵ In the Preface to the second edition of *Religion*, Kant

suggests we think of revelation as two concentric circles, with revelation to reason on the inside and historical revelation on the outside; then he proposes the experiment of seeing how much of historical revelation he can translate into the terms of the inner circle. This experiment could result in various forms of atheism. We could find out that the translation fails, and then reject the outer circle. Or we could find that the outer circle was completely redundant after the translation, though still consistent with the inner circle. But Kant does not take either of these positions, and we can learn what he thinks is wrong with atheism by examining why he rejects them. The second *Critique* has a different direction; it starts from the fact of reason and moves outward to the various postulations that are required. The moral argument given in the second *Critique* plays a comparatively small role in *Religion*, for example, in the Preface to the first edition. The relation of *Religion* here to the second *Critique* is like the relation of the *Metaphysics of Morals* to the *Groundwork*. The *Groundwork* gives the form of the moral law, and the *Metaphysics of Morals* gives the matter or content. It tells us what we do *in* our role as members of the kingdom of ends, namely, work for our own perfection and the happiness of others (MM 398). In the same way the second *Critique* gives the form of the postulate, and *Religion* gives us the matter or content. It tells us what God does *in* the role as king of the kingdom of ends.⁶ We will see Kant's argument for the rational instability of atheism more clearly if we focus on the question of what our moral lives would be like if we did not believe in the existence of such a king.

The focus of Kant's attention in *Religion* is the good and evil in the human heart, and this gives content to the moral postulation of God as the enabler of virtue. Translating the doctrines of creation and fall, Kant talks of a predisposition to good and a propensity to evil. Because we are born under the evil maxim, we have the propensity to prefer our happiness to duty. We cannot reverse this ranking, because our fundamental maxim is already corrupt. So we have to believe in divine assistance to accomplish what Kant calls "the revolution of the will." The moral agent cannot inspect this revolution, but she has to believe it has taken place. So here is the danger from atheism: it might leave us without this kind of moral faith, "that God will have the means to remedy this imperfection" (Collins, LMP 317). As in the point I made in §I, so here Kant has to be interpreted as presenting a rational dilemma, not making a prediction. Which way the atheist will *in fact* resolve the dilemma depends on whether the atheist is in fact committed to the moral law. But it is going to be hard for an atheist to sustain belief in the real possibility of being good, given that we are social beings and given the social aspect of evil.⁷ In *Religion*, Kant says the propensity to evil is activated by how we are toward each other (R 94):

Envy, the lust for power, greed, and the malignant inclinations bound up with these, besiege his nature, contented within itself [*an sich genügsame*], as soon as he is among men. And it is not even necessary to assume that these

are men sunk in evil and examples to lead him astray; it suffices that they are at hand, that they surround him, and that they are men, for them mutually to corrupt each other's predispositions and make one another evil. (R 94)

Kant's view is that we have a natural propensity to evil, activated in the social relations we cannot dispense with. Kant also thinks divine assistance is the only way to suppose this propensity can be overcome. An atheist who accepts Kant's views about the propensity but wants to lead a morally good life must therefore find some substitute for divine assistance. The final section of this essay contains some brief remarks about the prospects for this.

(b) The second moral criticism of atheism is that it deprives us of certain incentives for the moral life. In the first *Critique*, Kant puts this in a way that is not completely consistent with his mature ethical writing.⁸ He says: "Without a God and a world that is not now visible to us but is hoped for, the majestic ideas of morality are, to be sure, objects of approbation and admiration but not incentives for resolve and realization."⁹ This suggests that we can only be motivated to *live* morally, as opposed to merely *admiring* the moral life, if the hope of heaven or the fear of hell is added to respect for the moral law. This is not Kant's mature view. In his lectures on the philosophical doctrine of religion, Kant puts the point more carefully:

Natural morality must be so constituted that it can be thought independently of any concept of God, and obtain zealous reverence from us solely on account of its own inner dignity and excellence. But further it serves for this if, after we have taken an interest in morals itself (we) take an interest also in the existence of God, a being who can reward our good conduct; and then we obtain strong incentives which determine us to observe moral laws. (LPR 1003)

Here Kant's point is that heaven gives us an *additional* incentive to that given by the moral law itself.

The best account of the role in the moral life of God's rewards and punishments is given us, again, in *Religion*. As Kant sees it in *Religion*, God's role in sustaining the moral life is not confined to the rewarding of our individual attempts at virtue with eternal happiness. God has legislative, executive, and judicial functions within the kingdom of ends, of which God is the king and we are merely members. Actually, this theme can be traced throughout Kant's corpus, but I will not try to do that here. There is a problem about coordinating the ends of the members of the kingdom of ends. The agent has to believe not merely that *she* can be happy and virtuous, but that all the members of the kingdom can be. She has to assume that the world is not the kind of place where she can be happy only if other people are not, or where some of the people she tries to help can be happy only if other people she tries to help are not. This is one central reason why we have to recognize our duties, Kant says, as God's commands. It is the higher moral being who is the head of the kingdom "through whose universal organization the forces of single indi-

viduals, insufficient on their own, are united for a common effect” (R 98). This is an important place where God’s sanctions come in. The ground of our own obedience to the moral law is not to be hope of reward or fear of punishment (though this may give us additional incentive). But we do have to be able to believe that those who are not motivated by reverence for the law can be motivated by the sanctions to at least external obedience. The role of the sanctions here is the same as it is for an earthly kingdom, where too the ground of obedience is not supposed to be hope or fear but moral respect for internal freedom, and so also for the external freedom that is its external expression and that the sanctions make possible. The sanctions are, in Kant’s phrase, “a hindrance to the hindrances to freedom.”¹⁰ As he sees it, to believe that one can act morally and that one’s actions make a difference in the world is not enough. If we were all virtuous, and we could believe we were, perhaps what Kant calls in the first *Critique* “self-rewarding morality” (CPR A809/B837) would be enough. But as things are, we have to believe in the real possibility of the highest good *whether most other people are virtuous or not*.

(c) I will deal with the third and fourth of Kant’s moral objections to atheism more briefly, because they are already implicit in what I have said so far. The third objection is that atheism makes it harder to believe in the possibility of the highest good, and so tends toward a kind of despair. The passage from Volkmann’s notes (see note 1 here) says that religion without assertoric faith is an unstable condition “in which one continuously falls from hope into doubt and mistrust.” In the passage about Spinoza in the third *Critique*, also referred to previously, Kant says:

Moreover, as concerns the other righteous people he meets: no matter how worthy of happiness they may be, nature, which pays no attention to that, will still subject them to all the evils of deprivation, disease, and untimely death, just like all the other animals on the earth. And they will stay subjected to these evils always, until one vast tomb engulfs them one and all (honest or not, that makes no difference here) and hurls them, who managed to believe they were the final purpose of creation, back into the abyss of the purposeless chaos of matter from which they were taken. (CJ 452)

The despair here is about whether the universe makes moral sense. As I said earlier in connection with this passage, Kant is optimistic about how Spinoza would in fact resolve the difficulty presented by his atheism, once the speculative errors of his philosophy were exposed. Nonetheless, an objection to atheism is that it puts good people in this kind of difficulty. Kant’s view is that the moral agent is rationally required to aim at the highest good, and if his atheism rules out the only way our reason finds this thinkable, the morally good atheist is likely to find full reflective endorsement of his moral commitment unavailable. As I said in §I, however, this does not mean he will not in fact persevere in the moral life. Kant’s point is not meant as a prediction but as a rational prescription of belief.

(d) The fourth objection, that atheism has a tendency to corrupt moral character, can be found in the same passage. Kant says the final purpose of our compliance with the moral law is the highest good, namely, “a happiness of rational beings that harmoniously accompanies their compliance with moral laws.” But, he goes on to say, the “nullity” of that one ideal final purpose would “weaken his respect for the moral law,” and “such weakening of his respect would inevitably impair his moral attitude” (CJ 453). This language sounds more like the kind of prediction I have been saying Kant does not intend. But Kant does not say Spinoza *will* reach this “nullity” (despair about the possibility of the highest good)—only that if he *did* reach it, it would impair his moral attitude. If we think about atheism as a social phenomenon, however, something more like a prediction is available. Kant thinks Christianity has been the “vehicle” his contemporaries in Europe have employed to reach their appreciation of the moral law, and he thinks Christianity is destined to play this role for the whole world (R 157–158). Atheism in its dogmatic form, if it became pervasive and destroyed this vehicle, would therefore be dangerous not just for the individual, and not just for the State, but for the whole human race.

III

This section addresses whether Kant thinks moral religion and moral life in general require believing that God exists. On the one hand, the answer seems to be “yes.” After all, “religion” is defined in terms of recognizing one’s duties as God’s commands (R 154). How can a person who does not believe in God recognize her duties as God’s commands? On the other hand, we have texts like the one about Spinozism from Collins’s lecture notes: “Atheism can reside in mere speculation, while in practice such a person can be a theist or venerator of God, whose error extends to theology, but not to religion.”¹¹ We need to separate here the question about whether Kant uses the *term* “religion” in such a way as to allow that skeptical atheists can be religious, and the more important question whether he thinks *the moral life* rationally requires belief in the existence of God. On the first question, Kant is saying in this text and elsewhere that a kind of atheism is consistent with venerating God, or with religion, namely, the kind that “resides in mere speculation.” One example of such a person would be someone who thought she had to say “there is no God” if she did not have a theoretically compelling proof of God’s existence. She might refuse to say she believed something when she did not understand it, and she might think she was obeying the demand of reason in this refusal.¹² I think we should allow that Kant uses the term “religion” to include someone who refuses to assent to the statement “God exists,” even though Kant thinks a belief that God exists is rationally presupposed by one’s commitment to the moral life.¹³ My analogy of James and Joanna was designed to illustrate a parallel case of a person who has a practical faith that is consistent with the

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refusal to assent theoretically or make public profession. Kant's answer to the second question is that moral earnestness (or moral religiousness) rationally presupposes belief that God exists. Kant's reply to the person I have just been describing is that she needs to see the limits of the human understanding. Kant agrees there is no compelling theistic proof within the theoretical use of reason, but thinks we are nonetheless rationally required to believe that God exists.

An important passage appears at the beginning of Part Four of *Religion*, where Kant connects religion and assertoric faith in the existence of the highest good. The passage is obscure and comes in a footnote to Kant's statement "*Religion is (subjectively considered) the recognition of all our duties as divine commands.*" The footnote begins as follows:

With this definition some erroneous interpretations of the concept of a religion in general is [*sic*] obviated. First, so far as theoretical cognition and profession of faith are concerned, no assertoric knowledge is required in religion (even of the existence of God), since with our lack of insight into supersensible objects any such profession can well be hypocritically feigned; speculatively, what is required is rather only a *problematic* assumption (hypothesis) concerning the supreme cause of things, whereas with respect to the object toward which our morally legislative reason bids us work, what is presupposed is an *assertoric* faith, practical and hence free, that promises a result for the final aim of religion; and this faith needs only *the idea of God* which must occur to every morally earnest (and therefore religious) pursuit of the good, without pretending to be able to secure objective reality for it through theoretical cognition. Subjectively, the *minimum* of cognition (it is possible that there is a God) must alone suffice for what can be made the duty of every human being. (R 154)

This passage has been interpreted to say that Kant's position is that neither religion nor the moral life requires that we believe in the existence of God. Allen Wood says, about our moral agency:

Kant does not even think that we have to believe that there really is a God who wills that we perform our duties. Even a religious person, who regards her duties as divine commands, need not be certain that her duties are in fact commanded by God. For religion, Kant says, "no assertoric knowledge (even of God's existence) is required, (but) only a problematic assumption (hypothesis) as regards speculation about the supreme cause of things"; the "faith" that is strictly indispensable to religion "needs merely the *idea of God* . . . only the minimum cognition [*sic*] (it is possible that there is a God) has to be objectively sufficient." To be religious, then, "I do not even have to believe in the existence of God."¹⁴

Kant's footnote is obscure, but I think Wood has misread it. The passage does not settle whether Kant thinks the moral agent has to believe in the existence of God or not. I will divide my comments into three parts.

(a) Wood omits Kant's restriction of his initial point (note, "so far as") to

theoretical cognition and the *profession* of faith and does not give the appropriate stress to Kant's term "knowledge" (as distinguished from faith).¹⁵ I take it that Kant is making two linked contrasts here. The first is between theoretical cognition (where only a "*problematic* assumption," a hypothesis, about God's possibility is required, and not knowledge of God's existence) and our morally legislative reason, where, Kant explicitly says, "what is presupposed is an *assertoric* faith" (namely, faith in the existence of the highest good). The second is between a person's public profession and inner moral life. The former cannot be held accountable to any physical sensation of God since God is not that kind of object, whereas the latter does presuppose assertoric faith in order that the person can believe in a result for her ultimate purpose, namely, the achievement of the highest good. Kant is here separating off two erroneous interpretations of the concept of a religion, namely, the theoretical assertion and the public profession that God exists. Neither of these two is what he is interested in here.

(b) Kant goes on to say this assertoric faith needs "only the *idea of God* which must occur to every morally earnest (and therefore religious) pursuit of the good, without pretending to be able to secure objective reality for it through theoretical cognition." Here again, the contrast is between theoretical cognition and practice. Assertoric faith (in the existence of the highest good) has to make do with an *idea* and cannot secure the kind of object-status for God that theoretical cognition can establish for what we can sense and so put under concepts. Kant is insistent that we should not pretend to be able to secure this kind of status for our picture of God. He leaves open the question whether this assertoric faith nonetheless requires belief in the existence of *God* in addition to the existence of the highest good.

(c) Finally, Kant says, "subjectively, the *minimum* of cognition (it is possible that there is a God) must alone suffice for what can be made the duty of every human being." This is a point Kant makes elsewhere about what kind of *duty* we have in our beliefs about God. In the Vigilantius notes on Kant's *Lectures on the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant makes a distinction between the dogmatic atheist and the skeptical atheist.¹⁶ The skeptical atheist cannot persuade himself of theism, or the reality of God, though he also cannot demonstrate that God is impossible. "It is therefore incumbent on him," says Kant, "merely to assume the possibility of a God." The dogmatic atheist, on the other hand, does not accept even the possibility. But then Kant goes on to say that whereas the dogmatic atheist is making a "wrong and even dangerous contention," the skeptical atheist is not punishable, for his doubts are guiltless. Kant's position, in other words, is that human beings have a *duty* to say not that God exists, but only that God's existence is possible. There can be no duty to assume the existence of anything, he says in the second *Critique*, since this concerns only the theoretical use of reason (CPrR 125).

In this footnote in *Religion*, therefore, Kant has separated off some kinds of religion he is not talking about, and he goes on to separate off another,

namely, a religion of particular duties revealed not to reason but to the visible church. In the part of the footnote I quoted, Kant is separating off the interpretation of religion as a theoretical belief, and as a public profession, and he is denying that we have a duty of assertoric belief. But even though we do not have a duty to believe in the existence of God, Kant leaves open the possibility that such a belief is presupposed and therefore rationally required for the moral agent. If other passages lead us to believe that Kant thinks moral agency does require belief in the existence of God, nothing in this footnote is inconsistent with such a view. And there are other such passages. For example, in the second *Critique*, he says our reason finds the possibility of the highest good thinkable

only on the presupposition of a supreme intelligence; to assume the existence of this supreme intelligence is thus connected with the consciousness of our duty, although this assumption itself belongs to theoretical reason; with respect to theoretical reason alone, as a ground of explanation, it can be called a *hypothesis*; but in relation to the intelligibility of an object given us by the moral law (the highest good), and consequently if a need for practical purposes, it can be called *belief*. (CPrR 126)

Another passage in *Religion* has been interpreted as denying that moral agency requires belief in the existence of God, and I want to comment on this briefly. It comes from the beginning of the Preface to the first edition:

So far as morality is based on the conception of the human being as one who is free but who also, just because of that, binds himself through his reason to unconditional laws, it is in need neither of the idea of another being above him in order that he recognize his duty, nor, (in order) that he observe it, of an incentive other than the law itself. (R 3)

The key to understanding this passage (as also the previous passage) is to stress the three words “so far as.” We human beings are, for Kant, free beings who bind ourselves through our reason to unconditional law. In a word, we are autonomous. But we are not *only* such beings. We are also creatures of need. If we were purely rational, we would not need the idea of another being over us to help us do our duty. But also true of us, as Kant puts it in the second theorem of the second *Critique*, is that “all material practical principles as such are, without exception, of one and the same kind and come under the general principle of self-love or one’s own happiness” (CPrR 22). This is what generates the moral argument for the postulate of God’s existence. We have to be able to believe that we do not have to do what is morally wrong in order to be happy. This postulate is not necessary, Kant says in the second *Critique*, “as a ground of all obligation in general (for this rests, as has been sufficiently shown, solely on the autonomy of reason itself)” (CPrR 126). It is only necessary because we humans have to be able to strive to produce and promote “the highest good in the world” (the union of happiness and virtue), and so we have to believe in the possibility of its attainment. In the passage quoted at the end

of the previous paragraph, Kant says “our reason finds this thinkable only on the presupposition of a supreme intelligence,” and goes on to say that the assumption of the existence of such a being is a *hypothesis* for our theoretical reason, but for our practical reason it can be called *belief*.

So we have here two components, and the proper order of them is crucial. There is the belief in a supreme intelligence governing the world, and there is the commitment to obey the moral law for its own sake. Kant is insistent that the commitment to obey the moral law for its own sake has to come first. What he calls “moral theology” gets this order right.¹⁷ He thinks that putting the two components the other way round, deriving one’s obligation from one’s belief in God, corrupts both the morality and the religion. There is much to be said about Kant’s view here, but for the purposes of this essay what needs to be distinguished are the different ways the atheist can and cannot recognize the proper authority of the moral law. I think Kant would say that *so far as* he is rational and autonomous, he can; but, like Spinoza, because of that very same rationality he will find obstacles to the full rational endorsement of his commitment to morality.

IV

In this section I am going to list some ways Kant thinks theism helps in the attempt to lead the moral life. This will be the reverse side of Kant’s criticisms of atheism as discussed in §II. I will list eight ways theism helps the moral life. I am not trying to list them in order of importance, or to claim the list is exhaustive, and each item on the list is described in the briefest summary.

(a) Belief in God’s existence helps the moral agent believe it is possible for her to be good. She has to overcome the problem that she is born under what Kant calls “the evil maxim” that subordinates her duty to her happiness. Since this is her original fundamental maxim, she does not occupy a position whereby she can reverse the order of incentives and accomplish what Kant calls “the revolution of the will.” If she can believe God exists, she can believe God has given her “a divine supplement” whereby a revolution in her will can take place (CF 44 and R 37, 45).

(b) Belief in God’s existence helps her see how the highest good is realizable. The highest good (in one version, the exact proportioning of virtue and happiness) is required, Kant thinks, as the final object of the moral agent’s pursuit. But all we humans can do is try to be virtuous (given the assistance described above). We cannot produce the proportioning of this virtue to happiness. If we are to believe the highest good possible, we have to believe in the agency of some being beyond us in power and goodness (CPrR 124ff. and R 5).

(c) Additional incentives are provided by the belief that God will reward virtue. These are not (unlike the highest good) required for the moral agent, but they are a help. For example, the belief that we will eventually be part of a

community of virtuous people (“the society of all the good”) helps sustain us through the difficulties of living in a world where virtuous people suffer and vicious people are rewarded.¹⁸

(d) Belief in God’s existence helps the moral agent by giving her what Kant calls a “vehicle” for the moral law to be revealed to her. Kant thinks this is especially true of Christianity, a tradition he thinks is destined to be the world religion because of the “vehicle” it provides in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, “the holy one of the gospel.” If we were purely rational beings, we would not have need of such a vehicle; but because we are not, we do need it.¹⁹

(e) In giving us this special revelation (and also the revelation to reason), God is acting, so to speak, as legislator in the role of king of the kingdom of ends. The believer in God has also the advantage of belief in God’s acting as executive and judge in this kingdom. God’s assigning and carrying out rewards and penalties provides “a hindrance to the hindrances to freedom.” Some people may be moved to compliance with the moral law only by these rewards and punishments and, if they were not constrained in this way, would provide a hindrance to those who are trying to live morally (MM 231, 396, and R 161).

(f) There is a coordination problem even between people who are trying to lead a morally good life. The moral agent has to believe she does not have to do what is wrong in order to be happy. This is covered under (b). But she also has to believe it is not the case that she can be happy only if other people are not. Belief in God’s executive power in the kingdom allows her to believe that “through (God’s) dispensation the forces of separate individuals, insufficient in themselves, are united for a common end” (AP 333 and R 98).

(g) The moral agent can also believe, if she believes God exists, that God will bring about progress in history, so the kingdom will prevail in the end. We might call this “moral hope” as opposed to the “moral faith” operative in (a)–(c). The kingdom is represented in Christianity not merely as getting closer but as actually arriving. Kant believed in moral progress in history and thought his own age was seeing a decisive step in this progress. Moral hope is available, however, for moral agents who do not believe in historical progress, but believe that because God’s kingdom will prevail in the end, they will be vindicated (CF 93 and R 134).

(h) Finally, the moral agent who believes in God’s existence has a way to tie her moral life together with her worldview in general. Morality is, for Kant, just the practical exercise of pure reason. He does not think of different faculties of reason in us, theoretical and practical, but of a unified reason. Only in practical life is this reason required to postulate the existence of God; but in theoretical life in general and in science in particular, it uses the idea of God regulatively in order to make sense of the totality of experience. The belief in God’s existence, presupposed in the moral life, thus gives a unified sense to a person’s life as a whole (CPrR 139 and CJ 473ff.).

V

Is there some nontheist substitute that might do the work in ethical theory that Kant proposes for theism? We might try escaping from Kant's position about the rational instability of atheism by distinguishing between an "ideal conception" and a "historical conception" of the highest good, where the historical conception *does not depend on divine agency*.²⁰ We might try to locate the historical conception in Kant's historical and political essays, occasionally in *Religion* and in the third *Critique*, and more securely in the *Opus Postumum*. We would have here a Kantian reply to the Kantian critique of atheism. The historical conception is just that of a happiness of rational beings, produced historically by human effort, that harmoniously accompanies their compliance with moral laws. This is a self-rewarding morality, because no agency other than the human is presupposed; humans make themselves happy by progressively becoming more virtuous as history proceeds.

The first point I want to make is that this is not Kant's conception.²¹ He does indeed believe in moral progress. But throughout his work he thinks of this progress as dependent upon divine assistance. I know that some interpreters think Kant is not being sincere in these passages, that he is putting in God in order to avoid problems with the censor or the pietists he grew up with. But I don't think we should use this kind of interpretation unless we have to, and in the case of these texts it is better to suppose Kant is saying what he means. I will start again with *Religion*. I have already quoted one example of the sort of passage I have in mind. Kant does indeed say we can hope for a "system of well-disposed men, in which and through whose unity alone the highest moral good can come to pass" (R 98). But then he goes on to say that since we do not know whether such a whole lies in our power or not, we need to presuppose another idea, namely, that of a higher moral being "through whose universal organization the forces of separate individuals, insufficient in themselves, are united for a common effect." And then he says that in the ethical commonwealth (as opposed to a merely political one) all true duties must be represented as *at the same time* the commands of the highest lawgiver, who must also be "one who knows the heart." "To found a moral people of God is therefore a task whose consummation can be looked for not from men but only from God Himself" (R 100).²²

The historical and political treatises are more equivocal, because they have a different agenda, but they are still best read as consistent with *Religion* in this respect. I will take just one example. In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant frames his discussion by distinguishing between contexts (like *Perpetual Peace* itself) where we are concerned purely with theory and contexts where we are concerned with religion. In the former contexts we have to observe the constraint that we can talk only about nature, and not about providence, because we have to stay within the limits of possible sense experience. If we talked about provi-

dence in *these* contexts, we would be like Icarus flying on his manmade wings too close to the sun, producing in the end only his own destruction. Then at the end, Kant returns to providence and says that politics, though the discussion has been confined to nature, can still be believed consistent with ethics. For we cannot, without straying beyond the limits of human reason, attribute to the supreme power whose nature is beyond our understanding the restriction of our moral powers, so that we never can or will be in a better condition (PP 380). The whole discussion of nature in this work has to be understood as framed within the familiar Kantian ethical and religious framework, not as suggesting a replacement for it.

My second point is that this nontheist historical conception is not merely not Kant's view; it is not a plausible view on its own merits. Here I will be very brief, since the topic requires a book of its own.²³ A conspicuous exponent of the historical conception is John Dewey, one of the original signatories of the 1933 humanist manifesto that stated: "Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement." That the statement was written in 1933 is significant. We need to ask the question whether the statement is true, and whether it is supported by our experience of the world run by the people who believed it. The historical conception is one of moral progress by human efforts alone. The "progress" part of this is common to Kant and Dewey. The "human effort alone" part has been more or less unique in human history to the last century and a half. This has been at once the most educated and the most brutal period of human history. I am arguing not for the causal claim that atheism produces brutality, but for a Kantian modesty about what humans, given the propensity for evil, can accomplish on their own. Has Marxism or laissez-faire capitalism or any other human system produced the world of our dreams? If we lose the Kantian kind of modesty, we have shown that we open ourselves to horrendous evil.

The key question about atheism, as Kant saw, is whether a person is already committed to the moral law and has reverence for it. I claimed at the end of §II that his view about the connection between morality and religion gives us a kind of prediction about the consequences for society of the widespread rejection of theism. Nietzsche suggested a similar prediction, that the death of God would bring the death of guilt along with it.²⁴ There have indeed been various attempts in recent ethical theory to reduce the moral demand. Certain sentiment-based theorists, certain kinds of care-theorists, certain kinds of communitarians, and certain kinds of evolutionary ethicists have all denied that we have the duty of impartial benevolence, to treat every human as one and none as more than one.²⁵ I think Kant would call them all "practical atheists," whether they say they believe in God or not. But if a person does have reverence for the law, then without God she is in what I call "the moral gap." I cannot argue this here. But my view is that if she cannot produce a working alternative to theism in bridging this gap, her position will be unstable in just

the way Kant said Spinoza's position was. She will not be able to make consistent her beliefs about what she can do and what she should do.

NOTES

1. This essay was originally written in reply to a paper by Lara Denis, presented at the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association in 2001. I learned much from her paper, and some of the description of Kant's moral criticisms of atheism in the second section of my essay are drawn from her. Fred Beiser was the other commentator. Although he concedes that Kant's conception of practical faith is essentially theistic, Beiser's view was that it "is a boil, a tumor, a cancer within the critical philosophy, which is necessary to remove surgically." I have learned a great deal from Patrick Kain's unpublished paper "Interpreting Kant's Theory of Divine Commands: Three Proposals," and in particular he pointed me to the reference in N. T. Volkman's lecture notes to the "unstable condition" (*ein schwankender Zustand*) of religion without assertoric faith, whereby one continuously falls from hope into doubt and mistrust (LPR 1151). I have alluded to this phrase in the title of this essay. Finally, I have profited from Kelli S. O'Brien's paper "Kant and Swinburne on Revelation," *Faith and Philosophy* 17, no. 4 (2000): 535–557; she undertakes to adjudicate between my views and Allen Wood's on Kant's understanding of the place of revelation.

2. Collins, LMP 312. For more on the notion of "dogmatic" atheism, see §IIIc here. Although the Collins notes are early, the doctrine is repeated in later work.

3. Similarly, Kant attributes a kind of implicit religious faith (here in immortality) to Jews in general (R 126): "It can also hardly be doubted that the Jews subsequently produced, each for himself, some sort of religious faith." However, Kant thinks this was not part of statutory Judaism.

4. See Lewis White Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 272: "To be really possible is to be (a) logically possible and (b) related necessarily to some other fact (viz., the moral) whose reality is given."

5. I have defended the claim that this is not Kant's view, in *The Moral Gap: Kantian Ethics, Human Limits, and God's Assistance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), esp. chap. 2.

6. I put it this way in order to connect the point with the distinction in the *Groundwork* (GMM 433–434) between mere members of the kingdom of ends and the king of this kingdom who is "a completely independent being, without needs and with unlimited resources adequate to his will."

7. Allen Wood emphasizes this point in his article "Religion, Ethical Community and the Struggle against Evil," in *Faith and Philosophy* 17, no. 4 (2000): 498–511.

8. For a good discussion of the relation of *Religion* to Kant's development of his views about this, see Sharon Anderson-Gold, "God and Community: An Inquiry into the Religious Implications of the Highest Good," in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 113–131.

9. CPR A813/B841. In the rest of the passage the highest good as a whole is clearly supposed to be the incentive, not merely the heavenly reward.

10. MM 396; see also 231. I discuss this topic in "Kant on Recognizing Our Duties as God's Commands," *Faith and Philosophy* 17, no. 4 (2000): 459–478, esp. 468–471.

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11. Collins, LMP 312. There is a similar passage at *Vigilantius*, LMM 531.

12. Moral philosophers in the twentieth century who were strongly influenced by logical positivists like Carnap sometimes fell into this category. For example, R. M. Hare said the Apostles' Creed every Sunday in church. But his philosophical position was that we could not make meaningful assertions about the existence of God, and that faith in God was properly construed as what he called a "blik" (roughly, an attitude toward living in the world) rather than as making an assertion. See R. M. Hare, *Essays on Religion and Education* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 37–39:

It seems, indeed, to be impossible even to formulate as an assertion the normal *blik* about the world which makes me put my confidence in the future reliability of steel joints, in the continued ability of the road to support my car, and not gape beneath it revealing nothing below; in the general nonhomicidal tendencies of dons; in my own continued well-being (in some sense of that word that I may not now fully understand) if I continue to do what is right according to my lights; in the general likelihood of people like Hitler coming to a bad end. But perhaps a formulation less inadequate than most is to be found in Psalm 75: "The earth is weak and all the inhabitants thereof: I bear up the pillars of it." (38)

13. I am indebted to Patrick Kain for some additional references here: "The mere possibility of such a being is sufficient to produce religion in the human being" (Pölitiz, LPR 998; see also 1010); "The mere possibility of God's existence is already sufficient for moral religion; yet not as much as faith" (Rf 6226 [18:515]; I take it that the latter clause means assertoric faith is better at producing and sustaining religion, even though it is not strictly necessary); and "It is possible that a God exists, is sufficient for religion, but not for *cultus*" (Rf 6244 [18:523]).

14. Wood, "Religion, Ethical Community and the Struggle against Evil," 501.

15. See LPR 1084: "Hence our faith is not knowledge, and thank heaven it is not! For divine wisdom is apparent in the very fact that *we do not know but rather ought to believe that a God exists.*"

16. *Vigilantius*, LMM 531. The distinction is also found in LPR 1010 and 1026. In the former passage Kant says, "Hence a skeptic can still have religion" and goes on to say that the belief in a merely possible God as ruler of the world is the minimum of theology.

17. LPR 999. See CPR A632/B661. The very last sentence of *Religion* ends (R 202) "which proves that the right way to advance is not from grace to virtue but rather from virtue to grace." This is not a chronological claim, and Kant is not denying the doctrine of prevenient grace. But he is talking about naturally honest human beings who "carry their religion without fuss" and put to shame in the way they live their lives those Christians who make a great to-do about their privileged status as elect.

18. *Vigilantius*, LMM 530 and R 129. See also the references in §IIb here.

19. *The End of All Things*, Ak 8:339 (there is no word in the German corresponding to the Cambridge translation "though *supposedly* destined to be the world religion"), and R 107, 112, 157–158.

20. This was the proposal of Lara Denis in the original paper that prompted the present essay as a response. She referred to a discussion by Andrews Reath, "Two Conceptions of the Highest Good in Kant," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26, no. 4 (1988): 593–619; Stephen Engstrom, "The Concept of the Highest Good in Kant's Moral Theory," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52, no. 4 (1992): 747–780;

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and Thomas Pogge, “Kant on Ends and the Meaning of Life,” in *Reclaiming the History of Ethics: Essays for John Rawls* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). I would add Fred Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), e.g., 31: “The human will creates moral value.”

21. I am uncertain about the *Opus Postumum*. See Eckart Förster, *Kant’s Final Synthesis: An Essay on the Opus Postumum* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

22. Wood stresses this point in the article already cited: “Kant believes that (owing to a certain weakness of human nature) it is impossible for people directly to form a pure ethical community” (508). See also CF 82.

23. I have given somewhat longer treatment to the topic in *The Moral Gap*, esp. chaps. 4–7, and in *Why Bother Being Good?* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), esp. chap. 2.

24. *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 90–91: “The advent of the Christian God, as the maximum god attained so far, was therefore accompanied by the maximum feeling of guilty indebtedness on earth. Presuming we have gradually entered upon the *reverse* course, there is no small probability that with the irresistible decline of faith in the Christian God there is now also a considerable decline in mankind’s feeling of guilt.”

25. I am thinking, for example, of Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): “I am not obliged to care for starving children in Africa, because there is no way for this caring to be completed in the other unless I abandon the caring to which I am obligated” (86). She also says that the ethic of caring “will not embody a set of universalizable moral judgments” (28). Another example is Larry Arnhart, *Darwinian Natural Right* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998): “When individuals or groups compete with one another we must either find some common ground of shared interests, or we must allow for an appeal to force or fraud to settle the dispute. The only alternative, which I do not regard as a realistic alternative, is to invoke some transcendental norm of impartial justice (such as Christian charity) that is beyond the order of nature” (146).

three

Overcoming Deism

Hope Incarnate in Kant's Rational Religion

Christopher McCammon

The shape of Immanuel Kant's religious vision—if indeed it has a shape at all—is notoriously difficult to delineate. Many scholars have been content that beneath the serial number on Kant's dog tag we would find the inscription *Deist*.

Allen Wood certainly believes this was the case. In his straightforwardly titled paper “Kant's Deism,” he does a good job of substantiating just this sort of claim. He posits that the kind of deism described by John Dryden as “the opinion of those that acknowledge one God, without the reception of any revealed religion,” fits Kant very well.¹ He was, says Wood, concerned with the validity of a natural religion of unaided reason, not with any supernatural religion. While Kant concedes that “revealed traditions” may be temporarily necessary, Wood argues that this concession can be explained by (1) Kant's desire to appease the religious establishment and (2) Kant's belief that humankind had not yet emerged from the immaturity described in *What Is Enlightenment?* Nicholas Wolterstorff expresses similar sentiments in his “Conundrums in Kant's Rational Religion”: “The ritualistic side of Christianity should be seen, [Kant] thought, as having merely historical worth: rituals are neces-

sary, for a time, if humanity is to progress to the point where it can discard a faith of divine worship and make do with a purely rational religion.”²

Explanation (1) appears over and over again in Wood’s paper, yet it is *prima facie* unattractive. It seems a backhanded condemnation of a man who took his integrity very seriously. Kant confessed in a letter to Moses Mendelssohn: “Although I am absolutely convinced of many things that I shall never have the courage to say, I shall never say anything I do not believe” (C 10:69). Why not reverse Wood’s accusation and maintain that the traces of deism in the Kantian corpus are attempts to pacify (uncritically) “enlightened” academia? Though Kant explicitly rejected deism as a live religious alternative (PFM 356), scholars have persistently approached his position as a variation on the deistic theme.

Be this as it may, the discussion of (2) will receive the lion’s share of my attention in the following paragraphs—that is, that Kant makes allowances for revealed traditions because he believed humankind had not yet emerged from philosophical immaturity. I believe Kant’s use of symbols and representations drawn from revealed religion makes this second contention extremely problematic. Giving special attention to Kant’s doctrine of the Christic archetype from Book Two of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, I hope to draw together important themes from Kant’s broader critical project in order to outline the nature of rational hope in Kantian religion. In the end I believe we will see, among other things, that Kant does not foresee for humankind, in any possible “maturity,” the obsolescence of revealed religion. Christianity—revealed religion par excellence according to Kant—provides symbols and representations that make hope beyond the limits of knowledge accessible for rational belief. This done, I will briefly set my contentions over against Wolterstorff’s treatment of the themes of hope and rational belief in “Conundrums in Kant’s Rational Religion.” Wolterstorff contends that, whatever its deistic or Christian analogs, Kant’s conception of the relationship of rational religion to the Christian concepts of atonement and forgiveness is terminally incoherent. If my analysis is correct, Kant is incoherent only to the extent that his pursuit of reasonable *hope* is mistaken for the pursuit of moral and religious *knowledge*.

Before I can proceed, however, I must bring the relevant portion of Wood’s argument into brief focus. While he acknowledges that Kant’s “religion of reason has need of revealed traditions, owing to ‘a special weakness in human nature,’”³ Wood qualifies this by asserting that this “special weakness” may one day be overcome as humankind advances toward maturity. He sees this advanced humanity in Kant’s anticipation of a day when “the form of a church itself is dissolved, the viceroy on earth steps into the same class as the human being raised to a citizen of heaven, and so God will be all in all.” Clearly, Wood equates this dissolution of the church’s outward form with the coming of a religion more like deism.

It is interesting to compare the statement cited by Wood with another of Kant’s visions for the future of religion on planet earth:

It could be best of all likened to that of a household or family under a common, though invisible, moral Father, whose holy Son, knowing His will and yet standing in blood relation with all members of the household, takes His place in making His will better known to each of them; these accordingly honor the Father in him and so enter with one another into a voluntary, universal, and enduring union of hearts.⁴

Taken from the end of Division One, Book Three, of the *Religion* text, we have here a vision of a worldwide family constituted by a kind of mediation between an “invisible, moral Father” and a “holy Son” who provides for his younger siblings a vision of the Father’s will, cementing with his presence their moral communion. Yet the beauty and peace of this vision in Book Three is preceded by the toil and trouble of Book Two with its “Conflict of the Good with the Evil Principle for Rule over Man.” The fact of this conflict, and the uncertainty of its outcome, lead us to the necessity of moral hope; the nature of this conflict, and the inadequacy of reason to envision its resolution, lead us to the incarnation of that hope in revealed religion. The human being in search of moral reformation is indeed afflicted with “special weaknesses,” but the need for revealed religion is not among them.

Book Two of *Religion* offers a bitingly incisive and extremely bleak presentation of the exact nature of these weaknesses. Evil within the human being, Kant tells us, should not be traced to the evils of the world around us or to our own physicality, but to corruption at the level of *propensities*: “a subjective determining ground of the will which precedes all acts and which, therefore, is itself not an act” (R 31 [26]). The fact of this “subjective determining ground” would seem to excuse us from moral fault given that it “is itself not an act,” and Kant has just asserted that “nothing is morally evil and capable of being so imputed but that which is our own *act*” (R 31 [26]). There is no contradiction, however, because *act* is here taken in two different senses: an *act* can refer (1) to the choice of a maxim in or out of harmony with the moral law, or (2) to the actions performed in accordance with this maxim. Human propensities are the offspring of habitual acts in the first sense.

But close at hand we find a further conundrum: if a propensity to evil has been established, what is to be done? Kant admits that the way out is not readily apparent, because “it cannot be eradicated, since for such eradication the highest maxim would have to be that of the good—whereas in this propensity it already has been postulated as evil” (R 31 [27]). Classical discussion of virtue and vice, Kant insists, went wrong because it conceived of moral struggle as virtue versus inclination, and not as the presence of positive evil—a corruption of maxims disguised as a bright angel of reason’s own design. In the proper understanding of moral evil there is an element of horror—an element, Kant notes approvingly, preserved in the Christian tradition. Rightly conceived, the good is separated from evil not by an ontological gradation, but by an ethical gulf. And how is this gulf to be bridged? That it can be bridged we

must maintain because any assertion of *duty*, by Kant's lights, is analytically wedded to an assertion of *ability—ought implies can*:

For despite the fall, the injunction that we *ought* to become better men resounds unabatedly in our souls; hence this must be within our power, even though what we are able to do is in itself inadequate and though we thereby only render ourselves susceptible of higher, and for us inscrutable, assistance. (R 45 [40–41])

The problem as it now stands looks something like this. (1) Within every human being an evil principle is at work, dethroning the moral law from its place as the subjective determining ground of the will. (2) A will subjectively determined by usurping maxims cannot right *itself* by choosing or rechoosing the moral law as its maxim. (3) Nevertheless, every human being is haunted by the belief that we *ought* to reform—to “become better.” (4) As we have seen, every *ought* conceals a *can*. (5) Therefore, we must believe that some avenue exists whereby the moral law may overcome its rivals and be reenthroned—though this avenue be invisible from the perspective of earth-bound reason. But what is invisible from one perspective may be eminently visible from another. To use Kant's own language from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, what lies outside the realm of *knowledge* (i.e., the manifold of experience in the theater of time and space) *may be* well inside the domain of rational *faith*.

Kant's procedure here is analogous to what we find in his famous “moral proof” of God's existence in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant believed he had exposed as invalid all theistic proofs that claim to arrive at a knowledge of God's existence via theoretical reason—such apodictic certainty is possible only through the interaction of the twelve *a priori* categories with the objects of sense experience. In the second *Critique*, however, the following argument emerges from Kant's moral theory:

1. Humankind's highest good is for righteousness and happiness to exist in direct proportion to one another (i.e., *the good are the happy*).
2. If this is the highest good, every human being *ought* to strive toward its actualization.
3. Duty implies ability—ought implies can.
4. Therefore, the achievement of the highest good must be possible.
5. But we see that the highest good cannot be achieved in this world, or without a Divine Judge.
6. Therefore, the highest good must be achieved in another world, brought about by a Divine Judge of all humankind.

This is not a universally coercive argument for God's existence. It does not provide anything like the certainty offered by the traditional theistic proofs. Instead, Kant has shown us the need for God's existence as a necessary postulate for any who desire moral progress in themselves and the world.

The Kantian solution to the “Conflict of the Good with the Evil Principle” seems to be similarly motivated and constructed. Humankind is confronted with a moral conundrum: though fallen into corrupt dispositions, we are inescapably possessed by the idea that we “ought” to “become better.” This persistent *ought*, not to belabor the point, leads us inexorably to an assertion of ability. But what are we to say when it becomes apparent that the “labors of [our] hands” are inadequate? We must, Kant asserts, postulate that assistance may come from some source “inscrutable” to reason. Thus the need for revealed religion: what cannot be known (as inscrutable to reason and beyond the reach of certainty) may yet be the object of morally necessary hope. As Kant expressed it in a letter to C. F. Stäudlin, the essential question of his *Religion* text and of the philosophy of religion in general is “What may I hope?”—the third question in a series initiated by the *Critique of Pure Reason* (What can I know?) and the *Critique of Practical Reason* (What ought I to do?).

With the enclosed work, *Religion*, I have tried to complete the third part of my plan. In this book I have proceeded conscientiously and with genuine respect for the Christian religion but also with a befitting candor, concealing nothing but rather presenting openly the way in which I believe that a possible union of Christianity with the purest practical reason is possible. (C 11:429)

This “possible union” of Christianity (as a revealed religion) and pure practical reason is necessary just because human moral inadequacy stands in need of “inscrutable assistance.” It has been the typical procedure among Kant interpreters to highlight the independence of the latter from the former—thus Wood’s assertion of Kant’s deism. While it is certainly the case that Kant believed in a core of pure rational *faith* that must be distinguished from revealed *faiths*, the independence of this pure rational faith from revealed traditions is nothing like the whole story.

That there are real areas of interdependence and cooperation between rational faith and revealed faiths is supremely evident in Kant’s discussion of the “Personification of the Idea of the Good”—the Christic archetype. Might the figure of Christ, adumbrated in our own conception of ideal humanity and revealed in Christian Scripture, give shape to the “inscrutable assistance” we need?

Book Two begins with repeated comparisons between a rational conception of the ideal human being with the events of Christ’s life and passion. For example, Kant notes that the archetype of perfect humanity does not originate with humankind but seems to have “come down from heaven” like the incarnate Christ. Furthermore, because human persons cannot conceive of moral convictions unless we see them in conflict with and victorious over “the fiercest onslaughts,” we must conceive of the archetype as victorious over “every affliction, up to the most ignominious death, for the good of the world and even for his enemies” (R 61 [55]). If we have reasonable confidence that we

would act in a Christic manner in like circumstances, we may have a reasonable hope that we are objects “not unworthy of divine approval.”

But more pressing even than the moral usefulness of the Christ as moral archetype is the position of Christ as an object of moral hope. Suppose that, spurred by the “Personification of the Idea of the Good,” I turn from my evil maxims to the moral law. From that day forward I live a life “not unworthy of divine approval” (R 61 [55]) through unceasing dedication to this law. What shall we say of the life I lived before my change of maxims? What of the countless occasions I disobeyed the dictates of the moral law? “Whatever a man may have done in the way of adopting a good disposition, and, indeed, however steadfastly he may have persevered in conduct conformable to such a disposition, *he nevertheless started from evil*, and this debt he can by no possibility wipe out” (R 72 [66]).

From the perspective of pure reason, Kant goes on to say, substitutionary atonement is impossible. This is the “most personal of all debts . . . which only the culprit can bear and which no innocent person can assume” (R 72 [66]). What, then, shall I do about my *sin*? The shape of Kant’s answer to this question is vitally important both to our understanding of his relation to deism and to our grasp of his philosophy of religion as a whole:

And this moral disposition which in all its purity (like unto the purity of the Son of God) the man has made his own—or, (if we personify this idea) this Son of God, Himself—bears as vicarious substitute the guilt of sin for him, and indeed for all who believe (practically) in Him; as savior He renders satisfaction to supreme justice by His sufferings and death; and as *advocate* He makes it possible for men to hope to appear before their judge as justified. Only it must be remembered that (in this mode of representation) the suffering which the new man, in becoming dead to the *old*, must accept throughout life is pictured as a death endured once for all by the representative of mankind. (R 74 [69])

This paragraph unpacked, we find something like this: when the “new man”—the person post-adoption of moral law as maxim—accepts the guilt and sufferings incurred in his former life, though they were committed by the “old man” (R 74 [68]) who is a different moral entity, he fulfills the Christic disposition. Having thus entered fully into the pattern offered by the Christ, who suffered “the most ignominious death, for the good of the world and even for his enemies,” we may reasonably hope that something like the suffering substitute of the Christian tradition will make us appear “justified” before the divine judge, providing “higher, and for us inscrutable, assistance” (R 45 [40–41]) and filling the margins left by our moral inadequacies. This hope, of course, is *not knowledge*. We cannot *know* that ultimate acceptance before the divine judge is the fate of those who fully adopt the Christic disposition. From the perspective of *the known*, we can “by no possibility” hope for anything but what our guilt deserves. What we have is a *reasonable hope*. This hope is distinguished from mere wishful thinking by the fact that its embodying be-

liefs—the propositions embraced by the human being in pursuit of moral betterment—are necessitated by reason’s demand of conformity with the moral law. This leads us directly to Kant’s conception of rational faith:

Faith, in the plain acceptation of the term, is a confidence of attaining a purpose the furthering of which is a duty, but whose achievement is a thing of which we are unable to perceive the possibility—or, consequently, the possibility of what we can alone conceive to be its conditions.⁵

This definition of faith comes from Kant’s reiteration in the third *Critique* of the conditions for achieving humankind’s highest good: that is, the presupposition of God as moral judge and the soul as immortal. Strikingly, Kant seems to have something very like this line of argument in mind for the place of Christic symbols in the moral reclamation of humankind.⁶ If we are to maintain confidence and hope in the pursuit of moral success and personal salvation, we must avail ourselves of symbols drawn from—Dare we say it?—revealed religion. What makes Kant’s philosophy of religion radically distinct from recognizable deism is the claim that such symbols or representations are *necessary*. If we hope to complete the moral quest before us, if we hope in the end to be “well-pleasing” to the Divine Judge, we must *hope*—though we cannot *know*⁷—that something like the symbols of salvation and forgiveness offered us in the life and death of the Christ actually obtain. The great narratives of Christian theology provide symbols, pictures, ideas, personifications, “modes of representation,” and analogies that pure reason cannot regard as theoretical objects of knowledge, but must employ as possible incarnations of necessary hope. For example, in this lengthy footnote, Kant asserts that a Christ at least ideationally *incarnate* is a necessary condition of any human reflection on the archetype, and therefore of moral progress (R 65 [58]):

It is indeed *a limitation of human reason*, and one which is *ever inseparable from it*, that we can conceive of no considerable moral worth in the actions of a personal being without representing that person, or his manifestation, in human guise. This is not to assert that such value is in itself and in truth so conditioned, but merely that *we must always resort to some analogy* to natural existences to render supersensible qualities intelligible to ourselves . . . Such is the schematism of analogy, with which (as a means of explanation) we cannot dispense.

If Wood and those who emphasize Kant’s deistic flavor are correct, we would expect these “modes of representation” or “analogies” or “means of explanation” to be a kind of historical-empirical bone thrown to the unwashed herds of ordinary religious believers who cannot otherwise think their way to pure morality. Kant as deist, says Despland, might have embraced something like the following: “Such exemplification [of the archetype] is useful on account of the frailty of people’s minds, and the canon of natural religion is accessible to us without the historical vehicle that may have been necessary to our coarser ancestors or to the simpler of our contemporaries.”⁸

But this simply does not do justice to Kant's insight: these modes of representation are *universally necessary*. Human beings qua human beings (not as human beings in a particular less-enlightened historical epoch) are so constituted that we need an archetype in "human guise." Whatever the epistemic status of such symbols, Kant makes their employment a universal precondition of human moral progress. We simply must "resort to some analogy," and this is not unique to ignorant peasants and naive townfolk, but is an attribute of "human reason." Says Despland:

While Kant in Book Two agreed with the deists to give to historical representations only the value of exemplifications necessary on account of our frailty, he departed from most of them in holding that frailty to be one in which he himself as a philosopher participated . . . It seems that Kant wanted the picture of the life of Jesus to have a positive influence upon our "enlightened" imagination, yet did not want the imagination to run wild.⁹

While the imagination of the philosopher may be less inclined than those of the less "enlightened" to "run wild," it is an imagination that *must* engage the symbols and representations of revealed religion all the same. If deism is "the opinion of those that acknowledge one God, without the reception of any revealed religion," this seems to be a mold Kant cannot fit into—at least, not without unsightly bulges.

If Kant does not fit into any available deistic mold, Nicholas Wolterstorff contends that the mold Kant crafted for himself cracks from the interior pressure of self-referential incoherence. "Kant's religion, so far from being entirely rational," says Wolterstorff, "is riddled with irrationalities." He locates a primary fissure in Kant's picture of reflective faith as a locus of hope for "higher, and for us inscrutable, assistance"—the symbol of divine absolution through the Christic substitute. By Wolterstorff's lights, Kant cannot posit any possibility of divine forgiveness without violating the moral order he already has established:

What Kant is doing, in his entire argument, is probing the implications of our human rights and obligations. But something is an act of *grace* on someone's part only if the rest of us have no *right* to his or her performance of that act. If we have a moral claim on someone's doing something, then for that person to do that is not for the person to act graciously but for the person to grant what is due us . . . Thus Kant cannot have it both ways: he cannot hold that we can expect God's forgiveness, since God's failure to forgive would violate the moral order of rights and obligations, and also hold that God's granting of forgiveness is an act of grace on God's part. But since Kant's project is to ground religion rationally in the deliverances of morality, that is, in the structure of rights and obligations, it is grace that will have to go. God must be understood in the Kantian scheme as *required* to forgive. Of course this means that a gap begins to open between Christianity, on the one hand, and Kant's rational religion on the other.¹⁰

In other words, Kant's statement of the preconditions of hope (i.e., the good will's conformation to the Christic disposition) renders his conception of that hope (the "higher, and for us inscrutable, assistance" as symbolized by Christic substitution and divine grace) incoherent. According to Wolterstorff, the fulfillment of hope's preconditions through the adoption of the Christic disposition enables us to make certain moral demands of God—given our contribution to our own reformation, He is under obligation to absolve the margin of moral inadequacy that remains. But an *obligation* to be gracious is a contradiction in terms; thus Kant's project collapses upon itself.

Notice Wolterstorff's persistent repetition in the quotation above of "rights and obligations." This, he contends, is the heart and soul of Kant's project in *Religion*: the center of Kant's argument is "rights and obligations," and Kant cannot appeal to divine grace without compromising these "rights and obligations"; thus grace must be jettisoned in favor of the self-same "rights and obligations." But this will not do. Kant himself, if his comments to Stäudlin are of any import whatever, regarded *Religion* as a statement not so much of "rights and obligations"—such was the theme of his second *Critique*—but of the possibility of hope, given the jarring discontinuities between our obligation and our inadequacy to fulfill it: in Kant's words, "the injunction that we *ought* to become better men resounds unabatedly in our souls; hence this must be within our power, *even though what we are able to do is in itself inadequate*" (R 45 [40–41]; emphasis added). Because Wolterstorff focuses on questions of moral obligation to the exclusion of moral hope (hope is scarcely mentioned in the whole of his article), he cannot account for Kant's appeal to the Christian concepts of atonement and forgiveness. It is not surprising that Kant's central answers in *Religion* become conundrums once his fundamental question has been replaced, for Kant's question here is not what the person of pure heart has the *right* to claim, but what one must *hope* in order to make moral progress—not what *God is obligated to do*, not what *God may be known to do*, but what *one must hope* God will do.

Though Wolterstorff begins his article with a disavowal of attempts to reduce Kantian religion to morality, he seems to do just that in the end. He interprets *Religion* as an attempt to find epistemic ground for religion in the preestablished rationality of Kantian morality: "Kant's project is to ground religion rationally in the deliverances of morality."¹¹ Because the inscrutable assistance of divine grace, by Wolterstorff's lights, cannot be so grounded, it must go. But was a "grounding" of this kind really Kant's intention? Is Kant's intention in *Religion* to establish an unbroken continuum of epistemic grounding from morality to every part of his rational religion? It seems we have good reason to question this. I have attempted to demonstrate here that Kant himself did not believe any such continuum is possible. Certain gaps remain that morality, without recourse to "inscrutable assistance," cannot overcome. Therefore, Wolterstorff's motif of epistemic *grounding* seems inappropriate. Divine grace, as represented in the symbols and representations made avail-

able in the Christian tradition, is not connected by way of epistemic grounding to the deliverances of morality; its possibility is not *proven* from premises based in morality, it is *posited* as a possible object of reflective faith. Kant is guilty of incoherence only if we confound the possible incarnations of necessary hope with theoretical objects of knowledge.

Just this confounding of hope and knowledge has led some scholars to identify Book Two of *Religion* as the closest thing in the Kantian corpus to a public profession of deism. I have shown that the vibrancy of Kant's rational religion can be appreciated only when we understand his affirmation of necessary hope as incarnate in revealed religion. Certainly this is something more than any familiar form of deism.

NOTES

1. Allen W. Wood, "Kant's Deism," in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 2.

2. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Conundrums in Kant's Rational Religion," in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 41.

3. Wood, "Kant's Deism," 3.

4. R 102 [93]. All references to this work are taken from the Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson translation (Chicago: Open Court, 1934). Page numbers from the Greene and Hudson edition are in brackets immediately following the Academy pagination.

5. CJ 472. This quotation is taken from the James Creed Meredith translation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 146.

6. Kant references themes from the *Critique of Judgment* in direct connection with his discussion of the moral value of the Christic archetype: "Thus, I cannot say: I can *make comprehensible* to myself the cause of a plant or of any organic creature, or indeed of the whole purposive world only by attributing intelligence to it, on the analogy of an artificer in his relation to his work, say a watch; therefore, the cause of the plant and of the world in general must itself *possess* intelligence. That is, I cannot say that this postulated intelligence of the cause conditions not merely my comprehending it but also conditions the possibility of its being a cause" (R 65 [59]).

7. The reasons for this limitation are as much religious and moral as epistemic. Indeed, if the symbols provided by the Christian tradition were available as objects of knowledge, they would have little or no religious value because ordinary perceptual beliefs impress themselves on the just and the unjust. Adolf Hitler and Mother Theresa of Calcutta would, no doubt, form similar beliefs given similar sensory stimulation, despite their vastly different moral commitments. For Kant, our religious beliefs reflect our best hopes for personal and corporate reform in a way that ordinary beliefs—those formed by the *a priori* categories functioning within the manifold of experience—do not.

8. Michel Despland, *Kant on History and Religion* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 198.

9. Despland, *Kant on History and Religion*, 200.

10. Wolterstorff, "Conundrums in Kant's Rational Religion," 44–45. Kant himself puts something very like this objection in the mouth of a theological objector: "To believe that God, by an act of kindness, will in some unknown way fill what is lacking to our justification is to assume gratuitously a cause that will satisfy the need we feel (it is to commit a *petitio principii*); for when we expect something by the grace of a superior, we cannot assume that we must get it as a matter of course; we can expect it only if it was actually promised to us, and hence only by acceptance of a definite promise made to us, as in a formal contract" (CF 47).

11. Wolterstorff, "Conundrums in Kant's Rational Religion," 44–45.

four

The Anatomy of Truth

Literary Modes as a Kantian Model for Understanding the Openness of Knowledge and Morality to Faith

Gene Fendt

*I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order
to make room for faith.*

—CPR Bxxx¹

This famous sentence from the first *Critique* seems to render more plausible than most Kant criticism acknowledges that the entire critical project has a theological or religious telos. However, when the religious motive in Kant is pointed out, interpreters often assume it reduces to an entirely negative theology, Modernism, or perhaps even humanism.² Kant's way of putting this point about faith and knowledge is rather more purposive and, one might say these days, more ideologically revealing, than is necessary, for there is an old philosophical problem at its root, namely, the problem of the grounding of first principles and the relation of their truth to the truth of secondary (but first used) principles.³ Alternatively, one may, as Kant does in *Streit der Fakultäten*, present the issue as one of the relation of subordinate sciences to those sciences that provide their principles and so under whose judgment they stand. What I would like to outline is a way of understanding the series of relations of "knowledge" to "faith" in the architectonic repetitions with variation of the *Critiques* leading into the *Religion*. In this essay I will attempt to show how the question of truth is deployed in various aspects of Kant's enterprise and how these deployments are related to each other and presume a kind of faith or

trust all the way along. I take the series of deployments of “truth” Kant explicates to be rigorous if incomplete. It should go without saying that I believe it is true.

“What Is Truth?” (CPR A58/B82)

I will start seemingly far afield. In a justly famous book, Northrop Frye outlines a history of Western literature based on five fictional modes: myth, romance, high mimetic tragedy, low mimetic realism, and irony.⁴ I would like to begin with an account of truth that borrows heavily from this well-known plot. Frye’s account exhibits the devolution of literature from myth through romance and realism to irony; it is a great story, one that itself bears readings that are mythic, romantic, realistic, and ironic with equanimity and poise. It bears plurality of significance, and it bears such plurality because it has a structured openness; I find this same kind of structure and openness in Kant. The work of both is open in that it allows all these different readings (from mythic to ironic) entrance and purchase; it is structured in that these readings are mutually implicated and run across each other in ways that deny ownership of the whole to any one of them and allow some very clear views of their mutual relations. Frye suggests further that (a) the history of literature displays a shift in the center of gravity from the first to the last mode; (b) at the depths of irony we approach the mythic again, exhibiting that the *pharmakos* of one person is the god of another,⁵ and this circularity suggests either (1) a parasitic dependence of each mode upon the mode above it, or (2) a more Hegelian mutual interdependence, or self-development and exfoliation of each from or within the whole that is the body of literature. We might say of these final options that in the first case everything depends upon (is parasitic on) myth, or in the second, that no one mode can be ripped from the body of the whole without fatally compromising its own viability. I suppose this latter view to be what Hegel saw operating in Kant’s philosophy and requiring completion, though I am not myself convinced that he makes the matter clearer.

First let us trace out the supposed pattern of devolution in truth talk. According to Frye, the world of myth is “a world of total metaphor, in which everything is potentially identical with everything else, as though it were all inside a single infinite body.”⁶ One thinks of Socrates’ myth in *Republic* whereby the Good makes all things be what they are (including the knower) and be known as they are, or his myth in *Symposium*, whereby all beautiful things—bodies, souls, ideas—participate in and lead to the Beautiful. This infinite, all-encompassing Eternal Idea is what the demi-urge in *Timaeus* passingly imitates in constructing the moving world where we live and move and know, imitating in our own way the Eternal Idea that the demi-urge knows and imitates. A related version can be found explicated in detail by any number of early Christian and medieval commentators on the opening sentences of John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God,

and the word was God. He was in the beginning with God; through him all things were made and without him nothing was made which has been made” (Jn 1:1–3). In it the truth of the world and of the mind and of the word the mind utters is all one: Adam names all the animals correctly, seeing them *as they are* because seeing them in, or through, the mind of God with whom he is intimate, naked, and unashamed: “So God brought all the animals before the man and behold what he called each was its name” (Gn 2:19). Here no distinction is possible between realism, transcendentalism, objectivism, a cultural relativism of language games, or the (impossible?) individual relativism of idiolect; and pragmatism, too, is the truth of things, for in all of Eden nothing else works.

To put matters in Kantian terms, we would have to tell a story here of a form of intuition that we do not have, and so we can have “no proper knowledge” of it (CPR B149); we find it is impossible to describe such a thing without driving into self-contradiction since the ordinary language of substantives and tenses we use to tell the story seems permanently tied up with spatiotemporal intuition.⁷ Kant himself imagines Frye’s mythic unity of truth and being in terms of “intellectual intuition,” describing it as “[a]n understanding which through its self-consciousness could supply to itself the manifold of intuition—an understanding, that is to say, through whose representation the objects of the representation should at the same time exist” (CPR B138–139).

The next step should be romance, but let me speak first of what Frye calls “realism,” a term that includes the already mentioned high and low mimetic. If “myth is an art of metaphorical identity,” “realism is an art of implicit simile.”⁸ Here we might put all philosophical empiricism—including Locke, Berkeley, Hume—and all correspondence theories of truth. According to these an idea is true insofar as it corresponds to, or is like, the thing—“the agreement of knowledge with its object,” as Kant says (CPR A58/B82; A191/B236). So Locke’s ideas are denominated true or false “whenever the mind refers any of its ideas to anything extraneous to them” insofar as the mind’s “tacit supposition of their conformity to that thing . . . happens to be true or false.”⁹ And “the truth of these appearances or perceptions in our minds” consists “only in their being answerable to the powers in external objects to produce . . . such appearances.”¹⁰ That is to say, the ideas imply nothing about the substance of the thing *being*, for example, actually blue or bitter, just that it looks or tastes *like* that. In fact, Locke (sounding as much like Kant as anyone) goes so far as to say of our ideas of substances that “they are all false, when looked upon as representations of the unknown essences of things”:¹¹ we do not grasp the essence, but something relative. Similarly for Hume, impressions are our more lively perceptions, ideas the less lively perceptions we are conscious of when we reflect on the first: “Every idea is copied from a similar impression.”¹² Kant agrees with the empiricists, except in their reduction of *all* concepts and ideas to such empirical causality. The empiricists, like the celebrated Locke, extend their realist version of truth to the point of producing a “*physiology* of the

human understanding” (CPR Aix). Such a physiology would, Kant points out, reduce science from a product of reason “constraining nature to give answer to questions of reason’s own determining” to the “character of a pupil who listens to everything that the teacher chooses to say” (CPR Bxiii)—a blurring, buzzing Heraclitean confusion.

Besides being unable to explain the condition for the possibility of truth in the empirical sciences, namely, that “something in them must be known *a priori*” (CPR Bix), such a reduction of the sense of the word “truth” as empiricism believes raises grave difficulties for the use of the term in moral and aesthetic judgments. If “the world is everything that is the case” and “the world is the totality of facts not things” and “a proposition is a picture of reality” and “the totality of propositions is a language,”¹³ then, when all of your propositions are like intuitions of the world, you have the whole truth.¹⁴ Under such empiricism and positivism, moral and aesthetic truth must (just as everything else) correspond to *some thing—p*—and so we have to go about looking for what it is. Hobbes and Hume as well as many more modern thinkers judge it to be certain sentiments that they (variously) call socially influenced/shaped/created. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein says morality and aesthetics lie outside the world—whatever that means if the world is everything that is the case. What it means, I am given to understand, is that the shape of the world is moral or aesthetic. But this word—shape—seems to be a simile without a correlate, unless that correlate is feeling, sentiment, passion.

Kant’s deduction of the categories in the first *Critique* shows that reason has a reason that empiricism cannot *know*, but must *use* in all of its claims. There is a valid use of “true” that does not correspond to any thing appearing in intuition. One might say empirical reason has faith (*pistis*, in Greek) or accepts or trusts in the *a priori* categories, for they are not demonstrated in the way empirical reason demonstrates. Kant is revealing this acceptance as the basis of all our empirical knowledge. The low mimetic, empiricist deployment of truth depends upon a different requirement being true in order for it to accomplish what it (so amazingly, in Kant’s view) does. That higher truth is not discoverable or testable in the low mimetic manner one may test whether or not the snow is really white; it requires a deduction that transcends the bounds of pure empiricism.

We are now able to distinguish Frye’s high mimetic from the low mimetic deployments of “true” by paying attention to the status of the mind in these operations. The empiricists who preceded Kant (Locke, Hume, et al.) are, at best, low mimetic: the mind is like a piece of wax; things leave their impression on it; these impressions are ideas. Things happen; the mind accepts them. The things that happen are connected by contiguity or constant conjunction; we are in the habit of calling such repeated contiguity “causality.” The patterns repeated more frequently delve deeper furrows into the waxy tablature of the mind than singularities. Gradgrind does this to Bitzer (who at the end of Dickens’s novel is capable only of these little bits of empirical truth)¹⁵ quite

successfully. Reality is Gradgrind: it gradually grinds our mind into agreement with itself. Occasionally, damage (for example, after leaving by the window rather than the door once too often) or disease (fever) causes a meltdown of the wax. The mind is not a significantly different kind of thing from the environment, nor does it have any more significant powers than the usual wax. This is precisely Frye's description of the low mimetic hero.¹⁶ In fact, we might consider such a mind as some empiricists describe as lower than the environment, for it is completely subject to it; in that case we are already in the world Frye calls irony: the scene of bondage, frustration, and absurdity—a mind merely written upon, that cannot even see the pen.

Low mimetic morals would operate likewise: judgment becomes the mobile expressionistic result of a congeries of variously graven inputs—pleasure, pain, survival, parental or social dissatisfaction, etc. Were our empirical science perfect, morals would be as predictable as a machine—ouch!¹⁷ That is the point of Bitzer's transformation by Gradgrind; in the end Gradgrind feels the pinch of his exact machining. Perhaps the mythic command against graven images can yet be understood even at this low mimetic level? The point of the Dickensian work of art is to make us feel not only the pain, but more the injustice and reductive partiality of such a world. Our reaction is: people aren't all the way like that, really. Further, we can only feel that world as reductive, partial, unjust, and so painful because we feelingly know that world of total and complete empiricism not to be the world—though it is *like* the world.

Kant suffers neither of these epistemological or moral reductions. His empiricism is always at least low mimetic, for he holds that reason is an *a priori* factor in all our knowledge. Reason is related to the object of knowledge “either as merely *determining* it and its concept (which must be supplied from elsewhere) or as also *making it actual*” (CPR Bix). Kant thereby gives the mind in its scientific uses a power of action at least equal to the environment in the first case and “somewhat higher than the environment” of things the mind dwells in and things that act upon the mind in the second.¹⁸ That power, revealed in the deduction of the categories, exhibits the fact that, besides the low mimetic version of truth he shares with the empiricists, Kant has also what we can call a high mimetic deployment (one that requires a different kind of proof than the usual low mimetic manner of discovering the proper object of intuition). The condition for the possibility of the (low mimetic) truths about objects is the acceptance of the (high mimetic) truth of the deduction of the categories for objects.

Returning to our overarching story, we observe with Frye that “myth . . . is one extreme . . . ; naturalism is the other, and in between lies the whole area of romance, using that term to mean . . . the tendency . . . to displace myth in a human direction and yet, in contrast to ‘realism,’ to conventionalize content in an idealized direction.”¹⁹ Now, while the Preface to the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* reads like a romance—with the knight of honor going forth to redeem the name of that slandered queen, *Metaphysica*²⁰—Frye's

typology has a less rhetorical application to Kant as well. As the first *Critique* attempts to exhibit the necessity, and become perspicuous about the work, of reason's categories in determining the objects of nature, it also adumbrates, and the second *Critique* brings into high relief, that this project (science) is essentially moral,²¹ for the empirical-realist science that gets at nature's truth depends upon the same autonomy of reason that produces the categorical imperative, and the moral law that is the engine of the whole (to bring things down to a low mimetic analogue) has the purity and autonomy of the true queen, whom we all love and have loved always. Reason extends further than intuition, not only in "determining" the categories of all intuition but also in "making actual" a will that answers the categorical demand. Kant goes on to argue that the science the empiricists think gets at all the truth there is (empirical realism) depends essentially on a truth it never achieves or can achieve—what Kant calls the regulative ideas of pure reason. These ideas are at work in each and every effort of empirical science; insofar as that is true, the first *Critique* shows how all of our ordinary truths are part of an idealized and ever-incomplete project of reason: the complete *Naturwissenschaft* of the never wholly intuited cosmos of Nature. The truth we must dream of allows the truth we see.

The mythic autonomous and self-revealing God is displaced from the entirety of what is to the realism of practical reason (displacing myth in a human direction, as Frye says), and this practical reason proves both its existence and its right by deducing its law *a priori*, refusing any aid from empirical anthropology. Nor does this mind merely determine the form of its experience (as the high mimetic mind); rather, reason directs the investigation of the empirical world in accord with its own regulative ideas in a language whose syntax is underwritten by the *a priori* synthetic truths we lay out in mathematics and whose telos is implied in its own demand for moral actuality. Far from being a piece of wax, this mind is one with nearly demi-urgic powers. Perhaps it is Plato's demi-urge—though to say so would be to demythologize Plato.

We must be particularly clear that the truths of morals are not, according to this romance, discoverable in the way that truths about snow, or even the deduction of the categories that allow us to speak of snow and the rest of the physical world, are discoverable. The truths of morality cannot appear in intuition; further, the deduction of the principle of morals cannot proceed as the deduction of the first *Critique* proceeded, but the truths about snow and the world depend upon (what Kant himself calls) the *fact* (not just the possibility) of moral truth—in particular, that moral truth called freedom.²² We could not discover any truths at all were reason not capable of making laws for itself. Kant is, then, a moral realist, but what counts as real or true here is not objective in the way what counts as real or true in empirical science is objective. There is objectivity in morals, but it is not an objectivity tied to correspondence to an intuitable thing, nor is it the same kind of objectivity as he claims for the first *Critique*'s deduction. "True" has been deployed in three quite distinct senses.

Kant is very clear that these kinds of truth are not merely different; they are related in an asymmetrical way: the objectivity of the moral realm is the condition for the possibility of the discovery of truths about nature (but not the reverse), and the fact of freedom presupposes the coherence of reason's un-tuitable autonomy with the discovery of truths about nature in a system of causality, though that *coherence* does not prove the fact of freedom either. Aesthetic judgments are still another kind of thing, but they, too, would not be possible without the fact of morality; their truth takes yet another form, one that not only coheres with the other two, but in addition is the ground or condition for any actual community among human beings *in the world of experience*; for only if feeling, intuition, and intellect are connected in the same way in all of us can we even speak to each other, much less come to agreement about any political or aesthetic issue.²³ Kant's transcendental arguments about the work of reason both *perform and defend* that "romantic" (in Frye's sense) power exceeding that of ordinary sense and the environment that belongs to such high heroes. Reason, like the hero of romance, has a power of operation "superior in degree" to both the mere empirical understanding and its environment. This power, not natural to empirical understanding and intuition but natural to moral reason and coherent with the empirical environment, places the human being *at once* in the world of experience *and* in the supersensible world of morality. Freedom is a magic mirror, an "enchanted weapon" if ever there was one.²⁴ In fact, it is the source of all such stories. To steal a word from Heidegger, the truth of romantic fairy tales is their a-lethic revelation of the moral power.

Descending below the high and low mimetic, already dealt with, we find the ironic; it "begins with realism and tends toward myth, its mythical patterns as a rule being more suggestive of the demonic than of the apocalyptic."²⁵ Here the division of the original mythic body becomes absolute: each element a windowless monad whose vision of what is is entirely its own. In such a world each vision may be coherent in itself but thoroughly different from each other vision. Without a God to guarantee their preestablished harmony, each will be constructing, or showing, its own self-made film: each is its own private theater. Morally, this is Hobbes's state of nature; but such a state and such a nature have no way out. One may, at this point of despair, be tempted to invoke an argument against private language (Wittgenstein), or voice a prayer for solidarity amid all these contingent ironies (Rorty), or attempt to demonstrate that the grinding gears of natural selection delete those running peculiar (let us not call them queer or avant-garde) films (Spencer, and his more well-dressed grandchild, Sociobiology). But can such invocations be thought to go somewhere? I ask myself. Each of these later figures thereby exhibits what he would have take the place of Leibniz's more romantic version of God: language, groundless solidarity, natural selection. But to ask which is true, or whether any of them is so, is to take us immediately out of irony, for asking the question pretends that other monads hear and (might) care. I say to myself.

The question of truth may be asked in the world of irony, but to attempt to answer it is to bring a sieve to a man milking a he-goat (see CPR A58/B83). None of the four responses to irony named above universally closes the option that it may well be that no other monad is sharing your film or that in any case one is only applauding a universality that appears only in your own private theater. And it can't; I am tempted to ask for the condition of this impossibility, but that is to take us back to Kant's "deduction" in the *Critique of Judgment*. In the ironic story any agreement among monads (how would we notice it?) is purely contingent; there is no queen, and certainly no God preestablishing our harmony. This space is where the purely coherentist notion of truth operates—and in its smallest space. Of course, what counts as coherent may vary widely (how could we tell?) if, as some literary theorists in this mode hold, "even [our] types of logic" are merely a convergence of our own particular preferences.²⁶ Barring the pragmatism of the box cutter and the bomb, it will only be by some totally mystifying supervenient grace (mythic explanation), some invisible hand (low mimetic explanation), that these monads will come to agreement about the truth of either things or of values: without such (variably interpreted) versions of grace, the divisions between each individual are infinite and unbridgeable—each is a differend to the other.²⁷ We do not find ourselves to be quite in this position—yet. (How could we *find it* to be?)²⁸

We don't so find. Irony, even to be understood, requires a lighting it cannot supply itself. So, supervenient grace is operative: QED. We have now returned to myth, as Frye said we would, though coming to it this way and from this direction makes grace and sacrament seem Absolutely Other (*totaliter aliter*, as some later Medievals would put it) to each and all of us: totally transcendent to our profane world(s), yet somehow we are open to it. Perhaps Lévinas might be a synecdoche for this position: an ironist permanently broken open by grace. According to Weber (and others), this ironic world, this world of absolute anomie and division, is the final result of the world of Protestantism; it is certainly tied up with a reductive empiricism. One might, at this point, go on to exhibit how theological differences about the sacraments and ecclesiology play out between this ironic foundationless hoping-for-solidarity that seems our present state—at least according to Rorty—and the mythic liturgical and real communion long since foregone (as some say), but to do so would take us too far from this story about the truth—at least according to philosophy and criticism. One might find each of those versions of sacrament and ecclesiology tying itself to some aspect of Kant's critical philosophy.

So far then, we can see that Frye's typology does play out fairly clearly into several arguments about truth in epistemology and morals; further, Kant deploys each of them as providing some element of the truth of his critical philosophy, with the mythic deployment exhibiting the limit of that philosophical project (and from very early on). We can note that, as there has been a considerable shift in gravity, or communal acceptance, from Platonic myth to contemporary irony in the history of philosophy, the same devolution is appar-

ent in Kant criticism from the high romanticism of Schiller, Schelling, and Hegel to the low mimetic mode typified by Strawson.

Logic as Trope

There is a formal analogy to this story about truth. In 1931 Kurt Gödel published his important paper on undecidability in formal systems, proving that any formal system adequate to number theory includes a formula that is not provable and whose negation is not provable; in other words, the consistency of a formal system cannot be proved within that system. If consistency can be proven, completeness cannot be. What we have seen in this story about truth in Kant (and Frye) is the playing out of that claim about formal systems in the very informal and unaxiomatized system of ordinary language. Gödel's proof showed that mathematics could not be proven both complete and consistent within the bounds of one formal system, that the consistency of a system can be proven only by taking a step outside that system into another, and if that second can be proven to be consistent, we will not be able to prove its completeness. Almost as a proof of this, Alfred Tarski, in the course of his argument in "The Semantic Conception of Truth," notes that while his reasoning is very closely related to that used by Gödel, it "may be added that Gödel was clearly guided in his proof by certain intuitive considerations regarding the notion of truth, although this does not occur in the proof explicitly."²⁹ In other words, Gödel's reasoning about formal systems, having inspired Tarski, can itself be seen to depend upon and be involved in Tarski's larger and more general theory about truth in semantic systems: Gödel's truths about the formal system of mathematics are imbedded in the meta-language of language, and his proof mimics Tarski's thought, as Tarski proves it must (even though his article postdates Gödel's). For my part, I would like to say that Frye was clearly guided in his anatomy by certain intuitive considerations regarding the notion of truth, although this does not occur in the anatomy explicitly. For Kant, too: there is an order to our inquiries, ordered boundaries to the senses of "true" within them.

However, we must also note that Tarski restricts his notion of truth to semantically open artificial languages—languages whose semantic predicates (predicates like "true") apply only to sentences of languages other than itself. This requires the nesting of an object language within a meta-language where those predicates may apply; and the latter language in turn must also be semantically open to a meta-language where *its* truth may be expressed; etc. Our story is clearly related to this kind of logical vision of one complete system depending, for proof of its consistency, on something not provable within it, and that next system depending, for proof of its completeness, on something outside that, and so on. To start at the bottom, any ironist's view is perfectly consistent in itself, but he wishes to talk to someone about it and even convince others to be in solidarity with him; the accomplishment of that task

requires a step outside his object language. A pragmatist ironist (Rorty, to name names) wishes to make all such accomplishment nonlinguistic and so avoid this logical problem. With the right tools (including box cutters and bombs) I suppose it is possible to accomplish this—in the pragmatic sort of way that reduces those who disagree to a dusty silence.

Kant suggests, at the opening of “Perpetual Peace,” that this Hobbesian final solution might be nature’s. But he believes we are not merely objects of material nature. Kant perspicuously unites the next three higher versions of truth, for he shows that, while the Humean’s low mimetic empiricism is perfectly consistent, it is incomplete: it cannot explain the condition for its own possibility. For that a transcendental argument is needed. That first transcendental argument involves us in a system that includes freedom, a fact whose proof lies outside the system of empirical science, though it can be shown to be wholly consistent with it. A second transcendental argument is needed to prove the fact of freedom, and that argument has implications that will take us beyond the high mimetic story of Kant’s critical idealism into the romantic world of autonomous freedom and universal community that every will subject to the moral imperative already understands itself to be in.³⁰ That romance opens up to what is beyond its knowledge, but whose acceptance is consistent with it—if it understands how ought gets to can.³¹

But however neatly this story and analogy work, language is not a formal system (as Tarski admitted), and so I conclude that all of these modes of truth are always operative in it, and variously deployed by its users, in one great glass bead game. What we might have wished to believe were (and have been anatomically treating as) distinct language games cannot really be separated.³² And so, calls for, or claims that a language is in need of, reform³³ are both impossible to carry out and can be clearly seen (from the point of view of this anatomy) as a demand to universalize a certain form of myopia (usually these days the empiricist one, though the romantic view is not entirely dead). Finally, as to the question of whether this entire anatomy is dependent upon some extra-mythic origin (“In the beginning, God made . . .”) or is the exfoliation of language itself (“There is nothing outside of the text”), I propose that that question is undecidable from within that informal system we have and wherein we move, and so we have stories that go each way. This is not to say that the question is *essentially* undecidable, only that it is so *for us*.³⁴ For something to be undecidable in this sense allows it to be, in Kant’s terms, a matter of faith.

Semantic Openness and the Metaphysics of Religion

Rising with their aid (since [reason] is determined to do this also by its own nature) to ever higher, ever more remote conditions, it soon becomes aware that in this way—the questions never ceasing—its work must always remain incomplete. (CPR Aviii)

When Kant said, “I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith” (CPR Bxxx), in fact, he could do no other. And if, after the linguistic turn, the limits of reason are the limits of language, neither can we. What empirical science depends on, as Tarski showed formally, is what Kant’s transcendental critical arguments show by a longer and deeper way around: the embeddedness of science’s limited object language (and investigations) in a language (and purpose) larger than its object language has the terms for. The fact that Kant points out—in looking at the success of Galileo and Torricelli, whom he takes as the *arche* and synecdoche of empirical science—that these men saw “that reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own, and . . . that it must itself show the way with principles of judgment based upon fixed laws, constraining nature to give answer to questions of reason’s own determining” (B xiii) indicates that the truth of empiricism depends upon something beyond it: a principle not provable within its system—the freedom of reason. So, we might say, the language of empirical science is (necessarily) semantically open to that of morality.

So, too, it will turn out that morality depends for its completion, as does the coherence of our moral actions in a *complete* system, upon a principle outside itself that Kant does not attempt to deduce: the existence of God. The existence of God is not proven within morality, but God and immortality are implicated in every moral act; we might say the language of morality is (necessarily) semantically open to faith. To Kant this necessary openness seems to require faith,³⁵ as his discussion of Spinoza makes clear (CJ 452–453). But in making his moral argument for the existence of God, Kant is merely proleptically affirming the kind of thing Gödel would state: that the undecidable formula, σ , of a formal system is presumed true. In any case, *it is logically, and naturally, impossible to close the language of the moral world upon itself*. An atheist humanism is impossible (though an atheist inhumanism is not). Kant cannot, then, possibly be the father of atheist humanism except through the imputation of some illegitimate child, whose seed will be found to be other than Kant’s critical project. Even the claims of Modernism are, in their negative theology, too positive to be Kant’s children.

We must understand such famous statements of the tragic sense of life as Russell’s “only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul’s habitation henceforth be safely built”³⁶ to be merely rhetorical expressions of the inclination to revolt. I mean “inclination” in the sense Kant gives it in *Religion*;³⁷ and I mean “revolt” in Kierkegaard’s technical sense. That is, Lord Russell is giving expression to that form of locking oneself into oneself, and away from the community of reason, that Anti-Climacus calls defiance.³⁸ This despair can be understood as a perversion of the order of the faculties, for it results from grounding the moral project upon empirical experience and from limiting it to the low mimetic use of “true.” But, as Kant himself asks (CPR A816/B844): “What use can we make of our understanding, even in respect of experience, if we do not propose ends to ourselves?” That proposing requires

an autonomy that exceeds the empirically available truth. Perhaps we should use a favorite technical term: Russell's proposal is nonsense. Clearly, his statement cannot be the truth-functional derivative of atomic sentences: for to take it apart is to see it is non-sense. But without getting too rigorous about such formal details we might ask how, really, could despair be firm and yet continue in existence? And how unyielding can it be if it seeks to build? Or even publishes a book that, I suppose, *seeks* to convince?

I suppose the semantic openness of morality to faith means two things further. First, Kant's argument, far from requiring the displacement of God, shows that even the life of empirical science can be understood only from within a framework that inexorably entails a faith exceeding *all* our ways of knowing the truth. All of creation, as it were, conspires against the opposing use of reason. Every work of the finite rational being is therefore either an assent to this grace, or a work of revolt against it.³⁹ Second, the anatomy of truth uncovered here argues against the view "that we have and always will have two natures,"⁴⁰ but are really one, though that unity is not completely exhibited or demonstrable from any one aspect of that nature.

Finally, I propose that these two corrections allow us to understand that it is necessarily possible that God could "speak" to human beings, and that if He chose to do so we could understand Him.⁴¹ There could be a Word outside our words that coheres with all our natural language and can judge *all* our language's truth functionality. *We* can be found to be true or false. So one thing further: having heard and understood, to *know* (rather than believe) that Word as true would require that we have a further openness, but I think that further openness must be something other than a *semantic* openness of language to God's Word; it would more plausibly be called a *metaphysical* openness in our being to some kind of unity with God through that Word, some kind of what Aquinas calls "being made deiform."⁴² Quite naturally—anatomically speaking, and quite in keeping with the logic of truth in natural language, I cannot argue in proof of this principle, or even imagine what God has prepared—just as (according to Kant) I cannot truly imagine happiness—but I may consistently pray that this Word be done unto me. Insofar as my acts as a rational being are expressive of and upbuilding for the entire community of rational beings,⁴³ I am so doing. Pragmatically speaking, this is the one true thing to do; and this prayer is the mythic truth of every act of freedom—or, the truth is, I am in revolt.

NOTES

1. *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1933).

2. I confess to occasionally falling near these sins myself; for example, in *For What May I Hope? Thinking with Kant and Kierkegaard* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 206, I said that "Kant stands against both Incarnation and Revelation"—a statement I now repent, as will be seen by the close of this essay.

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3. Stephen R. Palmquist bases his *Kant's System of Perspectives* on what seems to me the same point: "Kant's doctrine of rational faith [is] not only a moral tool used for the systematic justification of the metaphysical ideas of God, freedom, and immortality, but also . . . a theoretical tool, required in order to open the door to the entire Critical philosophy." *Kant's Critical Religion: Volume Two of Kant's System of Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 51. However, I do not think Kant's system of perspectives can be systematized with quite as exacting a geometry as Palmquist suggests.

4. Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957).

5. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 43.

6. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 136.

7. Augustine usually comes at this issue from the angle of posing a problem of the bounds of language rather than as a bound of epistemology; he regularly presses language to the point where it breaks down and must fall silent (e.g., *Confessions* 1.4.4, 9.10.23–26). Nonetheless, he continues to speak. Undoubtedly these two angles are complementary, for whereof we cannot speak, thereof we seem not to be able to remain silent, or as Kant puts it, the "extension of concepts beyond *our* sensible intuition is of no advantage to us. For as concepts of objects they are empty, and do not even enable us to judge of their objects whether or not they are possible" (B148). Here Kant must mean such concepts are of no advantage to our knowledge of *things*, for he has, nonetheless, already used one such concept (the creative intuition), precisely to exhibit the bounds of our knowledge.

8. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 136.

9. John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 2.23.4. I have used the edition of Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover, 1959).

10. Locke, *Essay*, 2.32.16.

11. Locke, *Essay*, 2.32.18, cf. 2.32.5.

12. David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, §2, ¶14; see also ¶12. I have used the edition of P. H. Nidditch and L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975).

13. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), sentences 1, 1.1, 4.01, 4.001.

14. The entirety of Michael Dummett's recent Dewey Lecture, "The Concept of Truth" (*Journal of Philosophy* C:1 [January 2003]: 5–25), revolves around this low mimetic mode of deploying the word.

15. I am referring here, of course, to the characters in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*.

16. See Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 34, where he summarizes both the low mimetic and ironic.

17. This exact reductivism is exhibited by Barbara Herrnstein Smith; see, e.g., *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 39 and 43.

18. See Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 33–34.

19. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 137.

20. "Time was when metaphysics was entitled the Queen of all the sciences; and if the will be taken for the deed, the pre-eminent importance of her accepted tasks gives

her every right to this honour. Now, however, the changed fashion of the time brings her only scorn; a matron outcast and forsaken, she mourns like Hecuba” (CPR Aviii).

21. For this argument, see Gene Fendt, “De Reductione Scientiae ad Bonos Mores,” in *For What May I Hope*, 45–71.

22. See “On the Primacy of Pure Practical Reason in its Association with Speculative Reason” in CPR R 119–121.

23. This, I take it, is what Kant is bringing out in the devolution of the “deduction” of the third *Critique* to an “assumption” (CJ [§§30–38]).

24. See Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 33, where both quotations from the previous two sentences can be found.

25. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 140.

26. Smith, *Contingencies of Value*, 39.

27. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), xi. This position seems to be the French version of a position espoused by Gilbert Harmon in *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); he allows that there “is even the limiting case . . . [of] a one-person group” (7). The modern world is indeed, as Frye said, the world of irony.

28. The solipsism implicit in pragmatism is exactly its problem with regard to truth. As the always witty and inevitably trenchant Santayana once said, pragmatism seems “to express an acute critical conscience, a sort of will not to believe; not to believe, I mean, more than is absolutely necessary for solipsistic practice.” See George Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine: Studies in Contemporary Opinion* (New York: Scribner’s, 1913), 130.

29. Alfred Tarski, “The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics,” in *The Nature of Truth*, ed. Michael P. Lynch (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 360 (n18).

30. That Romanticism followed Kant’s third *Critique* is simply a fact of cultural history; this might prove something to an empiricist, if she thought history was a science and could prove something.

31. Not to understand how ought gets to can leaves one in the situation Allen Wood has called the “absurdum practicum.” See Allen Wood, *W. Kant’s Moral Religion* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1970), 29.

32. So, for example, Sidney Axinn’s explication of what he calls “the logic of ignorance” in Kant, requiring that “the distinction between the examiner’s and the subject’s language must always be kept in mind,” cannot really hold to the distinction it requires, for examiner and subject are the same person. See *The Logic of Hope: Extensions of Kant’s View of Religion* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 1994), 169.

33. See Dummett, “The Concept of Truth,” 11–12.

34. I mean to recall two technical notions in this sentence. First, according to Tarski, a theory is essentially undecidable if all consistent extensions of it are undecidable (*Undecidable Theories* [Amsterdam: North Holland, 1953]). Second, according to Aquinas, what is supremely knowable in itself may not be so to a particular intellect—i.e., for us (*Summa Theologica* 1, q. 12, art. 1; cf. 1.2.1). This last seems closest to what Kant is implying in the suggestive idea of a being with creative intuition (CPR B139).

35. For example, he says that “to view ourselves as in the world of grace [in a system of moral laws under the government of the supreme good] where all happiness awaits us, except insofar as we ourselves limit our share in it through being unworthy of

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happiness, is, from the practical standpoint, a necessary idea of reason” (CPR A812/B840).

36. Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 107.

37. Perhaps, for Russell, this is already what Kant calls a passion. I have used the edition of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper and Row, 1960); see R 29–30n [24n] for “inclination” and for “passion.”

38. Anti-Climacus continues: “This kind of despair is rarely seen in the world; such characters really appear only in the poets, the real ones, who always lend ‘demonic’ ideality—using the word in its purely Greek sense—to their creations. Nevertheless, at times despair like this does appear in actuality.” See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 72.

39. So, synecdochically, every interpretation of the critical project either assents to the religious ideas that permeate it from the beginning, or revolts against that connection of reason and faith.

40. Denis Savage, “Kant’s Rejection of Divine Revelation and His Theory of Radical Evil,” in *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 73.

41. Again, I am arguing against the Savage position that “all statements of revealed religion, if they have any objective validity at all, are completely translatable—without remainder—into the concepts and expressions of rational ethics” (74), though here some more famous interlocutors agree with him—Barth, Cassirer, and Walsh, among others.

42. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1, q. 12, art. 5, 6. In article 6 Aquinas continues by saying that person will have a fuller participation in this “who has the more charity . . . and will be the more beatified.”

43. Cf. Kant’s idea of the “corpus mysticum” as a community wherein “rational beings, under the guidance of [moral] principles, would themselves be the authors both of their own enduring well-being and that of others” (CPR A808–809/B836–837).

PART 2. THEOLOGICAL
APPLICATIONS FOR
KANTIAN RELIGION

five

Reading Kant through Theological Spectacles

Philip J. Rossi

Dangerous shoals await those who use theological charts and compass as prime navigational aids in exploring the complexities of Kant's thought. Yet those same aids sometimes can provide direction for routes to and through domains of Kant's work and its development that are not readily accessible—or seemingly even closed off—from “standard” philosophical mappings of his critical project and its significance.¹ Both the dangers and the possibilities of such theologically charted navigation need close attention when the domain under exploration is Kant's treatment of the extensive range of topics we have become accustomed to place under the heading of “religion”—a heading and a grouping that Kant himself, in company with other thinkers prominent in the constitution of “modernity,” played a role in establishing as a standard locus in our discourse about human activities and institutions. I issue this caution for readers as well as for myself with regard to the exposition and argument of the rest of this essay.²

What lies behind this caution about the use of theological mappings of Kant? It arises, first of all, from the particular academic context that has shaped my own work on Kant for at least three decades. Partly by choice, partly by a set

of circumstances, the institutional setting for this work has been a large department of theology that understands its work to embody the ecumenically engaged Catholic theology envisioned by Vatican Council II. Within that setting I have been continually reminded of the fact that Kant has cast a long shadow upon philosophical and theological inquiry of almost every kind for more than two centuries. The image for this that I regularly use with graduate students is to have them imagine Kant's work and its aftermath as a mountain range that stands athwart one's intellectual path. One might do one's best to ignore it, but in the end it is far more likely that one will have to find a way over, through, or around it. Whatever path one negotiates, moreover, is likely to intersect with the paths of others, and one should not be surprised to find oneself with welcome—but also sometimes unwelcome—intellectual companions on various stages of the journey.

That my own journey would be through and over the Kantian mountains, rather than around them, was probably first determined by my initial philosophical training in a Jesuit seminary where the Aristotelian-Thomist conceptual formalities that were the staple of the required curriculum were taught by faculty who, for the most part, worked within a distinctively Catholic philosophical movement known as “transcendental Thomism.” This movement originated in the first half of the twentieth century in writings of the Belgian Jesuit Joseph Maréchal, most notably in his five-volume study *Le point de départ de la métaphysique: leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance*.³ In characteristically Catholic fashion, transcendental Thomism has subsequently taken both philosophical and theological trajectories, with the latter having a far more wide-ranging impact in Catholic intellectual circles, most notably through the work of the German theologian Karl Rahner.⁴ The thrust of Maréchal's own work was to engage the concerns and issues of philosophers from Descartes to Kant and the later idealists from a Thomistic framework, but to do so constructively, that is, with an aim to recognizing and retrieving their contributions to philosophical inquiry, rather than ferreting out and refuting their errors in the adversarial and polemical mode that had become typical of other neo-Thomist analyses of these issues.⁵ This early exposure to a style of inquiry that approaches philosophical texts with an eye that looks first to convergences rather than differences had the effect of rendering Kant less of an “adversary” to the principles of Thomism and neo-Thomism as these were variously formulated in the manuals and textbooks of early- and mid-twentieth-century Catholic philosophy. He became, instead, an interlocutor—a formidable one, to be sure—who had to be understood and dealt with, first and foremost on his own terms, before one could make a judgment about the desirability or necessity of polemical engagement.⁶

This manner of engaging Kant—as well as any other philosopher or theologian—could be termed a principle of “hermeneutical generosity.” It is not always easy to apply this principle to a thinker such as Kant, given not only the span of years and range of topics encompassed in his extensive volumes of

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writings but also the phenomenon noted by Lewis White Beck: “It is regrettable that Kant was not more careful; though had he been so, the race of Kant commentators would be unemployed.”⁷ Charges of carelessness and inconsistency have been a staple of Kant commentary and criticism for more than two centuries. While some of these charges have validity, our reading of his texts should work from a perspective that seeks first to articulate and then to understand the concepts and lines of argument that Kant took to be (or tried to make) consistent—even for his more tensive texts or obscure arguments—before pronouncing them hopelessly inconsistent for further use in philosophical (or theological) inquiry.

This principle of hermeneutical generosity, however, does not guarantee that we will all read Kant in the same way, be it with respect to the overall trajectory of his thinking, the relation of his “pre-critical” writings to those of the “critical project,” or his treatments of specific fields of philosophical inquiry, such as metaphysics, ethics, or epistemology. Larger interpretive frameworks function to make readings of Kant differ from one another, often enough in ways typically identifiable by reference to a particular philosophical style or school. For instance, though each claimed the legacy of Kant, the various forms of German neo-Kantianism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century diverged considerably on their readings of key arguments and concepts in the corpus of Kant’s writings and on what constituted the intellectual center of gravity of the critical project.⁸ In the twentieth century, various readings of major parts of Kant’s work have been associated with Arendt, Donagan, Habermas, R. M. Hare, Heidegger, Rawls, and Strawson—to name only a few major figures for whom Kant has functioned as a key interlocutor. More recently, moreover, Kant has been presented in a variety of “deconstructed” guises, most often as a sinister avatar of “enlightenment rationality” but even occasionally as a precursor, albeit mostly unwitting, of the “postmodern.”⁹

Many of the thinkers just mentioned would not claim to be full-blooded members of the more narrowly focused “race of Kant commentators,” so they might be quite ready to acknowledge that differences in their readings of Kant have sources in places other than *in* his texts or *from* his own historical context. Yet it is also the case that even among the race of Kant commentators—those who closely parse Kant’s texts and scout the sociocultural and historical terrain that nurtured his work—there are many who present accounts that often differ from one another not merely in matters of detail, but on how best to understand his fundamental concepts or to reconstruct and assess his basic arguments. In many cases these differences can also be identified as a function of the particular philosophical framework a commentator uses to question Kant’s text and its contexts. The farther away we inevitably keep moving from Kant’s own context, the harder it becomes for us to use just Kant’s own spectacles—or those of his contemporaries—in reading his work: even as we try to don those, we are already wearing other lenses. So just as the neo-Kantian readings of the latter part of the nineteenth century did not offer a single version of Kant’s

thought, Kant scholarship of the twentieth century has offered a variety of analytic, phenomenological, pragmatic, and hermeneutical readings that post-modern and deconstructionist readings now join to usher in the twenty-first.

That different readings of Kant arise as a function of the different philosophical frameworks and styles interpreters bring to his texts seems relatively uncontroversial. Much the same can be said about the way other major figures in the history of philosophy have been read and continue to be read. What I will explore in the rest of this essay, however, is a claim that is likely to be more contentious, namely, that key differences in the reading of Kant's philosophy of religion also exhibit differences in what I shall term the "theological horizon" that frames, be it explicitly or implicitly, the issues, arguments, and concepts in his texts. Such theological horizons function, in the first instance, on Kant's own part, but they also do so from the side of his readers, and their operations in the latter case may have had the more significant impact on whether one views Kant as friendly or unfriendly to theology as a mode of inquiry or to particular theological claims and conclusions.¹⁰

What I understand by a "theological horizon" can be most readily displayed by looking first at how one arises and operates on Kant's own side. Perhaps one of the few matters almost all readers of Kant might be likely to agree on is that he is extraordinarily persistent in raising questions both at and about the limits of human agency and inquiry. From his relentless pursuit of these questions he constantly brings to the surface a range of possibilities for construing the constitutive elements of what it is to be "human" inasmuch as that term marks out *our unique status as the intersection of freedom and nature*. The possibilities that he then frames most pointedly for construing the human, moreover, are those that concern *how, as the unique intersection of freedom and nature, we then stand with respect to the divine*. As a result, the "theological horizon" that functions on Kant's side arises precisely with respect to his characterization of the human; it bears upon what contemporary theology treats under the heading of "theological anthropology"—the shape of the human viewed within the context of the reality of the divine. Kant takes this question of how the human stands with respect to the divine to arise—and to arise ineluctably—from our unique human status in the cosmos. Framing the question in this way is thus what I take to exhibit Kant's most fundamental theological horizon—even as he wrestles with the intractability of articulating a relationship across what he understands to be the radical difference between the human and the divine. As Susan Neiman puts it:

Of the many distinctions Kant took wisdom and sanity to depend on drawing, none was deeper than the distinction between God and the rest of us. Kant reminds us as often as possible of all that God can do and we cannot. Nobody in the history of philosophy was more aware of the number of ways that we can forget it. He was equally conscious of the temptation to idolatry, the alternative route to confusing God with other beings. Kant's relentless

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determination to trace the ways we forget our finitude was matched only by his awareness that such forgetting was natural.¹¹

To put this point in a different way: Although I think it inappropriate for many reasons to think of Kant as himself a theologian, he doggedly returns to issues about the fundamental sense and significance of what it is to be human, that is, to be morally free as part of a causally determined cosmos. He takes these issues to be such that, at some point in their pursuit, we have no way to frame them but in relation to that which we call “God”—but which, precisely *as* God, lies in all ways beyond human grasp (and, indeed, beyond relation). The anthropological issues Kant raises—that is, his questions about the human—push him (and eventually his readers) toward the articulation of fundamental questions about the divine in relation to the human—that is, toward theological questions.¹² In this way he exhibits a “theological horizon” that functions to keep in view *the very possibility of relation of the human to the divine*. As Michel Despland observes in his Foreword to these essays, “[Kant’s] way of doing philosophy embodies an understanding of what it means to be human that is most relevant to any theological endeavor or any undertaking to study religions.” In dealing with these theological questions, however, Kant does not approach them *as* a theologian—at least not as a formally Christian theologian for whom doctrine articulated and accepted by the church forms a normative framework for responding to these questions.¹³

What I thus propose for the rest of this essay is a further specification of the “affirmative” theological horizon that, in my judgment, needs to be explored in order to understand better the interrelatedness of Kant’s philosophy of religion and theology¹⁴—viz., the role that is played by assumptions about the function and character of “grace” and its bearing upon human (moral) activity. Different understandings of grace mark some important divides in Christian theology—so my hope is that the examination of one instance of an interpretation of some of Kant’s key anthropological claims being shaped by a particular kind of Catholic understanding of grace may help bring to light how, in contrast, a different understanding of grace, one shaped by the Reformation problematic of justification, is at work in some of the other essays in this collection. It should be noted, moreover, that a similar “Reformation-shaped” understanding of grace may implicitly function in “traditional” interpretations of Kant that see his work as theologically negative. If so, then this collection points out the need for a further systematic exploration of the bases for *both* theologically affirmative *and* theologically negative readings of Kant.

To the extent that a central concern of Kant’s own work involves construing how the human stands in relation to the divine, one should not be surprised that a specific “theological horizon” often brought into play in reading Kant on religion is primarily indexed to a central notion, that is, “grace,” that Christian theology has employed to articulate that divine/human relation. I

propose to understand this notion in terms of its function of gathering together a complex cluster of images and concepts that variously articulate the most crucial aspects of how *God's* activity bears upon the center of what makes *us* and our activity *human*. This is by no means a transparent notion—so much so that my construal of *divine* “grace” as having a bearing on “what makes us *human*” may be at least as controversial for theologians as my using it as an interpretive lens to differentiate readings of Kant may be for philosophers. Differences among Christians have often been marked by different theologies of grace—be it the dispute between Augustine and Pelagius, the doctrines framed in the Reformation as distinctively Catholic, Calvinist, and Lutheran construals of grace, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century controversies over Arminianism among Protestants and between the differing views of Molina and Báñez among Catholics,¹⁵ or the mid-twentieth-century intra-Catholic controversy sparked by the efforts of a movement known as *la nouvelle théologie* to reconceptualize the relationship between “nature” and “grace.”

Though “grace” primarily functions in theological discourse as a way to characterize aspects of God’s activity, the differences that have been most contentious among various Christian theologies of grace have frequently been “cashed out” concretely in terms of the construal of how our human capacities stand with respect to the power of grace: for instance, the question of whether God’s grace is “irresistible” is as much a question about how one construes the range of human freedom or the power of the human will as it is a question about the power of grace and the power of God. As a result, someone working within a theological horizon oriented toward a Calvinist theology of grace will typically “read” the fundamental circumstances and structure of the human situation—such as the range and even the nature of human freedom—differently from someone whose theological horizon has been oriented by a Catholic or a Lutheran theology of grace. We should thus not find it strange that key intra-Christian differences in the orienting of a theological horizon carry over into readings of Kant, given the central focus his critical project has upon our human situation as a free and finite part of the cosmos and upon the power and limits of our capacities in that situation.

I believe Kant’s own reading of this situation can be defended as congruent in its most important points with a Christian anthropology, but it also cannot be fully identified with the theological anthropology of a single historically articulated theological tradition, such as Lutheran, Calvinist, or Catholic. Unlike theologians within these traditions, Kant is not concerned to measure his account by reference to a particular doctrinal interpretation of grace and the human condition; the unsurprising result is that elements of his view are arrayed along quite different points of the terrain usually taken to mark the boundaries dividing various Catholic and Protestant theologies of grace. Jacqueline Mariña has provided a thoughtful analysis that helps to locate how differences among Christian theological horizons can affect interpretations of Kant on the crucial question of how human freedom functions

with respect to the power of God's grace.¹⁶ Her main line of argument seeks to refute the charge often leveled against Kant that his critical reconstruction of the Christian doctrine of original sin in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* amounts to Pelagianism—that is, the view that, to extricate themselves from the condition of “radical evil,” human beings have no need of divine assistance that is efficacious and freely bestowed (i.e., of grace).

At the outset of her argument, Mariña points out that “Kant works with at least three different concepts of grace, all of them operating on distinct levels.”¹⁷ Her analysis of the second and the third of these concepts, both construing grace as “divine aid,” is central to resolving a set of issues involved in Kant's account of moral regeneration and in “the remarkable antinomy of human reason” regarding “historical faith” and “pure religious faith” (R 116). It is, however, the first of these concepts—“Kant's most general and principal conception of grace . . . [that] can be defined simply as ‘God's unmerited favour,’ to which the individual can relate both practically and existentially”¹⁸—that is most important in showing how “theological horizons” function on the side of Kant's readers.

Mariña's analysis of this first concept of grace identifies three features that are particularly significant. First, the level where this first concept of grace functions is *universal*; at this level “this concept relates to the unconditioned worth of all rational beings, and hence, to the moral law.”¹⁹ Second, this universality marks the *gratuity* with which grace is bestowed:

When we say that grace is freely given, what we mean is that it is not something owed to us in virtue of some special characteristic we possess setting us apart from others, or in virtue of something we *do* making us special. Our actions do not *constrain* God to confer any good upon us or to enter into relation with us. The divine/human relationship is established by God with us *before* any act on our part, and this means that all that we can do is to be *receptive* of God's grace.²⁰

Finally, this general concept of grace has significance for Kant's anthropology beyond that demarcated by the issue of moral regeneration: “this general notion of grace *is not simply* a response to the problem of radical evil. If it were merely this, the problem of evil would define the contours of that which is needed to solve it, namely grace.”²¹ At the risk of oversimplifying the subtleties of both Kant's concept and Mariña's analysis, her proposal suggests that, if one grants the admittedly controverted distinction between *Wille* and *Willkür*, this first concept of grace functions more properly on the side of *Wille* as the general orientation of the human will prior to the making of any specific choice on the side of *Willkür*.

Mariña does not herself draw this connection to Kant's terminology. Still, she offers at least two remarks that suggest the aptness of the connection. The first is early in her discussion:

Key to a resolution of the issue [of Kant's “Pelagianism”] is the recognition that it is not *our* adoption of a good disposition that is the condition of *God's*

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action upon us, that is, his graciousness towards us, but that rather, our adoption of such a disposition is the condition of *our ability to be receptive of and to recognize God's grace*, which is ever present.²²

The second occurs in her concluding discussion on the Augustinian character of Kant's account of grace (399–340), in which a key element is an acknowledgment of the function of grace for the general orientation of the human will prior to the making of any specific choice:

Because its ground (the predisposition to good) has a divine source, we cannot give ourselves credit for it; rather, the very possibility of our doing good rests on grace. Kant thereby comes very close to the Augustinian-scholastic position which attributes our ability to do good to actual grace.²³

If grace functions in Kant's analysis at a level where it is "ever present," this shifts the theological horizon for reading Kant's account of religion from the one operative in a "Pelagian" reading. The theological horizon of grace as "ever present" opens the possibility that grace may function in the first instance as a *general* qualification upon the relationship between the divine and the human and not just as a (problematic) *specific* element in effecting human moral regeneration.

The reference to Augustine is important and instructive. At the risk of oversimplifying once again, the theological difference at work here can be characterized by reference to that earlier figure who has also played a monumental role in the history of both philosophy and theology. As in the case of Kant, Augustine's work forms another of the great mountain ranges athwart the path of each discipline. Despite the great chronological "space" that separates these two ranges, the conceptual distance between them in the matter of grace may be considerably less, particularly if one is willing to entertain the possibility that there are significant similarities in the way Augustine and Kant each read the finite character of the human condition as well as the power and limits of our capacities within that condition.²⁴ Yet, even if one takes Kant to be an "Augustinian *Aufklärer*," there is more than one orientation one can take in using an Augustinian map to locate and traverse a pathway of "grace" through Kantian territory. On one orientation, the Kantian path marked "grace" turns out to lead in the direction scouted by one of Augustine's great adversaries, Pelagius—and this is a path often tracked by the "traditional interpretation." Along it, Kant's account of grace is "simply a response to the problem of radical evil," construing grace in one of the specific senses of "divine aid." On this orientation, the function of grace is forensic, though with a Pelagian twist: the grace of God imputes to us the righteousness that we ourselves have already accomplished. One may thus be likely to miss the markers that place this construal of grace within a more general concept whereby grace bears much more fundamentally upon the inner (re-)ordering of our agency, viz., upon aligning the fundamental maxim of our action with the predisposition to good that forms the fundamental orientation of *Wille*.

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Reading Kant with an orientation that reads grace as primarily divine aid in the face of a human incapacity to turn away from radical evil comports well with locating *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*—be it explicitly or implicitly—primarily (or even exclusively) within a theological horizon delimited by the classical Reformation problematic of justification: How are we (helpless sinners) ever to be saved? When translated into the concepts of Kant's account of human moral freedom, this problematic becomes one of finding logical space for the grace of divine activity to function within the ambit of the exercise of human autonomy flawed by a willful inversion of our incentives for choice. Within that horizon, what Wolterstorff calls “conundrums in Kant's rational religion” will almost inevitably arise, and Kant will be subject to Michalson's charge of “wobbling” between the worldview of the Bible and that of the Enlightenment.²⁵

Another orientation, however, can be taken from the Augustinian map, one that is not as closely tied to the theological horizon of the Reformation. This one suggests that the main Kantian path across the terrain of grace is not Pelagian, but rather more closely parallels one Augustine himself charted in terms of our inner disposition. This path runs closer to the Catholic side of the Reformation disputes about grace and justification:

It is, however, no doubt true that insofar as Kant places the grounds of justification within the person, i.e., within the altered disposition, he strays far from the Reformation view which sought to comprehend justification in forensic terms. In his doctrine of grace he comes much closer to Rome. To those who insist that one cannot have a true conception of grace without such a forensic understanding of justification, Kant will, no doubt appear Pelagian.²⁶

Recognition that placing the function of grace *deeply within the dynamics of the subject* moves Kant “closer to Rome” is significant for specifying the theological horizon that provides a different orientation for reading this Kantian anthropological terrain with an Augustinian map. This horizon lies closely aligned to that of transcendental Thomism. A central element in the project of transcendental Thomism had been to articulate the (transcendental) conditions of possibility for the dynamisms of human subjectivity. Kant is acknowledged as the methodological progenitor of this project, but what sets the transcendental Thomist form of this project within a theological, as well as a philosophical, horizon are its efforts to place the Kantian project in continuity with traditions of Augustinian-Platonic reflection upon the spiritual striving and finality exhibited in those human dynamisms, traditions for which Aquinas is taken as the prime historical and systematic exemplar.²⁷

This essay is not the place to rehearse the full range of issues from textual interpretation to theological method that, in the wake of the project of transcendental Thomism, engaged many Catholic theologians and philosophers since the middle of the twentieth century. It is important, however, to take

note that one key issue centered on the adequacy of the construal of grace that had become standard in Roman Catholic theology after the Reformation.²⁸ This construal had its origin in the interpretations of Aquinas developed by later commentators such as Cajetan (1468–1534), John of St. Thomas (1489–1644), and Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) and was understood in many quarters of nineteenth- and twentieth-century neo-Thomism as faithfully representing Aquinas’s own views. This construal functioned in terms of concepts of the “natural” and the “supernatural” that had their basis

in a distinction between two diverse finalities in human nature. The first is a finality that every created nature must possess in virtue of its constitution as a nature. The second is the supernatural finality that an elevated nature has acquired through the contingent act of God that raises it to the order of grace and glory.²⁹

Critics of this view—most notably proponents of *la nouvelle théologie* such as Henri de Lubac, but also prominent transcendental Thomists such as Karl Rahner—argued that its two-tiered account of finality within the human recipient of grace had become increasingly implausible on historical, scriptural, and systematic grounds. While recognizing the importance of preserving both the gratuity of grace and the freedom of the human response to the graciousness of God, they sought to provide an account of the relation between “nature” and “grace” in the human person based on concepts that would better exhibit that the integrity of their relation to one another is such that “concrete reality of grace includes nature as an inner movement within itself.”³⁰

This dispute is relevant to my purposes in this essay because the shift in the understanding of grace proposed by critics of the standard neo-Thomist construal of the distinction between the natural and the supernatural is a shift of theological horizon fundamentally similar to the one operative in Mariña’s critique of Pelagian interpretations of Kant. In both instances the shift lies in the horizon of theological anthropology—the shape of the human viewed within the context of the reality of the divine—wherein notions of grace are placed. The shift is effected by envisioning grace as operative at a more fundamental structural level of the human: grace now functions principally as the fundamental form of divine relation to the human rather than as a moment of “divine aid” with respect to particular human activities.³¹

Proponents of *la nouvelle théologie* and transcendental Thomists thus argued for the primacy of construal of grace as a constantly offered invitation of relationship with the divine that functions at the level of the fundamental human dynamisms of knowledge and desire. They maintained that such a relational construal of grace comports better with an integral and holistic understanding of the human than the then-dominant neo-Thomist emphasis on grace as a “transient elevating motion” that works upon particular moments of human activity within a bifurcated account of the human.³² Mariña’s argument against considering Kant to be a Pelagian draws attention to the universal

function of grace in constituting the unconditioned moral worth of humans whereby God establishes a relation with us “*before* any act on our part.”³³ Grace is operative in the relational context constitutive of human moral agency so that “the very possibility of our doing good rests on grace.”³⁴ This relational understanding of grace opens up the possibility of overcoming a bifurcation in Kant’s construal of the human that is required by those construals of grace that view it primarily as “divine aid” offered at the decisive point of moral regeneration. These views—not all that far from seeing grace as “transient elevating activity”—will inevitably find grace and human freedom pitted extrinsically over against one another in unrelieved tension, if not irreconcilable competition.

In arguing that the theological horizon operative in Mariña’s reading of Kant aligns well with the one operative in the Catholic theology of grace that emerged after World War II, I am not primarily arguing for the inclusion of a Catholic reading of Kant—let alone a “Catholic Kant”—within Firestone’s category of theologically affirmative readings of Kant. Such a proposal does not make a great deal of sense, given that the dominant reading of Kant within Catholic philosophical and theological circles has mostly been aligned, though for its own set of reasons, with the “traditional interpretation” and its judgment that Kant has been a baneful influence upon the enterprise of Christian theology.³⁵ The lines of interpretive demarcation here cut across the standard larger distinctions of Christian theological traditions, such as Calvinist, Catholic, and Lutheran, and seem to lie closer to distinctions in theological anthropology that, particularly in an age of active ecumenical conversation, cut across putatively “denominational” lines.³⁶ I strongly suspect that the key elements that determine whether the horizon of a particular theological anthropology enables a “friendly” reading of Kant are to what extent, first, “the human” is construed primarily in relational terms within that horizon and, second, Kant’s own anthropology is taken to be open to such a relational construal. The second is obviously more problematic, be it within or outside a theological horizon for reading Kant—though I think a case can be made that the recovery recent scholarship has made of the social dimension in Kant’s account of reason renders such a relational account far more plausible.

A host of issues obviously remain for continued discussion of how to converse in a theologically responsive and responsible way with Kant’s philosophical treatment of religion. What I have provided here, both in terms of the larger movement of transcendental Thomism and in the more focused analysis of Kant’s account of grace that Mariña offers, is only a partial sketch of how a particular Catholic theological horizon functions as an interpretive grid for reading Kant. My hope is that this has offered a concrete context for further reflection on the caution I enunciated at the beginning of this essay—that is, the reminder to pay heed to the fact that, even when he is writing on matters of religion, Kant remains thoroughly a philosopher. My aim in suggesting further reflection on this is certainly not to discourage the reading of Kant from

theological horizons—especially since I think that, when carefully done, this can help us to spot otherwise overlooked features of the Kantian terrain, such as the contours of a larger Augustinian account of grace that is not so apparent when Kant’s account of radical evil is read just through the lens of forensic justification. Yet even when one does discover Kant to be more robustly supportive of key elements of Christian orthodoxy than the “traditional interpretation” has been ready to admit, it is important to resist the almost inevitable temptation then to seek support for even more. Kant may very well travel with Augustine on the matter of grace, but one is not likely to find paths on Kantian terrain that mark out routes to Nicea or Chalcedon.

NOTES

1. A classic instance of a theologically informed reading of Kant that exhibits dimensions of his thought missed by many philosophical commentators is Karl Barth’s treatment of Kant’s work in *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background and History* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Judson Press, 1973), 266–312.

2. [Editors’ Note: Rossi’s essay was originally written as an epilogue to this entire collection, but turned out to be so thoroughly affirmative that we decided it would fit better as one of the main contributions. We have retained most of Rossi’s references to other contributors, but have moved the following paragraphs from the main text into this note.] The usefulness of this caution may not readily be apparent until I recount the origins and intent of the collection of essays, *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, that I coedited some years ago and that has come to function as the “prequel” to the current collection. The idea for that earlier collection—and for the conference where many of the published essays were presented in draft form—came from a conversation with Dr. Joseph O’Malley, a Hegel and Marx scholar in Marquette University’s Department of Philosophy, after we had each returned from sabbaticals and shortly after I had participated in the 1985 International Kant Congress at the Pennsylvania State University. Dr. O’Malley recounted to me some discussions he had with German scholars about new directions that interpretations of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* and related writings were starting to take; these discussions had notable parallels to the ones I had participated in, with (mostly) younger North American scholars at the Kant Congress.

The convergence of these conversations provided grounds for organizing a conference to bring together interlocutors from both sides of the Atlantic and from a variety of philosophical perspectives to articulate and probe these newer questions that were emerging about Kant’s treatment of religion. A few of the participants in the conference, including myself, had also done advanced academic work in theology or the study of religion and brought explicit theological interests to their engagement with Kant’s thought, but the primary goal of both the conference and the subsequent collection of essays was not to promote a theological agenda but to engage and advance philosophical discussion of Kant. Of the three main questions the conference focused on, the first, “What is the scope and status of Kant’s claims about ‘rational religion?’” was still very much in keeping with the line of inquiry that Chris Firestone, in his part of the Editors’ Introduction to this volume, calls “the traditional interpretation” of Kant’s view on religion. Though the question was familiar, some essays suggested answers that

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diverged from those that usually had been played out in the traditional interpretation, particularly with regard to ways of construing the respective functions of the theoretical and practical uses of reason within the context of Kant's often contested claims about the unity and the ends of reason. The second and the third questions—"What impact does Kant's account of 'radical evil' have upon his understanding of human agency and subjectivity?" and "What is the systematic significance of the place that Kant gives to religion within the working of human culture and history?"—though not entirely unknown to prior discussions, were given significantly greater prominence not just on their own merits but also for the bearing they had upon the first question. The "reconsideration" of Kant's philosophy of religion suggested by these latter two questions was thus not merely concerned with the parts of Kant's work that could be grouped under the heading of "religion," but with their dynamic interaction with the larger enterprise Kant had styled "critique." These latter two questions thus provided possibilities for reconsidering some fundamental assumptions about Kant's critical project as a whole that had shaped the ways the traditional interpretation viewed Kant's treatment of religion.

Two of these larger reconsiderations deserve specific mention here. First, some essays argued for a shift of perspective from using the first *Critique* as the dominant hermeneutical lens for viewing a text such as *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* to a perspective that accorded greater significance to writings from the later stages of the critical project. This shift articulated a greater awareness of "critique" as a "work in progress," not yet brought to full closure even in the final decade of Kant's career, than was usually manifest in the traditional interpretation of the later critical writings as, at most, minor aftershocks from the great tectonic shift effected by the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

(Not surprisingly, contributors to this volume [e.g., Despland, Fendt, Firestone, Hare, Kielkopf] find it unproblematic to use Kant's later writings as an appropriate interpretive lens for viewing the critical project as a whole. More generally, though I would agree with Firestone that a mark of "the traditional interpretation" is "a shrinking level of confidence in the cogency of his critical writings after the *Critique of Pure Reason*," I also think greater attention to the full range of the later critical writings is not by itself sufficient to provide a decisive counterweight to theologically negative readings of Kant. The writings of the exponents of "Radical Orthodoxy," such as John Milbank and Phillip Blond, for instance, make later writings such as the *Critique of Judgment* and *Religion* a focus for their case against Kant as a progenitor and exponent of a liberal humanism that has the displacement of God inscribed in its fundamental logic.)

Second, some essays argued for and from an account of reason that placed considerably greater stress upon its social character than had typically been found in readings of Kant given by the traditional interpretation. In retrospect, this shift was itself part of a larger reconsideration that has been taking place for at least two decades over the role that Kant's philosophical anthropology plays in the critical project. The previous—and frequently unargued-for—commonplace, that Kant treated anthropology as simply an empirical inquiry with little bearing upon the structure of critique, has been brought into question by a number of interpreters who take the critical project to be ineluctably anthropological in its primary thrust—i.e., toward the vindication of reason precisely in its uniquely finite and embodied human form. (For instance, Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999]; G. Felicitas Munzel, *Kant's Conception of Moral Character: The "Critical" Link of Morality, Anthropology,*

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and *Reflective Judgment* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999]; Robert B. Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics: From Rational Beings to Human Beings* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000].) This turn toward the anthropological and the social, as I shall indicate below, opened up dimensions of Kant's treatment of religion that have important bearing on what one takes to be the textual and conceptual *loci* in Kant's work that have the most import for theology.

3. Bruxelles: L'Édition universelle; Paris: Desclée, De Brouwer, 1944–1949.

4. See Karl Rahner, "The Importance of Thomas Aquinas," in *Faith in a Wintry Season: Conversations and Interviews with Karl Rahner in the Last Years of His Life*, ed. Paul Imhoff and Hubert Biallwns, translation edited by Harvey D. Egan (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 41–58, for Rahner's account of the influence of Heidegger, Kant, and Maréchal on his own theology.

5. Three works of Gerard McCool, S.J., provide a broad historical overview of neo-Thomism and the place of the work of Maréchal and other "transcendental Thomists" within that movement: *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989); *From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989); *The Neo-Thomists* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994). "Transcendental Thomism" has been subject to the criticism from other Thomists that it concedes too much to the modern "turn to the subject."

6. That this was the style of my Jesuit teachers may not be accidentally connected to a principle that Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, enunciates early in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the formative document for Jesuit life: "Let it be presupposed that every good Christian is more ready to save his neighbor's proposition than to condemn it; if he cannot save it, let him inquire how he means it; and if he means it badly, let him correct him with charity; if that is not enough, let him seek all the suitable means to bring him to mean it well and save himself." *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, trans. Elder Mullan, S.J. (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1914), 15.

7. Lewis White Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 221.

8. See Lewis White Beck, "Neo-Kantianism," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 5, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 468–473; Thomas E. Willey, *Back to Kant: The Revival of Kantianism in German Social and Historical Thought, 1860–1914* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978).

9. Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), sees Kant's ethics as paradigmatically embodying the "Enlightenment project of justifying morality" (see especially chaps. 3–4). Compare this with Onora O'Neill's modestly postmodern (or at least anti-Cartesian and nonfoundationalist) Kant in "Reason and Politics in the Kantian Enterprise," *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989), 3–27, or with Clayton Crockett, *A Theology of the Sublime* (London: Routledge, 2001), who reads Kantian transcendental imagination as a disruptive possibility that prefigures key features of postmodern thought.

10. A soon-to-be-published collection of essays, *Kant und der Katholizismus. Stationem einer wechselhaften Geschichte*, ed. Norbert Fischer (Freiburg: Herder, 2005), explores these issues in terms of the history of the reception of Kant's critical philosophy among Catholic thinkers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

11. Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*

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(Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 75. The centrality Neiman gives to this distinction suggests that Kant's work bears the mark of what Robert Sokolowski, in *The God of Faith and Reason* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), xiv, calls "the Christian distinction" between God and the world that is "different from distinctions made within the world."

12. My contention that we should not consider Kant a theologian is not intended to dispute two historical claims backed by a good deal of evidence—i.e., that Kant was familiar with issues of major concern to the German theologians of his day and that a number of his positions and arguments are articulated, at least in part, in response to certain theological views on these issues. (See, e.g., Walter Sparr, "Kant's Doctrine of Atonement as a Theory of Subjectivity," in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991], 103–112; Aloysius Winter, "Theologiegeschichtlich und literarische Hintergründe der Religionsphilosophie Kants," in *Der andere Kant: Zur philosophischen Theologie Immanuel Kants* [Hildesheim: George Olms Verlag, 2000], 425–476.) Neither of these claims, nor their conjunction, however, is sufficient to place Kant in the company of (Christian) theologians, even given the variety among their ranks over two millennia and historical shifts in the methodological and conceptual demarcation of philosophical from theological modes of inquiry. Although I consider it both historically and systematically legitimate to *locate* Kant's work in reference to theological horizons—and that is a general point this essay seeks to support—the *manner* of his inquiry is resolutely philosophical even with respect to theological issues. Thus, the "protesting faith" that Elizabeth Galbraith describes in Chapter 9 of this volume may be at least as much philosophical as it is theological. Robert M. Adams's "Original Sin: A Study in the Interaction of Philosophy and Theology," in *The Question of Christian Philosophy Today*, ed. Frank J. Ambrosio (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 80–110, offers an instructive illustration of how this difference between formally philosophical and formally theological inquires concretely functions in Kant's discussion of "radical evil."

13. Another way to make this point is that Kant does not consider himself bound to follow the grammar of Christian doctrine in his response to these questions—for instance, the grammar of the doctrine of the Incarnation that requires that one speak of Jesus as both human and divine or one of the standard Christian grammars for speaking of God as Trinity. At the same time, as Gene Fendt argues in Chapter 4, the different levels of Kant's account of truth make his critical philosophy open to a variety of theological uses and interpretations.

14. The fact that Kant approaches theological questions as a philosopher has, in my judgment, an important bearing upon the contribution that this collection of essays makes to continuing scholarly inquiry about his descriptions and assessments of the role of religious—and specifically Christian—belief and practice with respect to the unique human vocation to be the juncture where nature and freedom meet. By giving prominence to "theologically affirmative" readings of Kant, this collection continues the important work of arguing for a rendering of Kant's philosophical theology that is historically richer and systematically more complex than those "traditional interpretations" that often failed to move beyond Kant's careful and thorough dismantlement of the arguments for the existence of God that had been the stock-in-trade of the school metaphysics of his era. Some of those traditional interpretations even went so far as to read into Kant an anti-Christian and antireligious animus that expressed the bias of a

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later secularism more so than they provided an adequate account of Kant's own quite carefully nuanced views. Yet a "condition of possibility" for bringing together a collection of "theologically affirmative" readings of Kant is an expectation that his texts are open and amenable to such readings—an expectation that itself constitutes one crucial element in a "theological horizon."

15. Frederick Copleston observes that the Roman decision that ended this dispute by permitting both views to be taught also enjoined that "the Jesuits were forbidden to call the Dominicans Calvinists, while the Dominicans were told that they must not call the Jesuits Pelagians." *A History of Philosophy*, vol. III: *Late Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy, Part II: The Revival of Platonism to Suárez* (New York: Doubleday, Image Books Edition, 1963), 165.

16. Jacqueline Mariña, "Kant on Grace: A Reply to His Critics," *Religious Studies* 33, no. 4 (1997): 379–400.

17. Mariña, "Kant on Grace," 380.

18. Mariña, "Kant on Grace," 385.

19. Mariña, "Kant on Grace," 385.

20. Mariña, "Kant on Grace," 383.

21. Mariña, "Kant on Grace," 385.

22. Mariña, "Kant on Grace," 381.

23. Mariña, "Kant on Grace," 399. I understand Mariña's discussion of this point at the conclusion of her essay to sketch out some possibilities for understanding the relationship between the two concepts of grace as "divine aid" and the more general concept of grace she finds operative in Kant.

24. William Barrett's observation is pertinent: "The Kantian good will, which wills to submit itself to the moral law, is a descendent of the *voluntas*, the will in St. Augustine, which is restless until it rests in God." *The Illusion of Technique* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 247. See Philip Rossi, *The Social Authority of Reason* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), chap. 1.

25. Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, "Conundrums in Kant's Rational Religion," in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Gordon P. Michalson, Jr., *Fallen Freedom: Kant on Radical Evil and Moral Regeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

26. Mariña, "Kant on Grace," 400.

27. See McCool, *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism*, 255–257; Richard Schaeffler, *Reason and the Question of God*, trans. Robert R. Barr and Marlies Parent (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 23–30.

28. An overview of this controversy can be found in McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*, 200–209.

29. McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*, 202.

30. Karl Rahner, "Philosophy and Theology," *Theological Investigations* 6, trans. Karl-H. and Boniface Kruger, O.F.M. (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1969), 72.

31. A crucial consequence of this kind of shift is that it offers a mode of construing divine activity "in" and "on" the world that need not be "interventionist." See David B. Burrell, C.S.C., "Divine Action and Human Freedom in the Context of Creation," and Kathryn E. Tanner, "Human Freedom, Human Sin, and God the Creator," in *The God Who Acts: Philosophical and Theological Explorations*, ed. Thomas F. Tracy (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 101–109, 111–135.

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32. McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*, 206.

33. Mariña, “Kant on Grace,” 383.

34. Mariña, “Kant on Grace,” 399. How one construes “grace” may have a bearing on how one appropriates Kant’s strategy regarding what John Hare terms “the rational instability of atheism”—i.e., toward the morally upright atheist who withholds the assent to God that, on Kant’s account, should issue from acknowledgment of the moral law. Thus Fendt’s discussion of how “the language of morality is (necessarily) semantically open to faith”—which seems informed by an Augustinian account of grace close to that proposed by Mariña—seeks to exhibit the “rational instability of atheism” *performatively*; Hare’s own account, by contrast, seems to function within a Reformation horizon on grace and seeks to exhibit that instability *argumentatively*.

35. Such a judgment is pronounced by Cardinal Désiré Joseph Mercier in his essay “The Two Critiques of Kant” (1891), in *Cardinal Mercier’s Philosophical Essays: A Study in Neo-Thomism*, ed. David A. Boileau (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 150: “I imagine that Kant shivered with responsibility when he measured the terrifying consequences of his work of destruction. But it was too late! It is the work itself that should have been destroyed.” This judgment is striking inasmuch as it comes from a central figure in the revival of Thomism under Leo XIII. There have been exceptions to such a negative judgment: Maréchal may be the most important one historically (though his methodological appropriation of Kant was accompanied by stringent criticism of a number of the major conclusions that Kant drew from his own method); James Collins’s sympathetic analysis in *The Emergence of Philosophy of Religion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967) deserves special notice as does the work of Richard Schaeffler, Friedo Ricken, and Aloysius Winter in Germany and François Marty in France.

36. H. Richard Niebuhr provides one instance of a theologian in the Reformed tradition whose appropriation of Kant exhibits strands of a “theologically affirmative” understanding, even as he writes much that is critical of Kant. Significantly, Niebuhr’s positive reading emerges from his own articulation of a *relational* account of the human. See Joseph S. Pagano, *The Origins and the Development of the Triadic Structure of Faith in H. Richard Niebuhr: A Study of the Kantian and Pragmatic Background of Niebuhr’s Thought* (Ph.D. thesis, Marquette University, 2001).

Kant's Prototypical Theology

Transcendental Incarnation as a Rational Foundation for God-Talk

Nathan Jacobs

Kant on God: Incantation or Incarnation?

Three main questions face theology in and around Kant's philosophy: (1) *Does Kant's philosophy leave room for meaningful theological discourse?* (2) *If so, where is this room and what is the nature of the theology that fills it?* (3) *Given the relationship between such theology and Kant's philosophy, is it desirable to be both a theologian and a Kantian?* The bulk of this essay will be devoted to the first and second questions. The first I answer affirmatively: Kant's philosophy does leave room for meaningful theological discourse. The second I answer by reference to the transcendental theology Kant develops in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. The third question is briefly addressed in my concluding comments by highlighting the questions we are left with if this account of Kantian theology is accurate. Recent articles on Kant by Nicholas Wolterstorff and Jeffrey Privette will frame my inquiries throughout and will be the focus of this introductory section.

Beginning with Wolterstorff, we find a basic distrust in the prospect of meaningful Kantian theology, common among traditional readers of Kant's philosophy. His pessimism is rooted in the problems this traditional read creates for God-talk and God-thought. In "Is It Possible and Desirable for Theolo-

gians to Recover from Kant?" Wolterstorff examines the predicament contemporary theology faces, given its post-Kantian context.¹ He avers the primary difficulty facing theology is one of anxiety: *How can we speak (or even think) of God in a way that actually refers to God?* According to Wolterstorff, the strictures on human knowledge and experience set forth in Kant's first *Critique* appear to make theological discourse that is actually about God impossible. One of the chief advocates of the severity of these strictures and the limitations they place on transcendent metaphysics is P. F. Strawson, who defines them in relation to what he calls Kant's *principle of significance*: "This is the principle that there can be no legitimate, or even meaningful, employment of ideas or concepts which does not relate them to empirical or experiential conditions of their application."² If a concept, theological or otherwise, is such that its "experience-situation" cannot be specified, then according to Strawson's Kant we are not using that concept legitimately.

Wolterstorff explains the Kantian strictures on knowledge by employing "the metaphor of a boundary." Since, as Wolterstorff puts it, "knowledge of objects is limited to what we could in principle experience," we cannot have knowledge of what we cannot experience.³ The metaphor of a boundary identifies the line between what we can know and what is beyond our ability to know. This sets up a bifurcated worldview made of things-as-they-appear and things-as-they-are-in-themselves. The forms of intuition (viz., space and time) and the forms of conception (viz., the twelve categories) are the structural features that constitute knowable objects and separate the knowable from the unknowable. God, freedom, immortality, the soul, and things-in-themselves are beyond our ability to know in any meaningful way. Therefore, while Kant may have "[denied] knowledge in order to make room for faith" (CPR Bxxx), the only examples of faith that seem to fit his philosophical paradigm are those that shade off into agnosticism, nonrealism, or perhaps radical fideism.

The theological difficulty this paradigm creates becomes clear as we consider that religious adherents typically hold that their beliefs, many rooted in experience, are reasonable and true of God's actual nature (even if incomplete). The Judeo-Christian patriarchs, prophets, and apostles are prime examples: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim" (1 Jn 1:1). The vexing question in the light of Kant's paradigm (traditionally conceived) is how such claims about and experiences of God can be thought meaningful in a realist sense. As Wolterstorff notes, "God, in the Kantian scheme, cannot be an object of experience."⁴ To speak or think of God is to predicate something of God, and to predicate something of God is to express a concept that interprets intuitions. Since, however, no intuition is adequate to the deity, no predication is possible. God so transcends the structural features of the human mind that all God-talk is just talk—merely human incantations revealing nothing more than our own longings and aspirations. Contemporary theology that seeks to speak within Kantian strictures

must, says Wolterstorff, adhere to an apophatic theology: “Kantian theology, so it would seem, must be exclusively negative theology.”⁵ For this reason, Wolterstorff concludes it is not desirable for theologians to work within the parameters of Kant’s philosophy.

In contrast to this theological pessimism, Jeffrey Privette’s affirmative interpretation represents the quintessential optimist regarding the possibility of harmonizing Christian theology and Kantian philosophy. In “Must Theology Re-Kant?” Privette presents his view in conversation with and opposition to that of Wolterstorff.⁶ Privette’s optimism is built upon relatively recent developments in how we understand Kant’s distinction between the knowable and the unknowable. By drawing on Henry Allison’s “double-aspect” view of the distinction between the thing-in-itself and the thing-as-it-appears, Privette finds the noumenal/phenomenal distinction is a more useful insight for Christian theology than is traditionally supposed.⁷ Rather than the metaphor of a boundary signifying two separate realities, it represents a distinction between two different ways of considering the same reality. This nuance enables Privette to suggest that “when one has experienced the phenomenal, whatever it happens to be, conditioned as it is by space and time, one has good reason to believe that she has experienced it *in accordance with* the noumenal.”⁸ For Privette, there is a fundamental distinction between our experience of a thing and the thing in itself; however, this distinction is not ontological in nature (giving us a bifurcated reality), but epistemological (giving us two ways of considering a unified reality).

Privette draws on the principle of perspective in the work of Stephen Palmquist in support of his use of Allison’s interpretation.⁹ With Palmquist, Privette argues that when one understands the perspectival logic of Kant’s language, Kant’s transcendental idealism becomes compatible with empirical realism; and this “dispels much interpretive confusion concerning Kant’s understanding of the nature (and function) of appearances in human experience and knowing.”¹⁰ According to this understanding of Kant’s program, the appearance as representation is only something in relation to what it represents. This does not mean the appearance can be equated with the thing in itself, for the thing in itself, “having no corresponding sensible intuitions, cannot be represented.”¹¹ But it does mean, according to Privette, that a type of connection or correspondence holds between the noumenal and the phenomenal: “there is a sense in which it can be said that the transcendental object *causes* and provides a *basis* for the appearance.”¹² In short, the phenomenal and noumenal in this scheme are flip sides of the same thing: “phenomena constitute the side of experience . . . which is toward, or in relation to experiencing subjects; noumena constitute the side beyond or above experience . . . which is only toward, or in relation to, itself . . . [T]hese realms are realms of reflection rather than realms of being.”¹³

Adapting Allison’s interpretation to include a sense of transcendental “accordance,” “causation,” and “foundation” enables Privette to make the

infinite gap between noumenal and phenomenal seem not quite so infinite. We may not experience the noumenal directly; yet we do experience an appearance that finds its footing in noumenal reality. Privette maintains, "if appearances find a *grounding* in the unknown and unexperienced, then perhaps some *continuity* is established between appearances and things in themselves."¹⁴ The importance of this "continuity" comes to light as Privette moves from Kant's theoretical philosophy to the historical event of the incarnation in the person of Jesus. For Privette, one may reasonably affirm that the incarnation, as a sensible manifestation of the noumenal, bears continuity with the transcendent deity: "In the Incarnation, God is conditioned by time and space . . . This means that Jesus Christ . . . [as] God become man, is an example *par excellence* of noumenal become phenomenal."¹⁵ While it may be true that "No one has ever seen God" (Jn 1:18), it is equally true that if we have seen Jesus, we have seen an appearance grounded in the divine (see Jn 14:9): "meaning and reality, divine reality, have once and for all [been] revealed in the material and sensible world, enabling . . . a glimpse of God as God."¹⁶ The Christ-event provides the only means to meaningful God-talk on Privette's account, for "without a sensible intuition, God can only be considered non-empirically, and *such consideration is never better than speculative and abstract*."¹⁷ For this reason, Privette contends that within the Kantian paradigm, "one may speak and think confidently and non-speculatively and realistically of God only by appealing to, and beginning with, Jesus Christ and Incarnation."¹⁸ Understanding Kant in this way seems not only to allow, but even to promote, a Christo-centric brand of Christian theology.

The polarized interpretations of Wolterstorff and Privette provide the context for the contention of this paper. I argue in the next section that we cannot go the full distance with Privette without compromising what is most essential to the relationship between Kant's theoretical philosophy and his philosophy of religion. I contend that, even under the double-aspect read of Kant, theological discourse cannot rely exclusively on the empirical appearance (as Privette does) and still claim to be Kantian. However, in contradistinction to Wolterstorff, I set forth in the final section an understanding of Kant's ongoing transcendental examination of rational belief that points toward a type of genuine theological optimism that is consistent with his critical philosophy. This understanding draws specifically on Book Two of *Religion*, wherein Kant introduces "the prototype."¹⁹ The picture of Kantian theology I defend combines Wolterstorff's sober understanding of the seriousness of the epistemic restrictions on God-talk/God-thought with Privette's affirmative emphasis on incarnation as a means of talking/thinking intelligibly about God. My concern here is not to defend a new interpretation of *Religion*,²⁰ but merely to point out promising new research developments on Kant's *Religion*, and why something like these developments is necessary if there is to be robust, meaningful Kantian theology.

Must Privette Re-Kant?

Privette's argument is intended to establish that Kant's philosophy leaves room for the possibility of incarnation, and that this means a believer's experience of God incarnate in Jesus can ground meaningful God-talk.²¹ An overview of Kant's writings reveals that Privette is partially right. Kant thinks God could provide an empirical revelation (*Offenbarung*) of theological truths, and even of God's own nature. In *Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion* Kant asserts plainly "no human being can hold it impossible that . . . God might have given to it, in a higher revelation, certain truths" (LPR 1119). And in *What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?* Kant explores the possibility of an immediate appearance without any indication that such an event is out of the question: "If I come across an immediate intuition of such a kind that nature . . . could not provide that intuition, then a concept of God must serve to gauge whether this appearance agrees with all the characteristics required for a Deity" (WMO 142). Kant does not dismiss a finite manifestation as impossible, but presumes such an occurrence is genuinely feasible—an assumption consistent with all Kant's writings, including *Religion* (see R 169). While incarnation does present a problem for Kant, the problem is not one of possibility. The problem is one of knowability. For Kant, the difficulty is whether it is ever possible for a person to know that any particular appearance was actually an appearance of God. In Allen Wood's words: "though divine revelation itself is not impossible, it is impossible for any man to know through experience that God has in any instance actually revealed himself."²² Or, to use Kant's words in *The Conflict of the Faculties*, "if God should really speak to a human being, the latter could still never *know* that it was God speaking" (CF 63).

The significance of this dilemma comes to light when considering Kant's definitions of God. God is said to be the "highest being" (A578/B606), the "being of all beings" (A578/B606), "the highest reality" (A579/B607), the "necessary all-sufficient original being" (A621/B649), and "a being having all reality" (A631/B659). Essentially, for Kant, God is infinite in being and thus in predication: "It already lies in my concept of an *ens realissimum* that he must be a thing, and therefore I have to ascribe to him every reality which can be predicated of him as a thing" (LPR 1020). Such a definition (or collection of definitions) places God beyond all possible experience, as it demands a type of empirical infinity that Kant thinks is impossible: "The transcendental idea of a necessary all-sufficient original being is so overwhelmingly great, so sublimely high above everything empirical, which is at all times conditioned, that . . . one can never even procure enough material in experience to fill such a concept" (A621/B649). For Kant, no finite appearance (or even collection of appearances) is adequate to the idea of God, given this infinite definition. For this very reason, a key feature of the process of cognizing God is, as Wolterstorff indicates, the process of removing from the concept of God all finite limitations:

But even though reason in its merely speculative use is far from adequate for such a great aim as this—namely, attaining to the existence of a supreme being—it still has in them a very great utility, that of **correcting** the cognition of this being by making it agree with itself and with every intelligible aim, and by purifying it of everything that might be incompatible with the concept of an original being, and of all admixture of empirical limitations . . . to get rid of what is incompatible with the highest reality, what belongs to mere appearance. (A639–640/B667–668)

No matter how close one's interpretation of Kant's theoretical philosophy comes to bridging the gap between the noumenal and phenomenal realms, a Kantian could never suggest that an experience of a finite entity could correspond to God as the all-reality. In Kant's words, "It is quite impossible for a human being to apprehend the infinite by his senses" (CF 63).

This knowledge gap is, for Kant, insurmountable—so much so that, contrary to Privette's claim, no reported (i.e., empirical) incarnation could be adequate to serve as a philosophical foundation for theology. Kant instead maintains that we must first reach a rationally grounded theology that may be used to judge any purported manifestation. This order cannot be inverted, as Privette does, for the empirical manifestation can never be adequate to the idea of God; thus it must always be judged relative to whether it conflicts outright with the theological parameters already set in place by reason. Kant lays this out most expressly in WMO 142–143, a passage worth quoting at length:

Now even if I have no insight at all into how it is possible for any appearance to present . . . what can only be thought but never intuited, this much is still clear: that in order to judge whether what appears to me . . . is God, I would have to hold it up to my rational concept of God and test it accordingly . . . In just the same way, even if nothing in what he discovered to me immediately contradicted that concept, nevertheless this appearance, intuition, immediate revelation, or whatever else one wants to call such a presentation . . . demands that it be of *infinite* magnitude as distinguished from everything created; but no experience or intuition at all can be adequate to that concept . . . rational faith must come first, and then certain appearances or disclosures could at most provide the occasion for investigating whether we are warranted in taking what speaks or presents itself to us to be a Deity, and thus serve to confirm that faith according to these findings.

Privette argues extensively that the incarnation constitutes a bridge between the noumenal and the phenomenal: the appearance of Jesus is grounded in and thereby bears continuity with the noumenal God. Such an account of the promise of Kant's philosophical program for theology has immediate appeal for much of traditional Christian thought. The question, however, is not whether Privette's picture of Kant's philosophy conforms to Christian concerns, but whether this picture is an accurate portrait of Kant. Amid Privette's efforts to establish the primacy of the incarnation as a bridge to the noumenal God, he

does not provide a basis for thinking the incarnation either would occur or has occurred in Jesus of Nazareth.²³ In other words, he does not provide a rational theology that can judge the appearance. One must surmise, given Privette's emphasis on God "revealed in the . . . sensible world," and our "appealing to, and beginning with, Jesus,"²⁴ that any evidence for the incarnation must be empirical (such as miracles or the resurrection) and presented after the fact. For Kant, however, this simply will not do. History cannot provide sufficient epistemological grounding for belief in incarnation; the empirical will always contradict how reason defines God: "if I predicate the concept of this reality as it is encountered in appearance with its limitations, then my concept of God will be wholly corrupt" (LPR 1022). Thus, for Kant we first need a rational theology in order to gauge all appearances:

Even if God were to make an immediate appearance, I would still need a previous rational theology. For how will I become certain here whether it is God himself who has appeared to me, or only another powerful being? Thus I have need of a pure idea of the understanding, an idea of a most perfect being, if I am not to be blinded and led astray. Thus we can have no correct insight into the external revelation of God, and we can make no right use of it, until we have made an entirely rational theology our property. (LPR 1118)

Contrary to the impression left by Privette's approach, an empirical appearance cannot ground a rational theology in Kant's scheme, but must always be subject to a previous rational theology—whatever that may be for Kant. We must employ a rational understanding of God to test all so-called divine appearances, lest we "be blinded and led astray" (LPR 1118).

Does this mean Kant leaves no room for incarnational theology? Clearly, as a number of the above quotations indicate, Kant has left open the possibility for an immediate divine appearance, so there is room. But how significant is such room, and is it meaningful (or even helpful) to talk about God's appearing, given Kant's definition of God as the infinite all-reality? Even if incarnation is possible, applying predicates derived from a God-appearance to my understanding of God in a way that corrupts that understanding would seem to render incarnational theology unhelpful (if not harmful) in Kant's way of thinking. If, however, it can be shown that incarnation is already part of Kant's preexisting rational theology, then a divine appearance would not necessarily create a conflict between the empirical and the rational, for belief in such divine condescension would not rest on the empirical appearance over and against the rational concept of God as the all-reality, but would rest upon a previous rational theology that tells us we must believe in such divine condescension, and it therefore in principle can be experienced.

I will argue in the next section that Kant's rational theology does commend belief in incarnation, in a certain sense, and that this peculiar feature of Kant's rational theology provides the foundation for Kantian theological dis-

course, unhindered by the God-talk/God-thought problem. The grounds for this belief are found in *Religion*, in what I call Kant's "prototypical theology." Prototypical theology, like Privette's position, overcomes the God-talk/God-thought problem by utilizing finite predication (giving coherence to its God-talk), but it reaches this predication through Kant's investigation of the boundaries of rational belief. When religious beliefs are rooted in the needs of reason, they are universally necessary (as opposed to historically contingent) and epistemologically sound. Prototypical theology is a rationally grounded theology of divine condescension that enables us to speak and think meaningfully about God in finite terms via a transcendental examination of rational belief. Kant explores this avenue for rational theology in Book Two of *Religion*, and the excavation of these grounds will occupy the remainder of this essay.

Cognition and Kant's Prototypical Theology in *Religion*

Kant's account of metaphysics in the first *Critique* indicates a movement away from knowability to a search for the proper grounds of rational faith. This, of course, leads him straight to moral reason. Throughout *Religion* Kant gives regular indications that what grounds his argument therein is a process of cognition.²⁵ The roots of human cognition expounded in the *Critique of Pure Reason* blossom in Kant's *Lectures on Metaphysics* and influence many of the developments in Kant's transcendental theology thereafter. Cognition is clearly more than mere opinion (*Meinung*), but interpreters of Kant dispute whether cognition (*Erkenntnis*) is closer to knowledge (*Wissen*) or rational belief (*Glaube*). For our purposes here, suffice it to say that Kant makes an important distinction between empirical cognition and pure cognition, or the cognition of reason. The latter is where matters of God, freedom, and immortality fall. Therefore, I will be using the term "cognition" throughout the remainder of this essay in this latter sense, as a process that grounds rational belief, not full-fledged knowledge.²⁶ I will presume throughout this section that *Religion* is best read as a continuation of Kant's quest to understand the nature and extent of pure cognition.

When approaching *Religion* with this understanding of Kant's methodology, we find a general picture of what practical reason tells us religious belief must look like. We find that these beliefs have a discernible shape based on Kant's critical inquiries into the nature of the moral disposition and the question of hope. In the essay "Beating the Conundrums in Kant's *Religion*: Books One and Two," Chris Firestone and I provide a new expository reading of Books One and Two of *Religion*. There we offer a unified picture of *Religion*, as an exercise in cognition that constructs a robust rational theology. Key features of our interpretation include: (1) a shift in emphasis away from the autonomous individual, often assumed to be imported from Kant's moral philosophy, to a transcendental analysis of the human species; (2) the conclusion that humanity as a species must share a single moral disposition whose

moral bent is either good or evil;²⁷ (3) the determination, based on Kant's definition of moral goodness and moral corruption, that the human disposition is corrupt or evil (though not by necessity);²⁸ and (4) the necessary belief in a perfect humanity, or what Kant calls the *prototype*, as grounding meaning and moral hope in the face of moral corruption.

For the purposes of our present discussion of meaningful God-talk, I will focus on the fourth aspect of this new interpretation. Here my treatment of the prototypical feature of Kant's rational theology will be largely expository in thrust, focusing on *Religion*, Part Two, Section One, Subsections A and B (R 60–66). In Kant's concern to establish meaning and hope in the context of radical evil, he argues for the importance of a moral prototype, citing four main features of how this prototype is to be cognized: the prototype's existence as a necessary feature of reality, its divinity, its humanity, and its redemptive work on behalf of the human species. These four features constitute an outline of Subsection A.

Kant juxtaposes the problem of radical evil in Book One with the existence of the prototype, or at least our need to believe in his existence. Establishing that the moral bent of humanity's disposition is evil—a type of moral peril Kant believes is common to all human persons—prepares the way for prototypical theology. In the face of the hopelessness aroused by humanity's dispositional corruption, moral cognition must appeal to “the prototype” (R 61) as a necessary feature of reality, if the world is to retain meaning. At the beginning of Book Two, Kant introduces the prototype as “humanity . . . in its full moral perfection” (R 60). This humanity embodies the very antithesis of our morally corrupt nature, established in Book One, and, according to Kant, is the only reason God would create the world. Morally perfect humanity, Kant submits, is “That which alone can make the world the object of divine decree and the end of creation” (R 60). Only such humanity could incite such pleasure in God (who is supremely concerned with the moral) to create, for “from [*Humanity in its full moral perfection*] happiness follows in the will of the Highest Being directly as from its supreme condition” (R 60). The prototypical humanity in view here must (given Kant's argument for corruption in Book One) possess a moral nature (or disposition) distinct from what is inherent in the human individual, one that exhibits the perfection our humanity lacks and so desperately needs. On the grounds that such an ideal must exist if we are to retain the meaningfulness of the world, Kant submits for [rational] belief the existence of this prototypical ideal and presses ahead in the process of cognizing its nature.²⁹

The first feature of the prototype's nature is *divinity*. The prototype, Kant tells us, has existed within God from all eternity, and is not created (indicating both its transcendence and nontemporality). Kant assumes the prototype is linked to the very being of God; insofar as God is necessarily eternal, so too is this perfect humanity. Kant writes, “This human being, alone pleasing to God, ‘is in him from all eternity,’ the idea of him proceeds from God's being; he is

not, therefore, a created thing" (R 60). The prototype is "God's only begotten Son, 'the *Word*' (the *Fiat!*) through which all other things are, and without whom nothing that is made would exist" (R 60). Since the prototype is divine, its dispositional perfection appears to be an inherent and eternal property of its being. Hence, the prototype is an eternal divine ideal whose immutable moral constitution is, as such, able to serve as the primordial object of divine pleasure and the precondition for the very meaning and existence of our world.

Regarding *humanity*, the second tier of the prototype's nature, we must understand that, for Kant, the prototype cannot be thought of as an inherent member of the human species. Kant makes clear that "we are not [the prototype's] author" (R 61). Instead, we should believe the "*prototype has come down* to us from heaven, that it has taken up humanity" (R 61). In other words, the prototype's humanity should be cognized as something the divine Son of God has willfully taken on in order to make humanity in its full moral perfection available to our corrupt species.³⁰ Note that this is not incarnation in the sense of traditional Christian theology as a temporal, historical appearance, but is a nontemporal, primordial incarnation, which serves as the condition for the creation of our world, and is discovered in cognition. Thus, we have here a type of transcendental, nontemporal incarnation. For Kant, such divine descent is needed because it is inconceivable that "the *human being, evil* by nature, would renounce evil on his own and *raise* himself up to the ideal of holiness" (R 61). However, it is not inconceivable that the divine Son of God has condescended to us and as such is a provision of divine grace: "This union with [humanity] may therefore be regarded as a state of *abasement* of the Son of God . . . The human being . . . who is never free of guilt . . . [is] hence unworthy of the union of his disposition with such an idea, even though this idea serves him as prototype" (R 61). Since Kant established in Book One that humanity, while corrupt, is not evil by necessity,³¹ we may consistently believe the ideal of holiness can "take up humanity—which is not evil in itself—by *descending* to it" (R 61). Therefore, Kant presents the prototype as an eternal divine being who willfully takes up human nature for our sake, or as a "divine human being [who] had actual possession of his eminence and blessedness from eternity" (R 64).

Now, Kant does not portray this divine/human prototype as a mere stagnant ideal. Rather, he submits, we must cognize an accompanying account of the moral activities of the prototype, or what is essentially a picture of the active prototypical work of redemption on behalf of humanity:

We cannot think the ideal of a humanity pleasing to God . . . except in the idea of a human being willing not only to execute *in person* all human duties, and at the same time to spread goodness about him as far wide as possible through teaching and example, but also, though tempted by the greatest temptation, to take upon himself all sufferings, up to the most ignominious death, for the good of the world and even for his enemies. (R 61, emphasis added)

The particulars of this account, for Kant, are rooted in the utter perfection of the prototypical disposition: “human beings cannot form for themselves any concept of the degree and the strength of a force like that of a moral disposition except by representing it surrounded by obstacles and yet—in the midst of the greatest possible temptations—victorious” (R 61). Since the empirical cannot yield the disposition itself (see R 63), such an account of the prototype’s activity is needed in order to cognize the full depth and complexity of the prototype’s moral perfection.³² Thus, Kant’s earlier reference to the abasement of the Son of God highlights not merely the prototype’s union with our humanity in his descent to the species, but also the suffering he endures on our behalf: “[though] not bound to submit to sufferings, he nonetheless takes these upon himself in the fullest measure for the sake of promoting the world’s greatest good” (R 61).³³

With this fourfold picture of the prototype’s existence, divinity, humanity, and redemptive work before us, we must remember that Kant does not present this moral prototype to us in *Religion* as a particular historical individual, but as a cognized ideal, a transcendental component of rational theology. In other words, this prototypical narrative is not, for Kant, an actual history. Having identified the prototype as “presented to us by reason” (R 61), and as part of “our universal human duty” (R 61), Kant indicates the prototype is a necessary feature of reason; it is not contingent on historical happenings. Throughout *Religion*, Kant distinguishes between a religion grounded in a historical event that “carries . . . the consciousness of its contingency,” and a religion grounded in reason that “can be recognized as necessary” (R 115). The prototypical theology of Book Two belongs to the latter. As Kant puts it, “the required prototype always resides only in reason” (R 63). Even the narrative of the prototype’s redemptive work is a nontemporal narrative; it is how we must cognize the prototype, not what we identify about the prototype from having experienced a particular series of historical events. Two main reasons Kant places the prototype first and foremost in reason are (1) the prototype must be universally accessible if elevation to him is to be a universal human duty (see R 62); thus, only the cognized prototype is “perfectly valid for all human beings, at all times, and in all worlds” (R 66); and (2) since the prototype is a dispositional ideal, “outer experience yields no example adequate to the idea; as outer it does not disclose the inwardness of the disposition but only allows inference to it” (R 63). Therefore, cognition gives us access to the disposition in a way experience cannot.

The primacy of pure cognition (over empirical cognition) in Kant’s prototypical theology becomes apparent as Kant argues against the *need for* (though not the *possibility of*) a particular historical manifestation of the prototype in R 62–66. His argument is rooted in a parallel between our duty to conform to the prototype and our duty to conform to the moral law. Kant writes: “[the prototype] has complete reality within itself. For it resides in our morally-legislative reason. We *ought* to conform to it, and therefore we must

also *be able* to" (R 62). The prototype, as the picture of what we ought to become, falls in the purview of duty. Kant submits that if we require an example from experience of someone who is able to conform to the prototypical ideal in order to validate the idea, we likewise would need to require an example of one conforming to the moral law in order to validate its authority: "If we had to demonstrate in advance that it is possible to be a human being conforming to this prototype . . . we would have to entertain reservations about allowing even to the moral law the authority of unconditional and yet sufficient determining ground of our power of choice" (R 62). It is self-evident, for Kant, that "even if there never had been one human being capable of unconditional obedience to the law, the objective necessity that there be such a human being would yet be undiminished and self-evident" (R 62). Therefore, the validity of the prototypical ideal, in like manner, retains validity regardless of empirical verification: "There is no need, therefore, of any example from experience to make the idea of a human being morally pleasing to God a model to us; the idea is present as model already in our reason" (R 62).

Kant's concern is to show not that an empirical manifestation of the prototype is impossible, but only that the validity of the prototype, who resides first in reason, does not depend upon such an empirical manifestation. This becomes clear as Kant, after arguing against the *need* for an empirical manifestation of the prototype, switches gears and insists such a manifestation must nevertheless be *possible*. This contention rests, for Kant, on the *ought-implies-can* principle: if humanity ought to conform to such an ideal, we must presume that such an ideal can be manifest amidst humanity. Hence, "an experience must be possible in which the example of such a human being [pleasing to God] is given" (R 63). Kant, of course, qualifies this by noting that this possibility exists only "to the extent that one can . . . ask for evidence of inner moral disposition from external experience" (R 63). For "as outer it does not disclose the inwardness of the disposition but only allows inference to it, though not with strict certainty" (R 63). Therefore, Kant's thinking is balanced on this point: the *required* prototype, as a universally valid dispositional ideal, resides always and only in morally legislative reason, while the *ought-implies-can* principle indicates that a manifestation must be *possible*—to the extent that outward deeds give evidence of an inward disposition.³⁴

In summary, Kant submits that the prototype is an eternal divine being who has willfully taken on human nature and presented himself to humanity for emulation via cognition. Given the perfection of his disposition, we must cognize him as enduring all manner of temptation, suffering, and even death for our salvation. His existence grounds meaning in our world, for only his perfect moral constitution serves as the sufficient, eternal object of divine pleasure, and thus, conformity to his image is our *telos* and duty. The idea of him must thereby reside in our morally legislative reason and be both necessary and universally valid for all people, in all times and in all worlds. We must believe an empirical manifestation of the prototype in history is possible;

however, empirical access to such a history is unnecessary for moral faith, as hope ultimately rests on the prototype of reason, not experience.³⁵

Theological Discourse and the Prototype of Reason

This understanding of *Religion* gives us a clear avenue within Kant's philosophy for meaningful theological discourse. This avenue is rooted in theology of divine condescension, but unlike Privette's account, it is grounded in practical reason. As shown earlier in this essay, the problem facing purely empirical incarnation in Kant's philosophy is that, if such divine condescension is gauged theoretically (i.e., relative to God as the all-reality), the empirical appearance will always be incongruent with what reason tells us about God: no finite thing is adequate to the all-reality. Our inability to experience the all-reality, as we have seen, is the very thing Wolterstorff uses to set up the God-talk problem, and the unavoidable incongruence between appearance and the all-reality is what also establishes an epistemological problem for Privette's use of the incarnation. However, Kant's prototypical theology (as conceived herein) overcomes both of these problems. We have in Kant's prototypical theology a rational theology that allows us to speak intelligibly about God and gives us something other than the all-reality to gauge purported divine manifestations.

Regarding the God-talk issue, Kant's prototypical theology gives us a picture of divine condescension that is rooted in *practical* reason and discovered through a discursive process that examines how human cognition responds to the question of hope. This prototypical theology tells us something positive about the divine prototype that is more than mere talk, for what it says can, in principle, be experienced. The prototype's divine/human nature gives an avenue for utilizing finite predication in reference to God that does not corrupt the concept of God, for such predication is not simple anthropomorphism, but a rational understanding of the very nature of the divine Son of God who reason tells us took on humanity in a transcendental incarnation. What cognition enables us to say/think about the divine prototype is already meaningful theological discourse; it is intelligible, Kantian God-talk/God-thought. Reason testifies to the descent of the divine Son of God in taking on humanity and presents us with a narrative of his dispositional perfection. All such things can, in principle, be experienced and thereby spoken of intelligibly amid the Kantian strictures on knowledge.

Regarding the epistemological problem facing a divine appearance (if one were to occur), we have in Kant's prototypical God-talk/God-thought a gauge for testing any purported manifestation that, unlike the all-reality, is empirically attainable—as Kant argued in light of the *ought-implies-can* principle. If the divine nature were to appear as prototype, the testimony to his divine nature would not be the sufficiency of his appearance to our concept of the all-reality, but the sufficiency of his outer deeds relative to his inward divine disposition. In Kant's words, the manifest prototype,

though in fact totally human, would nonetheless be able to speak truly of himself as if the ideal of goodness were displayed incarnate in him . . . For he would be speaking only of the disposition which he makes the rule of his actions but which, since he cannot make it visible as an example to others in and of itself, he places before their eyes externally through his teachings and actions: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (R 65–66)

We experience in this appearance not the divine all-reality, but the divine disposition that endures under all temptation, suffering, and even death for the sake of one's enemies. Thus, while we will never find an appearance adequate to God as the all-reality, we can reasonably purport to have experienced an appearance adequate (insofar as the outer displays the inward disposition) to the prototypical ideal.

Clearly, Kantian philosophy (at least as understood here) is not as pessimistic as Wolterstorff makes it out to be. Kant is able to speak intelligibly about the divine prototype, and he provides a vision for a robust rational theology. God-talk/God-thought is intelligible because of reason's need to cognize the descent of the divine Son of God taking on humanity, and because of the subsequent narrative that reason reveals to us concerning his dispositional perfection. All such things can, in principle, be experienced and thereby spoken of intelligibly amid the Kantian strictures on knowledge. If this read stands, the prototypical theology of Book Two of *Religion* already overcomes the God-talk/God-thought problem by grounding cognition of God in a transcendental concept of incarnation, and we may note that both this vision and its foundational assumptions are strikingly Christian in scope.

The groundwork for Kant's prototypical theology in Book Two is the problem of radical evil in Book One. Radical evil points to a universal moral peril for humanity not unlike the orthodox notion of original sin (*peccatum originarium*)—a term Kant himself uses in R 31.³⁶ Kant's description of the prototype in Book Two bears an uncanny resemblance to the Christ of Christianity (apparent from the number of Kant interpreters that assume the prototype is Jesus of Nazareth).³⁷ The prototype is dubbed the divine Son of God who takes on humanity; and a key feature of prototypical redemption is an atoning death wherein the prototype suffers for the sins of those who believe in him for salvation (see R 74). This "most ignominious death, for the good of the world and even for his enemies" (R 61), serving "to deliver them from eternal damnation" (R 64), is not merely Christ-like, but the heart of the Christian gospel (see 1 Cor 15:11).

Despite the appeal of this overarching vision to Christian theologians, the question remains whether this rational theology is desirable. Unfortunately, this question is far more involved than merely asking whether Kant's vision matches one's faith commitments. The interpretation of Kant's rational theology presented here raises a number of key questions regarding its practical import for the discipline of theology proper. For it must be remembered that Kant's prototypical theology is a *rational* theology. Cognition commends the

prototype of reason, not the New Testament Jesus. Kant's emphasis on reason thus leads us to ask: *What is the role of history in this rational theology? Does it matter, and if so how? Can a Kantian move from prototypical theology to belief in Jesus as the prototype and remain a Kantian? If reason provides sufficient grounds for rational theology, is revelation necessary? What is the role of the biblical scholar? Is he merely led by the philosopher or does he bring something unique?* Finding answers to these and other questions will be vital for determining whether theologians will ultimately find this understanding of Kant desirable.

Regretfully, the answers to these questions are not evident by looking merely at Kant's prototypical theology. These further issues are developed primarily in Books Three and Four of *Religion*. Space restrictions prevent us from examining them in this essay. However, what our study of Kant's prototypical theology on its own does enable us to conclude is that Kant's philosophy does leave room for a rational theology that includes meaningful God-talk/God-thought, and that what Kant says about God in these few pages of *Religion* is, on the whole, consistent with Christian theology *in abstracto*. At the very least, this interpretation provides sufficient grounds for further inquiry into Kant's vision for rational religion, in the quest to determine whether theologians can benefit by pursuing theology within the Kantian paradigm.

NOTES

1. Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Is It Possible and Desirable for Theologians to Recover from Kant?" *Modern Theology* 14, no. 1 (January 1998): 8.

2. P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Methuen, 1966), 16.

3. Wolterstorff, "Is It Possible and Desirable," 9.

4. Wolterstorff, "Is It Possible and Desirable," 9.

5. Wolterstorff, "Is It Possible and Desirable," 13.

6. Jeffrey S. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" *Heythrop Journal* 40 (1999): 166–183.

7. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 169.

8. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 169.

9. See Stephen R. Palmquist, *Kant's System of Perspectives: An Architectonic Interpretation of Kant's Critical Philosophy* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1993), 27ff.

10. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 171.

11. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 171.

12. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 171.

13. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 171–172.

14. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 172.

15. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 173–174.

16. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 180–181.

17. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 179.

18. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 182.

19. Kant's term (*Urbild*) is also referred to as "the archetype," because this is how Greene and Hudson translated it. As such, the title of this paper could also be "Kant's Archetypal Theology."

20. A thoroughgoing defense of the read of *Religion* I adopt here can be found in Chris L. Firestone and Nathan Jacobs, "Beating the Conundrums in Kant's *Religion*: Books One and Two" (forthcoming).

21. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 180.

22. Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), 204.

23. Privette's argument only submits Christian theology, with its emphasis on the incarnation, as a theology that survives Kant's philosophy; his argument does not defend the incarnation, except perhaps by way of considering some of the alternatives. He writes, "The incarnation may be denied, of course . . . The alternatives . . . are silence, agnosticism, or pessimism." Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 180–181.

24. Privette, "Must Theology Re-Kant?" 180, 182.

25. See, e.g., R 6–9, 12–14, 31, 35, 61–62, 66, 119, and 163–164.

26. The disagreement in English-speaking Kant studies is largely a result of the inconsistent ways *Erkenntnis* has been translated. While early translators such as Meiklejohn used "cognition," Kemp Smith used "knowledge" interchangeably for *Erkenntnis* and *Wissen*. With the Cambridge edition consistently translating *Erkenntnis* as "cognition" and *Wissen* as "knowledge," theologically affirmative readers are becoming increasingly aware of the relatedness of cognition and belief. For a treatment of the importance of distinguishing between knowledge and cognition, see Rolf George, "Vorstellung and Erkenntnis in Kant," in *Interpreting Kant*, ed. Moltke S. Gram (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1982), 31–39.

27. That Kant assumes we can speak of a single universal disposition shared by all individuals may seem peculiar to some; however, Kant claims as early as the first *Critique* that the very notion of the moral disposition is necessary to his philosophy. See CPR A829/B857.

28. To be morally good is to subordinate all incentives to the incentive of the moral law; and since human persons do not act according to the law alone, the ground of all particular maxims must be cognized as corrupt. See Firestone and Jacobs, "Beating the Conundrums in Kant's *Religion*: Books One and Two," §3.

29. The question of realism versus nonrealism seems to hinge on this concept of meaning. If the world is meaningful, then it will be because of the existence of perfect humanity. If the world is not meaningful, then the need for perfect humanity evaporates. Kant's argument does not address the realist/nonrealist issue, but presumes the meaningfulness of our world and presses ahead, most likely on the basis of what Michalson calls "the principle of proportionality." See Gordon E. Michalson, Jr., *Fallen Freedom: Kant on Radical Evil and Moral Regeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 24.

30. Moral hope in *Religion* depends on our adopting—or appropriating (R 66)—the disposition of the prototype in moral faith. Kant writes, "In the *practical faith in this Son of God* . . . the human being can thus hope to become pleasing to God (and thereby blessed); that is, only a human being conscious of such a moral disposition in himself . . . is entitled to consider himself not an unworthy object of divine pleasure" (R 62). The disposition of the prototype "alone [is] pleasing to God" (R 60), and therefore, moral hope rests on incorporating the prototype's disposition into our person in an act

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of moral faith.

31. The exegetical evidence for understanding this as a key feature of Kant's argument in Book One is thoroughly established in Firestone and Jacobs, "Beating the Conundrums in Kant's *Religion*: Books One and Two," §3.

32. While I certainly take Kant's prototypical theology to be realist, this prototypical narrative seems to be indicative of symbolic theology.

33. This, of course, contrasts with the human individual who, in his moral guilt, "can regard himself as responsible for the sufferings that come his way" (R 61).

34. Kant makes clear that the possibility of a prototypical manifestation does not give license to presume that one who *emulates* the prototype *is* the prototype: "we would have no cause to assume in him anything else except a naturally begotten human being" (R 63). Since human duty is to conform to the prototypical ideal, we should not think one who emulates the prototype to be unique, argues Kant. This does not mean we should "absolutely deny that he might indeed also be a supernaturally begotten human being" (R 63); rather, Kant feels the quandary "from a practical point of view . . . is of no benefit to us" (R 63).

35. Kant admits that an empirical example (e.g., Jesus) can serve as a catalyst for the discovery of the prototype of reason, but even in such a case, one's faith must finally be in the prototype *in abstracto* if it is to be rational (see R 119).

36. See Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ and On Original Sin*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, First Series, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999), vol. II, 43; and Augustine, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 1996), XXVII. Kant goes so far as to acknowledge at the close of Book One that if the Adamic narrative is taken as a nontemporal, transcendental narrative of the human species, then the Genesis account of the fall is within the purview of rational religion (see R 41–44). For a more thorough treatment of this understanding of Book One, see Firestone and Jacobs, "Beating the Conundrums in Kant's *Religion*: Books One and Two," §3.

37. See, e.g., Michalson, *Fallen Freedom*, 92.

seven

Making Sense Out of Tradition

Theology and Conflict in Kant's Philosophy of Religion

Chris L. Firestone

One of the surest ways of identifying an example of the traditional interpretation of Kant is to look for a shrinking level of confidence in the cogency of his writings after the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781).¹ If an interpretation's confidence in Kant erodes as his philosophy advances through the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1787) to the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), and then disappears altogether with *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793), you can be pretty sure you are dealing with a traditional interpretation. This progressive erosion of confidence is especially evident when looking at the reception of his writings after *Religion*. Penned in Kant's twilight years, these writings present the traditional interpretation with deep problems in trying to explain his interest in God and the significant way he employs theological concepts. If Kant prohibits knowledge of God in the first *Critique*, why does he appear to be such a staunch advocate of theology in his late works? Why is talk of God allowable—or even desirable—for Kant in these epilogues to his great *Critiques*?²

On the traditional read, one way of dealing with these questions is to focus on *Kant-the-person*. Perhaps, as some interpreters claim, Kant is showing signs

of senility in his later years by forgetting about his prohibition on theoretical knowledge of God and dribbling on his philosopher's cloak by introducing into his work, without a staunch denial of their viability, theologically friendly concepts like grace and revelation. Might it be the case that the Kant of the 1790s was no longer the wise old sage of Königsberg, but an aged shell of the man he once was? On this reading, Kant may have become more concerned for his eternal soul than for the rigid phenomenal/noumenal distinction of his critical philosophy.

Another way the traditional interpretation has dealt with these questions is to focus on *Kant-the-politician*. On this view, Kant's writings on religion are understood as a tip of the philosopher's hat to the religious censors and the covert (or not so covert) reduction of religion to morality. Instead of following his critical philosophy with a book similar to that of his follower Gottlieb Fichte, namely, one critiquing the very possibility of revelation, Kant may have felt it politically wise to adopt Christian doctrine into his philosophy and adapt it to the peculiar concerns of his moral religion. Kant's writings on religion, in this, as in the previous case, provide little more than an elaboration on his moral philosophy and the eliminative reduction of religion to morality, according to the traditionalist.

Instead of focusing on "Kant-the-person" or "Kant-the-politician" in order to make sense of Kant's increased emphasis on theological discourse in his late writings, this essay explores the interpretive importance of understanding first and foremost *Kant-the-philosopher*. Unlike the personal and political alternatives, this motif does not depend fundamentally on evidence found outside the counsel of Kant's writings. This emphasis is found in *Religion* (implicitly throughout, but explicitly in the Prefaces) and is crystallized in Kant's philosophical program in his final publication, entitled *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798). *Religion* provides the seminal statement of Kant's vision for transcendental reason regarding the essentials of religion, while *Conflict* testifies to the centrality of philosophy as a calling for Kant and the constitutive influence of this vocation on his entire intellectual enterprise.

The purpose of this essay is to explore these two works from the point of view of Kant-the-philosopher in order to understand the nature of Kant's position on theology proper. This will distinguish this essay from that of Nathan Jacobs (see Chapter 6). Whereas Jacobs focuses exclusively on Kant's rational theology (or theology from a philosophical point of view), I will focus on the place of revealed theology (or theology from a theological point of view) in Kant's thinking. In order to flesh out Kant's position on theology in a preliminary way, I will focus in the next section on *Conflict* as Kant's seminal statement regarding the distinction between the disciplines of philosophy and theology. This sets up the unique roles of these two faculties in the "university of learning" and the difference of perspective at their core.

In the third section I will argue in brief that, though theology is a separate and unique discipline for Kant, it is very much dependent on philosophy for its

rational foundation. In particular, theology proper (which I am correlating with both “revealed religion” and “historical faith” in Kant’s *Religion*) has at least three distinct purposes: (1) to awaken and deepen our rational convictions regarding the perennial questions in religion, (2) to overcome our human weakness regarding our ability to embrace rational religion by presenting us with an authoritative historical source of theological truth, and (3) to hasten the day that the corrupt disposition of humanity is completely replaced by the disposition of humanity in its full moral perfection. The third of these purposes requires that we return to *Conflict* in the final section, having understood the nature and purpose of biblical theology, to examine Kant’s rules for conflict between philosophy and theology and the purpose these rules serve in Kant’s grand philosophical scheme for the religious redemption of humanity.

On the Difference between the Faculties of Philosophy and Theology

Although opinions vary regarding the importance of *Conflict* to Kant’s philosophical program,³ nobody disputes that the Preface and the First Part (on “The Conflict of the Philosophy Faculty with the Theological Faculty”) provide significant information regarding Kant’s position on theology proper. These portions of *Conflict* were written shortly after the publication of *Religion*, sometime between June and October 1794.⁴ They carry the doctrines of Kant’s philosophy in general and philosophy of religion in particular into an academic environment strongly influenced by the theological concerns of a Prussian religious state. Much has been made in this regard of Kant’s letter to King Friedrich Wilhelm II placed in the Preface to *Conflict*. This letter is a response to an earlier letter of reproof to Kant from Johann Christoph Wöllner, the State Censor of Religion. Because of the way Kant utilizes the language of his letter, specifically, his signed declaration “as your Majesty’s most loyal subject,” the inclusion of this letter in the Preface is taken by many as evidence that Kant’s principal intent in writing the Preface was to justify his publication of *Conflict* after he had told the king that he would not publish on religion ever again.

Without becoming embroiled in complex speculation over how far this may or may not be true, we would be remiss to overlook a very important theme on which the very effectiveness of the Preface hinges, namely, the vocational difference between philosophy and theology. Kant’s claim is that the vocational difference between philosophy and theology, what I will argue is primarily a difference of perspective, is crucial to a proper understanding of *Religion*. Kant begins his case this way (CF 8–9):

Since . . . I make no appraisal of Christianity, I cannot be guilty of disparaging it. In fact, it is only natural religion that I appraise . . . But when reason speaks, in these matters, as if it were sufficient to itself and as if revealed

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teachings were therefore superfluous (an assertion which, were it to be taken objectively, would have to be considered a real disparagement of Christianity), it is merely expressing its appraisal of itself.

Pervading his arguments of the Preface, we find a hermeneutic strategy for understanding *Religion* based on recognizing the philosophical perspective of the entire work. In CF 6n, Kant goes on to explain along similarly perspectival lines why he chose to title his work *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*:

[It] was to prevent a misinterpretation to the effect that the treatise deals with religion *from* mere reason (without revelation). That would be claiming too much, since reason's teachings could still come from men who are supernaturally inspired. The title indicates that I intended, rather, to set forth as a coherent whole everything in the Bible—the text of religion believed to be revealed—that can *also* be recognized *by mere reason*.

Kant identifies the central features of his philosophy of religion with Christianity and reiterates that his task in *Religion* was to articulate those beliefs that can “be recognized *by mere reason*,” that is, to examine religion from the perspective of philosophy or according to reason alone.

As we move into the First Part of *Conflict*, this difference of perspective between philosophy and theology takes center stage and is worth looking at more closely. According to Kant, “The biblical theologian proves the existence of God on the grounds that He spoke in the Bible, which also discusses his nature . . . [and] must . . . count on a supernatural opening of his understanding by a spirit that guides to all truth” (CF 24). In contradistinction, “the philosophical faculty must be free to examine in public and to evaluate with cold reason the source and content of this alleged basis of doctrine” (CF 33). When Kant writes of theology in *Conflict*, then, he appears to be writing about the field of inquiry where God’s Word and Spirit are presumed to constitute the standpoint of authority. When Kant writes of philosophy, he is writing about the field of inquiry where reason and freedom constitute the standpoint of authority. From the point of view of both reason (the domain of the philosopher) and the State (insofar as it is related to the church), theology is the higher faculty. Because it is purportedly of God, theology represents the tangible presence of religion in human life. Drawing on Kant’s image in *Religion*, theology is the necessary vehicle for the eventual arrival of a purified form of religious faith, and philosophy does well to recognize this fact by working with it.

Lest we get too far ahead of ourselves, we must not lose sight of what is unique about the discipline of theology, because this will be crucial in determining precisely why Kant thinks theology is important to philosophy. The majority of *Conflict* is concerned with a necessary dispute between philosophy and theology over the many questions of religion, and Kant clearly wants to ensure that the two vocations are not conflated and that both are present within the university of human learning. Theology, according to Kant, is right-

fully one of the university's higher faculties. Like law and medicine, theology establishes its norms and bases its authority on the best available writings in the field. Since theology's writings are presumed to be revelation of God, the discipline of theology has the status of the queen of the sciences, and, as Kant famously put it, the only question left is whether philosophy carries the torch before her or the train behind. In this sense theology serves both the interest of the government and the will of God, although not necessarily in a pure way or at the same time (CF 17–24).

In *Conflict*, Kant uses the terms “theology” and “biblical theology” synonymously. Interestingly, in light of developments after Kant, a synthesis of biblical and systematic theology actually might be closer to what he means.⁵ In the constitution of pure theology, “there is no human interpreter of the Scriptures authorized by God, [the theologian] must rather count on a supernatural opening of his understanding by a spirit that guides to all truth than allow reason to intervene and (without any higher authority) maintain its own interpretation” (CF 24).

Theology rightly understood, according to Kant, is rooted in the faith that God has spoken and the conviction that what God has said and done, as it is written, provides a trustworthy perspective on reality. This does not mean, however, that theology provides an independent source of information about God that threatens to undo reason and the vocation of philosophy. As already stated with regards to *Religion*, just as anything *known* must involve a judgment (i.e., a synthesis of intuition and concept), everything *believed in rationally* must be rooted in the moral and cognized for the sake of hope according to strict critical guidelines. In the context of *Conflict*, what this means is that theology must be upheld, not because it promises theological data that cannot be gleaned from the inner recesses of reason, but because theology as a distinct discipline promises to hasten the day that rational religion will become complete and be the religion of the land. Rather than promoting stagnation by putting theology into a theoretical, moral, aesthetic, or religious box, his philosophy of religion is placed into the dynamic and moving environment of the university. The conflict of the disciplines promotes the evolution of theology for the sake of true religion.

Personifying these two disciplines in *Conflict*, Kant notes in CF 24,

I am here only speaking of the pure (*purus, putus*) biblical theologian, who is not yet contaminated by the ill-reputed spirit of freedom that belongs to reason and philosophy. For as soon as we allow the two different callings to combine and run together, we can form no clear notion of the characteristic that distinguishes each by itself.

At first glance, it may not be obvious why Kant believes the distinction between philosophy and theology entails a necessary conflict. Initially, the dispute is fueled by the challenge to the veracity and viability of the other's perspective. Oftentimes the definition of conflict in the first *Critique* is attributed to the

meaning of conflict in *Conflict* despite the textual evidence to the contrary.⁶ In *Conflict* the philosopher maintains the perspective of reason and freedom, and the theologian maintains the perspective of Word and Spirit. When philosophy and theology disagree in their assertions, and these assertions cover the same conceptual space, conflict for self-preservation ensues. At a deeper level, however, the dispute involves the intentional use or abuse of authority. Kant explains the general nature of the dispute this way: “there will be a conflict between the higher and lower faculties which is, first, *inevitable*, and second, *legal as well*” (CF 32).

Since theology, for Kant, gains its authority because it is presumed to be of divine origin and as such is sanctioned by the state, it has an authority that is inevitable and legal. However, this authority, if left unchecked in the hands of human beings, just as inevitably oversteps its limits and trespasses on the territory of philosophy. When this happens, as it did in Kant’s context, the philosopher’s job is to use reason to challenge the authority and content of theology. Because philosophy and theology come together in the context of the human predicament and rely on human discourse for their public exposition, disagreement is inevitable. Kant’s contention, however, is not that this relationship should become entrenched and bitter, but that it should be proactive and engaging. Kant writes, “this conflict of two parties . . . is not a war” (CF 35), but, instead, they are “united in [their striving toward] one and the same final end (*concordia discors, discordia concors*)” (CF 35). The conflict Kant writes about is a *civil* conflict that leads toward the final end of humankind. In a sense, *Conflict* is all about establishing a university context that can ensure progress toward the eventual unity of philosophy and theology into one religious worldview. Kant’s final end is a rational religious vision and is an example of this synthesis, an end that unites humanity into a Kingdom of God or an Ethical Commonwealth.

Biblical Theology in Books Three and Four of *Religion*

Conflict read in isolation from *Religion* might give the impression that Kant believed the discipline of theology is founded independently of the constraints of reason. As Jacobs showed in the previous chapter, however, theological thought and discourse is, at the end of the day, grounded on the tenets of rational religion for Kant. In Books One and Two of *Religion*, Kant sets out to establish the nature and extent of the grounds for rational theology from the point of view of transcendental reason and the vocation of philosophy. He more or less ignores the issues of perspectival distinction from and disciplinary conflict with theology and focuses on what he calls “pure religious faith” (R 102), that is, those moral doctrines or universal principles that can be cognized by mere reason and affirmed in faith. Not until Books Three and Four does Kant move to examine the work of the scriptural/biblical scholar. While the nuances of Kant’s vision in Books Three and Four may differ from interpreter

to interpreter, what almost all can agree on is that Kant believes that central to the biblical interpreter's task is the exaltation of the pure moral doctrines of rational religious faith. In the drive toward the purification of ecclesiastical faith, universal principles of morality must be used as the supreme interpreter of any given holy book or set of religious beliefs. In Kant's view, this is "how all types of faith . . . have always been treated, . . . teachers . . . kept on interpreting them until, gradually, they brought them . . . in agreement with the universal principles of moral faith" (R 110–111). In short, the scriptural scholar, in Kant's view, should be a fellow promoter (with the philosopher) of pure religious faith.

If, as shown in the previous section, there must be a genuine conflict in the university of learning between philosophy and theology as two distinct disciplines with two distinct perspectives, then the question is whether or not scriptural scholarship offers anything at all that is unique. If not, one would be justified in wondering what Kant is trying to accomplish in *Conflict* by demarcating the nature of the disciplines. Is he dribbling on his philosopher's cloak by appealing incoherently to biblical concepts like grace and redemption when all philosophical resources have run out? Or is this an artificial separation meant to kowtow to the political authorities by carving out room for theology unnecessarily? Perhaps the crucial question is whether Kant genuinely views theology as a discipline distinct from philosophy, which makes a unique contribution to rational religion in general and the university of learning in particular? For the remainder of this section, I argue that theology proper has at least three clear distinctives in Kant's view that do make a unique and important contribution to his vision for rational religion.

We pick up Kant's argument for the unique role of theology in Book Three of *Religion*. There he introduces the need for a revelation (or at least what is upheld as revelation) in the form of a written, "sacred" text. This "need" is, according to Kant, rooted in "a peculiar weakness of human nature" (R 103). Kant does not explain the nature of this weakness in Book Three, but it seems that this weakness is essentially a human tendency to feel that merely being moral is insufficient to please God. This weakness manifests itself as a withholding from the moral (and moral reason) its proper place and authority, and thereby creating the human desire for special revelation. For only in special revelation can we hope to find what (beyond the moral) God demands. As a result, Kant recognizes that "pure faith can never be relied on as much as it deserves, that is, [enough] to found a Church on it alone" (R 103). And thus, in the face of this weakness Kant points to the weight of authority a sacred text has as the means for remedying this human deficiency. Kant notes that a "holy book commands the greatest respect even among those . . . who do not read it" (R 107), and thereby suggests that it is beneficial (and even necessary) for religion to maintain, and regularly appeal to, this sacred authority.

The benefit of the sacred text does not reside in the knowledge that it is revelation, but in its presumed authority. According to Kant, "no subtle argu-

ment can stand up to the knockdown pronouncement, *Thus it is written*" (R 107). Here the biblical scholar enters the scene as the guardian of the sacred text (see R 112), who discerns and presents the meaning of the sacred text to its readers. The scriptural scholar draws from the text the pure moral/religious doctrines and presents them to the church community, and in this way the laity is able to embrace rational religion. Because those who sit under the authority of the sacred text, with the biblical scholar as its guardian, are able to receive the doctrines presented—whatever they may be—due to their grounding in the sacred text, this becomes a means for the propagation of the purified religious doctrines. This type of scholarly endeavor draws on resources inaccessible to the layperson (e.g., ancient languages) and thereby pulls from the text "the understanding of the church community" (R 113). If the pure religious doctrines are presented in this way, "those who fancy that they find in this idea [of revealed Scripture] a special strengthening of their moral faith . . . gladly accept it" (R 113). It is this understanding of the biblical scholar that leads Kant to conclude that "the authority of Scripture . . . is the worthiest and . . . only instrument of union of all human beings into one church" (R 112).

By itself, this limited understanding of the biblical theologian's role might appear to promote a disingenuous use of Scripture, but Kant has in mind a more significant insight into this role that is related to his definition of rational religion. This more significant role becomes apparent in Book Four, where human weakness and the need for a sacred text reemerge in Kant's treatment of Christianity as learned religion. Here Kant returns to the topic of human weakness, one that feels the need for revelation of what God demands. Weakness here is not defined in moral terms or in terms of a finite and defective human intellect; instead, in Book Four this human weakness is specifically attributed to what Kant calls the "unlearned" or those who cannot (for whatever reason) immediately grasp the pure moral/religious doctrines from mere reason and need the apparent authority and clarity of the biblical scholar to make these doctrines intelligible and binding. Thus, while rational religion is universally accessible and valid, it is not universally communicable since the unlearned may not be capable of understanding it in abstract terms.

If a religion is to be valid for the whole world (as rational religion must be), including both the learned and the unlearned, there arises a need for learned religion as the platform for the biblical scholar to communicate, through erudition and a treatment of the text, the pure moral/religious doctrines. In Kant's words:

[U]niversal human reason must be recognized and honored as supreme commanding principle in a natural religion within the Christian doctrine of faith; whereas the doctrine of revelation, upon which a church is founded and which stands in need of scholars as interpreters and preservers, must be cherished and cultivated as a mere means, though a most precious one, for giving meaning, diffusion, and continuity to natural religion even among the ignorant. (R 165)

This, then, accents the role of the biblical scholar highlighted in Book Three. The biblical scholar does not merely utilize the power of the sacred text because it is somehow an unfortunate reality that it is revered, but the biblical scholar utilizes the sacred text because of the inevitability that not all humans are learned. Rational religion demands that the pure moral/religious doctrines be universally accessible even to the unlearned.

Assuming Kant has established here a unique role for the biblical scholar, we still face a rather significant question: *Is the distinctiveness of the biblical scholar merely an attempt on Kant's part to make the biblical scholar into a philosopher in priest's clothing?* If, ultimately, the biblical scholar merely forwards to the church laity the philosophically purified religious doctrines, the biblical scholar ultimately must be a philosopher propagating the gospel of pure reason using the authority of the a sacred text as merely a means to an end. If this is the case, then the biblical scholar does not bring anything new to the conflict with philosophy. And likewise, if this were the case, then the role of the biblical theologian would be artificial and the conflict a farce. Such an artificial division would exist to appease state authorities by duping the unlearned in order to encourage them to be moral in Kant's philosophical sense.

So again, the pressing question remains: *Is the biblical scholar just a philosopher playing priest, or does this so-called distinct discipline actually make a contribution?* I believe Kant's distinction between the theological and philosophical discipline, and the subsequent conflict between these disciplines, is anything but artificial. The key to seeing this is found in the opening of Book Four of *Religion*. Kant, there writing on the topic of revelation from the perspective of a rationalist, suggests that the naturalist denial of the very possibility of revelation is beyond the limits of human reason: "Hence [the rationalist] will never deny [the possibility of revelation] in the manner of a naturalist" (R 155). Moreover, Kant admits that, regarding the question of whether revelation is possible or even necessary to the instantiation of religion, reason cannot adjudicate these matters, and no decision can finally be reached: "Hence [the rationalist] will never . . . contest the intrinsic possibility of revelation in general or the necessity of a revelation as a divine means for the introduction of true religion; for no human being can determine anything through reason regarding these matters" (R 155).

The point of origin of revelation, for Kant, is always located in what is responsible for disclosing the pure moral/religious doctrines. Kant forwards two possibilities: either the internal testimony of reason or the external testimony of Scripture. It is not always possible in every case to determine this location, but clearly Kant holds that the former is crucial for determining (and accepting in faith) the tenets of true religion. Having reached this point of dispute between what one "either accepts as necessary and sufficient, or only as accidental, to the one and only true religion" (R 155), Kant presents a way of understanding and disseminating religious truth, namely, "according to the characteristic that renders it capable of *external communication*" (R 155).⁷

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Both *natural religion* and *learned religion* communicate well to human beings. The former, Kant suggests, constitutes what “every human being can be convinced through his reason” (R 155) and targets the “learned,” whereas the latter constitutes what “one can convince others only by means of erudition” (R 155) and targets the “unlearned.”

Kant does not envision an infinite gap between the natural and the learned. Rather, he indicates quite clearly that “a religion can be *natural*, yet also *revealed*” (R 155). Such a religion is one that “human beings *could and ought to have* arrived at . . . on their own through the mere use of reason” (R 155); yet, because “they *would* not have come to it as early or as extensively as is required” (R 155), the public revelation of its doctrines proves beneficial. And thus, with the introduction of such a religion, “everyone can henceforth convince himself of its truth by himself and his own reason” (R 156). Therefore, such a religion rightfully bears both titles: “the religion is *objectively* a natural one, though *subjectively* one-revealed; hence it truly deserves also the first title” (R 156).⁸

The importance of this point is that Kant opens the door for the possibility of revelation adding to human understanding. For in the case of a religion that is both natural and learned, its principles are moral principles that are embedded in human reason; however, the gift of revelation has served to awaken these principles in a timely and thorough manner. Note that in such a scenario revelation does not present information that is beyond the purview of reason—something that reason could never have arrived at—but unveils rational principles that heretofore have lain dormant. By opening the door to this possibility and admitting that reason cannot eliminate it, Kant establishes the rational possibility that a sacred text may not be merely a revelation, but a revelation that may awaken and deepen principles within reason in a more timely and thorough manner than reason would on its own. And therefore, while reason leaves us at a loss as to how to assess whether a purported revelation is revelation if it supposedly introduces nonrational principles that reason cannot reach on its own, revelation that is both natural and learned can be engaged with and fruitfully deepen philosophical inquiry.

The Rules of Conflict and the Hope for Unity

Given the thoroughness of Kant’s vision for philosophy and theology in Books Three and Four, some readers might interpret *Religion* as though Kant’s plan was for theology simply to submit to the clear teachings of reason just as soon as it becomes clear that the two are of one accord. Kant is not this optimistic. He gives a glimpse of his intended purpose for *Religion* in the Preface to the first edition:

For the sciences profit from being set apart, insofar as each science first constitutes a whole by itself, only after that shall the experiment be made of

considering them in association. Now whether the theologian agrees with the philosopher or believes himself obliged to oppose him: let him just hear him out. For in this way alone can the theologian be forearmed against all the difficulties that the philosopher may cause him. To conceal these difficulties, however, or indeed to decry them as ungodly is a mean expedient that will not wash; to mix the two [disciplines] and for the biblical theologian to direct only an occasional fleeting glance at [philosophy], constitutes a lack of thoroughness where in the end nobody knows exactly how they stand in the whole with respect to the doctrine of religion. (R 10–11)

Kant indicates that his theological vision is in keeping with the discipline of philosophy, and that it is presented as such to the biblical theologian. This presentation is not presumptuous, however. Kant does not think the theologian ought simply to accept it; his plea is instead for the voice of philosophy to be heard and carefully considered. This will naturally lead to dialogue, and occasionally outright opposition. The point is to engender a reasoned conflict so that clarity and progress will be possible.

We see here the seeds of *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Kant is clear from the very outset of *Religion* that his theological vision represents the perspective of philosophy on religion. Along these same lines, the biblical theologian belongs to a separate discipline that ought not to be confused with philosophy, but ought nevertheless to engage philosophy—even if this means in disagreement or outright opposition to its claims. The fact that Kant singles out the theologian in the hope that he will be heard out indicates that *Religion* is written, at least in part, to the theologian and that it is submitted in a cross-disciplinary context. Kant believes this conflict within the academy is not simply inevitable, but also potentially fruitful, provided each side recognizes the nature and limits of their respective perspectives. As such, *Religion* is not the end of theology per se, but more of a philosophical vision rooted in moral and judicial reasoning, one that places demands on theology. From this vantage point, Kant's philosophy of religion readies itself for conflict with that discipline in the quest for understanding.

With a clear understanding of the nature of philosophy and theology and the importance of the conflict between them in hand, we close with a summary of Kant's rules for conflict. In the section "On the legal conflict of the higher faculties with the lower faculty," Kant lays out the "formal procedures for such a conflict" (CF 32–35). These four procedures comprise the ground rules for a civil conflict of the faculties and present a plan for the ongoing quest within the university for establishing the purified moral doctrines of religious faith. True religion depends on the active and public interchange between philosophy and theology, so long as this conflict remains principled.

The first rule for philosophical and theological conflict is as follows: "This conflict cannot and should not be settled by amicable accommodation (*amicabilis compositio*), but (as a lawsuit) calls for a verdict" (CF 33). Here Kant is advocating an approach to the conflict of philosophy and theology that re-

quires a decision to be made. If a theology is unable to challenge and chasten philosophy by offering a vision of history and hope worthy of our rational commitment, then one should side with what is confirmed in the rigors of critical philosophical reasoning. This does not mean, however, that one ought to dispense with theology altogether. As shown earlier, Kant's optimism toward theology is rooted in his conviction that we need theology for the propagation of rational religion. The philosophical side of the dispute should be against only one manifestation of theology at a time. The same is true of philosophy. If a theological perspective on the world, God, and humanity is more cogent and convicting than its philosophical counterpart, if it resonates with our deepest moral instincts and longings for hope, then that particular conception of philosophy should be reconsidered. The aim of a verdict is not to dispense with the discipline, but to progress toward truly rational religion through conflict. If one theology is rejected, according to Kant, the philosopher must find a new one. Important to note, of course, is that this discussion does not deny the priority of the rational over the historical in Kant's estimation. Instead, it confirms that whatever the theologian gleans from the historical can be held out as truth only if it can be reasonably asserted that we should have thought of it ourselves.

Kant's second rule for philosophical and theological conflict confirms this line of thinking: "This conflict can never end, and it is the philosophy faculty that must always be prepared to keep it going" (CF 33). Here the importance of theology to Kant is noteworthy. For Kant, theology is the task of mining through the "Word of God" in the conviction that God's Spirit will lead us unto all truth. The only way we could ever reasonably believe it as such, however, is if it resonates with rational religion. This transcendental priority is a product of Kant's deepest philosophical instincts. Nevertheless, theology is so important to the philosophical task as it pertains to religion, according to Kant, that a good philosopher should even be willing to undertake the vocation of the theologian in order to do theology in such a way that history and the church actively chasten philosophy. Philosophy needs theology, so much so that, if theologians were to stop doing their job, philosophers would have to do it for them. Without the historical to latch on to, no one knows how long it would take for the truths of rational theology to be established, and at what depth they would ever be so established.

The third rule for conflict has to do with context: "This conflict can never detract from the dignity of the government" (CF 34). According to Kant, realizing that religious liberty is directly proportional to civil liberty is always crucial. If we are not prepared to support government in its endeavors to maintain open rational discourse at all times, then we cannot hope the human race will progress. For Kant's religious vision to get off the ground, a civil state must be established and maintained. If the government, as protector of the people, is not held in high esteem, then open rational discourse will not be possible. Even though theology is—both in Kant's specific historical context

and in his general way of thinking about theology—authorized and supported by the State, the fate of any particular manifestation of theology cannot detract from the dignity of government. For Kant, a reciprocal relationship exists between the State and theology proper, and philosophy’s job is to make sure whatever particular manifestation of theology is predominant has been critically examined so as not to detract from the stability of the rule of law.

The fourth rule for conflict has to do with the evolution of human thinking toward truth and confirms Kant’s optimism toward the enduring work of theology, law, and medicine: “This conflict is quite compatible with an agreement of the learned and civil community in maxims, which, if observed, must bring about the constant progress of both ranks of the faculties toward greater perfection” (CF 35). Kant’s vision is that a truly civil society be a progressive and educated people—a morally free people to be sure, but a people under God with eternity in their hearts. This is true because of Kant’s faith in human freedom and reason and the testimony of reason and freedom to this effect. Religion must be rational at the end of the day for Kant, and his principal concern is that there be established social and political structures that will enhance, rather than hamper, the eventual establishment of his eschatological vision for religion. Without rational rules and civil structures, philosophy would revert to merely a solitary and Socratic discipline and never be champion of the transition to true universal religion that Kant feels is central to its vocation.

The rules for the civil conflict of philosophy and theology constitute a clear and emphatic account of how philosophy and theology are to be engaged. *Conflict* is a progressive step in the fulfillment of Kant’s *role* as a philosopher. Kant often challenges the biblical theologian, not because the theologian’s perspective is necessarily flawed, but because it is, yet in an ideal world should not be, in conflict with essential elements of his rational theology. Kant also holds that the same is true the other way round: the theologian ought to challenge the philosopher when their arguments and conclusions disagree. This confrontation might be over the proper interpretation of Scripture (as it often is in *Conflict*), but it can also be over what it means to think rationally about religion. In the court of public reason and the recesses of personal belief, the philosopher and theologian draw closer together in the truth by confronting one another in humility. This is important, because the philosopher and the theologian, whether they know it or not, are aiming at the same goal. So Kant does not dismiss the biblical theologian, who implores us to search the Scriptures to find eternal life; instead, asserting that “the only way we can find eternal life in any Scripture whatsoever is by putting it there” (CF 37), he challenges the theologian to refute his claim that what reason demands and what God demands have one and the same final aim.

NOTES

1. For a detailed explanation of what I mean by “traditional interpretation,” see Part I of the Editors’ Introduction.

2. For an overview of the God-talk problem and one way Kant’s philosophy overcomes it, see Nathan Jacobs’s essay (Chapter 6). This essay is written as something of a companion piece to that essay. Both essays emerge out of a joint research program on *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. This is especially true of the third section in each essay. My thanks to Jacobs for helpful insights throughout.

3. Some interpreters think the text should not be placed into the seminal corpus of Kant’s critical writings because it is irrelevant to understanding his philosophy. See, e.g., Clement C. J. Webb, *Kant’s Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 169. For Webb, *Conflict* does little more than reiterate Kant’s philosophy of religion in a different format. Bernard Reardon concurs: *Conflict* “adds nothing of significance to what had been more fully said before.” See Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Kant as Philosophical Theologian* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 157. Other interpreters admit *Conflict* into the seminal corpus of Kant’s critical writings, but in a way that links it decisively to his political context. Peter Byrne suggests that *Conflict* is more a political treatise that does not refer to theology in general, but to theology “Prussian-style.” Personal correspondence, March 2002. Susan Shell adds that *Conflict* exhibits Kant’s “central strategy: to play upon the government’s desire to rule, in order to bolster the independence of the scholarly community vis-à-vis church censorship.” Susan Meld Shell, “Kant as Educator: Reason and Religion in Part One of the Conflict of the Faculties,” in *Kant’s Legacy: Essays in Honor of Lewis White Beck*, ed. Predag Cicovacki (Rochester, N.Y.: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 335.

4. Allen W. Wood, “Editor’s Introduction,” in *Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 235.

5. Galbraith recommends that we understand Kant’s distinction between philosophy and theology, not in the way described, but in different contemporary terms. She draws attention to the fact that philosophical theology and philosophy of religion are terms Kant used synonymously. Her argument is that, since the university, as it is broadly conceived today, does not identify theology as being essentially revealed theology, Kant can be thought of as a theologian, or as she puts it, as a “closet theologian.” Theology today, according to Galbraith, is essentially what Kant called philosophical theology. Whether or not she is right about the nature of contemporary theology is not at issue; what is at issue is the specific nuance of how Kant defined theology in *Conflict*. Elizabeth Cameron Galbraith, *Kant and Theology: Was Kant a Closet Theologian?* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1996), 63–64. For further clarification of the distinctions between rational and biblical theology, see LPR 993–1001. For Kant, “there are no kinds of theology but those of reason and revelation” (LPR 999).

6. At least two kinds of conflict can be found in the first *Critique*. The first kind is not directly related to theology. Conflicts of this kind are primarily among philosophers and are an important focus of the “Transcendental Doctrine of Elements.” There Kant wrote about philosophical disputes arising from the abuse of reason. These kinds of disputes present perspectival problems within the domain of pure philosophy. These are found particularly in Book Two of the Transcendental Dialectic, in “The Dialecti-

cal Inferences of Pure Reason.” Finding solutions to these problems was the chief task of Kant’s critical methodology in the first *Critique*. An unbounded reason leads philosophy into irresolvable conflicts of its own making, while a bounded reason allows philosophy to avoid these conflicts and live in perspectival harmony.

The Transcendental Doctrine of Method, on the other hand, has as a principal concern the dispute between the perspectives of philosophy and theology. This second and smaller part of the first *Critique* focuses on philosophy in its role as the lower faculty of learning moving human understanding toward “a complete system of pure reason” (CPR A707/B736). This part makes a somewhat rhetorical argument for the perspective of philosophy over, and very often against, all other perspectives. It can be viewed as the seed of the conflict of perspectives that grows into a major feature of Kant’s philosophical program. Reason, understood broadly, is concerned not so much with peace through isolation (as it is in the Transcendental Doctrine of the Elements) as with progress through engagement. Where the Doctrine of the Elements “made an estimate of the building materials and determined for what sort of edifice, with what height and strength, they would suffice,” the Doctrine of Method was concerned with “not so much the materials as with the plan” (A707/B735). A key section in the Doctrine of Method is “The discipline of pure reason with regard to its polemical use.” This section highlights the two kinds of conflicts present in the first *Critique* as “the antithetic of pure reason” and reason’s “defense of its propositions against dogmatic denials of them” (A739–743/B767–771).

Antithetical conflicts have the benefit of leading philosophy toward transcendental insight. They bring philosophy to the recognition of its boundaries and a state of confidence and peace. As Kant puts it, “The conflict cultivates reason by the consideration of its object on both sides and corrects its judgment by limiting it” (CPR A744/B772). Beyond the use of antithetical conflicts in the constitution of reason’s boundaries, philosophy does a disservice to itself in dwelling on disputes of this sort. The other kind of conflict, however, is rooted in the relationship between the perspectives of philosophy and theology. When referring to this polemical conflict in the first *Critique*, Kant employs phrases that are very similar to those he later uses in *Religion* and *Conflict*; however, their purpose is somewhat different. Kant there discusses the conflict between theology and philosophy not in order to point the way forward for the ongoing and fruitful relationship between these disciplines, as he does in *Religion* and *Conflict*, but instead, to establish the discipline of philosophy in the face of dogmatic theological challenges. Kant describes the conflict as a dispute over “tone”; it is not really material as much as rhetorical—i.e., perspectival.

7. The importance of this distinction is that since it is beyond the limits of human reason to mediate the debate between the pure rationalist and the supernaturalist—“from the origin of a religion alone we cannot draw any conclusion regarding its suitability or unsuitability to be a universal religion of humanity” (R 155)—the measure of a given religion’s suitability for true religion falls to this question of communicability. We can draw a conclusion regarding a particular religion’s suitability or unsuitability to be the universal religion of humanity, in Kant’s words, “on the basis of its constitution as universally communicable, or not; the first property [i.e., religion as universally communicable] constitutes, however, the essential characteristic of the religion which ought to bind every human being” (R 155).

8. The difference between a religion that is both natural and revealed and a

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religion that “cannot be considered but as revealed” is that the former could persevere even if the revelation were lost and entirely forgotten, whereas the latter requires that the record be preserved “in a totally secure tradition or in holy books as records, [or] it would disappear from the world; and a supernatural revelation would have to come about, either one publicly repeated from time to time or one continuously enduring within each human being” (R 156).

eight

Kant and Kierkegaard on the Need for a Historical Faith

An Imaginary Dialogue

Ronald M. Green

January 1, 2027. Immanuel Kant and Søren Kierkegaard unexpectedly find themselves sharing a corner in the Delta Medallion Club at Denver Airport. Snow has delayed their flights for several hours.

The two great scholars of philosophy and religion are familiar with one another's writings. Thanks to the work of Gill, Glenn, Mehl, Perkins, Green, and others in the last quarter of the twentieth century, it is now well known that Kierkegaard constructed much of his thinking on the foundation of Kant's philosophy.¹ Kant's familiarity with Kierkegaard is more recent—one aspect of the education program he has gone through in the decade since his “reanimation” was accomplished by means of modern genetic science and computer technology.

A waiter takes their order and returns with two glasses of California Chardonnay and a bowl of Goldfish crackers.

Kant: I really enjoy these little crackers, don't you?

Kierkegaard: One of the best of the modern “inventions”!

Recognizing that they have an opportunity to pursue a topic dear to them, the two thinkers quickly turn to ethics and its relationship to religion.

Kierkegaard: Let me say, first of all, how pleased I am to have this chance

to express my thanks to you. As you know, during my lifetime I was unable to be as public as I would have liked about my reliance on your work. The Danish attitude toward rationalism in general and to Kantianism in particular was so negative in my day; I never joined this chorus of voices. I took a strong stand of opposition to the Hegelians who made light of your work, and I took pains to insert brief but very positive things about your philosophy and your character in my writings.² But I admit I never credited you properly.

Kant: I understand. Frankly, I'm not sure what I would have done in your place. As you know, despite my reputation for moral rigor, I made my own compromises with strict veracity. One of these was my pledge to King Friedrich to obey his edict not to publish *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Without saying so, I interpreted this as a pledge to Friedrich just so long as he remained alive. Many have since remarked that I was a bit casuistic in my reasoning.

Kierkegaard: Since you raise the subject of *Religion*, let me say here how much this book influenced me. During my student years it was a ray of light in the darkness. Here was the undisputed moral rationalist, the father of the modern concept of moral autonomy, affirming the "radical evil" in human beings and our need for divine grace to achieve moral fulfillment!

Kant: It's interesting that you should say that. I confess I was initially unhappy with my conclusions in *Religion*. I thought I had said all there is to say about rational religious beliefs when I wrote the *Critique of Practical Reason*. A moral governor of the universe, the possible continuance of our life beyond death to accomplish our perfection in moral virtue—I honestly believed these were the only religious concepts we needed to complete the moral life.

Kierkegaard: What was it that changed your mind? You know many have said *Religion* was nothing more than your effort to pacify the orthodox, including your manservant Lampe.

Kant: That's amusing, and unfair to Lampe. He was no fool and disliked priestcraft as much as I did. In fact, *Religion* was really a surprising consequence of an idea already present in the second *Critique*. It was an idea I initially resisted, because I feared its practical implications. I yielded to it only when I became convinced of its truth and power.³

Kierkegaard: What is that idea?

Kant: That in relation to morality we are radically free. In the second *Critique* I began to explore a basic problem in rational moral justification. We know we are bound by the moral law whose voice is commanding. We also know we are "creatures of needs" who are compelled to seek the satisfaction of our desires, the sum of which constitute our happiness.⁴ Indeed, one purpose of morality is to create the rule of law that permits all persons the ordered pursuit of their happiness. But the question is, how are we to reason when the dictates of the moral law run counter to our valid rational concern with our well-being?

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Kierkegaard: One would think you would reply that we must obey the dictates of the moral law that by its nature requires the subordination of individual ends to the common good.

Kant: That's certainly right. But the question is, how do we rationally justify the priority of moral reason? We can't appeal to the individual's happiness in this context, since this is just what he or she is being asked to subordinate. Nor can we appeal to the satisfaction that comes with virtue (what I termed "self-contentment" in the second *Critique*). The people who choose to act virtuously certainly experience this, but this is because they have already chosen to give prime importance to their moral self-estimate. The question is, why should they do this? Finally, we cannot argue that objective, self-disregarding reason (what I call "pure practical reason") dictates this priority, because it is just this pure reason whose supreme authority is being questioned. Indeed, this may be the only instance in all of rational justification where the authority of pure reason can be impugned. In other words, we find here that in this situation all rational justification runs in circles.

Kierkegaard: So you are saying we cannot be compelled by reason to accept the priority of the moral law?

Kant: Exactly. This doesn't mean we can avoid the command of moral reason. Certainly we can never unequivocally justify anyone's unfettered pursuit of personal happiness. Such a policy is insanity and would soon defeat itself. But the priority of moral reason nevertheless defies strict rational justification. To eliminate this problem, I argued in the second *Critique* that our practical reason leads us to entertain certain religious beliefs. To the extent we believe the world may be ruled by an all-powerful and just moral governor who unerringly rewards our virtue (and punishes our vice), we have a reasoned basis for always giving priority to our morally commanding reason.

Kierkegaard: You are not saying that morality requires us to hold these beliefs?

Kant: No, not at all. That would be to find rational necessity where, as I have said, none exists. These beliefs are a way of holding together all the conflicting dictates of our practical reason. *If* we wish to make our reason harmonious with itself in its theoretical and various practical employments,⁵ we can act morally and subscribe to the religious beliefs that assist us in doing this. But, as I put it, such a position is a choice, "a voluntary decision of our judgment . . . itself not commanded" by reason (CPrR 146). Hence our reason permits us to adopt morality and its attendant religious beliefs, but it also permits us, if we are willing to live with conflict at the core of our reason, to abandon morality and these same beliefs.

Kierkegaard: I take it that this is the truth in the traditional Christian teaching that wickedness begins with unbelief.

Kant: Precisely. And it is also the source of the radical freedom I spoke of. This is not just a freedom to do as we wish. We have that freedom in any case if we are prepared to act irrationally. But here we have a freedom to act immor-

ally in a way that cannot be rationally condemned. We have a rational freedom for immoral choice.

Kierkegaard: And this is the idea that you resisted until you turned to it in *Religion*?

Kant: That's right. You might say that in the second *Critique* I devoted myself to developing and defending morality's associated religious beliefs. But I failed to dwell on the implications of the sheer voluntariness of these beliefs and the depth of our rational freedom in this area. In *Religion* the implications of this voluntariness were moved to the fore.

Kierkegaard: Can you briefly spell those implications out?

Kant: They proceed in sequence. First, since we are not required by our reason to give priority to the moral law, there is every reason to believe that on occasion we will fail to do so. Second is the moral requirement that we must guarantee unerring obedience to the moral law if we are to claim any moral worth for ourselves at all. The third implication follows from these two: since we can and will fail to uphold the priority of the moral law, we cannot sustain any claim to moral worth.

Kierkegaard: Can you please explain your second point?

Kant: Our need to guarantee unerring obedience to the moral law?

Kierkegaard: Yes.

Kant: Very simple. We must guarantee unerring right willing because moral worth is an all-or-nothing affair. One cannot be just a "little bit" immoral. Even one act of wrong-willing evidences a fundamentally immoral disposition, one that places other considerations before the moral law. This is what I called a corrupt "general maxim" of the will. If I may use a metaphor from an area I have just learned about, a person who occasionally subordinates morality to self-interest is like a computer that occasionally miscalculates sums. Such unreliability makes both the person and the machine worthless. This is why in *Religion* I termed this ever-present tendency to such an inversion of motives "the radical evil" of the human will, an evil that lies at the very root of our morally legislative disposition and that corrupts us fundamentally. In religious terms, if we think of our duties as commanded by a morally legislating God, this evil is sin.

Kierkegaard: But you are not saying that we must sin?

Kant: No. Absolutely not. This is a matter of free choice, a choice that is even less required by reason than the choice of morality. But it is a rationally possible choice. And what is possible may become actual. This possibility is what weakens our confidence in any judgment of moral worth.

Kierkegaard: Does the problem stem from the fact that we possess many personal desires?

Kant: Yes and no. We are creatures of needs, pulled by inclinations that occasionally war with our moral reason. Without such inclinations, there would be no motive to disobey morality. We would then have a holy will like God. But these inclinations do not themselves explain our wrongdoing. We

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always know ourselves to be free to resist them and they can sometimes even lead us to virtue.⁶ Nor does the problem arise just because we face stress, hardship, or want. Inexplicably, we choose to invert the priority due morality in good times as in bad. This is why Scripture presents the fall of man as occurring once, inexplicably and without necessity, but in a way that foreshadows the recurrent fall of all who follow. For if even one of us succumbs to this misuse of freedom, who can confidently assert that he or she will not also do so?

Kierkegaard: This, of course, is the philosophical reinterpretation of the doctrine of original sin that you present in *Religion*.

Kant: Yes. It is the first of several such philosophical reinterpretations of orthodox teachings that I endeavor there. But I want to stress that I'm not looking to the historical fact of Adam's sin. The explanation of sin as an inheritance from our first parents is the most inept one I can imagine (R 40 [35]). No person can be imputable for the wrongful deeds of another. Adam is each one of us. Experience teaches that at some point we each "fall" freely into the choice of immoral conduct, and even one such fall calls fatally into question the constancy and worth of our moral disposition, convicting us in our own eyes of sin.

Kierkegaard: This is an ingenious argument. I've pushed you because I wanted to hear your own synopsis of insights that have had a great impact on my thinking. As you may know, I drew heavily on your arguments to ground my repeated assertion that philosophical ethics leads to its own undoing. For example, in *The Concept of Anxiety* I said, "Ethics points to ideality as a task and assumes that every man possesses the requisite conditions. Thus ethics develops a contradiction, inasmuch as it makes clear both the difficulty and the impossibility."⁷ Or, again, "An ethics that ignores sin is a completely futile discipline, but if it affirms sin, then it has *eo ipso* exceeded itself."⁸ In all this, it was your development of the ideality of ethics, the rigor of the moral demand, and the inevitable but imputable fact of moral failure that informed my thinking.

Kant: Yes, but we must be careful. In reading your work, I felt you wanted to go much farther than I was willing to go.

Kierkegaard: Why do you say that?

Kant: Because you use these ideas as a springboard to defend orthodox Christian teaching, especially faith in a historical savior. But just as I vehemently deny that it does us any good to look at the fall in historical terms, so I deny any ultimate importance to historical events or revelations in the process of our moral redemption. Everything we need for our moral salvation resides within us as a part of our practical reason.

The conversation is interrupted as a waiter asks whether they wish another drink. He tells them the weather has lifted and flights will probably be resuming in the next hour or two.

Kierkegaard: Well, then, it seems our time is short. This difference between us is so important that I would like to focus on it immediately. Let me

say that I simply do not understand your position. It seems to me in clear contradiction to almost everything you say.

Kant: What do you mean?

Kierkegaard: As I understand your argument in *Religion*, you frankly acknowledge that we must accept the conclusion that we are “infinitely guilty” for our defection from the moral law (R 72 [66])?

Kant: Yes.

Kierkegaard: And as a consequence, we merit infinite punishment (R 72 [66])?

Kant: That’s right.

Kierkegaard: You further concede that there is a substantial place for divine grace in the process of our moral redemption—that when we reach the depths of our moral self-esteem, we are driven to the possibility of grace as the sole way of escaping moral despair and rationally resuming our moral striving?

Kant: I’m not sure I’m comfortable with the phrase “sole way.” The sole way we can regain our lost moral course is to rededicate ourselves to upright willing. We cannot look to anyone else to do our moral work for us. Let me add here that, according to human reason, it does not make sense to believe our moral debt can be discharged by another person, even if he be declared to be the Son of God. Moral evil is no transmissible liability that can be made over to another like some commercial debt (R 72 [66]).

Kierkegaard: I understand your insistence on this point, and I might say that I am not a proponent of the scholastic-dogmatic view of atonement. We must ourselves suffer and atone. But God’s grace can work in us through Christ in other ways besides this kind of substitutionary atonement. The problem is that divine activity seems to have no real place in your scheme. Where does grace fit, if we can achieve moral conversion on our own? I’m sure you’ve become familiar with modern writers who perceive a deep incoherence in your views at this point. Gordon Michalson, for example, draws on the views of Alisdair MacIntyre to argue that you are merely caught between two discrete traditions of thought: your orthodox past and an Enlightenment perspective.⁹ Nicholas Wolterstorff and others maintain that, on the one hand, you recognize the depths of our moral incapacity to achieve enduring rectitude and our need to rely on a power beyond ourselves, but that, on the other hand, you refuse to relinquish a Stoic insistence on moral imputability and responsibility.¹⁰ Hence the contradictions in your arguments and your reluctance to look to saving grace to forgive our sins and redeem our will.

Kant: But I *do* look to saving grace. Michalson and these other modern writers totally miss my point here. I fully admit a role for God’s involvement in our moral life through divine grace. First, I appeal to God’s timeless intuition to ground our hope that our individual acts of renewed moral willing are in fact part of a course of unvarying rectitude. Second, I look to God for the confidence that our new, upright disposition will remain constant, and I regard this very disposition, which I call our Comforter or Paraclete, as a sign of

God's support (R 71 [65]). Third, though I may not have made this point very clearly, I argue that we may also look to God to accept the penitent suffering we undergo during our moral conversion as adequate to repay the infinite wrong we have done. This is the proper place for a concept of vicarious suffering, as arising out of our own moral concepts and reflecting the suffering the new, morally reformed person undergoes in leaving behind the old, morally corrupted self (74 [68]).

Kierkegaard: Let me say that I find your rationalist interpretation of vicarious suffering very interesting.

Kant: Thank you. I regard it as one of my more penetrating deductions of a concept. But let me make clear how important the reliance on God is even in this rationalized conception. We must hope that our suffering will satisfy our moral debt. We cannot make this judgment ourselves without appearing to escape a merited punishment. In contrast, a moral governor of the universe who truly knows our frailty and our place in the larger moral order can judge us less harshly than we must judge ourselves (R 141 [131n]). Hence, grace (or what classical theologians might call "God's righteousness") permeates my account and is essential to it.

Kierkegaard: And yet you still will not relinquish the insistence on individual moral reform and rededication as a first step in this process? Doesn't that return us to the critics who claim you place the emphasis on autonomous human willing rather than God's prior initiative on our behalf?

Kant: Absolutely not. Don't tell me, Kierkegaard, that you, too, fail to see my point here?

Kierkegaard: No, in fact, I think I fully understand. My disagreement with you lies elsewhere and has to do with the role of the historical savior. But I'm trying to become very clear about precisely what you are saying. Let me sharpen the question: How do you reply to the claim that your whole account focusing on human moral willing and rededication (supplemented by grace) seems opposed to a traditional conception of grace, whereby we are first accepted and revived from moral death and only then empowered to accomplish moral rededication?

Kant: I see no conflict between these two accounts. They are one and the same. Whether grace reanimates the will or willing exhibits grace is all the same. In both cases the emphasis must be on *our* willing. Through this lens we mortals perceive divine effects. More than this we cannot know and cannot say. As I observe over and over again in my writings, we have no *knowledge* of noumenal things. We cannot understand how our freedom is compatible with the realm of causality we belong to (R 145 [135n]). We cannot say where or how the divine intervenes in spatio-temporal reality, though we can certainly hope and believe it does. We may even have to entertain a belief in grace if we are rationally to resume what has previously been so ill-fated a task. But we cannot achieve knowledge about how grace works (that lies beyond our cognitive capacities). This and other related subjects belong to the *mysteries* of faith

(137–147 [129–138]). We are best advised not to spend time worrying about such matters. All this becomes idle speculation if it does not manifest itself in upright willing.

Kierkegaard: Then you are saying we are rationally permitted to regard the divine as immanent in moral reasoning.¹¹ You further seem to hold that our sense of unbending obligation means (on the principle of *ought implies can*) we possess the ability to renew our willing,¹² and that this sense of obligation, along with the very reanimation of our moral efforts it induces, may be taken as evidence of God's gracious intervention on our behalf?

Kant: Exactly. Our willing and grace are one and the same, depending on how they are conceived. No priority can be placed on them in time or logic. I might add that anyone familiar with my thinking would see this as a basic feature of my philosophy. For example, as early as the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* I try to show that our sense of freedom (given to us through the imperative of the moral law) is evidence of our "citizenship" in an intelligible realm (GMM Part III). I never deny noumena nor their presence in spatiotemporal realities; but I argue that our only insight into them is through the lens of our "natural" moral experience. The same is true of grace.

Kierkegaard: Then in a sense you are a "pure mystic" of reason, like one of those people you have a young friend describe in an appendix to *The Conflict of the Faculties*?¹³

Kant: You are indeed a careful reader of my work, Kierkegaard!

Kierkegaard: Perhaps too careful. For now I must tell you that though I well understand your arguments in *Religion* concerning grace, I must disagree with your conclusions about revealed faith and the historical savior. In fact, you might say much of my work is a development of this disagreement.

Kant: I am fascinated to hear you say that. Please explain.

Kierkegaard: Gladly. But before getting to specifics, let me see whether you agree that your argument in *Religion* and *Conflict* has two prongs. One maintains that the concept of a historical savior contains ideas that are morally repugnant. The other maintains that such a historically based faith is not really needed.

Kant: I would like to see how you flesh out this broad categorization of my argument, but it seems correct.

Kierkegaard: Then let's take the first prong: that the concept of a historical savior is morally unacceptable. In *Religion* you develop your understanding of the Son of God as an archetype in our reason of the ideal of a humanity well-pleasing to God, but not as a historical person (R 61–62 [55]). Indeed, you deny that a living individual, however righteous, can ever be known to be anything more than a naturally begotten human being (64–66 [57–59]). This, I take it, is another implication of your denial of our knowledge of noumenal reality.¹⁴

Kant: Quite right.

Kierkegaard: But then you go on to say that if we were to elevate even a holy and righteous person to the status of a God-man, this could actually

hinder our ability to adopt that person as a model for imitation because it would place him beyond all our normal human frailties and burdens (R 64–65 [57f.]).

Kant: Exactly. The effort to elevate a holy man in this way really defeats itself by rendering him utterly inapplicable to us. How can we learn to overcome bitter adversity, temptation, and fear if our model possesses a holy will and divine assurance of his own redemption from suffering and death? Although I didn't say this in *Religion*, it seems to me that this impulse to elevate a man to the status of God can become an excuse for moral sloth and turpitude. Since we are merely weak and imperfect creatures, why should we aspire to moral perfection if only a God-man can accomplish it?

Kierkegaard: These are powerful points, but I believe they are fundamentally mistaken.

Kant: Why?

Kierkegaard: First, because you misconceive the nature of our savior, Jesus Christ. You ignore the teaching that he is “fully God and fully Man.” In his human nature, he entirely enters into our trials and temptations, and he never draws on his divinity in the struggle toward goodness. Have you forgotten his prayers in Gethsemane? His agony of doubt and abandonment on the cross? Yet despite this, he never succumbs to sin, never relinquishes his holy mission. Christ for us is fully a model: never beyond what lies within our reach as human beings. And yet he is, in a sense, a negative model as well.

Kant: A negative model? Do you mean that we should not imitate him?

Kierkegaard: No, just the opposite: we should and must imitate him, but we do not. Hence, Christ highlights our sin and deepens our remorse over our culpability for the abandonment of God's holy ways.

Kant: How intriguing. I confess I never saw things this way. But it is certainly a morally commendable idea.

Kierkegaard: More than commendable. I would say it is necessary for any moral life that seeks completion. Without this demanding, holy example to sharpen the requirement, we succumb to excuses and sink into the very moral lassitude you denounce. This is why I maintain throughout my work that a Christian ethic is truer to morality than any merely autonomously conceived moral law.¹⁵

Kant: But you are not saying that we can dispense with autonomous reason?

Kierkegaard: No, moral reason interpenetrates our religious concepts. It leads us to an awareness of the inadequacy of our unaided efforts. But moral reason alone easily slips away from the requirement and provides opportunities to soften our self-judgment. Your own work provides many examples of how rational ethics has evaded these problems. The Stoic misuse of the concept of self-contentment to minimize the full challenge of moral commitment is one example. Your own evasion of the full implications of your discovery of the depths of sin is another.

Kant: My own evasion of the implications of sin?

Kierkegaard: Yes. Although you do an excellent job in *Religion* and *Conflict* of establishing the depths of our defection from the moral law, your own solution to this problem—moral rededication without prior confession of God's saving act in Christ—is inadequate to the problem you develop. This returns me to the other prong of your argument against a historical savior: the claim that such an act of salvation is unnecessary for us. I believe just the opposite is true: that we cannot effect our full moral conversion *without* belief in such a saving act.

Kant: What is your argument for this?

Kierkegaard: In fact, you are the one who supplied me with the argument, both in *Religion* and *Conflict*. You know that I pored over both these works and even copied out passages and bits of humor from them into my journals.¹⁶ Your bold moral denunciation in both texts of Abraham's willingness to obey God's command in Genesis 22 was a major stimulus to my presentation of the ethical in *Fear and Trembling*.

Kant: I'm aware of your attention to both my works. But how do they contribute to your criticism of me?

Kierkegaard: Reading and rereading these two books, I came to see them as a progressive involvement with the question How are we to recover from the depths of moral self-judgment which our reason discloses to us? In *Religion* your answer to this revolves around your rationalized and moralized conception of divine grace as evidenced in our own sense of unbending obligation to moral reform and renewal. Grace enters to provide a rational grounding for what might otherwise appear irrational.

Kant: Quite right. In *Religion* divine grace provides an answer to the question "How is moral reform logically possible?" just as a priori knowledge enters in the first *Critique* as an answer to the question "How is experience logically possible?" and as freedom enters in the second *Critique* as an answer to the question "How is morality logically possible?"

Kierkegaard: But you will admit that in both *Religion* and *Conflict* you equivocate about whether we must openly confess to ourselves our full reliance on God's grace?

Kant: What do you mean?

Kierkegaard: On the one hand, you develop the depths of our sin. You point out that we must judge ourselves guilty of infinite sin. You acknowledge that if we were to stand before a righteous judge, we would pass judgment on ourselves with the greatest severity (R 69 [64]). You even concede that but for our inability to see beyond the limits of this life, we would reasonably go from mere comfortlessness about our eternal state to "wild despair" (71 [65]).

Kant: That is all true. I also say, as you acknowledge, that we find the confidence we need to carry on in our reformed moral disposition, a disposition that is grace enough for us.

Kierkegaard: But what allows us to regard this as anything more than self-

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deception? Recall your own remark that “man is never more easily deceived than in what promotes his good opinion of himself” (R 68 [62]). Isn’t this reliance on our disposition an evasion of the depths of the problem?

Kant: I acknowledge that our sense of requirement and empowerment may occasionally be self-deluding. But what is the alternative? To acknowledge ourselves as fatally mired in sin? To give up and abandon reform? What is the profit in that? What is wrong with taking our indwelling sense of obligation as a sign of grace and proceeding from that?

Kierkegaard: Two things. First, it is an invitation to those who feel any moral urgings at all to ignore the significance of their defections from the moral requirement. Second, it provides license to repeat the errors of the past and even to seek new occasions for self-assertion under the guise of moral renewal.

Kant: Granted that is a risk: but, again, what is the alternative? Total, wild despair? Self-indulgent wallowing in our own moral incapacity and wickedness? Let me take a leaf from your book, *The Sickness unto Death*, and ask whether what you are counseling doesn’t amount to “despair over forgiveness”?

Kierkegaard: I appreciate your attention to my work. But I think you miss my point. My aim in *The Sickness unto Death* was to drive us to God’s forgiveness in Jesus Christ. It is to avoid this that the prideful, demonic personality despairs over forgiveness and wallows in condemnation. The willingness to accept forgiveness in and through God’s atonement for us in Christ is the alternative both to despair and to shallow, autonomous moral self-renewal. Furthermore, it is an alternative that doesn’t enervate but energizes the moral life.

Kant: How is that?

Kierkegaard: First, it forces us to strip away all our self-deception and naive confidences and greatly intensifies our sense of the requirement. As I showed in the *Philosophical Fragments*, there is all the difference between a teacher who merely reminds us of what we already know and one who shows us how deeply in error we are.¹⁷ Second, the fact that God has actually entered time, suffered, and died on our behalf provides us a real basis for the confidence that we can be and have been forgiven. In saying this I am again drawing on your writings.

Kant: How so?

Kierkegaard: I employ your point in the first *Critique* that there is a significant difference between *logical* possibility and *real* possibility.¹⁸ Many things are logically possible. They belong to what I call the sphere of “ideality” or “concept existence.”¹⁹ But only some things are actually given to us in experience, as you say, and hence are really possible. A God-man and our enduring moral redemption are both logically possible. Your work shows that. Neither can be refuted, unless we succumb to a dogmatic empiricism that denies noumena can be expressed in time. But it is one thing to say something

is logically possible and quite another to say it has come to pass. My point is that the depth of our valid moral despair requires *real*, not logical, possibility.

Kant: You make a powerful case.

Kierkegaard: Actually, once again it is your case. You develop it in *Conflict*.

Kant: Do I?

Kierkegaard: Yes, in an oblique way. Do you recall the imaginary dialogue you present there in the form of a series of objections on the part of a defender of revealed faith to “a rational interpretation” of the Bible?

Kant: I would have to search my memory.

Kierkegaard: Let me help you. I actually have a copy of the text here on this wonderful laptop computer I purchased.

Kierkegaard withdraws a portable computer from his traveling bag and places it on the table before them. He types several keystrokes, and smiles with satisfaction.

Kierkegaard: These computers are wonderful things, aren't they? You and I owe our very existence to them. But here is the dialogue, just as I remembered it. One of the objections you consider is stated as follows: “To believe that God, by an act of kindness, will in some unknown way fill what is lacking to our justification is to assume gratuitously a cause that will satisfy the need we feel (it is to commit a *petitio principii*); for when we expect something by the grace of a superior, we cannot assume that we must get it as a matter of course; we can expect it only if it was actually promised to us . . . So it seems that we can hope for that supplement and assume that we shall get it only in so far as it has been actually pledged through divine *revelation*” (CF [83]). This seems to me to be a powerful argument.

Kant: What is my rationalist reply?

Kierkegaard: What you say is the following:

A direct revelation from God embodied in the comforting statement “Your sins are forgiven you” would be a supersensible experience, and this is impossible. But it is also unnecessary with regard to what (like religion) is based on moral principles of reason and is therefore certain a priori, at least for practical purposes. There is no other way we can conceive the decrees of a holy and benevolent law-giver with regard to frail creatures who are yet striving with all their might to fulfill whatever they recognize as their duty; and if, without the aid of a definite, empirically given promise, we have a rational faith and trust in His help, we show better evidence of pure moral attitude and so of our receptivity to the manifestation of grace we hope for than we could by empirical belief.

Now, my dear Kant, I hope you will agree with me that this reply, so central to our disagreement over the need for faith in a historical savior, is a pastiche of misleading and unrelated ideas.

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Kant: Isn't that extreme? What is wrong with these remarks?

Kierkegaard: Take the first part of the reply that a direct revelation from God regarding forgiveness "is impossible." Certainly this misstates the matter. It is by no means impossible that a statement or revelation to the effect that we are forgiven should come from God. Only that we should *know* such a statement to be from God is impossible. Your whole philosophy rejects an empiricist dogmatism that rules out the possibility of noumena amid phenomena.

Kant: Of course you are right. What I meant to say is that it is impossible for us to make an assertion with any claim to "knowledge" that a particular communication (whether through words or events) actually proceeds from God.

Kierkegaard: On this matter there is no disagreement between us. In *Training in Christianity* and elsewhere I emphatically deny that the contemporary believer who witnesses Christ in his midst has any advantage over those of us, centuries later, who attest in faith to the meaning of that life. We are talking here about faith, not knowledge. For you it is a rational faith based on moral concepts. For me, it is a moral faith graciously given by God. But surely it is misleading to say, as you seem to do, that such a revelation itself is impossible, when what you mean is the far more modest observation that we cannot possess *knowledge* that a revelation is from God. I might add, by the way, that where God's forgiveness of us is concerned, we are not talking about a single oracular assertion (out of the mouth of a fanatic like Swedenborg) but about the entire record of Christ's holy life—and death.

Kant: You're right about all this. My rationalist's reply does not represent my own point of view here.

Kierkegaard: Your subsequent assertions are no more helpful. You say a direct revelation from God that we will receive his help is unnecessary because there is "no other way" we can conceive the decrees of a righteous lawgiver with regard to "frail" but morally striving creatures like ourselves. But this merely restates your position. It is no reply to the objection that even when we have good reason to "expect something by the grace of a superior, we cannot assume that we must get it as a matter of course." I think what the objector is trying to say here is that we would be morally presumptuous to interpret *our need* as somehow creating a requirement for God to meet it. Such presumptuousness is deeply contradictory to the humility that should characterize those who have come to recognize their sinfulness. But if we have no right to presume that God will aid us, we return to the question of how those who are mired in sin can gain the reasonable confidence they need to renew their striving. Revelation can provide this by offering some evidence (not certain evidence but enough to justify confidence) that God *has* committed himself to our redemption.

Kant: An interesting moral point. I like to think of myself as a master of practical rational arguments, but I am not accustomed to having moral reason turned against me as you do here. I confess that I can see nothing wrong in what you say.

Kierkegaard: Your final point in this reply strikes me as equally unconvincing.

Kant: Are you referring to my assertion that we show better receptivity to the manifestation of grace if we rely on faith and trust in God's help rather than on any definite, empirically given promise?

Kierkegaard: Yes. I'm aware of how central this assertion is to your practical philosophy. An analogue to it appears at the end of the second *Critique* when you say we are better off lacking knowledge of God's existence because this affords us the opportunity to develop a purer moral disposition unaffected by the certainty of reward or punishment (CPrR 147). I take it you are trying to say the same thing here: that our moral sensibilities are sharpened by the absence of security regarding our redemption. In terms familiar to us both, you are saying that we must work out our salvation in "fear and trembling."

Kant: Again you impress me with your grasp of my writings.

Kierkegaard: But I must say that this is the one place where such uncertainty may be inappropriate. Recall that our morally committed person who has come to see the depths of his or her sin does not face a problem of false confidence and assurance, but just the opposite: a paralyzing state of self-condemnation in which every buoying reflection must be rejected as merely another expression of self-deception. Here, it seems to me, strong medicine is needed. And since nothing is morally or cognitively wrong with perceiving the Gospel record as a sign of God's love for us, we are fully warranted in making the events of Christ's holy life, death, and resurrection the conceptual starting point for our moral rebirth. Acceptance of these beliefs is merely another expression of your own insistence on the priority of practical reason and an extension of your willingness to accept noumenal beliefs that do not violate theoretical reason on grounds provided by compelling convictions of our practical reason.²⁰ In this case, practical need triumphs over not only the ordinary cautions of theoretical reason (such as not easily admitting belief in a God-man, though it cannot condemn such a belief), but also moral reason and its reluctance to qualify moral autonomy in any way.

Kant: Your arguments are very compelling. If I hesitate to accept them with enthusiasm, this is because during my life I witnessed so many fanatical Christian believers who insisted on making this belief in saving grace the starting point, but who then engaged in "passive surrender" to grace (C 75) and never thereafter demonstrated the effort of moral renewal it was supposed to lead to.

Kierkegaard: I share your concern. My own writings, as you may know, criticize those Christians who appeal to grace and then forget the "requirement." But it is one thing to object to such weakness and misuse of concepts and another thing to reject those concepts themselves. The reply to our tepid Christians is not to ignore the Gospel but to preach it in its full depth and rigor. That is what I tried to do during the last phase of my life in what is called my "attack on Christendom."

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Kant: I am familiar with your efforts. They showed great courage and perseverance.

Kierkegaard: Thank you, though I know I was also motivated by more than a little bitterness. I would like to accept your compliment, but I realize that “man is never more easily deceived than in what promotes his good opinion of himself” (R 68 [62]).

Kant: A question. I am now in a better position to understand the outlines of your sustained philosophical defense of revealed Christian faith. I am even persuaded that the concepts you develop may be acceptable to our morally legislative practical reason. But you are not saying that these beliefs are *required* by reason, are you? If so, I would have two problems with such a position. First, as I indicate in *Conflict*, I am opposed to the imposition of dogmas. These dogmas, so dear to ecclesiastical faith, involve matters we can never settle with certainty and are an invitation to needless strife and conflict. Second, to go beyond those concepts directly given to us by our practical reason and require beliefs based on revelation is to exclude from moral salvation whole sectors of humanity not privy to such revelation. In other words, these revealed beliefs lack the universality appropriate to fundamental moral concepts (R 95; CF 77).

Kierkegaard: I have given little thought to the question you raise. It is the question, really, of whether Christian faith itself, especially a confession of belief in Christ, is required for our moral salvation. Let me begin to answer your question by observing that it is really two questions.

Kant: How so?

Kierkegaard: First, it is the question of whether we need some real evidence in experience in order to build a commitment to moral renewal. That is, must our moral rededication be accompanied by certain theoretically or empirically warranted beliefs to ground the confidence that we are anything other than morally doomed? To this question I must give a strong affirmative answer. Everything both you and I have said about the totality of moral despair leads me to believe that without some warrant beyond the voice of conscience, we must end in the paralysis of self-condemning moral despair. I might add here that your own writings repeatedly affirm the need for some rationally based confidence—a reasonable hope (R 51 [46]; CF 75–77)—in at least the possibility of assistance in our moral renewal.

Kant: I grant that. Although I try to dissuade my readers from dwelling on this matter (because I believe it has too often distracted people from the practical task at hand), I do observe that reason cannot put such “speculative” questions aside lest it be accused of “being wholly unable to reconcile with divine justice man’s hope of absolution from his guilt” (R 76 [70]). I take it you would argue that such “speculative” matters, bound up with the question of whether we have been and can be saved, are far more important than I am inclined to admit.

Kierkegaard: Yes, though I see myself as developing, rather than contradicting, your position.

Kant: Fair enough.

Kierkegaard: But to return to your earlier question of whether we are rationally required to believe in Christ, a second question is implicit in this. This is the question of whether, in addition to having a well-founded belief to base our moral rededication on, this belief must focus on God's activity in Jesus Christ. In other words, to what extent is this one historical faith requisite for salvation?

Kant: I see that question. It is one that preoccupies me. Let me repeat my specific apprehensions. How can we make human beings' moral redemption depend on a faith known only by some, with all the implications this has for dogmatic tyranny, exclusion, and oppression?

Kierkegaard: I share your concerns. Let me say, as odd as it may seem, that this is not a question I really addressed in my writings. Remember who my intellectual opponents were. First, the cultured despisers of Christianity, especially the Hegelians, who denied that we even needed the faith of the Gospel for our ethico-religious life. These were the smug, unthinking, and very distant heirs to aspects of your philosophy, convinced that we are the best of men living in the best of times. Against them I used the moral rigor I learned from you—something wholly lacking among the Hegelians—to intensify the moral demand and to develop the importance and value of historical Christian faith. But at no time was I called on philosophically to defend the rational necessity of Christian belief in general. My second set of opponents were the lax residents of "Christendom" who hardly needed to be told that Christian faith is necessary. What had to be assaulted was their confidence that they already had such faith by virtue of their possession of a baptismal certificate or the fact of their birth in a "Christian" nation. Hence, a defense of Christian faith against other religious or philosophical positions was never really my concern.

Kant: I understand that. But how, then, do you answer my question? Do you believe a faith in the promise of God's forgiveness through Christ is rationally required for our salvation?

Kierkegaard: This is a difficult question to answer. Frankly, I'm not sure. On the one hand, like you, I think, I would probably say that what matters is not our words or even beliefs but our ethico-religious passion. A person who comes to despair over the rigor of the ethico-religious demand and who then avoids despair's complex evasions and accepts the requirement fully is on the way to salvation. On the other hand, I personally find it difficult how one can come to know either the requirement or the possibility of meeting it apart from Christ.

Kant: Would you say, then, to do so is impossible? Are there perhaps other philosophical or religious paths that might take us to these insights? Perhaps they exist in religious traditions that you and I know little about? If you have read my *Religion* carefully, you will note that I frequently suggest that basic biblical insights have their counterparts in other religious traditions (R 20, 74, 141 [15, 68n, 131n]). Are the concepts requisite for salvation from a deepened

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awareness of our moral failure also to be found elsewhere? This is important, because it would address one aspect of my insistence that the religious-moral conceptions we require must be universal, though they might take different forms for different peoples.

Kierkegaard: I suppose that is possible. But I repeat, this was never my concern, never a part of the challenge I faced. My life task was neither to convert nor even to consider the pagans but to remind those living in Christendom and claiming to be Christians of the meaning—and the demands—of their faith.

Kant: I appreciate that. In this sense, at a different moment in the development of Christianity, we were not so far apart. For my concern in fighting against historically based ecclesiastical faith was to combat the ecclesiastical faith whose dogmatism had led to moral laxity, conflict, and violence.

The waiter approaches to say that both men's flights have come up on the departure screen of the Club's computer and that they had better start for their boarding gates.

Kant: Well, my dear Kierkegaard, we must break off in midcourse. Perhaps we can turn to some of these larger questions another time. This has truly been a pleasure. I genuinely hope this is only the beginning of a sustained conversation between us. I would like to invite you to Königsberg for a more formal discussion of these matters with others in attendance, but, as I'm sure you know, my natal city, though renamed, is still being reconstructed and lacks the resources for an adequate scholarly conference.

Kierkegaard: Perhaps some time in Copenhagen? Or better yet, why not San Francisco, a charming city with good wine and a far more pleasant climate than either of our Baltic homelands?

Kant: Agreed! Auf Wiedersehen.

Kierkegaard: Auf Wiedersehen. Farvel!

NOTES

1. Jerry H. Gill, "Kant, Kierkegaard and Religious Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 28 (1967–68): 188–204; see also his article on "Kant" in *Kierkegaard and Great Traditions*, vol. 6 in *Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana*, ed. Niels Thulstrup and Maria Mikulová Thulstrup (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Boghandel, 1981), 223–229; John D. Glenn, Jr., "Kierkegaard's Ethical Philosophy," *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 5 (spring 1974): 121–128; Peter J. Mehl, "Kierkegaard and the Relativist Challenge to Practical Philosophy," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14, no. 2 (1987): 247–278; Robert L. Perkins, "For Sanity's Sake: Kant, Kierkegaard and Father Abraham," in *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling: Critical Appraisals*, ed. Robert L. Perkins (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 43–61; Ronald M. Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992). See also R. Z. Friedman, "Kierkegaard: First Existentialist or Last Kantian?" *Religious Studies* 18, no. 2 (June 1982): 159–170; Jeremy D. B. Walker, *To Will One Thing: Reflections on Kierkegaard's 'Purity of Heart'* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Uni-

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versity Press, 1972), and *Kierkegaard's Descent into God* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985); Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982); William D. Peck, "On Autonomy: The Primacy of the Subject in Kant and Kierkegaard" (Ph.D. thesis, Yale University, 1974); C. Stephen Evans, *Subjectivity and Religious Belief: An Historical, Critical Study* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Christian University Press, 1978); Geoffrey Clive, "The Connection between Ethics and Religion in Kant, Kierkegaard and F. H. Bradley" (Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1953).

2. Kierkegaard's favorite descriptor for Kant is "ærlige" (honest). See, for example, *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, 16 vols. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1909–1978), VIII2 A 358 n.d.; VIII2 B 81 n.d., 1847: JP I-649; cf. XI A 666, 1849 (*Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk, vol. 1 [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967], III-3558); XI A 666 n.d., 1849; X2 A 501, 1850.

3. In offering this view of the relative novelty of Kant's efforts in *Religion* to explore the extent of our rational freedom from morality, I disagree with Dennis Savage's estimate that "Kant's theory of radical evil in the *Religion* contains nothing basically new as compared with his theory of moral good and evil presented in his [earlier] ethical works." See "Kant's Rejection of Divine Revelation and His Theory of Radical Evil," in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 73.

4. GMM 405, trans. Lewis White Beck as *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), 21; CPPr 26, trans. Lewis White Beck as *Critique of Practical Reason* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), 25. Henceforth citations will be made in the main text with page numbers from the Beck edition in brackets immediately following the Academy pagination.

5. CJ (187); *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, 1951).

6. R 57–59 (51), trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson as *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (Chicago: Open Court, 1934), 51. All references to this work are taken from the Greene and Hudson translation. Page numbers from the Greene and Hudson edition are in brackets immediately following the Academy pagination.

7. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. Reidar Thomte (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 16–17.

8. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 99.

9. Gordon E. Michalson, Jr., *Fallen Freedom: Kant on Radical Evil and Moral Regeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

10. Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, "Conundrums in Kant's Rational Religion," in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 48–49; John E. Hare, *The Moral Gap: Kantian Ethics, Human Limits, and God's Assistance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 60–62.

11. "Inward divine revelation is God's revelation to us through our own reason" (LPR 1117).

12. "A change of heart such as this must be possible because duty requires it" (R 67 [60]).

13. CF 70–75; trans. Mary J. Gregor as *The Conflict of the Faculties* (New York: Abaris, 1979).

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14. This conception parallels Kierkegaard's denial that the "contemporary" is in any way privileged. See, e.g., *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1941), 90; *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 63; *Training in Christianity*, trans. Walter Lowrie (London: Oxford University Press, 1941). The similarity between Kant and Kierkegaard on this matter is noted by Gordon E. Michaelson, Jr., in his *Lessing's "Ugly Ditch": A Study of Theology and History* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 17.

15. Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, PAP X2 A 396 n.d., 1850, JP I-188.

16. For references to these passages, see Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, chap. 1.

17. Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), chap. 1.

18. CPR A558/B586; trans. Norman Kemp Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929).

19. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 39–42.

20. See Allen W. Wood, "Kant's Deism," in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 17–18.

PART 3. RELIGIOUS
INSTANTIATIONS OF
KANTIAN PHILOSOPHY

nine

Kant and “A Theodicy of Protest”

Elizabeth C. Galbraith

Kant’s perceptive account of the innocent and morally righteous sufferer in his 1791 essay “On the Failure of All Attempted Philosophical Theodicies” was the seed that enabled my own theological preoccupation with theodicy to take root. In the first chapter of *Kant and Theology: Was Kant a Closet Theologian?* I argued that though Kant is willing to reject traditional theodicies, he still offers his own positive approach to theodicy, one that is consistent with, in fact, integral to, the theology at work in his moral argument for the existence of God. Since publishing *Kant and Theology* my sense of the theological significance of Kant’s essay on theodicy has been deepened by my own encounter with Holocaust Studies. In this essay I reconsider Kant’s 1791 essay in light of the significant contribution made to the study of theodicy by John Roth. Moreover I propose that Kant’s “authentic theodicy” provides an appropriate framework for building theodicies that do not trivialize innocent suffering or the gross injustices of our world.

In his recently revised and reissued essay “A Theodicy of Protest,” John K. Roth offers a harrowing critique of traditional theodicies that, in his opinion, “have a fatal flaw: they legitimate evil.”¹ Anyone familiar with Roth’s long and

distinguished career in Holocaust Studies will be aware of his vehemence against the many ways theodicies are guilty of trivializing innocent suffering. According to Roth, theodicies are concerned with getting God off the hook for the magnitude of evil and suffering in the world, and in the process they usually do harm to the innocent victims of appalling evil, making them at worst guilty of the crimes committed against them, or privy to some grand scheme wherein their appalling suffering is an essential means to a glorious end, one that outweighs the agonies endured en route. Roth's protest against traditional theodicies is a call away from soft answers that betray the victims of horrendous evil, to real engagement with both innocent suffering and the indefensibility of the magnitude of evil in our world. Thus, he proclaims, "I protest against philosophies and theologies that do not take the historical particularity of evil seriously enough, even when they claim that evils are horrendous. The Holocaust, genocide, and democide smash and destroy particular persons in ways that scar the world forever."²

In one all-encompassing onslaught against traditional theodices, Roth takes issue with what has become known as the "free-will" theodicy, according to which God permits moral evil to exist for the sake of human freedom.³ Moral evil is the price God has to pay for creating humans as free rational beings, capable of making moral choices. One would not be truly free if one were not able to choose evil as well as good. The value of creating free beings capable of choosing the good, and ultimately God, outweighs the cost of moral evil. Thus, God's gift of freedom is justified, despite its destructive capabilities.

In response to this defense, Roth retorts, "human freedom has been used as God's defense; in fact it is crucial in God's offense," since "our freedom is both too much and too little."⁴ On the one hand, Roth tells us, freedom constitutes an insufficient defense of God because of its paucity. The piercing example of such paucity given by Roth is the story of Sophie, the main character in William Styron's novel *Sophie's Choice*. The novel "becomes a commentary on the powerlessness of individual freedom as it faces overwhelming forces of social domination."⁵ Sophie's freedom, or the lack of it, shows "how pathetic a 'freewill defense' for God can be."⁶ As she disembarked from the train that brought her and her children from Warsaw to Auschwitz, an SS official informed Sophie that she could choose one of her children to live. "I cannot choose" Sophie screams, but eventually, so as not to lose both children, lets her daughter go. Though fictional, Roth argues that *Sophie's Choice* exemplifies the kinds of "choiceless choices" Holocaust victims faced on a daily basis. It is emblematic of those who have "too little freedom" to fight the forces of evil in our world. And to those audacious enough to suggest that human virtue could not be tested without such harrowing experiences, Roth retorts that such propositions mock the victims of evil.

Just as some have too little freedom, so others "have more power and more freedom than is good for us." The freedom God gives us is, according to Roth, "too much and too soon," since the Holocaust shows that "human beings can

and will do anything to each other.”⁷ According to Roth, if God is “the One who ultimately sets the boundaries in which we live and move and have our being”⁸ and such boundaries have proven wide enough to include genocide and democide, then God is “everlastingly guilty; and the degrees run from gross negligence to murder.”⁹ In fact, God’s guilt entails “in the beginning Auschwitz.”¹⁰

Still, it will be argued that the moral evils that resulted in the Holocaust and the natural evils of cancer and other chronic diseases will prove regrettable means to some greater good. Such a facile excuse, implying that “the end will justify the means,” is of no consolation to Roth, for whom “no good that God can do will totally fill the void” left by the “wasted past.”¹¹ Instead, he despairs over the hope that there will be any future good “so great as to render acceptable, in retrospect, the whole human experience, with all its wickedness and suffering as well as its sanctity and happiness.”¹² With regard to traditional theodicies, Roth maintains that “the irretrievable waste of the past robs God of a convincing alibi.”¹³

As should now be clear to the reader, protesting the inadequacy of philosophical and theological answers to the problem of innocent suffering is only part of Roth’s agenda. More than a critique of traditional theodicies, Roth’s “A Theodicy of Protest” is a refusal to vindicate God or to let God off the hook for the extent of the misery in our world. As Roth himself informs the reader, “every good theodicy will be an antitheodicy . . . It will be suspicious of every claim that seeks to justify God.”¹⁴ Roth’s “A Theodicy of Protest” is a protest against God.

Unlike the more familiar critiques of theodicies on the part of agnostics and atheists who query the very existence of the Judaic-Christian God that theodicies take for granted, Roth, precisely because he does believe in the existence of such a God, forwards a rousing indictment of God’s complicity in evil and innocent suffering: “To deny God outright would go too far. But to affirm God’s total goodness, to apologize for God, to excuse or exonerate God . . . these steps go too far as well.”¹⁵ The tendency of theodicies is, of course, to protect God’s innocence, typically by indicting humankind. Here Roth agrees with Camus that “man is not entirely to blame; it was not he who started history.”¹⁶ History is God’s indictment, since Roth also agrees with Hegel that history is “the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been sacrificed.”¹⁷ And the result of Roth’s investigation is that “such a wasteful God cannot be totally benevolent.”¹⁸ Thus, it is not only that Roth dissents from traditional theodicies in his unwillingness to acquit God or ignore God’s accountability. In addition, there is implicit within Roth’s theodicy of protest the accusation that God has in fact acted unjustly, and ultimately therewith, a questioning of God’s goodness.

Roth finds support for his “protest against God,” more appropriately called anti-theodicy,¹⁹ in the literature of Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor, by whom

he has been heavily influenced. Wiesel's play "The Trial of God" likely provides some of the impetus for Roth's onslaught against God: "Antitheodicy or a theodicy of protest puts God on trial and in that process the issue of God's wasteful complicity in evil takes center stage."²⁰ But there is also a biblical precedent for the trial that both Roth and Wiesel, like Kant before them, advocate—namely, the Hebrew Bible's book of Job.

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15). "Job's ancient declaration," Roth tells us, "is crucial for a theodicy of protest. Indeed, his entire story is at the heart of the matter."²¹ While acknowledging those interpretations of the book of Job that stress Job's eventual repentance for daring to question God in the midst of his suffering and the happy ending that seems to ensue, Roth finds the statement quoted above "more honest" to the problem of innocent suffering presented by the book of Job.

In the midst of his appalling suffering Job, adamant about his own clear conscience, or at the very least convinced of the atrocious disproportion between crime and punishment, stubbornly and furiously calls God to account. And yet, Roth maintains, "Job's argument is no rejection of God. Rather, it trusts that God will vindicate him." Moreover, "Job's trust is bold, even extreme. It entails God's confession that God has treated Job unfairly—abusively and brutally—for according to the story it was only by God's choice that Job was all but destroyed on the pretense of testing his faithfulness."²² God thunders back at Job with what Roth calls his "non-answer," then comes Job's repentance. Roth is attracted to Wiesel's reading of Job's supposed submission to God: "Elie Wiesel suggests, however, that Job's humility was no simple resignation. Wiesel reads it instead as resistance and rebellion masked in hasty abdication."²³ Roth takes heart from Wiesel's interpretation, "not least because it implies that Job did not give up. Whatever the form of his protest and so long as it lasted, he could still be saying, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.'"²⁴ My interest here is to determine to what extent we can find support for such a complicated and contradictory cocktail of faith and rebellion in Kant's essay on theodicy; to this we now return.

Early in his career Kant's thought on theodicy had been very close to that of Leibniz. He followed Leibniz in embracing a theodicy that included the divine permission of evils, the interpretation of natural evil as punishment for moral evils, and God's providential rule for the ultimate good of creatures.²⁵ Hume seems likely to be the one who awoke Kant from his dogmatic slumbers concerning theodicy, as well as on the bounds and capacities of reason. By the time he wrote his three great *Critiques*, Kant had become skeptical of the assumption that the wisdom of God could be defended by theoretical reasoning from the natural world. Such skepticism is reflected in his essay on theodicy, with the first part attempting to dismantle classical defenses of God in light of the problem of evil. A comprehensive account of Kant's critique of traditional theodicies in the first part of his essay has been given by Stephen Palmquist in his recent book *Kant's Critical Religion* and will not be repeated here.²⁶ For our

purposes it suffices to note the conclusion Kant draws from his critique, namely, that “no theodicy proposed so far has kept its promise; none has managed to justify the moral wisdom at work in the government of the world against the doubts which arise out of our experience of the world.”²⁷ What is of great significance to our present project is that, having dismissed what he considers to be the most traditional defenses of God given in theodicies, Kant could quite easily have ended his essay. Instead, however, he informs the reader, “we are capable at least of a negative wisdom” (FT 263). In large part such negative wisdom entails acknowledging “the necessary limits of our reflections on the subjects which are beyond our reach” (FT 263)—a refrain familiar to anyone acquainted with the three *Critiques*. But it also entails what Kant refers to as “authentic theodicy” (FT 264), and just as Roth found support for his “theodicy of protest” in the book of Job, so according to Kant, “such an authentic interpretation I find expressed allegorically in an old scripture” (FT 264). The old scripture Kant has in mind is the very same book of Job.

Surprisingly, unlike Roth, Kant does not seem to be concerned with the extremely troubling question of suffering as a test of faith; he chooses to concentrate instead upon the dispute that takes place between Job and his friends:

Each side proposed his own theodicy for the moral explanation of his bad luck, each according to his own opinion (or rather according to his station). The friends of Job accepted the doctrine that explains all woes in the world by reference to divine justice; they are punishments for crimes committed. Although they were not able to name any crime with which to charge the unfortunate man, they nevertheless believed they could judge a priori that Job must have committed such a crime, or else divine justice would not have allowed him to become so unhappy. (FT 265)

In contrast, “Job confidently asserted that the conscience of all his life did not reproach him; as for his inevitable human frailties, he added that God himself would note that he made him a frail creature. He therefore accepted the doctrine of unconditional divine decree. ‘God is unique, he said, and does what he wills’” (FT 265).

For Kant, the arguments proposed by either side are not of ultimate importance. Rather, “the character which the men exhibited while they reasoned is more worthy of attention” (FT 265).

Job spoke as he thought, as he felt, and as every man in his position would feel. His friends, however, spoke as if they were overheard by the Almighty whose behavior they were judging, and as if they cared more for winning his favors by passing the right judgment than for saying the truth. The dishonesty with which they affirmed things of which they should have confessed that they had no knowledge and with which they feigned convictions which in fact they did not have, contrasts with Job’s free and sincere outspokenness, which is so removed from lying flattery that it almost borders on temerity. “Do you want,” asked Job, “to defend God with unjust arguments?” (FT 265–266)

Just as for Roth, so Kant's sympathies lie with Job, a man who has the courage to stand by his convictions in the midst of the most trying circumstances, circumstances that understandably could lead one to despair. His calling God to account, his refusal to retreat into self-blame, and his confident resistance to the accusations of his so-called friends, who, Kant implies, are lying flatterers of God, afford him Kant's admiration. Most significantly, Kant emphasizes Job's retort, accusing his friends of defending God with unjust arguments.

Job's vindication, hinted at but never fully acknowledged in Roth's essay, is crucial to Kant's "authentic" theodicy. Thus Kant reminds us that in the conclusion to the biblical account, "God made the condemnation fall upon his friends, because, considered from the standpoint of conscience, they had not spoken of God as well as his servant Job did" (FT 265–266). And the reasons why Job is preferred by God could not be clearer to Kant:

[O]nly the uprightness of the heart, not the merit of one's insights, the sincere and undisguised confession of one's doubts, and the avoidance of feigned convictions which one does not really feel (especially before God where dissemblance would never work), these are the qualities which caused the upright man Job to be preferred in the eyes of the divine judge to the pious flatterers. (FT 266–267)

A refusal to give answers that do not match the facts characterizes Job's response to his own suffering in contrast to the responses of his friends. Kant, like Job, took it to be "a sin to flatter God and make inner confessions, perhaps forced out by fear, that fail to agree with what we really think" (FT 266).²⁸

Though Kant paints with the milder stroke of "confessing one's doubts" what Roth more appropriately presents as "righteous rebellion," clearly each admires Job for his sincerity and his protesting faith. More significantly, what Roth and Kant before him both seem to have recognized in Job is an appropriate, for Kant fully vindicated, religious response to the inadequacy of traditional theodicies. As Roth notes, "dissenting moods are at the foundation of my approach to theodicy. But those moods also seek to turn dissent into a religious response that can make more sense out of life, not less, without abandoning honesty in facing life's harshest facts."²⁹

Roth is drawn to Job's protesting faith because it "offer[s] less cheap grace" and "inspire[s] more the fear of God that provokes righteous rebellion."³⁰ Cheap grace was anathema to Kant,³¹ and, as his essay on theodicy shows, sincerity, even in the expression of one's most profound doubts, everything. Toward the end of "A Theodicy of Protest" Roth recalls a story told by Annie Dillard in *Holy the Firm*:

A small church stood in the Puget Sound country where Annie Dillard lived while she wrote her book. She believed that its minister, a Congregationalist, knew God. "Once," she writes, "in the middle of the long pastoral prayer of intercession for the whole world—for the gift of wisdom to its leaders, for hope and mercy to the grieving and pained, succor to the

oppressed, and God’s grace to all—in the middle of this he stopped, and burst out, ‘Lord we bring you these same petitions every week.’ After a shocked pause, he continued reading the prayer. For his protest, Annie Dillard adds, ‘I like him very much.’”³²

I suspect that, like Dillard and Roth, Kant would “like” the protesting minister “very much.” Moreover, Roth’s own honesty in the expression of his most serious doubts, his stubborn cry on behalf of the sufferer, and the resilience of his “costly” faith would have found favor with Kant. For both Kant and Roth, protesting faith is a valid response to the injustices of our world.

Where Kant’s treatment of the book of Job seems to depart from Roth’s is in his assessment of what Job’s experience leads one to conclude with regard to God. According to Roth, Elie Wiesel’s assessment is correct. Job, Wiesel tells us, “did not suffer in vain; thanks to him, we know that it is given to man to transform divine injustice into human justice and compassion.”³³ The significant challenge Kant’s authentic theodicy poses for Roth’s anti-theodicy is whether calling into question the ultimate justice and goodness of God bolsters or potentially undermines protesting faith.

Kant cannot quite take the step that Roth takes in letting go of the ultimate justice of God, as is shown by his own analysis of Job’s encounter with the divine theophany. Kant considers God’s eventual answer to Job to be more substantial than the “non-answer” referred to by Roth. According to Kant, God reveals to Job the ambiguity of the created world, with aspects that seem to affirm and others that seem to deny divine providence. This, Kant tells us, is the work of a wise Creator: “God showed Job an ordering of the whole which manifests a wise Creator,” but “his ways remain inscrutable for us, already in the physical ordering of things but even more in the connection between this order and the moral one (which is even more unfathomable to our reason)” (FT 266). In response to the theophany of God, “Job confessed not that he had spoken sacrilegiously for he was sure of his good faith, but only that he had spoken unwisely about things that were above his reach and which he did not understand” (FT 266).

The anti-theodicy in Roth, who resists moving beyond Job’s justified rebellion, would be most disappointed by Kant’s easy acceptance of Job’s submission and deference to God. All the more troubling, then, that Kant, despite his aversion to traditional theodicies, should resort to claims such as that God’s ways “remain inscrutable for us.” We would be mistaken, however, to interpret Kant’s claim as an admission that human moral standards do not apply to the divine, or that God’s justice is different from ours. Believing that God’s justice is different from ours would place God beyond moral accountability, a stance Kant could never support. Rather, the point for Kant is that human reason simply cannot fathom the paradox of how a morally ambiguous world is also the result of a wise Creator. For precisely this reason, traditional theodicies fail.³⁴

Just as in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where Kant is willing to “deny knowledge in order to make room for faith” (CPR Bxxx), so in his essay on theodicy Kant finds he must deny knowledge in order to safeguard faith in divine wisdom and goodness. This is not to suggest that Kant would disagree with Roth about the injustices rampant in our world. His account of God’s theophany clearly acknowledges the moral ambiguity of the world. If anything, it seems reasonable to believe Kant would agree completely with Roth so far as the fact of life’s injustice is concerned, since the injustice of life is in large part the impetus for the moral argument for the existence of God offered by Kant in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Kant’s moral argument for the existence of God demonstrates that he was as obsessed with the small daily injustices, such as the virtuous person who foregoes happiness for the sake of duty, as Roth is concerned with the overwhelmingly large instances of genocide and democide.

However, when Kant goes on to tell us in his essay that “theodicy is not a task of science but is a matter of faith” (FT 267), he does so in an attempt, given the moral ambiguity of the world, to resist sacrificing the goodness of God. To charge God with injustice or of not being wholly benevolent, as Roth does,³⁵ for Kant would undermine faith itself. In Kant’s essay, unlike that of Roth, there is a nonunderstanding commitment to the goodness of God, and to the justice of God’s ways. This explains why, although Kant claims to have disproved traditional theodicies, he does not claim to have disproved the righteousness of God in the face of the fact of evil. Instead, I would suggest, Kant is establishing the only valid way of maintaining justice and righteousness—namely, by denying knowledge in order to make room for faith in its existence. His screaming and rebellious refusal to let go of God is what makes Job’s protesting faith so admirable. What, in my opinion, Kant correctly intuits is that, to be consistent, a protesting faith is only truly capable of protesting against the injustice in our own lives and the lives of others if it is sustained by a resilient trust in divine justice.

Concerning Job’s faith, Kant tells us

[T]he faith which arose out of such unusual answers to his doubts, that is, which arose simply out of the conviction of his ignorance, could arise only in the soul of a man who in the midst of his most serious doubts could say, “Until the hour of my death, I will hold fast to my piety” [Job 27:5–6]. In this case, faith, however weak it may become, is a truer and purer one. (FT 267)

Kant commends the sincere man of faith who refuses to accept explanations that do not meet with the facts, no matter how pious they may appear to be, but who also, in the midst of the most serious doubts, “holds fast” to his piety. Both Kant and Roth admire the stubborn way Job clings to his faith. For Kant perseverance is shown in Job’s pronouncement “until the hour of my death, I will hold fast to my piety” (Job 27:5–6)—a determination echoed in the more

harrowing cry preferred by Roth, “though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). For Roth this is about refusing “to give despair the final say.”³⁶ For Kant faith in the ultimate moral wisdom of God, in divine justice ultimately, is the only thing, finally, that wards off despair.

In *Kant and Theology* I argued that what Kant’s “authentic theodicy” leaves us with is a stubborn, though from Kant’s perspective entirely rational, moral faith in divine justice. In the same way that Kant had maintained in the second and third *Critiques* that belief in the existence of a moral God was an essential underpinning for the moral life, so in the essay on theodicy, belief in divine justice is essential to Job’s faith.³⁷ In *Kant and Theology* I even used the language of “deferred theodicy” to highlight what I thought to be Kant’s underlying assumption that justice, both human and divine, would ultimately prevail.³⁸ Roth’s anti-theodicy has taught me, however, to be as wary of future as of present justifications of the way of God: “our theodicy of protest despairs over the hope that there will be any future good ‘so great as to render acceptable, in retrospect, the whole human experience, with all its wickedness and suffering as well as all its sanctity and happiness.’”³⁹ Of greater import, it seems to me now, is not the deferred vindication of God’s ways, but rather the courage and conviction with which Job endures his suffering and encounters and responds to the divine. I am now inclined to agree more than ever with J. D. Collins’s suggestion that Kant’s treatment of the story of Job transfers all attention entirely from preoccupation with the justification of God to the religious person’s manner of enduring evil.⁴⁰ I would add, however, that the only resolution to the problem of evil, in this case, Job’s innocent suffering, is a personal faith in divine justice. Faith itself is the only theodicy. And though it would be problematic to suggest that in the book of Job the divine theophany is God’s justification, the possibility that for Kant God may be vindicated in and through Job’s faithful experience is not.

NOTES

1. John K. Roth, “A Theodicy of Protest,” in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy, A New Edition*, ed. Stephen T. Davis (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 1–37; quotation at 17.

2. Roth, “Theodicy of Protest,” 3. Democide is “The murder of any person or people by a government.” See R. J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1977), 31.

3. In his essay Roth does not address the important distinction made in the work of Alvin Plantinga and others between the free-will defense and free-will theodicies. For a clear and concise treatment of the distinction and introduction to relevant literature, see “The Problem of Evil: The Case against God’s Existence,” chapter 7 in Michael Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and chapter 5 (“The Problem of Evil”) of the companion text, Michael Peterson et al., eds., *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

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4. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 8, 9.
5. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 9.
6. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 10.
7. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 10.
8. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 8.
9. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 14.
10. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 8.
11. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 14.
12. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 12. See John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977). Roth is quoting and disagreeing with Hick.
13. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 12.
14. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 18.
15. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 6.
16. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 8; see Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage, 1956), 297.
17. G. W. F. Hegel, *Reason in History*, trans. Robert S. Hartman (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), 27.
18. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 7.
19. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 17. See also Zachary Braiterman, *God after Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 4.
20. Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God* (New York: Random House, 1979); Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 6.
21. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 15.
22. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 15.
23. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 15–16; see also Elie Wiesel, *Messengers of God*, trans. Marion Wiesel (New York: Random House, 1976), 235.
24. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 15.
25. See Ann L. Loades, *Kant and Job's Comforters* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Averro, 1985), Part III; Elizabeth Cameron Galbraith, *Kant and Theology: Was Kant a Closet Theologian?* (London: International Scholars Publications, 1996), 35ff.
26. Stephen R. Palmquist, *Kant's Critical Religion: Volume Two of Kant's System of Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000). See Appendix VI.1.
27. Immanuel Kant, "On the Failure of All Theodicies," trans. Michel Despland, in *Kant on History and Religion* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973), 263; hereafter FT.
28. See also Immanuel Kant, *Philosophical Correspondence, 1759–1799*, ed. and trans. Arnulf Zweig (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 80 (letter to Lavater, April 28, 1775).
29. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 13.
30. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 19.
31. See Galbraith, *Kant and Theology*, chap. IV.
32. Roth, "Theodicy of Protest," 18. See also Annie Dillard, *Holy the Firm* (New York: Bantam Books, 1979), 58–59.
33. Wiesel, *Messengers of God*, 235.
34. Kant's interpretation of Job's confession bears comparison with what has become known as the 'Cognitive Limitation Defense' offered by Stephen Wykstra in "The Humean Obstacle to Evidential Arguments from Suffering: On Avoiding the Evils of

‘Appearance,’” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 16 (1984): 73–94, and further developed in “Rowe’s Noseeum Arguments from Evil,” in Daniel Howard-Snyder, ed., *The Evidential Argument from Evil* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 126–150. Emphasizing what he considers to be the immeasurable gap between God’s infinite mind and finite human minds, Wykstra argues that we cannot hope to have epistemic access to God’s reasons for permitting the evils of our world.

35. Roth, “Theodicy of Protest,” 3, 7.

36. Roth, “Theodicy of Protest,” 13.

37. Galbraith, *Kant and Theology*, chap. 1, “Kant’s Copernican Revolution in Theology.”

38. I am indebted to Ann Loades’s insight in *Kant and Job’s Comforters* for this emphasis upon divine justice.

39. Roth, “Theodicy of Protest,” 12.

40. See James Collins, *The Emergence of Philosophy of Religion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967), 91.

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A Kantian Model for Religions of Deliverance

Charles F. Kielkopf

About thirty years ago I was seeking supplementary reading for a philosophy of religion course and found myself browsing through Kant's essays on religion within the limits of reason.¹ Kant captivated me. An Enlightenment philosopher was confronting a fundamental problem in confessing Christian theism as opposed to mere theism or deism. It is Anselm's problem: *Cur Deus homo?* I began a long project of reading seriously most of Kant's work so that I could articulate a partial answer inchoately suggested to me first by Kant's notion of our innate evil and then by his account of the victory of the good principle over the evil. A tangible product of my study is a book: *A Kantian Condemnation of Atheistic Despair: A Declaration of Dependence*.² In the process of writing that book, I did not obtain an answer to Anselm's question. With Kant's guidance in the many subsequent years, though, I have made considerable progress in my Anselmian project of Christian faith seeking understanding because Kant gave me the courage to speak the words of Christian soteriology. This essay is authentically Kantian insofar as I am philosophizing along with Kant, who reminded us that at this stage of human culture there is no definitive philosophy to learn but only learning how to philosophize (CPR A838/B866).

Important to note for understanding this essay is that I use a different philosophical idiom than did Kant. My style is to organize the topics by discussion of premises in arguments offered as deductively valid. However, I would not have been able even to think of the approach to the topics and their development without Kant. In particular, I cannot imagine having developed the centerpiece of this essay and its modification without the guidance of Kant's first two essays in *Religion*. The centerpiece comprises the elements of a rational model for religions that have teachings and express sentiments to the effect that human beings face a dreadful fate, have brought this fate upon ourselves, are incapable of rescuing ourselves from it, and do not deserve to be so rescued. William James labeled such religions "morbid-minded."³ James's distinction between healthy-minded, morbid-minded, and deliverance-oriented religions provided categories I have used, anachronistically, for charting the development of religious themes in Kant's philosophy from 1781 to 1794. Familiarity with James's categories is not needed to follow the line of argument in this essay.

One could regard Kant's development of a religious model as a "dialectical triad." First comes the optimistic, healthy-minded moral deism. Second is the morbid-minded religious perspective based on our innate evil. These are reconciled into a model for religions of deliverance. What, though, is a rational model? A rational model of a religion or type of religion uses concepts and theses of philosophy without using concepts and teachings of any historical religion to express approximations of concepts and teachings of historical religions. The concept of an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient creator and sustainer of all except itself is a philosophical model for God in monotheistic religions. Here I adapt Kantian themes from *Religion* to develop rational models for soteriological notions such as original sin, need for rebirth, and redemption. The last section of this essay offers an assessment of the significance of rational models for philosophy, theology, religious studies, and religion itself.

Kant's three *Critiques*, especially the second, provide theses of a rational model for a healthy-minded Kantian moral religiosity.⁴ Before *Religion*, Kant diagnosed and addressed two aspects of his moral theory that could lead a rational person to despair. Could a rational and moral person hope to become happy? Indeed, could a rational person even hope to become moral or worthy of being happy? These are *religious* concerns about Kant's moral theory, because for Kant—and for me—religious questions are about what we can hope to accomplish with our lives by living in accordance with reason.⁵ If these questions can be answered, they are not answered by altering the moral theory but by proposing why rational people may hope for satisfactory solutions without being irrational. Kant's moral theory and theory of nature ruled out the possibility of attaining happiness by use of our practical reason, whose ultimate end is happiness. Why? On each occasion of its correct use reason may require us to choose contrary to what will make us happy. There is no natural mecha-

nism for happiness to be obtained by correct use of reason. Of course, by good fortune moral people could become happy. But such happiness would be obtained by luck and not by use of practical reason. Kant addressed this concern with his moral argument for God's existence, an argument I read as an entitlement for hoping. In the healthy-minded model, then, there is a moral God who will bring it about that all is as it ought to be. All is as it ought to be if each person has the amount of happiness they deserve. To be worthy of happiness we need to struggle toward our moral perfection, and this requires working for the happiness of others.

The main requirement for moral perfection is to be a person who seeks inclination satisfaction guided by the principle of doing what is right regardless of whether or not any inclinations are satisfied by doing so. In light of our natural tendency to be inclination satisfiers and to deceive ourselves about why we choose, can we hope to become agents who are deserving of happiness? Certainly nothing guarantees that a natural human lifespan provides enough time to become morally perfect. Kant addresses this second concern with his argument for immortality. Hence, on this healthy-minded model each person has enough time to become morally perfect. To be sure, if we do not struggle, or deliberately ignore demands of morality, then if all is as it ought to be, it will not go well with us. Unfortunately, since almost all, if not all, of us are guilty of some immorality, we have cause for concern. This negative possibility does not eliminate the overall optimism of healthy-mindedness. To avoid the bad prospects all we need do is to continue, or to start, the struggle to be morally perfect. Our limited achievements may not entitle us to bliss or to whatever the reward for the best may be. But if we commit ourselves to striving for things as they ought to be, then we can hope to become worthy of being happy and to have the happiness we deserve. Up to this point, Kant's position is a moral deism. At the end, the deity intervenes enough to bring it about that there is happiness in proportion to merit.⁶

In *Religion*, however, Kant subjects this moral deism to a third radical critique, transforming it into a model for morbid-minded religiosity. Try to imagine someone whose religiosity conformed to the healthy-minded Kantian moral deism becoming afflicted with a melancholy thought that human beings by themselves are incapable of moral perfection and none of our efforts brings anyone close to being worthy of happiness. What line of thought, apart from the teachings of historical religions, might lead us to such a melancholy thought? What conceptual changes in the healthy-minded Kantian model would alleviate the anxiety of this melancholy thought? To answer the second question we must form a modified Kantian model suitable for religions of deliverance, such as Buddhism or Christianity. Answering the first question requires interpreting themes from the first two essays of Kant's *Religion*. I develop a Kantian answer by commenting upon what I call "The Soteriological Predicament," the foundation for the centerpiece of this essay.

The Soteriological Predicament: A Kantian Moral Melancholy

In the opening paragraphs of *Religion* Kant anticipates James's distinction between the two types of religiosity:

That "the world lieth in evil" is a plaint as old as history, old even as the older art, poetry; indeed, as old as that oldest of all fictions, the religion of priestcraft. All agree that the world began in a good estate, whether in a Golden Age, a life in Eden, or a yet more happy community with celestial beings. But they represent that this happiness vanished like a dream and that a Fall into evil (moral evil, with which physical evil ever went hand in hand) presently hurried mankind from bad to worse with accelerated descent; so that now (this "now" is also as old as history) we live in the final age, with the Last Day and the destruction of the world at hand. (R 18 [15])

After this characterization of the morbid outlook, Kant writes that some philosophers have held the empirically unsupported, healthy-minded hope that humanity can progress from the morally worse to the morally better. As an example of this optimism Kant writes: "In the words of Seneca: We are sick with curable diseases, and if we wish to be cured, nature comes to our aid, *for we were born to health.*"⁷ Kant then raises a crucial question that guides us in balancing healthy- and morbid-minded religiosity:

But since it well may be that both sides have erred in their reading of experience, the question arises whether a middle ground may not at least be possible, namely that man as a species is neither good nor bad, or at all events that he is as much the one as the other, partly good, partly bad. (20 [16])

The healthy-minded regard people as partly good and partly bad. Let us ask of ourselves whether we can honestly classify ourselves as partly good, partly bad, where "can" means consistent with Kantian critical philosophy and moral theory. The negative answer is given in the course of justifying premise (2) of what I call the Soteriological Predicament.

The Soteriological Predicament plays two roles in constructing a rational model for morbid-minded religiosity. First, it provides words, in a philosophical framework, for expressing sentiments of a morbid-minded religiosity. Second, the philosophic concepts are adapted for defining approximations for actual religious concepts. Here is a brief, step-by-step expression of the model I have in mind:

Soteriological Predicament & Our Innate Evil

1. I have performed an immoral act.
2. If I have performed any immoral act, then I have a corrupt moral character and I have been the one who corrupted my moral character.

3. If I have a corrupt moral character, then I am morally equivalent to the worst criminal—that is, my character is morally that of the worst criminal.
4. If I am morally equivalent to the worst criminal, then it would be better if I had never been born. (I am not worthy of being happy, and if things ultimately turn out as they ought to be—viz., happiness in proportion to moral merit—I shall not be happy.)
5. If I have a corrupt moral character and I corrupted myself, then there is nothing I myself can do to remove my corruption—that is, to improve my character so that I am no longer morally equivalent to the worst criminal.
6. If I have a corrupt moral character and I corrupted myself, then I do not deserve to have any being, including a God, remove my corruption and give me a “new birth.”

From (1) through (4) we may conclude (7).

7. It would have been better if I had never been born.

From (1) through (5) we may conclude (8).

8. There is nothing I can do to remove my corruption.

From (1) through (8) we may conclude (9).

9. I do not deserve to have any being capable of removing my corruption remove my corruption or give me a “new birth.”

These conclusions may be summarized as:

I am unable to do anything myself and I do not deserve the help of anyone else to bring it about that it was worthwhile for me to have been born.

This summary conclusion of the Soteriological Predicament is pessimistic enough to justify classifying such a religious perspective as morbid-minded. Let us consider arguments for the premises to appreciate how we can draw this pessimistic entailment from a Kantian moral theory. Appreciation of how we draw out the entailment will guide us in modifying this rational model for a deeply pessimistic religion into a rational model for a more optimistic religion of deliverance.

On the First Premise, Moral Autonomy

The first premise reveals that the predicament does not involve those who impute no moral evil to themselves. So I do not obtain a strong thesis that human beings in general are innately evil. I show, at best, that those of us who impute moral evil to ourselves and hold the elements of Kantian moral theory, used in defense of the premises, ought to judge ourselves to be innately evil and incapable of becoming better solely by our own efforts. This first premise will be interpreted as presupposing that we can exercise Kantian autonomy; I

shall call this moral autonomy. The bilevel complexity of Kantian self-imputation of immorality uses a presupposition of moral autonomy. When I impute a moral offense to myself, I accuse myself of choosing to do what I ought not to have done, and I take responsibility for the character flaw that led me to choose to do what I ought not to have done. This bilevel character of self-imputation of immorality becomes crucial in the defense of premise 5: that we are incapable of redeeming ourselves. The following discussion of moral autonomy brings out that no experience, not even introspection, can show us whether or not anyone ever exercised moral autonomy. So the first premise may be believed but not known.⁸

Kant made the term “autonomy” an honorific term for many moral theorists. There are even those who, thinking the autonomy Kant tried to characterize is an illusion, still want to use the term “autonomy.” In light of this usage, we need to modify “autonomy” with adjectives such as “natural,” “political,” “moral,” and “human.”⁹ Readers should be aware that what I shall call human autonomy Kant usually calls heteronomy. My special definitions of these terms are as follows.

Moral autonomy is freedom to do what we judge to be morally obligatory regardless of any inclination to do otherwise. Moral autonomy is a philosophical concept drawn from aspects of ordinary concepts of free and voluntary. Moral autonomy is “noncausal” in the sense that, according to the philosophical thought introducing this “refined” notion of freedom, we should not use it to explain behavior, nor should we try to explain the behavior that leads us to use it by referring to natural factors alone. Attributions of moral autonomy are primarily judgments about the moral worth of our actions. If we use our moral autonomy properly, we are worthy of happiness: that is, it ought to be the case that we are happy. Moral autonomy is contrasted with human autonomy.

Human autonomy is our capacity to use reason to seek inclination satisfaction. Getting up out of a chair to walk across the room to get a drink of water to satisfy thirst is an example of exercising human autonomy. Kantians seek a causal account of exercises of human autonomy, for they are empirically observable phenomena—that is, sensible. Moral autonomy is empirically unobservable; its exercises, if any, are supersensible. Elsewhere I made a case that moral autonomy, if exercised, is not exercised by an unobservable self, but by observable human beings.¹⁰ An exercise of moral autonomy is an exercise of human autonomy having a supersensible aspect. An exercise of human autonomy can be regarded as an exercise of moral autonomy in the following way. We can transform a verbal representation of human autonomy of the form “S doing A to satisfy inclination I” into an expression of moral autonomy by using the form “S doing A to satisfy inclination I because it is morally obligatory for S to do A to satisfy I.” Nothing sensible can show us that such representations of moral autonomy have application. To avoid standard conflicts between determinism and free will, we should not hold a metaphysics that allows for deter-

ministic prediction of all exercises of human autonomy.¹¹ We may accept, however, that for any exercise of human autonomy we can trace back a series of natural causes sufficient for it.

Consider an alleged example of someone exercising moral autonomy. Some of my colleagues and I are having drinks in the faculty club bar after a department meeting. I have an inclination to be regarded as entertaining by repeating an unfounded rumor that an absent colleague is having an affair. If I repeat the rumor, my behavior can be described by saying: He repeated the rumor to satisfy his inclination to be an entertaining conversationalist. Since nothing forced me to repeat the rumor, my gossiping would be an exercise of human autonomy. However, suppose that I have the maxim that I ought not to repeat unfounded rumors that might damage someone's reputation. Along with this maxim I have a natural inclination to act in accordance with my principles. The inclination to act in accordance with one's principles is as natural as an inclination to be regarded as an entertaining conversationalist.¹² Suppose I recall my maxim and do not repeat the rumor. My behavior can be described by saying: He did not repeat the rumor, but mentioned an incident about last Saturday's football game to satisfy an inclination to have something interesting to say and to satisfy an inclination to act in accordance with his principle. So far, only an exercise of human autonomy has been described. We would describe acting with moral autonomy if we added to the above description "and he acted on these inclinations in this circumstance because so acting was in accordance with the moral law." (I suggest the addition cited in the previous sentence could be interpreted as acting from respect for the moral law.) However, empirical description is exhausted with the description of the act as one of human autonomy. Not even introspection shows me that I acted on my principle because the principle is in accordance with morality. Nonetheless, experiences of oneself or others acting contrary to strong natural inclinations to act in accordance with the moral law might lead someone to believe that people have moral autonomy—that is, act from respect for the moral law.¹³

On Premises (2), (3), and (4) of the Soteriological Predicament

Observations about an example support the second premise of the Soteriological Predicament. Suppose as a child I told a lie to my mother so that she would punish my brother because I wanted to satisfy some inclination for revenge. The act was immoral, and I knew it. My mother asked me whether my brother had disobeyed her and crossed the street. I knew that he had not and that it was wrong to tell a lie saying that he had. I also had a desire for revenge because he had stopped me from crossing the street. When she asked me I was at a "moral crossroad." I could exercise my moral autonomy, suppress the urge for revenge and honestly say, "He didn't." Or I could ignore the demand of the moral law, a demand even a child can hear. Ignoring the moral law is not exercising my moral autonomy. If I do not use my moral autonomy,

my human autonomy operates as the “default-mechanism”; I choose, with human autonomy, the readily available means for “getting even” and dishonestly say “He did.”

Suppose I chose the second course. That particular choice was immoral because I chose to ignore the moral law by allowing myself to satisfy an inclination whose goal was consciously contrary to the demands of morality for the situation. What does that particular choice reveal about the kind of moral person I am? By imputing moral evil to myself I take the stance that my immoral choice was not merely something that happened to me in my childhood. As an immoral choice it cannot be explained totally by natural factors operating in my childhood, since moral autonomy was a decisive factor. By taking responsibility for the particular immoral choice, I also take responsibility for being the kind of person who made that choice. Hence, to answer what kind of person even a single immoral choice shows us to be, we need to examine more closely the relation of moral and human autonomy in the human person. This requires remarks about a Kantian notion of character.

What did my choice to satisfy an inclination while ignoring the demands of morality reveal about my character? My character includes my way of thinking, *Denkungsart*, about acting.¹⁴ My character contains my maxims. It also includes the disposition, *Gesinnung*,¹⁵ I use to adopt principles and act in accordance with them. When I take responsibility for my character, I take responsibility for both my principles and my inner disposition. Here I adapt Kant’s notions of empirical and intelligible character.¹⁶ I am not proposing a dualism of character, because on this interpretation of character, moral character and empirical character will be ways of regarding a person’s character. My empirical character is my way of thinking (*Denkungsart*) and disposition (*Gesinnung*) considered as a natural phenomenon when nature is represented as having agent causation. I exhibit my empirical character when I exercise human autonomy. My intelligible, or moral, character is my empirical character represented as supersensible. Above it was pointed out how moral autonomy is representable as a supersensible aspect of sensible human acts. Here my empirical character is represented as my supersensible intelligible character by thinking that some choices of my empirical character can also be exercises of, or failures to exercise, moral autonomy.

When asking What must my character be like to have made this immoral choice? we reach the level where people generating the Soteriological Predicament take full responsibility for their immoral choice. Because I take responsibility for the immoral choice, I attribute to my way of thinking a maxim to the effect “I may occasionally set aside the moral law to satisfy an inclination,” and I take responsibility for having that maxim.

My childhood example admits generalization. When people accept full responsibility for their immoral choices, they impute to their characters a maxim to the effect “I may occasionally set aside the moral law to satisfy an inclination” and blame themselves for having adopted such a maxim. Let us

call this maxim about setting aside the moral law on occasion *The Maxim of Moral Corruption*.

How should I judge my character once I have imputed to myself the Maxim of Moral Corruption? Certainly, I am not morally perfect. But may I not be above moral corruption? I do have several maxims a morally good person would have. However, because of the special high level of the Maxim of Moral Corruption, other maxims do not save me from being morally corrupt. The Maxim of Moral Corruption has the high-level status of overriding all other maxims. Indeed, if one has the Maxim of Moral Corruption, then it is one's highest maxim.

Adapting a phrase of Kant's, we could call the competitor for highest maxim the Maxim of the Holiness of Duty.¹⁷ To match its competitor, let us call it *The Maxim of Moral Goodness*. It can be expressed as "On no occasion may I set aside the moral law to satisfy an inclination." These two are the competitors for the highest maxim. Suppose you have some other very high-level maxim, such as maximizing one's utility, a utilitarian principle, or even one of the versions of the categorical imperative. A still more basic question is whether you will never deviate from it or occasionally deviate from it.

If I impute to myself the Maxim of Moral Corruption, then I must judge myself to be morally bad, not somewhere in between good and bad. For my highest maxim is the same as that of anyone who sets "a price on his conforming to morality."¹⁸ If I set a price on my conformity to morality, then I have no morality but only prudence. Another way to appreciate your total moral corruption if you have the Maxim of Moral Corruption is to consider someone whose words and actions lead you to classify him or her as morally bad, if anyone is. Consider a serial killer or Himmler. If such persons recognized their immorality and traced their responsibility for it back to their highest maxim, their highest maxim would be the same as yours—viz., the Maxim of Moral Corruption. Judging me by my moral character, then, I with my childhood lie am morally equivalent to a serial killer! As already noted, if happiness is ultimately in proportion to moral merit, it would have been better if such people had never been born. So we have made a case for premises (3) and (4) of the Soteriological Predicament.

If I am morally corrupt because I have the Maxim of Moral Corruption, how did I acquire the maxim? If I try to attribute adoption of the maxim to external factors, such as my genetic makeup or environmental influences, I am evading responsibility for my immoral choice that ultimately depends upon my highest maxim. I must take the responsibility for allowing myself to be bad by failing to use moral autonomy to adopt as my highest maxim the Maxim of Moral Goodness. Instead, I allowed my highest maxim to be the Maxim of Moral Corruption and thereby corrupted myself. So we have to confess that in adopting our Maxim of Moral Corruption we have freely corrupted ourselves.

This completes the case for premise (2) of the Soteriological Predicament.

On Premise (5), Plus a Model for Original Sin

Difficulties in answering questions about the origin of my, or anyone's, self-corruption are brought out to defend premise (5). However, more is accomplished in defending (5) than pointing out that we cannot know how to eliminate our fundamental corruption because its origin is too indefinite. I shall exploit indeterminacy about the time and circumstances of our fundamental corruption to show the suitability of our fundamental corruption for a model of doctrines of original sin in historical religions.

How can we describe, let alone account for, the origin of moral evil in ourselves? We cannot understand the origin of evil in ourselves because the choice to adopt the Maxim of Moral Corruption is radically different from any other morally significant choice. Ordinary attributions of moral autonomy cannot be understood by any procedure of natural science. However, ordinary attributions of moral autonomy are at least linked with datable exercises of human autonomy. We regard certain exercises of human autonomy *as* being accompanied with a choice to do what is right because it is right, or as failing to be so. The choice to be corrupt, however, cannot not be linked with any exercise of human autonomy. Only my actually accusing myself of a particular choice contrary to the moral law allows me, as brought out in defense of premises (2)–(4), to regard myself as having already adopted a Maxim of Moral Corruption. Unfortunately, as will be noted below, this maxim is ours for the whole of our life as far as we can tell. Attributions of self-corruption, then, are interpretations of a whole life, yet we cannot specify the date of our choice of self-corruption as being our entire life.¹⁹

The fact that self-corruption is not connected with any datable choice in our lives can be emphasized by considering it as primarily guilt. The guilt of having the Maxim of Moral Corruption is better established via the Soteriological Predicament than the deed of having selected it. Because of its unspecifiable origin the removal of this fundamental evil, or guilt, is equally unspecifiable. We have no idea of what to do to eliminate it. Merely proclaiming “My highest maxim is that on no occasion may I set aside the moral law to satisfy an inclination” does not make it my maxim. Even living for a long time, apparently in accordance with the Maxim of Moral Goodness, does not show that I have removed, as my highest maxim, the Maxim of Moral Corruption that I have acknowledged was operative in me. I may be merely acting in accordance with morality because my “price” for being immoral has not yet been offered. (The immortality argument of the second *Critique* does not address this anxiety.) What I am clear about is that I became evil through failure to use my moral autonomy and do not know how to undo what I did. Until what I did is undone, my efforts to act in accordance with morality seem fruitless for removing my moral guilt.

How might we interpret this self-corruption as an original sin? First, let us

model sin. It is appropriate to call choices contrary to morality “sins” when developing a model for religions. To regard a moral failure as a sin is not merely a verbal change. It introduces the thought that a moral failure is an offense against God. Here “offense against God” means at least the following. Our moral failing is known to the creator and sustainer of everything who wills that all be as it ought to be and brings it about that ultimately all that exists is as it ought to be. Regarded as a sin, a moral failure is known to God as a use of our ability to create a small bit of reality contrary to the will of God. Self-corruption is an original sin because it is a necessary condition for any other sin in a person’s life.

So in a context of accepting the Soteriological Predicament we have use for personal terms, such as “my original sin” and “your original sin,” to designate allegedly particular events in people’s lives. To approximate doctrines of humanity’s original sin I shall make a case that the universal term “original sin” is more fundamental than the personal terms. This original sin of self-corruption may be regarded primarily as a feature of being a typical human as opposed to its being events in the lives of individual human beings. The preceding argument for attributing it to any individual required no definite details about any person. Its content is the same in all humans who have it. No one’s original sin can be located as a particular event in anyone’s biography. A person acquires it by being born with it in the following sense. I was born guilty of it because I was born as a type of being—viz., a being having moral and human (natural) autonomy, such that if a person of this type commits any particular sin, then that person is already guilty of this original sin. It is imputable to me because I am of this type. Or to put it another way: I was born with it because I was born as a type of being for whom the Soteriological Predicament can be generated. Because I have it by virtue of being born human, I, and others, may be regarded as having it secondarily. The fact that this original guilt is primarily a feature of human beings will be emphasized by using first-person plural—with this sin *we* have chosen death!²⁰

Thus, if our guilt can be removed, *we* would have to remove it by atoning for it. If we could atone for it we could not do it collectively since the whole human race is never together at any time to act together. So it seems that if humans can make atonement, some individual human, or group of individual humans, would have to do so. Furthermore, if anyone were to use the above theses to talk, for theological purposes, about our original sin, an original sinner, and someone who atoned for our sin, the context and case for the theses must not be forgotten. The case consists mainly of considerations for taking the universal term “original sin” as more fundamental than the singular term “my original sin.” The result is that we have a line of thought that allows us to make assertions similar to claims of historical religions. We are not entitled to assume that our line of thought is what led to similar assertions in the historical religions. I confess, though, that such considerations, inspired by a reading of Kant’s *Religion*, gave me the courage to begin again to use phrases

such as “original sin.” For I came to recognize that some tentative sense could be given to them.

After this case for premise (5) and modeling of original sin, one might think it shows only that we need to enlarge the concept of a moral God already represented in the optimistic, healthy-minded Kantian model sketched earlier. The concept of a God who brings it about that things are as they ought to be included the concept of being all-knowing. Now we see that the concept of God also should include the concept of being a moral restorer of people who struggle to act as if the Maxim of Moral Goodness were their highest maxim. Certainly a moral God who could “see into the hearts” of His creatures would recognize the differences despite the fundamental corruption of all. The restoration would be an expunging of the Maxim of Moral Corruption from the character of those striving to act throughout a long period as if it were no longer their highest maxim. The proposal for enlarging the concept of God is plausible for modeling religions of deliverance. However, there are objections to implementing it. The objections are brought out in premise (6) of the Soteriological Predicament. Consideration of these objections guides us even further toward enlarging the concept of a moral God.²¹

On Premise (6) and Conclusion of the Soteriological Predicament

Do I deserve a second chance, or rebirth, to strive for moral goodness? After all, when my mother discovered that I had told a malicious lie, I returned to “her good graces” after a few days. The negative answer depends upon using moral concepts such as offence, deserve, and atonement in this very unusual context of developing a theory on character development and improvement through exercises of moral autonomy.

We have already observed that in adopting the Maxim of Moral Corruption, I became the moral equivalent of the worst criminal. We can further note that in corrupting myself I acted no differently than the worst criminal did in corrupting himself. Indeed, when we focus on adoption of a highest maxim, no conceivable degenerate person would act any worse in making himself or herself morally corrupt. Think of a reprobate. Think of another one a bit worse. They both have the same highest maxim and adopted it in the same way. Because there are no conceivable corrupt persons who corrupted themselves in a different way, we can follow Kant in saying that the crime of self-corruption is infinitely enormous and deserving of infinite punishment (see R 72 [66]). Furthermore, I can do nothing to atone for this crime of self-corruption. If for the rest of my life I do nothing but what I ought because I ought to, I have done nothing more than what I should do. I do not “store up merit” by doing my duty. It is as if I start with a huge debt and cannot earn anything to repay it.

Suppose I received an undeserved second chance. I would be back in my

original position before I corrupted myself. In my original position of innocence in my moral character I did not have the strength to resist corrupting myself. If that original innocence were restored, I would have no more resistance to self-corruption than before. Strength of habit in my empirical character shows only that I have strong habits, not that I have a morally good character. Without resistance to self-corruption, I cannot really strive to be morally better, let alone morally perfect. There is no clear way to build up strength in my moral character. The consideration in this paragraph is relevant for modifying the notion of God into a sustainer as well as a regenerator of human moral character.

We can now draw the conclusion of the Soteriological Predicament and consider its significance for enlarging our concepts of a moral God and our relationship to this God. Recall the dire conclusion the Soteriological Predicament tells people who impute some moral guilt to themselves to draw about their plight: Even to strive so that it is not true of me that “it would have been better for him if he had never been born,” I need to be given something that I do not deserve and that would be as subject to self-corruption as my original self.

This conclusion tells me, in effect, that I have good reasons for thinking I cannot strive to be morally good and no reasons for thinking I can ever strive to be morally good, if I have ever acted immorally. We can express the conclusion vividly in terms of the impotency of moral autonomy. It directs people who take responsibility for having done something immoral to say to themselves: My moral autonomy is totally impotent with respect to making myself a morally good person. Indeed, my moral autonomy is totally impotent with respect to making me better than the most degenerate reprobate. If salvation is at least having things go tolerably well with me if things turn out as they ought to be, then my moral autonomy is impotent with respect to “saving me.” Can we move beyond this model for a totally morbid-minded religiosity into one for religions of deliverance?

Modifying the Concept of God to Avoid Inconsistency

We need to reconsider the conclusion of the Soteriological Predicament, because without modifications it is inconsistent with other principles. I do have a moral obligation to strive to be morally good even if it is not so clear that I have a moral obligation actually to reach that condition. But “ought to do” implies “can do.” So with the Soteriological Predicament and acceptance of responsibility we have a logical contradiction in the four claims that make up what I call *The Paradox of the Single Sin*, as follows:

1. If I have an obligation to strive to be morally good, then I can strive to be morally good.
2. I have an obligation to strive to be morally good.

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3. If I have done something immoral, then I cannot strive to be morally good.
4. I have done something immoral.

What should we do in face of this logical conflict? An effort to model religions of deliverance is not the place for an impartial philosophical examination of all alternatives for avoiding the inconsistency. To construct a suitable model we want to avoid the inconsistency by introducing a slight modification of claim (3) of the paradox—a claim I label *Sinner's Despair*. Sinner's Despair is a consequence of the Soteriological Predicament. If you can strive to be morally good, then you can will to have been morally good as an end. If you can will an end, then you can will means to the end. But, according to the Soteriological Predicament, there are no means for a sinner to become morally good. If we are going to avoid the paradox with only a slight modification of Sinner's Despair, we need to consider whether the case for the premises in the Soteriological Predicament admit a slight modification. Why, though, restrict ourselves to slight modifications? The predicament was generated from the resources of a Kantian moral philosophy for the special purpose of modeling a despair that would enable us to hope for deliverance. Radical ways of rejecting claim (3) or other claims in the paradox would undercut the effort to model the morbid-minded despair with a Kantian moral philosophy. The gist of the slight modification I have in mind is expressed in the italicized clause inserted in claim (3) to give what I call *Sinner's Hope*.

(3) If I have done something immoral, then, *unless God restores and sustains my moral autonomy in recognition of my efforts to become morally good*, I cannot strive to be morally good.

There are, of course, several other ways to alter or dismiss claim (3). Consider one obvious critique of claim (3) to appreciate how it undercuts the effort to model morbid-minded religiosity with Kantian moral philosophy. The case for premise (5) of the Soteriological Predicament rested on using the concept of choice of moral character as essentially undetermined. It could not be determined when, where, or even by whom the choice was made. It would certainly not be arbitrary, let alone irrational, to reject such concepts for their inherent vagueness. If the concept of choice of moral character is dismissed, then the bilevel character of taking moral responsibility discussed in interpreting premise (1) should be set aside. This is not the place to analyze in great detail the notion of moral autonomy. But I submit that setting aside the notion of taking responsibility for our character as well as our acts would be to set aside any significant notion of moral autonomy. For if our acts come from our character and we are not responsible for our character, then ultimately our acts are based on something different—that is, heteronomous—to us. Hence, one obvious way of avoiding the paradox would be, in effect, to dismiss the Kantian

moral philosophy. My restriction of alternatives only to those that help advance the modeling will be addressed in the last section on the significance of rational models.

Before pleading for an adjustment to the concept of a moral God to defend Sinner's Hope, let us note why we leave the other claims in the paradox unchallenged. Acceptance of claim (1) expressing an "ought" implies "can" thesis is crucial for any Kantian moral theory. Claim (2) is not trivial. Should sinners conclude they no longer have an obligation to strive to be morally good because their one sin has rendered them morally impotent? In their impotence they may cast themselves on God's mercy and then do as they wish.²² We ought not take the antinomian alternative of denying that we have an obligation to strive to be morally good. How is rejection of claim (2) tantamount to antinomianism? Does an agent have a definite moral obligation if and only if that agent has an obligation to strive to be morally good? For instance, do I have an obligation not to commit suicide to avoid death from an unpleasant illness if and only if I have an obligation to hold the maxim of moral goodness as my highest maxim?

I restrict myself to arguing for the most challenging half of the thesis: If an agent has a definite moral obligation, then the agent has an obligation to strive to be morally good. On my interpretation of Kantian moral thought a particular obligation is primarily an obligation to form my character by adopting a maxim as a categorical imperative directed to oneself. So if I accept that I have the particular obligation not to commit suicide, my obligation is primarily to add to my character the particular moral imperative "Never take your own life regardless of any inclination to do otherwise." Suppose I say I am not concerned with becoming morally good. If I say I am not concerned with being morally good, then I say I may have the Maxim of Moral Corruption as my highest maxim. But if I have the Maxim of Moral Corruption as my highest maxim, then I am willing to allow any principle I have chosen to be set aside. But this is inconsistent. For example, to accept the obligation not to commit suicide, I choose to have a prohibition against suicide as a principle that cannot be overridden. But if I allow myself to have the principle of moral corruption, I am willing to have my prohibition against suicide overridden.

In general, if I am willing to have any principle I have chosen set aside on occasion, then I am not choosing to have any particular maxim a fixed principle of my character. If I am not choosing to have any particular principle a fixed principle, then I do not really accept any moral obligation. Excusing yourself from striving to be morally good, then, is to excuse yourself from morality. We should not accept excusing ourselves from morality, if a goal of modeling a religion with concepts of a moral philosophy is to enrich our morality and religion. I fear claim (4) is true of all of us.

So we turn now to constructing our model so it includes Sinner's Hope rather than Sinner's Despair. Logical manipulations on Sinner's Hope allow us to reexpress it as the following:

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If I have done something immoral and I can strive to be morally good, then God restores and sustains my moral autonomy in recognition of my efforts to become morally good.

Along with the other claims in *The Paradox of the Single Sin, Sinner's Hope* yields this claim:

God restores and sustains my moral autonomy in recognition of my efforts to become morally good.

Can we consistently accept that God restores and sustains our moral autonomy in recognition of our efforts to become morally good? Does its acceptance advance our goal of modeling religions of deliverance? We can consistently add this claim to the healthy-minded religious model. That model did not specify that God was immutable and hence could not change or act. We noted that the optimistic model was deistic by having God act only at the end to proportion happiness to moral merit. Also, the claim is consistent with the line of thought in developing the Soteriological Predicament. The concept of a moral God played no significant role in arguing for the premises of the predicament. Indeed, generation of the predicament probably seemed in conflict with the notion of a moral God. There seemed to be no provision for a moral God to take note of the difference between those with the Maxim of Moral Corruption who tried to live morally and those who did not. It is hardly radical to propose that the addition in *Sinner's Hope* brings out what a moral God would recognize. Significantly, the addition in *Sinner's Hope* does not specify that a moral God is required to restore and sustain the moral autonomy of sinners who still struggle to be moral. We who have sinned once are in a condition such that we cannot attain moral worth through any exercise of moral autonomy, and we do not deserve to be saved from this condition. Under the moral theory being used, God cannot be criticized for letting the situation be as it is. However, sinners who struggle to be morally good do show a faith in moral autonomy. This faith in their moral autonomy shows they, too, are in harmony with the will of a moral God by willing that what they control be as it ought to be.

There is no inconsistency in thinking a moral God responds to this faith in moral autonomy, especially if the original sin has been atoned. God's response to the moral faith would be, in effect, a re-creation of human beings so that we no longer operate in the moral sphere totally autonomously. We act autonomously with the support of God's grace. If we exercise it faithfully, we can, according to the model, hope that God will ultimately re-create it as something that can make us worthy of being happy. A final thesis to be added to the model returns us to the consideration that human beings must somehow rectify our predicament. Thus I propose for the model some incarnation thesis to the effect that by becoming human God does something to restore and

sustain our moral autonomy, removing the guilt that made us undeserving of having our predicament changed.

What Is Accomplished with a Rational Model?

What does the above model-building accomplish for philosophers who wish to affirm religion or religious (theological) concepts? I do not submit this model-building as a work in philosophy. By making special assumptions, some initially odd-sounding conclusions are drawn from a Kantian moral theory. These could be a preliminary to a *reductio ad absurdum* of the Kantian moral theory in question or to the dismissing of an attempted *reductio*. Such argumentation about a Kantian moral theory would be part of philosophy. But the model-building ignores philosophical evaluation of the Kantian moral theory. (It does not “go wherever the argument goes.”) The model-building is not in moral philosophy. The goal is to reflect on a particular moral theory to find aspects that suggest a hopelessness, or despair, that provokes theses about religion, or about the potential object of our hope. There are no proofs, or even arguments, that these theses expand our understanding of what is the case. So the model-building is not metaphysics. Since the goal is only to approximate claims of historical religions, the model-building is not what some have condemned as Ontotheology. The model-building is not part of a natural theology because no proofs are offered. Indeed, specifying details about what God should be makes the task of establishing the existence of God more difficult. The model-building is not in philosophy of religion because it is not critical thinking about religious thinking or acting. I do not claim that if people held these views about original sin, etc., they would avoid superstition and fanaticism with respect to such doctrines. Conditions for avoiding superstition and fanaticism also require empirical study. They do, however, give me confidence that I *can* hold such doctrines without being superstitious or fanatical.

As philosophy, such model-building could be considered at most as suggestions or philosophical fragments for theologians who are developing full philosophical modeling of some particular religion. But the suggestions are not philosophically neutral, because they are developed with the intent of modeling certain types of religions. They are more a preliminary to some theology than philosophy proper. Of course, removal of the model-building from philosophy does not remove it from criticism of the logic, etc., used in its development. However, the activity of model-building may provide material for philosophical reflection about topics such as legitimate concept formation and even *truth* in religion.

The model-building itself is too closely involved in using the scriptures and appreciating the theology of Christianity to be classified as part of religious studies. But the significance of such an effort within a religion is a topic for religious studies. My suggestion is that such fragmentary model-building has twofold significance. One, it does offer suggestions to theologians. Two, it is a

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type of personal religious thinking sometimes called “faith seeking understanding.” Its ad hoc utility is to help individuals reappraise claims of their religions; especially after the claims *seem* to have lost their semantic status as truth claims. Such personal lines of thought need have no standing in the religion as claims that are to be taught about the doctrine. Nonetheless, such lines of thought may be very important for the individual as are personal prayers and meditations. Indeed, for some the effort to give new sense to old words might be a *necessary condition for prayer*.

In conclusion, recall how I found this model-building, inspired by Kant, to be of crucial help in my faith seeking understanding. This conclusion will explain the title of this essay. I speak only for myself. Nevertheless, I believe what I develop here is relevant to many people in our age.

Why did my first reading of Kant’s *Religion* offer me so much hope? With what sort of despair or religious confusion was I afflicted? The affliction could be labeled “doctrinal aphasia.” Such aphasiacs cannot say words such as “Through their own fault human beings are in a condition that requires them to be saved by God” without anxiety and embarrassment. They cannot even say such words *to themselves* without anxiety. I do not know how widespread this affliction is. Some might think it enlightenment, rather than an affliction, and that it should be the condition of all educated people. Being stunned so that one cannot utter doctrines of historical religions might even be regarded as the healthy effect of some type of Socratic dialectic that leaves people dumb. Nevertheless, it is an affliction for those who hope to pass on a historical religion because they feel the religion has some great value to offer people. It is a great affliction for those whose life leads them to have a melancholy that historically has been addressed by religions of deliverance. You cannot develop the religion in yourself, let alone pass it on to your children, unless you can speak the special words of the religion.

How might thinking along with Kant help one overcome this aphasia? Kant takes us “back to basics.” He shows us how we can use reason alone to give sense to the soteriological words once again. The rational or philosophical sense given to the terms does not provide the imagery and emotional force that the words had before critical thought made us try to suppress the imagery and emotions. However, the words, with only the anemic sense they have from reason alone, can suffice to give us the courage to start us using the terms again. It is analytic to say but important to observe that we cannot go further until we start. So in conclusion I suggest we read Kant not only as showing us how we can give new sense to an old notion of being born again, but also as showing us how to give new birth to the *religious words of salvation* themselves.

NOTES

Significant improvements to an earlier version of this essay were suggested by the editors of this volume.

Religious Instantiations of Kantian Philosophy

1. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, ed. and trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (Chicago: Open Court, 1934). Henceforth, page numbers from the Greene and Hudson edition are in brackets immediately following the Academy pagination.

2. Charles Kielkopf, *A Kantian Condemnation of Atheistic Despair: A Declaration of Dependence* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997); hereafter *Atheistic Despair*. This essay refines and extends the final chapter outlining a Kantian soteriology.

3. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1961), 119. See p. 114 for a succinct account of healthy-minded religiosity. On pp. 140–141 there is a nice synopsis where James brings out how religions of deliverance emphasize the best of both approaches.

4. *Atheistic Despair*, chap. IX. The healthy-minded model has been developed from themes in Kant's 1785 *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, his 1788 *Critique of Practical Reason*, his 1790 *Critique of Judgment*, and his 1797 *Metaphysics of Morals*. The task of this essay is to use themes from his 1793 *Religion* to adapt the healthy-minded model into one suitable for morbid-minded religions of deliverance.

5. This characterization of the focus of religion is compatible with an old catechism answer to a question of why God made us. The answer that we were made to know, love, and serve God and be happy with Him forever in heaven can easily be taken as telling us how God wants us to use our theoretical and practical reason.

6. Allen Wood argues this persuasively in his essay "Kant's Deism," in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991). However, if Wood's claim is taken to hold for the Kant of *Religion*, I do not agree. Richard Kroner raises a similar challenge in his work, *Kant's Weltanschauung*, trans. John E. Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 41.

7. R 20 [16]. Kant also cites the Latin: *Sanabilibus aegrotamus malis, nosque in rectum genitos natura, si sanari velimus adiuvat* (Seneca, *De Ira* II:13.1).

8. Attributions of exercises of autonomy, let alone moral autonomy, are not analytically true. I am using "knowledge" and "belief" as Kant used them in CPR A820/B848–A828/B856.

9. An extended discussion of the usage of Rawls and Gauthier justifies using "moral autonomy" and "human autonomy." See *Atheistic Despair*, 85–97.

10. *Atheistic Despair*, 139–147.

11. I am not claiming that Kant would accept setting aside complete predictability of human autonomy.

12. Kant showed how a choice to allow our behavior to be determined by this inclination might be interpreted as a supersensible choosing out of respect for the moral law. Elaboration on this material from the second *Critique* (CPrR 72ff.) would require another essay.

13. In *Atheistic Despair* (chaps. VI–VII), I presented a pragmatic argument that we do not have to regard belief in moral autonomy as illusory.

14. See CPR A551/B579; CPrR 152; and AP 285.

15. For purposes of justifying the use of disposition (*Gesinnung*) as an aspect of character, as I am using "character," a crucial use of the frequently used *Gesinnung* is at R 25 [20], in the argument that there is no middle ground between good and evil: "Die Gesinnung, d.i. der erste subjektive Grund der Annehmung der Maximen, kann nur eine einzige sein und geht allgemein auf den ganzen Gebrauch der Freiheit. Sie selbst

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aber muss auch durch freie Willkür angenommen worden sein, denn sonst könnte sie nicht zugerechnet werden." In light of my interpretation of free will in people as moral autonomy, directing human autonomy (see *Atheistic Despair*, chap. VI), I have a special reading for *den ganzen Gebrauch der Freiheit* and *freie Willkür* and read this passage in the following way: "The disposition, i.e., the first subjective ground of the adoption of maxims, can only be one and concerns the use of both moral autonomy and human autonomy. It must, however, have been adopted through an exercise of moral autonomy or failure to exercise moral autonomy, for otherwise it could not be imputed."

16. See R 47. I offer a significant modification of Kant's notion of intelligible character. For Kant intelligible character is noumenal. In line with the discussion in Chapter VIII, Part I, of *Atheistic Despair*, intelligible, or moral, character for me is a representation of something noumenal. It is, however, a supersensible representation of something noumenal.

17. The phrase appears in R 46 [42]: "Das ursprünglich Güte is die Heiligkeit der Maximen in Befolgung seiner Pflicht." I read this as "The original good is holiness of maxims in pursuit of his duty." (To regain this original good we need to be reborn.) Neither "Maxim of Moral Corruption" nor "Maxim of Moral Goodness" is Kant's term.

18. See R 38–39 for Kant's argument that if Robert Walpol's "Every man has his price for which he gives way" were true of morality, there would be none.

19. See R 39ff. for Kant's claims about the timelessness of the fundamental choice of evil.

20. In Book One of *Religion* [41–44], Kant points to the biblical narrative of the fall, affirming the truth of the story of Adam not as a history but as a pictorial illustration of the original sin of humanity.

21. The arguments for premise (6) are influenced by the discussion of the three difficulties treated in R 66ff. [60ff.]. These are alleged difficulties in the idea that we can become pleasing to a moral God, despite starting from our self-inflicted moral corruption by seriously striving to act as if the Maxim of Moral Goodness were our highest maxim.

22. I do not find Kant posing this question. However, the line of thought underlying the alternative of denying that we have an obligation to strive for moral goodness is adapted from Kant's antinomy of religious thinking (R [116ff.]). Those who take the alternative of abandoning pursuit of moral goodness hold the antithesis that faith in God's effort saves them. The thesis of the antinomy holds that only through our own moral efforts toward being morally good can we even hope to be saved.

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Kant's Approach to Religion Compared with Quakerism

Leslie Stevenson

As a philosopher who has studied Kant's philosophy of religion and has also become a member of the Religious Society of Friends, I think I discern some deep affinities between the two. I have previously written a short article introducing Kant's philosophy to Quakers.¹ In the present essay I attempt a more systematic comparison between Kant's approach to religion and Quaker thought and practice; this also may serve to introduce the latter to students of religion who are not familiar with it.

My experience of Quakerism has been within the British tradition that, since the Manchester conference of 1895, has become very "liberal" in its approach (though this does not necessarily mean that Quakers accept what has been called "liberal theology"). The Quaker movement started in England as one of the radically unorthodox sects of religious seekers that emerged in the ferment of new religious, social, and political ideas in the mid-seventeenth century, the period of the Civil War. They have proved to be longer lasting than other such sects, owing much to the missionary and organizing work of their founder, George Fox. The British Quakers went through a "quietist" period in the eighteenth century, when they separated themselves from the

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rest of society by dress and manners; then they evolved through an evangelical phase in the nineteenth century into the apparently doctrineless spirituality of today.

Fox and the early Quakers obviously thought of themselves as Christians, though they did without creeds, priests, and sacraments, concentrating instead on the “inner-light of Christ.” Religious groups elsewhere in the world, notably in Africa and America, bear the name of “Quaker” but are more like evangelical Christians in their ethos. But many contemporary British Quakers hesitate to call themselves “Christian,” harboring doubts about the importance of the creedal criteria usually associated with that label.

Kant's attitude to Christianity was similarly ambiguous. His parents were Pietists, followers of that “religion of the heart” that had grown within the Lutheran Church in the late seventeenth century, led by Phillipp J. Spener. Pietism emphasized personal religious feeling and ethical behavior more than intellectual theology or ecclesiastical ritual—making it sound somewhat similar to the Quakers in England in the same period. But by Kant's time the Pietist movement had hardened into an insistence on stereotyped confessions of individual conversion, and this revolted the freethinking, self-confident young Kant.² The Pietists imposed a strictly religious education in their schools, and in alliance with the Prussian monarchy they got many of their supporters appointed in universities. Kant insisted on the right to think for himself, and in reaction to his experiences as a schoolboy in the Collegium Fridericianum (an institution he described as “a Pietist hostel”!) he developed an antipathy to formal religious devotions. In later life, when his position as Rector of the University required his attendance at church services, he declared himself indisposed.

However, the personal piety of Kant's parents—especially his mother, who died when he was thirteen—remained an enduring affectionate memory with him. He was opposed to the Pietists' requirement of public profession of Christian belief, and to their maneuvering for political and academic influence, but he retained something of the spirit of early Pietism in his emphasis on good life-conduct and character as fundamental to religion.

In what follows I will compare Kant and Quakerism on the role of religious communities, theological claims, and religious experience.

How Far Does the Religious Society of Friends Exemplify Kant's Ideal of an “Ethical Community”?

Let me start with the externals, namely, churches and religious groups as social institutions. Kant addresses these issues in Parts Three and Four of *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. He was very minimalist about the content of “pure religious faith” (as we shall see in the next section), yet he saw an ongoing need for institutional religion to help transform human individuals and society in the right direction. Indeed, he held that human beings

have a *duty* to join an “ethical community” under laws of virtue, seen as divine commands (R 94–99).

But Kant’s concept of an ethical community is an ideal; particular churches or other religious communities only imperfectly approximate to it. For him, a “true (visible) church is one that displays the (moral) kingdom of God on earth inasmuch as the latter can be realized through human beings.” Such a church will be founded on universal, a priori, moral principles; it will be “cleansed of the nonsense of superstition and the madness of enthusiasm”; its constitution will be “neither *monarchical* (under a pope or patriarch), nor *aristocratic* (under bishops and prelates), nor *democratic* (as of sectarian *illuminati*); rather, it will be more like “a household (a family) under a common though invisible moral father” (R 100–102). Allen Wood has suggested that a better model for it is the relationship of friendship, “though extended beyond the confines of two individuals to a community that is ultimately to encompass the entire human race.”³

The constitution and practice of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain seems pretty close to Kant’s requirements. It makes no appeal to authoritative revelation or miracles and has no rituals (unless the practice of meeting for an hour of silence counts as a ritual) or sacraments (though there are procedures for admission into membership, and for weddings and funerals). And no ministers or pastors are appointed—it is open to anyone to speak spontaneously (to “minister”) in the otherwise silent meetings. Members are appointed to take on certain responsibilities, as Elders, Overseers, and Clerks, but these are rotating positions, and there is no such thing as ordination for life. Quakers can thus be said to take literally “the priesthood of all believers.” Whether they can be said to be cleansed of “the madness of enthusiasm” or of “sectarian *illuminati*” (those who claim to be directly illumined by God) is a moot point—to be discussed in the third section. Kant might well have applied these disparaging labels to George Fox and other early Quakers, who claimed inspiration by “the inner Light”; but present-day British Quakers tend to be very sober in their deportment, and modest in their claims!

Kant distinguished between his notion of a “universal church” founded on plain rational faith, and the “ecclesiastical” or “historical faiths,” that is, the various religious traditions of the world (including the non-Christian religions). But he admitted that “due to a peculiar weakness of human nature, pure faith can never be relied upon as much as it deserves, that is, [enough] to found a Church on it alone” (R 103). A church “needs a public form of obligation, some ecclesiastical form that depends on experiential conditions and is intrinsically contingent” (105, 109, 133, 192). So “ecclesiastical faith naturally precedes pure religious faith” (106)—that is, historically, but philosophically it is the other way round.

Thus Kant says “there is only *one* (true) *religion*; but there can be several kinds of *faith*” (R 108), “different and equally good forms” of church, differing in what is inessential (168, 175n). He envisaged that the historical faiths can

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become conscious of their contingency and gradually transform themselves closer to pure religious faith (115): “The leading-string of holy tradition, with its appendages, its statutes and observances, which in its time did good service, becomes bit by bit dispensable,” and “the degrading distinction between laity and clergy ceases” (121–122).

Quakers have their own idiosyncrasies (and terminology) arising from their history, but perhaps their practice can be seen as closer to Kant's “pure religious faith” than that of many Christian churches or non-Christian religions. A statement from London Yearly Meeting in 1928 expresses the spirit of Quaker “Meetings for Worship”:

In silence, without rite or symbol, we have known the spirit of Christ so convincingly present in our quiet meetings that his grace dispels our faithlessness, our unwillingness, our fears, and sets our hearts aflame with the joy of adoration. We have felt the power of the Spirit renewing and recreating our love and friendship for all our fellows. This is our Eucharist and our Communion.⁴

In Kant's view, the final purpose of all historical faiths, with their claimed revelations and holy books, is “to make better human beings”; so such faiths—including the Christian revelation that, as he puts it, “we happen to have”—should be interpreted in a way that is consistent with “the universal practical rules of a pure religion of reason” (R 110, and cf. 162, 181–182). He says (patronizingly?) that the doctrine of revelation can be cherished as a means for presenting natural religion to “the ignorant” (165), and he suggests that the sacred scriptures should be interpreted as expressing moral truths about the human condition, even if this is not their literal meaning (83–84, 110).

George Fox and the Quakers of the following centuries quoted the Bible and thought of themselves as Christians, albeit of an unorthodox kind (and like other “heretics,” they were sometimes persecuted). But now the relation of most Quakers to “the biblical revelation” has become looser: A&Q4 says that “The Religious Society of Friends is rooted in Christianity and has always found inspiration in the life and teachings of Jesus,”⁵ but there is no mention of the doctrine of incarnation. The Old and New Testaments are still looked to as one source of illumination, but they are not seen as uniquely authoritative: A&Q5 tells Quakers to “remember the importance of the Bible, the writings of Friends and all writings which reveal the ways of God” (note how all three are packaged together in one sentence). A&Q7 reads: “There is inspiration to be found all around us, in the natural world, in the sciences and arts, in our work and friendships, in our sorrows as well as in our joys. Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?” This openness of approach makes it easier for Quakers to empathize with other religions, and A&Q6 recommends this: “While remaining faithful to Quaker insights, try to enter imaginatively into the life and witness of other communities of faith.”

The two centuries since Kant's time cannot be said to show any unam-

biguous progress toward the universal, rational kind of religion he envisioned. Indeed, the persistence and resurgence of fundamentalism in several world religions would have pained him. He himself noted pessimistically that people's heads "filled with dogmas of faith, have been made almost incapable of receiving the religion of reason" (R 162). But a spiritual searching for new forms of religious or quasi-religious faith and practice has also been manifest, both in long-established groups such as the Quakers and the Unitarians and in a variety of new religious movements. Kant would not, I think, give up hope.

How Far Do the Quakers Agree with Kant on the Role of Theology?

Although Kant criticized the three main ways of trying to prove the existence of God (in the Dialectic of the first *Critique*), he famously said his purpose was "to deny knowledge to make room for faith" (in the Preface to the second edition, at Bxxx).⁶ He proposes to put religious belief on a practical rather than a theoretical basis (see the Canon of the first *Critique*, the Dialectic of the second, and sections 85–91 of the third). In his late work, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant deals most fully with religious questions. Here he treats of good and evil in human nature, forgiveness, justification and grace, scripture, revelation and history, religious mysteries, prayer, and the role of churches, ritual, and priests. His language is technical, his sentences are often tortuous, and he adds footnotes of monstrous size—but he is dealing with profound issues in an original, thought-provoking manner.

Kant's approach to religion is through morality: he said, "the concept of God is one which belongs originally not to physics, i.e., to speculative reason, but to morals" (CPrR 140). He defines religion as the recognition of all our duties as divine commands (129; R 153–154). But it is not clear what that means—in particular how we are to interpret that rather crucial little word "as."

In the Preface to the first edition of *Religion* Kant starts out by saying "morality in no way needs religion" (R 3), yet a few pages later he says, "morality inevitably leads to religion" (7); this seems inconsistent at first sight. However, the thought behind the first sentence is that we can know what our moral duties are without appeal to any idea of God, and that we can and should be motivated to fulfill them purely by the thought that they are indeed our duties (and not by any idea of divine rewards or punishments). In contrast, Kant's thought behind the second sentence is that we need to be able to *hope* that doing our duties will in the long run tend to promote "the highest good"—that is, the happiness of human beings in proportion to their virtue—and that this can only be brought about by God (see CPrR 124ff.).⁷

Explaining this in R 5, Kant says we have a "natural need, which would otherwise be a hindrance to moral resolve, to think for all our doings and nondoings taken as a whole some sort of ultimate end." Although people

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occasionally do the dutiful thing even when there is no apparent hope of its leading to any good results—for instance, risking death by defying a tyrant's command to give false testimony against a colleague—such Stoical heroism is too much to expect of human nature in general. We need to have some faith that people's doing what morality requires will, in the larger scheme of things, tend toward the highest good—that is, complete human fulfillment in accordance with virtue. Kant thus talks of “the combination, which we cannot do without, of the purposiveness deriving from freedom and the purposiveness deriving from nature” (R 5)—by this, I take it, he means our faith that being moral is not ultimately pointless makes some demand on the wider nature of the world; it presupposes some hope that the highest good is possible.

At R 7 Kant contrasts *respect* for the moral law with the attitude of *worship* for the object of religion (“the highest cause that brings this [moral] law to fruition”), and in the lengthy footnote at R 6–7 he says human beings seek something they can *love*, whereas the moral law inspires only *respect*. His point seems to be that if we are to find the power to live up to the demands of morality, we need to relate ourselves to something more than the moral demands themselves, in a way that involves more than just moral attitudes or beliefs.⁸

The orthodox thing to say, of course, is that we need God's salvation. But what exactly is Kant's attitude to talk of God? In *Religion* he says (in another of his gargantuan footnotes) that practical moral faith “needs only *the idea of God* . . . without pretending to secure objective reality for it through theoretical cognition. Subjectively, the *minimum* of cognition (it is possible that there is a God) must alone suffice for what can be made the duty of every human being” (R 153–154n). Apparently, then, all that is needed is belief that God *may* exist: only atheism is ruled out. In the end, the Kantian “minimum of cognition” required for moral faith seems to amount only to a belief that in some way or other (whether by the power and goodness of God as traditionally conceived, or in some other way) some degree of progress toward the highest good is possible.⁹

Quakerism has not usually involved such highly intellectual inquiry into the philosophical foundations of moral or religious faith. But it has a corresponding emphasis on the practical rather than theoretical character of religion. Quakers have traditionally opposed the orthodox tendency to formulate the essentials of faith in the articles of a creed, whose acceptance is made a condition of membership. *Advices and Queries* carries some authority for Quakers, but it is basically an expression of Quaker spirituality, practices, and ethics, rather than a set of propositional beliefs. Indeed, A&Q2 enjoins us to “remember that Christianity is not a notion but a way.” Quakers, like Kant, assert the fundamental importance of good life-conduct; but they emphasize how this depends on spiritual experience, traditionally described as experience of God, or the spirit of Christ, or the holy Spirit (all these terms are used in the first few paragraphs of A&Q). (I will explore how much of a difference from Kant this involves in the next section.)

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The practical nature of Quaker spirituality is expressed in a paragraph by Harvey Gillman in 1988 that can perhaps be seen as a modern version of Pietism:

For a Quaker, religion is not an external activity, concerning a special “holy” part of the self. It is an openness to the world in the here and now with the whole of the self. If this is not simply a pious commonplace, it must take into account the whole of our humanity: our attitudes to other human beings in our most intimate as well as social and political relationships. It must also take account of our life in the world around us, the way we live, the way we treat animals and the environment. In short, to put it in traditional language, there is no part of ourselves and of our relationships where God is not present.¹⁰

The Quaker objection to creeds is explained in a statement of 1917:

We do not in the least deprecate the attempt, which must be made, since man is a rational being, to formulate intellectually the ideas which are implicit in religious experience . . . But it should always be recognised that all such attempts are provisional, and can never be assumed to possess the finality of ultimate truth . . . Among the dangers of formulated statements of belief are these:

- (a) They tend to crystallize thought on matters that will always be beyond any final embodiment in human language
- (b) They fetter the search for truth and for its more adequate expression and
- (c) They set up a fence which tends to keep out of the Christian fold many sincere and seeking souls who would gladly enter it.¹¹

Note how closely clause (a) and (b) relate to Kant’s views that theological claims lie beyond the limits of human knowledge, that all our cognition of God is merely symbolic (CJ 351–354, see also 456–457), and that our very conception of God is “always in danger of being thought by us anthropomorphically and hence in a manner often directly prejudicial to our ethical principles” (R 182–183). Clause (c) can also be related to Kant’s view that the ecclesiastical faiths add various nonessentials to the pure religion of reason, for it sounds as if the Quakers who wrote this piece in 1917 wanted to use the label “Christian” in such an inclusive way as to make it more like Kant’s pure rational faith than a particular ecclesiastical faith.

A more positive defense of Quaker practical belief was written by the astronomer Arthur Eddington in 1929:

Rejection of creed is not inconsistent with being possessed by a living belief. We have no creed in science, but we are not lukewarm in our beliefs. The belief is not that all the knowledge of the universe that we hold so enthusiastically will survive in the letter; but a sureness that we are on the road . . . So too in religion we are repelled by that confident theological doctrine which has settled for all generations just how the spiritual world is worked; but we need not turn aside from the measure of light that comes into our

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experience showing us a Way . . . There is a kind of sureness that is very different from cocksureness.¹²

In its confidence in experiential method rather than doctrine, and its repudiation of “cocksureness,” this is very much in the spirit of Kant’s rejection of theoretical knowledge of metaphysical theology in favor of practical moral faith, involving a measured degree of hope.

But what about the specifically Christian conception of Jesus Christ as Divine Savior? Part Two of Kant’s *Religion* is entitled “Concerning the battle of the good against the evil principle for dominion over the human being.” He is quite explicit that the New Testament talk of wrestling against principalities, powers, evil spirits, or Satan should be understood in a purely symbolic sense, as a “vivid mode of representing things, apparently also the only one at the time suited to the common people” (R 83):

This expression [“an evil spirit”] does not appear to be intended to extend our cognition beyond the world of the senses but only to make intuitive, *for practical use*, the concept of something unfathomable [i.e., the tendency to evil in human nature]. It is at any rate all the same to us, so far as this practical use is concerned, whether we locate the tempter simply in ourselves, or also outside us. (59–60)

At R 69 Kant offers a similar practical interpretation of the notions of heaven and hell as representations powerful enough to rouse humanity to good, with no need to take them objectively. We might protest that the texts themselves, when interpreted in terms of what we know (or think we know) about the concepts and beliefs of first-century Christians, are indeed “intended to extend our cognition beyond the world of the senses”—to supernatural powers of evil, and to everlasting bliss or torment in a life after death. But Kant’s principle of biblical interpretation is to try to “find a meaning in Scripture in harmony with the *most holy* teachings of reason” (83–84), even if that is not the literal, historical meaning (66–67, 110).

Kant describes Christ as “the personified idea of the good principle” and thus touches on the central Christian doctrine of incarnation. Some of what he says suggests an equally symbolic interpretation of it:

[The] ideal of moral perfection . . . is presented to us by reason for emulation . . . But, precisely because we are not its authors but the idea has rather established itself in the human being without our comprehending how human nature could have even been receptive of it, it is better to say that that *prototype* has *come down* to us from heaven, that it has taken up humanity. (R 61)

This makes it sound as if incarnation, for Kant, is a figure of speech rather than a claim to metaphysical reality. However, he goes on to say:

Not that we would thereby absolutely deny that he might indeed also be a supernaturally begotten human being. But from a practical point of view

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any such presupposition is of no benefit to us, since the prototype which we see embodied in this apparition must be sought in us as well. (63–64)

Kant's practical point is that "there is no need . . . of any example from experience to make the idea of a human being morally pleasing to God a model to us; the idea is present as model already in our reason" (62).

In a similar way, Quakers have not insisted on the doctrine of incarnation—the metaphysical identification of Jesus with God, or at least with one Person of the Trinitarian Godhead. Consider this statement by L. Hugh Doncaster in 1972:

The heart of the Quaker message does not lie in a doctrine expressed in abstract terms, but in an experience of power and grace, known in our hearts and also related to the structure of the universe; also known individually and recognised as belonging to all. At the same time this universal spirit is focused and made personal in Jesus in a way which makes it appropriate to speak of the Universal Light as the Light of Christ.¹³

This talk of "the light of Christ" or "the Christ within" goes back to the beginning of Quakerism by George Fox:

Now the Lord God has opened to me by his invisible power how that every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ . . . This I saw in the pure openings of the Light, without the help of any man, neither did I then know where to find it in the Scriptures, though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it. For I saw in that Light and Spirit, which was before Scripture was given forth.¹⁴

The practical rather than theoretical importance of Jesus is emphasized by Kathleen Lonsdale in 1967:

To me, being a Christian is a particular way of life, not the unquestioning acceptance of a particular system of theology, not belief in the literal truth of the Virgin birth, or the Resurrection and Ascension, but being the kind of person that Jesus wanted his followers to be and doing the things he told them to do . . . Nor, it seems to me, can you live a Christian life unless, like Jesus, you believe in the power of goodness, of justice, or mercy and of love.¹⁵

A spiritual rather than metaphysical interpretation of the resurrection is offered by S. Jocelyn Burnell (another astronomer!) in 1989:

The resurrection, however literally or otherwise we interpret it, demonstrates the power of God, to bring life out of brokenness; not just to take the hurt out of brokenness but to add something to the world. It helps us to sense the usefulness, the possible meaning in our suffering, and to turn it into a gift.¹⁶

What then of sin and salvation? Kant presented his version of the doctrine of original sin in his account of the "radical evil" in human nature in the First Part of the *Religion*: He says: "there is in the human being a natural propensity to evil; and this propensity itself is morally evil"; it consists in our constant

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tendency to prefer our own self-interest to our moral duties: "This evil is *radical*, since it corrupts the grounds of all maxims; as natural propensity, it is not to be *extirpated* through human force" (R 37).

Quakers have not been keen on the notion of original sin. Their favorite phrase, "that of God in every person" (derived from Fox), is sometimes taken to assert the innate goodness of human nature, but it is surely better interpreted as implying that we all have a *potential* for good (we are "made in the image of God," as Genesis puts it). And this is perfectly compatible with saying we also have a potential for evil, and even a tendency toward it, as Kant said. Francis H. Knight in 1945 expressed a sense of falling short of our calling:

I am conscious of a power of choice, of a better and a worse. This "ought" is my insignia of personality. Directly I admit that my life might be better than it is I have a sense of failure and feel a need of help from something or someone outside myself. This sense and this need are to me the meanings of the terms "sense of sin" and "need of salvation."¹⁷

Kant developed a conception of moral transformation that he argues is consistent with the Christian account of salvation: "How it is possible that a naturally evil human being should make himself into a good human being surpasses every concept of ours" (R 44–45). We need a fundamental transformation of mind, and this ultimately depends on "supernatural cooperation"—that is, divine grace:

[T]he command that we *ought* to become better human beings still resounds unabated in our souls; consequently, we must also be capable of it, even if what we can do is of itself insufficient and, by virtue of it, we make ourselves receptive to a higher assistance inscrutable to us. (45)

[T]hat a human being should become not merely *legally* good, but *morally* good (pleasing to God) . . . cannot be effected through gradual *reform* but must rather be effected through a *revolution* in the disposition of the human being . . . so a "new man" can come about only through a kind of rebirth . . . and a change of heart. (47)

Despite this use of Scriptural language, Kant does not subscribe to an evangelical (or Pietist!) account of God's saving work (see his discussion in CF 54–59). His position is, epistemologically, that we cannot know any such transcendent claim, and morally, that we should not rely on God to transform us without any effort on our part:

According to moral religion . . . it is a fundamental principle that, to become a better human being, everyone must do as much as it is in his powers to do; and only then . . . can he hope that what does not lie in his power will be made good by cooperation from above. (R 51–52)

In a later passage Kant writes: "true religion is not to be placed in the knowledge or the profession of what God does or has done for our salvation, but in what we must do to become worthy of it" (133). Yet he admits there are

mysteries here that we cannot understand (142–144). We may hope for divine grace, but it is an illusion to think we can distinguish the effects of grace from those of nature—that is, human virtue (45, 52–53, 174, 191)—for we are prone to self-deception, most especially in our supposed self-knowledge (51, 63, 68). And we cannot achieve grace through any kind of religious cult or ritual, for the very idea of a “means of grace,” a technique for achieving holiness, is self-contradictory (51, 174, 192–200).

An account of the required change of heart, also close to the words of the New Testament but concentrating on spiritual change rather than any theological theory of atonement, was given by John Wilhelm Rountree in 1904:

In Jesus, in his life and his death upon the cross, we are shown the nature of God and the possibilities that are within our reach. We are shown the world as the Father sees it, are called to live in harmony with his will and purpose, to hate the sins that made him mourn, to scale the barrier of sin and discover that the way of penitence lies open and direct to the Fatherly heart. No legal bargain, but a spiritual conflict, and inward change, the rejection of the living death of sin, the choice of new birth, of the purified self, the conversion from a low and earthly to a high and spiritual standard of life—here you have the practical conditions of salvation.¹⁸

Quakers up to the time of Rountree have used some Christian language, but in a somewhat unorthodox way. In the late twentieth century, however, British Quakerism became so “liberal” that some controversy has developed between those who prefer to think of themselves as definitely Christian, and those who call themselves “universalists.” Pam Lunn expressed this in 1990:

Within the Society of Friends we have our own problems with the traditional language of Christian spirituality . . . There are those who can comfortably talk in Christian language, because they experience it deeply as expressing truth and reality as they perceive it. For them it is not “just a language”; it is the truth . . . There are those who just cannot use that language at all, because for them it precisely does not express their deepest truths, and may in fact be felt to deny or even violate them . . . So they must grapple with the equal inadequacy of contemporary language to express the depths of their searching.¹⁹

Compare this with Kant’s statement that our concept of God is “always in danger of being thought by us anthropomorphically and hence in a manner often directly prejudicial to our ethical principles” (R 182–183). So far, the fit between Kant’s approach to religion and Quakerism appears to be very close.²⁰ The Kantian practical philosophy offers a combination of social hope for gradual human enlightenment and emancipation in the progress of history and culture, with a religious viewpoint that sees our ultimate hope in the transformation of our hearts—something beyond our knowledge that we attribute to divine grace.²¹ With such a combination of nondogmatic spirituality and social commitment Quakers can heartily agree.

How Far Do Kant and Quakers Differ on the Possibility of Religious Experience?

Quakers may appear to differ sharply from Kant on one remaining issue. Like many other Enlightenment thinkers Kant expressed hostility to “enthusiasm”; by this he meant the claims made by various religious believers to have direct experiential knowledge of God. In *Religion* he asserts:

[A] delusion is called enthusiastic when the imagined means themselves, being supersensible, are not within the human being's power . . . [T]his feeling of the immediate presence of the highest being, and the distinguishing of it from any other, even from the moral feeling, would constitute the receptivity of an intuition for which there is no sense [faculty] in human nature. (R 175)

“Intuition” is the traditional (though questionable) English translation of Kant's word *Anschauung*, meaning perceptual or quasi-perceptual awareness. So Kant here rules out any direct, quasi-perceptual, experience of God. This view is confirmed in some of his last publications:

[W]e would have to prove that we have had a supernatural experience, and this is a contradiction in terms. The most that could be granted is that the human being has experienced a change in himself (new and better volitions, for example) which he does not know how to explain except by a miracle and so by something supernatural . . . To claim that we *feel* as such the immediate influence of God is self-contradictory, because the idea of God lies only in reason. (CF 57–58)

[T]he question is whether wisdom is *infused* into a person from above (by inspiration) or its height is *scaled* from below through the inner power of his practical reason. He who asserts the former, as a passive means of cognition, is thinking of a chimaera—the possibility of a *supersensible experience* which is a direct self-contradiction (representing the transcendent as immanent).²²

Here the claim is not just that human nature does not as a matter of fact contain any faculty for experience of the transcendent, but that it is logically impossible.

Yet the *Quaker Advices and Queries* tells its readers to “treasure your experience of God, however it comes to you” (A&Q2), to “set aside times of quiet for openness to the Holy Spirit,” and to “find a way into silence which allows us to deepen our awareness of the divine” (A&Q3). Moreover, a Quaker meeting is supposed to enable a *collective* experience of the divine: “when we join with others in expectant waiting we may discover a deeper sense of God's presence” (A&Q8). Thomas Kelly, an American Quaker philosopher of the first half of the twentieth century, gave a traditionally realist account of experience of God, saying that *this* is the evidence for the reality of God that Quakers

primarily appeal to,²³ and he interpreted the experience of a “gathered” Quaker meeting as a collective awareness of divine Presence, a group mystical experience.²⁴

Could Kant have a blind spot here? Could the great philosopher have missed something in the experience of many people, most of them not at all intellectual, like him? That is possible (even the greatest thinkers have their limitations). However, as is well known, there are deep disagreements and problems about the description of “religious experience.” Such experiences involve concepts of some sort, however vague. (There is no question of animals having religious experiences!) But the concepts involved tend to be very tradition-specific—much more so than the more mundane concepts of the material objects of human perception—and there is controversy (both within and between traditions) about the application of religious concepts to experience. Some of the disputes are “first-order,” between religious believers who share some elements of a tradition, but are not prepared to accept as veridical every “inspiration from God” that others may claim to have, as the long history of heresy-hunting and interreligious strife bears witness. But in reaction to such apparently unshakable disagreements, “second-order” philosophical problems are raised about what could ever count as experience of something transcendent, and skepticism about its very possibility is a common response (apparently exemplified by Kant).

However, we should realize that Kant does not deny—indeed, he affirms—that we have deeply significant experiences, in *some* sense of the rather ambiguous term “experience,” that involve awareness of something transcending factual knowledge of the world through perception and scientific method. A very famous passage in the Conclusion of the *Critique of Practical Reason* (CPrR 161) says: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence, the more often and more steadily one reflects on them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.*” A lesser-known passage expresses similar nature mysticism at the end of the youthful Kant’s early work presenting a scientific hypothesis about the origin of the solar system: “In the universal quiet of nature and in the tranquility of mind there speaks the hidden capacity for knowledge of the immortal soul in unspecific language and offers undeveloped concepts that can be grasped but not described.”²⁵

In the third *Critique* Kant philosophized at some length about our experience of the beautiful and the sublime, and some of what he says there invokes a transcendent dimension to aesthetic experience, especially his discussion of the sublime:

[N]othing that can be an object of the senses is to be called sublime. What happens is that our imagination strives to progress towards infinity, while our reason demands absolute totality as a real idea, and so the imagination, our power of estimating the magnitude of things in the world of sense, is

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inadequate to that idea. Yet this inadequacy itself is the arousal in us of the feeling that we have within ourselves a supersensible power. (CJ 250)

In a section entitled “Beauty as the Symbol of Morality” he writes, “the morally good is the *intelligible* that taste has in view,” and he goes on to say, mysteriously:

[Aesthetic] judgment finds itself referred to something that is both in the subject himself and outside him, something that is neither nature nor freedom and yet is linked with the basis of freedom, the supersensible, in which the theoretical and the practical power are in an unknown manner combined and joined into a unity. (CJ 353)

It is, of course, very tempting for the orthodox believer to identify this mysterious something with God. While denying that there can be experience *directly* of the transcendent, Kant finds certain experiences *suggestive* of something transcendent.

Another relevant aspect of Kant's treatment of this question of religious experience is that, officially, in his fundamental theory of knowledge presented in the first *Critique*, he reserves the term *Erfahrung* (standardly translated as “experience”) for empirical *knowledge*. He says the “raw material of sensible impressions” has to be worked up (by the mind) into “a cognition of objects that is called experience” (B1). In denying the possibility of experience of the transcendent, then, Kant can be taken as denying that there can be experiential *knowledge* of God—which fits, of course, with his denial of knowledge to make room for faith—and this is consistent with his allowing that there can be “experiences” (in another, noncognitive, sense of the word) that are somehow “of” God, or at least of something transcendent or “supersensible.”²⁶

By way of relief from Kant's heavy-handed philosophizing, let me quote a Quaker meditation on aesthetic experience, and its relation to God, written by Caroline C. Graveson in 1937:

There is a daily round for beauty as well as for goodness, a world of flowers and books and cinemas and clothes and manners as well as of mountains and masterpieces . . . God is in all beauty, not only in the natural beauty of earth and sky, but in all fitness of language and rhythm . . . in all fitness of line and colour and shade . . . in all fitness of sound and beat and measure . . . The quantity of God, so to speak, varies in the different examples, but His quality of beauty in fitness remains the same.²⁷

I suggest that what is meant here is that there can be an *indirect* experience of God through the experience of beauty. Graveson is not asserting that God is one item among others experienced as beautiful (not even a specially beautiful item!), but rather that all beauty, whether natural or manmade, can be seen as indirectly revelatory of God. In another passage Rufus Jones wrote in 1920:

[B]eauty has no function, no utility. Its value is intrinsic, not extrinsic. It is its own excuse for being. It greases no wheels, it bakes no puddings. It is a

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gift of sheer grace, a gratuitous largesse. It must imply behind things a Spirit that enjoys beauty for its own sake and floods the world everywhere with it. Wherever it can break through, it does break through, and our joy in it shows that we are in some sense kindred to the giver and revealer of it.²⁸

This way of putting it, however, suggests an implicit *argument* from the premise that we find and enjoy beauty in the world to a proposed explanation of its existence as brought about by a transcendent Spirit that also enjoys it. This is a quasi-scientific inference to the best explanation, and it invites corresponding skepticism about the quality of the proposed explanation. By contrast, the first passage—to me at least—suggests a way of feeling or thinking that is more immediately involved in the perception of beauty itself, a kind of *seeing-as* that is not a matter of inference, but something perhaps better expressed in nature poetry, such as that of Wordsworth or Gerard Manley Hopkins.²⁹

Let me try to approach this matter of indirect yet immediate experience of God from another and somewhat unexpected angle, namely, the Quaker method of conducting church business:

In our meetings for worship we seek through the stillness to know God's will for ourselves and for the gathered group. Our meetings for church affairs, in which we conduct our business, are also meetings for worship based on silence, and they carry the same expectation that God's guidance can be discerned if we are truly listening together and to each other, are not blinkered by preconceived opinions. It is this belief that God's will can be recognised through the discipline of silent waiting which distinguishes our decision-making process from the secular idea of consensus.³⁰

What is it "to know God's will" on a particular question? According to the obvious realist interpretation of these words, it is to know the desire or purpose of the omniscient and perfectly good supernatural Being. But how does this relate to our concept of the best thing (for me, or for us) to do in the situation, all things considered? For anyone who accepts the traditional conception of God, His will must necessarily be the best thing to do, since He is omniscient and perfectly good; and conversely the best thing to do must necessarily be His will, for the same reason.

How then is a believer to *find out* what is God's will on any matter? A traditional approach would be from the side of God: the believer may hope to receive some direct guidance from God Himself, either by a voice speaking audibly and publicly (as in Mark 9:7), or by an "inner voice" somehow identified as the speech of God in her own consciousness.³¹ Less directly, the believer may find guidance from some passage of Scripture regarded as divinely inspired, or from a leader or priest or pronouncement of a Church regarded as divinely authoritative.

But the believer can also approach questions of what to do from the side of ethics (and prudence), making his or her judgment about what is the best thing to do, in the light of all the considerations he or she is aware of (includ-

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ing, but not restricted to, “religious” sources). Given the above equivalence, the best thing to do must be God’s will, so surely one way of discerning God’s will is to judge, as carefully as one can, what is the best thing to do. What the Quaker business method adds to this thought is a certain kind of mental discipline, spending some time in collective silence, reminding ourselves that our own preconceptions may be limited, and preparing ourselves to be open to new light. (Perhaps this can be described as judging prayerfully as well as carefully.)

Unbelievers will not use theological concepts in their decision making; they will just talk of deciding what to do. Insofar as they think practical judgments have some objectivity, they can speak of trying to “discern” what is best to do in a situation. However, we can introduce a certain limited use of theological language from the ethical/prudential side, by stipulating that the phrase “God’s will” can be used as a designation for whatever the speaker judges is the best thing to do, all things considered.³² (This would be *one* way of interpreting Kant’s definition of religion as the recognition of all our duties as divine commands.) It can be construed as *not* really using the word “God” as a name (of a supernatural being about whom other things can be said), but merely using the phrase “God’s will” as an indivisible unit. Alternatively, it can be construed as using “God” as a name, but only within a traditional metaphor, a figure of speech (a “picture” in Wittgenstein’s sense),³³ a vivid but fanciful label for what, in literal truth, is just the best thing to do, judged by nontheological criteria. Both interpretations can be described as reductionist, and the latter is endorsed by David Boulton, a self-described “Quaker humanist”:

To seek “the will of God,” then, or “follow the leadings of the Spirit,” is *not* to suppose there is a “real” God or Spirit out there with a will of his (her? its?) own which will be revealed to those (especially in a Quaker meeting?) who open their minds to it. Do we not all recognise, in our heart of hearts, that this is a figure of speech, a powerful and imaginative way of expressing a commitment to a common search for what is right and best for all?³⁴

A middle way between reductionism and naive realism is suggested by an account of divine guidance by George Gorman in 1973:

I would hesitate to claim that I receive direct guidance from God—I do not hear a divine voice that tells me what to do. But I do have a sense that I am being drawn to take one course of action rather than another. The guidance, however, arises from a countless number of experiences, influences, attitudes and disciplines which I have accumulated over the years and upon which I have reflected. So certain types of action seem to be my natural response to particular circumstances. In them all the sense of the presence of God is real and immediate but it is not unmediated.³⁵

That last sentence especially is a remarkably Kantian statement for a Quaker! Gorman wants to say that the “sense of the presence of God” is real (and presumably that God Himself is in some sense real), though it does not consist

in the hearing of an outer or inner voice. In that sense, this experience of God's guidance is indirect. It is "not unmediated," Gorman says, for it operates—and is recognized to operate—through all the experience one has gained, including one's moral and religious education. But it can be "immediate" in that, at the time of decision, one can (optimistically and trustfully—but hopefully, not complacently) think of one's present response as formed (and informed) by God. Whether that is more than a "mere" figure of speech remains to be discussed.

What do Quakers have to say about "experience of God" other than practical guidance on what to do in particular situations? A&Q1 reads: "Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life." Here, as in Kant's definition of religion as interpreting one's moral duties as divine commands, the word "as" is used in an ambiguous way. Interestingly, the 1964 version of this advice (reprinted at QFP 26.01) sounded more committal: "Take heed . . . to the promptings of love and truth . . . *which are* the leadings of God" (emphasis added). Do we have to choose here between the reductionism of a merely symbolic interpretation and the naive realism that tries to locate God, or the voice of God, as one particular item within experience?

A passage by Rex Ambler (a Lecturer in Theology as well as a Quaker) may suggest a middle way:

[W]e should altogether stop talking about God as a being of some sort, an imaginable entity, whether male or female, personal or impersonal, and bring our language back to the experience and practice where it really belongs. God is part of a story we tell about ourselves in order to convey something of the depth and mystery and creative power that we experience among ourselves and that we are hoping to trust and act upon in the conduct of our lives. God is a metaphor for the kind of reality that cannot be talked about directly and literally, certainly not in scientific language, or in rational philosophy either. But it is not a metaphor that we absolutely need for experiencing and responding to the reality it is supposed to be referring to. It is after all only a word.³⁶

This may sound very reductionist, especially in that last throwaway line. But note that Ambler is saying there is a reality (of some sort) that talk of God is trying to express. However, a certain sloppiness exists here in the failure to distinguish God from the concept of God, and even from the word "God." (Dare one suggest—in the Friendliest possible way—that a Lecturer in Theology ought to do better?) I suggest rewriting this as follows:

The surface grammar of talk about God is reference to a being of some sort, an imaginable and perhaps experienceable entity—a disembodied (yet male!) person. But if we interpret this theological language in terms of our actual experience and practice we find that its depth grammar is rather

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different. The concept of God is part of a story or theory or interpretative scheme we tell in order to convey something of the depth and mystery and creative power that we experience among ourselves and in the universe and that we are hoping to trust and act upon in the conduct of our lives. The concept of God is a metaphor for this kind of reality, which cannot be talked about directly and literally, certainly not in scientific language, or in purely intellectual philosophy either. But it is not a metaphor that we absolutely need for experiencing and responding to the reality it is supposed to be referring to, for other traditions use different metaphors for the same purpose.

Still, what counts as “needing,” or *not* needing, a metaphor for a certain purpose needs examining. I have opened up more topics to explore than can be done in this essay, but I suggest that the combination of Kant and Quakers leads us in a promising direction, not merely in the philosophy of religion but in religion itself.

NOTES

1. Leslie Stevenson, “Kant’s Philosophy and Quakerism,” *The Friends’ Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (April 2002): 85–92.

2. See Ernst Cassirer, *Kant’s Life and Thought*, trans. James Haden (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1981), 16ff.; and Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 34n.

3. Allen W. Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 316.

4. QFP 26.15. I will use “QFP” to abbreviate *Quaker Faith and Practice*, the book of Christian discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, in the edition published by them in 1995.

5. I will use “A&Q” to abbreviate *Advices and Queries*, the nearest equivalent to a Quaker creed—except that it consists mainly of prescriptions and questions, rather than propositions. Extracts from it are often read out in Quaker Meetings for Worship. There are forty-two brief paragraphs, set out in section 1.02 of *Quaker Faith and Practice*, and also published as a separate booklet by the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain.

6. I have made a detailed study of Kant’s epistemological distinctions in “Opinion, Belief or Faith, and Knowledge,” in *Kantian Review* 7 (2003): 72–101.

7. I have critically discussed this argument in “Is There Any Hope for Kant’s Philosophy of Religion?” in *Akten des IX. Internationaler Kant Kongresses* (Berlin: Humboldt Universität, 2000).

8. John Hare has written a whole book about this gap between the moral demands on us and our natural capacities to live up to them: *The Moral Gap: Kantian Ethics, Human Limits, and God’s Assistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

9. Arguably, in order for moral resolution not to be undermined, we need to be able to hope only that some *progress* toward the highest good is possible. See Onora O’Neill, “Kant on Reason and Religion,” in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Value*, ed. G. B. Peterson, vol. 18 (1997), 267–308, and see also my paper cited in note 7. In the *Opus Postumum* (notes written in his old age) Kant may have been aware of the

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weakness of his practical argument for faith in God, when he wrote “Religion is conscientiousness . . . To have religion, the concept of God is not required (still less the postulate “There is a God”)” (OP 21:81).

10. QFP 20.20.

11. QFP 7.23.

12. QFP 27.24.

13. QFP 26.43.

14. George Fox, *Journal* (1648), quoted in QFP 26.42.

15. QFP 20.26.

16. QFP 26.56.

17. QFP 26.10.

18. QFP 26.49.

19. QFP 26.76.

20. Kant must have heard of the Quakers, as is shown by his inclusion of a letter from C. A. Wilmans at the end of Part One of *The Conflict of the Faculties* (CF 69–75). Wilmans mentions a group of people “called separatist but calling themselves *mystics*” who, he says, do not differ in religious principles from Quakers; moreover, he says: “if these people were philosophers they would be (pardon the term!) Kantians.” So I am not the first to see the affinities between Kantianism and Quakerism. However, Kant himself cautiously says (in a footnote at CF 69) that in publishing Wilmans’s letter he does not guarantee that his view coincides with Wilmans’s.

21. I have attempted a more rounded introductory presentation of Kant’s whole philosophy in Chapter 6 of *Ten Theories of Human Nature*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

22. From Kant’s Preface to Reinhold Bernhard Jachmann’s *Examination of the Kantian Philosophy of Religion* (1800), trans. Allen W. Wood, in *Kant, Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 441.

23. Thomas Kelly, *Reality of the Spiritual World and The Gathered Meeting* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1996), 16ff. Reprinted from *Reality of the Spiritual World* (Wallingford, Penn.: Pendle Hill Publications Pamphlet, 1944) and *The Gathered Meeting* (Philadelphia: Friends Tract Association, 1946).

24. Kelly, *Reality of the Spiritual World*, 53ff.

25. Conclusion of *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens*, trans. Stanley L. Jaki (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1981), 196. Some other quotations showing this “mystical” side of Kant’s extremely capacious mind are assembled by Stephen Palmquist, in Chapter X of *Kant’s Critical Religion: Volume Two of Kant’s System of Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

26. Confusingly, Kant does not always follow his own definitions. For instance, in between the sentences quoted above from *The Conflict of the Faculties* (CF 57), he writes: “But an experience which he cannot convince himself is actually an experience, since (as supernatural) it cannot be traced back to any rule in the nature of our understanding and established by it, is an interpretation of certain sensations that one does not know what to make of, not knowing whether they are elements in cognition and so have real objects or whether they are mere fancies.” Here the second use of “experience” must imply knowledge, whereas the first does not.

27. QFP 21.28.

28. QFP 26.32.

29. I have discussed “imaginative” discernment in Wordsworth toward the end of

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"Twelve Conceptions of the Imagination," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43, no. 3 (July 2003): 238–259.

30. QFP 3.02.

31. There are examples of the latter in QFP at 26.02 (George Fox), 26.04, 26.05. The Bible represents God as speaking to people, but the intended mode is often ambiguous.

32. A similar suggestion can be applied to the old-fashioned use of the phrase "act of God" in insurance contracts, to mean—presumably—very unusual natural events that are humanly unpredictable (but not necessarily miracles, actually *breaking* laws of nature).

33. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), 53ff.

34. David Boulton, *The Faith of a Quaker Humanist* (Torquay: Quaker Universalist Group, 1997), 14.

35. QFP 26.73.

36. Rex Ambler, *The End of Words: Issues in Contemporary Quaker Theology* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1994), 24–25.

twelve

Philosophers in the Public Square

A Religious Resolution of Kant's *Conflict*

Stephen R. Palmquist

*with an appendix coauthored by
Richard W. Mapplebeckpalmer*

On Retreat with Kant: Concord and Conflict in Philosophical Practice

In opposition to the common belief that philosophy is a discipline belonging solely in the university, where it can be safely insulated from influencing or being influenced by the way ordinary people live their lives, a movement has arisen over the past decade or so, commonly known as “Philosophical Practice.” Some trace its early organization back to 1992, when several French philosophers and friends casually met one Sunday morning in a Paris café to discuss an issue of mutual concern. A journalist, overhearing them planning a follow-up meeting and mistakenly thinking it would be open to the general public, announced it in the local press, and the first “Café Philo” was born. Soon the popularity of the weekly gatherings that began cropping up in cafés all over Paris and throughout France came to the attention of philosophers elsewhere, who had already been interested in practical ways of luring philosophy out of the Academy and back into the public square (where it began, in pre-Platonic Athens). Contacts were made between counselors who were already using philosophical ideas and methods to assist clients in overcoming personal problems, consultants who had already been hired by big businesses to assist them in thinking philosophically about various corporate problems,

and teachers who were already interested in minimizing current social problems by introducing “philosophy for children” into primary and secondary school curricula. Starting in 1995, annual conferences began to be held, where philosophers engaged in these and other nonacademic activities could share their ideas and encourage others to regard philosophy as more than just an academic discipline.

Soon after attending the Third International Conference on Philosophical Practice, in July 1997, I began exploring various ways of involving myself in philosophical activities outside the university. At that conference I read a paper pointing out that the psychologist Carl Jung was strongly influenced by Kant and arguing that certain Kantian ideas also could serve as useful counseling tools.¹ In addition to experimenting with this possibility in some volunteer counseling I did over the next few years, I started the Hong Kong Philosophy Café in 1999—an organization that has now grown to six semi-independent branches with a mailing list of over four hundred interested participants.² Meanwhile, in 1998 I had acquired a ten-acre parcel of forest nestled in the backwoods of Mendocino County, about 150 miles north of San Francisco, with the idea of setting up a philosophical retreat center—an idea that developed out of discussions I had with various participants attending the 1997 conference. In January 2001 the first CIPHER retreat took place in a newly completed house that had been built on the property.³

For a Kant scholar accustomed to working in a university setting, these new exploits have been both exciting and challenging. They have forced me to think deeply about whether (and if so, how) Kant’s ideas can be useful to ordinary laypersons. As a result, I have come to a new understanding of the false limitations philosophers put upon themselves when they buy into the assumption that philosophy should be tucked safely away in the inner recesses of the Academy. With the idea of testing the applicability and interest Kant’s ideas might have to the general public, I facilitated a one-day retreat in December 2001, intended as a way of coming to terms with the September 11th tragedy and the resulting war in Afghanistan that was then unfolding. Four local residents, all ordinary working people, none of whom had previous exposure to Kant, met with me for four intense, two-hour sessions of reading and discussion based on Kant’s essay *Perpetual Peace*. The success of the event was evident not only from the numerous insights that arose during our discussions, but also from the *concord* we five experienced, and came to hope for the world at large, as a result of considering Kant’s explanation of why war happens and his vision of the way political relations could some day do without it.

The success of that event (and other retreats) motivated me to plan a second retreat on Kant, this time offering scholars an opportunity to reflect in a nonacademic setting on a text where Kant appears to be less optimistic about the possibility (or even the desirability) of concord: *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Since the focus of my recent research on Kant had been in the area of the religious and theological implications of his philosophy, and since I was

already involved in the project of coediting the present collection of essays, a retreat discussing how Kant's *Conflict* offers important guidelines for interpreting his philosophy of religion seemed like a good idea. Four of the five participants in the retreat, held in mid-July 2002, subsequently submitted essays for this volume. As it turned out, however, our discussions focused as much on Kant's conception of what a philosopher should be, and on how the philosophy *faculty* of a university should relate to the rest of the university and (especially) to the general public, as on the specific details of Kant's philosophy of religion—if not more so.

In the second section of this essay, I provide a report on the discussions held at the July 2002 CIPHER retreat, entitled “Rethinking Kant's Philosophy of Religion.” This report does not identify the participants who expressed specific ideas, for in most cases the insights were mutual, arising spontaneously as a result of the concord that developed between us through the prolonged attention we were able to give, as a small group of new friends philosophizing together in a relaxed and noncombative setting, to Kant's text. In the third section I then take a step back from the focus on Kant as a topic discussed at philosophical retreats and summarize my overall strategy for interpreting Kant, explaining how and why it provides a strong basis for interpreting his philosophy of religion in an affirmative way. In the last section I argue that one of the best nonacademic professions for a Kantian philosopher to enter would be that of a pastor. The essay then concludes with an Appendix, coauthored by a pastor-philosopher who actually implements many of the ideas presented here.

Kant on the Philosopher's Responsibility to the General Public

In his last published work on religion, Part I of *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798), Kant provides numerous helpful clarifications of his previously published views on religion. He bases many of his arguments on a theory of the fundamental difference between the responsibilities philosophers and theologians have in their respective relationships to the government on one hand and to the general public on the other. In this respect, the main difference between philosophers and theologians, he argues, is that the latter are charged with the task of training one of the three “businessmen of the faculties” (i.e., *pastors*), whereas philosophers have no such responsibility to train public servants.⁴

Kant's theory of the difference between philosophers and theologians raises two fundamental questions for anyone interested in promoting a harmonious relationship between the disciplines of theology (and/or religion) and philosophy: (1) Do philosophers have *any* proper role as public servants, or are they necessarily confined to the university, where they serve merely as critics of the other three faculties? and (2) Would it be possible and/or desirable for a pastor, who presumably must don the cloak of the theology faculty, also to be a practicing philosopher in Kant's sense (i.e., one whose allegiance is to “bare

reason”)? Exploring how Kant answers the first question in *Conflict* will be the purpose of this section. After the third section outlines Kant’s general understanding of the relationship philosophy has to the higher faculty of theology and to the public practice of religion, we will be prepared to answer the second question in the final section.

Before looking at Kant’s views on the philosopher’s responsibility to the public, we must address the issue Kant raises in the Preface of *Conflict*, regarding his own readiness to comply with the deceased king’s demand that he remain silent on matters relating to religion. As is well known, the censor for the highly conservative king objected to the theology in Kant’s 1793 book, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, and ordered Kant to stop writing on religious matters. In his response Kant did not accept the charges; rather, he claimed his approach was designed to defend and promote the Christian religion.⁵ Nevertheless, he agreed not only to stop writing on religion, but even to stop speaking in public on any religious matter *as long as he remained the king’s servant*. Fortunately the king died before Kant did, and Kant argued that this freed him from his promise to remain silent. Kant was therefore able in good conscience to publish this important last work, containing his most mature reflections on religion and theology.⁶ Was Kant justified (when judged by the principles of his own philosophy) in taking this “easy way out” in his conflict with the government? Kant’s theory of the distinctive role of philosophers seems partially designed to exonerate him from any charge of cowardice: he was merely following his duty as the king’s loyal servant. However, as we shall see, this strategy does not succeed, when properly understood.

At the retreat we discerned four distinctive tiers or levels in Kant’s account of the philosopher’s role. The first and most general level is that occupied by the general public. By “public” Kant means anything outside both the university and the government that is potentially a concern for everyone—that is, anything that is open for discussion by all. Indeed, Kant’s term, *öffentlich* (“public”), has “open” (*öffen*) as its root meaning. University professors and students, like government officials, function as members of the public when they go about their daily lives. But when they carry out their official duties within the Academy, members of the higher faculties function as trainers of “public servants” and are therefore answerable to the government.

The second level is occupied by these public servants themselves—in Kant’s scheme the three types of “businessmen of the faculties” (pastors, lawyers, and doctors)—or, for that matter, by any professional whose area of expertise places him or her in a direct relationship with members of the general public. Since the role of good government is to care for the general well-being of the people, Kant argues that the government has a proper duty to exercise a certain degree of control over these professionals. Laws and guidelines are quite rightly instituted for the protection of the public against charlatans or incompetent practitioners. Kant states at one point that, in general, “people want to be *led*, that is . . . they want to be *duped*” (CF 31). Since most people

are susceptible to being deceived, the government's job should be to protect the general public as much as possible from being harmed. The more philosophically enlightened the general public becomes, the less strict these government controls will need to be.

In *Conflict* Kant connects the three higher faculties to the three principal desires of ordinary people: "being *happy* after death, having their *possessions* guaranteed by public laws . . . , and finally . . . looking forward to . . . health and a long life." The philosopher's message to the people ought to be that, in order for these wishes to be fulfilled, one should "live *righteously*, commit no *injustice*, and, by being *moderate* in his pleasures and patient in his illnesses, rely primarily on the self-help of nature." Unwilling to accept such strict demands, unenlightened people look to clergy, lawyers, and physicians for miraculous help, forgetting they have "been a *scoundrel* all [their] life, . . . *broken* the law, . . . and *abused* [their] physical powers" (CF 30).⁷ Since these motives are hardly ideal, they need to be regulated by any government that has the people's best interests in mind. Giving the philosophy faculty freedom to criticize everything proposed by these educators of the professions is the best means of "governing" or "patrolling" (*controlliren*) the higher faculties (28).⁸

The third level is made up of what Kant called the "higher faculties" (theology, law, and medicine)—or what we today would simply call "the academic community," excluding the philosophy faculty (and its intellectual offspring that form departments of their own nowadays).⁹ These faculties are distinctive because they *train* the professionals who then go out and "lead" the members of the public who, for one reason or another, do not wish (or are not able) to think for themselves on matters of faith, justice, and health. Kant argues, famously (or infamously), that the government has both a right and a responsibility to keep a watchful eye on any academics whose main function is to train public servants. For if these academics are out of line, they may lead the professionals astray, and this, in turn, could have a directly detrimental effect on the general public.

The philosophy faculty, by contrast, occupies its own distinct, fourth level precisely because it does not train any professionals who relate directly to the public. Instead, the academic philosopher's main task is to engage in *creative conflict* with members of the higher faculties. As such, Kant claimed the writings and speech of philosophers ought not to be of any concern to the government. (This means the censorship he had reluctantly cooperated with for the past four years had been inappropriate. Kant had willingly obeyed an unjust law.) During our discussion of these ideas at the retreat, I suddenly realized that Kant's four-tier theory includes one feature that is often overlooked, mainly because Kant himself does not emphasize it—though he does hint at it. That feature is that these tiers can be arranged either in a straight line, like levels or stories of a building, or in a circle. If Kant had in mind the latter arrangement, then, contrary to first impressions, *the philosophy faculty has both the right and the responsibility to engage in direct, uninhibited contact*

with the general public. What gives philosophers this right is that, in their engagement with the public, philosophers do not claim some special, “higher” knowledge; rather, they appeal to one and the same faculty, “publicly” using the same “cold reason” (*kalter Vernunft öffentlich*) that all human beings use when thinking (CF 33).

This can be confirmed by proposing an alternative way of picturing the relationships between the various “tiers” mentioned above, suggested by Kant’s practice of referring to philosophy as the “lower” faculty in relation to the “higher” faculties that train professionals. The “highness” of theology, law, and medicine connotes a royal calling, a direct link to the “high officials” of government. The “lowness” of philosophy, by contrast, connotes a direct link with the general public. *There are no professional philosophers.* Rather, the philosopher’s job is to convey to the general public the views being promoted by the higher faculties (as sanctioned by whatever is “politically correct” at the time) in a way that will enable those who are willing to think for themselves to make up their minds in an informed yet impartial manner. That is, the academic philosopher is (or should be) like the general public’s *spy*, strategically positioned at the heart of the university in order to collect information and serve as the public’s most reliable informant.

The problem is that academic philosophers nowadays *do* tend to regard themselves as forming a distinct profession (aside from being professional *teachers*). As a result, they often pay allegiance to university administrators in a manner not unlike the way Kant thought the members of the higher faculties ought properly to pay allegiance to the government, at least in their public pronouncements. (Kant thought all academics, whether in the higher or lower faculties, should be free to say whatever they wish, as long as they are speaking only to each other, not to the general public.) The very component of the university that ought to be its independent voice of conscience is all too often just a safe haven for half-witted thinkers to make a comfortable living. If philosophy teachers view themselves as public servants employed by the government to produce other professionals like themselves, then they are actually seeing themselves as members of what Kant called the “higher faculties” and would thereby be subject to government control in Kant’s scheme.

Kant’s argument boils down to this: in those cases where a government employs philosophers, as when they teach in a publicly funded university, they are serving a function not unlike the “loyal opposition” in a constitutional monarchy such as England. Good government depends on the presence of an opposing voice that is given total freedom to say what it deems best for each situation; and the same is true for professional education. The philosopher, in Kant’s scheme, is the proper person to serve this role, because philosophers answer only to the voice of reason. Academic philosophers who work in state-sponsored or private institutions are indirectly performing public service through the influence their research and teaching have on members of the higher faculties;¹⁰ nevertheless, they are not bound by the same restrictions as

those who perform *direct* public service, because of the special position they occupy as the “lower faculty.” This applies as much to philosophers who work within the confines of a university as it does to those who step outside the university and attempt to reason in a “free and open” manner, unencumbered by the fetters of grades and other limitations of the university context. Philosophical practitioners must be careful not to place themselves in “high places,” where their appeal to reason could be compromised by official (e.g., governmental or organizational) intervention.

In light of this interpretation of Kant’s position, Kant’s personal choice to abide by the will of the censor surely does not merit moral condemnation. That is, he was not doing anything that contradicted his own teachings on moral goodness. However, his decision is also not worthy of praise. For it lacked the very courage that Kant himself thought should be the hallmark of the true philosopher, the courage to stand up to officials (whether they be government or university based) and openly challenge rulings that are in error. Apparently he thought that in his case such a struggle would not be worth the effort. Perhaps he excused himself on the grounds of old age, reasoning that he could simply write what he wished to write on the topic and arrange to have it published posthumously, if he were to die before the king. Kant’s compliance, therefore, is nothing to be overly concerned about; but it is definitely nothing to hold up as an example for others to follow, especially since it fails to implement his own ideals regarding the philosopher’s responsibilities to the general public. Although Kant in his old age failed to exhibit the moral courage of Socrates, he cannot be accused of going to the opposite extreme and selling his soul to the devil in the manner of Faust.

The Perspectival Interpretation as a Basis for Interpreting Kant’s *Conflict*

In addition to discussing Kant’s views on the relationship between philosophers and the general public, participants at the July 2002 CIPHER retreat addressed a variety of more specific issues regarding the proper interpretation of Kant’s philosophy of religion, in light of the interpretive guidelines provided in *Conflict*. Rather than reporting on those details here, however, I shall now take a step back and look at the overall structure of Kant’s philosophical System in hopes of revealing its suitability to serve as a foundation for an affirmative approach to theology and religion.

The organization of *Conflict*, like that of most books Kant wrote after 1780, is determined by Kant’s deep belief that philosophy is at its best when it follows an “architectonic” approach.¹¹ By this he meant philosophers should seek to construct their arguments in an orderly way determined by reason itself, rather than following the merely random approach of collecting information from the “aggregate” we find in experience. Kant’s interpreters, especially those who adopt the traditional interpretation,¹² have almost universally

rejected this “art of constructing systems”¹³ as ludicrous, to the extent that any portion of Kant’s System that an interpreter fails to understand tends to be cast aside on the grounds that it was supposedly “only necessary because of the artificial requirements of Kant’s architectonic.”

The first and foremost aim of my work on Kant has been to demonstrate how mistaken this a priori rejection of architectonic reasoning is—at least, for any interpreter whose first aim is to understand Kant on his own terms. Without adopting the writer’s assumptions, an interpreter cannot hope to understand what the writer meant to convey, especially with a thinker as deep and complex as Kant. In this section I shall summarize how this trend can be countered by adopting precisely the opposite assumption regarding the relationship between Kant’s architectonic and the various conundrums in his main philosophical writings: where apparent contradictions or incoherencies arise, I attempt to discern how a *clearer* articulation of the architectonic can resolve the problem. This method enables us to see concord in the otherwise apparently confusing labyrinth of Kant’s System, and so also, as we shall see at the end of this section, in the disparate loose ends of the *Conflict* text.

Most interpreters would agree that the most fundamental presupposition of Kant’s entire philosophical System is the “Copernican” hypothesis: the claim that “we can know *a priori* of things only what we ourselves put into them” (CPR Bxviii). Yet very few are aware that this hypothesis is part and parcel in Kant’s mind of the assumption that philosophy must be architectonic. If philosophers must view objects of knowledge as conforming to the forms of thought imposed on objects by the knowing subject, and if these thought forms are by nature *logical*, then the resulting philosophical knowledge will obviously be expressed according to logically ordered patterns, artistically arranged around an idea of the whole—that is, they will display what Kant calls “architectonic unity.” This establishes what I call the overarching “Copernican Perspective” in Kant’s System, a Perspective that informs each *Critique* at the deepest level.¹⁴ Interpreters who fail to recognize that Kant presents this hypothesis not as “the final solution,” but as a *perspective* that can be extraordinarily useful for philosophers to adopt, invariably neglect the important fact that Kant does not regard it as exclusive; in particular, Kant *expects* nonphilosophical (e.g., scientific) knowledge to involve adopting the opposite Perspective, where the aggregate is given a position of priority instead. This perspectival openness should be kept in mind when we consider in the final section how Kantian philosophers can enter a profession usually reserved for theologically trained professionals.

Kant’s self-chosen name for his System was “Transcendental Philosophy,”¹⁵ so the Copernican (genuinely philosophical) Perspective is also called the “Transcendental Perspective.”¹⁶ But this “idea of the whole,”¹⁷ otherwise known as reason’s attempt to discern its own nature and limits, manifests itself in three distinct subject areas or “standpoints”: when we apply our minds to search for the ultimate limits of empirical (e.g., scientific) knowledge, we are

adopting the “theoretical standpoint,” where space, time, and the twelve categories define the limit of what we can know.¹⁸ Beyond this limit, the human mind naturally produces certain ideas—the three archetypal examples being God, freedom, and immortality—that must by their very nature remain unknowable. Despite being unknowable, Kant insists there are good, “heuristic” (or hypothetical) reasons for treating them (even in our theoretical reasoning) as if they relate to something real.

Kant’s reputation as a philosopher whose primary impetus in theology is negative comes mainly from his utter rejection of the traditional arguments for God’s existence in the *Critique of Pure Reason*—viewed by many interpreters as the proper starting point of Kant’s philosophy of religion.¹⁹ Yet Kant’s own understanding was that to make such arguments the starting point of theology is to adopt a sophistical approach that could never provide the proper foundations for a living religious faith. By proving the impossibility of *all* possible forms of theoretical argument, he believed he was guaranteeing, once and for all, that the atheist’s position can never be proved as theoretically valid.²⁰ For Kant, the negations of the theoretical standpoint on their own provide no foundation whatsoever for theology or religion, but only *prepare the ground* for constructing a genuinely affirmative foundation: no atheist can ever claim a religious person is being irrational by believing in God, since the question of God’s existence cannot be settled from this standpoint.

Although Kant criticizes “practical reason” *after* having criticized theoretical reason, he regards this new standpoint, based as it is on freedom as the “one fact” of reason, as having primacy over the theoretical. In the second *Critique*, Kant’s first purpose is to establish what makes an act morally good. This cannot, he argues, be determined by anything external to a human person, including the outcome of the action. Rather, it must be determined by the conformity of the person’s freely chosen motivating maxim(s) to the “moral law” that lies in the heart of every human person. Having explained how morality works, however, he goes on to consider *why* we should be moral, even though acting morally in this imperfect world does not always produce the happiness we think it should. Here Kant offers the first clear and explicit theological affirmation in what I regard as his “theocentric” philosophy:²¹ anyone who believes trying to be morally good is a rational approach to life is, by that very fact, acting *as if* God exists. In order for their beliefs to be consistent with their actions, such persons ought therefore to believe in God.²²

Kant’s third standpoint is often regarded as an afterthought by interpreters, yet Kant himself portrays it as constituting the crowning phase of his entire System: in the *Critique of Judgment* Kant argues that the opposite standpoints of nature (our causally determined, theoretical knowledge) and freedom (our self-determined, practical action) are *synthesized* by various forms of existential judgment. Most of his attention is given to examining how our judgments of beauty, sublimity, and natural purposiveness succeed in combining elements of both the theoretical and the practical standpoints, thereby demon-

strating that nature and freedom are, in fact, united in a greater whole in the context of real human experiences. In a lengthy Appendix, Kant explains in considerable detail how this provides the foundation for a “moral theology,” whereby God can be viewed not just as a deistic watchmaker, but as a *living God*, who can be encountered—albeit, symbolically—in just such forms of human experience as are examined earlier in the book.²³

That the affirmative aspects of Kant’s theology do not end here can be unambiguously discerned by any open-minded reader of two of Kant’s late works, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* and *Opus Postumum*.²⁴ The former is adequately discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 above, and in thoroughgoing detail throughout *Kant’s Critical Religion* (KCR),²⁵ so I shall not venture to give an account of the details here. The one point I shall make is that *Religion* is the book that best exemplifies Kant’s application of his twelve-fold architectonic (as determined by the table of categories in the first *Critique*) to the detailed organization of a whole book’s arguments. In particular, the four main “perspectives” governing the argument-flow within each *Critique* (i.e., the transcendental, logical, empirical, and hypothetical) are clearly implied by the very titles of the four books of *Religion*: radical evil establishes the transcendental conditions for religion; personal redemption adds the logical means of countering those limits to create meaning; social redemption through church structures gives religion real empirical power to combat evil; and correctly distinguishing between true and false ways of serving God puts believers in the proper hypothetical frame of mind for being good.²⁶

In the process of working out this philosophical defense of the rational conditions for the possibility of religion, Kant develops and applies a new and profoundly reforming theological hermeneutic, whereby all doctrines and rituals must be interpreted as moral symbols, either directly or indirectly, in order to be meaningful.²⁷ When the richness of Kant’s accomplishment is fully recognized in this way, the claim of traditional interpreters, that he was actually attempting to do away with religion by reducing it to nothing but morality, becomes almost unbelievably ludicrous.²⁸ Instead, we see Kant as insisting morality must be *raised* to the level of religion in order to become a feasible human endeavor at all. That is, without embracing religion at whatever level we find ourselves in our moral development, the gargantuan task of obeying the moral law would have to be given up as a lost cause.

Probably the most frequent criticism of Kant’s philosophy of religion—and this applies not only to the adherents of the traditional interpretation, but even to many who properly recognize the religious and theological affirmations Kant defended throughout his writings—is that his philosophy leaves no room whatsoever for *religious experience*.²⁹ Firestone’s reference to my method of interpretation as the “religious” approach is apt,³⁰ inasmuch as I deny this almost universally accepted claim. In Chapter II of KCR, I argue that Swedenborg’s writings served as the most profound catalyst for Kant’s development of the all-important Copernican Perspective, as well as for quite a few of the

revolutionary theories present in the first *Critique* yet mysteriously absent in Kant's writings prior to 1764. I demonstrate that Kant's way of dealing with Swedenborg followed the Critical approach that had been his natural way of philosophizing from the beginning:³¹ rather than rejecting Swedenborg's mystical claims outright, Kant argues that something real and even significant may have been happening to Swedenborg, but that his attempt to draw *knowledge* from those experiences was illegitimate. On this basis, I claim the entire Critical System was Kant's attempt to work out the details of this "Critical" (theoretically limited, yet open to practical significance) view of what mystical experience entails.

Part Four of KCR develops and defends this claim in three ways. First, I demonstrate by collecting passages from throughout Kant's works not only that he himself had experiences that could properly be called "mystical," but that he gave public witness to them in his writings. Second, I argue that Kant's *Opus Postumum* was meant to fill a "gap" in the architectonic of his System by accomplishing a double synthesis: on the one hand, to unite the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (the third book developing Kant's theoretical standpoint) with the opposing work, *Metaphysics of Morals* (the third book developing Kant's practical standpoint), and on the other, to unite the two opposing books in Kant's "judicial" standpoint (namely, *Critique of Judgment* and *Religion*) by giving them both a metaphysical expression. This "universal metaphysics" therefore had to deal with a wide spectrum of subjects; but I have demonstrated that Kant's approach, whether he is dealing with the mysterious ether that the science of his day believed underlies all natural phenomena or with the categorical imperative that our morality imposes on us, was *existential*. That is, his primary attention was on our *immediate experience*, and how that gives rise, at a secondary level, to all the machinations of Critical philosophy. This, and not some wild theory that Kant was a "mystic" in any traditional or fanatical sense of the word, is all I mean by claiming that Kant's entire philosophical System leads to an existential heart that can best be called a "Critical mysticism."

Keeping in mind this perspectival interpretation of Kant's philosophy and its affirmative religious and theological implications, let us now return to the *Conflict* text to see what new light can be shed on Kant's intentions therein. First and most obviously, we now can see the overall, threefold division of the book as a direct reflection of Kant's architectonic distinction between the three main standpoints of philosophy: theologians tend to overstep the boundaries of the theoretical standpoint in order to establish knowledge of God; lawyers tend to overstep the boundaries of the practical standpoint in order to determine what is legally right; and doctors tend to overstep the boundaries of the judicial standpoint in order to judge the cause of diseases and the best path back to health. That is, the three "higher faculties" of the university are a direct reflection of the three rational standpoints philosophers must critique when they adopt the Copernican/Transcendental Perspective. The latter, therefore, corre-

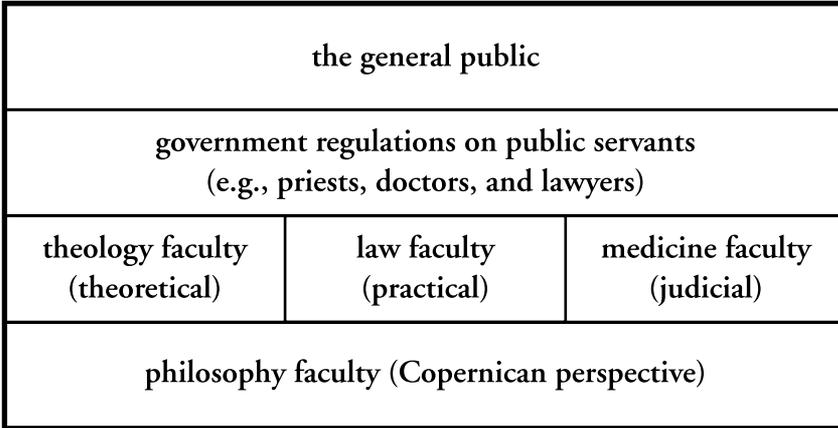


Figure 12.1.

sponds directly to the *lower* faculty of the university. Its job in Kant’s System is to “govern” (*controlliren*) the standpoints in exactly the same manner that the philosopher’s job in the university is to govern the pronouncements of those working in and for the other faculties. This lower faculty ought (and need) not be put under any governmental controls, because the government should be concerned only with those who adopt the Perspective of the general public—what I call the Empirical Perspective, making use of reason without first having subjected it to Critique. The higher faculties can be restricted by government regulations because they all adopt this fundamentally non-philosophical Perspective. They must adopt this Perspective if they are to train the professionals who will be directly leading the general public.

This brings us back to the question whether the philosopher has any legitimate reason to come into direct contact with the general public in Kant’s scheme. The diagrams shown here each relate Kant’s Perspective-plus-three-standpoints System to the higher-lower faculties distinction in *Conflict*, but in two radically different ways. Figure 12.1 could be called “the philosopher’s academic role in an unenlightened society”; for in any context where the general (nonacademic) public really does simply want to be duped, the philosopher’s only hope is to begin by trying to influence the “dupers” themselves, so they will minimize the irrational elements in their teachings and leadings. Figure 12.2, by contrast, could be called “the philosopher’s public role in an enlightened society,” for in any context where a significant portion of the public has become sufficiently self-examining (i.e., Critical) to be able to adopt the Copernican Perspective on their own, the philosopher has not only a right but a duty to step out into the public square and encourage them to do so. This, as I see it, is what has been happening for the past decade in the Philosophical Practice movement mentioned in the first section.

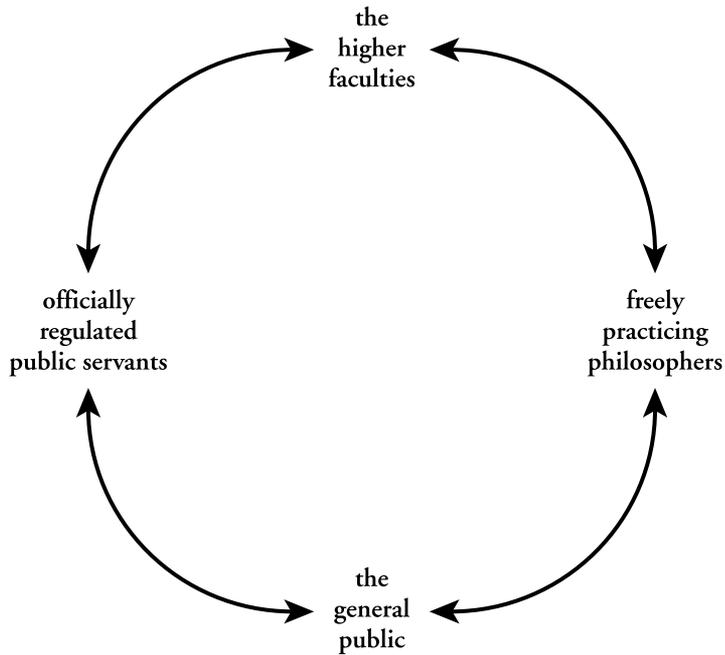


Figure 12.2.

Finally, we can now see the precise way this overview of Kant's System assists us in interpreting the diverse views on theology and religion portrayed in *Conflict*. Kant's understanding of the necessary conflict between philosophy and theology relates primarily (if not exclusively) to *academic* theology, viewed as a training ground for pastors, because of its demoralizing tendency to cater to the inclinations of the unenlightened public. Kant sees no necessary conflict, but rather a great deal of potential *concord*, between philosophy and *religion*, provided the latter is conceived in a properly enlightened manner. Indeed, Kant's willingness to affirm both theology and religion is in exact proportion to the extent of enlightenment that can be expected from the general public: he remains sharply critical of any theology and religious practice that caters to those who (whether consciously or unconsciously) still *want* to be "duped"; yet he becomes not only affirmative but filled with a profound hope in a future universal concord when referring to any theology and religion that caters to enlightened members of the general public. A philosopher boldly taking an active role in the realm of public religion could therefore make a significant impact. In the next section I shall explore the potential for practicing philosophy in a concord-oriented manner in a religious context.

The Kantian Pastor: Two Models for Philosophical Practice in Religion

Given the fact that theologians and philosophers often share a wide range of common intellectual interests, I am amazed that nobody (to my knowledge) in the Philosophical Practice movement has given attention to the possibility of practicing philosophy in a specifically religious context. As I argued in the first section, philosophy itself, not only by its nature as the “lower” (foundational) faculty of the university, but also by its appeal to a faculty (power) of the mind that is common to all human persons, cannot be a “profession” in its own right.³² The more philosophers around the world come to recognize that teaching is not the only profession philosophers can have without giving up their status as philosophers, the more enlightened the general public will become. If religion is indeed the central focus of Kant’s entire philosophical System (see note 21), an obvious alternative profession for Kantians would be the pastoral ministry. With this possibility in mind, our final question is How, if at all, is it possible for Kantian philosophers to become pastors?

Before offering some suggestions as to how best to answer this question, I shall introduce one further distinction, operating in *Religion* as well as in *Conflict*, between what we can call “ideal” religion and “real” religion. The former would consist of a group of people that fulfills all the requirements of Kant’s “pure moral faith” by meeting together under a simple common belief in a mysterious divine assistance, dispensing with all the historical trappings involved in defending specific religious dogmas and/or requiring members to participate in certain religious rituals in order to become well-pleasing to God. This is the form of religion Kant devotes most attention to describing, yet he readily admits that it is, at this stage of human development, little more than a hope we can hold and attempt to approach in our own imperfect ways.³³ Real human beings, as he repeatedly states, remain creatures of sensibility, influenced by our inclinations; as long as this is true, most people will settle for something less than ideal religion. One of the drawbacks of the traditional interpretation is that it fails to acknowledge the realistic, pragmatic strain in Kant’s writing on religion, where he allows for many forms of belief and practice that fall short of the ideal, provided they prompt people to move in the right direction.

With this distinction in mind, we can distinguish likewise between two ways a philosopher can play an active, positive role in a religious community. The first is to join and support a religious group that conforms as closely as possible to Kant’s *ideal*. Kant recognized that such examples can exist, for he includes an extended reference to one such group as an Appendix to *Conflict*—not insignificantly for my interpretation, a group that was known by the name “mystics.”³⁴ One of the best examples of such a religious organization nowadays is The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). Their guiding princi-

ples are surprisingly close to Kant's ideal:³⁵ no belief is required in any historical or doctrinal claims that would then be regarded as necessary for salvation; all officially sanctioned beliefs focus on enhancing the moral life of the members; in place of the rituals many religious believers regard as sanctioned by and therefore pleasing to God in and of themselves, Quakers merely sit in silent worship, allowing the spiritual influence of their corporate gathering to empower them to live better (and usually this means more self-examined) lives. The tradition is so close to Kant's ideal (see, e.g., Kant's definition of "religious illusion" in R 170) that, somewhat ironically, there is no *special* role left for the philosopher to perform. The philosopher who attends can encourage the group to follow a more rational, enlightened course in any corporate actions that are taken, but he or she can have no "professional position" in the group, because such positions simply do not exist. For this tradition strictly interprets Jesus' admonition that the leaders in his Kingdom of ideal religion must not "lord it over" each other³⁶ to mean no professional leadership (no paid pastor) should be employed.

The second option for a Kantian who wishes to make a difference in the religious world by bringing philosophy into the public square *does* involve the potential for taking up a professional role: one who feels called to exercise a positive, enlightening influence on ordinary churchgoers (most of whom will, as Kant observed, "want to be led") could become a pastor or priest. Preferably the Kantian philosopher-pastor should be *free* of any and all restraints imposed by hierarchically organized denominations. The most suitable church will therefore be independent, otherwise the freedom necessary to appeal first and foremost to the common reason of those who attend could be compromised by the need to obey the official statutes established by the denomination's theologians. Nevertheless, this is not the only possibility. Philosophical practitioners could become, for example, Catholic priests or Baptist ministers, provided they are willing to live with the conflict (inner and outer) that is likely to result from adopting the standpoints of both the philosophical (Kantian) theologian and the biblical (denominational) theologian. That is, the conflict between philosophy and theology experienced in the Academy (see the second section) is likely to be mirrored in the Kantian pastor's own mind and/or in his or her relationship with the church hierarchy. Since Kant believed such conflict is *healthy*, it should not prevent a Kantian from being a good pastor.

Kant provides numerous guidelines for how such a pastor can live and work in a church without inadvertently frustrating the philosophical goal of bringing enlightenment to the general public. Below I outline four basic guidelines for Kantian philosopher-pastors, based on a correlation between the topics of the four stages in Kant's system of rational religion and the four "principles of the invisible church" specified in Book III.³⁷ That these guidelines are likely to place the philosopher-pastor in a position of conflict with certain types of theologians will be evident to anyone familiar with the range of Christian theologies in circulation today. Yet in my experience they are largely

consistent with the doubts many thinking laypersons express about the very theologies their denomination tells them they are *supposed* to accept.

1. Avoid any interpretation of a doctrine or a ritual that would tend to lead people to believe they are not responsible for their own moral evil. As a corollary, discourage people's tendency to project their own evil onto others, especially the members of other religious traditions, for in doing so they contradict the first principle of the true church, *universality*.

2. Encourage a basic trust in divine assistance, but not in such a way that the participant is led to believe that God has done or will do everything, without any active participation on the part of the people. Although the latter interpretation of grace may be more attractive, it contradicts the second principle of the true church, *purity of moral motivation*.

3. Emphasize the supreme importance of love,³⁸ both toward other members of your own church, in order to establish a healthy moral community, and toward members of other traditions or no religious tradition at all, in order to maintain good relations with the wider community. No other religious law can *surpass* this one, not even a belief in the supreme importance of one's own scripture or tradition, for this would contradict the third principle of the true church, *freedom of relation*.

4. Use the beliefs and rituals in your tradition *only* as tools for promoting the goal stated in (3), never allowing them to be treated as ends in themselves. For to do the latter would be to base the community's religious life on statutes and habits that are by their very nature changeable, and this would contradict the fourth principle of the true church, the *unchangeableness of the constitution*.

If a philosopher-pastor employed in a hierarchical church is ever asked by church officials (or the denomination's theologians) to subordinate any of the above principles to a prudent maxim that has been handed down by tradition, he or she will be faced with an inner conflict. The pastor *as philosopher* should boldly stand up to the "higher" authority and defend the principle, but *as theologian*, should simply obey. While the Kantian could remain silent at this point (R 185–190), he or she must not pretend to believe anything that positively contradicts these basic rational principles. For to acquiesce in this way is to give up all the benefits that may arise out of a *creative conflict* with theology. The likelihood of and even the need for such a conflict is unlikely ever to pass away as long as the philosopher's Transcendental Perspective and the theologian's Empirical Perspective are seen as anything but complementary and mutually supporting opposites. The fact that an authoritative theologian or church official may not see the conflict in such a positive light should not prevent the philosopher from speaking out in the name of freedom, risking excommunication if necessary in order to "speak the truth in love."³⁹

Congregations that gather together around such essentially Kantian principles are likely to be relatively small, especially if they attempt to practice the ideal of a leaderless religious community. For as much as we would like to

believe we are living in an “enlightened” age, we are only (at best) a little further along than was the Europe of Kant’s day. Political events since September 11, 2001, show how far we still have to go before Kant’s vision of a “kingdom of ends” (his rational, moral interpretation of Jesus’ “kingdom of heaven”) becomes a widely accepted reality. Until such a time as philosophers are willing to take a more active role in public discourse, and above all in the nurturing of people’s religious dispositions through direct participation in church leadership, on both professional and nonprofessional levels, those religious leaders who have no philosophical training are likely to attract the largest crowds—and to resist philosophy’s creative influence on religion.

Appendix: A Pastor’s Reflections on Kantian Principles for Church Government

Kant described religious service as the celebration and nurture of a universal and ethical commonwealth under the guidance of God. In R 131–132 he states:

[I]f the seed of the true religious faith, as it is now being publicly sown in Christendom, though only by a few, is allowed more and more to grow unhindered, we may look for a continuous approximation to that church, eternally uniting all men, which constitutes the visible representation of an invisible kingdom of God on earth. For *Reason has freed itself*, in matters which by their nature ought to be moral and soul-improving, *from the weight of a faith* forever dependent upon the arbitrary will of the expositors, and has among true reverers of religion . . . universally laid down the following principles.

Here, as throughout *Religion*, Kant treats his vision as a realistic plan, applicable to real church congregations. In this Appendix a philosophically minded pastor of a traditional congregation—Grace North Church, in Berkeley, California—reflects on how Kant’s principles for true religion actually *work* in one particular community of faith.⁴⁰

According to Kant, freedom lies at the foundation of human morality. Yet we each compromise our freedom by allowing our choices to be governed by “weighty” inclinations instead of by the *lightness* of the moral law.⁴¹ As a result, we lose our balance and fall into the depths of sin, or what Kant called “radical evil.” The Bible uses metaphors such as slavery to describe the heavy burden we experience as a result. True religion, as a walk in the lightness of being, restores our freedom. Unlike a slave community, a true Church, in Kant’s view, comprises members who are free to choose the maxims that govern their own decisions (e.g., R 179).

Just as our present path (what we *ought* to be doing) always lies midway between the horizons of our past (what *is*, or has been) and future (what we

hope will be), so also Kant saw morality's immediate *vertical* intersection of our path as being what either balances us or throws us askew. When applying Kant's insights to our own congregations and religious practice, we should remember that Kant's vision of people living in a free moral community requires us to shave away centuries of distortion that have obscured the purity of Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of Heaven. All too much of the Gospel tradition's long history is the tale of how congregations have been *seduced* by empires and other power structures to become the very thing Jesus came to free us from.⁴² Like all true Protestants, Kant was primarily a Critical Catholic.⁴³ He protested against all that would make the catholic ("universal") community less than catholic. The prophetically Protestant contention is that local religious communities, together with their clergy, have been hijacked: hierarchical governments have monopolized the councils of the people that properly belong to each local neighborhood. They have made themselves deaf to the protests of those they have hijacked.

In the midst of these conflicting voices, Kant quietly tells us how free our life in the Spirit could really be. True religion, unlike sects, does not disconnect us from our fellow humans: *religio* "reconnects" souls to one another, *kata holou*, "according to the whole." In *Religion* Kant tells the perennial fourfold story of the soul's encounter with the one who, guiding his path, overcomes the impassable mountains by the lightness of being. While we are still mired in the dark heaviness of evil, we discover to our amazement the archetype⁴⁴ in our soul of a new and better order for human living. It resides already in our heart like a seed waiting for spring. As this inner power and focus for our will comes alive in our soul, we find ourselves turning toward it for enlightenment; it motivates us to live *freely* with others in "an association of human beings merely under the laws of virtue" (R 95).

National and denominational laws are necessarily coercive. But the community we seek can only be established *without coercion*. It is what Kant called, in contrast to all other societies, "an ethical commonwealth." "Woe," he wrote, "to the legislator who wishes to establish through force a *polity* directed to ethical ends!"⁴⁵ Only in a community of souls freely dedicated to the freedom and welfare of *all* their neighbors can an effective religious standpoint be established, let alone begin to operate. Once we come together in such a noncoercive yet ethical fellowship, the end of this sequence of experience, according to Kant, is the harvest of a free, joyous, and outgoing *service* to the world by every member of this truly free congregation.

As we have learned to rejoice in the light that shines in the darkness of our own soul, so we now, *in friendship* with a community of free souls, go forth to shine in the darkness of the world. Building such a network of congregations is a universal duty (R 89), "a duty which is *sui generis*, not of men toward men, but of the human race toward itself." As a prophetic minister of universal religion, preparing our various denominational traditions to undergo a com-

plete baptism, Kant has led us “bare” (*blossen*) to the font of grace. Within the catholic boundaries of bare reason, we may refresh our will to build a commonwealth that runs counter to the oppressions of society.

To convey Kant’s principles of church government to those who attend Grace North Church,⁴⁶ I use *virginity* as a metaphor for spiritual integrity (or *oneness*). It denotes the soul and those communities of souls who have learned to resist the weight of evil and submit only to what sets them free. *Chastity* is then understood as the political virtue of guarding the freedom and oneness of a virgin community through an emphasis on the *purity* of each person’s responsibility and moral agency. The biblical prophets used these metaphors to inspire a self-enslaved people to work for liberty in a context where the *upper* classes of the body politic had silenced the critical voices of the *lower* classes. Likewise, the preachers in the ecclesiastical establishment of Kant’s day were hardly listening to and nurturing the voices of a free people; perhaps this is why he argued for the necessity of a true church, yet chose not to attend a “visible church” himself.

In *Religion*, Kant allowed no substitute for the *uncoerced* coming together of morally motivated souls in a freely covenanted commitment to work together for the Kingdom of Heaven: “A Church . . . as the union of many, requires a *public* covenant.”⁴⁷ In the Congregational tradition of Grace North Church the obligation that ties us together is not Credal, but Covenantal. In order to be *unchangeable*, its free agreement must be grounded not in theological belief but in an act of commitment. The stories of Israel and Jesus are about fidelity to covenants undertaken freely, not submission to an ideology. Unlike most Christian traditions that are based on the global ideology of a theological creed, the Congregational tradition of ecclesiastical polity has a philosophical (practically rational) grounding in *local obligation*. In both Jesus and Kant we find this same emphasis on agreement as *acting together for a purpose*: to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven.⁴⁸

A religious covenant is an act of will whereby the covenanting parties agree to submit their will to the will of God.⁴⁹ Such covenants lay no ideology upon the local community. They simply bind us to start together from where we find ourselves in our local situation. Cults cast an illusion of global salvation that tends to devalue the local. They globalize by de-localizing. They offer “knowledge” in a way that excludes the life-giving unknown. Covenants, however, localize without needing to de-globalize. They recognize that the hard labor of building an ethical commonwealth cannot but involve a quest for justice, and justice requires honoring the global (the universal and unchangeable aspects of the Gospel) as well as the local (the purity and freedom of the congregation).

The Kingdom of Heaven cannot be achieved by violence or coercion. The way to it can only be governed peaceably. The nature of both the way and the end is therefore to gather friends. If a congregation be not governed by a spirit of friendship, it cannot be religious. A local community of grace is a

gathering of friends united by their mutual commitment to God. Although covenants are not creeds, they radiate faith and rich sets of beliefs that can be shared by all rational people. As local, they can be entered into by folk of any theological disposition. By refusing to submit to external coercion and choosing to fulfill our obligations as if they were divine commands, we enter a moral order of friendship where the free bond of love between the covenanted parties becomes the model for all human cooperation.

In contrast to the coercive ways of human monarchies, the “royal priesthood” of a pure community professes only to submit to the king who is crucified. For his Spirit speaks to us not of monopoly and tyranny, but of friendship and creativity. There is no coercion among friends. Like a true monarch, the pastor therefore represents the royal priestliness of every soul. Celibacy is the political virtue that governs the attitude of those entrusted with presiding over the people as they make their decisions. In a free and moral community every voice must be cherished and heard. But whoever heads the community must refrain from making decisions. He or she must be politically celibate. Without political celibacy, genuine priesthood is compromised and collapses into a monopoly. The whole community is both sovereign and priestly. The only valid governing role for the pastor is to enhance the priestliness and sovereignty of each soul, both within their community and beyond. Therefore the bylaws of GNC make clear that although every parishioner has a vote in the Quarterly Parish Meeting, those in the roles of the Lay Moderator or the clergy may not vote. They are required to be celibate—a total reframing of the catholic practice of celibacy.

All communities are at risk of being hijacked by those who want to monopolize power. But “this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.”⁵⁰ If we are serious about paving the way to implement a transformation of religion according to Kant’s vision, then political celibacy (of the lay head of the congregation and the clergy) is the only way to preserve the freedom needed for every voice to be heard. Kant saw how the coercive ecclesiastical and monarchic governments of his day oppressed the lightness of being inherent in a natural, rational, and universal religion. If the purity of the congregation (its virginity) is respected by the listening and learning of a celibate clergy that guarantees that every voice is given due hearing and consideration—then a Copernican Revolution will take place in the local practice of church government. The clergy will revolve around the laity, not vice versa. Such a transformation of the ecclesiastical scene, with power rising from the local level and radiating abroad in a noncoercive way, is in strict accordance with Kant’s vision. It quietly floods the top-down structures that dominate us, submerging them in the rising tide of a global ethical commonwealth. We, in our Kantian congregation in Berkeley, all refugees from hierarchical denominations, can testify that this polity not only works but generates a most extraordinary experience of that lightness of being that religious people call grace.

NOTES

1. The paper “Perspectives in Counseling: Kantian Categories and Jungian Types as Models for Psychosocial Insight” can be accessed from the “articles” page of my web site at www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/srp/pubs.html.

2. Information on the Hong Kong Philosophy Café, including summaries of many past meetings, is available on my web site at www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/HKPC.

3. “CIPHER” stands for “Center for Insight into Philosophic Health, Education, and Renewal.” For further information on the meaning of this term as it applies to the retreat center, see the relevant pages on my web site at www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/CIPHER.

4. I take “public servant” to refer to any professional employed and/or regulated by the government in a role intended to be beneficial to the general public. The other two standard faculties in the universities of Kant’s day were those of law and medicine, whose task involved the training of lawyers and doctors, respectively. These other two areas, discussed in Parts II–III of *Conflict*, were not considered in any depth at the retreat, nor will they be in this essay.

5. See CF 10n. For a detailed defense and elaboration of Kant’s claim, see Chapter VIII of my book *Kant’s Critical Religion: Volume Two of Kant’s System of Perspectives* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); hereafter KCR.

6. Green’s essay in this volume alludes to the fact that Kant has often been criticized for apparently breaking his 1794 promise to the king, never again to publish or speak on matters of religion or theology. The supposition is that Kant was thereby breaking his own moral principle, the categorical imperative. However, I see no reason to doubt Kant’s own straightforward explanation of the situation in CF 10n. (For a more detailed description of the censorship issue, and a response to the gross misrepresentations of Kant that have been perpetrated in this regard, see KCR 132n, 192–193n.) The claim I make below is not that Kant contradicted his own principles by publishing *again* on these topics, but that he shirked a fundamental responsibility of the philosopher by agreeing so readily to obey the edict in the first place.

7. See also CF 35 and various examples throughout the book. Whereas Kant encourages philosophers to have the courage to act *in* public (see e.g., 28–29), members of the higher faculties can act only “officially”—that is, *on* the public.

8. Unfortunately, Gregor translates this key word simply as “control.” But the point is not that philosophers tell members of the other faculties what to do; rather it is that we *observe their reasoning*, very much in the way the border patrol checks passports before letting a foreigner into the country.

9. Today’s universities have many more faculties and departments, most concerned with training particular types of professionals. Most of what we call the Arts and Humanities would have come under the Philosophy Faculty in Kant’s day, as would any academic pursuit that was *not* intended to lead directly to a profession other than university teaching.

10. When relating Kant’s theory to the present day, we must keep in mind that Kant wrote *Conflict* at a time when Prussia was a monarchy. In modern democratic societies a *privately* funded university can be regarded as having virtually the same relationship to government as a publicly funded institution, because in a democracy

“the people” (including, of course, those supporting the private institution) technically *are* the government.

11. For a detailed discussion of the meaning of “architectonic,” see KCR, Appendix III.2–3. I attempt to lay bare the precise form taken by Kant’s architectonic as he applies it to his own philosophical System in §III.2–4 of *Kant’s System of Perspectives: An Architectonic Interpretation of Kant’s Critical Philosophy* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1993); hereafter KSP.

12. As defined in the first section of the Introduction to this volume.

13. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A832/B860, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), 860; hereafter CPR.

14. For a more detailed account of what I call “the principle of perspective” and the details of how it operates in Kant’s System, including a table showing over five hundred places in the first *Critique* where Kant uses terms that can be taken as equivalent to “perspective,” see KSP, chap. II. Chapter III then explains how this relates to Kant’s Copernican hypothesis and how Kant’s favorite architectonic patterns develop directly out of this assumption.

15. See, e.g., PFM 279. Later, in a footnote to the same work, Kant explains the meaning of “transcendental” in a way that confirms its existential (or “mystical,” in a new and *specifically* Critical sense) rooting in the “fertile *bathos* of experience” (374).

16. In KSP and KCR, I adopt the convention of capitalizing any word that refers to Kant’s entire philosophical System (e.g., to all three *Critiques* taken together) or to the Perspective that governs it, while leaving the same term uncapitalized when it refers to a specific part (or perspective) within this whole (e.g., to the three standpoints that each govern one of the *Critiques*, or to the four perspectives that operate within each *Critique*). For a detailed summary of these different levels of perspectives and a fuller explanation of why the overarching level is capitalized, see KSP, §II.4.

17. CPR Bxliv.

18. For a detailed summary and analysis of the systematic argument Kant constructs in his application of the theoretical standpoint, see KSP, chap. VII.

19. In *Kant’s Rational Theology* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), for example, Allen Wood reveals that even at this early stage in his career he was tending in an anti-Kantian direction. For he evaluates the importance of the three standard types of theoretical argument in exactly the opposite order of Kant’s own preferences. For a thoroughgoing discussion of an affirmative alternative to this approach, see KCR, chap. IV. Specific responses to Wood and other philosophers who reject Kant’s assumptions about the proper role of theoretical arguments are given in KCR, Appendix IV, “How to Be a Theist without Proving That God Exists.”

20. See John Hare’s essay in this volume for an excellent argument confirming the problematic nature of atheism from a Kantian perspective.

21. The precise meaning of this term is explained in KCR, §I.3. In short, it does not mean that Kant’s main concern was explicitly theological (e.g., establishing certain knowledge of God)—for in this sense his philosophy is undoubtedly anthropocentric—but that a deep sense of God’s presence (first as an idea, then as a postulate, then as an existential judgment, and finally as a symbolically experienced reality) serves as the calm center of the “storm” that constitutes the Critical philosophy’s several revolutions.

22. This interpretation of Kant’s practical argument for belief in God was first expressed in such an illuminating manner by Allen Wood, who refers to it as a “*reductio*

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ad absurdum practicum" (*Kant's Moral Religion* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970], 25–34). Unfortunately, in his later work Wood has gradually become more reluctant to see any significant religious or theological affirmations in Kant. Nowadays he tends to adopt the traditional interpretation, with its assumption that Kant is a deist with a reductionistic view of religion, almost as if there were no alternatives. See, e.g., Wood's article "Kant's Deism," in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. Philip J. Rossi and Michael J. Wreen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 1–21. For an exhaustive refutation of the deistic/reductionistic interpretation, see Part Two of KCR; see also Christopher McCammon's arguments against this interpretation in his essay in this volume. For a detailed account of the architectonic structure of Kant's argument in the second *Critique*, see KSP, chap. VIII.

23. See KSP, chap. IX, for a detailed summary of Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and its relation to his architectonic. I further examine the focus Kant's affirmative theology places on symbolism in KCR, chap. V.

24. By "open-minded reader" I mean, in particular, any reader who is willing to put aside all the trappings of the traditional interpretation and consider the possibility that Kant was not out to destroy all religion and theology, but might rather have been attempting a radical philosophical reformation in these areas. When interpreters stop reading negative innuendos between the lines of Kant's text and see him instead as developing an integrated network of perspectival arguments, theological and religious affirmations pop out on virtually every page of *Religion*.

25. KCR's Appendix IX.2 summarizes the content of *Religion* in the form of "95 Theses"; most of these are surprisingly consistent with what many forward-thinking Christians actually believe nowadays.

26. See KCR, chap. VIII, for a lengthy account of how these same four "stages" in Kant's argument correspond directly to the main emphases in Christianity: the Old Testament's account of the problem of sin; the Gospels' account of grace as the solution; the early church's attempts to work out the social implications of grace, especially in the writings of Paul; and the Reformation's protest against many (but for Kant, not enough!) of the false means of pleasing God that had developed in Christian tradition. Contrary to the undefended claim made in Firestone's essay in this volume, Kant's elaboration of these correspondences (i.e., the discussions of his "second experiment") is spread throughout the four Books of *Religion*, not limited to Book Four. For an introductory-level summary of my argument in KCR, see *The Tree of Philosophy*, 4th ed. (Hong Kong: Philopsychy Press, 2000), Lectures 32–33.

27. For an extended example, examining how Kant applies this principle to prayer, see KCR, Appendix VIII. Proponents of the traditional interpretation of Kant's philosophy of religion invariably ignore the "indirect" side of this distinction. Yet this is a crucial component of Kant's affirmation of real, living religions: he finds any religious belief or ritual to be rationally acceptable, even if it has no direct or literal moral meaning, provided it has the effect of encouraging or enlivening a person's underlying moral disposition. Thus, verbal prayer is acceptable as long as it "fan[s] into flames the cinders of morality in the inner recesses of our hearts" (Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, trans. Louis Infield [London: Methuen, 1930], 99 [English pagination]).

28. If the reductionist interpretation is so ludicrous, how did it become so popular? As Firestone argues in the first section of the Introduction to this volume, the fact that T. H. Greene's Introduction to the translation of *Religion* presented the reductionist interpretation as the only option is probably the main explanation for its widespread accep-

tance: English Kant scholars used that translation almost exclusively for over sixty years. In addition, I have argued in Chapter VI of KCR that certain features of the translation—especially the title—seemed calculated to give the false impression that Kant was a reductionist in religion.

29. A recent example of the seemingly innumerable references to this criticism appears in an article by Leslie Stevenson, in *The Friends Quarterly* (April 2002): 85–92, entitled “Kant’s Philosophy and Quakerism.” Fortunately, Stevenson has significantly modified that claim in his essay here. Ronald Green’s impressive demonstration of the profound influence Kant had on Kierkegaard renders somewhat less incredible the suggestion that Kant himself might have been attempting to prepare the way for a proper understanding of religious experience (see, e.g., his essay in this volume).

At the retreat, one of the participants pointed out in this regard that in *Conflict* Kant actually second-guessed Kierkegaard more than is often recognized. For his view here is that a healthy conflict between theology and philosophy is necessary, even when ideal religion (moral religion for Kant, or “Religion B” for Kierkegaard) is well established. Kant seems to portray the philosopher and the theologian as two performers in a play, adopting different personas according to the required script. Interestingly, Kierkegaard actually adopts this very approach as an expository tool in the philosophical works he published during the first half of his career.

30. See the first section of the Introduction, as well as Chapter 7 of this volume.

31. The standard reference to Kant’s early works as “pre-critical” is therefore highly misleading. The proper term for this early period, I argue, is “pre-Copernican,” since there is nothing resembling the distinctively Transcendental character of Kant’s mature thinking in his writings before *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, where he analyzes and assesses Swedenborg’s work, yet from that time onward, this Transcendental/Copernican Perspective became central to Kant’s thinking.

32. Though sometimes portrayed, I believe disastrously, as an attempt to make philosophy into a profession, a better way to describe the Philosophical Practice movement is as an attempt to *encourage philosophers to take up professions other than teaching*. Pastoral ministry is a profession that has received little or no attention by the (largely unreligious) members of this movement. Yet of all professions, this one would seem to have the greatest chance of enabling philosophers to have an enlightening influence on a wide spectrum of the general public.

33. For example, Kant states in R 135n that we should “diligently work . . . even now” for “the continuous development of the pure religion of reason out of its present still indispensable shell.” In the second edition he adds a second footnote, clarifying: “Not that it ‘will cease’ (for it might always be useful and necessary, perhaps, as a vehicle) but that ‘it can cease.’”

34. See CF 69–75.

35. Stevenson’s essay in this volume develops this correspondence in much greater detail.

36. Mt 20:25–26. Obviously, the same admonition could be interpreted as mandating a particular way of being a pastor, especially since elsewhere in the New Testament paid leadership appears to be a given. My point here is merely that the Quaker approach is closer to the Kantian ideal, because “priestcraft” always tends to pervert true religion (e.g., R 175ff.).

37. R 101–102. The correlation between the four Books and the four principles is no accident, for Kant based both on the same architectonic pattern, what I have called a

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“second-level analytic relation.” For an explanation of the latter, see *The Tree of Philosophy*, Lecture 13, and KSP, chap. 3, §II.

38. In KCR, §§IX.2–3, I propose a full-fledged biblical theology focused on love. Such a biblical theology, I believe, would minimize the negative effects of any remaining differences between Kantian philosopher-pastors and biblical theologians, paving the way for a concord that preserves all the creative benefits of both Perspectives.

39. Eph 4:15. To remain quiet in the face of a potential conflict, as Kant did throughout the mid-1790s, ironically makes the philosopher virtually indistinguishable from the compliant theologian.

40. This section is adapted from a much longer essay written by the Rev. Richard Mapplebeckpalmer. The full text in its original form, entitled “The Copernican Revolution in Religion: A Testimony on Kantian Church Government,” can be found at <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~ppp/texts/KantianTestimony.htm>.

41. Thus Jesus said (Mt 11:30): “For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

42. For a detailed interpretation of biblical references to such political/power issues, see Palmquist’s *Biblical Theocracy: A Vision of the Biblical Foundations for a Christian Political Philosophy* (Hong Kong: Philopsychy Press, 1993).

43. See KCR, 239–242: Kant was at the same time a “liberalizing conservative” and a “conserving liberal.”

44. Or “prototype” (see Jacobs’s essay in this volume).

45. R 96 [87]; cf. Mt 23.

46. Universality (or “oneness”), purity, freedom, and unchangeability (R 101–102 [93]).

47. R 105 [96]. Although the translators give the word *covenant*, Kant’s term, *Verpflichtung*, more literally means *obligation*. Kant does not use the German word for covenant, *Übereinkommen*; but undertaking a public obligation is usually sealed in some sort of covenant. English and German use the same word, *Testament*, to clarify that the stories of Israel and Jesus are alike stories about fidelity to a covenant.

48. “The wish of all well-disposed people is, therefore, ‘that the kingdom of God come, that His will be done on earth’” (R 101 [92]). See Palmquist’s “‘The Kingdom of God Is at Hand!’ (Did Kant Really Say *That?*),” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (October 1994): 421–437.

49. Thus Jesus prayed (Mt 6:10): “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

50. Cor 4:7.

CONTRIBUTORS

MICHEL DESPLAND is Professor of Religion at Concordia University and a Member of the Royal Society of Canada. His publications include *Kant on History and Religion* and *Reading an Erased Code*.

GENE FENDT is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Nebraska, Kearney. His publications include *For What May I Hope?*

CHRIS L. FIRESTONE is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Trinity International University. His publications include “Kant and Religion: Conflict or Compromise?” and “Kant’s Two Perspectives on the Theological Task.”

ELIZABETH C. GALBRAITH is the Joseph E. McCabe Associate Professor of Religion at Coe College. Her publications include *Kant and Theology: Was Kant a Closet Theologian?*

RONALD M. GREEN is the Eunice and Julian Cohen Professor for the Study of Ethics and Human Values in the Department of Religion and Director of the Ethics Institute at Dartmouth College. His publications include *Religious Reason; Religion and Moral Reason;* and *Kierkegaard and Kant: The Hidden Debt*.

JOHN E. HARE is the Noah Porter Professor of Philosophical Theology at Yale Divinity School. His publications include *The Moral Gap* and *God’s Call*.

NATHAN JACOBS is a Ph.D. student in Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary.

GREGORY R. JOHNSON is Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Swedenborgian Studies at the Pacific School of Religion. He is editor and translator of *Kant’s Dreams of a Spirit-Seer and Other Writings on Swedenborg*.

CHARLES F. KIELKOPF is Professor of Philosophy at Ohio State University. His publications include *A Declaration of Dependence: A Kantian Condemnation of Atheistic Despair*.

Contributors

RICHARD W. MAPPLEBECKPALMER is Director of the Grace Institute for Religious Learning and Senior Pastor of Grace North Church in Berkeley, California. He is an Anglican priest and has written widely for various Church-related publications.

CHRISTOPHER McCAMMON is a Ph.D. student in Philosophy at the University of Nebraska.

STEPHEN R. PALMQUIST is Associate Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Hong Kong Baptist University. He is author of *Kant's System of Perspectives: An Architectonic Interpretation of the Critical Philosophy* and *Kant's Critical Religion: Volume Two of Kant's System of Perspectives*, and editor and translator of *Four Neglected Essays by Immanuel Kant*.

PHILIP J. ROSSI is Professor of Theology at Marquette University and a member of the Society of Jesus. He is author of *Together toward Hope: A Journey to Moral Theology* and coeditor of *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*.

LESLIE STEVENSON is Honorary Reader in Philosophy at University of St. Andrews. His publications include *Seven Theories of Human Nature*; *Ten Theories of Human Nature*; and *The Metaphysics of Experience*.

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