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## 6 Gandhi, Kant and Superstition

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**Abstract:** By examining and comparing Gandhi's statement that the Bihar earthquake of 1934 should be seen as divine punishment for the sin of untouchability with a similar claim in Kant's writings, I argue that while Gandhi and Kant are, broadly speaking, remarkably similar in the way in which they relate morality, religion, and politics in conceptualising the categories of faith and superstition, they also seem to differ in their vocabularies and the propositional content of their respective moral psychologies. However, if we are committed to dialogue across cultures, then the differences between Gandhi and Kant need not preclude reflective conversation between them.

**Keywords:** Gandhi; Kant; Bihar earthquake; faith; superstition; moral philosophy; divine punishment

### 1. Introduction

The idea that we could ferret out a universal conceptual framework on the basis of which all cultures could be evaluated was a particularly influential strand of Enlightenment thought. One consequence of this idea was that it led to the denigration of the cultures of the colonies as worthless. Many thinkers, especially in the colonies, responded to this undermining of their cultures with a 'defiant invitation to alterity or "civilisational difference"' (L. Gandhi 1998: 20). They questioned the legitimacy of the universalising grand narrative of Western modernity in evaluating their cultures. This circumstance formed one context in which Gandhi's thought was appropriated in the late-20th-century academic discourse in India.

Drawing on Gandhi's critical engagement with the project of modernity, some thinkers argued that Gandhi's thought could not be assimilated to the so-called 'western' categories for a diverse set of reasons—because Gandhi relied on Indian thought, which is irreducible to western thought; because he astutely saw through the pretensions of modernity from his own unique vantage point; because he Indianized Western notions beyond recognition; because he attempted to tackle the colonial/modern by employing resources available in the Indian tradition; and so on.<sup>1</sup> This employment of Gandhi as an alternative to a colonising modernity led to important insights, and remains relevant in the face of latter-day neo-colonialism. In the present context, however, one could argue, as Bernstein (1992: 65) does, that the legitimacy of the universalising grand narrative of modernity has been put in doubt, even in the western academy. So one could contend that the emphasis should now be on a dialogue between cultures, which is of course not a new project even in the Indian context.<sup>2</sup>

The present essay is a contribution to this larger project of laying out the pre-conditions of dialogue between cultures. More specifically, it raises the question of how dialogue across ideas emerging in different cultures could be established, especially in contexts that are still struggling in one way or another with the legacy of colonisation. Such a dialogue is significant, because it promises not merely to help us further understand the colonial encounter in an intellectually rigorous and balanced manner; but can potentially also lead to the emergence of norms that are, at least to some extent, generalisable across cultures. Here I explore this question regarding the possibility of dialogue between politically opposed cultures by comparing Gandhi's claim that the Bihar earthquake of 1934 should be seen as 'divine punishment' for the sin of untouchability with a similar claim in the writings of a key Enlightenment philosopher, Immanuel Kant.<sup>3</sup> Such an undertaking may seem odd, because we usually, with good reason,

take Gandhi as a critic of the Enlightenment to be an antipode to Kant the Enlightenment figure. This may be the reason why some may believe, perhaps hastily, that any dialogue or rational comparison between Gandhi and Kant would be otiose.<sup>4</sup> However, as I will argue in §2, while Gandhi and Kant employ different vocabularies, and the propositional content of their respective moral psychologies differs, there are striking similarities in the manner in which they view the relationship between morality, faith, superstition, and society. On the basis of this claim, in §3, I point to one way in which a dialogue between Gandhi and Kant could proceed in general, if our aim is to initiate and sustain a dialogue between two thinkers on opposite sides of the colonial divide. Establishing such a dialogue, I suggest briefly, would require seeking out broad thematic continuities between the thinkers involved with the aim of arriving at some conclusions about the themes at issue, and doing so in a way that is, at least in part, generalisable across cultures.

## **2. Gandhi, Kant and the divine punishment argument**

In the wake of the Bihar earthquake of 1934, the press quoted M. K. Gandhi as saying ‘I want you, to be superstitious enough (*sic*) to believe that the earthquake is a divine chastisement for the great sin we have committed against those whom we describe as Harijans’ (Bhattacharya 1997: 158). Rabindranath Tagore published an article criticising this statement by Gandhi, to which Gandhi responded with a short but rich piece of his own.<sup>5</sup> I begin by explicating Gandhi’s defence of his statement against Tagore’s criticism (§2.1), and present Kant’s version of the divine punishment argument in §2.2. Finally, in §2.3, I compare the two.

2.1 Tagore offers three reasons for rejecting Gandhi’s statement linking a natural disaster like an earthquake and divine punishment for a social ill (henceforth, interchangeably, ‘divine

punishment argument' or 'divine punishment claim'). Gandhi responds to some of Tagore's arguments, and passes over others, apart from defending his own statement by means of a positive argument.

(1) Tagore says that Gandhi's divine punishment argument is 'unscientific', because only physical facts can explain physical events (ibid.). Implicit in this argument is the mechanistic view of nature, which is characteristic of the Enlightenment. If this argument is valid, then Gandhi's drawing of a connection between the Bihar earthquake and untouchability is problematic. But Gandhi seems to deny the mechanistic view of nature when he says that it is not merely physical phenomena that 'produce' physical and spiritual consequences, but spiritual phenomena also produce physical and spiritual consequences (ibid., 159). On the basis of this presupposition, he justifies the claim that moral actions can indeed 'produce' cosmic effects. Further, he says that this claim cannot be refuted by scientific knowledge, because science cannot give us the laws of god (ibid., 159–60); and given our ignorance of the laws of god, what 'appears to us as catastrophes are so only because we do not know the universal laws sufficiently' (ibid., 160). Therefore, contra the physicalist metaphysics that underlies natural science, Gandhi offers, albeit without justification, an alternative metaphysics in which spiritual and physical phenomena can reciprocally affect each other, and which cannot be refuted by scientific knowledge.

(2) According to Tagore, the divine punishment argument reveals the 'element of unreason...which is a fundamental source of all the blind powers that drive us against freedom and self-respect' for the following reasons. (a) Human nature would be superior to Godly nature if the latter needed to 'preach its lessons in good behavior in orgies of the worst possible behavior' (ibid.). (b) If morality and physical events are related, then why aren't there any

earthquakes when labor is exploited in the factories? Taking (a) and (b) together, Tagore argues for the irrationality of Gandhi's position by providing a theological argument (= [a]), and pointing to an inconsistency implicit in Gandhi's position (= [b]). For his part, Gandhi does not respond individually to either (a) or (b). However, he does respond to Tagore's overall charge of irrationality. Without trying to prove that the link between the Bihar earthquake, divine punishment and untouchability is 'rational', Gandhi justifies it on the basis of an 'instinctive feeling' instead. He says that he 'instinctively feels' that the Bihar earthquake is a punishment for the sin of untouchability (ibid., 160). This instinctive feeling cannot be proven, since it is a belief like the belief in God whose existence cannot be proven (ibid.). Here, if we bracket the merits of his argument, it is obvious that Gandhi opposes belief/faith to knowledge, and instinctive feeling to reason. In his view, some combination of faith and instinctive feeling can substitute for rationality, and he goes so far as to say that Tagore's view that there is no link between physical catastrophes and moral actions can as much be categorised as 'faith' as his own opposite assertion that there is indeed such a link (ibid., 160–61).

(3) The divine punishment argument is misled in Tagore's view, because Gandhi's enemies could just as easily claim that it was Gandhi's actions that had led to the Bihar earthquake (ibid., 159). Gandhi does not directly respond to this standard charge against superstition—that it leads to relativism. Some Enlightenment thinkers held that values derived from universal reason could take care of such relativism, and so presumed the disjunction between universal reason and relativistic superstition. Gandhi rejects the supremacy of universal reason, and offers two reasons in favor of the divine punishment argument in which he also rejects superstition, and appears to provide a rational justification for a 'living faith'. First, if the instinctively felt belief in the validity of the divine punishment argument leads to 'repentance and self-purification', then it

could be considered beneficial even if it proves to be ‘unfounded’ (ibid., 160). That is, if this belief is beneficial, it can be adopted even if it is false. This means that Gandhi does not think that the truth of the divine punishment claim can be the right measure for evaluating its significance.<sup>6</sup> Second, the connection between ‘cosmic phenomena and human behavior’ is a ‘living faith’, which differs from superstition. This living faith must be beneficial, but it turns into superstition if someone employs it to ‘castigate’ her opponents (ibid., 160–61). Here, Gandhi’s claim is that a living faith must be moral, and that the divine punishment argument instantiates this living faith, because the link between the cosmic and the behavioral is drawn in the service of the eradication of untouchability. However, superstition is not admissible, since it involves castigating one’s opponents, i.e., it causes dissonance in the polity.

(4) In sum, Gandhi denies that the validity of the divine punishment argument can be evaluated by means of universal reason, because this argument is supported by an instinctive feeling that forms part of a living faith. This living faith differs from superstition, and can bring about individual and social benefits.<sup>7</sup>

2.2 I now articulate (briefly) Kant’s argument that natural disasters can be viewed as divine punishment. It is well known that, for Kant, morality presupposes rationality, and that the content of morality can be derived by applying the categorical imperative: an act is moral if the principle of this action can be made into a universal law. However, it is perhaps less well known that Kant subordinates religion to morality, and privileges rational faith over revealed faith (WOT, 8: 140–41; CF, 7: 28; R, 6: 136ff).<sup>8</sup> This rational faith requires human beings to act as if God, immortality of soul, and freedom existed—what Kant calls the ‘postulates’ of practical reason. Kant puts the matter succinctly in his essay ‘What is called orientation in thinking?’

‘[R]ational faith, which rests on a need of reason’s use with a *practical* intent, could be called a *postulate* of reason—not as if it were an insight which did justice to all the logical demands for certainty, but because this holding true (if only the person is morally good) is not inferior in degree to knowing, even though it is completely different from it in kind’ (8: 141–2).

Here Kant makes a distinction between logically certain knowledge and ‘holding true’ (*fürwahrhalten*). In the present context, this means that if a person is moral, then she is entitled to think and act as if she were free, her soul were immortal, and that God did exist.<sup>9</sup> This holding true is a lower-degree truth when compared to certain truth; but it is qualitatively different from the latter, primarily because it has validity merely in practical and not theoretical contexts.

Given this context, the divine punishment argument can be admitted into Kant’s system only as a ‘regulative idea’ of this sort, that is, we are entitled to take it as true, but only if our overall project is to act on the basis of morality derived out of reason. Kant says this explicitly in a set of late essays on religion, collected as *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.

‘We cannot assume that the hypothesis that all evils in the world are generally to be regarded as punishments for transgressions committed was devised for the sake of a theodicy or as a contrivance for the purposes of priestly religion (cult), for it is too common to have been artificially excogitated; we must rather presume that the hypothesis is closely allied to human reason, which is inclined to link the course of nature with the laws of morality, and hence quite naturally comes up with the idea that we should seek to become better human beings first, before we can request to be freed from the ills of life, or to be compensated for them with a superior good’ (6: 74n).

So the claim that all worldly evils including natural disasters like earthquakes can be connected to our moral behavior must be viewed as somehow ‘closely allied’ to human reason.<sup>10</sup> Since this is a ‘presumption’ and in the service of making us act morally, we can take it as true, even though we can never know with certainty that natural and moral laws are connected.

Now, this concept of rational faith is Kant’s attempt to ‘deny knowledge in order to make room for faith’ (CPR, Bxxx). But the problem is that if we can be allowed the postulates which are not certainly known, then we should also be allowed to believe in superstitions, miracles, grace, etc. Yet Kant says that we are not entitled to the latter. I will now argue that this is not an inconsistency in Kant’s philosophy to the extent that he takes our ultimate goal to be the progressive establishment of an ethical commonwealth. Taking the fulfilment of this goal as the measure, Kant distinguishes rational faith from superstition. Superstition harms the ethical community by increasing the probability of irrational actions, while rational faith does not harm but actually fosters the establishment of an ideal moral community. I now justify this claim [(a)–(e)].

(a) Kant says that

‘a pure rational faith is...the signpost or compass by means of which the speculative thinker orients himself in his rational excursions into the field of supersensible objects; but a human being who has common but (morally) healthy reason can mark out his path, in both a theoretical and practical respect, in a way which is fully in accord with the whole end of his vocation; and it is this rational faith which must also be taken as the ground of every other faith, and even of every revelation’ (WOT, 8: 141–2).



So all faith must be rational, and revealed faith can be justified only if it is founded on rational faith. Kant exemplifies this when he re-interprets a tenet of revealed religion—the divine punishment argument—by viewing it as ‘closely aligned’ with human reason.

(b) Kant takes rational faith as related to the overall vocation of human beings. We can be truly moral only in an ideal ethical community. Therefore, achieving such a community should be the overarching vocation of human beings. The securing of this ideal community requires a gradual increase in legal actions and good deeds; and a decrease in violence. Once a society has turned ethical as a whole, it will establish reciprocal ethical relations with other ethical societies, and thus bring about what Kant calls the ‘cosmopolitan society’ (CF, 7: 91–92; R, Part III).

(c) If rational faith aids the human vocation of establishing an ethical commonwealth, then one way of relating morality, religion and political community in Kant’s philosophy would be to say that rational faith—including the postulates, but also the divine punishment argument—is useful in the formation of the ethical community. On the other hand, Kant asserts that ‘impure religious ideas, which includes inner experience (enthusiasm), alleged outer experience (miracles or superstition), presumed understanding of the mysteries of the supernatural (illumination, and attempts to influence the divinity)’ are not conducive to the goal of establishing such a community (R, 6: 52–53). Thus, the main criterion for deciding whether something should be considered rational faith or superstition depends on whether it serves the end of establishing an ethical community.

(d) Why does Kant think that ‘impure religious ideas’ detract from the establishment of the ethical commonwealth, while the postulates do not? Kant considers the idea that spiritual beings can influence nature to be impractical. Since we cannot know the nature of this influence through our senses, it would be foolhardy to act on its basis (WOT, 8: 137–38). In contrast, Kant allows

us the postulate of God, even though it cannot be sensed either. A plausible reason for this is that the postulates are meant to strengthen morality, not to produce it. One acts on the basis of the categorical imperative, because it is the rational thing to do, and the postulates can merely help strengthen our resolve to do this. Thus, in presuming a rational faith in God, we are not illegitimately presuming anything about how things are causally connected to each other in the world. We are merely employing the postulates (and the divine punishment argument) as aids in our quest for moral perfection. This is not the case with superstitions and impure religious ideas. Someone who invokes the supernatural—whether it be miracles or providing a reading of the supernatural on the basis of enthusiasm or illumination—speculates regarding a causality about which she as a human being can know nothing. If she also acts on the basis of these speculations, then she is liable to make mistakes, including the violation of her moral duties. And if she acts immorally, then she is not working towards the establishment of the moral community. Therefore, unlike the postulates, superstitions and impure religious ideas are not conducive to the formation of the ethical commonwealth.

(e) Hence, from (a)-(d), Kant links morality, religion and community in a way that allows us to distinguish superstition and rational faith. Therefore, rational faith, including the divine punishment argument, is useful in our quest to form an ideal ethical community, since it aids the achievement of moral perfection, and does not rely on any false causality.

2.3 The Gandhian and Kantian versions of the divine punishment argument are similar but also different in the following ways.

(a) Gandhi makes a metaphysical claim that spiritual phenomena can produce both spiritual and physical phenomena, while Kant thinks that it is impractical to claim that spiritual beings can

influence nature construed as a set of mechanical laws. However, Gandhi comes very close to Kant in his conception of the relationship between truth and the divine punishment argument. He defends his claim that the spiritual can have physical effects by saying that modern science cannot refute it, though he admits that it could be false ('unfounded'). Alternatively put, he says that the available means of achieving certain truth cannot prove the falsity of spirit causing effects in matter, although it could still be the case that this claim is false from a God's-eye perspective. This allows him to say consistently that one can instinctively feel and thus believe in the truth of the divine punishment claim, where truth is neither the truth of modern science nor truth from a God's-eye perspective. In this Gandhi comes very close to Kant, who also denies that the practical postulates can ever be known as certain truths, but admits to a notion of belief as holding something true. This leads him, as it does Gandhi, to accept the claim that one can believe in the truth of the divine punishment claim.

(b) Tagore denies any middle ground between rationality and religion, while both Gandhi and Kant seem to want to give content to this middle ground.<sup>11</sup> Gandhi speaks of a living faith, while Kant speaks of a rational faith. Both differ from superstition, and in both cases faith is distinguished from superstition on the basis of social criteria. For Gandhi, a living faith would turn into superstition if it were used to castigate one's enemies—that is, if it created social dissonance. For example, it would be superstition if the instinctively felt divine punishment argument were to be used to silence or harm one's political opponents. This claim presupposes that superstitious/non-superstitious beliefs relate as much to a person's attitude or world-view as to the content of these beliefs, as can be seen in the following. First, the fact that Gandhi holds that the divine punishment argument can be employed with a good conscience if the goal is the eradication of untouchability shows that those instinctively felt beliefs are acceptable that make

our community more rather than less moral. So the content of non-superstitious beliefs includes all that is socially useful, and that of superstitious belief all that is socially harmful. Second, since belief in the divine punishment argument can also lead to repentance and moral upliftment, it also serves in the acquisition of the correct moral attitude.

In all of this, Gandhi's overall position broadly resembles that of Kant. Kant takes it that rational faith has no value if the agent possessing it is uninterested in morally improving herself, and in contributing to the formation of an ethical commonwealth. Superstition divorces itself from morality, and hinders the emergence of a perfectly ethical community.<sup>12</sup> Thus, for Gandhi and Kant, the criterion for the right sort of faith is ultimately this-worldly, and it is intersubjective in that faith must help all of us live a better life in a moral community.<sup>13</sup>

(c) One major disagreement between Gandhi and Kant relates to how they view rationality. For Kant, morality presupposes rationality, and rational faith is grounded in practical reason, and so the divine punishment argument is admissible only because it is 'closely aligned' with reason in practical (= moral) contexts. Gandhi's living faith is not based on universal reason. Rather it rests on an instinctive feeling, which can act as a premise for arguments like the divine punishment argument if the content of these arguments is practically useful for the collective. Therefore, unlike §2.3(a) and §2.3(b), one finds a genuine divergence between the views of Kant and Gandhi: the former ultimately supports the divine punishment argument on the basis of rationality (universal reason, and holding something true), while the latter on the basis of some sort of pragmatic rationality (since the construction of an ideal society is at stake) and instinctive feeling.<sup>14</sup> So then, is Gandhi's instinctively felt belief consistent with Kant's holding something true? Is Gandhi's living faith so different from Kant's rational faith that there can be no possibility of dialogue?

### 3. Conclusion

I have suggested that Gandhi and Kant differ on the status of reason and feeling in their respective systems, but share a weak notion of knowledge that allows morality and religion to be related in a way that is conducive to the achievement of an ideal ethical community. One interesting consequence of this analysis is that Tagore seems to endorse key Enlightenment ideas—mechanistic world-view, rationality as strictly universal, and no middle ground between rationality and faith—in a way that differs from both Gandhi and Kant who, despite their differences, seem to possess something in common, at least on the divine punishment argument.<sup>15</sup> But the more important question here is that if we are committed to dialogue, how should we deal with the key difference between Gandhi and Kant on the divine punishment argument—the instinctive feeling claim in Gandhi, and the reason claim in Kant? I now briefly indicate one general direction in which we could sustain a dialogue between the positions of Gandhi and Kant, despite what does seem like an insurmountable difference between them.<sup>16</sup>

(a) Although Gandhi speaks of instinctive feeling, he locates it within some sort of pragmatic rationality, because he thinks that this feeling can be legitimate grounds for belief and action only if it is in the service of this-worldly well-being in a moral community.<sup>17</sup> A similar conception of pragmatic rationality underlies Kant's acceptance of faith to the extent it can aid in the achievement of the ethical commonwealth.

(b) Living faith and rational faith are similar, since they are based on belief that is weaker than certain knowledge.

(c) If we focus on the similarities ([a]-[b]), and if we do not wish to leave the matter here, but wish to iron out the differences between Gandhi and Kant on the divine punishment argument in dialogue, then we could take the following set of questions as a point of departure. Could we de-emphasise Gandhi's insistence on instinctive feeling—which makes him different from Kant—without giving up the essentials of his overall argument? If one could answer this question in the affirmative, then a Gandhian could employ the divine punishment argument to regulate her conduct, even if she rejected the claim that she instinctively feels the validity of this argument, but accepted Gandhi's characterisation of this-worldly well-being, the striving to build a just society, his notion of practical rationality, etc. Similarly, could a Kantian accept the divine punishment argument even if she is not entirely convinced that the categorical imperative captures the essence of morality, or that it helps us derive all our duties? If this proves to be the case, then she could bracket Kant's endorsement of universal reason, and act on the basis of the other aspects of Kant's divine punishment argument—the relationship between holding something true and rational faith, the importance of working towards the ethical commonwealth, etc. In addition to these questions, one could also ask if any of Gandhi's moral precepts violate the categorical imperative; or if Kant's philosophy includes a notion of moral exemplarity that makes it at least comparable to Gandhi's moral philosophy in the way Bilgrami (2014: 112ff) interprets it; and so on.

Needless to say what I have offered here is merely a small part of a larger project that would require not only working through the writings of both Gandhi and Kant in a detailed manner, but also working out philosophically the pre-conditions for dialogue in the post-colonial context. However, if we do decide to pursue this project of establishing a reflective conversation between Gandhi and Kant on the divine punishment argument, such an encounter between

opposing thinkers (but also cultures, perspectives, etc.) could well lead Gandhians and Kantians to strengthen and extend their respective views regarding the divine punishment argument. This, in turn, may engender new insights on the thorny relationship between faith, superstition and reason that might be, at least in part, generalisable across cultures. Stated more generally, this means that one way of establishing a dialogue between opposed figures from different cultures like Gandhi and Kant would be to look for broad thematic continuities between their respective philosophies with the aim of articulating something significant about some particular theme (here, the faith-superstition question), and to do so in a way that is, at least to some extent, generalisable across cultures. I am developing this claim elsewhere in the context of philosophical discussions around the notion of cultural incommensurability.

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<sup>1</sup> I do not have space to examine these positions in detail here. For the general conceptual terrain, and a representative set of essays, see Raghuramaraju (2006).



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<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Mayaram (2014), but in general also the writings of Raimon Panikkar and Ashis Nandy.

<sup>3</sup> Kant is not the only philosopher to have addressed the relationship between natural disasters, and religious and philosophical ideas. Voltaire on the 1755 Lisbon earthquake is a particularly famous example. In “Poem on the Disaster of Lisbon,” and later in *Candide*, Voltaire critiqued not merely Leibniz’s view that ours is the best possible world, but also the Christian engagement with the question of why God allows natural disasters to occur.

<sup>4</sup> It is well-known that Gandhi was educated in the Enlightenment tradition of thought, and was influenced by Western thinkers like Tolstoy and Thoreau, as well as the Bible. In addition, some commentators have tried to compare Gandhi with figures in the Western philosophical canon—for instance, Bilgrami (2014) compares Gandhi and Marx, and Sorabji (2012) compares Gandhi’s thought with that of the stoics. Yet a comparison between Gandhi and Kant would seem odd to many people. Paranjape (2016) forms an exception to this general tendency. In his essay ‘Kant and Gandhi: Transcivilizational Peace Perspectives’, he contrasts the visions of Gandhi and Kant on peace. He argues that peace for Gandhi requires the removal of all inequalities, while, on Kant’s view, inequalities cannot be removed but must be regulated in accordance with the moral law.

<sup>5</sup> For earlier discussions of this claim, see Ramchandra Gandhi (1984: 234) who interprets Gandhi’s divine punishment claim as ‘insightful advaita’. Also see Ramchandra Gandhi (2015: 344–47), where this claim is interpreted in light of the theory of karma as ‘moral pedagogy’. Finally, in his essay “Natural Supernaturalism?”: The Tagore-Gandhi Debate on the Bihar Earthquake’, Paranjape (2016) argues that the dispute between Tagore and Gandhi

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on the Bihar earthquake rests on their differing views regarding how to reconcile the rational and the spiritual.

<sup>6</sup> For Gandhi on truth, see ‘Gandhi, the Philosopher’ in Bilgrami (2014).

<sup>7</sup> My aim here is to point out a set of initial resonances and differences between Gandhi and Kant on the moral significance of natural disasters. Therefore, I leave for another time a detailed discussion of Tagore’s overall position on rationality and religion, and the location of Gandhi’s remarks on the Bihar earthquake in the context of his overall moral psychology.

<sup>8</sup> All references to Kant are drawn from Kant (1996a) and Kant (1996b), and cited in the standard ‘volume: page’ format. Works by Kant are abbreviated as follows: CPR = *Critique of Pure Reason* (cited according to the standard A/B method); R = *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*; CF = *Conflict of the Faculties*; WOT = ‘What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?’

<sup>9</sup> Kant of course discusses the postulates in Part II of his *Critique of Practical Reason*. Since my focus here is merely on the general relationship between the postulates and rational faith, I do not discuss this section in detail here.

<sup>10</sup> Although Kant refers to the connection between natural disasters and divine punishment in Part II of his early work ‘The Only Possible Proof for a Demonstration of the Existence of God’, I cite from Kant’s late writings on religion (1793), because Kant rejected much in his pre-Critical writings (prior to 1781), and seriously reconsidered the question of religion in his Critical writings (1780s and 1790s).

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of Kant undertaken with the aim of “reconstructing Tagore’s notion of freedom” in the context of the larger Tagore-Gandhi debate, see Puri (2015: 156ff).

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<sup>12</sup> Gandhi also has a notion of Rama Rajya, which can be seen, at least *prima facie*, as structurally similar to Kant's ethical commonwealth, since they are both moral and teleological conceptions.

<sup>13</sup> Broadly speaking, this interpretation of Gandhi seems *prima facie* to be consistent with the way Bilgrami (2014: 121) interprets Gandhi's thought. Of course, Bilgrami is not concerned with hermeneutics, and, more specifically, the dialogue between cultures in the way I am here. Moreover, on Bilgrami's interpretation, Gandhi can be seen to criticise Kant's moral philosophy to the extent his thought reflects the tension between universalisability of maxims like the categorical imperative, and Christian humility (*ibid.*, 113).

<sup>14</sup> Kant speaks of the feeling of respect for the moral law, but this is entirely different from Gandhi's instinctively felt belief, which has no counterpart in Kant.

<sup>15</sup> Here I obviously do not mean to suggest that the philosophies of Gandhi and Kant are in general more similar than that of Gandhi and Tagore (or even Nehru who is closer to Tagore than Gandhi in emphasising reason [Khilnani 2007: 96]), but only wish to point out that there is at least one significant way in which Gandhi seems closer to Kant rather than Tagore or Nehru. Minimally, this does seem to provide us with a starting point that would allow us to begin, as part of the larger dialogue between cultures, a reflective conversation between Gandhi and Kant.

<sup>16</sup> This commitment to dialogue enabling the ironing out of differences between ideas can be viewed as a moral stance—for instance, Bernstein (1992: 65–66). I have argued elsewhere that such a commitment need not be ethical, but can form part of the very structure of dialogue (see Kumar 2017).

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<sup>17</sup> I leave open what this pragmatic reasoning involves, but in general I agree with Chakrabarty (2008: 18) that Gandhi's thought cannot be understood in terms of instrumental means-ends reasoning.