

# Kantian Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/KRV>

Additional services for ***Kantian Review***:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



---

## The Implied Standpoint of Kant's *Religion*: An Assessment of Kant's Reply to (and an English Translation of) an Early Book Review of *Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason*

Stephen R. Palmquist and Steven Otterman

Kantian Review / Volume 18 / Issue 01 / March 2013, pp 73 - 97

DOI: 10.1017/S1369415412000295, Published online: 04 February 2013

Link to this article: [http://journals.cambridge.org/  
abstract\\_S1369415412000295](http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S1369415412000295)

### How to cite this article:

Stephen R. Palmquist and Steven Otterman (2013). The Implied Standpoint of Kant's *Religion*: An Assessment of Kant's Reply to (and an English Translation of) an Early Book Review of *Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason*. *Kantian Review*, 18, pp 73-97 doi:10.1017/S1369415412000295

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

# The Implied Standpoint of Kant's *Religion*: An Assessment of Kant's Reply to (and an English Translation of) an Early Book Review of *Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason*

STEPHEN R. PALMQUIST

Hong Kong Baptist University  
Email: stevepq@hkbu.edu.hk

STEVEN OTTERMAN

Georg-August-Universität Göttingen  
Email: ss09@cornell.edu

---

## Abstract

In the second edition Preface of *Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason* Kant responds to an anonymous review of the first edition. We present the first English translation of this obscure book review. Following our translation, we summarize the reviewer's main points and evaluate the adequacy of Kant's replies to five criticisms, including two replies that Kant provides in footnotes added in the second edition. A key issue is the reviewer's claim that *Religion* adopts an implied standpoint, described using transcendental terminology. Kant could have avoided much confusion surrounding *Religion*, had he taken this review more seriously. We therefore respond to three objections that Kant failed to address: how the *Wille*–*Willkür* distinction enables the propensity to evil to be viewed as coexisting with freedom of choice; how moral improvement is possible, even though the propensity to evil is necessary and universal; and how a 'deed' can be regarded as 'noumenal'.

**Keywords:** Kant, moral interpretation of scripture, propensity to evil, *Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, transcendental, *Wille* and *Willkür*

---

## Kant's Enigmatic Reply to an Anonymous Book Review

Near the end of the Preface to the second (1794) edition of *Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (6: 13–14), Kant responds as follows to an anonymous book review<sup>1</sup> of the book's first (1793) edition:

One judgment [of my work], namely that in the *Neueste Kritische Nachrichten* of Greifswald, Number 29, I can dispose of just as briefly as the reviewer did of the work itself. For the latter is, in his judgment, nothing other than [my] answer to the question posed to me by myself: 'How is the church system of dogmatics possible, in its concepts and doctrines, according to pure (theoretical and practical) reason?' – Hence, [he maintains] this essay is of no concern at all to those who are as little acquainted with his (K.'s) system, and who understand it as little, as they yearn to be able to understand it; and for them, therefore, [that system] is to be looked upon as nonexistent. – To this I answer as follows. To understand this work in terms of its essential content, only common morality is needed, without venturing into the critique of practical reason, still less into that of theoretical reason; and when, e.g., virtue as a proficiency in actions conforming to duty (according to their legality) is called *virtus phaenomenon*, but the same virtue as a steadfast attitude (*Gesinnung*) toward such actions from duty (because of their morality) is called *virtus noumenon*, these expressions are used only because of the school, but the matter itself is contained, even if in different words, in the most popular instruction for children or in sermons and is readily understandable. If only the latter could be boasted concerning the mysteries of the divine nature, which are classed with the doctrine of religion and are brought into the catechisms as if they were entirely popular, but which later on must first of all be transformed into moral concepts if they are to become understandable to everyone!<sup>2</sup>

After stating what he portrays as the reviewer's only criticism – that, because the purpose of *Religion* is merely internal to the Critical system, the book can be ignored by anyone who is not well-acquainted with that system – Kant quickly attempts to 'dispose of' it, thus implying that the book review contained no salient criticism other than this. Kant maintains that the reader of *Religion* need not be acquainted with the *Critiques*, but only with 'common morality', and that the only reason he had introduced some technical language into the work was to address formal concerns that his academic readers would be likely

to expect. He claims essentially that the reviewer has the book's purpose upside-down: *Religion* is not an attempt to force religion in general, and especially the church, into the formal requirements of the second (much less the first) *Critique*, but is rather an attempt to protect ordinary, morally attuned religious believers from being unduly disturbed by the scholasticism of dogmatic theology.

Was Kant's reply to this book review adequate? To what extent did he fairly and completely represent the claims actually advanced by the reviewer? Moreover, have interpreters over the past 200+ years tended to side more with Kant or with the reviewer? The key issue is whether or not *Religion* implicitly adopts a standpoint (i.e. an overall approach to the subject matter) of the type Kant elsewhere calls 'transcendental' – i.e. an inquiry into the very possibility of whatever type of experience and/or knowledge-claims are under consideration.<sup>3</sup> The reviewer assumes Kant *is* adopting such a standpoint, while Kant appears to be shying away from this claim. Regardless of who turns out to be correct on this point, if the reviewer raises unanswered objections that interpreters have continued to raise through the years, then one could argue that Kant is primarily to blame for any misunderstandings that have resulted, inasmuch as his reply was too short to persuade subsequent readers that the reviewer's assessment was inaccurate.

One can hardly begin to deal with issues such as these without appealing to the full text of the book review itself. However, the original text of the review has not, up to now, been readily available to scholars, even in German. As it has never been translated into English, the next section of this article will present a translation of the entire review that prompted Kant's response, quoted above. This will plainly demonstrate that Kant provides neither a complete nor an entirely accurate account of the criticisms contained in the review. Instead, he merely sidesteps the real point of the reviewer's initial observation, responds elsewhere to some of the several genuine criticisms that are completely ignored in the above-quoted passage (without naming their source), and neglects to appreciate the significance of the reviewer's affirmation of the book's value.

Following the translation of the book review, this article will assess the adequacy of Kant's replies to the objections actually advanced in the review. As we shall see, some of the reviewer's central concerns have continued to plague interpreters of Kant's *Religion* to this day. We shall therefore conclude by sketching, on Kant's behalf, possible responses to the objections Kant failed to address. Resurrecting a long-buried,

obscure essay in this way will prove to be more than just an exercise in historical grave-digging. Rather, we shall be able to draw enduring insights from the interesting interchange that *could* have taken place, had Kant made a more serious effort to respond to this early critic. In particular, we shall see that Kant would have been able to clarify the book's relevance to ordinary religious believers more effectively by *affirming* at least the *partial* accuracy of the reviewer's claim that *Religion* implicitly adopts a transcendental standpoint on religion.

### Translation of the Book Review<sup>4</sup>

{225} *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*. Written by I. Kant. Published in Königsberg by Friedrich Nicolovius, 1793. 296pp in octavo. Price: 1 Rthlr.

It was to be presumed that, just as Aristotelian and Platonic, Neoplatonic and scholastic, Cartesian and Leibnizian-Wolffian philosophy was, from the outset, adapted for<sup>5</sup> the church system or [in the case of the first pair] the latter was formed according to the former, so too would the critical [philosophy] sooner or later present and explain the doctrines of [church] dogmatics according to its characteristic principles. Now, if such an adaptation was presumably inevitable,<sup>6</sup> it was certainly<sup>7</sup> better in this case that the creator of this newest philosophical system, rather than another [philosopher], undertook this task,<sup>8</sup> in that from him [Kant] an inconsistent procedure (which is, after all, just the thing that matters in this context<sup>9</sup>) may least be feared. Now, seeing that Mr Kant carried out [this] proposed<sup>10</sup> task as the main point of the work<sup>11</sup> that lies before us, it is to be presumed that his given way of presenting the dogmatic concepts and formulations, as well as his entire system, will display<sup>12</sup> itself [in this review]; such a report, partly a detailed description, partly an examination of this<sup>13</sup> [system], would certainly be warranted. However, even a concerted attempt proved to the reviewer the difficulty of [writing] a summary; for an appropriate examination [of Kant's system] would call for a number of pages<sup>14</sup> that [would be] contrary to the layout of this journal.<sup>15</sup> [The] reviewer will therefore be content to present the goal of the work, the standpoints for the proper judgement [of it], and some of the most interesting examples of the manner in which dogmatic doctrines are handled, which will likely<sup>16</sup> suffice, as [the] reviewer is convinced that the book will not remain unread by anyone whom it can concern.<sup>17</sup>

The work's foremost standpoint, from which its text must be judged, is perhaps for good reasons not specified completely clearly and determinately. This [fact], and much [that is] characteristic of the text itself – as for example: its title, which can only correspond to it [the text] in certain respects and can thus deceive the reader; the strict philosophical approach in the first essay that looks<sup>18</sup> to prove the existence of so-called original sin *a priori*; and much more {226} can surely be added to this [list] – initially bewilder even the followers of Kant; [they] find it [to have] too many implied<sup>19</sup> claims and thus, irrelevancies, and to lack at times the otherwise usual brilliance [found in Kant's writings].

Misunderstanding first arises<sup>20</sup> only in what follows, and as such it convinces<sup>21</sup> the reviewer that one is only in a position to judge the text properly when one [assumes that] it is suitable for nothing more than an answer to the question that poses itself:<sup>22</sup> 'How is the church system of dogmatics possible, in its concepts and doctrines, according to pure (theoretical and practical) reason?' This is undoubtedly the problem (and indeed one must not disregard this)<sup>23</sup> that the work attempted to resolve according to the fundamental principles that are established from [Kant's] philosophical system itself. From this it follows, consequently, that this work is of no concern at all to those who are as little acquainted with his [Kant's] system, and who understand it as little, as they yearn to be able to understand it; and for them, therefore, [that system] is to be looked upon as nonexistent.<sup>24</sup> They, however, who understand it [Kant's system] or believe [themselves] to understand it, are yet permitted to do nothing else than to examine it [the work] in regard to the extent that it [the system] harmonizes<sup>25</sup> with the further principles<sup>26</sup> of the work. Therefore, all reasoning<sup>27</sup> from the fundamental principles of actual and bare theology, or from another [source] aside from the philosophy of the work, would not be permitted to affect<sup>28</sup> the work at all, because it completely denies<sup>29</sup> such a forum. Now, although<sup>30</sup> [the] reviewer believes himself to be very familiar with the principles [of Kant's philosophy] upon which the present, allegedly rational theory of dogmatics is based, he must yet confess that he did not always succeed in uniting the work with itself<sup>31</sup> and in following it in its proofs.

The following minor comments about the first essay, 'On the Inherence of the Evil alongside the Good Principle, or, On the Radical Evil in Human Nature',<sup>32</sup> whose foremost purpose

*seems* to be to demonstrate the reality of original sin, but *is* and *can be*,<sup>33</sup> actually, nothing other than to show how one can accept its existence in compliance with reason, may serve as proof of this judgement [regarding the book's standpoint]. The work undoubtedly exhausts that concept [of original sin] through the explanation of a natural and original, yet also acquired, propensity<sup>34</sup> to evil in human beings. The feature, [considered] as a *natural* one, indicates that it [the propensity to evil] must be accepted in the human being as the character belonging to its species and, in this way, conveys its universality. By virtue of the feature, [considered] as an *acquired* one, it is thought of as the human being's own deed through absolute free will and is thereby presented as capable of being imputed to the human being. This feature, as an *original* one, does not compromise<sup>35</sup> the *acquired* one, but rather, because that one [the latter] relates exclusively to the deed through freedom (only, however, as this [freedom] can be thought as [existing] in the intelligible character of the human being),<sup>36</sup> {227} it implies merely that it [i.e. the propensity to evil] must be thought exclusively without any time-condition, [that is] that one cannot conceive of any start in time for it.

The more familiar illumination of the concept of propensity may militate<sup>37</sup> splendidly, however, against the admissibility of this [i.e. the first essay's] presentation. According to the work, a propensity is generally the subjective ground of the possibility of an inclination. Insofar as this explanation stands completely without proof, and moreover [because it is] completely contrary to the use [of the word] in common language, it seems indeed to be quite arbitrary. Until now one understood [the term] propensity [to be] a habitual, continuous inclination or desire, so that *this*<sup>38</sup> [inclination or desire] would be the subjective ground of the possibility of propensity, rather [than vice versa].

Elsewhere in the work, p. 22, it [propensity] is a subjective determining ground of the power of choice<sup>39</sup> that precedes each deed and, yet, according to further principles<sup>40</sup> of the work, the will<sup>41</sup> simply determines itself; see pp. 39 and 54, the comment: nothing can influence it [the will], for it is absolutely free.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, propensity is, like inclination and desire, consistently<sup>43</sup> presented as [existing] in the human being according to his empirical character, but here [only] in him [considered] as [an] intelligible being. Now, through theoretical reason, we know

nothing about him as such a being [i.e. as intelligible]; [and] through practical reason [we know] only that he is free, yet without realizing the manner of this freedom that must necessarily be attached<sup>44</sup> to him. But then, can something ever entitle us to assume, on top of that, an intelligible propensity that would exist along with freedom? And even given this assumption, the work ties a knot that, because it cannot untie<sup>45</sup> it, it cuts, [even though] the latter can be satisfactory for only very few. In what follows, namely, when [moral] improvement becomes the topic of discussion, that propensity stands directly in the way. On account of this propensity, it is impossible to understand how [moral] improvement is possible: only the unconditional<sup>46</sup> command 'better yourself' allows us to conclude that it must be possible.

Additionally, the proposition that is so necessary for the goal of the work, that the propensity is a deed (p. 22,<sup>47</sup> etc.), is, for the reviewer, anything but proven. Even assuming that [this] deed already counts as that very use of freedom whereby the highest maxim is incorporated into the power of choice: how can the propensity, as a subjective determining ground of the power of choice, also be called a deed in this sense? In the concept of propensity nothing more is contained than the ground of the possibility of the use of freedom, simply because it, as the work itself says, must precede every deed, that is, every use of freedom and, consequently, also every determination<sup>48</sup> through which the highest maxim is incorporated into the power of choice. This entire presentation, that basically can be nothing more than a hypothesis, seems to be assumed, [yet] still requires quite a bit of adjustment.

{228} Because dogmatics grounds its doctrines on scriptural passages and until now did not readily assume a type of presentation that did not also find favour from Scripture,<sup>49</sup> such [a practice] is therefore, on account of the authority,<sup>50</sup> not to be changed; in this case our [Kant's] work was not able to do otherwise than to show consideration for it. However, the manner in which it did this, as well as its general maxim for this use [of Scripture], will surely have to outrage the theologically inclined<sup>51</sup> all the more (for its [the work's] scope<sup>52</sup> is thereby not at all limited to the mere philologist), as it completely conflicts with [the maxim for interpreting Scripture] that was acknowledged<sup>53</sup> until now and, moreover, it does not hesitate,<sup>54</sup> in accordance with the principles of the orthodox church, to sanction the most arbitrary

use, i.e. misuse, of the most holy<sup>55</sup> [Scripture] through a law. Now, the paradox is the following: ‘the main law for the interpretation of Scripture is agreement of it [the interpretation] with the universal practical laws of a new religion of reason; the interpretation may thereby seem forced, or, in fact, may be [forced]; by means of the interpretation, the literal, historically correct meaning may readily be sacrificed to those [aforementioned practical] rules, if only the text allows some of the latter, p. 149, etc.’<sup>56</sup> Undeniably, only by virtue of this maxim did it become possible for the work to use passages from Scripture as a possible cover for<sup>57</sup> its way of explaining dogmatic concepts: yet, [the] reviewer could not have claimed that this need [to explain dogmatics] alone produced that proposition [that the laws of the religion of reason may be forced onto Scripture]. It [the proposition] seems, rather, to belong to the inner essence of the system of the work and, thus, to deserve all the more attention.

The second essay, ‘On the Struggle of the Good with the Evil Principle for Dominion over the Human Being’,<sup>58</sup> splendidly contains the entire doctrine of Christ. He is [portrayed] as the ideal of humanity in its complete perfection, as the personified idea of the good in God through all eternity, his only begotten son, etc. He descended from heaven, assumed humanity, and [was] himself indeed divine, yet, in order to advance the world’s best [interest],<sup>59</sup> he voluntarily suffered: this is his state of abasement. Through practical belief in this Son of God the human being can hope to become blessed, namely if he is aware of such a moral disposition [like the Son of God’s] in himself. [To the extent] that he can foster the established faith, he would remain, under similar temptations and sufferings, true in his following of that archetype and he would thereby be entitled to think of himself as an object not unworthy of divine pleasure. Thus, the Son of God remains the proxy and saviour of humanity: the human being would become blessed by means of His satisfaction, etc. It is not possible to expound all of these types of presentation [found] in the work with understandable brevity and [the] reviewer must, therefore, refer [the reader] to the text<sup>60</sup> itself. If only one does not employ its [the work’s] manner of using scriptural passages,<sup>61</sup> {229} then he will thereby encounter many a very pleasant explanation.

Now, both of these [first two] essays are quite closely concerned with the actual [Critical] system and in this respect are noteworthy; nevertheless, the reviewer believes that priority and

greater interest can be conferred to both of the following two [essays] – ‘The Victory of the Good over the Evil Principle and the Founding of a Kingdom of God on Earth’, as well as ‘On Service and Pseudoservice under the Dominion of the Good Principle, or, On Religion and Priestery’,<sup>62</sup> about the church, religion in general, and so-called religious service, – at least to the extent that some of the many felicitous remarks that they contain could perhaps already now reach the appropriate destination<sup>63</sup> and fall [like seeds] on a good piece of land<sup>64</sup> from which, in a not-so-distant future, [one] could first hope to reap [their] fruits. Many prevailing abuses and prejudices are placed in such a bright light that only to the blind are they not palpable and only the stubborn are unable to abandon them. But none of them [i.e. the readers of Kant's work] ought to be blind or stubborn, [because] they [the abuses and prejudices] can and must concern them. The third and fourth sections (p. 253,<sup>65</sup> etc.) will hopefully justify this judgement for each reader.

### **Analysis of the Reviewer's Critique and Assessment of Kant's Response**

The reviewer begins on a positive note: since any great system of philosophy inevitably gives rise to a corresponding theological interpretation of religion (as in the case of the early church fathers' adaptation of either Plato or Aristotle) or is applied for the purpose of reinterpreting the existing system of church dogma, sooner or later someone was bound to do the same with Kant's Critical philosophy. He is pleased that Kant himself undertook this task, since we can presumably trust the system's originator to apply his Critical principles consistently. This makes it less crucial for a review to include ‘a detailed description’ and ‘examination’ of Kant's philosophical system – a task that was rendered impracticable by the journal's page restrictions. Merely presenting the book's standpoint and way of dealing with church doctrines will therefore suffice to achieve what appears to be the reviewer's main goal: to persuade anyone familiar with Kant's philosophy that they should also read this book, despite its shortcomings. So far, so good: Kant scholars, at least, should read *Religion*.

The reviewer begins his comments on the book itself with an observation: because Kant never clearly specifies its ‘foremost standpoint’, but merely implies it in the book's title and in his manner of argument throughout the text, even the devoted Kantian will be bewildered by Kant's convoluted approach. If we read the whole second edition

Preface with this initial observation in mind, Kant's comments in the first few paragraphs appear to be a direct response to this review, even though Kant does not mention the review itself until near the end, in the passage quoted above. The second Preface begins by stating the need to clarify the *standpoint* that is implied by the *title*, 'since concerns have been expressed also about the intention hidden under it' (6: 12) – this being precisely the point of the reviewer's initial observation. Kant defines the standpoint as *twofold*, using the metaphor of concentric spheres, with 'pure rational religion' forming the core and 'revelation' (or historical faith) as the outer sphere. With this metaphor in mind, he clarifies 'the second experiment' (*den zweiten Versuch*) conducted in *Religion*: 'to hold the revelation as a *historical system* up to moral concepts in a merely fragmentary way, and to see whether this system does not lead back to the same pure *rational system* of religion as a system independent and sufficient for religion proper'.<sup>66</sup> Kant subsequently claims that this 'fragmentary way' of appealing to scripture does not prevent him from accomplishing the task of bringing 'not merely compatibility but unity' into the relationship between reason and revelation (6: 13). The reviewer had portrayed *Religion* as containing 'too many implied claims and thus, irrelevancies' and therefore failing to achieve its unifying goal (see n. 31). Perhaps Kant mentioned the admittedly 'fragmentary' nature of his procedure in the process of explaining, in these first few paragraphs of the second edition Preface, how the book's title implies a unified, *twofold* standpoint because he hoped this new explanation would remove some of the bewilderment that this reviewer claimed readers of the first edition had experienced.

In an apparent attempt to mitigate the potentially negative impression made by his initial observation about *Religion*, the reviewer goes on to imply that the only proper standpoint for judging this text is *transcendental*. Although neither the reviewer nor Kant actually uses this technical term, the question they both pose as a quotation explicitly refers to the *possibility* of the church system, and the search for the conditions of a thing's possibility is the principal criterion for determining whether an argument or procedure is transcendental (see n. 3). In his explicit response to this review (quoted above 6: 13–4), Kant strongly objects to what he takes as the reviewer's exercise in mind-reading, but without clearly stating how the quoted description of the work's standpoint differs from his own view of that standpoint, in terms of the two 'attempts' (or 'experiments' – i.e. goals) he had hinted at in the first edition Preface and reaffirmed in the second Preface.

After all, many of Kant's arguments in *Religion* do seem to follow the characteristically Kantian form of examining the rational *possibility* of (in the reviewer's words) 'the church system of dogmatics'.<sup>67</sup> The crucial difference is that Kant wants the reader to see his purpose not in terms of a single goal, but as *twofold*: carrying out the transcendental task defined by the reviewer is only *half* of his purpose. What irked Kant about the reviewer's claim, evidently, was not the form of the question itself, but the implication the reviewer drew from it. For the reviewer goes on to assume that, because Kant employs the philosopher's standpoint throughout the book (which for Kant clearly is transcendental), *Religion* therefore could not contain ideas that would be of any concern to anyone who is not adept at thinking transcendently. After quoting the reviewer's interpretation of the book's key question, Kant continues by paraphrasing the reviewer's claim that anyone who does not have a clear grasp of the Critical philosophy (even many who *want* to understand it, but have not succeeded) may safely treat *Religion* as if it does not exist. *This*, not the form of the alleged key question itself, is the sole target of Kant's explicit reply.

Kant's rebuttal, that the book's 'essential content' is understandable to anyone familiar with 'common morality' and is already included in 'the most popular instruction for children or in sermons', indicates that he saw his intended readership *not* as merely scholars in the university, but as ordinary religious believers as well. This confession may have played an important part in the decision of the King's censor to ban the book just a few months after the second edition was published (even though the first edition had slipped by, uncensored). In any case, the exchange indicates that Kant did not want the reader to regard the book's 'standpoint' as being limited to scholars (much less Kant scholars), but as having a much broader (perhaps even universal) goal at its core. Far from trying to appease the censor, as has so often been alleged, Kant openly admits this potentially universal aim (to influence the way *ordinary religious believers* view the church and its dogmas) in a way that challenges the power of academics who seek to control religious believers by confusing them with complex dogmas – dogmas that cannot be understood unless they are 'transformed into' the language of common moral reason. For he concludes his explicit reply by referring to doctrinal 'mysteries' as being far more difficult for the layman to understand than the theories defended in *Religion*,<sup>68</sup> thus illustrating that the primary requirement for understanding *Religion* is common morality, *not* the transcendental intricacies of practical reason as set forth in the second *Critique*.

Had the book review ended at this point, Kant's response could be deemed adequate, though still potentially misleading, since he does not explicitly grant the reviewer's (legitimate) point, that *one side* of the book's standpoint (i.e. one *Versuch*) is transcendental. That many subsequent readers of *Religion* have ignored Kant's own statements about the twofold purpose of the book would then not be (and, given his clear statements earlier in the second Preface, is not) Kant's own fault. However, those many interpreters who, for more than two centuries, have refused to take Kant's plea seriously, when he claims this book's message should appeal to (and can be understood by) ordinary religious believers, have had other reasons for rejecting Kant's overall approach; in many cases these other reasons have been similar, if not identical, to one or another of the objections the reviewer goes on to advance. Had Kant adequately addressed *all* of the reviewer's concerns, he might thereby have earned more respect for his basic claim regarding the twofold standpoint of *Religion* and its implications for understanding the book's intended readership.

Let us therefore briefly recap the reviewer's objections, in order to highlight the difficulty of the challenge we shall face in our concluding attempt to respond to the criticisms Kant left unanswered. Following the reviewer's initial observation regarding the book's limited appeal – on account of its esoteric, transcendental standpoint (a point the reviewer himself seems to regard not as an objection, but merely as a statement of fact) – we find the following five substantive criticisms:

1. Kant's use of the term 'propensity' is idiosyncratic and inconsistent with the way that term is used in ordinary language: normally we think of desires as determining a propensity, not as a propensity determining our desires.
2. Because there is, according to Kant, no temporal starting point for the propensity to evil, it must be regarded as *determining* the *Willkür*, yet elsewhere he describes *Wille* as *absolutely free*. Kant never adequately explains how this distinction enables us to conceive of the propensity to evil as coexisting with freedom of choice.
3. Kant never explains how moral improvement is possible, if the propensity to evil is a necessary and universal component of human nature. His appeal to divine assistance merely cuts this 'knot', rather than untying it with a proper philosophical solution.
4. Kant's assumption that the propensity to evil, though noumenal, must be regarded as a *deed* is at best a hypothesis that remains to be proved.

5. Kant's hermeneutic principle, encouraging moral interpretations of scripture to be 'forced' onto the text, amounts to a paradoxical 'misuse' of scripture that is bound to outrage any responsible theologian.

Of these objections, we find that Kant himself effectively responds to the first and the fifth in footnotes added to the second edition (though again, without stating explicitly that he is responding to this review). After examining those responses and assessing their effectiveness, we shall attempt in the next section to respond to the other three criticisms.

Following a paragraph that accurately presents Kant's theory of the evil propensity as an attempt to ground the Christian doctrine of original sin in the essential nature of the human being's rational capacity, the reviewer objects to this way of using the term 'propensity'. He begins by introducing Kant's claim from the First Piece (6: 28), that propensity is 'the subjective basis for the possibility of an inclination (habitual desire)'. According to the reviewer, Kant's definition of this term is 'arbitrary' and 'completely contrary to ... [its] use ... in common language'. He maintains, in opposition to Kant, that inclination (or habitual desire) is 'the subjective ground of the possibility of propensity, rather [than vice versa]'. Kant's definition of this term is 'arbitrary' and 'completely contrary to ... [its] use ... in common language'.

That Kant addresses this issue in a footnote added in the second edition (6: 28–9n) shows that the one point he responds to in the Preface was not the only one of this reviewer's objections that he regarded as weighty. In the footnote, Kant not only articulates the relationship between propensity and inclination more carefully, but also explains how these relate to two other forms of desire, namely instinct ('a felt need ... to enjoy something of which one does not yet have a concept') and passion ('an inclination that precludes dominion over oneself'). He portrays 'propensity' as 'the predisposition to desire an enjoyment' and claims that the inclination to this enjoyment can come about only 'once the subject has had the experience of it'. In this way, a propensity to (do) a thing exists in human beings before any experience of that thing. Only after the experience, when a human being specifically desires something, may we say the person has an *inclination* to it – a position diametrically opposed to the one defended by the reviewer.

To illustrate the superiority of his position, Kant includes in this new footnote an example of the desire that certain human beings have for intoxicating substances. He writes:

Thus all crude human beings have a propensity to intoxicating things; for although many of them are not acquainted at all

with intoxication and thus also have no desire whatever for things that bring it about, yet one need let them try such things only once in order to produce in these human beings a scarcely inextirpable desire for them.

Crude people (*rohe Menschen*) have a natural (inborn) *propensity* to consume alcohol, Kant claims; but not until they try it and experience its intoxicating effect do they become *inclined* to consume it. To make this point perfectly clear, so that the reviewer cannot be correct in claiming that an inclination precedes a propensity, Kant also adds, in the second edition, the Latin word *concupiscentia* (i.e. craving) in the parenthetical remark describing inclination as ‘habitual desire’. This seemingly minor addition implicitly raises the *reductio ad absurdum* question: how can one *crave* a thing with which one is completely unacquainted? As confusion is bound to arise, if one is not familiar with Kant’s technical use of the terms ‘propensity’ (*Hang*) and ‘inclination’ (*Neigung*), we may assume that Kant found the reviewer’s point to be an important (albeit not insurmountable) objection, and thus made these two additions to clarify exactly what he meant, hoping to avoid any similar misunderstandings in the future. If we accept Kant’s taxonomy of desire as he presents it in his newly added footnote, then he has clearly succeeded in overcoming the reviewer’s objection – a fact that might help explain why subsequent commentators have not tended to raise serious objections against this aspect of Kant’s theory.

Similarly, that the reviewer’s fifth criticism (regarding Kant’s hermeneutic principle) is not one of the commonly cited obstacles to accepting Kant’s position in *Religion* may also be due to the fact that Kant responds to it in a specific footnote added in the second edition. The second of the nine footnotes added to the Third Piece (6: 110n) appears to be a direct reply to the reviewer’s complaint about Kant’s allegedly paradoxical (and theologically unacceptable) insistence on a moral interpretation of scripture. Kant cites a specific example of a biblical scholar, J. D. Michaelis, who had recently insisted that a prayer seeking revenge (from Psalm 59) be regarded as ‘inspired’, and argues that the only way to accept this interpretation while remaining consistent with other scriptural passages (such as ‘Love your enemies’: Matt. 5: 44) is to take the passages on vengeance as *symbols* encouraging believers to take revenge against their own ‘evil inclinations’ and/or never to seek *personal* revenge against others, but instead to leave all vengeance to God. Kant apparently intended this response to assist his ‘theologically inclined’ readers, those who might share the reviewer’s concern about

the danger of appearing to condone a 'misuse' of scripture, to find his principle of moral interpretation more palatable. The reviewer had accused Kant's procedure of being 'inconsistent' and 'arbitrary', so Kant here provides a concrete example in hopes of reassuring theologians that the motive of his hermeneutic principle is to render the text *more* self-consistent, by grounding all interpretations in moral reason.

As it turns out, of course, Kant's principle of scriptural interpretation (forcing a moral interpretation onto scripture even when such a meaning is clearly not intended by the original author) still infuriated some theologians. Perhaps Kant did not call specific attention to this issue in the second edition Preface because he knew how right the reviewer was: literal-minded theologians, as well as those devoted to historically accurate scholarship, were bound to object to his principle. Indeed, the reviewer had actually provided an accurate (though incomplete) statement of Kant's position. Kant does argue in the Third Piece (6: 110) that the correct principle for scriptural interpretation *in a church* is to find a moral meaning in the text; even if, in the opinion of scholars, that meaning 'may often seem forced, and may often actually be forced[,] ... this interpretation must, if only the text is capable of bearing it, be preferred to a literal interpretation that either contains within itself absolutely nothing for morality, or perhaps even acts counter to morality's incentives'. The reviewer accuses Kant's principle of being paradoxical; but there is no reason to regard it in this way, provided we clearly distinguish between the principle of interpretation that *scholars* should use and the principle appropriate for *religious* settings.

The reviewer's claim that Kant's position is bound to enrage theologians turned out to be verified by the fact that the King's censor banned Kant, on 4 October 1794, from making any further public statements about religion. Perhaps Kant knew that, in the political context of that time, replying to this criticism in such a conspicuous place (i.e. in the second edition Preface) would only make matters worse, for a core outcome of the argument in *Religion*, especially in the Fourth Piece (where, ironically, the reviewer claims he found the best insights!), genuinely *is* to dethrone the favoured position of theologians within religious organizations. Indeed, this may explain why the reviewer describes Kant's core hermeneutic principle as a 'paradox', whereby the allegedly correct interpretation of scripture may ignore what biblical scholars regard as the correct interpretation. The reviewer seems to have found this particularly objectionable because he mistakenly *thought* Kant's book would be of no concern to ordinary (non-scholarly) religious

believers – a point Kant corrects in his explicit response, quoted above, but without clarifying how this resolves the alleged paradox.

Kant might have been able to provide a response that would have appeased the censor, without compromising his position, had he taken more seriously the reviewer's attempt to second-guess his (implied) guiding standpoint. For the question quoted by both Kant and the reviewer explicitly highlights 'the church system' as the book's focus. Kant could have pointed out that his principle of moral interpretation does not compromise theological scholarship, because it was intended *only for application in a church setting*. Had he been willing to grant the appropriateness of the reviewer's reference to the church, he could have explained that his hermeneutic principle was not intended to be applicable *in a university setting*, where the theoretical standpoint (i.e. historically accurate exegesis) must retain its proper priority. By appearing not to challenge the university-based theologians quite so directly, he might have been able to avoid arousing the censor's ire.<sup>69</sup> That Kant chose not to respond in such a way highlights the weakness of any interpretation of *Religion* that views its contents as, in any sense, an insincere attempt to appease the censor.

The relative attention the reviewer pays to each of the four pieces corresponds quite closely to the amount of literature that each piece has generated until now: the First Piece attracts by far the most attention, with the Second Piece a distant second, and the Third and Fourth Pieces lagging far behind; indeed, the reviewer mentions the Third and Fourth Pieces almost as an afterthought – though he praises this last half of the book as containing its most fruitful insights. That the First Piece has nevertheless continued to dominate scholarly discussion of *Religion* is largely due to the fact that Kant never satisfactorily responded to several interpretative difficulties that arise for any attentive reader. That the reviewer identifies some of the very problems that continue to plague interpreters leaves Kant devoid of any excuse for not having given a *full* reply to this reviewer, whose objections he claimed to be able to dispense with so readily.

### Defending Kant against the Reviewer's Three Unanswered Objections

The first and foremost reason Kant's brief attempt to 'dispose of' this review in the second edition Preface of *Religion* seems unconvincing is that he does not acknowledge what appears self-evident: the reviewer is at least partially correct to characterize the book's implied standpoint

using the transcendental terminology of Kant's Critical philosophy. Had Kant granted the legitimacy of the reviewer's quoted question, then gone on to clarify that it represents only the *first experiment's* side of the twofold standpoint informing the book, instead of merely *opining* that his essential ideas should be as readily understandable as those expressed 'in the popular instruction for children or in sermons', readers would have been able to connect his rebuttal to the newly introduced metaphor describing the book's project in terms of two concentric spheres. For only the *second experiment*, properly understood, is accurately described as being aimed at the concerns of the ordinary (educated Christian) layperson and/or non-philosophical theologian.

Had Kant admitted the reviewer's claim regarding the transcendental character of the book's implied standpoint (or had he at least clarified that something like it, perhaps in an amended twofold form, is intended), then he might have recognized that his transcendental argument for the necessary and universal status of the evil propensity is actually only 'implied'. He could then have offered a more explicit account of the argument he calls an 'a priori', 'proper proof' (6:34n, 6: 35). The absence of such a clarification has resulted in commentators regarding this as the infamous 'missing' proof of the propensity to evil (see e.g. Morgan 2005). He could have pointed out that, as has been recently argued, the section titles of the First Piece themselves constitute the steps of the transcendental proof alluded to elsewhere (see n. 67). Perhaps Kant was reluctant to clarify this point by extending his response in the second Preface (or by adding any further changes to the second edition) because to do so would have been to emphasize the aspect of his twofold standpoint that *really does* appeal mainly to his philosophically minded reader (i.e. its transcendental aspect). To do that could have been construed as conceding the reviewer's claim that (at least part of) *Religion* is irrelevant to non-Kantians.

Understanding the transcendental character of Kant's account of the propensity to evil is the key to responding to the second of the reviewer's objections. The *Wille-Willkür* distinction can then be regarded as parallel to the transcendental-empirical distinction: just as Kant's epistemology defends a view of the human understanding whereby the content of our cognitions is real from the empirical perspective even though it is ideal from the transcendental perspective, so also *Religion* defends a view of the human will whereby the content of our choices is transcendently free even though it is empirically determined. That is, the free choice to adopt a propensity to evil fulfils a

function in *Religion* analogous to the mind's imposition of the forms of pure intuition (space and time) onto the empirical world in the first *Critique*: both function as transcendently ideal boundaries that make possible our empirically real experience of the matter under discussion (i.e. moral failure in *Religion*, and our knowledge of phenomenal objects in the first *Critique* – both presented as *inevitable* features of the human situation, due to their transcendental grounding). We do not actually experience the propensity to evil as such, any more than we have direct experience of the *pure* intuitions of space and time; but our experience of 'a few consciously evil actions, indeed ... a single one' (6: 20) requires us to assume the former, just as our experience of phenomenal objects in space and time requires us to assume the latter. That Kant did not explain this parallelism more clearly may be regrettable to Kant scholars; but if we take his brief explicit response to the reviewer at face value, his reason was that he did *not* want *Religion* to be regarded as an esoteric book meant to be read only by Kantian initiates. Kant's response indicates that he regarded religion as the place where the 'rubber' of his moral theory most effectively hits the 'road' of ordinary human experience. He was therefore trying to *minimize* references to technical terms such as noumenon and phenomenon, not carry them to a new level of Critical sophistication. This is why he explicitly states, in the passage quoted from 6: 13–4, that such notions were mentioned from time to time *only* to satisfy the expectations of the 'school'.<sup>70</sup>

Responding to the reviewer's third specific challenge, to explain how moral improvement is possible in the face of the evil propensity without merely evading the matter (i.e. cutting this 'knot') with an appeal to divine grace, also becomes more feasible once we accept the reviewer's recommendation that Kant's implied transcendental standpoint be made explicit. For if Kant is attempting, as the reviewer claimed, to answer a question about the *possibility* of 'the church system of dogmatics', then the main arguments of the Second Piece must be regarded not as a mere hypothesis – that the portion of church dogmatics known as 'christology' can solve the problem of radical evil – but as an inquiry into how such a system of theological belief *is possible*, without destroying hope of genuine moral improvement, as occurs whenever a belief in grace becomes an excuse for moral laziness. Kant could have gone a long way to dispelling the (now) centuries-old misunderstandings of his otherwise bewildering references to Christian theological language in the Second Piece if he had *responded* to this objection, simply by explaining (in line with the reviewer's own hint!) that the goal of the Second Piece is not to construct a *theology* of grace (i.e. that the

Second Piece does not attempt to defend the Christian account of grace as such), but to demonstrate how it is *possible* for a person who *already believes in some theology of grace* to be a morally good person. Kant could have explained in a single new paragraph added to the second edition Preface, or in a footnote added to the Second Piece, that his inquiry there focuses on explaining *how a person must believe*, if belief in divine assistance is to empower the believer to be a better person, rather than falling victim to the ever-present deceptive tendency of radical evil. Scholars participating in the recent 'affirmative' turn in the study of Kant's *Religion* have demonstrated that this must have been Kant's actual, implied goal in the Second Piece (see e.g. Palmquist 2010) – thus directly meeting the reviewer's crucial challenge to the coherence of Kant's argument.

The reviewer next objects to Kant's portrayal of the evil propensity as simultaneously 'a subjective determining ground of the power of choice' and a 'deed'. He asks: 'how can the propensity, as a subjective determining ground of the power of choice, also be called a deed in this sense?' The reviewer suggests that the work contradicts itself, for it claims that 'the concept of propensity [contains] nothing more ... than the ground of the possibility of the use of freedom...' But how can the mere ground (i.e. basis) of a possibility be a deed? If we can find a way past this last of the three major objections that Kant did not answer through changes in the second edition, then the task of filling in the defences Kant neglected to offer will be complete.

A typically Kantian move provides the basis for an adequate response to this question. Kant freely admits 'there would be a contradiction in the concept of ... propensity' (6: 31), but only 'if this expression could not somehow be taken in two different significations that can nonetheless both be reconciled'. According to Kant, the word 'deed' can apply both to the use of freedom in particular actions (in the phenomenal realm) and, as the reviewer notes, to the 'use of freedom ... through which the highest maxim is incorporated into the power of choice' (in the noumenal realm). The first sort of deed involves 'the objects of the power of choice' (6: 31) and when performed without consideration for duty, Kant calls this 'vice' or *peccatum derivativum* (derivative transgression). The other sort of deed involves the power of choice itself, and when performed in the same way as the above deed, Kant calls this *peccatum originarium* (original transgression). This original transgression is, according to Kant, 'cognizable merely by reason without any time condition' (6: 31) and is, thus, quite different from the type of deed

we experience in the phenomenal world (i.e. empirically). If the reviewer is merely asking how a propensity (to evil) can be viewed as an *empirical* deed, then Kant's answer would be simple: it cannot. But when viewed transcendently, as applying to the very possibility of our power to choose evil, Kant argues that the propensity can and must be viewed as a deed. For if our propensity to evil were not considered to be a deed performed freely by human beings, then we could not be considered moral beings (as 'evil must arise from freedom'). That is, if the way 'the supreme maxim is admitted ... into the power of choice' (6: 31) were not a deed performed through freedom, then human beings could not be held morally accountable for their actions.

Since this (noumenal) 'deed' can only be cognized by reason, the confusion it tends to arouse should come as no surprise. Unlike the phenomenal deeds that we regularly experience, Kant does not believe one can offer a rational explanation for exactly how or why this original transgression (being noumenal) exists; this, he argues towards the end of the First Piece, is precisely why human beings feel the need to appeal to religious symbols (such as the serpent in the garden) to fill this explanatory gap (6: 43–4). All reason can tell us is that, as beings with an essentially good predisposition (for reasons Kant presents in section I of the First Piece), we cannot conceive of ourselves as *ever* succumbing to evil actions unless we assume that such an original transgression has produced in us an 'innate' propensity that 'cannot be eradicated' (6: 31), because this propensity is the 'subjective basis for the possibility of an [e.g. evil] inclination'. If this transgression were not a deed conducted through freedom, then moral responsibility could not be imputed to us. In this way, the propensity to evil can be a subjective determining ground even though it is a deed that (in a logical sense) precedes all of our actions: it is a 'choice' made freely, outside of time, by the human being, to place empirical considerations above the moral law. This assumed deed is what activates the propensity (i.e. causes human beings to feel inclined) to perform the evil acts we regularly witness in the empirical world.

We see from this that Kant himself did not regard his claim about these characteristics of the evil propensity as 'nothing more than a hypothesis', but rather as a demonstrated conclusion, at least in the transcendental sense that the evil propensity *must* be regarded as a *universal* characteristic of human nature. All of this, however, was already present in the first edition. So Kant missed a golden opportunity, when responding to the reviewer in the second edition Preface, to refute this

objection by clarifying that the *twofold* nature of his standpoint has direct implications for his claim that moral deeds possess both a noumenal and a phenomenal aspect. To do this, he would have needed to admit that the reviewer's attempt to identify the book's 'standpoint' was partly *correct*, but that confusion arose because the second experiment had not been acknowledged properly. The fact that Kant's response does include a brief reference to the key terms required for such a clarification (i.e. 'noumenon' and 'phenomenon'), but attempts to de-emphasize their significance, suggests that Kant's excuse for ignoring this criticism would be, again, that he did not want to write anything in the second Preface that would enhance the impression that this book was only meant for 'the school'. Unfortunately, the subsequent history of the scholarly reaction to Kant's theory suggests that his neglect of this objection was a strategic mistake.

In conclusion, let us turn our attention back to the reviewer's initial observation – the point Kant took as the sole issue worthy of an explicit response. Did Kant make any changes in the second edition that were aimed at addressing his newly clarified *twofold* standpoint? Yes. Taking the Second Piece as a prime example, all six footnotes (or portions of footnotes) that Kant added in the second edition can be regarded as attempts to provide further explanation of the very point Kant emphasizes in concluding his explicit response to the reviewer: that some theological concepts are more easily understood in terms of common morality than others are. Thus, the first added footnote (6: 75n) provides a rationally acceptable definition of grace, showing it to be a concept that has a legitimate applicability beyond dogmatic theology. The second added footnote (6: 78n) advises clergy on the proper attitude towards deathbed conversion, reminding them that, even though God judges the heart (the noumenal disposition), we have rational grounds for judging our own moral condition only by observing our phenomenal deeds, while the third (6: 80n) challenges Christians who believe in a virgin birth to do so in a manner consistent with morality. The fourth (6: 81n) comments on different ways recent theologians had understood the crucifixion of Jesus and the corresponding ritual of the last supper, suggesting that it makes good moral sense to commemorate an attempted public revolution of morality that carries enduring legitimacy. The fifth (6: 84n) is a single, brief sentence added to the last sentence of the main text, reminding the reader of the wider 'sphere' of the book's implied twofold standpoint by emphasizing that, when interpreting such dogmas, 'the [moral] meaning is not the only one'. And the last added footnote (6: 88n), to a text in the General

Comment that insists miracles must not become the basis for any allegedly moral maxim, clarifies that miracles can be viewed in this way (as non-essential to the core of true religion) ‘without challenging their possibility or actuality’. Without exception, each addition to the Second Piece exemplifies Kant’s attempt to portray his position as *less* subversive to the established system of church dogmatics, and thus *more* easily comprehensible to anyone who is in touch with ‘common morality’, than the reviewer had interpreted it to be.

The issues raised by the foregoing analysis of this early review of Kant’s *Religion*, and our assessment of Kant’s response to it, transcend the concerns of Kant scholarship alone, for they cut to the heart of the question of how philosophical reflection may be relevant to the moral and religious concerns of ordinary human beings. To cite but one clear example, the tremendous influence of hermeneutic philosophy in the twentieth century should prepare us to consider, more seriously than the reviewer did, the legitimacy of Kant’s recommendations on the proper way of interpreting scripture in a religious setting. Had Kant openly affirmed the (implied) transcendental aspect of his standpoint in *Religion* and sought on that basis to clarify the book’s relevance to ‘the church system’, then the overwhelming influence his work has had on scholars, in both theology and philosophy of religion, might have been complemented more than it actually has been by a similarly profound influence on ordinary religious believers.

#### Notes

- 1 The review appeared in late 1793 (just a few months before Kant wrote the Preface to the 2nd edn); see n. 4, below.
- 2 This and all quotations from Kant’s *Religion* (including direct quotes in the translation of the book review, unless otherwise noted) are taken from Pluhar 2009, citing the marginal pagination from the Berlin Academy edn of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*.
- 3 For a more thorough discussion of the meaning of ‘transcendental’, with particular reference to its possible application to *Religion*, see Palmquist 2008. On some accounts, ‘transcendental’ refers only to the necessary conditions for *empirical knowledge*. Those who understand the term in this restricted sense should substitute ‘quasi-transcendental’ for ‘transcendental’ throughout the present article.
- 4 This anonymous review appeared in the German journal, *Neueste Critische Nachrichten* (ed. Johann Georg Peter Möller), 29 (1793), article number 257, pp. 225–9; original page numbers are shown in curly brackets {}. The other sections of this article were written primarily by Palmquist, with significant input from Otterman, but this translation was initially prepared by Otterman, and significantly revised with input from Palmquist.
- 5 *auf ... angewandt*.
- 6 *wahrscheinlicher Weise nicht ausbleiben konnte*.
- 7 *immer*.

- 8 *Geschäft.*  
 9 *worauf es hiebei ankommt*; parentheses added.  
 10 *gedachtes.*  
 11 *Werk.* All other instances of the word 'work' translate *V.*, *Vers.* or *Versuch*, unless otherwise noted. *Versuch* means 'attempt' but can also mean 'essay'. We reserve 'essay' (*Abhandlung*) for contexts where the reviewer refers to one of *Religion's* major divisions, as Kant's own word, *Stück* (literally, 'Piece'), does not appear in the review.  
 12 *sich ... ausbreiten werde*, or 'will propagate'. The reviewer's intended meaning in this and the following sentence is ambiguous. We have selected one of the two possible readings by using square brackets to fill in the missing words. Instead of referring to what is to be expected from this book review, the reviewer might here be expressing disappointment that *Kant* did not 'display' (but in this case 'propagate' would be the better choice) these two features in the text of *Religion*; on this alternative reading, the 'However' (*allein*) that begins the next sentence would be somewhat awkward, as the intended contrast would not be so direct.  
 13 *Prüfung desselben*, or 'testing of the same'. The *Prüfung* could refer to the testing of church dogmatics for consistency with the principles of Kant's system; but the context makes this reading unlikely.  
 14 *mehrerer Bogen*, or 'more sheets of paper'.  
 15 *Blätter.*  
 16 *um so eher.*  
 17 The review is written in one long paragraph, with several long dashes inserted in the text. Our paragraph breaks replace each of these long dashes, except that here and in the case of the last paragraph break, below, no dash appears in the text.  
 18 *sucht.*  
 19 *enthaltende.*  
 20 *hebt sich.*  
 21 *ergiebt es sich ... Ueberzeugung.*  
 22 Kant paraphrases this sentence in the Second Preface (6: 13; see above) in a way that shows he thinks the reviewer means he (Kant) poses this question to himself; but the reviewer does not explicitly state that. However, Kant quotes the following question accurately.  
 23 Parentheses added.  
 24 Since Kant quotes the words 'that ... nonexistent' verbatim from the review, the translation for this phrase is taken directly from Pluhar 2009. The reviewer's point is that even those who yearn (but fail) to understand Kant's system may safely ignore *Religion*.  
 25 *vertrage und übereinstimme.*  
 26 *anderweitigen Principien*, or 'ulterior principles'. The reviewer is probably referring to the Evil Principle and the Good Principle, as Kant uses '(des) Princip(s)' to refer to these principles in the title of each of the four pieces. We use 'fundamental principle' for the reviewer's two uses of *Grundsätzen*.  
 27 *Raisonnements.*  
 28 *treffen.*  
 29 *durchaus nicht anerkennt.*  
 30 *so ... aber auch.*  
 31 That is, uniting the principles of Kant's philosophy with the theory of dogmatics presented in the work.  
 32 This is the title of the First Piece.  
 33 Italics added in this sentence.  
 34 *Hang.*

- 35 *thut ... keinen Eintrag.*
- 36 Parentheses added.
- 37 *streiten.*
- 38 Italics added.
- 39 *Willkür.* Kant first makes this claim in the 2nd edn, at 6: 31.
- 40 See n. 26, above.
- 41 *Wille.*
- 42 The two page references here apparently correspond to 6: 28, where Kant first defines ‘propensity’ as ‘the subjective basis for the possibility of an inclination’ and 6: 40, where Kant writes: ‘moral constitution means the basis for the *use* of freedom, a basis which (like the determining basis of the free power of choice in general) must be sought solely in presentations of reason’. The reviewer might also have in mind 6: 24, where Kant says: ‘Only in this way is an incentive ... consistent with the absolute spontaneity of the power of choice (i.e., with freedom).’
- 43 *nie anders ... als.*
- 44 *beizulegenden.*
- 45 *auflösen.* Kant uses the knot metaphor in discussing the ‘antinomy of faith’ (6: 119). There he portrays a theoretical solution as disentangling (*auflösen*) the knot, and a practical solution as cutting it. The reviewer does not make clear whether his claim is intended as a summary or a criticism of Kant’s position.
- 46 *nicht abzuweisende.*
- 47 See 6: 31–2.
- 48 *dem bestimmten.*
- 49 *von der Schrift begünstigt ward.*
- 50 *der Autorität halber.* The context suggests that this is a reference to scripture; but ‘the authority’ could also be a subtle way of referring to the King’s censor, since the reviewer should have written ‘its authority’ if referring only to scripture.
- 51 *Eregeten.*
- 52 *Spielraum.*
- 53 *der bisher anerkannten.*
- 54 *keinen Anstand nimmt.*
- 55 *allerheiligsten.*
- 56 Although the reviewer uses quotation marks and is discussing the *First* piece, he is actually paraphrasing a passage from the *Third* piece (6: 110). The relevant portion of Kant’s text is quoted in the following section.
- 57 *zum etwanigen Belag.*
- 58 This is the title of the Second Piece (6: 57–8).
- 59 *das Weltbeste.*
- 60 *die Schrift.* Elsewhere we have usually translated this word as ‘scripture’. Here, however, the reviewer appears to be referring to Kant’s text, perhaps using this term ironically, given the following sentence.
- 61 *Schriftsteller*, literally ‘writers’; we take this as a misprint for *Schriftstellen*, the term translated previously as ‘scriptural passages’.
- 62 These are the titles of the Third Piece and Fourth Piece of *Religion*, respectively. The reviewer combines these two titles and the phrase ‘as well as’ in one long quote.
- 63 *Ort.*
- 64 *Acker.*
- 65 That is, §§3–4 of the Fourth Piece (6: 175–6).
- 66 6: 12. As Kant explains earlier in the second Preface, the first experiment is to discover ‘the bare, *a priori* principles’ that make religion possible (6: 12), clearly a transcendental

- task that must occur before the second experiment, the 'uniting' of pure rational religion with some revealed religious tradition, can take place. The nature of the book's 'experiment' had already been explained in the first Preface – a point Kant specifically states in the third paragraph of the second Preface (6: 13). The English translators obscure this reference by translating *Versuch* as 'experiment' in the second paragraph but as 'attempt' in the third.
- 67 Palmquist 2008 portrays the allegedly 'missing' transcendental argument in the First Piece as follows: given the original goodness of human nature, an evil action is *possible* only if a person has *chosen* an evil propensity at the very outset of one's moral life; since we do find actual instances of evil throughout the whole spectrum of human experience, we may conclude that the evil propensity is a universal and necessary, defining character of the species. In every situation of free choice, we humans therefore find ourselves in a position of being *already inclined* towards evil.
- 68 Kant's explanation of the new term *parerga* and of the purpose of the four General Comments, in the long paragraph added to the end of the first General Comment (6: 52–3), likewise highlights the difference between such esoteric doctrines and the common morality that is the focus of the rest of the book.
- 69 The reason Kant resisted this approach is probably that it would have heightened the impression that in *Religion* Kant was straying into the theologian's territory by giving concrete advice to pastors and church-goers – an impression Kant seeks to avoid in the 1st edn Preface. Kant's most thorough defence of such a strict separation of powers comes in his *Conflict of the Faculties* (1797), where he clarifies that it refers to relations between *university faculties*. Palmquist 2006 thus argues that *Conflict* need not be interpreted in a way that *precludes* interpreting *Religion* as having just such concrete implications for religious believers.
- 70 The 'school' has, indeed, taken up the reviewer's challenge on this point with gusto. Of the many studies of the relationship between the terms *Wille* and *Willkur*, one of the best is Hudson 1991. See also the discussion in Allison 1990: 129–36.

## References

- Allison, H. E. (1990) *Kant's Theory of Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hudson, H. (1991) 'Wille, Willkür, and the Imputability of Immoral Actions'. *Kant-Studien*, 82, 179–96.
- Morgan, S. (2005) 'The Missing Formal Proof of Humanity's Radical Evil in Kant's *Religion*'. *Philosophical Review*, 114, 63–114.
- Palmquist, S. R. (2006) 'Philosophers in the Public Square: A Religious Resolution of Kant's *Conflict*'. In C. L. Firestone and S. R. Palmquist (eds.), *Kant and the New Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press), pp. 230–54.
- (2008) 'Kant's Quasi-Transcendental Argument for a Necessary and Universal Evil Principle in Human Nature'. *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 46, 261–97.
- (2010) 'Kant's Ethics of Grace: Perspectival Solutions to the Moral Problems with Divine Assistance'. *Journal of Religion*, 90, 530–53.
- Pluhar, W. S. (2009) Trans. of Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Co.