

Vindicating Kant's Morality

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ABSTRACT: Among others, four significant criticisms have been leveled against Kant's morality. These criticisms are that Kant's morality lacks a motivational component, that it ignores the spiritual dimensions of morality espoused by a virtue-based ethics, that it overemphasizes the principle of autonomy in neglecting the communal context of morality, and that it lacks a theological foundation in being detached from God. In this paper I attempt to show that, when understood in the broader context of his religious doctrines and the overall philosophical project of the architectonic of reason, Kant's morality has a strong motivational component, supports the forming of a virtuous character as an essential element in a complete moral life, must be grounded in a community so as to realize peace and happiness for rational individuals, and is linked, ultimately, to a theological foundation.

I

There is an all-comprehending nature (in space and time) in which reason coordinates all physical relations into unity. There is a universally operative cause with freedom in rational beings, and, with the latter, a categorical imperative that connects them all, and, with that, in turn, an all-embracing, morally commanding, original being—a God.

Kant, *Opus Postumum*, 22:104.

FOUR CRITICISMS, among others, have been leveled against Kant's rule-governed morality: (A) Kant's morality lacks inspiration and fails to motivate to action. (B) Kant's morality neglects the qualities of sympathy, self-respect, gratitude, and emotional harmony, the likes of which are espoused by a virtue ethics or feminist ethics as necessary for a complete moral life. (C) Kant's morality neglects the communal context of morality and the "good life" in placing too much emphasis upon the principle of autonomy. (D) Kant's morality lacks a theological foundation that would guarantee a clear moral authority, i.e., it has become detached from God, theology, and the analogues that see God as sovereign and God's laws as moral principles. A brief look at the literature surrounding Kant's moral theory will ratify these claims.

With respect to (A), Hegel maintains that Kant reduces all of morality to an "empty formalism . . . , an empty rhetoric of duty for duty's sake."¹ Kant has been

¹G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge MA: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), §135.

attacked by virtue ethicists,² natural-law theorists,³ feminist thinkers,⁴ and Humean moral theorists⁵ under the united front that Kant's moral theory fails because of its "super-disinterestedness."⁶ Summing up this super-disinterestedness, Howard Caygill notes that Kant's categorical imperative "has been variously interpreted as the principle of an empty formalist moral philosophy, a glorification of the Prussian virtue of disinterested obedience to the call of duty, and the founding principle of an objectivist, rational account of moral action."⁷

With respect to (B), ever since Hegel, Nietzsche, and Scheler, the claim has been made that Kant's autonomy leads to *automaton-y*.⁸ From this perspective, the moral decision-maker is viewed as a cold, calculating machine, or as some kind of neurotic who barely manages to control temptation. Either way, in the words of Maritain, the "desire for happiness and the choice of true happiness, the aspiration toward beatitude, play absolutely no role and have absolutely no place in the proper order of (Kantian) morality."⁹ Humeans note that Kant's morality reverses Hume's dictum, "Be a philosopher, but amidst your philosophy, be still a man," since the fully rational and fully consistent categorical imperative trumps any and all other "human" considerations when making a moral decision.¹⁰ Feminists think that any feminine qualities (let alone classic masculine qualities like honor or pride) are absent from Kant's moral account. In the words of Maritain, "Love has

²Philippa Foot, *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Berkeley CA: Univ. of California Press, 1978); Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1981); B. Mayo, *Ethics and the Moral Life* (New York NY: Macmillan, 1958); E. Pincoffs, *Quandaries and Virtues* (Kansas City MO: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1986).

³C. S. Layman, *The Shape of the Good: Christian Reflections on the Foundation of Ethics* (Notre Dame IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1991); R. Louden, *Morality and Moral Theory: A Reappraisal and Reaffirmation* (Oxford UK: Oxford Univ., 1992); Jacques Maritain, *Neuf Leçons sur les Notions Premières de la Philosophie Morale* (Paris: Pierre Tequi, 1950); Jacques Maritain, *Moral Philosophy: An Historical and Critical Survey of the Great Systems* (New York NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964).

⁴Robert Holmes, *Basic Moral Philosophy* (New York NY: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1998), p. 127; R.M. Schott, "Feminism and Kant: Antipathy or Sympathy" in *Autonomy and Community: Readings in Contemporary Kantian Social Philosophy*, ed. J. Kneller and S. Axinn (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 1998), pp. 87–102; Sara Sedgwick, "Can Kant's Ethics Survive the Feminist Critique?," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 7 (1990): 60–79.

⁵David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (New York NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), Bk. 3, Sec. II, "Of Morals"; David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. J. B. Schneewind (Indianapolis IN: Hackett, 1983), App. 1, "Concerning Moral Sentiment"; G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33 (1958): 1–19; Richard Taylor, *Ethics, Faith and Reason* (Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall, 1985).

⁶Maritain, *Moral Philosophy*, p. 101.

⁷Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary* (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 99.

⁸G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978); Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, §135; Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. William Kaufmann (New York NY: Vintage Books, 1974); Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, trans. M. Frings and R. Funk (Evanston IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1973).

⁹Maritain, *Moral Philosophy*, p. 100.

¹⁰Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, p. 4; also see Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," op. cit.; J. B. Schneewind, "Autonomy, Obligation, and Virtue: An Overview of Kant's Moral Philosophy" in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), pp. 309–41.

no place in it.”¹¹ Natural-law theorists have observed that Kant’s moral theory is overly conduct-oriented and eschews character-development. Such a “stony” and “unsympathetic”¹² morality is seen as deficient because, following Aristotle (e.g., *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1099a), a complete moral account requires a consideration of the very things excluded from Kant’s morality, viz., the pleasures and pains associated with inclinations, as well as the benefits associated with the good life.¹³

With respect to (C), Kant himself tells us:

Nature has willed that man should produce entirely by his own initiative everything which goes beyond the mechanical ordering of his animal existence, and that he should not partake of any other happiness or perfection than that which he has procured for himself without instinct and by his own reason.¹⁴

Also:

He must concede that the ground of obligation here must not be sought in the nature of man or in the circumstances in which he is placed but *a priori* solely in the concepts of pure reason, and that every precept which rests on principles of mere experience . . . may be called a practical rule but never a moral law.¹⁵

The ideas represented in these paragraphs have caused commentators to claim that Kant’s morality is an inherently privatized endeavor in which the autonomous being makes decisions as a “rational atom in a vacuum,” to use MacIntyre’s phrase. What suffices for a moral decision is an aprioristic thought-experiment whereby one tests one’s maxims against the formulations of the categorical imperative; any rational being can perform such an experiment irrespective of time, place, circumstance, or situation.¹⁶ Thus, Maritain maintains that Kant “requires reason, cut off from the real and from nature, an ethics of pure duty . . . freed from any consideration of the good . . . to provide for perfect disinterestedness.”¹⁷ The community becomes irrelevant and/or dangerous, from the Kantian moral perspective, since it is from the community that heteronomous motivators—like acting for the sake of friendship, familial love, the common good, God’s laws, or the best utilitarian social circumstances—are ultimately derived.

¹¹Maritain, *Moral Philosophy*, p. 101; also see Allen Wood, “The Final Form of Kant’s Practical Philosophy” in *Kant’s Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mark Timmons (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press 2002), pp. 18–19. Similar criticisms are made by Schott, op. cit., as well as Sedgwick, op. cit.

¹²Wood, “The Final Form of Kant’s Practical Philosophy,” pp. 18–19.

¹³See B. Mayo, *Ethics and the Moral Life* (New York NY: Macmillan, 1958); also Foot, op. cit. and MacIntyre, op. cit.

¹⁴Immanuel Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” in *Kant: Political Writings*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p. 43 (hereafter referenced as IUH).

¹⁵Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis Beck (Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992), p. 5 (hereafter referenced as FMM).

¹⁶See the critique of Jurgen Habermas, “From Kant to Hegel and Back Again—The Move Towards Detranscendentalization,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 7 (1999): 129–57; also Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, §135.

¹⁷Maritain, *Neuf Leçons*, p. 3.

With respect to (D), thinkers have claimed that God either is “useless to Kant,”¹⁸ “plays no role in the moral domain,”¹⁹ or does not need to exist “even as a possibility.”²⁰ Ronald Green has tried to show that any religious or theological notions in Kant’s theory can be reduced to the “operations of practical reason,”²¹ and Andrews Reath puts forward a wholly secular conception of Kantian morality.²² An even stronger claim is made by J. C. Luik, who maintains that “there is quite literally no Kantian theology, no religious knowledge for Kant.”²³ Such thought has led certain commentators to question whether there can be an adequate grounding for Kantian morality. For example, C. S. Layman wonders if, absent a connection between morality and God’s laws, Kant’s theory can say anything about accountability in the private sphere of actions.²⁴

These are formidable criticisms of Kant’s moral project, but they are not insurmountable. I will attempt to show that Kantian responses can be mounted against each of these four criticisms, and the body of my paper takes each criticism in turn. It may be that most of these commentators are responding to *post-Kantian-style* moralities or moralities that *pick* and *choose* Kantian elements. But when we read the doctrines of Kant himself, we find that these complaints lose their force, and it can even be said that a lot of these commentators simply misread or misrepresent Kant. By the end of this paper I will have shown that, when understood in the broader context of his religious doctrines and the overall philosophical project of the architectonic of reason, Kant’s morality has a strong motivational component, supports the forming of a virtuous character as an essential element in a complete moral life, must be grounded in a community in order to realize peace and happiness for rational individuals, and is linked, ultimately, to a theological foundation.

II

From the outset, it is important to note that Kant’s overall philosophical project is architectonic. This means that Kant thought it possible for reason to organize, unify, and orient the two objects of philosophical thought—nature and freedom—into one system. Reason moves beyond the judgments of understanding to find order, purpose, and finality in reality. In fact, the judgments of understanding and their resulting categorical concepts can only be understood because of reason’s systematic work.²⁵

¹⁸L. Goldman, *Immanuel Kant*, trans. Robert Black (London UK: NLB Press, 1971), p. 201.

¹⁹R. B. Edwards, *Reason and Religion* (Washington, D.C.: Univ. Press of America, 1970), p. 46; also see Maritain, *Neuf Leçons*, pp. 2–5; Maritain, *Moral Philosophy*, p. 102.

²⁰Thomas Auxter, *Kant’s Moral Teleology* (Macon GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 88–89.

²¹Ronald Green, “Probing the Depths of Practical Reason: Looking Back Over Twenty-five Years,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 25 (1997): 15.

²²Andrews Reath, “Two Conceptions of the Highest Good in Kant,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 26 (1988): 593–619. Also see H.E. Crichlow, “Kant and Hegel: Their Religious Philosophies Compared,” *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 33 (1996): 87–102.

²³J. C. Luik, “The Ambiguity of Kantian Faith,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983): 339–46. Also see T. Kwan, “Kant’s ‘Humanistic’ Conception of Religion,” *Tunghai Journal* 24 (1983): 95–118.

²⁴Layman, *op. cit.*, Chap. 1. Also see A. Sandlin, “The Historical Course of Natural Law Theory,” *The Christian Statesman* 142 (1999): 13–20.

²⁵Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Smith (New York NY: Macmillan, 1929), A832/B860, Bxx, A326/B382, A840/B868, A318/B375, B425, A816/B844, A322/B379 (hereafter referenced

Thus, we are told in the first *Critique* that “we shall content ourselves here with the completion of our task, namely, merely to outline the *architectonic* of all knowledge arising from *pure reason*.”²⁶ And, in the second *Critique* Kant claims that

the nature of human knowledge . . . is of a more philosophical and architectonic character. It is to grasp correctly the idea of the whole, and then see all those parts in their reciprocal interrelations, in the light of their derivation from the concept of the whole, and as united in a pure rational faculty.²⁷

Finally, in the third *Critique* Kant says that “it is not enough that in building something in the science we follow principles and so proceed technically; we must also set to work with the science architectonically, treating it as a whole.”²⁸ Kant’s architectonic project always must be kept in mind when trying to understand the methodology and concepts surrounding his moral doctrines. In so doing, we will see that Kant can readily respond to all four of the above criticisms. A kind of *précis* concerning this systematic unity and its applicability to the practical realm can be found in the first *Critique* where Kant maintains that

Man’s natural endowments—not merely his talents and the impulses to enjoy them, but above all else the moral law within him—go far beyond the utility and advantage which he may derive from them in this present life, that he learns thereby to prize the mere consciousness of a righteous will as being, apart from all advantageous consequences, apart from even the shadowy reward of posthumous fame, supreme over all other values; and so feels an inner call to fit himself, by his conduct in this world, and by the sacrifice of many of its advantages, for citizenship in a better world upon which he lays hold in idea. This powerful and incontrovertible proof is reinforced by our ever-increasing knowledge of purposiveness in all that we see around us, and by contemplation of the immensity of creation, and therefore also by the consciousness of a certain illimitableness in the possible extension of our knowledge, and of striving commensurate therewith.²⁹

Criticism (A) is that Kant’s morality lacks a motivational component. This might be true if the categorical imperative comprised the whole of the Kantian moral life. Thankfully, it does not. Just as in the speculative realm of reason where there is an attempt to bring theory and practice together, so too in the practical realm of reason Kant attempts to bring together nature and freedom, body and soul, phenomenon and noumenon, in the *whole* of the rational being’s life. When faced with a genuinely moral dilemma, doing what is right according to the categorical

as 1C); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis Beck (Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), pp. 6–7, 141 (hereafter referenced as 2C); Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. W. S. Pluhar (Indianapolis IN: Hackett Publishing, 1987), §I, §IV, §57, §67 (hereafter referenced as 3C); Immanuel Kant, “What is Orientation in Thinking?” in *Kant: Political Writings*, op. cit., pp. 240–41 (hereafter referenced as WOT); Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. John Ellington (Indianapolis IN: Hackett, 1977), p. 90 (hereafter referenced as PR).

²⁶1C, A835/B863.

²⁷2C, p. 10.

²⁸3C, §68.

²⁹1C, B426.

imperative is essential and ultimately trumps any other kind of decision; but such moral decision-making is not, *by itself*, sufficient for a complete moral life. True, given our nature, we are not merely animals who *ought to* make choices based upon inclination, fear, or consequence. But at the same time we are not merely angelic minds who *do in fact* make decisions devoid of material inclinations altogether. Rational human beings are an admixture of beast and saint who seek happiness as “an unavoidable determinant of the faculty of desire.” There are other values in Kant’s system conducive to a happy and flourishing life, and it is both right (according to *Moralität*) and good (according to *Sittlichkeit*) to pursue such ends.³⁰ Consider the words of Christine Korsgaard:

The unconditional character of morality means that the desire for your own happiness must not stop you from doing what is right; it does not mean that morality is the only good or important thing. Happiness is conditionally valuable, but when its condition is met, it is a genuine good. The moral law commits us to the realization of the good things that rational beings place value on. A world in which good people are miserable is morally defective.³¹

Kant never maintains that rational beings *must* execrably, begrudgingly, or without any inclinations whatsoever adhere to the categorical imperative.³² The practical side of his architectonic project tries to reconcile nature and freedom, and so the obligation to the categorical imperative “occasions a new end for the human will, that of striving with all one’s power towards the highest good possible on earth, towards the universal happiness of the whole world, *combined with and in keeping with* (italics mine) the purest morality.”³³ In the final analysis, Kant makes it explicit that his morality “aims at the highest good in the world: a happiness of rational beings that *harmoniously accompanies* (italics mine) their compliance with moral laws.”³⁴ The moral life would be incomplete with *only* the categorical imperative as its aim.

At this point it may be objected that I have missed the point of the criticism that Kant’s categorical imperative lacks a motivational component because of its empty, formalistic rule-orientation. The criticism is *not* of Kant’s formulation of the *moral life in general*, but of the *categorical imperative specifically*, and I have spent time arguing for a motivational component in the broader category of the moral life. When we read the second *Critique* or the *Foundations* we find Kant making claims such as these:

³⁰2C, pp. 24, 64; also see Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. T. M. Greene and H. H. Hudson (LaSalle IL: Open Court, 1934), p. 30 (hereafter referenced as RWL); Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, trans. J. W. Ellington (Indianapolis IN: Hackett, 1983) (hereafter referenced as MPV); WOT, pp. 242–43; A.T. Nuyen, “Kant on God, Immortality, and the Highest Good,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 32 (1994): 121–33.

³¹Christine Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (New York NY: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), p. 28.

³²Consider Immanuel Kant, “On the Common Saying: ‘This May be True in Theory, But It Does Not Apply in Practice’” in *Kant: Political Writings*, op. cit., p. 68 (hereafter referenced as OCS); also Wood, “The Final Form of Kant’s practical Philosophy,” p. 19.

³³OCS, p. 65.

³⁴3C, §87.

The sole principle of morality consists in independence from all material of the law (i.e., a desired object) and in the accompanying determination of choice by the mere form of giving universal law which a maxim must be capable of having.³⁵ . . . Duty! Thou sublime and mighty name that dost embrace nothing charming or insinuating but requirest submission . . . a law before which all inclinations are mute even though they secretly work against it.³⁶ . . . If an unfortunate man, strong in soul, is indignant rather than despondent or dejected over his fate and wishes for death, and yet preserves his life without loving it and from neither inclination nor fear but from duty—then his maxim has moral merit.³⁷

Such quotations seem to undermine what I have been trying to say thus far. It could even be said that Kant's reasoning here is contradictory and absurd. Regarding the first two passages we have to ask: How is it that a person will be able to choose a course of action if all material desire or inclination is stripped from the choosing process in the first place? In the third passage, we have to wonder if it is ever possible for a person to be motivated by *any other thought* than that of the fear of death or the love of one's own life when deciding *not* to commit suicide! The "universal law" and "Duty! Thou sublime and mighty name that dost embrace nothing charming" hardly seem to be adequate motivators.

Yet, Kant appeals to the rational nature of human beings with the use of thought-experiments and evidence. If talk of consistency, universal laws, and duties does not convince or motivate, the attempt to justify or warrant such talk may be able to do so. Contrary to what might be thought or expected, people can be motivated by appeal to good reasons. Thus, Lewis Beck points out a fundamental need that seems generally applicable to even the least reflective of human beings: "as rational beings who want to know the 'reasons' for things, we seek for completeness in knowledge, with no unsupported foundations and no loose ends."³⁸ With Beck's ideas in mind, consider Kant's strategy in this passage from the *Foundations*:

For the thought of duty and of the moral law generally, with no admixture of empirical inducements, has an influence on the human heart so much more powerful than all other incentives For the commonest observation shows that if we imagine an act of honesty performed with a steadfast soul and sundered from all view to any advantage in this or another world and even under the greatest temptations of need or allurements, it far surpasses and eclipses any similar action which was affected in the least by any foreign incentive; it elevates the soul and arouses the wish to be able to act in this way. Even moderately young children feel this impression, and one should never represent duties to them in any other way.³⁹

Here, we see an attempt to convince with the combined usage of a thought-experiment, evidence, and appeal to intuition. Readers of this passage could conjure up visions of Socrates, Christ, Thomas More, or even Don Quixote—archetypal figures who

³⁵2C, p. 33.

³⁶2C, p. 90.

³⁷FMM, p. 14.

³⁸See Beck's Introduction to 2C, p. xiv.

³⁹FMM, p. 27, 27n.

did what was right despite any heteronomous inclinations that might have swayed them otherwise. Seen in this light, the categorical imperative hardly seems to be a non-motivator. Rather, the moral intuition seems correct that the *ought* be performed purely without any admixture of *is*.

Another point worth noting in relation to the question of motivation in Kant's morality has to do with the emancipation associated with acting according to the dictates of reason. The phenomenal realm of nature has its deterministic grip on a human being, causing one to act in certain impulsive, slavish, and non-reflective ways. Such a situation in the world of nature is truly animalistic, "pathologically affected," and ultimately, in the words of Hobbes, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short."⁴⁰ Fortunately for our species, performing duties in line with an autonomous noumenal rationality "frames for itself with perfect spontaneity an order of its own according to ideas," thereby freeing us from such a wretched natural state: "a free will and a will under moral laws are identical."⁴¹ We can cease to be animals and become free *persons*. Thus, Kant maintains that the "concept of freedom, insofar as its reality is proved by an apodictic law of practical reason, is the keystone of the whole architecture of the system of pure reason and even of speculative reason."⁴² For our purposes here, the upshot of Kant's account of freedom is that the spontaneity, liberation from inclination, and autonomy associated with the moral law actually act as incentives to be moral.

Besides, acting morally has the added benefit of leading, at times, to material happiness.⁴³ If one objects that such incentives taint the will with heteronomy, the response is that this is not so because it is reason itself *qua* "divine" *Wille* that compels one to act, and the happiness expected in life is an ancillary want of the faculty of choice *qua* "animalistic" *Willkür*.⁴⁴ If one objects that material happiness acts as the *real* incentive for moral action, the response is that material happiness is never guaranteed and so can never be the real incentive for acting morally. At best, acting morally makes us *worthy* of happiness. But the possibility of being happy is the proverbial "icing on the cake," existing as an *effect* or consequence of acting morally, and we do not necessarily act heteronomously by trying to make this possibility an actuality.⁴⁵

III

Criticism (B) is that Kant's theory neglects the affective, "spiritual" dimensions of morality that are necessary for character-development such as sympathy, self-respect,

⁴⁰See 1C, A534/B562, A536/B564; 2C, pp. 24–26; RWL, p. 22.

⁴¹1C, A548/B576; 2C, pp. 29, 90; FMM, p. 64.

⁴²2C, p. 3; also see 1C, A318, A569/B597; RWL, pp. 77, 109.

⁴³1C, A809/B837, A814/B842; 2C, pp. 116–117.

⁴⁴RWL, pp. 19, 23, 26, 31, 42–44; FMM, pp. 13–15; cf. Caygill, pp. 414–415, and John Silber, "The Ethical Significance of Kant's *Religion*" in RWL, pp. xciv–cxxvii.

⁴⁵FMM, p. 11; 1C, B373; 2C, p. 125; 3C, §83; OCS, p. 65; RWL, pp. 4, 41–42; Immanuel Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. M. J. Gregor (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991), p. 183 (hereafter referenced as MM); Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace" in *Kant: Political Writings*, op. cit., pp. 116, 123 (hereafter referenced as PP).

gratitude, emotional harmony, and the like. Nevertheless, as will be shown, such a criticism ultimately is unwarranted. In trying to understand Kantian morality, many commentators will limit their attention to certain parts of the second *Critique* and the *Foundations*, and this focus probably accounts for most of the misreading and misrepresentation of Kant's architectonic of practical reason. However, there are passages in many of Kant's works where he tries to lay out the features of the good life that include, along with an explanation of duty, many of the Platonic, Stoic, and Humean elements associated with happiness, virtue, and bringing about optimal consequences.

Consider that the *summum bonum* is established by Kant in the three *Critiques* and the *Religion* as an *a priori* realization of the end of the free rational being's moral life containing *both virtue and happiness*.⁴⁶ Consider also all of the passages in the three *Critiques* where Kant claims that neither happiness nor morality, taken by themselves, are sufficient for this ultimate and complete good.⁴⁷ Finally, consider how rational beings have a duty to seek after this good here on earth, and this conception is so entrenched in the framework of practical reason that, if this end is not achieved in this lifetime, it will be in some future life with the help of God.⁴⁸

With these Kantian passages in mind, Paul Guyer is correct in noting that "the motivation of duty should not simply act independently of, or even in opposition to, our feelings but that, instead, we both should and can work to make our feelings harmonious with our free will."⁴⁹ Lewis Beck is right to point out that inclinations and feelings "have a legitimate place in Kant's ethics. . . . They may even be seen as necessary corollaries of true virtue, since without inward resistance there is holiness of will but no virtue." Without virtue there cannot be "moral satisfaction," the ultimate end of autonomous moral action.⁵⁰ Further, Howard Caygill claims that Kant is just as concerned with the "proper way of being in the world" as he is with the proper actions performed in this world.⁵¹ In actuality, because we are natural beings existing in the phenomenal world, Kant tells us we have an *obligation* to seek virtue, sociability, mutual love, respect for persons, gratitude, humility, peace, our own happiness, and the happiness of all.⁵²

⁴⁶1C, A800/B828; 2C, pp. 119, 125; 3C, §86; RWL, p. 89; cf. Martha Nussbaum, "Kant and Cosmopolitanism" in *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal*, ed. James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bacmann (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 25–58; also Henry Allison, *Kant's Theory of Taste: A Reading of the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001).

⁴⁷1C, A813/B841; 2C, pp. 116–117; 3C, §87.

⁴⁸1C, A828/B856; 2C, pp. 128–134; 3C, §87; OCS, p. 65; Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, trans. A. Wood and G. Clark (Ithaca NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 109–111 (hereafter referenced as LPT).

⁴⁹Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Experience of Freedom: Essays on Aesthetics and Morality* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996).

⁵⁰Lewis Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 228–29.

⁵¹Caygill, p. 165.

⁵²1C, A315/B372, A814/B842; 3C, §86; FMM, pp. 15, 45–46; RWL, pp. 15, 21, 89, 148; MPV, p. 140; PP, pp. 104, 109, 123, 130; IUH, pp. 44–45; also see Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, pp. 228–229; Karl Apel, "Kant's 'Toward Perpetual Peace' as Historical Prognosis from the Point of View of Moral Duty" in *Perpetual Peace*, op. cit., pp. 79–112; G. Munzel, *Kant's Conception of Moral Character: The 'Critical' Link of Morality, Anthropology, and Reflective Judgment* (Chicago IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999).

It seems that T. H. Greene is wrong in claiming that, even though the “moral law must be the *sole* determining principle of a will that is to be judged good,” it is still “dangerous to allow other motives to *cooperate* with the moral law.”⁵³ This kind of reading probably has facilitated the mindset that Kant, in the words of Allen Wood, “fails to recognize the moral importance of having feelings, emotions or desires which are *spontaneously* in harmony with morality.”⁵⁴ Hans Reiss is right to mention that Kant “was not a blinkered visionary, nor was he even an unpractical utopian dreamer.”⁵⁵ Kant understood the need for appropriate character-development, correct rearing of the young, the right political arrangements, as well as a healthy and harmonious ordering of reason in relation to emotion and desire; all features important to the classic virtue-ethicist.⁵⁶ Again, as long as these features of the moral life do not encroach upon, try to subjugate, or act as a substitute for the dictates of the categorical imperative, they are to be admired and pursued. In fact, as values ratified by practical reason, it would be *wrong not* to pursue these features of a complete moral life.

IV

Criticism (C) is that Kant’s morality overemphasizes autonomy and neglects the communal context of morality. Since Hegel, Kant has been charged with procuring a kind of “armchair” morality whereby the rational being delves into a thought-experiment and prescind from the empirical world in order to figure out some solution to a moral dilemma. After all, a certain reading of Kant gives one the impression that heteronomy is closely tied to real-life situations in real-life communities. Kant rejects consequentialist, emotivist, intuitionist, and, in general, any kind of ethically-based (in the sense of *Sittlichkeit*) solutions to moral dilemmas because these all suffer from the common problem that the answers that they propose are not grounded in reasons that are fully consistent and/or universalizable, i.e., accepted by any rational being.⁵⁷ For the most part, these solutions are community-, culture-, or situation-bound and dependent upon the whimsical nature of circumstance, feeling, particular world-view, subjective belief system, historical predicament, or ambiguous interpretation of God’s laws. Any of these whimsical incentives are arbitrary, and subject to change at any time. So, in the end, a moral decision can take none of these into consideration: “A rational being can think of his maxims as practical universal laws . . . only by considering them as objective principles (devoid of) empirical conditions.”⁵⁸

However, we must remember that the rejection of communal-type reasons for making moral decisions does not mean that the empirical communal context from which moral decisions are made is to be neglected altogether. Recalling that reason itself generates the possible achievement of the greatest good as a natural end, Kant

⁵³Greene, p. 56.

⁵⁴Wood, “The Final Form of Kant’s Practical Philosophy,” p. 18.

⁵⁵Hans Reiss, “Introduction” in *Kant: Political Writings*, op. cit., p. 39.

⁵⁶1C, A569/B597; 2C, pp. 87–88; 3C, §83; FMM, pp. 27n, 71–73; RWL, pp. 40–46, 87–98; IUH, pp. 41–43; OCS, pp. 67–68, 73–92; MPV, pp. 80–81; MM, sec. II, pp. 96–99; PP, pp. 93–130.

⁵⁷2C, pp. 6, 20–25; FMM, pp. 9–13.

⁵⁸FMM, p. 26; also 2C, pp. 120–125; RWL, pp. 87–88, 96.

thinks that we have a duty to realize this good for self, community and, ultimately, cosmopolis. Kant makes it clear that rational beings need to be imbedded in social relationships as the condition for the possibility of attaining such a good for self, society, and species.⁵⁹ People have a natural propensity for evil, but at the same time they have a natural inclination to pursue their own good and the good of all in societies, and there is something about the right social engagement that ultimately aids in the perfection of individuals. Noting that a main component of Kant's moral project is the eradication of evil, Wood tells us: "the origin of evil is social, and therefore the struggle against it must take the form of a certain kind of society."⁶⁰ Roger Sullivan embellishes the point regarding the need for community:

This duty to seek the good cannot be satisfied just by the efforts of individuals concerned only with their own moral lives, for the goal is a collective, social good, not merely an aggregate of the moral achievements of individuals. . . . It involves the human species as a whole, requiring each of us to recognize that our moral destiny is inextricably tied to our relationship with one another in a communal endeavor.⁶¹

At this point, it is important to draw a distinction between a *subjective community of individuals* (SC) and an *objective community of rational minds* (OC). The SC comprises any empirical community of individuals united under laws because of common needs, values, ends, or desires such as a family, town, church, institution, or nation. Kant calls these kinds of settings "juridical communities" and notes that all humans are imbedded in these spheres. Conversely, the OC comprises "a systematic union of rational beings through common objective laws." When these minds unite in an empirical setting whereby they will actions according to the categorical imperative, Kant calls this an "ethical community."⁶² The SC acts as an obvious setting for the attaining of those things conducive to a flourishing moral life, viz., the cultivation of virtues, the development of value-systems, the distribution of material goods, the assurance of benefits, etc. In so far as rational beings are "always already" embedded in social spheres, it is simply false that Kant's morality neglects the communal context of morality.

However, given criticism (C), what really concerns us is whether *moral decisions reliant upon the categorical imperative* neglect the communal context of morality. If what is meant by community is the SC sense, then the answer is a *qualified* "yes." The yes is qualified because moral decisions are never made in a vacuum, and Kant realized this just like any other reflective thinker. Communal concerns do play a role in the decision-making process; but such concerns, ultimately, never can *be decisive*. The imperative compels us to prescind from, but not utterly neglect, communal-type

⁵⁹RWL, pp. 85–89; IUH, pp. 44–45, 50; PP, pp. 104, 108–109; OCS, p. 92; also D. Held, "Cosmopolitan Democracy and the Global Order" in *Perpetual Peace: Essays on Kant's Cosmopolitan Ideal*, op. cit., pp. 235–254; D. Lindstedt, "Kant: Progress in Universal History as a Postulate of Practical Reason," *Kant-Studien* 90 (1999): 129–47.

⁶⁰Allen Wood, "Religion, Ethical Community and the Struggle Against Evil," *Faith and Philosophy* 17 (2000): p. 505; also RWL, pp. 15, 26, 30, 86, 89.

⁶¹Roger Sullivan, *An Introduction to Kant's Ethics* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), p. 86.

⁶²RWL, p. 87; OCS, p. 73; FMM, p. 50.

matters so that consistent, coherent decisions be made. However, if what is meant by community is the OC sense, then the obvious answer to the question of communal neglect is “no,” since the very support for the categorical imperative stems from the universal community of inter-subjective rational minds having “one and the same reason.” Any person can join this community, and the only requirement for membership is the use of reason.⁶³

V

Oftentimes commentators will assume that, since Kant thinks we can have no theoretical knowledge of God, therefore we have no knowledge of God whatsoever.⁶⁴ This conclusion does not follow, and it is clear that Kant believed in God as the guarantor that moral actions will be crowned with happiness, if not in this life, then in some future life. Humanity’s pursuit of goodness “elicits from our reason a faith, for practical purposes, in a moral being who governs the world, and in a future existence.”⁶⁵ The moral proof for God’s existence was the only one endorsed by Kant as falling square in the realm of practical reason. However, it would seem that Kant makes God out to be a kind of rule-enforcing demiurge who, like any other reasoning being, looks to what is right when laying out the moral laws of the universe. In the *Religion*, God exists as holy legislator, preserver of the human race, benevolent ruler, administrator, guardian, and judge; but it appears to be questionable whether God is the *originator* or *constructor* of moral laws. Couple this with Kant’s famous opening passage in the *Foundations* where he maintains that “nothing in the world—indeed nothing even beyond the world (italics mine)—can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a Good Will.”⁶⁶ On this account, God is necessary as a being powerful enough to unite happiness with virtue, but God does not seem so powerful as to be the generator of that which is virtuous in the first place, since God is subject to the moral laws like any other rational being. (What? A non-omnipotent yet perfect Being!) This counter-intuitive result is one horn of the so-called Euthyphro dilemma re-translated into the language of the contemporary debate about divine command theory.⁶⁷

One result of a theological conception of God as non-omnipotent is criticism (D), viz., that Kant’s morality lacks a sufficient theological foundation to guarantee a clear moral authority. Some might be led to think that, since there is no all-powerful God who acts as the ground and determiner of what is right, then

⁶³1C, A839/B867, A556/B584; 2C, pp. 4, 6, 23; FMM, p. 7; also S. Engstrom, “The Concept of the Highest Good in Kant’s Moral Theory,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 52 (1992): 747–80; T. Hill, “Happiness and Human Flourishing in Kant’s Ethics,” *Social Philosophy and Policy* 16 (1999): 143–75.

⁶⁴For example, Goldman, p. 201; Luik, p. 345.

⁶⁵OCS, p. 65; also 1C, A813/B841; 2C pp. 128–38; 3C, §90; Wood, “Rational Theology, Moral Faith, and Religion,” p. 405.

⁶⁶RWL, p. 131; FMM, p. 9.

⁶⁷See A. Nuyen, “Is Kant a Divine Command Theorist?,” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 15 (1998): 441–53; Eleonore Stump and Michael Murray, eds., *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions* (Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1999), Pt. 6, pp. 401–428; Holmes, Chap. 6.

either we would somehow flounder in a sea of moral relativism, capriciously alter moral rules to suit our own conveniences, or have no incentive to be moral in the first place. Luckily, in Kant's system, it does not follow that if there is no God, then moral relativism, chaos, and/or general immorality would reign. In fact, an essential part of Kant's moral project is to ground morality in rationality whether there exists a God or not: "Morality must be so constituted that it can be thought independently of any concept of God, and elicit our most zealous devotion solely on account of its inner worth and excellence."⁶⁸ The moral law holds so long as there are minds to behold it, and abiding by such morality staves off the aforementioned disastrous logical outcomes associated with God's non-existence. However, as will be shown, Kant carves out a place for God in his moral project as a whole, and it would be wrong to maintain, as Auxter does, that "it is not necessary for God to exist (even as a possibility) in order that the agent may complete the moral activity fulfilling duty."⁶⁹

The interesting move that Kant ultimately makes is to unite the moral laws with God's laws by claiming that they are one in the same: "as soon as anything is recognized as a duty . . . , obedience to it is also a divine command."⁷⁰ Such a move seems to testify to the importance of God in his moral system. Kant makes it explicit that morality remains a doctrine of "empty concepts" of pure practical reason without being grounded in God's laws. In fact, duty tells us that we "require the presupposition of an idea, namely, that of a higher moral Being through whose universal dispensation the forces of separate individuals, insufficient for themselves, are united for a common end."⁷¹ In the first *Critique*, we are instructed that "without a God and a world invisible to us now but hoped for, the glorious ideas of morality are indeed objects of approval and admiration, but not springs of purpose and action."⁷² Kant goes so far as to maintain this:

I inevitably believe in the existence of God and in a future life, and I am certain that nothing can shake this belief, *since my moral principles would thereby be themselves overthrown* (italics mine), and I cannot disclaim them without becoming abhorrent in my own eyes.⁷³

It appears that Kant could see no way of justifying his practical philosophy without a religiosity; absent this religious aspect, practical philosophy would be doomed to lose its practicality.

One benefit of uniting the moral law with God's laws is that this move acts as an attempt to respond to the Euthyphro dilemma. One "horn" or contradictory result of the dilemma has already been mentioned, viz., that if God is *subject to* the moral

⁶⁸LPT, p. 31.

⁶⁹T. Auxter, *Kant's Moral Teleology* (Macon: Mercer Univ. Press, 1982), p. 88.

⁷⁰RWL, pp. 90n** and 37, 79, 104–105, 112; also 2C, p. 136; 3C, "General Comment on Teleology"; Immanuel Kant, *Opus Postumum*, trans. E. Forster and M. Rosen (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 198, 200–02, 207 (hereafter referenced as OP).

⁷¹RWL, pp. 89, 5; also OP, pp. 200, 202.

⁷²1C, A813/B841.

⁷³1C, A828/B856.

laws and not their maker, then God is made out to be a “non-omnipotent perfect being”—a being hardly consistent with itself. The other horn is that, if God *makes* laws to be moral, then we have the absurd possibility that God could make an intuitively immoral law actually be moral. For example, God orders Abraham to kill Isaac (generating a moral intuition that this is wrong), and that law is taken to be right because God commanded it. Kant would find this second horn abhorrent, as it would be tantamount to any worldly religion heteronomously pontificating about what is right and wrong.⁷⁴

My contention is that by collapsing moral laws into God’s laws, Kant has given us a possible solution to the dilemma that results in skirting the horns altogether. This solution is different from Nuyen’s and more in line with that of Aquinas’s answer to this kind of problem.⁷⁵ My solution entails two things. First, we need to note that, from Kant’s perspective, there is an actual metaphysical collapsing of moral law into God such that morality is *ontologically identical to* God. This move seems legitimate from Kant’s perspective since he maintains that God is the “administrator of *his own* (italics mine) holy laws,” and he straight-forwardly endorses the scholastic conception that “every attribute of God is in fact God himself.” Also, Kant maintains that the perfection attributable to the moral law is none other than the Perfection attributable to God.⁷⁶ Second, we need to underscore Kant’s concern with the utter rationality, consistency, and coherence of the moral law.

Having underscored these two points, we can see that if moral laws equal God, then God could never be non-omnipotent in looking outside of himself for the moral law since he would, in essence, *look to himself when making what is right be what is right*; God *would be his own* rightness. Also, if moral laws equal God, then it would be a logical impossibility for a fully rational, consistent, and coherent Being to contradict himself by making an immoral law be moral; God *could not contradict his own* rightness. Thus, Kant tells us that “if it flatly contradicts morality, it cannot, despite all appearances, be of God.”⁷⁷ This “Thomistic” reading of Kant’s solution to this problem seems all the more on-target when one considers commentators like Loudon, Holmes, and Garner who argue that scholastic natural theology forms the basis for Kant’s theology.⁷⁸ Also, consider this comment made by Wood and Di Giovanni:

Kant’s attitude toward traditional rational theology was on the whole highly favorable, and he took this rational theology to have vital religious importance. Thus if Kant denied that the existence of God could be proven on theoretical grounds, he still largely accepted the scholastic and rationalist conceptions of God and defended this conception against

⁷⁴LPT, pp. 159, 161; also see Norman Kretzmann, “Abraham and Isaac and Euthyphro: God and the Basis of Morality” in *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*, op. cit., pp. 95–118.

⁷⁵Nuyen, “Is Kant a Divine Command Theorist?”; see Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I–II, Q. 91, a. 4, *Quodlibet* 3 and *De Veritate*, Q. 17; also Holmes, chap. 6.

⁷⁶RWL, p. 131; LPT, pp. 46, 141; FMM, p. 59.

⁷⁷RWL, p. 82; also Nuyen, “Is Kant a Divine Command Theorist?,” p. 449.

⁷⁸Robert Loudon, *Morality and Moral Theory: A Reappraisal and Reaffirmation* (Oxford UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), Chap. 6; Holmes, Chap. 10; R. Garner, *Beyond Morality* (Philadelphia PA: Temple Univ. Press), Chap. 10.

the nascent impulses . . . which sought to replace it with a theology based on biblical revelation, or on a novel metaphysics, or on religious feeling or mystical intuition.⁷⁹

Another point worth noting is that uniting moral laws with God's laws would be consistent with Kant's architectonic project that sees an overall purpose, finality, and completeness in the synthesis of nature and freedom. The third *Critique* (1790) and the *Religion* (1793) underscore the completion of the moral project that Kant began with the publication of the first *Critique* in 1781. The primary task of the third *Critique* is to explain the role of reason's reflective judgments as the mediating link that can unify nature and freedom into a consistent and systematic whole. As Kant tells us in the third *Critique's* General Comment on Teleology, this task culminates in the "unavoidable" recognition on the part of reflective judgment that there should exist an ultimate ground for all of reality.⁸⁰ The primary task of the *Religion* seems to be that of giving further concretization to what it means to have this God as the basis of our moral lives. Rationally reflective persons want more specificity concerning what is at stake for this seemingly antinomous and bifurcated life of phenomena and noumena, inclinations and duties, virtues and rewards. The "feeling of the sublimity of one's moral destiny" that is experienced by rational beings needs articulation. Kant responds to this challenge of bifurcation by offering God and the "divine Church" *qua* ethical community as the solution.⁸¹ In the words of Emil Fackenheim, such a seemingly schizophrenic existence is avoidable "only if the two worlds, though apparently separate, are nevertheless connected; if the same Being is the author of the moral law and the natural world: that is, if there is a God who is omniscient, omnipotent and above all, holy."⁸² The ethical community (and its empirical counterpart, the institutional Christian church) is the clearest expression of the divine on earth; the most transparent way to make sense of the compulsion of *ought* midst the inclination of *is*.

If a religion must posit as its basis the existence of some kind of God, then it is clear from Kant's postulates that his version of morality ultimately lends itself to a religion. These postulates are the starting points whereby duty and autonomy take on their religious sense. Through the realization that an individual is obligated to seek the highest good, and through the further recognition that happiness should be associated with that good, the reasoning being is led to the existence of immortality and God. For our necessary moral purposes, we may have a rational hope and a practical *faith* in the reality of the conditions necessary for us to achieve this highest

⁷⁹Allen Wood and Gianni Di Giovanni, eds., *Immanuel Kant: Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), p. xxiv.

⁸⁰3C, §369, IX; also see Allison, *op. cit.*; Caygill, p. 353; H. Robinson, *Kant's Third Critique: The Spindel Supplement of The Southern Journal of Philosophy* (vol. 30, 1991).

⁸¹RWL, p. 45, Bk. 3; also A. Davidovich, "How to Read *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*," *Kant-Studien* 85 (1994): 1–14; S. Axinn, *The Logic of Hope: Extensions of Kant's View of Religion* (Amsterdam: Rodolphi, 1994); S. Anderson-Gold, "God and Community: An Inquiry into the Religious Implications of the Highest Good" in *Kant's Philosophy of Religion Reconsidered*, ed. P. Rossi and M. Wreen (Indianapolis IN: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1991), pp. 113–31.

⁸²Emil Fackenheim, "Immanuel Kant" in *Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought in the West*, ed. N. Smart (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), p. 20.

good: “In this manner, through the concept of the highest good as the object and final end of practical reason, the moral law leads to religion.”⁸³ The postulates of pure practical reason offer us the hope that our desire to be happy eventually will be fulfilled.

We must, however, reiterate that the will must possess utter autonomy as the basis for all moral decisions; the free agent can be bound to no other incentive than the moral law itself. This means that any choice to accept a so-called “divine command” needs to be authenticated by the work of reason. Once accepted, this divine command is sublimated under the category of moral law such that an individual does not violate the sanctity of freedom in acting according to this command. This is what Lewis Beck means when he speaks of the “kernel” of rational morality found in all religious truth.⁸⁴ In this sense, for Kant religion *arises out of* morality and not the other way around. And when religion is defined as the “recognition of all duties as divine commands,” herein lies the position that limits religion to the realm of reason alone. This is why Kenneth Seeskin can maintain that in “going beyond ethics, religion (for Kant) does not negate our duties as moral agents but provides us with a richer task of fulfilling them.”⁸⁵

From Kant’s perspective, it makes sense that there should be a God who has created the natural world, although we could never categorize this God. So too, it makes sense that there should be a God who accounts for freedom, although one could only subjectively say “*I am* morally certain,” and never “*It is* morally certain,” that there is a God. Further, in the same way that (a) we are to think *as if* there are regulative ideas in the theoretical realm, and these ideas aid in our systematization of the whole work of transcendental idealism; and (b) we are to treat all humans *as if* these beings were ends in themselves, and this idea aids in concretizing the moral law; so too (c) we are to look upon moral laws *as if* they were God’s laws, and this idea of God aids in giving both systematization and concretization to our moral life as a whole. The idea of God, in conjunction with a religion of reason, helps us answer the third of the fundamental questions posed in the first *Critique*, viz., “What can I know, What out I to do, What may I hope?”⁸⁶ In the words of Stephen Palmquist:

Kant is saying that though morality is *logically*, or perhaps *transcendentally* self-sufficient (i.e., even though no reference to religion is needed to explain what morality *is*), morality is nevertheless *teleologically incomplete* (i.e., its *ultimate purpose* cannot be realized by remaining within its own bounds). Just as the foundation of a building is “complete” in the sense that it can stand all on its own, and does not depend on anything *prior* to it in order to serve its purpose, and yet its *purpose* is not complete until an actual building is constructed upon it, so also the nature of moral action can be *understood* apart from reference to any religion, and yet the *purpose* of morality in general, as well as the actual

⁸³2C, p. 136; also RWL, p. 129.

⁸⁴Beck, pp. 230, 279; also RWL, pp. 5, 82–83n.

⁸⁵Kenneth Seeskin, “How to Read *Religion of Reason*” in *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism*, ed. Steven Kaplan (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1995), pp. 1–42.

⁸⁶1C A805/B833, A580/B608, A829/B857, A619/B647; 3C, §88; RWL, pp. 39–40; FMM, p. 46; LPT, pp. 90, 131; PR, p. 103.

fulfillment of the task morality presents to us, cannot be understood without stepping *beyond* the exclusively moral standpoint to adopt a new, *religious* standpoint, based on the moral.⁸⁷

It seems to me that if one is willing to throw out the “as ifs” regarding the answer in terms of “hope,” then why not throw them out regarding the answers put in terms of “ought” and “knowledge”? If acting as if there is a God is too much for some readers of Kant to handle in their epistemic arsenals, then why should acting as if in these other respects be something privileged to the exclusion of God? In other words, these “as ifs” seem to be of a common piece that either stands or falls together.

Someone may object that acting as if there is a God, looking to some God as an archetype, or taking someone like Christ to be a perfect embodiment of the moral law does not mean that this “God” *actually exists* as an extra-mental thing “out there” in reality. In the past two hundred years, there have been many moral theories that take Kantian principles as their basis and skirt the question of God’s existence altogether.⁸⁸ It seems possible to base a morality in Kant without basing Kant’s morality in God. However, my concern in this paper is whether *Kant thought* that morality needed God or not. I have tried to show that, from the standpoint of the architectonic of reason, Kant felt that a God aided in the formation of a completed and flourishing moral life. Absent God, our moral life would lack systematization, concretization, purpose, ultimate happiness, and if I am correct about Kant’s solution to the Euthyphro dilemma, the *moral laws themselves*.

Having shed more light on Kant’s understanding of God and his religious theory, we can see how criticism (D) loses its force. Happily, our informed understanding of Kant’s theological position helps us further in responding to the other three criticisms as well. With God in the moral picture, Kant’s morality can be seen as (a) all the more motivating, since the categorical imperative, though rational, stems from a being who is concerned about our making rationally moral decisions, and will even help us if necessary, *via* grace; (b) inspiring of a virtuous character, since Christ is upheld as an archetypal person whom we are to emulate; (c) conducive to happiness, since God will mete out justice, in the end, by rewarding virtue with eternal bliss; (d) inextricably linked to a community of rational minds having one universally consistent and coherent Mind as a source; and (e) inextricably linked to empirical communities of churches that make the eradication of evil, as well as the pursuit of all things right and good, possible. With respect to this final point, Kant thinks that it is possible to attain empirical, perpetual world peace, and God’s laws will help us make this endeavor a reality.⁸⁹

Kant claimed at the end of the first *Critique* that the “critical path alone is still open,” and that we have the courtesy of joining him on the journey. We can understand

⁸⁷Stephen Palmquist, “Does Kant Reduce Morality to Religion?,” *Kant-Studien* 83 (1992): 129–48.

⁸⁸For example, see Marcia Baron, *Kantian Ethics Almost Without Apology* (Ithaca NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995); Onora O’Neill, *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant’s Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge MA: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989).

⁸⁹PP, p. 109n; RWL, pp. 54, 56–57, 60, 62, 64, 82–83, 90–91, 170; OCS, p. 88; also J. Marina, “The Religious Significance of Kant’s Ethics,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 75 (2001): 179–200.

this as an invitation to continue the work of reason he started. We still continually hope that all of us will act virtuously, and that we will be rewarded for right decision-making. The supreme end of Kant's political work is the realization of perpetual peace and the happiness of all human beings. In commenting on Kant, the Neo-Kantian Herman Cohen envisions a world of peace and happiness whereby the "concept of reason engenders the concept of religion." Cohen suggests that it is reasonable to think that God is "eternally calling us to a mission of peace," and that "God is peace."⁹⁰ It seems that a full account of Kant's moral system with peace and happiness as ends requires a religiosity; at least, this is what thinkers like Kant or Cohen believe. It also seems that this religiosity goes a long way in vindicating Kant's morality in light of the above criticisms.⁹¹

⁹⁰Herman Cohen, *Religion of Reason Out of the Sources of Judaism* (Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1995), pp. 3, 462; also 1C A856/B884; PP, pp. 108–09, 114n.

⁹¹I thank those who have helped in the construction of earlier versions of this manuscript, including Brian Cameron, George Terzis, James Bohman, Marcia Baron, and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann.