

ARTICLE

What is Wrong with the Recent Semiological Interpretation of Kant's *Religion*

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Abstract

In this article, I challenge the semiological interpretation of Kant's *Religion*, particularly as advanced in recent years by James DiCenso and Allen Wood. As I here argue, their interpretations are neither compatible with broader aspects of Kant's positive philosophy of religion, nor with how Kant himself describes the project of the *Religion*. Kant wrote the *Religion* in order to explore the compatibility between his theologically affirmative pure rational system of religion and Christian doctrines, particularly as understood by the Lutherans and Lutheran Pietists of his era, rather than as a treatise on how to make Christian theology compatible with contemporary secularism.

Keywords: Kant; religion; belief; symbols; semiology; interpretation; Christianity

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, I have advanced an interpretation of Kant's *Religion* based upon what I regard as his own characterization of its overall project, namely, to hold Christian doctrines 'up to moral concepts' (*Rel*, 6: 12)¹ in order to determine which have and which lack 'compatibility' or 'unity' (6: 13) with rational religion. In some instances, a doctrine's incompatibility with rational religion is further found to carry the danger of directing agents away from the proper moral importance of 'genuine' religion and towards a cultic form of religion or 'religion of roagation' (6: 51). We thus find throughout the *Religion* Kant evaluating core Christian doctrines and concluding in some cases that they are not merely extraneous to the moral aims that ground and shape rational religion, but are sometimes directly harmful to such aims.

Yet, despite how explicit Kant is about this being the project of the *Religion*, a number of interpreters, for varying reason, have opposed the view that Kant 'rejects' any Christian doctrines. Chris Firestone and Nathan Jacobs, for example, have argued that the *Religion* is Kant's attempt at Christian apologetics, leveraging an 'Augustinian Metaphysic', to defend the faith against heretical encroachments (Firestone and Jacobs 2008: 136). By contrast, both James DiCenso and Allen Wood have held, in the words of the former, that 'Kant is not engaging in [any] theological speculation'

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whatsoever (DiCenso 2012: 117) since the aim of the *Religion* is merely to present Christian doctrines as symbols for our moral ideals in ‘imaginatively enhanced or pictorial form’ (DiCenso 2012: 28). Wood similarly writes that an interpretation such as mine, insofar as it explores which ‘doctrines Kant accepts and which he rejects’, ‘makes nonsense of Kant’s entire project in the *Religion*’ (Wood 2020: 163). For Wood, like DiCenso, contends that Kant’s concern is really about how Christian doctrines can be understood as symbols whose function is to help us gain ‘a meaningful and emotionally enriched way of relating to our own past’ (Wood 2020: 145).

I believe I have replied to those who propose that the *Religion* rests on an ‘Augustinian metaphysic’ in my recent ‘On the Alleged Augustinianism in Kant’s *Religion*’ (Pasternack 2020). So here, my focus will be on what we may call the semiological interpretation of the *Religion*, most prominently advocated by DiCenso and Wood. To this end, section 2 of this article will be devoted to the question of whether or not Kant appraises Christianity and its doctrines. Therein, I will bring my views into conversation with the assertion that, so long as a doctrine is understood as just symbolism, ‘everything in revealed (Christian) faith is compatible with rational faith’ (Wood 2020: 20). Then, in section 3, I will draw out some of the implications in order to address the objection that interpretations such as mine make ‘nonsense of Kant’s entire project in the *Religion*’ (Wood 2020: 163).

2. Does Kant appraise Christianity?

To lead off our first hermeneutical issue, let me bring up the question, perhaps the now infamous question: whether or not Kant appraises Christianity. This is an issue arising out of the Royal Edict of 1794, which warned Kant about publishing further on matters of religion. In his reply, Kant claimed that he has made no ‘appraisal (*Würdigung*) of Christianity’ (*Conflict of the Faculties*, 7: 8; *CF* hereinafter). In *Kant and Religion*, Wood takes Kant at his word here and asserts in Kant’s defence that, if through the *Religion* Kant can successfully establish that there is ‘unity’ or ‘compatibility’ between rational religion and historical faith, then the *Religion* does ‘not disparage Christianity, but would in fact do the *direct opposite*’ (Wood 2020: 24; my emphasis). Yet, given that projects of appraisal can have both positive and negative outcomes, for Wood to say that the *Religion*’s success would demonstrate the ‘direct opposite’ of disparagement, it seems to me that Wood has right there granted that the *Religion* does, in fact, appraise Christianity.

I do not, however, bring this up in order to take a cheap shot against Wood, but rather to indicate how genuinely hard it is to forgo the interpretative thesis to which I subscribe. I discuss the salient issues more fully elsewhere (especially Pasternack 2014 and 2020), but in short, in the preface to the second edition of the *Religion*, Kant explains his goal in terms of holding up ‘fragments’ of the ‘alleged revelation’ of historical faith to ‘moral concepts’ so that he can determine which have ‘unity’ or ‘compatibility’ with rational religion and which do not (*Rel*, 6: 12). It is in this context that I differentiate between doctrines that Kant accepts and rejects.

I take ‘reject’ in this context to mean that Kant has come to the determination that the doctrine lacks ‘unity’ or ‘compatibility’ with rational religion. When this is understood in relation to Kant’s imagery of the two concentric spheres, with the smaller/inner sphere being that of rational religion and the wider/outer sphere being historical faith, doctrines that are rejected, i.e. found to lack ‘unity’ or ‘compatibility’ with rational religion, fall thereby outside the region of overlap. They fall, instead, within

the outer region of the wider sphere, its annulus, i.e. the region of the wider sphere of historical faith that does not overlap with the smaller sphere of rational religion. By contrast, doctrines that are ‘accepted’ are those that are found to have ‘unity’ or ‘compatibility’ with rational religion, thereby falling within the scope of overlap between the wider sphere of historical faith and the smaller sphere of rational religion.²

Nevertheless, in opposition Wood contends, as mentioned earlier, that ‘everything in revealed (Christian) faith is compatible with rational faith’ (Wood 2020: 20). He further protests that an interpretation that considers which ‘doctrines Kant accepts and which he rejects’ ‘makes nonsense of Kant’s entire project in the *Religion*’ (Wood 2020: 163). And yet, there are discussions within *Kant and Religion* where Wood himself seems to follow the very interpretative thesis that he claims will make ‘Kant’s position impossible to understand, much less to take seriously’ (Wood 2020: 165).

For example, on p. 14, Wood provides an accurate (though not complete) list of the doctrines which I claim Kant rejects. These are ‘Original Sin as biologically inherited, the Incarnation, Vicarious Atonement, [and the putative revelation within the story of] Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac’ (Wood 2020: 14, n. 15). Yet on the very page where Wood opposes my claim that Kant ‘rejects’ the aforementioned doctrines, Wood himself writes that ‘rational and revealed religion must *reject* certain doctrines, or the apparent teachings of certain scriptures’ (Wood 2020: 14; emphasis added) – and as his example, he uses one of the examples I too offer, namely, Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac. Moreover, later in *Kant and Religion*, Wood discusses a second of the doctrines on my list, writing that Kant ‘rejects’ the ‘claim that sin is literally inherited by human beings from their ancestors’ (Wood 2020: 62).

Kant’s stated reason for rejecting the story of Abraham and Isaac is that one can employ a ‘negative criterion’ (*Rel*, 6: 87) to assess claims of alleged revelation: should the contents of the alleged revelation go against morality, we can safely conclude that it could not have its source in God. As for the second example, Kant’s rejection of the biological inheritability of sin, I take Kant’s view to be that our moral standing depends upon our will, rather than anything biological, never mind a biological inheritance of what an ancestor has willed. Accordingly, we cannot bear the negative moral status of sin except through our own doing.

So, if Wood in fact agrees that Kant does reject some Christian doctrines in the sense here described, what consequence does that have? Does it mean that Christianity is being appraised?

On those pages where Wood expresses opposition to the notion that Kant ever rejects any doctrine, he claims instead that only literal interpretations of revelation are being rejected; and thus, so long as the alleged revelation is taken as just symbolism, we are each free to find in it something of moral significance (Wood 2020: 25). While that allows the secular interpreter to still commend the Christian for having morally beneficial symbols, when we get into the meat of Wood’s treatment of the *Religion*, it is not as if nothing of Christianity is being rejected.

3. What is the goal of the *Religion*?

Turning now to the question whether an interpretation that considers which ‘doctrines Kant accepts and which he rejects’ ‘makes nonsense of Kant’s entire project in the *Religion*’ (Wood 2020: 163), and that ‘the very question itself makes Kant’s

position impossible to understand, much less to take seriously' (Wood 2020: 165), is it truly 'impossible' to understand (or take seriously) a project that explores the question of overlap between rational religion and historical doctrine? Does the *Religion* become incomprehensible if we follow what Kant himself says about his own project, i.e. that it is an inquiry which holds up fragments of historical faith to 'moral concepts' (*Rel*, 6: 12) in order to determine which have 'unity' or 'compatibility' (*Rel*, 6: 13) with rational religion and which do not? Do we not see kindred exercises in many texts through both the medieval and modern periods: whether one can reconcile religion and reason, whether religious doctrines as specific as the Fall can be derived from philosophical principles, etc.? Is it so absurd to read Kant's *Religion* as his contribution to this tradition, a contribution, however, that is shaped by the uniqueness of his epistemological and moral commitments?

One key aspect of that uniqueness is that Kant evaluates doctrine by way of compatibility with moral principles rather than via the sort of metaphysical defences more common to the works of his predecessors. That is, as we see in the Canon of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the Dialectic of the second *Critique*, and elsewhere, Kant is concerned with the practical relevance of various doctrines. But where Kant began with those doctrinal pillars that have a positive practical role (belief in God and the immortality of the soul), his aim in the *Religion* is to move farther downstream into the broader array of doctrines, evaluating each with respect to whether or not they are conducive towards or deleterious to our practical endeavours.

What Wood and DiCenzo get right is that Kant is concerned with the practical relevance of religion. But, by reducing all to the 'non-literal' (DiCenzo 2012: 19) and 'pictorial form' (DiCenzo 2012: 28) rather than actual doctrines to be evaluated in light of their compatibility with rational religion, they are forced into suppressing Kant's actual stated agenda for the *Religion*. For if one reads the *Religion* as just about 'culturally transmitted representational forms' (DiCenzo 2012: 114), where if one 'pictorial form' doesn't inspire, there is no problem with just moving on to the next, and the next, insofar as appeal is psychological and subjective. Under such conditions, Wood does not see the problem in claiming that '*everything* in revealed (Christian) faith is compatible with rational faith' (Wood 2020: 20), for the comparison is not concept to concept, but just trope to concept, and like a poem or abstract painting, there is no 'right' interpretation, just 'what *his* reason tells *him*' (Wood 2020: 25).

Hence, despite Wood on occasion claiming that Kant *rejects* one or another Christian doctrine (see above), he also proposes that according to Kant '*everything* in revealed (Christian) faith is compatible with rational faith' (Wood, 2020: 20). But if we take the latter as Wood's considered view, then we may understand his reading of the *Religion* to be that Kant's aim therein is to (a) separate the chaff of literal interpretations from symbolism, and then (b) show that once read symbolically, every Christian doctrine can be made compatible with rational religion. Now, while I think that that is a perfectly fine project, I just do not think it is either accurate to what we find in the *Religion*, nor does it do justice to the philosophical importance of this long misunderstood and undervalued text.

As just one example, consider that after Kant rejects Genesis 22, he does not follow up by telling us to not take it literally and that if one interpretation of its tropes is unappealing, it can be replaced with something different, maybe a story about toxic

parenting, or that we must expect the unexpected, or just a dramatic tale about how a certain mountain got its name.

No, what Kant does instead is introduce a 'negative criterion' (*Rel*, 6: 87) by which we can assess claims of alleged revelation: should the contents of the alleged revelation go against morality, we can safely conclude that it could not have its source in God. Likewise, rather than Kant rejecting the inheritability of sin to then follow up with some discussion of literal versus figurative interpretations of it, recuperating it as a symbol so that it too cannot be rejected, instead he tells us that it is the 'most inappropriate' (*Rel*, 6: 40) explanation of the origins of our moral condition and then moves on to a discussion of the will that is in no evident way offered as the symbolic meaning of the doctrine of biological inheritance. That discussion, which centres on the role of our own agency, is offered by Kant in contradistinction to the doctrine of biological inheritance, not, as the semiological interpretation would have us expect, as a means to resuscitate it as a religious symbol.

As one more test case for our respective views on Kant's goals, let us look at Kant's treatment of the passive reception of grace in the General Remark of Part One. The question at issue there³ is whether or not divine aid is needed in order for us to undergo what Kant, following Pietist terminology, refers to as the 'change of heart'. More specifically, Kant is working through his alternative to the Augustinian account of Original Sin. According to the Augustinian tradition, the Fall has corrupted the moral and cognitive capacities of all of humanity. As such, we are incapable of overcoming our fallen condition and thus it can only be through divine aid that we can improve morally. Hence, Kant writes, the adherents of this tradition believe that our moral improvement, our 'change of heart', cannot be our own doing, but must rather be done for us by God – all we can do, and all we need to do, is just 'ask' for God's help (*Rel*, 6: 51).

Kant, however, aggressively attacks this widespread Christian doctrine, a doctrine integral to many Catholic and Protestant soteriologies (see the related discussion at *CF*, 7: 54–7). He writes that this is a doctrine advanced 'under the pretext of natural impotence' by people who 'find moral labor vexing' (*Rel*, 6: 51).⁴ His complaint is that, just like the inheritability of sin, this doctrine would ascribe to us a moral status without that status coming from our own willing. Accordingly, he holds up this 'fragment' of the Christian tradition to moral concepts and finds that it lacks 'unity' or 'compatibility' with rational religion. Kant then deploys a distinction offered as part of the second Preface's presentation of the project of the *Religion*. He tells us that the passive reception of grace is a doctrine incompatible with 'moral religion', befitting instead a '*religion of rogation* (of mere cult)'. For rather than gaining a positive moral status through our own efforts, we merely have to 'ask God for help' (*ibid.*).⁵

I mentioned some of this earlier. But what is significant at this moment is what comes next in the text. If the semiological interpretation were correct, then Kant presumably would next say something about the fault here being in the literal interpretation of the passive reception of grace, though once it is understood just symbolically, presumably as some symbol for some secular ideal, then all would be fine.

But no, that is not what Kant does. Rather, after going so far as to attack the moral character of the proponents of this doctrine, discussing its incompatibility with moral religion and claiming that the doctrine is more suited to a '*religion of rogation* (of mere cult)', Kant then advances a *theological* alternative to the passive reception of grace, not some comments about a religious symbol for some secular signified.

That alternative, one that is made possible by transcendental idealism, falls outside of the usual spectrum of Augustinian, Semi-Pelagian and Pelagian soteriologies. In short, it is that in the face of the question of whether or not we need divine aid in order to undergo a ‘change of heart’, (a) ‘everyone must do as much as it is in his powers to do’ (*Rel*, 6: 52), and yet (b) because we cannot know whether or not our capacities are sufficient, we must leave open the possibility of divine aid. It is not that divine aid is unnecessary (as might be presumed for a Pelagian), nor is it the case, as the Augustinian tradition would maintain, that divine aid is necessary. Rather, for Kant, we cannot know if we are capable of bringing about the ‘change of heart’ solely through our own powers, though we do know that our moral status must substantively arise through their use. Hence, given the logic of *ought implies can*, we are left with a rational hope that ‘what [if anything] does not lie within [our own] . . . power will be made good by cooperation from above’ (*ibid.*). This probably sounds very familiar to Andrew Chignell, as it is close, but slightly different from the position he advances in Chignell 2014. My position, thus, is not, as Wood has incorrectly asserted, that according to Kant there is no need for divine aid. Wood is right that we are not so epistemically situated to be able to make such a claim. But he is wrong to think that that is my position.⁶

What this discussion has, at minimum, hopefully shown is: (a) that the interpretation I advance has a firm textual basis; (b) it does not make the project of the *Religion* ‘impossible to understand’; (c) nor does it undercut (as would the semiological interpretation) the *Religion*’s importance as a contribution to philosophical theology.

By contrast, just as DiCenso, a decade prior, asserted that the *Religion* is merely surveying doctrines understood as ‘culturally transmitted representational forms’ for our moral ideals (DiCenso 2012: 114), and is ‘not engaging in [any] theological speculation’ whatsoever (DiCenso 2012: 117), we now have Wood maintaining once again that the *Religion* is, in essence, a survey of how Christian doctrine can be turned into ‘a meaningful and emotionally enriched way of relating to our own past’ (Wood 2020: 145). That is, in both these cases, Wood and DiCenso would have us ignore what Kant actually says about the project of the *Religion*, ignore the many illustrations of how Kant’s own characterization of the *Religion*’s project flow through its pages, and instead superimpose an interpretative thesis that is not the one Kant actually – and explicitly – tenders.

I suspect that such semiological interpreters may offer in their defence some appeal to the epistemic strictures of transcendental idealism and/or Kant’s use of analogy, both of which have to be applied to any interpretation of the text. While I agree that that is so, it should not be overlooked that at the heart of Kant’s positive philosophy of religion is the thesis that our moral concepts offer us practical cognition of religious concepts, and thus, contrary to Wood’s claims, Kant’s account of analogy is not meant to turn religious symbols into secular signifieds, but rather to show how we can gain cognitive purchase on theological concepts.⁷

4. Conclusion

One cannot claim that Kant ‘makes no appraisal of Christianity’ while at the same time attributing to him such views as:

‘[t]he only truly religious function of divine revelation is to provide symbolic representations’ (Wood 2020: 176); ‘that no supposed revelation can ever truly command universal credibility’ (Wood 2020: 176); ‘that a necessary condition for regarding a scripture as divine revelation is that it admit of some interpretation according to which it harmonizes with the pure religion of reason’ (Wood 2020: 175).

And it hardly helps Kant’s case against the Prussian censors when one claims that he saw the literal interpretation of doctrine or scripture as ‘impoverished, inauthentic, corrupt, and superstitious’ (Wood 2020: 7), never mind ‘regressive’ (DiCenso 2012: 86) and even ‘repugnant’ (Wood 2020: 147).

While I definitely concur that Kant’s core concern in the *Religion* is the moral value of Christian doctrines versus their metaphysical truths, did Kant accomplish this by showing how doctrines about the ‘second-person relationship between myself and God’ (Wood 2020: 137) can instead be read as symbols for first-person ‘self-relation’ (Wood 2020: 137), our moral ideals in ‘imaginatively enhanced or pictorial form’ (DiCenso 2012: 28) through which we each become our own ‘redeemer’ (Wood 2020: 134)?

I further wonder whether the proponents of the semiological interpretation feel that it is the only interpretative option in light of the legacy of claims that the *Religion*’s treatment of Christian doctrine is internally inconsistent and/or that a positive Kantian philosophical theology is incompatible with the epistemic strictures of transcendental idealism. That is, they may feel that their deflationary account is the only way to protect Kant from himself.

By contrast, as I have argued elsewhere, many of the stock objections to the *Religion*’s treatment of Christian doctrine, or objections to his philosophical theology more broadly, can be overcome once it is made clear that their presuppositions are false, that they arise out of misreadings and mistranslations (see for example my discussion of the so-called ‘Conundrum Objection’ in Pasternack 2020), or sometimes just a simple lack of philosophical acumen.

So, rather than following the semiological interpretation, one that I think trivializes the project of the *Religion* and more generally distorts Kant’s overall treatment of religion, maybe what we need to do is believe that Kant was not out of his depths when dealing with religious topics, that he was not merely pandering nor incautious. Rather than dismissing such important moments as Kant declaring that among his reasons for writing the *Critique of Pure Reason* was that he sought out the limits to knowledge in order to ‘make room for faith’ (Bxxx), or that one would become ‘contemptible’ in one’s own eyes if one were to refuse to believe in God and the immortality of the soul (A828/B856), or that ‘morality inevitably leads to religion’ (*Rel*, 6: 6), perhaps we should take our stewardship of the tradition more seriously than do the semiologists, and thus instead of imposing on Kant’s religious works some extra-textual hermeneutic, perhaps we should actually pay more attention to his own characterizations of what he wrote with respect to its structure and aims, and believe that what Kant wrote was distinctly Kantian, rather than a reduction of religious doctrines to symbols for secular signifieds, something that is so generic that it could have been produced by countless other philosophers.

My goal has thus been to show that Kant does not need to be saved from himself, that we can accept what he wrote with regards to his own intentions as giving us real guidance towards those intentions, that many of the objections levied against his philosophical theology flow from interpretative and translation error, and that when read as written, we can actually discover therein an original and robust philosophical theology, internally consistent, rich in detail, with consummate awareness and understanding of Christian doctrine, a genuinely Kantian philosophical theology given form by the core tenets of his theoretical and practical philosophy.

Notes

1 Citations to Kant will be of the Akademie Ausgabe by volume and page, except for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, where citations will use the standard A/B edition pagination. Unless otherwise noted, English quotations will be from Kant (1992-).

2 An example of a doctrine that Kant ‘accepts’ (finds compatible with the moral concepts that shape rational religion and thus falls within the domain of overlap between the two spheres) is radical evil (*radix malorum*). An example of a doctrine Kant ‘rejects’ (finds incompatible with the moral concepts that shape rational religion and thus falls in the annulus, the part of the wider sphere outside the smaller) is the biological inheritability of sin. The issue, however, is actually more complicated than just this. For a more complete treatment, see Pasternack 2017.

3 Wood writes that I ‘repeatedly harp’ on an issue of translation that I ‘apparently’ think is ‘significant’ (Wood 2020: 158, n. 11). Yet, Wood insists, ‘the meaning of what Kant has said’ there is ‘quite clear’. That issue is that the Greene/Hudson and Di Giovanni translations overlook the subjunctive form of *Gesetz, zum Gut-oder Besserwerden sei noch eine übernatürliche Mitwirkung nöthig . . .* (*Rel*, 6: 44). Were the Greene/Hudson and DiGiovanni translations ‘quite clear’ with ‘the meaning of what Kant has said’ obvious to the reader, then twenty years of debate over the so-called ‘Conundrum’ would not have occurred. Wolterstorff, Michalson, Quinn, Hare, Firestone/Jacobs and others assume that in the General Remark Kant is asserting that divine aid is necessary in light of the translation ‘Granted that . . .’. Had the sentence been presented not as an assertion of what is the case, but rather as something to be questioned, a supposition to be appraised, I doubt that those decades of debate would have taken place.

4 Wood seems to overlook Kant’s attack on this doctrine, instead claiming that Kant wants to show Christians that the passive reception of grace can (somehow) be reconciled with rational religion – see p. 140. Yet, when personally reflecting on this doctrine, Wood writes ‘the sycophantic disposition to credit God with everything and ourselves with nothing can lead to patent nonsense if we do not restrain our contemptible impulse toward slavish groveling to the degree needed to preserve bare logical self-consistency’ (Wood 2020: 163, n. 15). Ironically, Wood’s language very much parallels Kant’s own vitriol against this doctrine as one of a ‘religion of rogation (of mere cult)’ and likewise against those who ‘conjure’ it up because they find ‘moral labor vexing’ (*Rel*, 6: 51), as I quote above.

5 An attentive reader might recognize that this stages Kant’s critique of ‘priestcraft’ and ‘counterfeit service’ in Part IV. For Kant’s objections there reflect the use of rituals such as baptism, communion and prayer as means, in substitution for our moral efforts, by which we seek to become ‘well pleasing to God’.

6 In my 2014 commentary on the *Religion* and elsewhere, I oppose the view held by Wolterstorff and others that Kant adopted the Augustinian view that divine aid is necessary, writing for example that Kant’s ‘philosophical commitments bar him from taking Divine aid as a condition without which the transformation of the Change of Heart would not be possible’ (Pasternack 2014: 146). I emphasize that, for Kant, our moral efforts are instead necessary for the ‘change of heart’ (e.g. Pasternack 2014: 170, n. 14) and that according to Kant, we must act as if our ‘change of heart’ is fully on our shoulders, yet we need to be agnostic on the question as to what role, if any, there is for divine aid. I think Wood has misunderstood a passage that begins ‘A key point in favor of the alternative view . . .’ (Pasternack 2014: 145) and mistakes it for my view. Instead, I am there reviewing various interpretative options rather than offering my own. My (tentative) view at the time was expressed in a nearby footnote: ‘We might say that Kant was not

merely agnostic about whether or not there is Divine aid, but struggles over whether or not we can overcome our state of sin' (Pasternack 2014: 167, n. 6). I then wrote 'On the Alleged Augustinianism of Kant's Religion' (Wood read a 2017 draft – and yet he still misrepresents my position, despite the fact that he should know where I stand), which culminates in the interpretative position that, for Kant, 'we are led to a hope, or more precisely, a *conditional hope*, 'that what does not lie in his powers will be compensated for by cooperation from above' (*Rel*, 6: 52; my translation). That is, we cannot know whether or not divine aid is needed, but if it is, then by the logic of *ought implies can*, we are warranted in having the hope that it will be given.

7 In the *Prolegomena*, Kant illustrates his use of analogy as follows: 'the promotion of the happiness of the children = a is to the love of the parents = b as the welfare of humankind = c is to the unknown in God = x, which we call love' (*Pro*, 4: 357n.). Likewise, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant frames this x as an unknown '[s]omething' in God 'of which we have no concept of what it is in itself' (A679/B707), and explains in the *Critique of Judgement* that his treatment of analogy allows us to gain cognitive purchase on religious language without determining anything about God's 'internal constitution' (*CJ*, 5: 457). For more discussion, see (Pasternack and Chance 2018).

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