Terry Godlove, *Kant and the Meaning of Religion: The Critical Philosophy and Modern Religious Thought*
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Two fundamental questions lying at the intersection of the nature of concepts and the meaning of religion drive the content of this book. The first concerns the question of whether religion as object of study in the academy is something merely constructed through the concepts that have been deployed to understand it. In this case concepts are so tightly structured and interconnected that reference to actual objects of experience is either wholly obscured by interpretation or becomes impossible. Hence Godlove is concerned with the charge of emptiness, namely, 'the charge that the modern religious studies academic-industrial complex has manufactured its subject matter out of whole cloth' (p. 157). The second question concerns a closely related worry, namely, whether there is anything beyond what appears to us as given through our interpretations, and if so, whether experience (broadly construed to include practical reason) can offer us any access to it. The latter question stands in conversation with questions broached by Nietzsche, who famously had urged that all knowledge is the result of interpretation in the service of the will to power: we construct our knowledge, and consequently everything that we experience, through our concepts. Not only do these constructions stem from our situated, embodied and embedded perspective, they are always deployed in the service of a continual creative conflict with others. With regard to the question of religion as an object of academic study, the question then becomes whether it is merely a constructed object whose discussion and analysis serves the interests of the rise of certain institutions, or American or European power.

The author seeks to shed light on both questions through an analysis of the following questions. What is the role of concepts and in what way do they shape our experience? Is there, in fact, anything left over, anything *given* that escapes our own constructions, and which in some way constrains our cognitions such that we can have a real grip on things in this world? If we have no grip on the given, then our concepts float free, so to speak, and completely constitute our experience. Here there are no constraints on how we interpret, for our concepts reach all the way down, constituting the very individuals of our experience. While these are strikingly general questions, Godlove is correct in identifying them as of great importance to the relevance of the work of the academy in general, and departments of religious studies in particular. If experience is interpreted 'all the way down', or if we understand

only through concepts constructed by us, then our knowledge is merely the spinning of our own conceptual webs and never provides insight into the empirical world. Most of Godlove's book is devoted to an analysis of how Kant's understanding of the nature of concepts and their relation to empirical intuition might help us in coming to grips with these problems. He correctly argues that Kant escapes what he calls 'hyper-inferentialism', namely, the claim that 'we can create conceptual content from inferential articulation' and that we can do so even absent 'circumstances (including the perceptual circumstances) and consequences (including those consequences that bear on action)' (p. 28). According to Kant, there are two fundamental sources of cognition, understanding and sensibility, and absent perceptual content, concepts are empty. Hence our understanding of the world cannot be constructed out of whole cloth.

The book is divided into six chapters. Each chapter is devoted to consideration of a separate issue stemming from the larger question of the role of concepts in the structuring of experience, especially regarding our attempt to understand religion. These chapters are: 1 'Concepts', 2 'Definition', 3 'Reason', 4 'Experience', 5 'Self' and 6 'Meaning'. The first three chapters provide an exposition of Kant's understanding of concepts and of how definitions illuminate our grasp of empirical kinds, and the role that reason plays in the search for general features of our experience. The chapters on experience and self explore those elements in Kant's system that are beyond or transcend conceptual articulation. The chapter on experience begins with an analysis of Kant's understanding of non-conceptual content, namely, intuition and experience. It is especially devoted to exploring Schleiermacher's reception of Kant's understanding of intuition and whether his use of the idea allows him legitimate access to religious experience. Is Schleiermacher justified in moving from intuition and feeling to that which grounds the way the self is affected? Insofar as non-conceptual content lies at the ground of Schleiermacher's account of religious experience, is there any legitimacy to the move from immediate self-consciousness to the idea of God as intentional object of experience? Must not any understanding of an intentional object already employ concepts? In the chapter on self, Godlove continues his analysis of the relation of the self and its experience of itself to the problem of non-conceptual content through a focus on Kant's understanding of self-consciousness. The principal question the author focuses on here is whether 'Kant's account of self-awareness enacts or at least encourages a false isolation of the mental from social phenomena' (p. 125). To what degree does Kant's self transcend the social construction of the self? And if Kant's understanding of the self does transcend such social construction, does this then mean that what we have here is a Cartesian Kantian model of private selfhood that ignores the social dimension of selfhood and of religion as well?

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The last chapter, 'Meaning', examines Kant's understanding of concepts and intuition in relation to the theory of meaning, especially with respect to 'Kant's deflationary concept of God', and the 'arc of Kant's humanizing program'. Godlove seeks to provide an analysis of how Kant thinks concepts acquire content, and to determine the relation between Kant's understanding and the move from philosophy of religion to the social scientific method in religious studies. The latter moves away from purely theoretical analysis of metaphysical entities to an account of both how language is being used locally as well as how language shapes experience.

The issues addressed in the book are highly significant. Here I limit myself to a discussion of a concern having to do with Godlove's development of his central theme regarding the relation of concepts to experience: he does not distinguish between the *intension* of a concept and its *extension*. Failure to note the distinction leads him to attempt to provide an analysis of a concept's intension in terms of its extension. This is a central confusion recurring throughout the book, one that significantly mars his analysis of Kant's understanding of concepts. For instance, Godlove notes that for Kant every concept 'is composed of a hierarchically nested and indefinitely extended series of sub-concepts. … The connections between concepts and sub-concepts are constitutive of them; that is, they are essential to each concept having just the content that it has' (p. 31). But the content of a concept concerns its intension, not its extension. The intension of a concept is composed of the marks contained *in* a concept; analysis of a concept in terms of its intension is the ground of analytic judgements. The sub-concepts that fall under a concept are richer than the concept itself; in addition to the marks of the concept they fall under, they also contain the marks that differentiate species falling under a common genus. These differentiae are *not* part of the content of the more general concept and, as such, an analysis of the extension of a concept does not shed light on its intension. If the content of a concept depended on the sub-concepts that fell under it, its content would be infinite, and a synthesis of its marks would be impossible. It was Kant's distinction between the intension and the extension of a concept that grounded his distinction between analytic and synthetic judgements: synthetic judgements are possible because concepts in the subject of a judgement relate to what falls *under* them, that is, such judgements are true in virtue of some third thing in which the subject and predicate of a judgement are joined. Here what is asserted in the predicate moves *beyond* what is contained in the subject concept, and the truth of the judgement depends on either experience or the conditions of its possibility. Godlove is certainly correct in affirming that Kant was no hyper-inferentialist: contra Leibniz, Kant did not believe that we had complete concepts, or that a concept could spell out all the features of an individual, or that it could pick out the principle of individuation of a

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substance. We are capable of making synthetic judgements because we have an immediate grip on phenomenal reality through our intuitions, and these intuitions transcend what we can grasp through conceptual articulation alone. As such, all true judgements are not analytic. Yet while he correctly points to much of this, Godlove is mistaken in suggesting that the content of a concept depends on its sphere, for this is to confuse intention with extension, and to confuse the ground of an analytic judgement with that of a synthetic one.

Despite this problem, Godlove gets at a central issue in analytic philosophy since Kant, one that governs the larger issues he explores in the book. This concerns the relation of empirical concepts to experience. How do we arrive at our empirical concepts? Are they constructed out of whole cloth, or do we form them in an attempt to articulate the nature of the objects of our experience? If so, how is such articulation possible? Is there even any fixity to our concepts, which is what must be presupposed if there is to be such a thing as an analytic judgement in the first place? Or are our concepts continually morphing as we use them to refer to different aspects of the same experience? A central issue in this regard concerns the relation of the content of a concept to that which falls under the concept. Godlove is incorrect to suggest that Kant believed that the content of a concept can be identified with its sphere: Kant was clear in distinguishing between intension and extension. However, Godlove is correct to point out that the problem of the fixity of the meaning of concepts, and the relation of a concept's meaning to that to which it refers is a rich one, one playing a key role in moving the study of religion away from a focus on the philosophy of religion and to its social and scientific study.

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Chris W. Surprenant, *Kant and the Cultivation of Virtue*
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In *Kant and the Cultivation of Virtue*, Chris Surprenant explores the question of how Kantian agents become virtuous in practice. Surprenant argues that