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# How is Religious Experience Possible? On the (Quasi-Transcendental) Mode of Argument in Kant's *Religion*

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## Abstract

Kant's general mode of argument in *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*, especially his defence of human nature's propensity to evil, is a matter of considerable controversy: while some interpret his argument as strictly *a priori*, others interpret it as anthropological. In dialogue with Allen Wood's recent work, I defend my earlier claim that *Religion* employs a quasi-transcendental mode of argument, focused on the possibility of a specific *type* of experience, not experience in general. In *Religion*, Kant portrays *religious* experience as possible only for beings with a good predisposition and a propensity to evil. Kant's theory of the archetype and his theory of symbolism illustrate the same mode of argument. Taking *Religion* as a sequel to the third *Critique* more than the second, my perspectival interpretation makes room for a robust view of unsociable sociability without the absurd deception of regarding it as the source of human evil.

**Keywords:** Kant's theory of religion; religious experience; quasi-transcendental arguments; propensity to evil; symbolism; perspectival interpretation

Questioning how religious experience is *possible* highlights an essential feature of Kantian critique. Being critical, in Kant's sense, requires *thinking perspectively*, identifying what is good or true about opposing sides of a controversy and distinguishing these from what is bad or false about each side. Kantian criticism typically focuses on how some feature of human experience is *possible*, detecting formal/subjective conditions that *necessarily* ground its possibility. Kant calls such necessary conditions for possibility 'transcendental'. However, not all types of human experience can be traced back to a fully transcendental ground. Taking Kant's view of *religious* experience as a case in point, I shall raise three questions that arise out of the recent literature on Kant and religion.

First, what role (if any) does *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*<sup>1</sup> play in Kant's philosophical system? Many interpreters have assumed the book is primarily an appendix to his ethics – a mere supplement to the system's practical standpoint, not a constituent component of doing critique. For example, this traditional assumption seems to operate tacitly throughout much of Allen Wood's *Kant and Religion*

(Wood 2020; citation throughout by page number only), for Wood frequently interrupts his exegesis of *Religion* to insert sometimes lengthy explanations of Kant's ethics. However, Wood also presents an up-to-date account of the crucial role *symbolism* plays in Kant's theory of religion. Early in chapter 1 he advances a thesis that will surprise some readers, that Kant's *Religion* is largely about religious *experience*. The first *Critique's* limitations on cognition of God, he insists (p. 5), 'do not preclude what might be called – and even what Kant himself might call – an "experience" of God'. Although such experience conveys no 'theoretical cognition', we can 'accept [it] on practical grounds or as part of aesthetic experience. Such experiences are symbolic in character.'<sup>2</sup> This opening argument suggests that for Wood *Religion* is a sequel to the *third Critique*, not the second.<sup>3</sup> This way of positioning *Religion* within Kant's corpus fits best with the claim Wood develops quite effectively in his book's second half, that symbolism is of crucial importance to Kantian religion.<sup>4</sup> Yet the book's first half reads Kant's *Religion* as if it were simply his system's third book on ethics. This tension illustrates why it is so important for interpreters to take a clear stand on whether *Religion* is a proper component of the critical system at all, and if so, to explain what role it plays therein.

My second question is this paper's title: how is religious experience possible? I shall consider this and my third question using Wood's aforementioned book as a sounding-board, as it aptly illustrates some key aspects of the relevant controversies. The previous quotation states Wood's main answer to this second question: for Kant, *symbolism* makes religious experience possible. Wood repeatedly associates symbolism with the very *possibility* of religious experience (p. 151): 'To say that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ symbolizes something about the moral change in ourselves is not to say that we reject what is presented through the symbol. . . . For the symbol is what gives us experiential access to what it symbolizes.' Religious experience would therefore be *impossible* without the symbols provided by some historical faith.<sup>5</sup> If symbolism serves for Kant as a necessary condition for the possibility of religious experience, this gives rise to the question: does the possibility of religious experience depend on any necessary conditions *other than* the presence of properly functioning symbols? Wood rightly emphasizes that Kant's 'save' for religious experience, which interpreters typically read Kant as altogether forbidding, is to regard the moral law as 'inner revelation' (p. 18) – a move fully consistent with Kant's restrictions on theoretical cognition, as long as we interpret it symbolically rather than literally. But are there *other* conditions?

A prime candidate for such a further condition is Kant's theory of the 'archetype' of perfect humanity, sometimes virtually identified with the 'good principle'. In *Religion's* second piece, Kant regards this idea, that human nature is grounded in a being who perfectly fulfils all levels of our predisposition to good (i.e. animality, humanity and personality), as the only hope we have of experiencing moral improvement, given the debilitating effects of our propensity to evil. Kant never presumes to *argue* for the archetype's reality; he merely takes as granted that, *if* our nature is beset by an evil propensity, the only rational way out would be to appeal to God's gracious provision of such an archetype conveyed by reason. (Kant's portrayal of the archetype as explaining the *possibility* of any alleged experience of grace closely parallels the role of possibility in his moral arguments for God's existence.) For Kant, morality itself cannot have a *transcendental* status, as he reserves this term for arguments proving

a necessary condition for the possibility of *theoretical* cognition. Nevertheless, Kant's frequent appeal to the possibility of realizing various *practical* objects, and his claims that such possibility can be explained only by presupposing that some subjective conditions necessarily apply, have led me to call various practical arguments 'quasi-transcendental'. A *quasi-transcendental argument* follows a structure similar to Kant's standard transcendental arguments but takes as its object something other than an empirical cognition, such as a religious symbol. My second question can therefore be restated as follows. Aside from the basic need for symbols conveyed by some historical faith and for an archetype of perfection that can give us hope of achieving moral improvement, what other quasi-transcendental conditions for the possibility of religious experience does Kant's *Religion* introduce?

In answering this refined second question, some interpreters might cite Kant's theory of humanity's 'unsociable sociability' as another necessary condition for religious experience. Kant undoubtedly does present his theory of the *ethical community* as a necessary condition for authentic religion. Moreover, on the basis of his new, 'religious argument' for God's existence,<sup>6</sup> he also argues that, for us unsociably sociable humans, such a community can have its proper effect only by taking the form of a *church*. Thus, Kant argues that the existence of *some historical faith or other* is a necessary condition for the possibility of religious experience.<sup>7</sup> However, Kant never treats unsociable sociability *itself* as such a condition, though our proper *response* to it is an underlying theme running throughout *Religion*. Wood sometimes seems to portray unsociable sociability as functioning quasi-transcendentally, but in all such cases, the *source* of this status is the evil propensity.<sup>8</sup> This observation leads directly to my third question.

Could Kant's theory of unsociable sociability explain the origin of human evil? Kant obviously regards unsociable sociability as the empirical product of our propensity, its *manifestation* in human history, not its *source*. Yet Wood reiterates the claim he had previously defended in many publications, that Kant *grounds* human evil in our need to exist in *society* (see n. 11). Obviously, our social nature is extremely important to Kant – important enough that in *Religion's* third piece he makes the church a necessary condition for successfully *combating* the evil that grafts itself onto this aspect of our nature. But does acknowledgement of the inevitably social *manifestation* of our evil nature *exclude* the claim that Kant argues quasi-transcendentally when discussing the human propensity?

Wood summarily rejects all claims that Kant advances an 'a priori' argument for humanity's evil propensity, oddly claiming (pp. 84–5) that 'Kant's thesis is . . . far too strong for it to be proven a priori'.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, he gives no details about these alternative interpretations or how they differ from each other.<sup>10</sup> Instead, ignoring such counter-evidence, he claims that the first piece passage commenting most directly on whether we can prove human nature's evil status is one near the end of the Introduction, where Kant says 'this can be proved only later on', through 'anthropological probing' (6: 25). This passage appears *before* Section I, where Kant will defend the first premise of his quasi-transcendental argument that human nature is radically evil. Wood leaves unmentioned that in the context of this preliminary remark Kant explicitly states that the proof referred to here is *not* the thesis of the *first* piece, that human nature is evil, but the thesis of the *second* piece, where Kant first introduces the archetype of perfect humanity and argues that we have a

duty to make this ideal of goodness *objectively real*. Wood's favourite proof-text does not even *address* the question of whether we can prove human nature is evil; it addresses the question whether there is any 'basis for exempting any human being from' *whatever* the first piece ends up concluding about human nature.<sup>11</sup> Anthropological concerns are important for Kant, but *not* in the first piece, which aims to determine how experiencing evil is *possible*; only in the second piece does Kant seek to determine whether 'one individual could be assumed to be good, and another to be evil, by nature', even if the entire 'genus' is evil (6: 25). Elsewhere, I refute Wood's way of interpreting this passage in detail.<sup>12</sup>

Wood concedes what my interpretation claims for Kant's quasi-transcendental argument when he writes (p. 88): 'This consequence of the thesis of radical evil for moral practice [that we need a change of heart in order to improve] is what is essential to the overall argument of the *Religion*.' This comment offers hope that, if Wood grasped what my position on Kant's quasi-transcendental mode of argument is, he could accept it. My claim is just as conditional as Wood's: *if* religious experience is *possible*, one of its necessary conditions is that the human race has collectively 'chosen' evil. Wood here (p. 88) grants that this 'consequence of the thesis of radical evil . . . is essential to the overall argument of the *Religion*'. Yet if so, it makes no sense to deny any *a priori* basis for the claim that 'we cannot begin our strivings for moral improvement with a presumption of our innocence, but must presuppose an original depravity of our disposition, and therefore we need to combat it' (p. 89). What do Wood's 'cannot', 'must' and 'need' *mean*, if not that reason *constrains us* to think of evil thus – i.e. that there is something quasi-transcendental about the reasoning? Wood has no problem conceiving and accepting Kant's view of human *goodness* – i.e., the moral law – as *a priori* (see e.g. p. 90). The point of Kant's doctrine of radical evil is that *we initially make ourselves rational* by giving ourselves an upside-down version of the same moral principle. We *must* have done so, despite having no empirical evidence of that *original act's* occurrence, because we observe the reversed principle operating from our earliest decision-making and because *evil deeds* could not exist, had we not chosen such a fundamental maxim. Wood cannot have his anthropological cake and eat it too: either *the moral law itself* is, like the propensity to evil, merely an anthropological observation that awaits empirical confirmation, or else both the moral law and our evil propensity can be established *a priori for the species*, although we cannot identify their relative presence in any given *individual* without 'anthropological probing' (6: 25).

In short, Wood (2020: 86) correctly reads this passage as making 'unmistakably clear . . . that Kant thinks the thesis . . . has *not yet been proven* at all, much less proven *a priori*'. But Wood portrays Kant's explicitly *preliminary* side-comment as if it were intended as the *final* answer to a question Kant has not yet started discussing in the first piece! In this passage, Kant portrays the claim that some special human beings have *escaped* the evil propensity as an anthropological question that, *as such*, does not properly belong to the first piece. Wood is therefore entirely unjustified to take this early comment as a reason for questioning (p. 86) whether 'Kant himself is even committed to the thesis of radical evil'. (What Kant is not committed to, and carefully avoids appraising even in the later parts of *Religion*, is whether or not the *historical Jesus* possessed radical evil.<sup>13</sup>) If Kant were as uncommitted to radical evil as Wood claims, then Kant's explicit statements throughout the first piece, that

human nature is radically evil, would have to be prevarications – a position Wood elsewhere resoundingly rejects.<sup>14</sup>

On the basis of Kant's claim at 6: 25 that the thesis of humanity's radical evil 'has not yet been proven', Wood (p. 61) infers that Kant never gives any proof and that he therefore might not be 'fully committed to the thesis that there is a radical propensity to evil in human nature'. But Wood can maintain this speculation only by carefully avoiding any close examination of Kant's text in the first piece, which repeatedly affirms, even in the *title* of Section III, that 'The Human Being is Evil by Nature' (6: 32). Admittedly, Kant also says in Section III that, given 'the multitude of screaming examples that experience places before our eyes in the deeds of human beings',<sup>15</sup> 'we can spare ourselves the formal proof' of the stated thesis (6: 32–3; emphasis added); but he never says he *actually omits* this proof. Contra Wood, Kant subsequently warns that these 'experiential proofs ... still do not teach us the actual make-up of that [evil] propensity and the basis of this opposition [to the moral law]' (6: 35),<sup>16</sup> and a few pages later he clarifies (6: 39n.): 'The actual proof of this judgment [i.e. of Section III's title] ... is contained not in this section but in the previous one.' Although Wood cites Palmquist 2008, he simply ignores the massive amount of textual evidence provided there, demonstrating the utter irrelevance of his position to a proper interpretation of the *possibility* of human evil. He admits at one point, however, that Kant's inference to the evil propensity appeals to a 'relative kind of apriority' (p. 75); with a more charitable treatment of his interlocutors, Wood could present his position as referring to the same feature of Kant's argument that I call *quasi-transcendental*.

Wood supports his social interpretation of evil's source with a second quote (pp. 77–8), this time from the introduction to the third piece. Yet the lengthy passage from *Rel*, 6: 93–4, is not about evil's *origin*; Wood gives this *impression* by inserting '[the radical propensity to evil]', which never appears in Kant's original. Kant starts the quoted passage by saying a person 'can easily convince himself' (6: 93) of the argument that follows – 'that [evil inclinations] come to him not so much from his own coarse nature ... as from human beings with whom he stands in relation or association'. The words 'coarse nature' refer to Kant's argument in the first piece, that we are each responsible for our *own* evil choices. His point here is that we *cannot* merely blame other people's annoying behaviour for our own poor choices. Wood shows his own self-confessed bias (acknowledged in his Preface) when he writes (p. 78): 'to say that for Kant the radical human propensity to evil has a social and historical origin is only to report what Kant explicitly says'. Kant explicitly says that human beings looking for excuses and not wanting to place blame where it belongs, on the choices that have determined their own coarse nature, *easily pass off responsibility* for their evil propensity onto other people. The position imputed to Kant by supporters of the claim that Kant *grounds* evil in unsociable sociability is what Kant explicitly identifies as a *deception* that easily tempts our evil inclinations!<sup>17</sup>

My previously elaborated alternative interpretation is that *Religion's* first piece provides a *quasi-transcendental* argument, whose main steps are easily overlooked until one notices that they are conveyed in the four *section titles*, which follow the form of the first *Critique's* typical transcendental arguments. Kant's proof is that, if evil exists, *something* in human nature must ground it, because beings such as ourselves, who possess a good predisposition, *could not do evil* if this were not the case;

we clearly *do* make evil choices; therefore, the human agent's volitional structure *must* have an evil propensity. Acknowledging the relevant textual evidence does not require abandoning the view that unsociable sociability is crucial for Kant; it simply requires us to concede that this doctrine tells us nothing about evil's *possibility*; rather, it gives us a helpful way of describing evil's *impact* on our attempt to implement the social ('humanity') aspect of our good predisposition. Given that Wood reads Kant's *Religion* as generally focusing on conditions for the possibility of *overcoming the effects* of our evil nature *through religious experience*, he gains no advantage by continuing to insist that Kant took refuge in a merely empirical observation at this foundational stage of his argument, instead of conceding that the first stage of Kant's argument employs his standard (quasi-)transcendental strategy.<sup>18</sup>

Accepting the quasi-transcendental status of Kant's argument for human nature's evil propensity would not require interpreters to sacrifice anything crucial about the importance of unsociable sociability.<sup>19</sup> Reading Kant's *Religion* as a systematically interconnected series of quasi-transcendental arguments for the possibility of religious experience keeps Kant's doctrine of unsociable sociability firmly in place, not as the *source* of evil but as fulfilling the more plausible function of describing the paradoxes we face when considering the human situation *empirically*. Kant's use of possibility-type proofs in so many other areas of his system – not the least being in his various moral arguments for God's existence – is thereby rendered consistent with his position on evil, so that interpreters no longer need to portray Kant as being merely unable to make up his mind because 'freedom is incomprehensible' (p. 65n.).<sup>20</sup> Wood's alternative, that 'The maxim of evil is grounded in a certain way of valuing ourselves – the comparative-competitive way' (p. 78), lacks support from Kant's texts and directly conflicts with numerous passages. The issue is not whether human nature inevitably *exhibits* this comparative-competitive feature; Kant states that explicitly in Section I of the first piece. Wood's interpretative option deceptively downplays the fact that Section I introduces *the predisposition to good*. Kant's main point there is that nature made us competitive *for our own good*, not that evil has its *source* in competitiveness. Interpreters will search in vain for the latter claim in Kant's text, especially in Sections II–IV, which examine how we graft evil *onto* these good predispositions. Kant's point in Section I is that our sociable nature is intrinsically *good*, precisely because it *cannot* (by itself) be the *source* or *ground* of the evil that makes us *unsociable*, much less of its very *possibility*. Moreover, recognizing the quasi-transcendental status of Kant's general mode of argument in *Religion* offers a sound basis for understanding the profound role of symbolism in religion – a point that Wood, as we have seen, highlights excellently, but without bringing out its grounding in Kant's overall argumentative strategy.

Our consideration of the consistency of upholding *both* a belief in unsociable sociability *and* the claim that Kant offers a quasi-transcendental argument for an evil propensity that first makes human evil *possible*, aptly illustrates Kant's normal argumentative strategy. As a perspectival thinker, he claims *both* that evil has a quasi-transcendental grounding (in our necessarily presupposed propensity) *and* that evil manifests itself empirically in our unsociable sociability. Both views are correct, depending on which perspective we adopt. The debate over the nature of Kant's thesis regarding the evil propensity seems intractable only when the interlocutors do not think perspectivally: the importance of anthropology for Kant should not be

underestimated and is essential to his view of how symbols arise in any given religion; but it cannot be used to answer questions about what is most fundamental in philosophy – i.e. the *possibility* of things – because these are *a priori* questions.

## Notes

1 Quotations from Kant's *Religion* cite my revision of Werner Pluhar's 2009 translation, interspersed throughout Palmquist 2016. I there translate Kant's *Stück* literally as 'piece', thus reminding us that Kant originally wrote the four parts of *Religion* as a series of journal articles ('pieces'). For my early defence of using 'bare' to translate *bloß*, see Palmquist 1992: 132–3, 136 – an article Wood cites (p. 2n.) in support of a claim he frequently repeats, that Kant does *not* reduce religion to morality, but raises morality to the level of (symbolically interpreted) religion. Nevertheless, Wood hastily dismisses 'bare' as a translation (p. 15), without addressing its benefits.

2 For a sustained argument that Kantian Critique is essentially a type of *experience*, with a religious dimension that sometimes borders on the mystical, see Palmquist 2019a.

3 My argument that Kant's *Religion* should be read as a companion to the third *Critique* was first presented in a series of journal articles published in the 1980s, later revised to serve as chapters in Palmquist 1993 (esp. ch. 3) or Palmquist 2000/2019 (esp. ch. 6).

4 Wood (p. 4n.) rightly recommends Paul Tillich as an excellent defender of the importance of symbolism within Christian theology. For a detailed account of Tillich's subtle reliance on Kant, see Palmquist 2019b.

5 Wood's account of religious symbolism resonates well with the one advanced in Palmquist 2000/2019 (esp. ch. 5) and throughout Palmquist 2016 (esp. ch. 6). Two differences are that, unlike Wood, I focused on Kant's account of the *possibility* of symbolism functioning as it does and that Wood thinks rational religion *itself* consists entirely of symbols, whereas I argued that religious experience is possible only when the symbols provided by some religious tradition convey the *non-symbolic* principles of rational religion.

6 For details on the new argument at *Rel.*, 6: 97–8, see Palmquist 2009.

7 Wood rightly affirms this crucial role for historical faith in several places (e.g. pp. 174–5).

8 On Wood's commitment to the importance of unsociable sociability, see e.g. pp. 70, 76–9, 164–7. With no textual evidence, he claims (p. 164): 'the radical propensity to evil is another name for what Kant ... calls the "unsociable sociability" of human nature'. To his credit, Wood openly confesses how weak his position is, for anyone concerned with the systematic coherence of Kant's text (see e.g. p. 164). Apparently, it never occurred to Wood that the reason there is precious little textual evidence for unsociable sociability prior to the Third Piece is that such a theory *plays no role* in Kant's systematic argument before the Third Piece. A more plausible view is that our unsociable sociability is the *outcome* (the empirical manifestation) of our propensity to evil, the latter being a quasi-transcendental presupposition explaining the *possibility* of the former.

9 Wood's rhetoric here would have been more persuasive had he provided some evidence that Kant was the sort of philosopher who regarded transcendental arguments as *weak*! Moreover, it is unclear which thesis of Kant's Wood is referring to. If it is Kant's answer to the question, *How is human evil possible?*, then surely Kant would allow *only an a priori* answer.

10 My interpretation of Kant's proof for the evil propensity regards it as 'quasi-transcendental': in Palmquist 2008 I offer extensive textual evidence that the argument *exists in Kant's text*. This is quite different from the claim made by Henry Allison and Seiriol Morgan, that a fully *a priori* argument can be *reconstructed* on Kant's behalf, since he failed to give one.

11 In *Rel.*, 6: 25, Kant makes two points: whatever conclusion the First Piece reaches regarding the evil propensity will not be about individuals, but about the human 'genus'; and the distinct question of whether certain individuals *overcome* that genus 'can be proved only later on', with 'anthropological probing'. As I argue elsewhere (see n. 12), the salient issue here is whether we are justified in 'exempting any human being from' the evil propensity, *if* the First Piece can establish such a propensity. Wood claims this passage says the "'formal proof" must wait upon the results of "anthropological research later on"' (p. 86); but Kant never refers here to a 'formal proof'; for no anthropological evidence could constitute *formal* proof! The formal proof mentioned in the First Piece is not anthropological. A perspectival reading

allows a proper place for *both* types of evidence, whereas Wood depicts Kant's position as one-eyed (solely anthropological).

12 See Palmquist 2008 and Palmquist 2016: §I.4, where I demonstrate that a careful examination of the First Piece gives responsible interpreters no option to claim Kant thought a proof was unnecessary.

13 Palmquist 2012 demonstrates that Kant remains entirely neutral on the question of Jesus' divinity.

14 Wood rightly challenges Pasternack's claim that Kant frequently prevaricates. But to be self-consistent in defending Kant's integrity, Wood should concede that in *Religion* Kant traces the very possibility of identifying a human act as evil to a hidden source within human nature's subjective constitution: the 'propensity to evil'.

15 Wood reads this claim as referring only to 'a morally responsible individual agent' (p. 66); yet several of Kant's examples refer explicitly to *political* forms of evil, perpetrated by *groups* of people against other groups.

16 Wood briefly discusses this passage (p. 74), but without explaining *why* Kant would write this, if Wood's position were accurate. Interpreting Kant as (uncharacteristically) favouring an entirely empirical argument in Section III requires reading the text selectively.

17 Objections to Wood's position are common in the literature, yet he passes over them lightly, without addressing them head on. Indeed, his own attention-diverting discussion of the role of the passions (pp. 79–82) could be read as an ironic illustration of what Kant calls 'delusion (*Wahn*)' (cf. n. 19 below): when the issue at hand is evil's *rational source*, Wood discusses the passions.

18 My alternative interpretation resonates well with the vast majority of Wood's reading of Kant's theory of religion: the fact that Kant offers only a quasi-transcendental proof of the evil propensity protects the ignorance that, as Wood repeatedly emphasizes, Kant appeals to elsewhere. Given that Kant says reason cannot tell us whether we need God's proactive assistance to enable us to counteract the effect of our evil propensity, how could he possibly *know* that evil is *sourced* in our need to relate with other people? On Wood's own principles, his interpretation cannot hold. By contrast, I see Kant's answer to the question 'What is the source of the evil propensity?' as exactly parallel to his treatment of divine grace: reason cannot tell us where the evil propensity comes from, but only that *we must have chosen it*, just as it tells us only that *if* grace is available, *we must make ourselves receptive to it*.

19 Wood (p. 83, emphasis added) implicitly acknowledges (and accepts) the quasi-transcendental status of Kant's argument for the evil propensity: 'the choice not to act according to who we are *is possible* only through a self-deceptive delusion that some incentive other than the moral one has rational priority over it'. Kant's argument is indeed about evil's *possibility*. Wood here inadvertently concedes that the *possibility* of human evil is grounded *not* in our unsociable sociability, but in 'a self-deceptive delusion' that is our free rational choice. This statement accurately portrays Kant's argument for the evil propensity as being grounded on the *a priori* necessity for a free choice to adopt a *fundamental maxim* as that which puts deception in place of proper moral reasoning. As such, the argument is quasi-transcendental.

20 That Kant thinks freedom is ultimately inexplicable does not mean he never gives an account of how freedom is *possible*. Rather, the argument of the First Piece accomplishes exactly that. Alleging that Kantian freedom is nothing but an unresolvable 'perplexity' (pp. 65n.) serves to justify Wood's belief that Kant thereby 'avoids any absurd commitment to a transcendental noumenal world'. I agree that many *interpretations* of Kant's remarks about the 'timeless' nature of our choice to adopt an evil *Gesinnung* make Kant's position *seem* absurd; but Wood writes as if *Religion* contains *no such remarks* in the first place – a contention that is simply counterfactual. On the metaphysical function of *Gesinnung* in Kant's *Religion*, see Palmquist 2015.

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