

another that we are justified in expecting others to feel this feeling of pleasure in response to the same object.

Though McMahon may not be able to draw as much as she would like from Kant, the fact remains that her contribution of a pragmatist theory of meaning and cultural pluralism grounded in a rich and nuanced view of aesthetic reflective judgement is important, challenging and exhilarating. The reader is rewarded with a novel integration of wide-ranging influences that constitutes not only an attractive view in its own right but also a productive and provocative lens through which to view Kant's legacy.

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Lawrence Pasternack, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Kant on Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*

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Lawrence Pasternack's masterful commentary on Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (published through Routledge's Guidebook series) achieves three important goals: first, it offers an original, plausible and unifying interpretation of *Religion* as a whole. Second, this unifying interpretation allows Pasternack to make the notoriously difficult *Religion* accessible to undergraduates. Third, it advances scholarly debate on several fronts, making it a must-have for philosophers and theologians working on *Religion* as well as for anyone teaching *Religion*.

In the Introduction (as well as in chapter 6), Pasternack articulates the interpretative backbone of his book, which is that *Religion* is fundamentally about the doctrine of the highest good. From the highest good, we can derive the two practical postulates of God and immortality. Together, these three tenets form what Pasternack calls the 'Pure Rational System of Religion' (p. 2). According to Pasternack, the articulation of this pure religion constitutes the 'first experiment' that Kant mentions in the Second Preface to *Religion*.

The 'second experiment', the execution of which Pasternack describes as 'the central project of *Religion*', is an 'investigation of the scope of overlap between traditional Christian doctrine and the Pure Rational System of Religion' (p. 14, n. 11). More precisely, Kant is interested in seeing whether

what Christianity holds to be necessary for salvation is also what pure religion says is needed for salvation. Because Kant holds that ‘Pure Rational Faith (*reiner Vernunftglaube*) = Saving Faith (*seligmachender Glaube*)’ (pp. 3, 80, 190), we can ignore or argue against historical religion whenever it asserts that something beyond pure rational faith is needed for salvation.

Viewing *Religion* in this way is both interpretatively novel and pedagogically useful. It provides a key to deciphering the text, giving us a shorthand for seeing what each of the four parts of *Religion* is about and how they relate to each other: part one centres on the fact that individuals, owing to their evil *Gesinnungen* (inspired by their propensity to evil), are unworthy of membership in the highest good; part two discusses how individuals can make themselves worthy of inclusion; part three is about the social measures good individuals can take to usher in the highest good, namely the formation of a church; and part four focuses on the threats institutional religion poses to this church.

Given the importance of the highest good to Pasternack’s project, he understandably devotes most of chapter 1 (‘Faith, Knowledge, and the Highest Good’) to elucidating it. He does so by giving us a sweeping tour of Kant’s thinking on the subject in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason*, *Critique of Judgement* and, near the beginning of chapter 2, *Religion*. Pasternack shows that, while Kant’s conceptualization of the highest good remained constant from the first *Critique* to the *Religion*, his argumentation on its behalf changed considerably from work to work, culminating in the argument he gave in the first preface of *Religion*.

This tour not only shows that the highest good was of central importance to Kant (appearing prominently in four of his major works), but also helps to dispel the common assumption that Kant’s canonical argument for the highest good is that of the second *Critique* (as Pasternack shows, this is probably the weakest of Kant’s four arguments). The only shortcoming of Pasternack’s account is his elucidation of the argument for the highest good in *Religion*’s first preface, which was too terse for me to fully grasp.

In the rest of chapter 1, Pasternack offers an interpretation of transcendental idealism for the novice reader (understanding it in much the same way that Allison does) and articulates the distinction between Kant’s understandings of knowledge, opinion, faith and persuasion. Pasternack’s discussion of these epistemic attitudes is original, extremely plausible, and hugely helpful to both the student and the scholar. As for his transcendental idealism, it goes beyond Allison’s methodological interpretation by allowing for the possibility of faith in a real God and afterlife.

Chapter 2 (‘*Religion*’s Two Prefaces and the Moral Foundations of Pure Rational Faith’) provides a close reading of *Religion*’s two prefaces. Besides his articulation of the argument for the highest good in the first preface, Pasternack’s most important contribution in this chapter is his limp

unpacking of Kant's criteria for the proper relationship between philosophers and biblical theologians. Pasternack shows Kant deferring to theologians on several fronts, but despite the avowedly submissive attitudes he expresses in *Religion's* preface, he discovers Kant violating his explicit standards throughout *Religion* and concludes (in chapter 4) that, 'however philosophically compelling *Religion* may be, we must wonder whether the Prussian censors [who condemned *Religion*] were legally in the right' (p. 166).

Chapter 3 ('Part One of *Religion: Good, Evil, and Human Nature*') finds Pasternack explicating the most discussed part of *Religion*: Kant's theory of evil. Although this ground is very well trod, Pasternack takes some new steps. First, he gives a set of five very helpful 'interpretive desiderata' (p. 98) that any successful reconstruction of Kant's argument for the universality of the propensity to evil will have to meet. Second, he provides his own reconstruction of Kant's argument for the universality of the propensity to evil. While this reconstruction is firmly in the anthropological tradition of Sharon Anderson-Gold's and Allen Wood's construal of Kant's argument (which reads the propensity to evil as emerging from the predisposition to humanity), he offers a pair of new insights that Anderson-Gold and Wood do not.

First, he illuminates the propensity to evil and the evil *Gesinnung*, not only by specifying what the propensity to evil is ('a principle within us that actively opposes the moral law – or put differently ... a principle that biases us in favour of adopting an evil *Gesinnung*', p. 108) and what the evil *Gesinnung* is (a supreme maxim of subordinating morality to happiness), but, most important, by explicating their relationship to each other ('The [propensity to evil] shapes our psychology such that we choose the [evil *Gesinnung*], and the [evil *Gesinnung*] then promotes the continuing activity of the [propensity to evil]', p. 117).

Second, Pasternack tells a story about how it is that the propensity to evil can be innate yet something for which we are responsible: it is innate in that it lies inert within all human beings, but we are morally responsible for it because during our psychological development it activates, and we eventually come to side with it despite knowing better. This is the most fleshed out version of the anthropological interpretation to date.

In chapter 4 ('Part Two of *Religion: The Change of Heart*'), Pasternack discusses Kant's doctrine of the 'change of heart' – that is, changing from having an evil to having a good *Gesinnung*. Whereas Kant's take on the propensity to evil is not necessarily incompatible with traditional Christianity, Kant's view of redemption is.

The traditional Christian view of redemption is that Jesus, by dying on the cross, atones for our sins, which, if we accept it, renders us well pleasing to (i.e. justified before) God. In other words, sanctifying grace – arrived at through vicarious atonement – paves the way for justifying grace.

Though Pasternack's Kant accepts the formula that sanctification is needed for justification, his understanding of sanctification is at odds with the Christian version. For Kant, we can make ourselves good – we do not need to believe that Jesus is God to become good. Indeed, Kant positively rejects this idea, both because he denies vicarious atonement and also because he thinks that Jesus, if holy, would be irrelevant to beings like us, who have a propensity to evil.

Once we become good, we are justified before God. Not because God forgives the sins of those with good *Gesinnungen*, but rather because from God's perspective a person's *Gesinnung* is all that matters; if it is evil, then that person deserves punishment, but if it is good, she does not. Consequently, we should not see God as *forgiving* the good person. Instead, the good person is *relieved* of responsibility for her past sinfulness: 'The forgiven are guilty, but treated mercifully. The "relieved" are no longer guilty' (p. 157). In other words, when the person changes her *Gesinnung*, the main condition of her having a debt of sin – namely, having an evil *Gesinnung* – is no longer true of her. (Pasternack also elaborates on Kant's take on justification and sanctification in the part of chapter 5 devoted to the Remarkable Antinomy.)

Part two of *Religion* concerns what it takes for an individual to transform herself from evil to good, but part three, which Pasternack tackles in chapter 5 ('Part Three of *Religion*: The Kingdom of God on Earth'), is primarily about what it takes for her to remain good in the face of temptations to relapse into evil, which Pasternack calls 'recidivism' (p. 175).

The greatest source of recidivism is being in what Kant calls the 'ethical state of nature' (6: 95). The ethical state of nature obtains when people of good *Gesinnung* are not united under 'a common commitment to the Highest Good' (p. 178). In order to escape the ethical state of nature, the 'visible church' – i.e. the set of people of good *Gesinnung* – must unite to form a particular kind of church, the 'True Church' (its 'membership must be ... open to all', its 'principles must be composed of nothing other than morality', etc., pp. 180–1), which paves the way for the emergence of the 'invisible church' (p. 180) or 'Ethical Community' (p. 177), an otherworldly union of the good under divine guidance.

In other words, though the evil *Gesinnung* is an individual problem with an individualistic solution (the change of heart), because of the propensity to evil people also need a corporate solution (the creation of a true church) to make the individualistic solution stick. However, since everyone faces the problem of the evil *Gesinnung*, neither the individualistic nor the corporate solution can require knowledge of contingent, historical facts. This is why Kant concludes that saving faith can require no more than pure rational faith; were we to need more, then some people would have no ultimate solution to their problem.

Chapter 6 ('Part Four of *Religion: Authentic and Counterfeit Service to God*') explains why it is that the greatest obstacles to the formation of the true church come from historical religion. The answer has to do with the usefulness of historical religion: although many of the rituals, symbols and doctrines of historical religion are not necessary for salvation, they can, by making pure religion more intuitive, often be quite salutary for an individual's change of heart. It is precisely because of this usefulness, though, that they are dangerous, for it is easy to confuse something that is instrumentally useful for the change of heart to be something that is necessary for the change of heart. It is in this kind of way, along with many others that Pasternack details, that historical religion perverts pure religion.

In chapter 7 ('Conclusion'), Pasternack discusses three issues: (1) how Kant can allow that 'God-talk' is meaningful; (2) the extent to which Kant reduces religion to morality; and (3) whether Kant is a Pelagian. Pasternack's answer to (3) is that Kant takes a Pelagian view of sanctification (he thinks we transform ourselves from evil to good), but departs from Pelagianism in regard to justification. Whereas the Pelagian thinks that we can pay back what we owe to God and thereby justify ourselves, Kant thinks we are justified only because of the manner in which God sees us (namely, God sees only our *Gesinnungen*). In addition, to remain sanctified, we need the emergence of the ethical community, which can happen only with God's aid.

According to its back cover, 'Routledge Philosophy Guidebooks painlessly introduce students to the classic works of philosophy.' While this Guidebook is not completely 'painless' (no introduction to *Religion* could be), it provides students a clear path through *Religion* while also in many ways greatly amplifying its intelligibility to scholars. Not only does it excel as a philosophically adept and comprehensive reading of Kant's *Religion*, but it stands as one of the most significant contributions to Kant's philosophy of religion to date.

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