

Notes on the Cambridge translation of Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*

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Abstract. This article mainly discusses translation issues in the two Cambridge editions of Kant's *Religion*, while engaging in a briefer discussion of Pluhar's translation of the same work. The aim is to correct single errors as well as patterns of questionable translation, and to do so guided by criteria of consistency in relation to Kant's use of key terms. I argue that the English translations have contributed to misinterpretations of Kant's philosophy of religion, although I make only passing references to the secondary scholarship.

Keywords: Archetype, Disposition, Favor, Grace, Idea, Way of Thinking.

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Whenever I teach undergraduate and graduate seminars on Kant's *Religion*, as I have been doing for many years, we repeatedly encounter translation issues. Since 1996, when it first appeared, I've used the Cambridge University Press translation by George di Giovanni, recently shifting to the revised edition of 2018 (with revisions by Robert Merrihew Adams). However, while the revised version improves on the original, several of the omissions, inconsistencies, and other more egregious errors have *not* been corrected. In many cases, the issues are sufficiently serious that the meaning of some passages is substantially occluded or altered. This means that for readers of Kant in English, translation often affects how some core terms and arguments are understood (or misunderstood, as the case may be). Hence, I've decided, somewhat belatedly, to make a record of the passages that concern me and share them publicly. I don't claim to have tracked down every questionable passage, and I welcome further feedback and suggestions. Although my own philosophical perspective on Kant's *Religion* will surface in some of my comments, I've written these Notes to call attention to translation issues that should concern readers of every philosophical orientation, to suggest alternate translations, and to do so within the context of Kant's arguments. Some of these concerns have been debated in the literature, and there may in some cases be a relationship between reliance on the CUP translation and interpretive claims made by various authors. However, an engagement with the impact of translation on the scholarship exceeds the scope of this project.

My intention is not to level criticism, and I don't pretend to be capable of producing a superior translation. In many respects the CUP edition remains the best version of the *Religion* in English, and it is the default option for most because it stands within the set of incomparable CUP translations of Kant's work. In an addendum, I offer some comments on the primary alternative, Werner Pluhar's *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason*. As I will show, while Pluhar offers improved versions of many of the problem passages in the Cambridge edition, he introduces other debatable translation choices, some of a systemic or recurring nature. In any case, for those using the Cambridge editions it is useful to have an organized account of translation choices that alter the meaning of the text, granting that Pluhar has in some cases already offered more reasonable alternatives.

These comments are divided into three sections. The passages involving significant issues, where the original meaning is altered, appear in the first 2 sections. Section 1 concerns two specific terms that appear frequently, and that are translated in multiple ways within the text. My aim is to track these recurring terms sequentially through the text, to illustrate the variability of the translation, and to provide reflections on their significance. Section 2 concerns single errors or omissions that are also listed sequentially. These are the sections where my philosophical stance vis-à-vis the *Religion* is most evident. In essence, I would argue that even where Kant draws upon theological concepts, the *Religion* remains strictly within the orbit of Kant's critical philosophy; hence the meaning of terms can best be understood within the framework of Kant's mature corpus. Finally, section 3 addresses passages where the concerns are either minor or involve an interpretive issue, but which are noteworthy in the interests of accuracy.

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I cite both the 1996 and 2018 editions where they differ; if there is only a single undated citation, the text is the same in both editions. All passages are listed according to the *Akademie Textausgabe* pagination (volume 6 for the *Religion*), given in the margins of all editions. All emphasis in the citations is original.

1. Significant issues: two recurring concepts

a. *Denkungsart* (way of thinking)

Denkungsart is a term used repeatedly in Kant's critical work. This is usually translated straightforwardly as "way of thinking" or "mode of thought" in the three *Critiques* and other writings. However, in both CUP editions of the *Religion* it is translated in several *significantly different* ways, although this variability is reduced in the revised edition. Hence, readers of English would never know that there is a recurring theme, i.e., the quality of our way of thinking, as consistent, principled, fact-based, broad-minded, or the opposite, with which Kant is preoccupied. Additionally, because of loose and inconsistent translating, the *Denkungsart* is sometimes made indistinguishable from the *Gesinnung* and other terms. My interpretive assumption here is that Kant uses terms such as *Denkungsart* systemically and rigorously within lines of argument traversing the entire text and even a series of connected writings. Hence, consistency in translation is important for tracking these terms and associated lines of argument.

6:30, In cases of "depravity... the mind's attitude [*die Denkungsart*] is thereby corrupted at its root..." A "way of thinking" is not an "attitude," and in some instances, e.g., 6:170, "attitude" is used to translate *Gesinnung* (disposition), as it is throughout Pluhar's edition as well.

6:30, Similarly, Kant addresses those who comply with the moral law merely "according to the letter [*dem Buchstaben nach*]," and argues that whatever is not based on "the spirit of the moral law... is sin (in attitude [*der Denkungsart nach*])." Again, what is at issue here is not an attitude, a subjective point of view, but an individual or shared mode of thinking that fails to align with the principles of the moral law.² Kant applies the religious notion of sin to convey the mode of thinking of a person who hypocritically acts out external precepts (the letter) without internal commitment to the underlying principles (the spirit). This reflects one of the fundamental principles of the *Groundwork*, that an action must be undertaken "solely from duty; not until then does it have genuine moral worth" (G, 4:398, and cf. G, 4:406).

6:37, "the attitude of mind [*die Denkungsart*] that construes the absence of vice as already being conformity of the *disposition* [*der Gesinnung*] to the law of duty (i.e., as virtue) is nonetheless itself to be named a radical perversity in the human heart..." Kant is addressing the ethical status of how we think about the relations between our inner disposition (or heart) and outer actions.³ We may rationalize to ourselves that the mere absence of external vice makes us meritorious; for Kant this is insufficient.

6:38, "on the attitude of mind [*den Denkungsart*] they could well discover within themselves."

6:46n, (1996 only) "the ethical frame of mind [*die sittliche Denkungsart*]" –corrected in 2018 to "the ethical way of thinking." (Note the potential confusion with "*sklavische Gemüthstimmung*" rendered as "slavish frame of mind" at 6:24n.)

6:47, Both editions correctly give: "a revolution is necessary in the mode of thought [*für die Denkungsart*] but a gradual transformation in the world of sense [*für die Sinnesart*]." With a consistent translation, we can see more clearly why this is so (why such a revolution is necessary); Kant has addressed corrupted, hypocritical *modes of thinking* repeatedly in the preceding pages.

6:48, Most of the inconsistent 1996 renderings of *Denkungsart* at 6:48 are corrected in the 2018 edition. The original rendering of "he is to this extent, by principle and attitude of mind [*dem Princip und der Denkungsart*], a subject receptive to the good" (1996) becomes "by principle and way of thinking" (2018), maintaining continuity with the prior reference to a revolution in the mode of thought.

6:48, Kant continues the ethical inquiry into modes of thinking initiated at 6:30; writing "of the propensity to evil, of the perverted attitude of mind [*als verkehrter Denkungsart*]" (1996), which becomes "of the perverted way of thinking" (2018).

It is noteworthy that in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant discusses "perverted reason (*perversa ratio*) [*der verkehrten Vernunft*]" (A692/B720). This could be rendered as "inverted reason," as, in Kant's words, "one

² A *Denkungsart* can be collective as well as individual. For example, in *Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant discusses the "mere sensible vehicle [*bloßes sinnliches Vehikel*]" of scriptural teachings as related to the apostles' "method of teaching"; he then notes of this method that "we can accept it as valid in relation to the way of thinking [*auf die Denkungsart*] in the apostles' times" (SF, 7:37).

³ Many passages show that Kant employs the heart as a metaphor for the inner disposition. For example, concerning the supreme lawgiver (God), "he must also be one who knows the heart, in order to penetrate to the innermost parts of the disposition [*das Innerste der Gesinnungen*] of each and everyone" (6:99). The same point is made in the 2nd *Critique*, 5:140 (for other passages see 6:72-3, 6:76, 6:159). Likewise, "moral faith must be a free faith, founded on pure dispositions of the heart [*auf lautere Herzensgesinnungen*]" (6:115-16). There may be a Pietist influence here, but the "heart" has been reconceptualized from being merely affective to representing the inner moral condition, *Gesinnung*, or meta-maxim inseparable from freedom of choice and ways of thinking.

reverses the matter,” i.e., seeks explanation from the unknowable (the supersensible) to the knowable (nature or experience). While in the *Critique* perverted or inverted reason is an epistemological issue, in the *Religion* the perverted way of thinking is clearly an ethical problem in which we invert our priorities, placing self-love before the moral law.

6:48, Likewise, the ensuing need for “the transformation of his attitude of mind [*Denkungsart*]” (1996), becomes “transformation of his way of thinking” (2018).

However, toward the end of 6:48, the 2018 text reverts to the 1996 version. Kant is describing cultivation of our “predisposition to the good [*Anlage zum Guten*]” through examples. He concludes, “and so the predisposition [to the good] gradually becomes an attitude of mind [*Denkungsart*], so that *duty* merely for itself begins to acquire in the apprentice’s heart a noticeable importance.”

6:57 (1996 only), The importance of Enlightenment and “courage” in cultivating virtue is contrasted with “the lazy and timid cast of mind [*kleinmüthige Denkungsart*] (in morality and religion), which has not the least trust in itself and waits for external help.” This is modified to “the lazy and timid way of thinking” (2018).

6:84, “the ordinary human way of thinking [*Denkungsart*]” is given correctly in both editions.

6:89n, “a humble and self-renouncing way of thinking [*Denkungsart*]” is given correctly in both editions.

6:109, “*einer sich erweiternden Denkungsart*” (an expanding or broadening way of thinking) is rendered opaquely as “whose frame of mind... is given to self-expansion.” Note the connection with Kant’s discussion of “a **broad-minded way of thinking** [*erweiterter Denkungsart*]” in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (KU, 5:295).

6:199, Discussing “solemnities” taken as “means of grace,” Kant states that this practice constitutes “a delusion which indeed might suit the mentality [*Denkungsart*] of a good citizen in a *political community*.” Mentality is not wrong here, in the same way that expressions like “attitude of mind,” “frame of mind,” and “cast of mind” are, but it serves equally well to hide a recurring concern with our patterns of thinking in relation to religion and ethics.

6:199, The continuity of Kant’s analysis is further disrupted, as, a few lines later, he argues for an ethical understanding of the ritual of “communion,” so that it “expands people’s narrow, selfish and intolerant cast of mind [*Denkungsart*], especially in religious matters, to the idea of a cosmopolitan *moral community*.” There is a direct connection with the need for an “*erweiternden Denkungsart*” argued at 6:109, and with KU, 5:295, but one would never know this.

b. *Urbild* (archetype)

This is translated as both “prototype” and “archetype” in the *Religion*, with no indication that the same word is being used by Kant. *Urbild* also gets translated as both “archetype” (A313/B370, A317/B373-374, A838/B866) and “original image” in the 1st *Critique* (A569/B597, A570/B598, A578/B606). An *Urbild* is a rational idea or set of ideas in individuated form, much like Kant’s sense of an “ideal” with which he sometimes uses it interchangeably. This is not a set model which we seek to reproduce, hence not a “prototype.” It is a formal, rational, moral ideal which we must actively strive to emulate, or, more precisely, which guides our future-directed willing and action in the world under variable contingent circumstances. Hence, apart from issues of consistency and transparency, “archetype” is the best translation (Pluhar also consistently uses “archetype”).⁴ In the following, I will leave the CUP translations as is, simply noting the recurrence of the term *Urbild* and providing a few explanatory comments.

6:61, Kant writes of “our universal human duty to elevate ourselves to this ideal of moral perfection, to the prototype of moral disposition in its entire purity [*dem Urbilde der sittlichen Gesinnung in ihrer ganzen Lauterkeit*].” Here the connection with “ideals” is clear, as well as the focus on human responsibility and effort in striving toward the ideal.

6:61, “because we are not its authors but the idea has rather established itself in the human being ... it is better to say that the prototype [*Urbild*] has *come down* to us from heaven...” In other words, as an ideal of reason an *Urbild* is universal, generated by reason itself and not constructed individually based on phenomenal experience; hence it maps on (at least partially) to the Christian narrative of incarnation.

6:61, “if we represent to ourselves this God-like human being, our prototype [*wenn wir uns jenen göttlich gesinnten Menschen als Urbild für uns vorstellen*] ...” This should be, “when we represent to ourselves this divinely-disposed human being as archetype for us...” This clarification is important, in that Kant does not claim that Jesus of the Gospels “is” an *Urbild* (although sometimes his formulations are ambiguous). Rather, Jesus provides an example (*Beispiel*) of a person inwardly disposed and living in accordance with the Ideal or *Urbild*. (The source of *Urbilder* in reason is specified at 6:63, and Jesus as *exemplifying* an *Urbild* is stated at 6:119).⁵ Pluhar gives, “if we conceive of that divinely minded human being –an archetype for us...” In this

⁴ For a more complete discussion of the concept of *Urbild*, see DiCenso (2013).

⁵ The point had already been made in the *Groundwork*: “Even the Holy One of the Gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before he is recognized as one” (G, 4:408).

case, the importance of how we represent the figure of Jesus is also obscured by Pluhar's reluctance to translate *Vorstellung* as "representation," and the crucial ethical focus on a holy or divine disposition is also occluded by Pluhar's reluctance to translate *Gesinnung* as "disposition" (see Addendum below).

6:61, The human being "can regard himself as responsible ...even though this idea [*Idee*] serves him as a prototype [*zum Urbilde dient*]." Here the status of the *idea* as *Urbild* is unmistakable, which is consistent with the responsibility for ethical alignment with the idea or ideal falling upon human agents.

6:62, In discussing "practical faith," Kant continues: "only a human being conscious of such a moral disposition in himself as enables him to believe and self-assuredly trust that he, under similar temptations and afflictions... would steadfastly cling [or adhere] to the prototype of humanity and follow this prototype's example in loyal emulation [*dem Urbilde der Menschheit unwandelbar anhängig und seinem Beispiele in treuer Nachfolge ähnlich bleiben*]." "Adhere" is better than "cling" in this instance, because the point is that we must actively emulate the example of the ideal. Note how "practical faith" is also *active*, involving living in accordance with the example of the archetype of moral perfection.

6:62, "If we had to demonstrate in advance that it is possible to be a human being conforming to this prototype [*ein diesem Urbilde*] ...we would have to entertain reservations about allowing even the moral law the authority of unconditional and yet sufficient determining ground of our power of choice." Kant is arguing that the practical possibility of conforming to the *Urbild* of moral humanity is based on the ought/can principle, i.e., it is grounded in our "morally-legislative reason" (6:62), even though it cannot be theoretically demonstrated.

6:63, Kant reiterates that "the required prototype [*das Urbild*] always resides only in reason," and "the prototype [*das Urbild*] of any such [moral] human being is nowhere to be sought except in our reason."

6:63-64, Building on the preceding comments about the rational source of the *Urbild*, "the prototype which we see embedded in this apparition [*das Urbild, welches wir dieser Erscheinung unterlegen*] must be sought in us as well (though natural human beings), and its presence in the human soul is itself incomprehensible enough." It would be more accurate, as well as more coherent, to render this as: "The archetype which we ascribe to this appearance..." Pluhar offers, "the archetype on which we base this appearance," which also distorts the meaning (see the related passage at 6:119). The point is that we "ascribe" the archetypal status to the phenomenal appearance of Jesus in the Gospels because we recognize his life and teachings as manifesting the archetype of moral humanity. Hence, he serves as a phenomenal example of a moral ideal or *Urbild* which is also available to us directly through our own reason.

6:75n, In referring to how "even the pure moral disposition [*die reinst moralische Gesinnung*] elicits in the human being, regarded as a worldly creature, nothing more than the continuous becoming of a subject well pleasing to God in actions," Kant states that "this disposition can indeed be, and ought to be, holy and conformable to the archetype's disposition [*der seines Urbildes*]. In degree, however, it always remains deficient and infinitely removed from that of the archetype." In terms of translation, Kant is still discussing the *Urbild* of the moral human being, previously translated as *prototype* and here (inexplicably) more correctly rendered as *archetype*. The deeper point is that the *Urbild* (generated by reason but exemplified in the figure of Jesus) provides an ideal (a perfectly good or holy disposition) to be approximated, but never fully attained, by fallible human beings. Certainly, differing philosophical and theological responses to this endemic imperfection of humanity are possible. Kant's own response is clear, as he continues, "as an intellectual unity of the whole, the disposition takes *the place of perfected action*" (6:75n). This point develops one made in the main text, i.e., that "in the sight of a divine judge for whom the disposition takes the place of the deed, he [the person who has embraced the principle of the good] is *morally* another being (6:74). In other words, the genuine intention and striving to be morally good itself constitutes a good disposition.

6:101, The "*church invisible*" is defined by Kant as "the mere idea of the union of all upright human beings under direct yet moral divine world-governance, as serves for the archetype [*zum Urbilde dient*] of any such governance to be founded by human beings." Here, and at 6:162, Kant employs the same term, *Urbild*, with reference to both the 'ideal church' and 'complete religion', although the translation hides this continuity. There are different types of rational ideals or *Urbilder* as well as different phenomenal examples that manifest the formal ideal.

6:119, "The living faith in the prototype [*das Urbild*] of a humanity well-pleasing to God (the Son of God) refers, *in itself*, to a moral idea of reason..." Again, faith is directed toward the rational moral idea represented or exemplified by the *Urbild*.

6:119, "By contrast, faith in this very same prototype [*dasselbe Urbild*] according to its appearance [*in der Erscheinung*] (faith in the God-man) is not, as *empirical* (historical) faith, one and the same as the principle of good life conduct (which must be totally rational); and it would therefore be something quite different to start with such a faith and derive a good life conduct from it." The above point is made even more emphatically; moral faith is directed to the underlying moral principle generated by reason, whereas faith in the phenomenal appearance that exemplifies the ideal risks diverting our focus from the ideal itself. This is continued in the next passage.

6:119, "the true object of the saving faith is not what in the God-man falls to the senses, or can be cognized through experience, but the prototype, lying in our reason which we put in him [*in unserer Vernunft liegende*]

Urbild, welches wir den letztern unterlegen].” The translation is obscure; Pluhar offers the equally obscure, indeed virtually meaningless, “*that we lay at the basis of the God-man*.” Much more plausibly and coherently, following directly the citation from 6:63-64 above, is: “the archetype, lying in our reason, that we ascribe to him.” This rendering is confirmed by the remainder of the passage: “(since, from what can be gathered from his example [*an seinem Beispiel*], the God-man is found to conform to the prototype).” In other words, the historical account of the God-man reflects, from the standpoint of practical reason, the realization of the *Urbild* of a human being harmonized with the principles of the moral law. We *ascribe to* the manifestation of the morally righteous human being portrayed in the Gospels the status of the archetype (*Urbild*) of humanity well-pleasing to God found in reason. The life and teachings of the Holy One of the Gospels, Jesus of Nazareth, provide an intuitively (i.e., phenomenally) accessible example of this rational ideal or *Urbild* (note the connection with 6:61, 6:63-64, and 6:128-9). Saving faith is directed toward the moral idea of reason, leading to good life conduct, and not to the specifics of the phenomenal account.

6:119, Kant argues that the theological and ethical standpoints reflect “one and the same practical idea from which we proceed: once, so far as this idea represents the prototype [*das Urbild*] as situated in God and proceeding from him; and again, so far as it represents it as situated in us; in both cases, however, so far as it represents the prototype as the standard measure of our life conduct.” Both standpoints, divine and rational-ethical, in Kant’s understanding offer expressions of the same rational ideal by which to regulate our ethical lives. No doubt this will be contentious to some, who want to divide the theological from the ethical as if these were two discrete domains for Kant, but the evidence is clearly against this.

6:128-9, “The teacher of the gospel” proclaims “moral faith, which alone makes human beings holy... and proves its genuineness by a good life-conduct... And, after he had given in his very person, through his teaching, suffering, and undeserved yet meritorious death, an example [*Beispiel*] conforming to the prototype [*dem Urbilde*] of a humanity well-pleasing to God, he was represented as returning to the heaven from which he came.” Note again the distinction between example and *Urbild* clarified at 6:119, as well as the recurring emphasis on moral faith and good life conduct.

6:145, This reference forms part of a philosophical take on the saying, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Kant explores how this is expressed in trinitarian formulations: a “principle of faith” in God as “the loving one... of human beings so far as they conform to his holy laws... in God also, so far as he displays himself [*sich... darstellt*] in his all-encompassing idea, which is the prototype [*Urbilde*] of the humanity generated and beloved by him, we can revere his Son,” and “the agreement of human beings with the condition of his love of approbation, the *Holy Spirit*.” Here the Son of God is presented as an *Urbild* of the idea of humanity generated and beloved by God.

6:162, Finally, Kant discusses “a complete religion [*eine vollständige Religion*], which can be proposed to all human beings comprehensibly and convincingly through their own reason... as a prototype for us to follow [*für uns Urbild der Nachfolge zu sein*] ... made visible in an example.” “Complete religion” is a rational ideal, knowable (in principle) through mere reason; it is, as Kant argues throughout the *Religion*, made accessible to phenomenal beings like us through examples.

2. Significant issues: single instances

6:29, “the will’s capacity or incapacity” [*Fähigkeit oder Unfähigkeit der Willkür*] should be “the capacity or incapacity of our faculty of choice” (or “capacity for choice” to distinguish *Willkür* from *Wille* (will)).⁶ Kant refers to *Willkür* as a “faculty [or capacity, *ein Vermögen*] of determining oneself from oneself [*von selbst zu bestimmen*], independently of necessitation by sensible impulses” (A534/B562), and as “the moral faculty of choice [*dem moralischen Vermögen der Willkür*]” (6:31).

6:44, “Granted [*Gesetzt*] that some supernatural cooperation is also needed to his becoming good or better, whether this cooperation only consist in the diminution of obstacles or be also a positive assistance, the human being must make himself antecedently worthy of receiving it.”

There is considerable significance in *Gesetzt* being mistranslated as “granted” by di Giovanni, rather than the more precise and appropriate “suppose” or “supposing.” First, *Gesetzt* means “suppose” or “supposing,” and is translated that way elsewhere in the CUP editions: e.g., A445/B471 (*Setzet*, rendered as “Suppose”), A551/B579 (*Gesetzt nun*, rendered as “Suppose now”), G, 4:398 (*Gesetzt also*, rendered as “Suppose, then”), KPV, 5:28 and 5:29 (where *Vorausgesetzt* is twice rendered as “Supposing”), KPV, 5:30 (where *Setzet, daß jemand*, is rendered as “Suppose someone...”), KU, 5:451 (*Gesetzt also*, rendered as “Suppose, then”), and 6:171, (where “*Gesetzt nun*” is also properly rendered as “Suppose now”). Thus, Kant is saying that, even if we hypothetically suppose the necessity of supernatural (divine) cooperation in our ethical improvement, we can know nothing of this and must focus entirely on our own internal ethical transformation.

⁶ On this distinction see Allison (1990, 129).

The translation problem is exacerbated by a tendency among some commentators to treat Kant's philosophical remarks with respect to the Christian doctrine of divine grace *as if* he were making conventional and constitutive theological assertions, and then debate Kant's proximity or distance from various standard theological doctrines. Kant, however, sets forth his approach to theological concepts in clear terms as: "the pure philosophical study of religion... along the lines of this book" (6:10). With respect to the concept of grace (as a form of supernatural intervention in human affairs), see 6:191 where Kant describes the "concept of a supernatural intervention" as "very risky and hard to reconcile with reason." "Granted" is a strong term philosophically and it could, if one ignores Kant's arguments concerning the primacy of autonomy and responsibility, not to mention the impossibility of supersensible knowledge for finite discursive intellects, as well as the limitation of faith to moral faith, be taken as signifying acceptance of the doctrine of grace, as well as moral reliance upon grace, in some form.⁷ The mistranslation noted below at 6:191 also feeds into this misconception.

6:51, In another key passage, Kant formulates a fundamental distinction applicable to all historical religions (or faiths): "All religions, however, can be divided into the *currying of favor* (of mere cult) [*der Gunstbewerbung (des bloßen Cultus)*] and the *moral* [*die moralische*], i.e. the religion of *good life conduct*."

Both CUP editions render this reference to *der Gunstbewerbung*, literally "endeavoring to gain favor" or "courting of favor" with the archaic term "rogation."⁸ Conveying "solemn supplication," this is not completely wrong, insofar as it expresses an attitude of seeking some personal benefit through religious practice. Yet, it dulls the critical significance of favor-seeking as a manifestation of self-love, insofar as supplication's traditional religious connotations neutralize its contra-ethical status for Kant. Worse still, the mistranslation detaches this crucial passage from recurring references to *Gunst* (favor) and *Gunstbewerbung* in the *Religion* and other writings. Here are a few examples:

6:160, Kant interprets the Gospel as rebuking those who "make up for their lack of deeds and ingratiate themselves into his [God's] favor [*sich Gunst zu erschmeicheln*]."

6:169, Sacrifices, festivals, and public games "have often had to serve, and still serve, to make the Divinity favorable [*nach günstig zu machen*] to a people, or also to individuals, in keeping with their delusion."

6:185n, Likewise, in the last part of the *Religion*, Kant again denounces any "groveling courting of favor [*kriechende Gunstbewerbung*]." Here the translation is correct, but the important continuity with the pivotal comment at 6:51 is lost.

5:264, In the 3rd *Critique*, Kant rebukes "the attempt to *curry favor* and ingratiate oneself [*nichts als Gunstbewerbung und Einschmeichelung*], instead of a religion of the good conduct of life." The anticipation of the *Religion* is precise.

In "On the Miscarriage of all philosophical trials in Theodicy," Kant argues that "Job speaks as he thinks, and with courage [*zu Muthe*]." By contrast, his so-called friends "speak as if they were being secretly listened to by the mighty one ... and as if gaining his favor [*im Gunst zu setzen*] through their judgment were closer to their hearts than the truth" (MPT, 8:265).⁹

The religion of favor-seeking or *Gunstbewerbung* is also connected with "mere cult" at 6:51 (cf. 6:115-16, 124); this is important for the translation issue arising at 6:179.

6:52, In discussing "parerga," in which reason "extends itself to extravagant ideas [*zu überschwenglichen Ideen*]," Kant refers to "presumed enlightenment of the understanding" [*der gewahnten Verstanderleuchtung*] (6:53). This should be, "presumed illumination of the understanding." Likewise, at 6:158, "enlightened ones" [*Erleuchteten*], technically should be "illuminated ones." Kant generally uses the terms *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment) and *Erleuchtung* (Illumination) in distinct, even antithetical ways. *Aufklärung*, concerning which Kant published an important essay in 1784 (E), is associated with the advance of reason and freedom individually and publicly. By contrast, *Erleuchtung* usually designates alleged supersensible inspirations that bypass reason and exceed the scope of legitimate knowledge. Elsewhere, Kant writes of "a certain mystical touch... an expectation of mysteries... turning of heads toward enthusiasm [*zur Schwärmerei*]." Because proponents of such claims can produce "no true knowledge of the object, they must necessarily promise a surrogate thereof, supernatural information [or rather, communication] (mystical illumination): which is then the death of all philosophy [*übernatürliche Mittheilung (mystische Erleuchtung), verheißen müssen: was dann der Tod aller Philosophie ist*]" (ST, 8:398).

⁷ Although it has contributed to groundless claims that Kant explicitly invokes divine assistance, Wood (2020) downplays the significance of *Gesetzt* being translated as "granted" by di Giovanni, rather than the more appropriate "suppose" or "supposing." He states, "the meaning of what Kant has said is quite clear, however it might be translated. In the German, and in both translations, the import of the antecedent clause is simply conditional" (2020, 158n). That is, even if we assume divine assistance, our autonomous efforts remain primary and indispensable. While Wood is correct, it remains the case that several commentators have cited the mistranslated passage in support of a more "robust" or dogmatic approach to grace.

⁸ For *Gunstbewerbung*, Pluhar offers "pursuit of favor."

⁹ For a more complete discussion, see DiCenso (2015).

6:75, “a decree of grace [*ein Urtheilsspruch aus Gnade*],” should be a *judgment* or *verdict* of grace (i.e., that we are judged as being “justified” before God if we are sincerely on the path toward virtue, even though necessarily still ethically imperfect). This follows directly from the discussion of “striving” for a holy disposition after the example of the *Urbild* at 6:74 and 6:75n.

6:79, “the inferiority of the moral disposition” should be “the interiority of the moral disposition [*das Innere der moralischen Gesinnung*].”

6:80n, Discussing the concept of a virgin birth, Kant refers to “natural regeneration” as making us too much like other animals for some tastes; hence “we look on it as something to be ashamed of—an attitude [*eine Vorstellung*] which certainly was the real cause in the belief in the sanctity of the monastic state.” Surely “a representation” is more fitting here, i.e., the representation of natural generation as brutish. This is especially significant in relation to the entire note within which the passage occurs, which is about modes of representation (*Vorstellungsart*) and symbols. Additionally, “attitude” is also used (albeit wrongly) for both *Denkungsart* and *Gesinnung*. In the same note, Kant discusses how “it suffices for practical purposes to hold the idea before [actually, *to represent that idea* to] us as model, as symbol of humankind raising itself above temptation to evil (and understanding it victoriously)” [*als Symbol der sich selbst über die Versuchung zum Bösen erhebenden (diesem siegreich widerstehenden) Menschheit uns zum Muster vorzustellen*].

6:94, In arguing for an ethical community, Kant states of people in proximity to each other that without this “they will corrupt each other’s moral disposition [*ihrer moralische Anlage*].” This should be “moral predisposition.” *Anlage*, which means *predisposition*, is mistakenly given as “disposition” here and at both 6:120 (1996 only) and 6:161. As Kant argues at 6:26, the original predisposition to the good (*Anlage zum Guten*) can be corrupted on the levels of both “animality” (wild lawlessness) and “humanity” (jealousy and rivalry).

6:105, “we should ourselves carry out the [rational] idea [*die Vernunftidee*] of such a community.” This is not a minor omission, given the precise meaning of rational ideas (see A312/B368ff.) and their fundamental significance in rational religion. It should be noted that even in the 1st *Critique*, rational ideas have primarily *practical* significance (e.g., A317/B374, A328/B384-85). A rational idea is strictly *a priori* and, in the case of practical application, determined by the moral law, whereas a general reference to idea diminishes the grounding of the ethical community in reason.

6:120, “We must strive with all our might after the holy intention [*der heiligen Gesinnung*] of leading a life well-pleasing to God, in order to be able to believe that God’s love for humankind (already assured to us through reason) will somehow make up, in consideration of the honest intention [*auf die redliche Gesinnung*], for humankind’s deficiency...” As we have seen, *Gesinnung* is best translated as “disposition,” as it should be in these passages. To strive after a “holy disposition” means that one’s over-arching meta-maxim is in accordance with the moral law, manifesting in a life of good conduct.¹⁰ There is a direct connection with the discussion at 6:74 and 6:75n, where from the standpoint of “full completion” represented by God, the disposition directed toward virtue is equivalent to attaining such a (holy) disposition.

6:120 (1996 only), “on the other hand, moral disposition [*Die moralische Anlage in jedem Menschen*] has not failed, for its part, to make itself heard.” Corrected to (2018): “The moral predisposition in every human being.”

6:121, “Thus at last the pure faith of religion will rule over all [*und so reine Vernunftreligion zuletzt über alle herrsche*].” This of course, should be, “and so the pure rational religion will rule over all.” The omission of “rational” is significant, as rational religion is precisely distinguished from the broader category of religion that contains historically conditioned, non-rational elements. Moreover, Kant does not mention faith in this passage. A parallel error occurs in *Conflict of the Faculties*, where he writes of Christianity’s harmony “with the purest moral rational belief [*dem reinsten moralischen Vernunftglauben*] of religion” (SF, 7:9), but where the crucial word “rational” is missing from the translation. These omissions downplay the distinction between rational religion (or faith) and historical religions with their non-rational elements.

6:122, “‘he was as clever as a child’ and knew how to combine learning too, and even a philosophy helpful to the church, with propositions [*Satzungen*, better translated as *statutes*] imposed upon him” (and cf. 6:180). Kant is here addressing the mixture of philosophical learning with dogmatic allegiance to statutory faith, inhibiting the cultivation of free rational faith. The reference to “child” is not laudatory.

6:129, Kant is distinguishing the historical from the rational parts of Christianity. As historical, the tradition uses accounts of miracles to confirm its truth; however, “as part of a moral and soul-saving faith [*als bloß zum moralischen, seelenbessernden Glauben*], can dispense with all such proofs of its truth.” What Kant in fact says is: “as merely moral, soul-improving faith.” (See 6:132, where *seelenbessernd* is correctly given as “soul improving”). The whole point of rational faith, for Kant, is to support ethical practice (moral improvement) based on principles accessible to practical reason (hence no need to embrace miracles), and this is completely hidden in this mistranslation.

¹⁰ How the inner disposition is (indirectly) manifested in action and life conduct is a major concern of the *Religion*, adding significantly to the ethical inquiries of the *Groundwork* and second *Critique* (see, 6:38, 6:68-69, 6:70n, 6:71, 6:75-76-77).

6:138, “the final object of practical reason (the realization of [the idea of] the final moral end [*die Realisierung der Idee des moralischen Endzwecks*]).” The omission of “the idea of” changes the meaning of the argument, which is based on the model of ideas of reason guiding practical action in the world initially formulated in the Dialectic of the 1st *Critique* and developed in Kant’s practical philosophy (see comment on 6:105). The mistranslation risks turning an idea guiding ongoing ethical-religious practice into a constitutive teleological claim.

6:141, Concerning trinitarian representations of the “supreme lawgiver,” Kant states that this “creed of faith [*Glaubensymbol*] at the same time expresses the whole of pure moral religion...” Clearly, in discussing representations of ecclesiastical faith, Kant is here concerned with a “symbol of faith,” especially as he immediately warns against taking the representation constitutively in terms of “anthropomorphic servile faith [*Frohnglauben*].” *Glaubensymbol* also appears at 6:69n, where it is translated as “tenet of faith.” Pluhar gets these right and adds clarifying explanatory comments.

6:153, “the pure faith of religion (which, when operative [*wenn er praktisch ist*], is what truly constitutes religion in every faith.” Since Kant is arguing throughout the book for a “practical,” i.e., rational and ethical approach to religion, it is hard to see why “*praktisch*” would not be translated straightforwardly here as “practical.”

6:176, “their own reason will easily persuade [*überzeugen*] them that the condition of earning his favor [*sein Wohlgefallen zu erwerben*] must be their morally good life-conduct.” *Überzeugung* is conviction, and *überzeugen* is usually translated as “convince,” which makes sense here as this clam concerning good life conduct is based in reason. By contrast, persuade (*überreden*) tends to be associated by Kant with sophism, i.e., persuading people by non-rational means (see A820/B848ff.). Additionally, *Wohlgefallen* means “pleasure” or “satisfaction,” not “favor,” which translates the strategically important concept, *Gunst*.

6:177, After stressing that “the moral service of God (*officium liberum*) pleases him directly,” a few lines later Kant refers to “actions that in themselves contain nothing well-pleasing to God [*nichts Gott Wohlgefälliges (Moralisches) enthalten*].” This should be: “contain nothing (morally) well-pleasing to God.” Kant associates such non-moral divine service with “wishes,” “delusion,” and “fetishism.” Note the thematic continuity with the previous reference (6:176).

6:179, Referring to “true enlightenment [*die wahre Aufklärung*],” Kant observes that “the service of God for the first time becomes a free and hence moral cult [*der Dienst Gottes wird dadurch allererst ein freier, mithin moralischer Dienst*].” Cult is both wrong, as *Dienst* means *service* (as correctly rendered in the initial reference), and it creates a gross contradiction with *Gunstbewerbung* presented as “mere cult” and as the antithesis of moral religion at 6:51. Also see, 6:84, “a religion of mere cult and observances [*bloßen Cultus*],” and 6:174, where Kant states, the “delusion that through religious acts of cult [*durch religiöse Handlungen des Cultus*] we can achieve anything in the way of justification before God is religious superstition [*Aberglaube*].”

6:191, “as surrogate for the independent [*der selbstthätigen*] yet deficient determination of freedom.” *Self-acting* conveys a clearer sense of Kant’s use of *selbstthätigen* as indicating choice and action generated, as Kant states, “through the use of our own powers.”

6:191, The fourth “General remark,” on “means of grace,” addresses the idea of “a supernatural assistance [*einem übernatürlichen Beistande*].” Kant writes, “*Diese Idee ist gänzlich überschwenglich*. Both CUP editions give, “This ideal totally escapes us,” but what Kant in fact says is, “This idea [not ideal] is completely excessive.” Hence, we can know nothing about means of grace; it is an unusable concept for both theoretical and practical purposes (see 6:44).

The full statement is: “This idea is completely excessive; and it is, moreover, salutary [or beneficial, *heilsam*] to keep ourselves at a respectful distance from it, as from a sacred thing, lest, under the delusion [*dem Wahne*] that we do miracles ourselves, or that we perceive miracles in us, we render ourselves unfit for all use of reason.” Maintaining a “respectful distance” from the idea of supernatural intervention has nothing to do with “accepting” it; as with any recourse to miracles, it must be avoided to prevent compromising our capacity to reason.¹¹ In the same spirit, at 6:52 Kant discusses *parerga* as “extravagant ideas [*überschwenglichen Ideen*] ... Reason does not contest the possibility or actuality of these ideas; it just cannot incorporate them into its maxims of thought and action.” Instances of this sort also indicate why distinguishing between a culturally transmitted “idea,” which is conditioned, and an “idea of reason,” which is not, is central to Kant’s analysis. This passage, when correctly rendered, further demonstrates the falsity of translating *Gesetzt* as “granted” at 6:44.

6:195, In a series of comments, Kant addresses the tendency “to clothe this wish [i.e., prayer as a means of grace to obtain favor from God] in words and formulas.” These passages build on prior comments where *Buchstaben* is consistently rendered as “literal.” Hence, at 6:30, Kant reflects on one who follows the law only “according to the *letter* [*dem Buchstaben*].” At 6:110, Kant argues that a moral interpretation of scripture “must

¹¹ Pasternak cites this passage to support the claim that Kant “accepts” miracles. “He [Kant] writes, for example, that we ‘leave the merits of ... miracles, one and all, undisturbed’ (6:85). With regards to their veracity, ‘reason is as paralyzed’ (6:87). Thus, it is ‘salutary to keep ourselves at a respectful distance’ (6:191) from them” (2015, 493). Pasternak omits the part about the “delusion” by which “we render ourselves unfit for all use of reason” (6:191).

be preferred to a literal [*buchstäblichen*] interpretation that either contains absolutely nothing for morality, or even works counter to its incentives.” At 6:147, he argues that “mere literal faith [*der bloße Buchstabenglaube*] hurts rather than improves the true religious disposition [*die wahre Religionsgesinnung*].” In the same vein, the series of comments at 6:195 contrasts the spirit of prayer with its literal letter. Unfortunately, in the associated comments at 6:195n, several of these remarks are made entirely obscure by the translation of *Buchstaben* as “verbal” rather than the more accurate and contextually relevant “literal.”

6:195n, “hence sincerity cannot be found in as perfect a form in this latter (verbal [*buchstablichen*]) prayer as it can in the former (the pure spirit of prayer).” Here the contrast of “the pure spirit of prayer,” which is morally focused, with *literal* prayer as a form of favor-seeking, is crucial.

6:195n, “The teacher of the Gospel, however, has superbly expressed the spirit of prayer in a formula that at once renders prayer dispensable and by the same token itself as well (as a verbal formula [*als Buchstaben*]).” This clearly should be, “as a *literal* formula,” as the teacher of the Gospel proclaims “the resolution to good life conduct,” making all literal formulae dispensable (cf. 6:51). The third reference to *Buchstaben*, “a gift of miracles... is not, taken literally [*den Buchstaben genommen*], in any way to be thought of” is correct (6:196n). This last point also reinforces the intellectual quarantining of supernatural intervention and miracles at 6:191.

6:196n, Continuing the same theme, Kant reflects on “the [moral] spirit of prayer [*der moralische Geist des Gebote*];” the crucial word “moral” is (once again!) missing from the translation.

While this might be coincidental, the pattern in many of these mistranslations is to downplay the precise focus on reason, rational morality, rational faith, and ideas of reason in favor of a more generic religious discourse.

6:200, “It is arduous to be a good servant [*ein guter Diener*] (here one always hears only talk of duties); hence the human being would rather be a favorite [*ein Favorit sein*], for much is then forgiven him, or, where duty has been too grossly offended against, everything is again made good through the intercession of someone else who is favored in the highest degree [*im höchsten Grade Begünstigen*], while he still remains the undisciplined servant [*der lose Knecht*] he always was.”

The translation issue concerns rendering both *ein guter Diener* and *der lose Knecht* with “servant” (as Pluhar also does). This is not technically incorrect, yet it hides how Kant uses two distinct terms to establish a stark contrast. In this context, the *Diener* lives and works in the service of the moral law and moral religion and is hence principled and autonomous. By contrast, the *Knecht* simply follows along wherever the regnant power, authority, or incentive leads, and is therefore a mere tool or pawn, albeit for self-serving reasons. Hence, in this instance *Knecht* should be rendered as “vassal,” “serf,” or “slave” (as in “a slave to one’s passions”). Note the references at 6:82 to *Knechtschaft* as “bondage,” and *die moralische Knechtschaft* as “moral servitude.”

6:201, This may be the most egregious error in the entire translation.

As noted, the fourth “General remark,” beginning at 6:190 and running to the end of the text at 6:202, is focused on the supernatural concept of “effects of grace [*Gnadenwirkungen*].” (each general remark discusses a theological concept with no connection to either speculative or practical reason, under the heading of *parerga*).

Kant concludes with a strong critique of this form of superstition and supernaturalism, stating: “If the delusion of this supposed favorite of heaven [*dieses vermeinten Himmelsgünstlings*, [i.e., those who consider themselves elect] reaches heights of enthusiasm, to the point of imagining that he feels the effects of grace within him [*zur schwärmerischen Einbildung gefühlter besonderer Gnadenwirkungen in ihm steigt*] ... virtue finally becomes loathsome to him and an object of contempt.” Unfortunately, both CUP editions render *Gnadenwirkungen* as “effects of faith” – a complete mistranslation that has no meaning and undermines the crucial concluding arguments against pursuing alleged *effects of grace* rather than *virtue* and *good life conduct*.

3. Minor concerns

6:6 (1996 only), missing word: “at the same [time] [*zugleich*] ought to be...”

6:8, The biblical theologian can judge “simply as divine [*bloß als Geistlicher*]” should be “merely as a divine” i.e., as a member of the clergy rather than as a philosopher.

6:31, “*dem Begriff eines bloßen Hanges zu Bösen*” is rendered as “in the concept of a simple propensity to evil.” But *bloßen* seems best rendered as “mere.”

6:31, “either in favor of, or against the law” (*dem Gesetze gemäß oder zuwider*) should be, “in accordance with, or against the law.” This is not only more accurate but avoids confusion with the critical concept of favor (*Gunst*).

6:31, Referring to the propensity to evil as an intelligible deed, Kant explains this as “a bare propensity [*ein bloßer Hang*];” again, this is better rendered as mere propensity, especially as Kant is discussing the propensity before it is acted upon in time. (Note that at 6:31 *bloßen* is translated as both “simple” and “bare”; not wrong, but less than ideally transparent).

6:34, “philosophical chiliasm... derided as sheer fantasy [*als Schwärmerei*], as much as theological chiliasm.” *Schwärmerei*, is a term used frequently by Kant to convey non-rational illumination, being carried

away by alleged supersensible inspirations, and usually translated in CUP editions as “enthusiasm.” It is quite distinct from fantasy. Pluhar gives “fanaticism.”

6:38, “peace of mind” should be “peace of conscience [*die Gewissensruhe*].”

6:51, “Assurance of this [*Zur Überzeugung*] ...” “Conviction” is much closer to the meaning of the term *Überzeugung* and is the standard translation throughout the CUP editions (e.g., A407/B433-34, A632/B660n, A749/B777, A786-87/B814-15).

6:60n, Kant discusses the tendency “to represent [*vorzustellen*] the moral good as differing from the moral evil, not as heaven from earth, but as heaven from hell. This is indeed a figurative representation [*eine Vorstellung, die zwar bildlich... ist*].” Kant then states, “the danger associated with the illusion [*mit der Einbildung*] of a close relationship between the characteristics that qualify somebody for one or the other, justify this form of representation [*dieser Vorstellungsart*].” The entire note is about *modes of representing* moral principles and conditions; hence Kant is concerned with a misleading *imagination, der Einbildung*, of a close relationship between good and evil; this is not the same as an illusion.

6:60 (1996 only), “*Humanity* (rational being in general as pertaining to the world)” changed (2018) to “*Humanity* (the rational earthly being [*die vernunftige Weltwesen*] considered in general).” This could also be, “rational worldly being,” i.e., human beings are (potentially) rational yet act under phenomenal conditions.

6:94 (1996 only), *nach Tugendgesetzen* as “the laws of virtues” (corrected 2018 to “the laws of virtue”).

6:95, “under laws of virtue alone [*bloßen Tugendgesetzen*];” could also be “under mere laws of virtue.”

6:109, “*doch keiner allgemeinen überzeugenden Mittheilung fähig ist*” rendered as “incapable of transmission that commands conviction universally,” whereas *Mittheilung* straightforwardly means “communication” –hence, the point is that the contingent (non-rational) elements of historical beliefs are not capable of the rational communication necessary for conviction (on this point see A820/B848).

6:116, “before a [divine] judge [*vor einem göttlichen Richter*].”

6:117, “the favor from on high [*ein solches höheres Verdienst*],” better rendered as “merit from on high.”

6:155, Kant distinguishes between Christianity as a Natural (i.e., rational-practical) and as a Learned (i.e., historical) religion (6:154-177). He writes, “It is either the *natural religion*, of which (once it is there) every human being can be convinced through reason; or it is a *learned religion* [*eine gelehrt Religion*], of which one can convince others only by means of erudition [*nur vermittelt der Gelehrsamkeit*, i.e., learning] (in and through which the others have to be guided).” While “erudition” is not technically wrong, it obscures Kant’s point, which is that adherence to historical, non-rational aspects of Christianity (and other religions) requires *learning*, not in the sense of scholarly erudition, but in the sense that one must be instructed in its tenets.

6:157, 6:157-58, and 6:158, (1996 only), The obscure “communality of insight [*allgemeine Einhelligkeit*]” is used three times; this is corrected to “universal unanimity,” “such a unanimity,” and “unanimity” (2018).

6:169, “elevating the sensible faculty of representation for the purpose of harmonizing it with the ideas of the end [*zur Begleitung intellectueller Ideen des Zwecks zu erhöhen*].” This should be: “for the purpose of harmonizing it with the intellectual ideas of the end.” This might seem redundant, but as with “rational idea” and “idea of reason” Kant distinguishes between ideas in the strict sense, as rational or intellectual concepts, and ideas in the more general sense as including concepts that might be empirically conditioned.

6:170, “the mind’s readiness to take on attitudes of dedication to God [*der Stimmung des Gemüths zur Empfänglichkeit Gott ergebener Gesinnungen*].” *Stimmung* should be “attunement” and *Gesinnungen* should be dispositions. Hence, “the mind’s attunement to a receptivity for dispositions dedicated to God.”

6:176, In comparing “the wholly sensuous *Wogulite*” (tribal people of Siberia) and “the sublimated Puritan,” Kant argues that while each has “their [own] ways of representation [*ihrer eignen Vorstellungsart*] ... there certainly is a tremendous distance in the *style* of faith, but not in the *principle*.” By omitting “own,” the translation softens Kant’s emphasis on multiple historical systems of religious representation.

6:176, Kant discusses how many religious practices serve “to steer to their advantage the invisible power which presides over human destiny [*das Schicksal*].” While this is not wrong, *das Schicksal* is better rendered as “fate,” which also captures more closely the superstitious and favor-seeking orientations Kant is addressing. Additionally, Kant frequently discusses “*die Bestimmung des Menschen*,” which can be translated as the “vocation” of humanity but is sometimes rendered as destination or destiny.¹²

6:180, “If that principle imposes humble submission to a constitution as compulsory service [*Unterwerfung unter eine Satzung als Frohndienst*].” This should be: “submission to a statute,” (cf. 6:122). This is especially clear as Kant is discussing statutory (i.e., historical) religion in relation to “priestcraft” or clericalism.

6:182ff. (1996 only), The too literal, and quite obscure “divine blessedness” for *Gottseligkeit* is replaced by the more standard “godliness” in 2018. Unlike traditional theology, however, Kant downplays godliness (as a focus on pleasing a heteronomous God) and prioritizes “the pure doctrine of virtue” (6:183-84).

¹² Some examples: “the moral vocation of our nature [*der moralischen Bestimmung unserer Natur*]” (KPV, 5:122); “the rational vocation of our cognitive faculty [*der Vernunftbestimmung unserer Erkenntnißvermögen*]” (KU, 5:257); “the supersensible vocation in us [*unserer übersinnlichen Bestimmung in uns*]” (KU, 5:258). For the concept of *Bestimmung*, see DiCenso (2019).

6:186, “And this is a requirement of conscience [*und diese Forderung ist ein Postulat des Gewissens*] ...” More strictly: “and this demand is a postulate of conscience.” In other words, the demand that our judgments be based on moral certainty, not mere opinion or probabilism, is given directly by conscience.

Addendum on Pluhar’s translation

If even the revised CUP edition still has numerous flaws, why not use Werner Pluhar’s edition, *Religion within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (2009), which avoids many of these errors? Certainly, Pluhar deserves credit for avoiding many of the errors of the CUP editions. All his Kant translations are valuable, and they often provide a more literal version of the text, if sometimes at the cost of readability. However, Pluhar’s version also exhibits several deleterious idiosyncrasies, many of which are systemic rather than occasional. I will mention only a few examples.

Most notably, his decision to translate *der bloßen Vernunft* as “bare reason” is puzzling, not to say obscurantist.¹³ Kant uses the term *bloß* throughout his critical writings, and it usually has a sense much closer to “mere” –i.e., it expresses the Kantian humility concerning the boundaries of our knowledge, which excludes supersensible or supernatural knowledge (6:89n). In the 1st *Critique*, for example, he writes of “appearances, i.e., mere representations” (A490-91/B518-19), and “the mere concept of a highest reality” (A580/B608). This is exactly the significance of *Religion*’s title, i.e., that Kant, representing reason and philosophy, can only explicate and assess inherited religious images and ideas within the terms of his critical epistemology, hence with respect to their practical effects on human affairs, including the inner *Gesinnung*. Supernatural doctrines of the kind associated with “affirmative theological readings” of the text, are completely beyond the boundaries of human knowledge and are therefore excluded from consideration. Unfortunately, Pluhar, in insisting on using “bare” where it is not indicated, often resorts to clumsy formulations such as rendering *bloßen Tugendgesetzen* as “the bare laws of virtue” (6:95; the CUP edition gives “under laws of virtue alone,” which is also less than ideal). In other instances, such as at 6:84, Pluhar agrees with the CUP edition in offering, “a religion of mere cult and observances [*bloßen Cultus*].”

Likewise, Pluhar argues in favor of translating *Vorstellung* as “presentation” rather than “representation,” (2009, 2, note 16). However, this idiosyncratic usage is confounding in actual practice, as noted in the prior discussion of 6:61. To cite a few further examples, “in the representation of reason [*in Vernunftvorstellung*]” becomes the nonsensical “in the presentation of reason” (6:39), or *Vorstellungsart*, which is clearly used to designate modes of representation, becomes “way of conceiving” (6:41). Similarly, Kant discusses how scripture addresses the human need for imaginative representation of concepts in temporal and narrative form, arguing that “scripture, in accordance with this weakness of ours, has presented [*so vorstellig*] that origin in this way” (6:43), where again “represented” is clearly the appropriate meaning. Elsewhere, discussing scriptural personifications of the good and evil principles, according to Pluhar Kant refers to “this lively way of conceiving and for its time probably the only popular way of conceiving [*diese lebhaft und wahrscheinlich für ihre Zeit auch einzige populäre Vorstellungsart*]” (6:83). However, Kant isn’t discussing ways of conceiving or conceptualizing, but rather historically conditioned pictorial, narrative, and personified *modes of representation*. Additionally, in Pluhar’s rendering, *Vorstellung* here also becomes misleadingly conflated with the completely different “common way of thinking [*der gemeinden Denkungsart*]” (6:84).

Pluhar’s choice of “attitude” to translate *Gesinnung* is also unsatisfying, as this fails to convey the deep, abiding sense of a governing meta-maxim formed by and subtending our patterns of ethical and non-ethical choices. While the choice of “disposition” in the Cambridge edition may not be perfect, it remains closest in meaning to Kant’s use of *Gesinnung*. Attitudes can change relatively quickly, whereas the *Gesinnung* is a “meta-maxim” built up over a lifetime. While not deterministic, it is deeply rooted in our habitual patterns of preference and requires an inner revolution to be transformed from unethical to ethical (on moral conversion, see 6:47-8, 6:72-75). It is important to note Kant’s definitions: “The attitude [*Die Gesinnung*], i.e., the first subjective basis for the adoption of maxims... applies universally to the entire use of freedom” (6:25), and “an attitude [*eine Gesinnung*] (subjective *principle* of maxims)” (6:37). In practice using “attitude” in place of disposition is unsatisfying and even confusing; for example, Kant is translated as analyzing “good or evil attitudes” rather than “good and evil dispositions” (6:38). Similarly, Kant’s discussion of an inner ethical revolution as requiring “*eine Revolution in der Gesinnung im Menschen (eine Übergang zur Maxime der Heiligkeit derselben)*” becomes “a revolution in the attitude in the human being (a transition to the maxim of the attitude’s holiness)” (6:47). “Attitude” seems superficial here and loses the sense of an entrenched “subjective *principle* of maxims” that requires ethical transformation. The reference to “the interiority of the

¹³ Stephen Palmquist, in his “Introduction” to Pluhar’s translation, justifies this translation in writing that “rational religion is a ‘bare’ (*bloß*-) body that is inevitably clothed by some historical faith” (2009, xv). In his commentary on the *Religion*, Palmquist uses this translation to argue that “the proper response to this limitation [of reason] is to clothe pure reason’s naked (i.e., transcendental) explanations in contingent explanations that can fill the gap left by bare reason’s ‘weakness’. ...Kant will argue that the proper tool for providing such clothing is the *symbol*” (Palmquist, 2016, 116).

moral disposition [*das Innere der moralischen Gesinnung*]” noted above, becomes the completely obscure “the inside of the moral attitude” in Pluhar’s rendering (6:79).

Stephen Palmquist, in his “Introduction” to Pluhar’s translation (and elsewhere), also takes issue with “attitude” as a viable translation of *Gesinnung*.¹⁴ However, his advocacy for “conviction” as a better translation of *Gesinnung* also seems narrow and fails to capture the cumulative quality of the *Gesinnung* arising from repeated patterns of choice. Additionally, conviction usually translates *Überzeugung*, a term used by Kant throughout his mature writings, and so Palmquist’s suggestion creates additional confusion.

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¹⁴ Palmquist, “Introduction” (2009, xxviii, note 6).