



Kant as a Baylean atheist¹

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ENG Abstract: This article argues that if Pierre Bayle had read Immanuel Kant, he might have thought Kant was an atheist. It begins from Bayle's definitions of atheism, which came out especially in his study of Spinoza. Spinoza was an atheist, Bayle thought, in part because he used strange definitions of God which no one else used. If one reads Kant on religion, one discovers many such strange locutions. And Bayle thought that the meaning of "God" included such elements as personality, liberty, providence, and beneficence, and that if these are denied one does not believe in the "God" of most people. Since Kant denied each of these in one way or another, Bayle would have thought of him as an atheist.

Keywords: Kant, Pierre Bayle, Spinoza, religion, atheism.

ES Kant como ateo bayleano

Resumen: Este artículo argumenta que, si Pierre Bayle hubiera leído a Immanuel Kant, podría haber pensado que Kant era un ateo. El punto de partida son las definiciones bayleanas de ateísmo, que se dan especialmente en su estudio sobre Spinoza. Spinoza era un ateo, pensaba Bayle, en parte porque utilizaba extrañas definiciones de Dios que nadie más utilizaba. Si se lee a Kant sobre religión, se descubren muchos términos extraños similares. Bayle consideraba, en cambio, que el significado de "Dios" incluía elementos tales como personalidad, libertad, providencia y beneficencia, y que si éstas se negaban no se creía en el "Dios" de la mayoría de la gente. Por lo tanto, dado que Kant negaba cada una de éstas de una u otra manera, Bayle habría pensado en él como un ateo.

Palabras clave: Kant, Pierre Bayle, Spinoza, religión, ateísmo.

Summary: Bayle and atheism. Kant. Bayle on Kant. Bibliography.

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This chapter is an exploration of the senses in which Immanuel Kant's philosophy of religion justifies characterizing him as a Baylean atheist. A Baylean atheist is someone who the early Enlightenment philosopher Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) might have considered an atheist. It turns out, of course, that there is no simple, single definition of atheism that is accepted by everyone. Bayle's is only one set of definitions of atheism of the many that were used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But study of his definitions in reference to Kant may contribute to a taxonomy of atheism in Kant and the Enlightenment.

Bayle and atheism

Pierre Bayle wrote tens of millions of words in a publishing career that lasted from 1683 to 1706, plus posthumous publications. He explored numerous issues in philosophy and history, and returned to such issues many times, often from a different angle and with a different purpose. Naturally, everything about Bayle is subject to multiple interpretations. But one issue which came up again and again was atheism, and its many meanings. It has been said that he was "the author with the most impact on the atheism of the Enlightenment" (Zorrilla 2022, 136).

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We can start with whether or not Bayle himself was an atheist. He denied it, and his two major biographers, Elisabeth Labrousse and Hubert Bost, both Protestants, call him a kind of Protestant (Labrousse 1963-64, Bost 2006). Distinguished scholars Gianluca Mori and Antony McKenna call him an atheist (Mori 1999, McKenna 2017). Given the difficulties of knowing the real thoughts of any writer, and especially one as prolific and inventive as Bayle, we may have to suspend judgment on his personal religiosity. Whether or not he considered himself to be an atheist, he was in fact denied jobs and threatened with other punishments by people who thought he was an atheist. He also knew his readership, and too clear an expression of atheism might have alienated most of them. So he had to be discreet in expressing his views and avoid revelations of personal unbelief, if any. But for our purposes, all we need to know is what he considered atheism to be, and what effects it had.

Bayle's ideas about atheism are complicated. Unlike narrower definitions such as the mere existence or inexistence of a God, Bayle recognized degrees of atheism in several dimensions (Paganini 2023, 410). He also recognized that atheists and religious people can agree on important points, such as sometimes both agree that "there is a first cause, universal, eternal, that exists necessarily, and ought to be called God" (OD III 214a).² But they disagree on what that means. For some, it is a Catholic or Protestant God. For others, such as Spinoza and the ancient Greek philosopher Strato of Lampsacus, it is the same as nature: Spinoza wrote of *deus sive natura*. Bayle's article on "Spinoza" in his magnum opus, the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697 and several later editions), provided grist for the mill of those who were declaring that Spinoza's system led to atheism.³ We will summarize a few of his points, which help us to know what to look for in Kant.

In the article on Spinoza, Bayle asserts that Spinoza cheats by using ordinary vocabulary in ways that most people would not understand, and without explaining his new and different sense (DHC 304, text near note DD, and 330, note DD). Thus, Spinoza's idea of God is so different from everyone else's that he is not talking about the same thing. For Spinoza, God is everything, and he does not consist of parts. He is indistinguishable from matter and acts necessarily (DHC 315, note O). That means there are no miracles, no providence, no special treatment of humans by God. Bayle points out that although they have little else in common, Spinoza and Epicurus agree on rejection of providence (DHC 305, text near note EE). But if God does not act in the world, he does not fulfill the role that Christians and most other religious people expect of a God. Spinoza deprives us of God's providence, confidence in our prayers, and of hopes for a future life (DHC 316, note O). This is a justification of calling Spinoza an atheist, Bayle thinks. What Spinoza calls God is not what the rest of us do; he is saying that our God does not exist. It is certainly possible that Bayle misunderstood Spinoza on this and other matters, as argued by Javier Espinosa in another article in this issue (Espinosa Antón 2024), but it is hard to make the case that what Spinoza described as God is anything close to what ordinary language means with the word.

It is worth noting that Bayle came around to valuing Spinoza's ideas from at least one point of view: politics. Just before he died the third part of his *Response to the Questions of a Provincial* (1706) came out, in which he reasoned that Spinozist monarchs would be better than religious monarchs because they would have one less reason to persecute (OD III, 952b-956b).

Many ideas count as atheism for Bayle. Many philosophers admitted the existence of a God, but denied the moral attributes such as personality, liberty, providence, and beneficence, and this latter is also a form of atheism because it deprives "God" of the ordinary meaning of the term (Paganini 2023, 412, 579). If we go by ordinary language, Bayle says, we will see that even "the greatest skeptics of antiquity have said that all men have an idea of God according to which he is a living being, happy, incorruptible, perfect in felicity, and not susceptible of any evil" (DHC 312, note N). Rejection of any of these elements of our understanding of God takes us beyond ordinary language and makes one an atheist. Spinoza rejected all of them. One cannot really have much personality if one is all that there is. Nor any liberty or beneficence, if those words mean anything, nor can such a God do much in the way of providence for human beings. "Speak clearly and unequivocally", Bayle admonishes the Spinozists, "say that the laws of nature have not been produced by a free lawgiver who knew what he did but were the result of a blind and necessary cause, and that therefore nothing can happen that is contrary to those laws" (DHC 319, note R). Then, "at least then you will be speaking frankly" (DHC 319, note R). Admit that you "deny the possibility of miracles" and thus "the possibility of the events recorded in Scripture" (DHC 320, note R). Then you are an atheist as most people understand the term.

Spinoza contested the ordinary understanding of God. This is all about understanding the vocabulary. It has been suggested that Spinoza would have argued that definitions of terms are the province of philosophers, and that they should not concede the meanings of words to the vulgar, but Bayle seems to have adopted ordinary language as a standard for communicating ideas. It may be worth mentioning that Bayle was not writing to and for the illiterate or semi-literate, but for the Republic of Letters, as he titled a journal that he edited. Ordinary language did not mean the least intellectual language possible, but the ordinary language of educated and literate people. It was a sophisticated, elite ordinary language, including other philosophers (Laursen 2010). Since Spinoza refused to adopt the ordinary vocabulary of religion in this sense, even at the level of the educated elite and other philosophers, Bayle thought calling him an atheist was justified.

In later writings, Bayle went further in defining atheism. In *Continuation of the Diverse Thoughts* of 1704, Bayle wrote that "One can reduce atheism to this general dogma, that nature is the cause of all things, that it

² Bayle's *Oeuvres diverses* are cited in the text by the letters "OD", volume number, and page. See the bibliography.

³ Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* is cited in the text by the letters "DHC", page in translation in bibliography, and Remark letter, where reference is to a Remark.

exists eternally and by its own right, and that it acts according to the extent of its force and to the immutable laws that it does not understand. It follows that nothing is possible but what nature does... that no effort of humans is capable of changing anything, or of removing anything from the chain of its effects; that everything happens according to an inevitable and fatalistic necessity" (OD III, 400b). In the second part of *Response to the Questions of a Provincial* (1705), Bayle wrote that "the specific difference between deism and atheism is not that those who follow deism recognize a first and eternal cause which would be rejected by the atheists: they agree with each other on that, but disagree in that the former see that first cause disposing of everything with full liberty, that it distributes the goods and the bads according to its pleasure, that it grants or rejects our prayers as it judges appropriate", which the atheists could not accept (OD III, 728a). The "personal" character of the deity is the key to defining deism (Paganini 2023, 412, 584). In the second part of Bayle's *Réponse*, a Jesuit proposes that "all of the peoples consent in general to attribute to an eternal being a providential distribution of goods and bads, according to what it judges appropriate" and Bayle comments that "nothing more is required to distinguish between deism and atheism" (OD III, 728b). Bayle adds that such a personal God "is necessarily the center of agreement of those who reject atheism". The deists deny that "an eternal and necessary being is the cause of all of the effects of nature, that it is not separate from nature, that it acts without liberty, and that it does not understand our prayers". The atheists recognize "an eternal and necessary being which is the immanent cause of all of the effects of nature", but reject the idea that "it knows and directs all human action, has liberty, and knows what it does" (OD III, 728b). It was not God's existence but his "essence" or his "idea" that was contested by some sorts of atheists (OD III, 938a). As we shall see below, Kant also contested the ordinary ideas about God.

Atheism was important to Bayle from the beginning of his publishing career until the end of his life in part because he made it a crusade to refute the conventional wisdom that atheists would be criminals and subvert governments because they did not believe in a God who would punish them after death (Laursen 2018). In his first major published work, *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet* (1683), Bayle broached the question of the possibility of virtuous atheists, and answered that whether or not one is an atheist makes little difference in one's behavior. Most of the time we do not live by our principles or stated beliefs, but according to our "temperament, the natural inclination toward pleasure, the taste one contracts for certain objects, the desire to please someone, a habit gained in the commerce of one's friends" (OD III, 88). It is factors such as temperament and taste, not opinions about God and religion, that determine what one does (OD III, 92-94). Passions, pride, and the "mechanical constitution of their nature" are the major factors, not philosophical or theological ideas (OD III, 109). That means that rewards and punishments, and appeals to pride, reputation, and vanity are enough to keep social peace, with no necessary reference to God (OD III, 109-110, 115). At one point Bayle reviews a large number of atheists or people suspected of atheism who lived good lives: Diagorus, Theodorus, Euhemerus, and Epicurus among the ancients; the Jewish Sadducees; Giulio Cesare Vanini, a numerous sect in Turkey, and Michel de l'Hôpital in recent centuries (OD III, 110-112). As Stefano Brogi put it, Bayle demonstrates that atheists have often been capable of acknowledging basic ethical principles whereas what we call religions sometimes justify the violation of natural morality (Brogi 2022, 155).

For Bayle, the fact that Spinoza was a good person did not make him any less an atheist. We also have records of religious people who were just as bad as what people say about atheists: people at the court of Catherine de Medici, "although they believed in God, [...] were capable of every sort of wickedness" (OD III, 100). So atheism and religion have no necessary connection to social peace and political stability. In many of his later works Bayle pushed variations on the theme of the virtuous atheist and the possibility of peace and prosperity in an atheist society. In addition to the article about Spinoza, there is a great deal more about atheists in the *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, and naturally he was accused of atheism for discussing some of them sympathetically. He added a "Clarification concerning atheists" to the second edition of that work (1702), in which he did not retract his views, but rather reaffirmed that atheism could be harmless to society. In the absence of moral truths based on truths about God, people might nevertheless behave well because of their "temperament, education, liveliness of ideas of virtue, love of glory, or dread of dishonor", he wrote (DHC, "I. Eclaircissement").

Bayle's point about all of these people is that there are many ways to be religious and many ways to be an atheist. Recognizing a first principle and creator, but one that has no effect on human behavior, may mean that one is in effect an atheist. As we have seen, in *Various Thoughts* he wrote that Strato of Lampsacus and Spinoza recognized a first principle, but they are considered atheists because on their accounts that first principle is not at all like what other people think of as God because it acts by emanation and is immanent in the world, is determined by natural necessity, and does not determine what happens in nature by its own free will, which further means that it does not understand our prayers and thus our prayers cannot bring about a change in the natural course of things (OD III, 312; see McKenna 2017 and Zorrilla 2022). One can believe in "God" by one's own definitions but nevertheless be an atheist if one does not believe in the definitions of other educated people.

One of the main things Bayle did not like about Spinoza was that he was too rational, like the other rationalists of Bayle's day that Bayle spent a lot of time refuting (Brogi 1998, Hickson 2016). His main strategy was to show that various elements of rational theology and philosophy always ended up in atheism. If rationalists can almost always be reduced to atheism, that does not bode well for what Bayle might have said about Kant.

For our purposes, we have seen that Bayle thinks that if people contest the moral attributes of God such as personality, liberty, providence, or beneficence or use definitions of God that contradict what is normally taken by ordinary language and common usage to be definitions, such as that God is a living being, happy, incorruptible, perfect in felicity, and not susceptible of any evil, then those people might be classified as

atheists. They do not believe in what most traditions and most people think of as God, so it is not unjust to call them atheists. We shall now explore whether or not Immanuel Kant met any of these criteria. Our question is, would Bayle have considered him an atheist?

Kant

Scholars are also divided as to whether Kant was genuinely religious. One of his major biographers, Manfred Kuehn, agrees with many philosophers of atheistic inclinations who think Kant was an atheist (Kuehn 2001). Other scholars, including the author of a major commentary on Kant's work on religion, have been arguing for decades that he was genuinely a Christian (Palmquist 2016). As in Bayle's case, Kant was accused of atheism, which implied threats to his job as a professor and his ability to publish. The Prussian king even wrote to him to demand that he stop publishing subversive ideas. Like Bayle, he also knew that it might have been difficult to persuade many people to adopt his philosophy if it were too clearly spelled out as atheism. He had to be diplomatic and hide any beliefs that might have been too easily construed as atheism. As in our treatment of Bayle, we will not attempt to answer the question about his personal beliefs here, but rather concentrate on what Kant wrote about religion, and what it implies for atheism and atheists.

What did Kant know about Bayle? A lot: Bayle's *Dictionnaire* was one of the most widely-held books in European libraries in the 18th century. Everyone read him, and responded in one way or another to many of his arguments. Even Kant's sovereign, Frederick II of Prussia, translated a selection of Bayle's writing into German. Kant read French, and thus had access to whatever Bayle published in that language (Ferrari 1979). In addition, Bayle's ideas were often mediated in the form of the clandestine manuscripts that circulated around Europe with some of the more subversive ideas that were being drawn out of the texts of Spinoza and Bayle in the period (see Paganini, et al. 2020). Kant even imitated Bayle's vocabulary in the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* when he titled three of his books *Critiques*, and called his own method the critical method. It is safe to say he would have thought about what Bayle might have said about his philosophy.

Religion plays a role in almost all of Kant's writings, but we will only pay attention to three of them here: the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, 2d ed. 1787), the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and *Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (1793, 2d ed. 1794).⁴ In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant dealt with what he called the antinomies of pure reason, which are conflicting judgments about the world. The third antinomy was that there was no such thing as freedom, and that there is freedom. The fourth was that there exists a necessary being (which people would have understood to be God), and that there does not exist such a necessary being. It would not be hard to believe that the absence of freedom and the absence of a necessary being could be counted as atheism as it is normally understood. These antinomies are resolved by Kant by declaring that each side is right if seen from a different perspective, that of the noumenal and the phenomenal. The noumenal realm is the realm of ideas which cannot be known as existent, but can be known as necessary according to reason. The phenomenal realm is the realm of appearances and things as we know them in everyday life. We have no good evidence about freedom or God in the phenomenal world, but know that reason requires their existence in the noumenal world. As Kant describes it, he has had to "deny knowledge in order to make room for faith" (B xxx). We do not know there is a God, but know there should be one.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant described the immortality of the soul and God as "postulates of practical reason" (Ak. 5.122, 125). This relies on the previous book for the distinction between noumena and phenomena, and insists that we must postulate freedom and a noumenal God, even if we have no proof in the empirical world that there might be one. Postulating is assuming something exists as a necessary basis for the use of our reason. What this means is that although the elements of traditional religion are found in the phenomenal world in churches and established religions, and in observed behavior, no one can know if these represent the noumenal truth behind the appearances. But we can know that reason requires that we act as if we have freedom and as if there is a necessary being. Kant is very aware that his claim that his distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal, such that space and time are ideal, not real, is what distinguishes his theory from Spinoza's (Ak. 5.101-102). Otherwise, we have Spinoza's "absurd" claim that we are accidents inhering in God, he writes (Ak.5.102).

If Kant calls us to act "as if" God, freedom, and immortality exist, we must understand the meaning of that "as if". In 1911 the Kant scholar and philosopher Hans Vaihinger brought out a defense of useful fictions and falsehoods as cognitive heuristics as "the philosophy of 'as if'", with an important chapter on Kant (Vaihinger 1911). This raises the question whether everything that Kant said we must act "as if" it is true is actually true, or if these are all useful fictions. Kant admits that we cannot possibly know whether any of the things he thinks we should act "as if" they are true are actually true, and we must accept them on faith. So his entire edifice can be understood as a useful lie. He did not put it like this, but readers would be justified in asking why it is always "as if" and never actually true. If readers adopt a Baylean emphasis on ordinary language, they might end up giving Kant the label of atheist on the ground that he rejects knowledge of God, freedom, and immortality and replaces them only with "as ifs".

There are many implications of Kant's system in the *Critique of Pure Reason* for religion, and some of them show up in his *Religion*. One is the constant reference to religious issues as "ideas" and other vocabulary that indicates that we are talking about the noumenal world, not the physical or phenomenal one. In *Religion*, we are told from near the beginning that we should "assume" a holy and omnipotent being (Ak 6.5); that ethics

⁴ Kant's *Gesammelte Werke* are cited in the text by the letter "B" for the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and for the rest of Kant's works by the letters "Ak.", volume number, and page. See the bibliography.

leads inescapably to “the idea of a reigning moral lawgiver, outside the human being...” whose will is “the final purpose of the human being” (Ak 6.6); that “an omnipotent moral being must be assumed as ruler of the world” (Ak 6.7n.). Throughout the book, Kant is careful to always express ideas about freedom and God as ideas, not references to phenomena. It is easy enough to reconcile “the concept of freedom with the idea of God as a necessary being”, he writes (Ak 6.50n.). The idea of the personified idea of the good principle, Jesus, “emanates from God’s essence” (Ak 6.60), and it is our universal duty “to elevate ourselves to this ideal of moral perfection” (Ak 6.61). We should have “practical faith in this Son of God (insofar as he is presented as having assumed human nature)” (Ak 6.62). In this last example, Kant will not say that Jesus assumed human nature, but only that he is represented as assuming human nature. The point of this vocabulary is to distance himself from any claim in the ordinary language sense that we have real freedom and that there is a real God in the phenomenal world, which is the real, actual world we see around us. This is a far cry from Bayle, who wanted to stay close to ordinary language, and accused Spinoza of deviating from it too much. We shall speculate below about what he might have said about Kant.

Another implication of Kant’s *Critique* may be found in the critique of miracles in his *Religion*. A true moral religion is based on convictions in the heart, not miracles (Ak 6.84). Miracles provide a wrong incentive to believe, a wrong reason. Belief in them does not make you a better human being nor pleasing to God (Ak 6.84). If we assume that God can change the laws of nature to make miracles possible, we lose the concept of the law, and that leaves reason paralyzed (Ak 6.86-87). The ultimate point is that God’s providence in the form of miracles would render it difficult or impossible to understand both God and the world with reason alone. So miracles should be excluded from our mental life. As Kant puts it, on the one hand, a person should not “take up faith in miracles into his maxims”, yet on the other hand we are not in a position to judge whether they happen or not, since we cannot know the noumenal realm (Ak 6.88n.). Kant’s critique of miracles thus contains parallels with Spinoza’s, and Kant even mentions Spinoza as an example of a virtuous atheist (Espinosa Antón 2024, Rodríguez Aramayo 2024). These points may make Kant himself an atheist by Bayle’s standards.

In another article in this issue, Roberto Aramayo categorizes Kant’s position as “ethical atheism” because according to Kant, ethics must postulate God and God may not command ethics, or ethics will not be possible at all (Rodríguez Aramayo 2024). In Kant’s philosophy, ethics will not approve of obedience to ethical commands for rewards or to avoid punishments, but only for their own sake. God himself cannot be a moral agent, which requires choices and the ability to make mistakes. The paradox is that Kant’s moral philosophy is entirely dependent on God, freedom, and immortality, but he cannot say that he knows that they exist in the phenomenal world, only that he knows that they should exist in the noumenal world. Kant was savvy enough about human nature to know that one could not rely on individual consciences alone to support good behavior, so the third and fourth parts of his *Religion* are about how a church in the phenomenal world could “complement” our ethical duties by framing them and giving them emotional support. But saying we cannot know that there is a God so we shall make ourselves believe it by church trappings can be construed as a form of atheism, especially if one adopts ordinary language understandings of what God is and can do, as Bayle recommends. And he asserts several times that this phenomenal church will be unnecessary at some time in the distant future (e.g. Ak. 6.175), further adding to the impression that this is all human invention. We shall now turn to more on Bayle’s probable judgment of Kant.

Bayle on Kant

Since Bayle lived and wrote a century before Kant, he had no inkling about what Kant might have said a century later, nor about how vocabulary, religion, and philosophy might have evolved in the intervening years. But we can still ask the question, would Bayle have seen Kant’s vocabulary and philosophy as a form of atheism, as he did Spinoza’s? Kant openly opposes common understandings of religious phenomena because he thinks they undermine morality. His God is not the God of ordinary language and common customs, but the God of reason and of what we should think about religious matters in order to be moral people. Since Bayle is very concerned about moral behavior, too, and thinks it is a matter of reason and “natural light”, it might seem that they agree. But Bayle still may have had reservations about Kant’s refusal to say anything about the noumenal God but what it should be, while denying that there is anything in the phenomenal world that should be understood as God or influenced by God. Kant may seem close to Spinoza in these respects. In that case Bayle might have thought of him as an “atheist”, too.

Kant and Spinoza agree on a number of points about miracles, with the conclusion being in both cases that we should not rely on belief in miracles for anything important. Since Bayle thought that Spinoza’s exclusion of the possibility of miracles was a form of atheism, Kant’s rejection of them could count as atheism, too. In the article by Javier Espinosa in this issue, a number of parallels between Spinoza and Kant are brought out (Espinosa Antón 2024). It is true that Kant rejected Spinoza’s doctrines at various points but he also followed Spinoza on other points, and was accused of Spinozism with a certain justification by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and others in the Spinozastreit of 1785-1790’s (Lord 2011, Boehm 2014). To some extent, Kant can be understood as a Spinozist. But to the extent that Kant is a Spinozist, he might fall under the same charges of atheism that Bayle brought against Spinoza.

There are several dimensions in which Bayle might have thought of Kant as an atheist. One is the use of vocabulary that is unlike normal ordinary language. If all Kant can do when talking about God is say that he is a necessary idea, that we must assume his reality, and that we should act as if he exists, that is not ordinary belief in God and thus qualifies as a sort of atheism. One can imagine Bayle saying to Kant, “Speak clearly and unequivocally”, as he wrote to the Spinozists (DHC 319). If we can know nothing about God’s personality,

liberty, providence, and beneficence but only assume them as a matter of rational faith for the purposes of reason, we cannot be true believers in the God of other people. If we cannot know that God is a living being, happy, incorruptible, perfect in felicity, and not susceptible of any evil, simply because we cannot know anything about him in the usual sense of knowing and must rely on rational faith, then we are virtually atheists, at least by everyone else's standards.

The case has been made here that Bayle might have thought of Kant as an atheist for some of the same reasons he thought of Spinoza as an atheist. This justifies calling Kant a Baylean atheist, even if the term is an anachronism. It captures the point that Kant could have been understood as an atheist from a Baylean point of view. But we can add that although he criticized Spinoza, it is at least possible that Kant would have been proud to be associated with Spinoza as a rationalist and as a virtuous atheist, and thus perhaps only worried about the charge of atheism for political reasons.

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