A History of Philosophy
55 Kant's Ethics
By Dr. Arthur Holmes of Wheaton College

We want to take up Kant's ethics today. And let me start by reminding you that at the end of the critique of practical reason, at the end of his first critique, he points out that even though, in terms of what he calls doctrinal belief, what we can know metaphysically, rationally, we cannot demonstrate the existence of God. Yet it may be possible, on the basis of ethics, to affirm the existence of God rationally.

So there's a natural transition between the first critique, on pure reason, and the second critique on practical reason. It's sometimes said that the first critique is dealing with our faculty of knowing, the second critique with our faculty of willing, and the third critique, critique of judgment, with the faculty of feeling. All right, maybe, but in any case, it's in the second critique that you get the notion of the moral will introduced, and moral responsibility, moral duty, and so forth.

Now, a few preliminaries. One is this comment, that by anybody's reading, Kant is a moral realist. That is to say, he insists that there are objective moral truths, about objective moral qualities, that there are objectively real moral distinctives between right and wrong, between virtue and vice.

He's a moral realist, in that sense, an objectivist. And his famous categorical imperative, which we'll be looking at, tells us how we can know that difference between right and wrong. Now, his moral realism is, however, very much in keeping with the concerns of others in the late 18th century.

There's a sense in which the 18th century could be described as an age of moral crisis, because the aftermath of the scientific revolution, the Copernican revolution in physics, was, of course, a turn to a mechanistic science. Without teleology. Therefore, without the conception of the good as an all-inclusive ideal, which everything in nature strives to imitate.

The result was that right after the scientific revolution and during it, there was a groping for some new way of addressing ethical questions. And we saw in Bacon, and it's true in Descartes as well, a kind of early version of utilitarianism in terms of what works. There was a sophisticated development in Thomas Hobbes, whom the 18th century saw as an unqualified hedonist, a thoroughgoing determinist, without recognizing a shred of human goodwill or benevolence.

That was the 18th-century reading of Hobbes. And when we were talking about him, I think I pointed out that it doesn't really come out that way. There are notes of benevolence in his concern and so forth.

The 18th century also called him a thoroughgoing atheist. And that's not the case clearly at all. But in any case, that reading of Hobbes precipitated a great deal of concern among 18th century philosophers for providing some objective grounding of morals.

A concern about moral realism, you see. One of the moves in that direction was the Cambridge Platonism, you remember. Another, you might say, is John Locke's attempt to ground natural law, human law, in the rational nature of human beings.

Some reading I was doing just this morning. I discovered that Locke was very close to the daughter of Ralph Cudworth, who was really the leading Cambridge Platonist. You see.

And Locke's rejection of innate ideas may well have been a rejection, as we mentioned before, of the Cambridge Platonism. But at the same time, he shared their concern for an objective grounding of ethics. The same was the concern of those moral sense philosophers.

People like Butler, Adam Smith, Shaftesbury, and Hutchison, whom we noted more in passing than anything else. And that Shaftesbury was the son of a family where Locke was hired as a tutor. So he was the tutor to the Shaftesbury who later developed moral sense philosophy.

That Shaftesbury rejected Locke's approach to ethics and wanted to have something much more definite. And so the development of that notion of a moral sense. David Hume, it's said, was very much influenced by the moral sense thinkers.

In fact, there is an interpretation, a fairly recent interpretation that's been developed in the last ten years or so, that David Hume was so much influenced by the moral sense philosophers that he too shared their concern about ethical realism. Now, when we were talking about him, I suggested that he was an ethical subjectivist. That is to say, to say something is right or wrong is simply to refer to how people feel about it.

But according to this newer interpretation, those moral feelings, moral sentiments, are simply signs by which we recognize what is objectively the way it is. The case for that interpretation of Hume really hinges on some statements that Hume seems to make about the difference between virtue and vice, which sound as if he's talking about objective qualities of individuals, of human beings. So that if virtue and vice are objective qualities, then there is an objective difference between those qualities, and you've got moral objectivity, at least in the status of the moral qualities.

So, this matter of moral realism was very much a concern of 18th-century thinkers. Likewise, Immanuel Kant, very much a moral realist, tried to avoid some of the possible ethical implications of that mechanistic science with its causal determinism, which, of course, would take away from individual moral responsibility and its implicit subjectivist implications. So, it's with that in mind, then, that Kant writes about ethics.

Now, his approach to ethics is remarkably like his approach to metaphysics. There, in examining the faculty of knowing, what he looks for is the a priori structures, the subjective structures that shape the way in which we think and understand, as well as perceive things. In the critique of practical reason, he's again looking for the mental structures, the subjective structures, or principles that we bring to our moral thinking.

And again, the question is whether those structures of our thought are purely subjective, as was the case with the forms and categories, or whether they have any objective correlates. So that when it turns out that the subjective structure involves some sense of duty, of respect for moral law, the question is whether there is any objective moral law. You see.

And while he concludes that the forms and categories used in science and metaphysics are purely subjective, it turns out that the categories used in ethics are objective. That is to say, there are objective correlates. There is such a thing as objective moral duty, as an objective difference between right and wrong, objective moral law.

So he is, in those regards, a moral realist. Now, in order to see the way he does that, you have to recognize that he is again seeing the synthetic a priori nature of ethical judgments. So that the ethical judgment, then, involves the confluence of two kinds of input.

On the one hand, empirical input, and on the other hand, some a priori principle. So that when we say stealing is wrong, you get an empirical description of an act that is known as stealing. And you get the concept of wrong or lack of rightness as the a priori principle.

So what you get, then, is the introduction of an a priori principle in our moral reflection, in our moral awareness. An a priori principle that is applied to factual situations. Applied to.

Not implied in. But applied to factual situations. And this a priori principle is, of course, the categorical imperative.

Now, you have an initial selection about this in the anthology. The last little piece of Kant in the anthology. The last piece in the anthology, period.

And that is taken not from the critique of practical reason, but from his metaphysical foundations of morals. Some of you may have read that material in your introductory course. And recall that what he does is to start by saying that there is only one thing that is unconditionally good.

That is to say, a good will. Goodwill. The focus is on intention.

On motive. On character. The inner disposition of the individual.

And it's only the goodness of that inner moral disposition that can be regarded as good without qualification. After all, our natural inclinations can be twisted, diverted, or perverted. Our desires may be self-indulgent.

You see. So that our desire for happiness is not something that is in itself good and right. It can be misdirected.

So he makes a clear distinction between, on the one hand, inclinations. Because inclinations are towards empirical objects. Okay? A clear distinction between inclinations, on the one hand, and the sense of duty, on the other hand.

The sense of duty refers back to the a priori principle. The inclinations are looking forward to empirical satisfactions. And the moral quality is involved in the former.

He makes the distinction another way. By talking about hypothetical imperatives as distinct from categorical imperatives. Well, you know the difference between a hypothetical proposition and a categorical proposition.

A hypothetical one is iffy. If you want this, then do that. It would be a sort of hypothetical moral syllogism.

If you want this, then do that. So that hypothetical imperatives are oriented to ends, outcomes, consequences, inclinations, and desires. Okay? And they're not unqualifiedly good.

On the other hand, categorical imperatives are not iffy at all. You see? Without qualification, the categorical imperative tells you what's right. So while he starts by saying the only unconditionally good thing is acting out of a sense of will, he develops that notion of the completely unconditional imperative.

It's the goodwill, yes, to act out of respect for duty, not just in accordance with duty. Kant's not saying, do your duty. Well, not saying just that.

Because he knows perfectly well that you can do your duty for the wrong reason. Like you can observe the speed limit because there's a cop car following. No moral virtue in that.

You see? But doing one's duty out of respect for duty is the sort of thing that he's after. Then he goes on to develop that more fully. Going that far alone, he calls common sense morality.

Because it is, in effect, the kind of common reality which many ordinary people in the street would immediately describe. But he goes on to develop it in his more philosophical way in trying to articulate his categorical imperative, which he presents in three forms. One is often referred to as the universalizability principle.

The second is referred to nowadays as the principle of respect for persons. And the third as the autonomy of the will, the autonomous will. A word about each of these.

Universalizability. That you should always act according to a maxim. A maxim is a moral rule.

According to a maxim that you could will as a universal moral law. Always act according to a maxim that you could will as a universal moral law. And two interpretations of that have developed.

One is, would it be something that you could get enacted? That is to say that all persons would recognize as morally binding. Universalizability. The other, more usual interpretation, is that it is logically possible to will that? Now, something that's not logically possible to will would be a self-contradiction.

So, if you cannot logically will it to be a universal moral law, it's because it would turn out to be a self-contradictory law. A self-defeating thing. If, for instance, you are trying to take a loan and promise to, with a promise to repay it by a certain date, knowing and intending fully well not to repay it, you are in effect doing this with no intention to keep the promise.

Now, the maxim on which you are acting, if universalized, would be something like everybody could, if they wished, make promises without to reintrude senses. One, you are really not making a promise. You are making a promise that is not a promise.

Second, you are destroying the whole institution of promising by the universal law. There would be no such thing as promising, so it would be a self-contradictory law. So, the categorical imperative, then, is stated in that way.

The problem with that formulation is that it provides a negative criterion, telling you what you cannot do, rather than a positive criterion. A negative criterion rather than a positive criterion. Now, Kant, however, goes on to a second formulation that nowadays gets known as respect for persons.

His way of putting it is that we should always, there's the universalizability carried over into this, we should always treat persons as ends in themselves rather than as means only. Never treat a person only as a means. Always as an end.

Now, he's not saying treat persons as means. We do that all the time. You're using me right now to get some credit.

And I'm using you to earn a living. Yeah, he's not saying that's wrong. But he is saying that in the ways in which we use people, treat those people as of value in themselves.

Why that? Well, because they're rational people with moral will, as usual. Yes. So it's really universalizing what I ask for myself, that I be respected as a rational being, able to make moral decisions.

Reversing that in a positive way. Now, the emphasis on respect for persons has been made a great deal of use of in, for instance, contemporary medical ethics and business ethics. It's been developed at the University of Chicago, now retired, but still around.

There's a principle like this when he says that if I ask respect for my life project, then consistency requires that I respect your life project. Why do I ask for respect for mine? Because I'm a rational, self-determining being. You see.

So he argues for a principle of generic consistency, as he calls it. The principle of generic consistency. PGC, it gets known.

And this is really the universalization of respect for persons. So that's the second way of stating the categorical imperative, and obviously, it has much more positive application. Now, it seems to me that one of the difficulties with this is that what it means to respect a person really depends on how you define a person.

And if you're not satisfied with the sufficiency of defining a person simply as a rational being, but if there is more to the notion of personhood, then that needs to be spelled out. And I'm inclined to argue that there is more to it. Therefore, this is an incomplete ethic.

The third version of the categorical imperative involves his distinction between the autonomous will and, on the other hand, the heteronomous will. Now, a heteronymous will is one that is ruled by another. Heteronomy.

Governed by another. Autonomy means, of course, self-government. The autonomous will is one that is self-governed.

His point, basically, is that the categorical imperative requires that you act out of your own good will. You see, it's coming back to that notion. That it be a free act, self-determined, acting of your own will, rather than being governed, driven, by other people's desires and expectations, going along with the crowd, conforming to social pressures, following your own desires, rather than acting out of free will, enslaved by your own inclinations.

So that's the basic distinction. Not that it ties into what he's been saying. He's been criticized here, really, for this degree of autonomy, which should be governed.

And so, Robert Adams, for instance, who teaches at UCLA, introduces a third alternative that he calls the theonomous will. A will that is governed by God. A theonomous will.

Whether Kant really would allow that, or intended it, is a very good question. That was the law of God. So, it may be a direction that he would have been happy with.

In any case, his primary intention in talking of the autonomous will is to come back to the distinction between acting out of a voluntary respect for duty, as distinct from simply following inclinations and giving in to extraneous influences. So, this is his categorical imperative. He does speak in connection with the respect for persons of what he calls a kingdom of ends.

That is to say, if you treat people as ends, rather than means, what you're doing is advocating that society should be a kingdom of ends. You know, say a kingdom of people, of equal worth, value. This is the basis for his emphasis on human rights.

In light of that, he proposed what he called a League of Nations. That's where Woodrow Wilson got the idea, straight from Immanuel Kant. He has a book, Kant does a little booklet called Perpetual Peace, in which he proposes this.

That rational people, you see, acting out of goodwill, should contract together, contractual arrangement, contractarian approach. So, the respect for persons leads to the notion of the kingdom of ends. And in his religious book, which we'll be getting into, he talks of this kingdom of ends simply as the kingdom of God.

You see. He sees this as the biblical notion of the kingdom of God. All right.

Any comment, query, that far? That's pretty straightforward, I think, once you see what he's up to. David? Yeah. He... You see, the only thing that is good without qualification is goodwill.

It follows that the only thing that is really morally worthy is an act done out of a sense of duty. Not doing your duty because somebody's standing behind you with an arrest warrant. Not your duty because, really, you have an unthinking habit.

You see. And certainly not avoiding your duty by being lured away by roommates who want to go out on the town for the night. No, stick there and read Kant.

For example, Christian prays that God change my desires so that I would want to be... Oh, he'd be very happy if your desires were changed. You see. His point is that acting out of desire is something that is deterministic.

Now, let me go on to make that point. What he is arguing here in his analysis of the moral self, okay, in the analysis of the moral experience, what he's arguing is that the will is free when it acts rationally out of a sense of duty. Guided by reason out of a sense of duty.

On the other hand, if they will, rather than... If the individual is not acting out of that kind of goodwill, but is simply doing what it wants to do, it's functioning at the empirical level where the cause-and-effect mechanisms of mechanistic science come into play. So, in simply doing what you want to do, eating without thought of whether this is what you ought to be eating, for instance, responding thoughtlessly and breaking off what's got to be done, just warming it up, what you're doing is acting more like an animal than a rational human being. You see.

So he's trying to maintain that if you live at the sensual level, pursuing desires, inclinations, emotions, feelings only, you see, you're not free. You're not acting as a human being. While the desires may not be bad, the activities may not be bad; he's concerned about the moral quality of the person.

The only thing that is good without qualification is goodwill. Oh, you know, he's been criticized here. Sure, he was a Prussian.

I don't know why that would be a criticism. But a lot of English writers talk about the Prussian in him. He was a bachelor.

Yeah. The very disciplined bachelor. The neighbors set their clocks in the morning by the time he walked down the street to the university.

That sort of an individual. Underlying it, I think, is the feeling that, and I suspect this underlies your question, David, that there is something less than fully human about the notion of acting out of a sense of duty and ignoring desire. God-given desire.

Perhaps redemptively transformed desire. Yes. Well, I think the thing to say in his defense is that he recognizes that we have a natural desire for happiness.

He recognizes that this is a God-given desire for happiness. The problem is that in this life, those two don't come together. You see? There's too much going against us for them to come together.

Both in us and outside us to automatically trust desires for happiness. And that's what feeds into what you see coming later in terms of the corollaries. Pete? Yeah, he's not saying we always do.

He's very explicit that there are people who will fly in the face of their duty, act to the contrary, and reject moral law. He's trying to get into his thinking something of what theology talks about in terms of depravity. Whether he does so sufficiently is the question.

His background was Lutheran Pietism. And Kierkegaard is quite critical of him in this regard. Not for being a Lutheran pietist, I mean, but for what Kierkegaard regards as a too optimistic view of human nature.

Somebody else back there, yeah. Yeah, you see, that question implies that he's simply saying, do your duty. And so what do you do if you have conflicting duties? But he's not just saying, do your duty.

He's saying, act out of a sense of duty. So his response to your question would be that in choosing between conflicting duties, you choose out of a sense of duty. You don't do the duty that you prefer to do.

You say that you're more inclined to do it, it's easier to do. You do the duty which, as a rational being, you decide it is your duty to do. Now that does get him into some problems.

Well, you decide in terms of respect for persons. So that hypothetically, he might say that if duty A conflicts with duty B, and they're both duties to persons, which is more essential in respecting the person involved. In that way, I suppose he might argue in terms of lifeboat ethics.

You know what I mean by lifeboat ethics? Extremities where there are two people who can be lost and only one can be saved. Do you remember maybe why you're calling him an absolutist? Yeah, he is, in the sense, well, yeah, he's often taken to be,

in the sense that he does not want to allow moral exceptions. Exceptions to moral rules.

In that sense, he's an absolutist about lying. There are no such things as justifiable lies. My initial reaction to your question was to pull out that favorite illustration about what you would do if you were in Amsterdam in 1942 and the Gestapo came knocking at the door looking for the Jewish girl you're hiding in your attic.

You'd say, would you tell a lie, or what would you do? No, I think at least according to that reading of Kant, he would say, no, you must never tell a lie. Yeah, precisely. We had a Kant scholar here on campus on one of these visiting philosopher programs a few years ago, Christine Korsgaard, who was then at the University of Chicago, is now at Harvard.

And she argued in one of her lectures that Kant was not an absolutist in that sense. That he would reconstruct the picture so that you're not lying. What you're doing is respecting persons and treating those who violate persons in a way that keeps the truth from them.

Something of that sort. I think the point is, yeah, you think that's a subtle one, huh? There are two or three classic ways in which ethicists respond to your kind of question. What do you do when duties conflict? One, you operate with a hierarchy of duties.

And you decide which one ranks higher. Now that's what I was implying when I said which is more essential with respect for persons. The other is to introduce rules to govern exceptions to moral rules.

Put that another way, you are qualifying the moral rule. So you mustn't lie is just a shorthand for a much longer moral rule with all sorts of qualifications. Defining what you mean by a lie.

Just as some Old Testament scholars say about the commandment, thou shalt not kill. That read in that context, there are all sorts of qualifications that are built into it. You just have to look in the context to see.

It's not a blanket rule. It's a qualified rule. So it's difficult to know exactly what Kant does.

That's how some Kant specialists earn their reputations is arguing about how to interpret Kant that way. Knowing what your sense of duty is? No. Well then, you don't have to worry about knowing it.

If you're acting out of a sense of duty, you must know you have a sense of duty. No, you mean how do you determine what is your duty? By the categorical imperative. That is the way in which you know what is your duty.

Would you be acting on a maxim that could be universalized? Would you be acting out of respect for persons? Would you be acting out of an autonomous will? It's the way you know. It's the way you decide. No, he doesn't give you a whole list of rules.

Well, you don't want a rule book for ethics. You've got to make moral decisions in cases where there are no rules anyway. That's what medical ethics and bioethics are about today.

Anything? No, moral thinking is about how the most basic moral principles affect our decisions. Or if we're trying to formulate moral rules we should follow. How do you formulate those moral rules? The answer is based on the categorical imperative.

Say that again. Exactly. On the basis of the categorical imperative.

This here, the a priori principle, is the categorical imperative. Come at that one other way. Some of you have seen me talk this way before.

But I find it helpful to distinguish between four levels of ethical discussion. A particular case. An area rule.

A rule that applies to an area of moral responsibility, like a rule against lying. Overall principles. That is to say, principles that apply to every kind of area of responsibility.

To the entire moral life. And then the basis on which those principles rest. Which would be a theological basis.

Or a philosophical basis of some sort. Or a metaphysical basis. Now, in Kant's case, the principle is the categorical imperative.

The categorical imperative. He might have a rule about truth-telling. Which is based on the categorical imperative.

To lie is not to respect persons. I think I can fool you, deceive you, and manipulate you with my lies. It's not respecting persons.

So the rule is based on that, and that's applied to the case. So how do you know what's the right thing to do in a particular case? Well, normally we check the rules. You have certain moral rules of thumb.

You have certain explicit biblical moral teachings. There are certain societal moral standards. Professional code of ethics.

Whatever it might be. But when you're trying to formulate such rules or try to handle conflicts between moral obligations at the rules level, then you go back to what the overall principle demands. I think there is another feature that feeds into ethical discussion, and that's what I call background beliefs.

BBs. Background beliefs. You know, if you're dealing with questions in business ethics, then your underlying belief about the meaning and purpose of work, of economic activity, comes into play.

If you're dealing with matters of medical ethics, then your belief about the purpose of medical care comes into play. And there's literature, for instance, that from a Christian point of view, about the attitude of the medical profession that we have to extend human life at all costs to the patient. Not just economic costs, but costs of suffering.

Lingering. Arguing that from a Christian point of view, death is something to be accepted. Not endlessly denied.

And that the preservation of life is not the highest end. It's not an argument for active euthanasia. But it is an argument against extraordinary means of extending life when, by all natural standards, life is drawing to a close.

So, background beliefs. I have a question on the categories themselves. These A4 categories are they as objective as the metaphysics? Yeah, you see, I started today by talking of Kant as a moral realist.

You see, the categorical imperative, don't call them categories. There's one categorical imperative. This is three ways of stating it.

The categorical imperative is his way of distinguishing right from wrong. You see? Now, is he making up the distinction? No, this is his way of recognizing a distinction that's already there. You see? Moral right and moral wrong are two very different things.

How do we know which is which? By means of the categorical imperative. It seems strange to me that he'd be a moral realist while in metaphysics, he believes in the phenomenal. Ah, but he told you he was going to be at the end of the first critique.

Yeah, now read that last section in the first critique. You remember where he talks about belief, moral belief as distinct from doctrinal belief. Now, why? Well, at this juncture, all he's doing is talking about moral experience.

Where does moral experience occur? Within the mind, wrestling with moral obligation in relation to desires and inclinations. In other words, moral experience as such is not experience of a space-time world at all. You see? And so your forms and categories of science and metaphysics don't impose themselves on our moral thinking.

You see? So it is in our moral life, in the inner life of the human spirit, that you have an open door into the nature of reality. That's why it is that idealism and romanticism is a result of Kant. You see, the turn is a turn away from observing the external world of science to the inner world of science.

Now, that was his Copernican revolution, wasn't it? Yeah. So the Copernican revolution has very far-reaching implications. Remember when we talked about the effects of Kant in 19th-century idealism, romanticism, and all the rest of it? Well, you begin to see it here in terms of ethics.

Kant is hardly a romanticist, but he's often called an ethical idealist. That is to say, one who describes the ultimate reality in ethical terms, in terms of right and wrong. An ethical idealist.

So Kant's God is a moral deity. Isn't it, if everyone has the APRI principle, isn't it also very deterministic? Like, for people to be like... No. No, the fact that in the examination and analysis of moral experience you uncover by the transcendental method, this categorical imperative, doesn't mean to say that everybody has to follow the principle.

If there's freedom of will, you can turn your back on the principle. You see? And that's precisely what some people do. What was it in Milton's Paradise Lost that the devil said? Evil, be thou my good.

See, that's the evil will. That's not goodwill, that's evil. Now, if he were not an indeterminist, you see, if he didn't emphasize freedom of will, you'd be right.

You'd be a determinist. But the principle is not a principle that determines your decisions. The principle is a principle which reason can observe in guiding the will.

You know? Yeah, well, hold the phone on that one, would you? Just a moment. So far, the only part of the response that we can have is that this kind of moral experience is independent of the forms and categories that apply to metaphysics. Okay, let's take this next step to the corollaries.

And you can see already how he handles the question of freedom. The freedom of the will is a corollary of moral duty. That is to say, if we say that morality consists of

acting out of a sense of duty, then if morality is to make any sense, there must be the freedom to act out of a sense of duty, which means freedom of the will.

So, while he is not proving the freedom of the will, it is a corollary of his account of moral experience, of moral phenomenology. You see? If he's right about this matter of duty, then it follows that we have freedom of will. I call it a corollary.

It's not a proof there. It seems to be implied in what's gone before. But he goes further than that.

And if the first is sort of a logical corollary, the second are more postulates that we are led to in the light of the ethic. Additional postulates. That is to say, the achievement of goodwill, the only thing that's intrinsically good, the achievement of goodwill in this life, is never completed.

You don't achieve moral perfection in this life. Moreover, there is that natural God-given desire for happiness, which is never fully achieved in this life, while pursuing duty in the face of one's desires. So, for both these reasons, there must be a continuation of this life, in which your moral development continues and is rewarded with happiness.

The immortality of the soul is a practical necessity. And what he means by practical is that it's necessary to use practical reason. Practical reason is moral thinking.

That is to say, if moral thinking makes any sense, you have to postulate, in addition, a life hereafter, in which the moral quest, the quest for the good, the good will, can be achieved. Moreover, if there is to be a future life in which that is possible, then we have to postulate the existence of a moral being who would guarantee happiness that is proportionate to one's virtue. So you have two morally necessary postulates of practical reason.

Immortality of the soul is of God. Now, what he does in his religion book is to spell that part of it out more fully. He spells that part of it out more fully.

And let me give you a quick rundown of that in this way. What he's doing is trying to see correlations between the things he has described in the moral consciousness and the concept of God and the traditional religious attitude, the attitude towards God. Now, in the moral consciousness, what we're finding is that reason, via the categorical imperative, reason legislates, tells us what is right, tells us what to do.

Reason legislates. Yes, you see, in the correlate, there is the conception of God as the holy, righteous lawgiver with the appropriate religious attitude of reverence, awe, that includes obedience. The moral consciousness also manifests a natural inclination to happiness, often in tension with what reason legislates.

Correlated with this is the recognition that God is the good provider who blesses our obedience. And the religious attitude is one, of course, of grateful love. In the moral conscience, as well as moral consciousness, rather, there is the experience of conscience, that is to say, of something which jogs you, pricks, when you have a bad conscience.

And the correlate here is the conception of a just judge who judges the moral worth of an action. And, accordingly, the religious attitude of respect, the fear of the law, and so forth. Now, it's difficult to know exactly what he means.

Is he simply saying that the God whose existence we have to postulate has to be this sort of a God? And this is the way God really is? Yes, I am. And this is the way we should respond to him? Is that what he's saying? Or is he saying that the conception of God and the religious life is simply a psychological projection of our religious experience, of our moral experience? Now, the latter route, of course, is taken by the ethical humanist, naturalistic interpretations of religion, and the former interpretation that this is the way God is, the way that was taken by the more traditional religious approaches, with qualifications. And out of this approach to talking about God developed some of the early streams of 19th-century liberal theology.

Because if your theology is simply an extension of your ethics, then you have a new theological method, which doesn't go as far as the biblical revelation. So one strain of 19th-century liberal theology emerged out of Kant's thinking at this juncture. Incidentally, Kant vowed in letters that he wrote that if he wrote about the Christian religion, he would be accused of doing so, you see, and was forbidden to teach or to publish.

In defense, he defended himself. Now, for a man who said that lying is always wrong, it would be hard to think that he said that. But the debate goes on.

In addition to that, in the religious book, what he does is talk about the kingdom of God. Talk about Christ. Christ, you see, represents in the Christian religion the ideal of moral perfection.

The great example. The death of Christ is the supreme example of acting out of a sense of duty. Not my will, but mine.

And so, Kant, in that context, gave birth to what since become known as the example theory of the atonement. The example theory. The significance of the death of Christ was in providing a supreme moral example.

And if that is all that is said, then obviously, the Orthodox Christian traditions are going to object to Kant. It is at least not enough. Now, whether he intended there to be more is difficult to know.

It's certainly clear that the title of his book does not pretend to say everything that there is about religion that can be said. But only what can be said within the limits of reason alone. Perhaps the significant thing is this juncture, that whereas the Enlightenment wanted to demonstrate the basic truths of religion, Kant doesn't try.

That sort of metaphysical proof isn't possible. But he does maintain it is rational to postulate the basic truths of religion. You see? And it's the overall rational coherence of the resultant scheme that involves a moral law-giver and so forth, which makes it so plausible and so rational to postulate.

So, in terms of justifying belief, you'd have to say that Kant really is a coherentist in terms of the overall coherence of the thing.