Kant took this interposition of the notion of worthiness to set him apart from all of the ancients and to constitute a veritable revolution in our understanding of morality.\textsuperscript{89} When it came to the subject of religion, the revolution Kant wrought upon the world was as straightforward and consequential; religion is not the study of grace, but rather of what is required of us in order to be worthy of grace. His official definition of grace is given in a footnote to the second book of \textit{Religion}. He writes that we have no legal claim to grace,

But only a capability of receiving, which is all that we, for our part, can credit to ourselves; and a superior's decree conferring a good for which the subordinate possesses nothing but the (moral) receptivity is called grace.\textsuperscript{90}

Elsewhere he speaks again of our "moral receptivity" for supernatural assistance and of our making ourselves worthy of divine supplementation.\textsuperscript{91} It is clear enough that our capability of receiving grace is not a physical but a moral capability, that in order to receive grace there is something we must do, namely, act from the moral law. Now this definition may seem innocuous enough, but it would be unintelligible, not to say perverse, to those doctors of grace such as Augustine and Luther. Kant demanded that the Idea of morality mediate grace just as it did happiness, for this mediation also assured the non-arbitrariness of our salvation, something that Kant could not place entirely beyond our will. And it is no mere coincidence that acting from the moral law is the condition of our worthiness for both happiness and salvation, since morality unifies the sphere of the practical, the realm of our action in the world. The religious cast of mind, as the moral, should consist in the disposition to harbor no wish, no hope, except on these terms, terms set unequivocally by practical reason and subject to no authority higher or lower than itself, no authority outside of itself.

Yet it was precisely the thought of Augustine and Luther that, as a consequence of original sin, the notion of worthiness had lost all sense. The very conditions for the possibility of worthiness no longer obtain because, to list the most obvious no longer existing condition, we no longer have free will. Augustine tells us in Chapter XXII of his \textit{The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope and Love} that freedom of the will is itself the gift of God, that God's grace or mercy "goes before the unwilling to make him willing; it follows the willing to make his will effectual."\textsuperscript{92} And Augustine speaks here of God working willingness in man, a phrase wholly unintelligible from Kant's point of view, since for him only one's own will can work willingness. But for Augustine the very idea that man's worthiness can be a condition for God's grace must be incoherent. For God's grace is needed because we have no claims to worthiness, because we live in a perpetual state of unworthiness, requiring something no smaller than redemption. Indeed, even if we distrust the near glee with which Calvin sometimes describes our human nature, his descriptive epithets—accursed, degenerate, miserably enslaved, corrupt, damnable\textsuperscript{93}—are natural complements to a certain view of grace. If, as Calvin believes, Paul had authoritatively "drawn a picture of human nature, which shows that there is no part in which it is not perverted and corrupted,"\textsuperscript{94} then how could one draw a picture of redemption in which anything was left to us? From corruption, corrup-
tion comes, and so God's grace is to be wished for not just in spite of, but because of our non-merit. Whatever doctrinal differences there may be, that is a vision shared by all Christian physicians of grace.

Moreover, when it fell to Augustine to depict the origin of original sin, he fixed, with Biblical authority, on pride as "the start of every kind of sin."

And what is pride except a longing for a perverse kind of exaltation? For it is a perverse kind of exaltation to abandon the basis on which the mind should be firmly fixed, and to become, as it were, based on oneself, and so remain... And so, to abandon God and to exist in oneself, that is to please oneself, is not immediately to lose all being; but it is to come nearer to nothingness... This then is the original evil: man regards himself as his own light, and turns away from that light which would make man himself a light if he would set his heart on it.95

So it is when one, so to speak, detaches one's will from God's will, attempting to shed the needed ontological support, that one falls closer to nothingness, that one sins. It is as if a part of God, the human being, rebels against Him, something mirrored by a part of ourselves, our sex organs, rebelling uncontrollably against our selves.96 Just as from our human perspective the involuntary movement of the genitals can be viewed as a rebellion against the will that should control them, so from God's perspective the spontaneous and involuntary movement of our will is viewed as a revolt against the Will that should control it.97 Thus as this arrogance of presumed autonomy is our downfall, so in Kant the autonomy of the will is a necessary condition of our salvation. If the spontaneous revolt of autonomy turns us away from light, and if once this turning has commenced it corrupts our nature through and through, then we must leave it to God to bring us back to something like our original state, a state in which we root ourselves in His will. So it is from God's will, from His grace and mercy, that this re-turning must come; we must look there to a reorientation of our lives, and from there all claims to worthiness appear as pretensions, as deceptions to be given up rather than demanded.

Kant takes the elevation of this concept of grace to the center of our religious life, and the corresponding picture of human nature it paints, as something like a manifestation of a specific pathology of the human spirit. One might call it the pathology of passivity, but before describing it, let me look at the way Kant conceives of the legitimate role for grace and for faith. Kant calls the faith of "every individual who possesses moral capacity (worthiness) for eternal happiness a saving faith."98 This saving faith is a single faith and a moral faith because it springs from that pure religious faith that is itself based in the one, universal practical reason. This moral faith is so named because it requires a morally good disposition.99 By contrast there is also the faith of a religion of divine worship. This latter faith is, Kant says, both "drudging" and "mercenary" and "cannot be regarded as saving because it is not moral."100 The religion of divine worship is expressed in the many competing ecclesiastical or historical faiths that share in common the deception, induced in their worshippers, that we can become well-pleasing to God through the performance of actions that "possess in themselves no moral worth," actions that "an evil man can also perform."101 About the deformations caused by the religion of divine worship, I shall have more to say
shortly. But even the saving faith itself involves two elements and, as always in Kant, everything turns on how these elements are structured, on the relation of subordination and priority that holds between them. Kant describes these two elements as, first, “what man himself cannot accomplish, namely, undoing lawfully (before a divine judge) actions which he has performed” and, second, “what he himself can and ought to do, that is, leading a new life conformable to his duty.” 102 The first element is a faith in atonement, redemption, or reconciliation with God, the second a faith that we can become well-pleasing to God by acting morally. These two elements echo what I earlier called the division of labor between God’s grace and practical reason. And the question Kant characteristically asks is whether our faith in atonement from debt will bring about moral conduct, or whether our moral activity will bring forth faith in atonement. 103 This question of priority amounts to a question of salvation. Kant initially poses this inquiry about priority as “a remarkable antinomy of human reason with itself” 104 and after telling us, as we expected, that this problem cannot be resolved theoretically, since it wholly transcends “the speculative capacity of our reason,” 105 he asks and answers the decisive question:

But practically, the question arises: What, in the use of our free will, comes first, (not physically, but morally)? Where shall we start, i.e., with a faith in what God has done on our behalf, or with what we are to do to become worthy of God's assistance (whatever this may be)? In answering this question we cannot hesitate in deciding for the second alternative. 106

Kant insists that we may hope to appropriate another’s atoning merit (even if we know not how), and so may hope to partake of salvation, “only by qualifying for it through our own efforts to fulfill every human duty,” 107 efforts that have to be the effect of our own will and not of “a foreign influence in the presence of which we are passive.” 108 Whatever rhetoric Kant may occasionally use to the contrary, he did not share the ungraceful picture of man as accursed, degenerate, and miserably enslaved. As his question above makes clear, he was unequivocal in his belief that, despite radical evil, we have free will; otherwise we would be able to make no sense of moral responsibility, of morality itself, of reason in its practical employment. Whatever evils and perversities the human will has visited upon itself, Kant stuck to the slogan, no mere slogan, enunciated at the beginning of the first General Observation.

Man himself must make or have made himself into whatever, in a moral sense, he is or is to becom e. 109

On this claim the reasonableness of morality depends.

The requirement to do our duty is unconditioned, and we must take this requirement, both as maxim of action and basis of belief, as the starting point on our way to salvation, as the anchor of our saving faith. In this way there is a rational connection between our lives and our hopes. We may rationally hope for atonement, if we have done all that is within our practical power, for if we have done all that we can, fulfilled our part in the division of religious labor, we can rest secure that God will do His part in His way. If our actions, our efforts, count for nothing, if our connection to God is up in the air, then hope will no longer be a
concept attached to reason, but will be indistinguishable from mere wishing; hope could then be, at most, a purely psychological concept without foundation in the practical. And Kant says about those who try to derive faith in moral conduct from faith in vicarious atonement, that since it is only a matter of belief, of a wish that atonement be given to one, no reasonable person could seriously believe that the consequences of this faith in atonement could be a good life-conduct "for which he has hitherto not taken the least pains."

110 This advocate of atonement desires to convert a bare wish into a hope, "as though one's object were to come of itself, elicited by mere longing."111 This path of reversed priority brings a double loss of hope, a loss of double hope; we cannot rationally hope for atonement, starting as we do here from nothing, although we can, and if we start from nothing we intensely do, wish for it; and we cannot rationally hope to act morally if we simply believe only that someone else can, without our doing anything but believing, atone for our sins. But for Kant we can both hope to act from the moral law, since reason tells us that we ought to and so can, and we can hope for atonement, since reason tells us that the condition for such hope is that we do all that is within our power. Hope, unlike longing, is conditioned.

Kant makes it clear that we must decide what is to be apportioned to humanity and what to God. The principle of ecclesiastical faith makes faith in vicarious atonement a duty of man, whereas faith in good life conduct, brought about by the divine agency, is given to us through grace.112 Thus this principle takes something mysterious or supernatural to be a duty and so presumably within the power of our practical reason, while something natural to us is taken from our power and reckoned to God. This principle gives us both too much and too little; it asks us to act on a faith that must remain partially obtuse to our reason, thus pointing us towards fanaticism, and it debars us from a faith in actions that are part of reason's domain, thus weighing us down in sloth. Ecclesiastical faith stands us on our heads, dizzying us with useless effects. According to Kant's principle of apportionment, though, "the good course of life, as the highest condition of grace, is unconditioned duty, whereas atonement from on high is purely a matter of grace."113 This principle sets us on our feet, giving to us the unconditioned requirements of reason, and only then allowing us to wait for God's grace to fulfill or supplement the conditions we have met. Neither fanatical nor slothful, this principle permits us to be reasonable, that is, human.

If the faith in vicarious atonement were given primacy, then this magical, mystical faith, inspired directly by heaven, would take everything we recognize as morality and turn it into the will of God. The autonomy of humanity, not to mention the autonomy of the individual, the center of Kantian morality, would be crushed by God's will. And so, in a moment of unambiguous consent, Kant says about Romans 9:18—"He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth"—that "taken according to the letter, it is the salto mortale of human reason."114 This death leap of reason, God's will crowding it off the earth, is what happens when reason's unconditioned commands and conditioned hopes are torn from it, leaving it nothing to do but die to its requirements. Paul's pronoun-
cement, taken according to the letter, leaves no room for human reason and so no room for human, that is reasonable, morality, causing us to throw up our hands, heavenward. And of course, some theologians, who also happen to be saints, would be more than happy if that was exactly where we did throw our hands. Take Augustine, for example: he says about Romans 9:16—"So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy"—which precedes Paul's conclusion quoted by Kant,

the true interpretation of the saying . . . is that the whole work belongs to God, who both makes the will of man righteous, and thus prepares it for assistance, and assists it when it is prepared.\textsuperscript{115}

Augustine explicitly opposes an interpretation of this passage that would claim merely (and some "merely" this is) that the will of man is by itself not enough without the mercy of God. Rather, he protests that this passage must be interpreted to show that the will of man by itself is nothing, that the mercy of God is everything. And about this same passage, Romans 9:16, Luther says,

A man owes his ability to will and to run, not to his own power, but to the mercy of God who gave him this power to will and to run. Without it, man \textit{could} neither will nor run.\textsuperscript{116}

Luther wants to deny that this text implies that our willing and running amount to nothing, if by that we mean that it is not necessary for anyone to will or to run. It is just that willing and running do not come from one's "own strength," that this willing and this running are "God's work."\textsuperscript{117} But for someone with Kant's principles, if that does not amount to nothing, nothing does; for if willing is not of one's own strength, if it comes from God's work, then it cannot be imputed to you, you are not accountable for it. And, from a moral point of view, what you are not accountable for is nothing to you. Luther too sounds the death knell of human reason.

So as not to underestimate the fate of humanity under this doctrine of grace, let me examine a passage from Augustine that juxtaposes the notions of justice, desert, merit, and mercy, a passage from the "Blessed Augustine" that Luther sometimes took as his guide. Augustine is interpreting Romans 9:14-24, where Paul is considering God's justice and injustice. If everything is of God who showeth mercy, then how can He blame anyone, for no one can oppose His will? If everything comes of God's work, what will happen to the idea of responsibility, how will we establish a connection between our actions and God's judgments? Augustine says that a person who understands these matters will find no room to question or complain to God. I quote his answer in full:

. . . he perceives that the whole human race was condemned in its rebellious head by a divine judgment so just, that if not a single member of the race had been redeemed, no one could justly have questioned the justice of God; and that it was right that those who are redeemed should be redeemed in such a way as to show, by the greater number who are unredeemed, and left in their just condemnation, what the whole race deserved, and whether the deserved judgment of God would lead even the redeemed, did not His undeserved mercy interpose, so that every mouth might be stopped of those who wish to glory in their own merits, and that he that gloriethe might glory in the Lord.\textsuperscript{118}
The logic of his argument is: as a result of rebelling against God, as a consequence of sin, we are justly or deservedly condemned; he who is redeemed is done so not because of what he deserves, since he deserves condemnation, but because of God's mercy or love; so he must credit his redemption not to his own merits but to God's gratuitly. And he who remains condemned has received his due and has no ground for complaint. What gets this argument started is a specific interpretation of original sin.\textsuperscript{119} One would have to hold, either as Augustine does, that original sin causes the will to be enslaved, results in the absolute and unadulterated corruption of our nature, so that we cannot possibly do anything that could accrue to our merit—this is the death of the will, and, so it seems, the death of moral responsibility; or at least one would have to hold, the less Protestant view, that whatever we can accomplish through our will, we cannot begin to counterbalance what we have incurred through sin, that the achievements of our will are as if nothing when placed on the ledger of our debts—this is the death of moral effort, and the slow erosion of the will. In either case, at the beginning or at the end, our wills are impotent. We must rely on, rest everything upon, God's love. Whether this merciful love redeems us or not is up to Him. Luther concludes about this chapter of Augustine's \emph{Enchiridion} that:

Such words cause a man to recognize his damnation and to despair of the possibility that he can be saved by his own powers. Ordinarily, the idea that he is fallen in Adam leaves him cold, for he hopes, indeed he presumes, to be able to raise himself by his own free will. But here it is given to understand that grace raises him up before and beyond all his free will.\textsuperscript{120}

But he is also given to understand that this raising up comes as though from nowhere, with no reason, even contrary to reason. And although Luther does draw a distinction between the "horror of despair" and "salutary despair,"\textsuperscript{121} this is a distinction, if not without a difference, with not enough difference, at least if you see the moral world as Kant does.

If suffering is not proof of our connection with God, if "as Luther's confessor had to remind him, God appears only in love,"\textsuperscript{122} then the love of grace must appear to Kant as pathological. Kant's infamous distinction between pathological and practical love (between love from inclination that we just happen to have and that cannot be commanded, and love that issues in action and that we must have because it is commanded by duty) seems perfectly in place here.\textsuperscript{123} One of the chief moral problems of pathological love is that it is arbitrary; you either have it or not, and no one can require it of you. Kant could not help but view the loving grace described by Augustine and Luther as arbitrary and so pathological; and from the human point of view it does indeed present itself as a mysterious arbitrariness. For Kant, just as a mother's caring for her child ought not simply result from feelings of tenderness that may or may not be stable, so a Father's caring for His children ought not simply result from feelings that appear to have no basis at all, no basis other than the fact that they are present. Kant must take this loving grace to debar our connection to God, to make our relation to him not so much a connection as a matter of luck, as if getting his attention were a matter of whim, His whim not ours. There is an ancient theological debate about the
primacy of God's will to His intellect that received one of its best known philosophical crystallizations in Descartes' letters to Mersenne on the creation of the eternal verities. Must there be metaphysical or logical constraints on the power of God's will, or does His will create the metaphysical or logical principles that then come to be viewed by us as constraints? Are we forced to see God as "a Jupiter or Saturn, making him subject to Styx and the Fates?"\textsuperscript{124} Kant was not afraid to reply that God's will is constrained, if not by metaphysical and logical principles then by moral ones. But to describe this as a "constraint" borders on empty—it is like calling reason a constraint, which perhaps for the unreasonable—but for God?—it is. And it is not as though, despite his critics' cries, Kant had no place for emotional love. Rather, the place he made for it had to be set alongside the places required for other things. If you are going to let your salvation, your redemption, depend on some mysterious and arbitrary love, then you are going to have a hard time finding any place for the non-arbitrary. You might as well give up your power to shape your life.

Circling beneath many of these considerations has been the issue of the interplay between, and the relative priority of, activity and passivity. One could say that grace takes passivity as our mode of relation to, our basis in, the world, while freedom requires activity as its basis. I want to turn, first, to the most explicit place that Luther takes up these issues, his \textit{Commentary to Galatians} based on his 1531 lectures. In the first section of his commentary, Luther sets out the argument of the \textit{Letter to the Galatians}, whose aim is to show us the "difference between Christian righteousness and all other kinds of righteousness."\textsuperscript{125} Political or civil righteousness, the ceremonial righteousness of traditions, the righteousness of parents and schoolmasters, and even the righteousness of the law, the Ten Commandments, are all forms of active righteousness, for they all consist in our works and may be wrought by "our pure natural strength."\textsuperscript{126} But about the distinctly Christian righteousness, Luther says,

But this most excellent righteousness, of faith I mean (which God through Christ, without works, imputeth unto us), is neither political nor ceremonial, nor the righteousness of God's law, nor consisteth in our works, but it is clean contrary: that is to say, a mere passive righteousness, as the other above are active. For in this we work nothing, we render nothing unto God, but only we receive and suffer another to work in us, that is to say, God. Therefore it seemeth good unto me to call this righteousness of faith or Christian righteousness, the passive righteousness.\textsuperscript{127}

Yet because of our weakness and misery, we see nothing but "our works, our worthiness and the law," which show us our sin and bring our evil past to memory. When near death and weighed down by the anguish of our conscience, we beseech God that we might live longer so that we can amend our lives. But this wish for amendment, this wish to make things right, is the hope of reason, which cannot keep itself from the sight of the "active or working righteousness." Indeed, this active righteousness is the righteousness of reason itself, which is incapable of looking above itself to the passive or Christian righteousness.\textsuperscript{128} And, as Paul had shown, no law, no reason, can quiet a person's conscience, for the commandment of the law is that by which sin is first known (\textit{Romans} 7:7-13). The only way that
the terrors of conscience can find release from despair is to accept the grace offered in Christ, the righteousness of “grace, mercy and forgiveness of sins.”

Luther’s analogy for our relation to this passive righteousness is that of the earth to the rain that makes it fruitful. The earth, by her own efforts and labor, cannot obtain rain, but receives it as a gift of God from above; “so this heavenly righteousness is given us of God without our works or deserving.” Just as we would think it futile and foolish for the earth to try to procure of itself the showers it needs to save itself, so we should think of ourselves when we try to enact our belief in our own power to effect our salvation; “we shall never be able to attain to it, unless God himself by mere imputation and by his unspeakable gift do bestow it on us.” And when I have this righteousness, “I descend from heaven as the rain making fruitful the earth.”

Precisely what role Luther was willing to allow for the law is a difficult exegetical question, but he was clear that the law must be moderated and kept within its bounds:

He that teacheth that men are justified before God by the observation of the law, passeth the bounds of the law, and confoundeth these two kinds of righteousness, active and passive, and is but an ill logician, for he doth not rightly divide.

The correct division, the healthy logician, joins the law and works and flesh to the old man, while the promise of forgiveness, the mercy of God, and the spirit belong to the new man. The law does not pertain to the new man, the man of Christ: “But now the Law has come to an end with Christ, and everyone who has faith may be justified” (Romans 10:4). There are two worlds, earthly and heavenly; the righteousness of the law has to do with earthly things, while the heavenly, Christian, passive righteousness is of the new man “in a new world, where is no law, no sin, no sting of conscience, no death, but perfect joy, righteousness, grace, life, salvation, and glory.” Whatever the law may do it cannot justify: if you desire sin, the sting of conscience, death, then Luther urges you to choose the active righteousness of the law; if you desire perfect joy, peace, life, not to mention salvation and glory, then the passive righteousness of God’s grace must be chosen for you. Luther demands the move from Moses to Christ.

One final quotation from Luther’s Commentary ought to put to rest any ambiguities of his position. How are we to obtain, he asks, this passive righteousness? What are we to do if the law cannot procure it for us?

Why do we then do nothing? Do we work nothing for the obtaining of this righteousness? I answer: Nothing at all.

And he proceeds with his explanation,

For the nature of this righteousness is, to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing whatsoever of the law or of works, but to know and believe this only, that Christ is gone to the Father and is not now seen ...

In this heavenly world, Christ intercedes for us, he intercedes on our behalf; he himself is our righteousness, his righteousness is imputed to us, so he reigns over
us and in us by grace. No more need be said to deliver us into passivity, to make passivity our basis in the world as a whole.

Lest anyone thing that this plea for passivity is of Luther’s making only, that it is the result of one of the characterological defects he is rumored to have suffered, I remind you of that image of passivity Paul used in Romans 9:19-21. Paul is responding to that salto mortale of human reason, everything coming from God, that Kant had staked his life against.

If you will ask me, “In that case, how can God ever blame anyone, since no one can oppose his will?” But what right have you, a human being, to cross-examine God? The pot has no right to say to the potter: Why did you make me this shape? Surely a potter can do what he likes with the clay? It is surely for him to decide whether he will use a particular lump of clay to make a special pot or an ordinary one?

No matter that Paul’s response is in the interrogatory, it is plain that he would declare: the potter can do what he likes with the clay.

Of this passage, Augustine says that when Paul rebukes our right to cross-examine God, he does not do so, as some foolish people think, for want of an answer to give. Rather the revocation of this pretended right,

in such a matter as this ... suggests to a man in a single word the limits of his capacity, and at the same time does in reality convey an important reason. For if a man does not understand these matters, who is he that he should reply against God?

The phrase “limits of his capacity” is as Kantian sounding as Kant, and the question here is exactly one of legitimate limits, the shape of these limits, and the rights of reason.

Speaking of the rights of reason, Luther had much to say about this passage on the potter and the clay, in his debate with Erasmus (whom he refers to as “Diatribes”) on the freedom of the will. Against Erasmus’ attempt to show that this passage does not abolish free will, Luther complains that the argument is taken from,

Madame Reason, commonly called “human” reason, to the effect that the fault must be attributed not to the vessel, but to the potter, especially if He is such a potter as actually creates the clay as well as molds it. “Here a vessel is thrown into eternal fire,” she says, “which has been guilty of nothing but not being its own master.” Nowhere does Diatribe more obviously give herself away than in this passage. For what you hear said here—in other words, of course, but with the same meaning—is what Paul makes the ungodly say: “Why does he find fault? Who can resist his will?” This is what Reason can neither grasp nor endure, and what has offended all these men of outstanding talent who have been received for so many centuries. Here they demand that God should act according to human justice, and do what seems right to them, or else cease to be God. The secrets of his majesty are no recommendation; let him give a reason why he is God, or why he wills or does what has no semblance of justice—much as you might summon a cobbler or girdle maker to appear in court.

Luther clearly knows that what is at issue is the salto mortale of human reason, and he hopes to give this reason a push, hastening it to its death so that grace and God can be given their rightful authority. If God the potter is subject to merits, deserts, and the law of reason, He loses His power to make and do what he likes; He is yoked to something other than His will. Luther thinks that God's
omnipotence. God's being God, is threatened by the imposition of the standards of (human) reason. But this is to picture God's will as a mighty force, say, a hurricane, independent of His other attributes and the power they have to shape it, to impose order on it. Violent acts of nature are often referred to as acts of God, as explosions of His will, but might we not rather view these acts as what happens when His will no longer expresses His nature, as what transpires when the will is not the reasonable expression of intentions, choices, decrees? Why must the will be thought of as a mysterious force, as not being able to express itself or have full authority if it is subject to reason? It is as though the will must break through all bounds, naked and unrestrained, to exhibit itself genuinely. Luther's picture of the human carries with it a companion picture of the divine; and if you give up the abject corruption of the human heart, it will be easier to give up the anarchic expression of the divine will.

The terms of Augustine and Luther—limits of human capacity, right division of active and passive righteousness, reason and grace—are Kant's terms, so let me turn again to Kant to explore his horror at the primacy of the passive, a primacy that, so he believes, ineluctably turns into pathology. In Book IV of the Religion Kant announces a principle that he says requires no proof:

Whatever, over and above good life-conduct, man fancies that he can do to become well-pleasing to God is mere religious illusion and pseudo-service to God.143

Various forms of religious ritual, such as private-prayer, church-going, baptism, and communion, may serve to awaken or quicken or strengthen the moral disposition, to sensibly represent to ourselves the moral effort required of us, and so these rituals may serve as means to the end of moral action which is itself directly well-pleasing to God.144 However, to attribute to these means an "intrinsic value instead of the value deriving from the end"145 is the origin of religious illusion and gives rise to that pseudo-service of God that bysteps or oversteps the need for moral service. And to attribute to statutory faith, which is a vehicle of and ultimately a means to pure religious faith, the intrinsic value of the end is yet another instance of this religious illusion.146 The participants in this religious illusion, the devoted devotees of this pseudo-service, wish to "conjure up divine assistance by magic,"147 uttering beseeching prayers, perhaps with fervent intensity, performing every kind of outwardly bizarre ritual private to their particular historical religion, all because they believe, or claim belief, that it will please God, as if God were the type of being who yielded to the "synchophantic courting of favor."148

Kant says about this religious illusion that it produces fetishism, fetish-worship or fetish-faith.149 We come to believe that we can work on God, sorcerer-like, to bring about our own salvation through means which our own reason cannot demonstrate to be well-pleasing to God; we substitute statutory commands, as unconditionally necessary for our salvation, for the duties of morality. This fetish-faith is,

the persuasion that what can produce no effect at all according either to natural laws or to moral laws of reason, will yet, of itself, bring about what is wished for, if only we firmly believe
that it will do so, and if we accompany this belief with certain formalities. Even where the conviction has taken hold that everything in religion depends upon moral goodness, which can arise only from action, the sensuous man still searches for a secret path by which to evade that arduous condition, with the notion, namely, that if only he honors the custom (the formality), God will surely accept it in lieu of the act itself. This would certainly have to be called an instance of transcendent grace on God's part, were it not rather a grace dreamed of in slothful trust, or even in a trust which is itself feigned.\footnote{150}

This slothful, passive trust, the evasion of the arduous path of moral action, combines with our attraction to certain magical, formal ceremonies to yield the fanciful illusion that we can please God by tricking him, as though enacting that old magician's adage that the hand is not quicker, merely slicker than the eye. We slickly try to pass off a longing of the human heart for a principle of the human heart, a wish for an action, a symbol for what is symbolized. This fetish-faith is the attachment of the sensuous man, a person whose deviations in the religious life are no less strange than those of the erotic life. If we look to the origin of the psychiatric conception of fetishism, we find in Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* the following:

The word fetish signifies an object, or parts or attributes of objects, which by virtue of association to sentiment, personality, or absorbing ideas, exert a charm (the Portuguese "fetisco") or at least produce a peculiar individual impression which is in no wise connected with the external appearance of the sign, symbol or fetish.\footnote{151}

Krafft-Ebing goes on to say that religious fetishism consists in the delusion that its object, such as the idol, "is not a mere symbol but possesses divine attributes" so that we then ascribe to it "peculiar wonder working (relics) or protective (amulets) virtues."\footnote{152} And the religious fetish, like the erotic, can produce "feelings of delight and even ecstasy."\footnote{153} This is precisely what Kant takes a fetish-faith to be: we ascribe to the regulations of statutory faith wonder-working powers, the power to work the wonder of our salvation, because they exert a charm on us, even though our reason tells us that these attracting charms have no intrinsic value, that their association with something else has caused us to pass them off as something else—as though God were charming. Fetishes release us from actions that are difficult to perform, even if they saddle us with other kinds of burdens. It is psychically easier, compulsion aside, to attach oneself to a spouses' clothing than to attach oneself to a spouse. And the activity or effort required to act from the moral law is hard enough for us, finite creatures that we are, that we would "gladly undertake the most burdensome pious drudgery were it possible to offer this in payment for the other."\footnote{154} Why undertake the difficulty of relations with an animate person if you believe the same results can be accomplished by relations with an inanimate object; and why make the effort to act, to do something, if the mere repetition of formulas, the simple belief in dogmas unintelligible to us, can bring about our own salvation? Fetish-worship acts as "a sort of opium to the conscience,"\footnote{155} charming us to sleep, transporting us to another world, addicting our reason to ecstasy, only eventually to kill it off. To release ourselves from the compulsive magnetism of the fetish, we must reestablish the priority of reason, separating out the sensible from the intelligible.
Kant argues that once we depart from the principle that only our good life-conduct is well-pleasing to God, once we enter the superstitious realm of pseudo-service of God, this pseudo-service has no limits. When we step beyond the moral foundation of our salvation, everything becomes arbitrary and we can multiply our supposed service without end, without governing principle.\textsuperscript{156} Everything from lip offerings to the offering of earthly goods to self-immolation could become a part of this pseudo-service; rightful and reasonable limitations will lose their hold upon us. Moreover, when the maxim of pseudo-service shapes one’s relation to God, “there is no essential difference among the ways of serving Him, as it were, mechanically which would give one way a priority over the other.”\textsuperscript{157} All of these ways are equal in value, alike in worth, that is, worthlessness; deviation from the only genuine principle of respect for God allows us no ground to distinguish better and worse, permits no discrimination among ways of serving God. We become like those wind-up toys which, when you pull their strings, mechanically repeat a few choice phrases.

As I have said before, Kant did not want to deny the possibility of mysteries, such as the divine supplementation of the human will. If we do our part, act from the moral law, we may reasonably hope that what is not in our power “will be supplied by the supreme Wisdom in some way or other.”\textsuperscript{158} But our human reason cannot presume to determine the way in which this help will be given, or in what it will consist. We can represent to ourselves our practical relation to God, the relation between our action from the moral law and God’s grace, even though we are unable to grasp theoretically the relation of God to the human being.\textsuperscript{159} But this practical relation to God is enough to give us moral certainty, which is all the certainty required of us and all the certainty we need. We ought not to adopt the attitude that it is better to believe more rather than less, on the ground “that what we do over and above what we owe will at least do no harm and might even help,”\textsuperscript{160} hoping that what we believe about God is true and knowing that if it is untrue it is merely superfluous and we have burdened ourselves only with inconveniences. This attitude leads to hypocrisy, to dishonesty, and to the violation of conscience.\textsuperscript{161} Rather, our moral certainty is preserved in what Kant calls the “genuine maxim of certainty.”

Whatever, as the means or the condition of salvation, I know not through my own reason but only through revelation, and can incorporate into my confession only through the agency of an historical faith, and which, in addition, does not contradict pure moral principles—this I cannot, indeed, believe and profess as certain, but I can as little reject it as being purely false; nevertheless, without determining anything on this score, I may expect that whatever therein is salutary will stand me in good stead so far as I do not render myself unworthy of it through defect of the moral disposition in good life-conduct.\textsuperscript{162}

This maxim of certainty accords with our conscience, governed as it is by the laws of practical reason, and the resulting conscientiousness professes certainty only about that which it can be certain, avoiding that “lack of sincerity which produces nothing but inward hypocrites.”\textsuperscript{163} In addition, this moral certainty, this certainty of the moral individual, sets up the Kantian division between active and passive righteousness, giving to us our duty, leaving to God the mysteries that are beyond
our understanding. It is this division which undercuts that other faith, the one that produces delusions, of grandeur and of melancholy, and that is based on the illusion that we can penetrate areas our reason cannot enter.

Kant distinguishes three kinds of illusory faith, all of which involve us in transgressing the bounds of our reason towards the supernatural, which in fact can be an object neither of theoretical nor practical use. First, there is the illusory faith in miracles, the belief the we can know through experience something which, given the objective laws of experience, "we ourselves can recognize to be impossible." Second, there is the illusory faith in mysteries, the belief that we must include among the concepts of our reason, as necessary to our moral interests, "that of which we ourselves can form, through reason, no concept." And finally there is the illusory faith in means of grace, the belief that we can bring about through our own means, through natural means, "an effect which is, for us, a mystery, namely, the influence of God upon our morality."

I want to focus once more on our relation to grace, on the phenomenology of that illusory faith in grace. At one point in Book IV of Religion Kant defines fanaticism as,

The persuasion that we can distinguish the effects of grace from those of nature (virtue) or can actually produce the former within ourselves...

Along with the illusions of religious superstition, the belief that we can justify ourselves before God through acts of worship that have no moral content, there is the illusion of religious fanaticism, the wish to justify ourselves by striving for a so-called communion with God. This latter fanaticism yields the belief that if only we could contact God directly, we could persuade Him, by the fervid passion of our wish, to justify us. Hand in hand with this fanaticism about means of grace, our desire for direct unmediated contact with God, goes a fanaticism about works of grace, a wish to observe heavenly influences operating in us, which Kant calls "a kind of madness." These works of grace are a supernatural influence "in relation to which we are merely passive," and the imagined experience of them is "a fanatical illusion pertaining entirely to the emotions." Kant puts the consequence of this wish for reciprocal influence, of us upon God, of God upon us, in this way:

When the illusion of this supposed favorite of heaven mounts to the point where he fanatically imagines that he feels special works of grace within himself (or even where he actually presumes to be confident of a fancied occult intercourse with God), virtue comes at last actually to arouse his loathing, and becomes for him an object of contempt.

Why should one not feel contempt towards those who have to pursue the arduous path of virtue when you, one of the favorites of heaven, can experience divine works of grace coating your soul, levitating you upwards, allowing you to detour from the path of common men and women? Virtue will come to arouse loathing, since the need for virtue will be a sign that someone is not among the chosen, and pride will cause you to loathe it. If you suffer this illusory faith, you will want to be picked out as special, distinguished from your fellows, graced with God's grace, beyond the human. One should remember that it was Freud's psychotic, Dr.
Schreber, who can be precisely described as suffering from the belief that he was a participant in occult intercourse with God, a case that should help to register the quality of the experience involved. And it is not only loathing and contempt of virtue that characterize the experience of works of grace, but something else that produces another kind of inner transformation. The spiritual state of someone who believes he has been infused by God's grace is the state of a soul drunk with light-headedness, delighted, estatic, sweet. No one less authoritative than St. Thomas Aquinas himself says as much. He tells us that a man may know he has grace "conjecturally by signs . . . when he is conscious of delighting in God and of despising worldly things." He who has received grace knows it "by experiencing a certain sweetness, which he who does not receive does not experience." As Roland Barthes has insisted, sweetness and the substance of sugar that exemplifies it imply "a set of images, dreams, tastes, choices and values," the sugar of sweetness is "a time, a category of the world." Instead of the Cartesian world exemplified in a ball of wax, we have the world of grace exemplified in a lump of sugar. One particular mode of sweetness is a specific type of nearness, the nearness of seductiveness, in this case the seductiveness of divinity. And this Thomistic sweetness is in fact a category of time and of the world—the time of apocalypse, filling us with shivers of ecstasy, bringing to an end our earthly endeavors, as sugar brings the meal to an end. But for Kant our human endeavors, our earthly endeavors, are always beginning from the beginning, forever in progress. Our lives here are not so much the sweetness of sugar as the bitterness of coffee, that mythical stimulant of the nervous system that, as Barthes reminds us, Michelet claimed led to the French Revolution. Call this Kantian rigorism if you like, but what Kant thought we needed is exactly to keep the moral spirit revolving, moving, active, something that the sweetness of accomplished grace impedes.

In our superstitious worship, in our fanaticism, our passivity, we distort not only ourselves, but God as well. In the human world, for the secular rulers of our race, beneficence and justice do not operate separately, as they should but are mixed together; so when a human ruler must make a decision regarding one of his subjects, that subject will try to circumvent the attribute of justice and appeal directly to beneficence, hoping to tip the mixture in favor of unrestrained good-will. So it is with our conception of God.

Among the three divine moral attributes, holiness, mercy, and justice, man habitually turns directly to the second in order thus to avoid the forbidding condition of conforming to the requirements of the first.

We want to look upon God as having an unconditional beneficent will, as if mercy exhausts His moral personality. But if we do look upon God in this way, we will look upon ourselves as having to do nothing, as needing only to appeal to this mercy to get it to operate on us. God's domain will then be a world of effusive well-being, a world without holiness and justice—this is a picture of God as hedonist, concerned to maximize happiness at whatever cost to other moral notions.
But, for Kant, God’s beneficence cannot work this way; in order to express His good will towards his creatures,

He first looks upon their moral character, through which they can be well-pleasing to Him, and only then makes good their inability to fulfill this requirement of themselves.\(^{182}\)

Kant’s God gives justice its due, and only after surveying our moral character, seeing if we have tried to become well-pleasing to Him through moral action, will grace become relevant. This justice requires our moral action in order to receive His grace. Distortions of humanity and God are aligned with one another; His unconstrained mercy roots us in passivity, disfiguring us both. But His justice gives us back activity, makes of us moral beings again.

At the end of the first General Observation, Kant gives an argument to show that works of grace cannot be adopted into our maxims either for theoretical or practical use. Kant says that we cannot define works of grace theoretically, showing that they are real works of grace and not just “inner natural effects because our use of the concept of cause and effect cannot be extended beyond matters of experience, and hence beyond nature.”\(^{183}\) The argument, as I understand it, is that everything that occurs in either inner or outer experience falls under the objective laws of experience, one of these being the law of cause and effect. We cannot make sense of the idea that the purported work of grace that takes place within us is the effect of a supernatural cause, for the very notion of a supernatural cause has no content for us. A supernatural cause would be beyond the limits of possible experience, but cause and effect are concepts conditioned by, made sense of by, what falls within possible experience. So a supernatural cause would, qua cause, be placed within experience and, qua supernatural, be placed outside of experience; hence this idea is self-contradictory.\(^{184}\) About the practical application of the idea of works of grace, Kant explicitly says that it is self-contradictory. To employ this idea practically we would have to have a rule,

concerning the good which (for a particular end we ourselves must do in order to accomplish something, whereas to await a work of grace means exactly the opposite, namely, that the good (the morally good) is not our deed but the deed of another being, and that we therefore can achieve it only by doing nothing, which contradicts itself.\(^{185}\)

Our practical reason sets ends for the will to accomplish, but works of grace are, essentially, non-accomplishments, and so we cannot put forward a work of grace as an end to be achieved by our practical faculty. To take works of grace as our goal is to paralyze practical reason, to direct it to strive for something by not striving for it; hence this idea has no practical employment. We can summarize Kant’s arguments here by saying, what he says in another context, that man’s “own reason already teaches him that it is of no use to know that regarding which he can do nothing.”\(^{186}\) We can admit that works of grace are incomprehensible,\(^{187}\) mysteries to us, but it is a crucial feature of this incomprehensibility, it is the very meaning of this incomprehensibility, that it is of no use to us.

In *Anthropology From a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant says that “the ineradicable passive element in sensibility is really the source of all the evil things said about it.”\(^{188}\) Yet as Kant goes on to say, this fact requires not the abolition of passive
sensibility, but its subordination to our active powers. There is nothing intrinsically deranged about passivity; its derangement arises from the way it is coupled with fanaticism in the moral and religious life, and the way it takes over this life as a whole. Those Christian doctors of grace have produced a state of religious iatrogenesis, a sickness in which we are reduced to "a state of sighing moral passivity in which nothing great or good is undertaken and everything is expected from the mere wishing for it."189 Kant’s emblem for this Christianity is the sound of a sigh, taken both as an expression of fatigue and as a yearning. These worshippers wish to do nothing and yet have everything accomplished for them, as if their sighs could both absolve them of responsibility and confer power on the intensity of their heartfelt desires for justification. But heartfelt, if you are Kant, does not a justification make. There is no inherent reason why fanaticism must express itself as passivity. It is one of Kant’s great achievements to have diagnosed the shape fanaticism takes in the life of religion, the shape of passivity. When reason oversteps its bounds in this domain, it kills itself off, leaving itself nothing to do but wait, leaving it nothing.

This voracious passivity points to the truth in Freud’s claim that religion has an "infantile prototype," that the helplessness of the child, the fear of the father, and the need for his protection are transferred in our adult lives to the idea of religion.190 God the Father is our protector, for we are helpless, passive, towards Him. Neither Luther nor Kant, I suspect, would completely disagree with this Freudian assessment. But Luther would interpret it as childhood dependence, for we are the children of God; Kant would interpret it as childish dependence, a sign of immaturity, of a time before responsibility. Kant wants us to rise to the state of adulthood; Luther wants us to remain children. Both want our salvation. Where are we to turn?

In one of his most Kantian moments, Stanley Cavell asks us to

re-understand the sense in which redemption is impossible, and possible: impossible only so long as we live solely in history, in time, so long as we think that an event near 2,000 years ago relieves us of responsibility rather than nails us to it—so long, that is, as we live in magic instead of faith.191

Where shall we turn—to times long past or to the present moment, to the acts of heaven above or to the active law within, to magic or to faith? If we have learned the lesson of Kant, each of us must put ourselves in the position to say: "my sole concern has been to save myself—nothing in my hands, nothing up my sleeve—by work and faith."192 Work first, then faith.

NOTES


3. I pick up this thought from Stanley Cavell. "Ending the Waiting Game: A Reading of Beckett’s Endgame." Must We Mean What We Say? (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969.) Hereafter abbreviated as WWM.

5. Immanuel Kant. *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals.* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964.) p. 76(408-409). Henceforth I shall abbreviate this work as G. When citing this work and the second *Critique,* I shall cite, first, the page numbers of the English translation and then, in parentheses, the corresponding page numbers of the Akademie edition of Kant's works.


7. Ibid., p. 105.


11. KL, op. cit., Bxxv.


13. Ibid.


15. Ibid., pp. 81-82.

16. Ibid., p. 81.

17. Ibid., pp. 80-81.

18. See also the General Observation to Book Four of *R. op. cit.*

19. PC, op. cit., p. 82.

20. Ibid., p. 83.


22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., p. 413.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., p. 414.

26. Ibid.

27. BW, op. cit., p. 112.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.


32. Luther was well aware of the threat of fanaticism and even mentions his own fight "with those fanatics who subject the Scriptures to the interpretation of their own spirit." BW, op. cit., p. 158. But his discussion of this threat turns into a discussion of the external clarity of Scripture, and he himself admits that it is internal clarity that is required for a true understanding of Scripture. BW, op. cit., p. 112. The problem of fanaticism must come face to face with the question of the criterion for the internal clarity of Scripture. See BW, op. cit., pp. 108-112, pp. 158-169.


34. Ibid., p. 104.

35. Ibid., p. 105.

36. Ibid.

37. G. op. cit., p. 114 (446-447)

38. Ibid., pp. 100-101 (433)

39. Ibid., p. 101 (433)
40. Ibid., p. 102 (434).
41. R. op. cit., p. 90.
42. Ibid., pp. 87-88.
43. Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Practical Reason.* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1956.) p. 27 (28). Hereafter abbreviated as *KII.*
44. I discuss the structure of practical reason in "Is Rawls A Kantian?". *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly.* January/April, 1985. Hereafter abbreviated as *RK.*
45. R. op. cit., p. 100.
46. Ibid., p. 169.
47. Ibid., p. 56.
48. Ibid., p. 82.
49. Ibid., pp. 82-83 and both footnotes on p. 83.
50. Ibid., p. 101 footnote.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., p. 100.
54. Ibid., p. 131.
55. Ibid., p. 131 footnote.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., p. 39 footnote.
58. Ibid., p. 58 footnote.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid., Book Two, Section Two.
62. Ibid., p. 78.
63. Ibid., p. 58 footnote.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
67. KT. op. cit., p. 147.
68. This theme is developed in both KT. op. cit. and CR. op. cit.
69. R. op. cit., p. 78.
70. KI. op. cit., Avii.
71. R. op. cit., pp. 31-32.
72. Ibid., p. 30.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid., pp. 21-23.
75. Ibid., p. 25.
77. Ibid., pp. 479-480.
78. KII. op. cit. Chapter Three.
79. This is a central idea of Part Four of CR. op. cit.
81. Ibid., p. 162.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid., p. 163. My emphasis.
84. I discuss this issue of priorities as it pertains to Kant's moral philosophy in *RK.*
85. KI. op. cit., B4.
86. CR. op. cit., pp. 454-455.
87. R. op. cit., p. 48.
88. Ibid., p. 41 footnote.
89. KII. op. cit., pp. 66-67 (64-65).
119. Of course, given his conception of freedom, Kant held that of all the explanations produced of the spread and propagation of moral evil, "the most inept is that which describes it as descending to us as an inheritance from our first parents." *R. op. cit.*, p. 35.
122. *MWM. op. cit.*, p. 162.
126. *Ibid.*, p. 101. Luther says, in the next line, that these kinds of active righteousness are also "of the gift of God," since all good things which we enjoy are God’s gift. But the significant difference is that while active righteousness may also be wrought by our pure natural strength, passive righteousness cannot be so wrought.
135. Ibid.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid., pp. 105, 109.
138. This citation is from The Jerusalem Bible. (New York: Doubleday, 1966).
139. E. op. cit., p. 115.
140. As the editors of BW. op. cit. indicate, this is a slight misquotation on Luther's part. What Erasmus says is: “which has been guilty of nothing because it is not its own master.” Luther's argument, however, is not affected.
141. BW. op. cit., pp. 257-258.
142. Ibid., pp. 258-263.
143. R. op. cit., p. 158.
144. Ibid., pp. 181, 182-188, 165.
145. Ibid., p. 158.
146. Ibid., p. 157.
147. Ibid., p. 166.
148. Ibid., p. 172 footnote.
149. Ibid., pp. 165-166, 167-168, 181-182.
150. Ibid., pp. 181-182.
152. Ibid.
153. Ibid.
155. Ibid., p. 72 footnote.
156. Ibid., p. 160.
157. Ibid.
158. Ibid., p. 159.
159. Ibid.
160. Ibid., p. 176.
161. Ibid., p. 177.
162. Ibid.
163. Ibid., p. 178 footnote.
164. Ibid., p. 182.
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid.
167. Ibid.
168. Ibid., p. 162.
169. Ibid.
170. Ibid.
171. Ibid., p. 182.
172. Ibid., p. 189.
174. Ibid.
179. Kant's emphasis on activity is complicated by his doctrine of the Fact of Reason, our consciousness of the moral law. (See, for instance, KII. op. cit., pp. 31 (31), 48 (47)). This consciousness of the moral law is not a mere consciousness, but also a recognition, an acknowledgment that the moral law governs our wills. And were it not for this recognition, our identification with pure practical reason, morality would have no hold on us. Such recognition requires that we be open
to the moral law, not just that we act but that we respond to its claim upon us, that we be, if not passive, receptive. How this central moment of receptivity alters the interplay between activity and passivity in Kant’s moral philosophy is a topic I cannot discuss here.

180. *R. op. cit.*, p. 188.
181. Ibid.
182. Ibid., p. 132.
183. Ibid., p. 48.
184. This argument, of course, depends on the validity of the analysis of cause and effect given in *KI*.
186. Ibid., p. 160.
187. Ibid., p. 48.
191. MWM. *op. cit.*, p. 162.

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