DAWES HICKS LECTURE ON PHILOSOPHY

KANT'S MORAL THEOLOGY

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1. Kant's rejection of *speculative* theology and his alternative concept of a *moral* theology.

2. Kant's main moral proof of God's existence:
(*a*) its starting-point
(*b*) the practical gap belief in God is required to fill
(*c*) discussion of the precise role assigned to God in Kant's theory.

3. Subsidiary moral proofs of God's existence in Kant. A point of comparison between Kant and Wittgenstein.

4. The concept of *moral belief*:
(*a*) how do the pronouncements internal to this attitude get their meaning?
(*b*) what is their logical status?
A comparison between Kant and Braithwaite over the latter point.

5. Concluding discussion:
(*a*) what gives the Kantian type of view about religion its attraction?
(*b*) to what extent is a view of this sort defensible? An internal difficulty in Kant's position.

1. 'I maintain', wrote Kant in the concluding comment to his discussion of the proofs of God's existence in the first *Critique*,[1]

'that all attempts to make a purely speculative use of reason in reference to theology are entirely fruitless and of their inner nature null and void; that the principles of its employment in the study of nature do not lead to any theology whatsoever; consequently that there can be no theology of reason at all unless one takes moral laws as its basis, or uses them as a clue.'

'Theology of reason' here contrasts, of course, with 'theology of revelation',[2] a study for which Kant showed little sympathy despite his celebrated declaration that he had had to abolish

[1] *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 664/A 636. I use Kemp Smith's translation throughout, with only minor corrections.
[2] Op. cit. B 659/A 631.

knowledge in order to make room for faith. The faith he wanted to recommend was not blind but rational; the assurance he thought we had of God's existence was different in kind from the assurance we have about everyday matter of fact but not for that reason incapable of justification. *Credo quia absurdum* and *credo quia impossibile*, whatever appeal they might have in other ages, were not slogans which had much attraction for men of the Enlightenment. And though Kant was perhaps a man of the Enlightenment with a difference, he was in this respect typical of his time: he wanted a rational theology, or he wanted no theology at all.

Yet how could he possibly have any kind of rational theology, given the correctness of the results of the *Critique of Pure Reason*? According to the argument of that work, any attempt to prove God's existence as a matter of knowledge or justified belief of the everyday kind can be shown to involve either an illegitimate extension of the categories beyond the limits of possible experience, or the patently false assumption that, in this one case, we can argue from essence to existence; if not both. Proof of the existence of God, as something which demands or at least has some claim on our theoretical assent, is accordingly ruled out. But there is worse to come, for the doctrines of the Analytic do not merely amount to a theory of the limits of the proper employment of the understanding; they also constitute a theory of meaning. And if Kant is to stick to his theory of meaning, as he in fact professes to do throughout his mature writings, it looks as if he is committed to the view, not just that statements about God are incapable of proof or disproof, but that they are, strictly, not even intelligible. If a term is to be meaningful, according to the Kantian account, it must be possible to point to something in experience which corresponds to it or to its constituents,[1] or at the very least to find some counterpart for it in experience, in the way in which we can find experiential counterparts for the pure categories in their schemata. Whatever the shortcomings of this as a general theory of meaning, there can be no doubt of its plausibility as applied to terms used to characterize or describe. But if this is once granted, what are we to make of the basic terms used in theological discourse, the terms through which the theologian seeks to make the concept of God determinate or, in plainer words, in which he tries to say

[1] 'Concepts are altogether impossible, and can have no meaning, if no object is given for them, or at least for the elements of which they are composed': *C.P.R.*, B 178/A 139. Note Kant's commitment to atomism.

what sort of thing God is? God being the *ens originarium* invoked to account for what we meet with in experience can clearly not be spoken of in terms appropriate to things empirical. But if we cast aside all predicates which have empirical connexions and still try to characterize God, it is doubtful whether the words we employ ('necessary being', 'first cause', and so on) can be said to have any definite meaning. Kant at least could not in consistency avoid drawing that conclusion. Nor did he in general seek to avoid it, though he blunted its sharpness by insisting that '*for thought* the categories are not limited by the conditions of our sensible intuition, but have an unbounded field'.[1] An unwary reader might conclude from this that possession of the categories, which are, on Kant's argument, non-empirical in origin, at least enables us to form the idea of a supersensible being such as God, even if it does not suffice to decide whether anything corresponds to the idea. But reference to the chapter on schematism shows that this conclusion is mistaken, at least if a *determinate* idea is in question. The only concepts which are available for the purpose of 'thinking' a supersensible object are categories in their pure form, categories from which all reference to time has been abstracted; and concepts of this kind are such that we simply do not know how to apply them. If we do try to make a use of them, as was done in the traditional First Cause argument for example, we come up with statements which convey nothing definite; like the statement that something exists, but not in the way people and material things exist, nor in that in which numbers exist, nor . . ., &c. Existence in this example is in effect a purely logical notion; as a term it has no more meaning than the logical symbol '$\exists x$'. And Kant makes clear that the same is true of all the pure categories: take away the reference to time and the only content left is logical. But surely it is plain that if your intellectual equipment is confined to notions of logic you can form no determinate idea of any object whatsoever.

Kant was of course aware that when men spoke of 'God', whether in ordinary life or in theology, they filled out the bare ontological concept of 'a being which possesses all reality' with extraneous matter, and so rendered the idea more definite and more intelligible. His question was, however, what justified this filling out. There were, in his view, only two sources from which we could derive such supplementary material: reflection on the phenomena of nature, and the moral life. And as regards the first, despite the respect with which he treated the argument

[1] *C.P.R.*, B 166, note; cf. B xxvi, note.

from design, his conclusion was that the process of supplementation was quite illegitimate. In a careful and detailed treatment of the whole subject in the last part of the *Critique of Judgement*[1] he argued that the step from teleology to theology could be taken only if we imported the idea of a final end of creation, an idea which could not be derived from the contemplation of natural phenomena but was properly a moral idea. Failing this we could not even arrive at the concept of a *single* architect of the natural world, much less of a supreme intelligence who is creator of heaven and earth.[2] The physico-theological argument might, in the words of the *Critique of Pure Reason*,[3] 'perhaps give additional weight to other proofs (if such there be)', but taken by itself it was useless to the theologian. Or, as Kant put it in another passage:[4]

> Physico-theology is a physical teleology misunderstood. It is of no use to theology except as a preparation or propaedeutic, and it is only sufficient for this purpose when supplemented by a further principle on which it can rely. But it is not, as its name suggests, sufficient, even as a propaedeutic, if taken by itself.

If these contentions are correct, it follows that theological concepts and statements must get any meaning they have from their connexion with morals. The concept of God, as Kant expressed the point in his second *Critique*, must be shown to belong not to physics, or metaphysics (which 'only contains the pure *a priori* principles of physics in their universal import'[5]), but to ethics. How this is to be done is not yet clear, but one possibility can be ruled out at once. This is to take the line followed by many popular philosophers of a religious turn of mind and argue that the very fact that men feel moral scruples, acknowledge obligations or, more generally, operate with value concepts can be taken as evidence of their divine origin. For ıis plain when we come to think about it that this is simply a causal argument which attempts to infer God's existence from the particular way in which things are constituted; in form it is identical with Descartes's argument from the fact that we

[1] §§ 79–91.

[2] *Critique of Judgement*, § 86; *Kant's Critique of Teleological Judgement*, translated J. C. Meredith, pp. 110–11; cf. 'General Remark on Teleology', Meredith, 157–8.

[3] B 665/A 637.

[4] *C.J.* § 85 (Meredith, 108).

[5] *Critique of Practical Reason*, Berlin edition of Kant's Works, v. 138; trans. L. W. Beck, *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason and other writings in Moral Philosophy*, p. 240.

possess the idea of God, or again with the teleological argument itself. And it shares all the weaknesses of these purported demonstrations, as Kant himself would have been the first to point out: it involves the same illegitimate transition from the sensible to the supersensible, and makes the same false move as is made in the argument from design when God is credited with infinite wisdom on the strength of having produced order which, by our standards, is remarkable in extent and variety.

Moral theology,[1] if there is to be such a thing, has clearly got to be something other than a further version of the old-fashioned speculative theology which Kant rejected in principle. Its whole ambience must be different. Speculative theology took its start either from a truth about the world or from an idea, and argued that we were committed to God's existence on grounds which were, respectively, causal or logical. The object of the speculative theologian's inquiries was to attain enhanced understanding, and the status claimed for their results was that of knowledge or truth. As such they were meant to be independent of persons, just as scientific conclusions are, and certainly had nothing to do with the human will. By contrast the moral theologian must make his beginning not from a fact or a conceptual puzzle, but from something we do or a way in which we are practically affected, and his aim must be not to explain but to facilitate action. It follows that the assertions at which he arrives will not, in the strict sense, constitute knowledge; they will represent convictions rather than truths. It follows again that any arguments to which he appeals will have a peculiar status: they cannot claim the universal validity which attaches to a successful geometrical demonstration or a cogently presented scientific case, but will be valid only for those who share the arguer's starting-point. For a man who was totally insensitive to moral distinctions and totally unaware of moral obligation moral theology would have no meaning whatsoever.

In what sense could such a theology lay claim to the honorific title 'rational'? It could do so at two different levels. First by maintaining that, given its starting-point, its conclusions were in no sense arbitrary. The case here would be that anyone who acted morally, or indeed felt even the slightest moral compunction, was committed to affirming God's existence; if this is not precisely an intellectual affirmation (since to make it is not to

[1] The term 'moral theology' is, of course, Kantian; see, e.g., *C.P.R.*, B 660/A 632, B 842/A 814. I use it in its special Kantian sense throughout this paper.

state a fact) it would even so be irrational to reject it. The virtuous atheist is on this way of thinking obtuse: he does not see what is logically bound up with his own moral activity. But, secondly, moral theology might claim to be rational on the more important ground that it was based on and in something which no honest man could ignore or argue away. Action, and more particularly moral action, is on this argument a field for the immediate and independent exercise of reason; it is not the case that the intelligent agent merely applies the results of theorizing in a sphere which has no genuine autonomy of its own. On the contrary, moral conduct is autonomous in the sense that reason is there independently active, though its activity does not of course result in the discovery of truths. It follows from this that the moral life is just as reasonable a starting-point for a theology as is any fact or set of facts about the world. A theology based on morals will naturally take a very different form from a theology which purports to build on facts, whether physical or metaphysical; as we have already seen, the assertions of which it consists will necessarily have a close bearing on action, and may turn out in the end not to be assertions in the strict sense at all. But none of this takes away from the central point being made here, which is that moral theology could be a form of rational theology. Whether it is will depend, needless to say, on whether its exponents convince us of the authenticity of their picture of the moral life and persuade us that it has the implications they see in it.

2. I must now turn from these generalities to the details of Kant's own attempt to construct a moral theology. A good point from which to start, which has the advantage of connecting closely with the topic just discussed, is the strange-sounding doctrine of 'the primacy of pure practical reason in its association with speculative reason'.[1] Practical reason is intelligence embodied in action, pure practical reason intelligence embodied in moral action. As is well known Kant assumes, on grounds I shall not discuss here, that there is all the difference in the world between acting to achieve some casual purpose, or for the sake of happiness, on the one hand, and acting out of moral considerations, on the other. In the first case practical reason is 'pathologically conditioned' since it is 'merely regulating the interest of the inclinations by the sensuous principle of happiness',[2] in the second it is

[1] *C.Pr.R.* v. 119 ff. (Beck, 223 ff.).

[2] *C.Pr.R.* v. 120 (Beck, 224).

pure and autonomous. And Kant maintains that 'consciousness of the moral law' shows that 'pure reason of itself can be and really is practical'.[1] The same point had been expressed at greater length in an earlier discussion in the *Critique of Pure Reason*,[2] where Kant wrote:

> I assume that there really are pure moral laws which determine completely *a priori* (without regard to empirical motives, that is to happiness) what is and what is not to be done . . .; and that these laws command in an *absolute* manner (not merely hypothetically, on the supposition of other empirical ends), and are therefore in every respect necessary. I am justified in making this assumption, in that I can appeal not only to the proofs employed by the most enlightened moralists, but to the moral judgement of every man, in so far as he makes the effort to think such a law clearly.

The starting-point of Kant's moral theology might be described as a practical fact: the sentiment of unconditional obligation experienced in a context where action is called for. I term this a 'practical' fact because it presents itself immediately as part of the moral life of the agent; it is not a mere truth for idle contemplation. Now the doctrine of the primacy of practical reason can be seen as being in the first instance a demand that we accept such practical facts at their face value and with whatever implications they may turn out to have. Two alternative possibilities can be envisaged here: we might seek to play down the primary fact of morality, as Aristotle and Epicurus did according to Kant, by blunting the distinction between morality and prudence, or we might argue that, whatever the nature of this fact, moral practice could not in any case commit us to assertions about the supersensible, since the *Critique of Pure Reason* has shown these to be meaningless. Kant dismisses both possibilities, though he allows that if the first were correct the second would have to be accepted as well. As things are, however, he holds that moral action is evidently not merely prudential and that when we take it for what it is we see that the moral agent is, in the very fact of acting, committed to belief in God. Formally, this results in an extension of the bounds of theoretical reason beyond those set in the first *Critique*, but materially the conclusions argued for there still stand unchallenged, since the extension is only 'in a practical respect' and has no implications for physics or metaphysics. In plainer words, the belief which is thus associated with moral action is not belief in the everyday sense at all; it is not commitment to a proposition held to be

[1] Ibid. [2] B 835/A 807.

true on evidence which renders it probable, but commitment to a practical attitude.

On the face of things it seems paradoxical that Kant, the supreme exponent of the doctrine of the autonomy of ethics, should have held that there is a necessary tie-up between morals and religion. But it turns out that the connexion is innocuous, for at no point did Kant argue that belief in God is necessary for being a good man, still less that theological propositions must be presupposed as a ground for the derivation of moral propositions. There are, Kant held, two sides to every moral action: what may be called the moral disposition or inclining of the will, and the carrying of the action into effect. Now it was Kant's view that the moral disposition is entirely in our power and entirely independent of our religious beliefs: the moral law commands, and it depends solely on our wills whether we obey. But when we turn from the question whether our motive is good to that of whether the ensuing action is right, in the sense of appropriate and successful, other factors come in which are less obviously under our control. We need in the first place to have made an objectively correct estimate of the facts of the situation and to know how it may be expected to develop so far as natural causes are concerned. We also need to count on the behaviour of other people, whose co-operation is often vital for the success of our designs. Finally, we need to presume that we shall have at least a measure of luck in the carrying out of our projects, that natural contingencies or an unkind fate will not systematically thwart their success. And Kant maintains that, unless we were firmly convinced that these needs would be satisfied, we should be paralysed in our actions. Conversely, if we go ahead with our moral projects in the confidence that we shall succeed, this amounts to practical belief in God.

To appreciate the full force of this doctrine and understand Kant's reasons for putting it forward it will be useful to consider at this point a passage in the *Critique of Judgement*[1] where Kant imagines 'the case of a righteous man, such, say, as Spinoza, who considers himself persuaded that there is no God', on the ground that the common metaphysical proofs are invalid, but nevertheless 'reveres' the moral law in practice. Such a man, says Kant (and here I shall quote at length),

does not require that [the] pursuit [of the moral law] should bring him any personal benefit in this or in any other world. On the contrary his will is disinterestedly to establish only that good to which the holy

[1] § 87; Meredith, 120–1.

law directs all his energies. But he is circumscribed in his endeavour. He may, it is true, expect to find a chance concurrence now and again, but he can never expect to find in nature a uniform agreement—a consistent agreement according to fixed rules, answering to what his maxims are and must be subjectively, with that end which he finds himself obliged and urged to realize. Deceit, violence and envy will always be rife around him, although he himself is honest, peaceable and benevolent; and the other righteous men that he meets in the world, no matter how deserving they may be of happiness, will be subjected by nature, which takes no heed of such deserts, to all the evils of want, disease and untimely death, just as are the other animals on the earth. And so it will continue to be until one wide grave engulfs them all—just and unjust, there is no distinction in the grave—and hurls them back into the abyss of the aimless chaos of matter from which they were taken—they that were able to believe themselves the final end of creation. Thus the end which this righteous man would have, and ought to have, in view in his pursuit of the moral law, would certainly have to be abandoned by him as impossible.

What is it that puts the virtuous atheist in this unhappy predicament? It should be made clear first that Kant is assuming that he is pursuing not merely the general end of living a good life, but also the particular end of attaining a state of affairs in which happiness is proportioned to virtue, a condition Kant described as the *summum bonum*. Kant's insistence on our having a duty to promote the *summum bonum*, and his failure to stress the all-important distinction between promoting it *simpliciter* and promoting it 'as far as it lies within our power to do so', to use words of his own,[1] have attracted much unfavourable comment. But as Mr. J. R. Silber has recently argued,[2] the idea of the *summum bonum* has a central place in Kantian ethics, in so far as without it we get in that system no clear indication of what in particular we ought to do. To say that we ought to promote the *summum bonum*, understood in the Kantian way, is at least to give some guidance about the lines on which we should direct our moral effort. Nor if we remove the question from its Kantian context is it absurd to claim that we should do all that lies in our power to bring about a state of affairs in which people enjoy happiness in proportion to virtue. To reward those who do good and penalize those who do evil is a recognized end in most moral systems. And though of course it is an end which has had critics,

[1] *C.Pr.R.* v. 144 note (Beck, 245). For the criticisms referred to see Beck's excellent commentary (Chicago, 1960).

[2] 'The Importance of the Highest Good in Kant's Ethics': *Ethics*, April 1963.

Plato and Hegel among others, its obvious connexions with widely shared notions of justice and fairness make it one which any moral society would find it hard to abandon altogether.

Assuming then that we have a duty to help realize the *summum bonum*, how does belief or absence of belief in God affect the issue? It is quite plain that to bring the *summum bonum* into existence is something which no single man can accomplish unaided. We lack both the foresight and the control over nature and the actions of other people which are necessary for achieving that end. Now Kant sometimes writes as if we recognize a duty to accomplish the *summum bonum* and in so doing admit that its accomplishment must be possible, proceeding thence to argue that since it is evidently not possible through our own unaided efforts, it can be brought about only with the concurrence of a moral governor of the universe. To recognize this particular duty is thus to be committed to belief in God. But if this is Kant's argument, it is obviously a thoroughly bad one, for by the principle that 'ought implies can' we cannot have a duty to do something which does not lie within our power. However, the case can perhaps be restated along less objectionable lines.

In this fresh version we begin by admitting that the only duty we have as regards the *summum bonum* is to do everything *in our power* to further its promotion. Accepting this duty, and for that matter accepting any other, is in no way bound up with belief in God. But though we have no *duty* to bring the *summum bonum* actually into existence, we have nevertheless a strong *interest* in that end, an interest which is closely related to our moral effort. Given that we see that we must do all in our power to promote an aim whose accomplishment does not depend on ourselves alone, we shall naturally not be indifferent to the question whether the aim is likely to be accomplished. If we come to believe that whatever we do and however hard we try the chances are that our ultimate end will never be attained, our moral effort will clearly be seriously weakened. Should we conclude that there is *no* possibility of its accomplishment, we must abandon the whole endeavour as futile.

These remarks should explain the position of 'Spinoza' in Kant's at first sight overpainted picture. He is described as a 'righteous man', which means that he recognizes the call of duty and would hence accept what Kant considers the central duty of helping bring about the *summum bonum* so far as that lies in his power. But he is not interested exclusively in the perfecting of his own will; he also wants to see moral ends realized. Now

though as a moral agent he thinks of himself as belonging with all other such agents to a moral world, a world in which, in the words of the *Critique of Pure Reason*,[1] 'the free will of each being is, under moral laws, in complete systematic harmony with itself and with the freedom of every other', he is at the same time uncomfortably aware of the contrast between this ideal and what holds true of the natural world in which he lives. In the ideal moral world everyone does what he ought; in the actual world a great many people do not. Moreover, whilst in the ideal world morality is self-rewarding, in so far as rational beings there 'under the guidance of moral principles, would themselves be the authors both of their own enduring well-being and of that of others',[2] conditions in the actual world are again very different. To judge by appearances at any rate, it is the wicked who flourish and the just who suffer. The result is that the righteous man who confines himself to belief in nature is, as Kant puts it, 'circumscribed in his endeavour', for he has no reason to hope that the end which his conscience bids him pursue is attainable, and every reason to fear that it is not. If he takes his atheism seriously he must give up his pursuit of the end.

> But perhaps he resolves to remain faithful to the call of his inner moral vocation and would fain not let the respect with which he is immediately inspired to obedience by the moral law be weakened owing to the nullity of the one ideal final end that answers to its high demand —which could not happen without doing injury to moral sentiment. If so he must assume the existence of a *moral* author of the world, that is, of a God.[3]

The combination of sustained moral endeavour and genuine unbelief is on this argument impossible, since persistence in moral effort is taken as tantamount to acknowledgement of God's existence. Whatever the moral agent may say in his theoretical moments, his actions testify to his belief quite unmistakably.

The question we want to ask about all this is what exactly belief in God is supposed to do for the moral man. We cannot ask *how* God operates, for that is a speculative question ruled out of court by the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the God of whom we speak is, in any case, not brought in to solve theoretical puzzles. But we are entitled to know what difference postulating God's existence makes. Kant's *general* answer is that it enables us to feel confident that our moral effort will not be in vain.

[1] B 836/A 808. [2] B 837/A 809.

[3] *C.J.*, § 87, Meredith, 121. This passage follows immediately on that quoted on pp. 270–1 above.

despite the fact that it is made in a setting which is indifferent, if not positively hostile, to morality. If we accept his main analysis of the moral life (and it would perhaps be foolish to discuss the details of his doctrine on any other basis), we may allow that he is correct in seeing a gap between virtuous intention and successful performance. But that is not to say that the gap sets a practical problem, still less that belief in God is the only way to get over it.

Let us consider what God might be supposed to do by way of bridging the gap. One such thing would be to ensure that other people are more co-operative in the moral sphere than contemplation of their natural proclivities might lead us to expect. The passage about the good atheist shows that Kant thought that virtue could not flourish in isolation, whilst the 'system of self-rewarding morality' referred to in the first *Critique* is described as 'an idea, the carrying out of which rests on the condition that *everyone* does what he ought, that is, that all the actions of rational beings take place just as if they proceeded from a supreme will which comprehends in itself, or under itself, all private wills'.[1] In so far as I form the idea of a kingdom of ends, a notion which Kant thought had an important part to play in moral thinking, I necessarily think of myself and my fellows as belonging to a close-knit community of this kind. But none of this has any bearing on what we can expect to happen, as opposed to what ought to happen. It may be that for moral purposes I must form the idea of a kingdom of ends, and it may be true that in such a kingdom all private wills would be comprehended in, or fall under, a supreme will, but it does not follow that any actual moral agents will be ready to throw off the old Adam because of this. Nor indeed would it be morally satisfactory if they did so as a result of God's initiative, rather than through the exercise of private judgement. From the Kantian point of view at least, enforced moral co-operation is scarcely better than the unrestrained anarchy of nature.

In his writings on history and politics[2] Kant suggested a different way in which 'Providence' might be thought of as working for the promotion of a morally desirable state of affairs through individual human decisions. It may be, he there suggests, that private selfishness leads or will lead to public benefits, the natural unsociability of men ensuring that they develop their talents and are eventually forced, in the interests of survival,

[1] *C.P.R.*, B 838/A 810.

[2] See in particular the essay, 'Idea of a Universal History' (1784).

to come together in a single world community in order to escape the horrors of war. Here there is no doubt that actual affairs, as opposed to mere ideas, are under discussion. What is less clear is whether this form of conviction that good will come out of evil will seem at all relevant to the despondent moral agent. The assurance the latter wants is that his own moral efforts will not be in vain; the assurance Kant offers him as a philosopher of history is that other people's selfish actions may unwittingly turn out to have good results. One can scarcely think that the offer goes far towards satisfying the demand. So far from encouraging the virtuous to persist in their moral aims, it may even tempt them to abandon them altogether, secure in the conviction that God will make everything right in the end.

I said earlier that successful moral action demands not only the co-operation of other people, but also a degree of control over nature and a certain amount of luck to ensure that the agent's intentions are not too often thwarted by circumstances which he could not foresee. If the Fates are against us, the most carefully and conscientiously formed plans may very well go awry. Now Kant could have been thinking of this difficulty in writing of the necessity of a moral belief in God, though I know of no place where he confronts it directly. And it is certainly true that if we thought there was a real possibility that a cruel fortune would systematically turn our good efforts to ill account, we should not be able to persist with them. If belief in God were the sole means of ensuring, in the face of this possibility, that we continued with our moral aims, belief in God would be necessary for the moral agent. But the trouble is that there is no real foundation for the hypothesis of a cruel fortune or unkind fate. Nature, on Kant's view of it (and indeed on that of most people), is not so much hostile as indifferent to morality: it is not as if it were positively malevolent or as if the task were to show it not to be such. True, the world is complicated and there are very many causal factors at work in it, not all of which may come to the notice of the moral agent or be sufficiently appreciated by him; the general possibility of any particular act's turning out unfortunate can certainly not be ruled out. But the existence of this possibility should not be used to make our flesh creep. It is, after all, only a general possibility, like the possibility that the most carefully made mathematical calculations will be found to contain a mistake. We do not need, nor can we have, any absolute guarantee against it, any more than we need or can be given protection against the Cartesian Demon.

For though we cannot remove the possibility of mistake in either case, we can in both take rational steps to diminish its likelihood. If the moral agent is reasonably circumspect and reasonably well informed, he can count on being reasonably lucky as well.

The reply might be made here that in all his actions the agent will require to take for granted the proposition that nature is intelligible in detail, a proposition which Kant connects with the idea of God in the first *Critique*.[1] If we are to have any scientific knowledge, he argues there, the material of experience will need to be delimited in certain ways: it must be suited to our intellects by being neither too varied nor too monotonous. All scientific investigation proceeds in the conviction that experience will prove thus amenable, but it is in fact an uncovenanted mercy that it does so: no reason can be given why the requirement should be satisfied. It is as if a wise creator had adapted nature to the needs of our understanding, as if nature were 'formally purposive' in the terminology of the *Critique of Judgement*.[2] In acting, as he must, on the assumption that it is the scientist is in effect committing himself to what Kant elsewhere[3] calls a 'doctrinal' belief in God. And the argument would be that in so far as the moral agent uses the results of accumulated experience in calculating the effects of projected courses of action he too must subscribe to the same belief. Now there certainly are striking similarities between the case Kant puts up in the first *Critique* for the need to assume God for the purposes of theoretical inquiry and the case he deploys in his moral theology for practical belief in God: in both, commitment to God is connected directly with commitment to action, and in both it is argued that, without the first commitment, action is unintelligible or even irrational. But it must be insisted that, whether or not there is anything in what Kant has to say about doctrinal belief, his own practice is to differentiate sharply between this kind of belief and moral belief. In explicating the role which God is thought to play in the latter, we cannot, therefore, be content to refer merely to the former. For even if it is true that the moral agent gives hostages to fortune every time he draws on past experience in assessing a situation, he shares this predicament with agents of any kind, and indeed with inquirers too. It cannot in consequence be against the risk of going wrong *here* that moral belief in God is supposed to shield him.

[1] *C.P.R.*, B 670/A 642 ff. [2] *C.J.*, Introduction, v.
[3] *C.P.R.*, B 854/A 826.

I have so far neglected the obvious suggestion, that the function of God in Kant's moral system is quite simply to proportion happiness to virtue by ensuring that the virtuous are rewarded and the vicious punished in a future life. I have done this for two reasons. First, because, despite the prominence Kant gives to the notion of the *summum bonum* in these discussions, I take him to be concerned with a wider problem than that of the satisfaction the moral agent can expect to produce by his efforts. The problem (and here the parallel with doctrinal belief comes out again) is that of the feasibility of successful moral action generally, and it arises from the existence of the gap already mentioned between virtuous intention and actual performance in the empirical world. It seems clear to me that Kant was as much occupied with this wider problem as with the special question of the attainability of the *summum bonum*, and that this alone explains why he thought abandoning belief in God would carry with it the virtual subversion of morality, not just the nullifying of a single obligation, however important.[1] Apart from these considerations, however, I believe that the idea that God might produce the *summum bonum* by proportioning happiness to virtue *in some future life* is altogether too crude to deserve Kant's serious attention. Admittedly Kant took the immortality of the soul to be a postulate of practical reason as well as the existence of God, but it is not clear to me what life after death can have to do with moral problems of any sort, whether they concern the perfecting of the will (the purpose for which Kant supposed immortality necessary) or the attainment of a state of affairs in which men are rewarded according to their deserts. The problem of the moral agent is to practise morality in this world, an achievement to which the thought of some utopia in which everything is as it should be is surely quite irrelevant. You do not encourage a child who is not very good at arithmetic to persist by telling him that once he gets to heaven God will see that he makes no more mistakes. If God is going to help us with our moral effort the help must be given here and now, and the result be seen in the achievement of a better state of affairs in the actual world, in fact in the functioning of a community which to a recognizable degree acts on moral principles and is not wholly ineffective in achieving its moral aims.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*[2] Kant said that he 'inevitably'

[1] Compare, e.g., *C.P.R.*, B 839/A 811: reason finds itself constrained to assume a wise Author and Ruler, 'otherwise it would have to regard moral laws as empty figments of the brain'.

[2] B 856/A 828.

believed in the existence of God. His argument was that it is 'absolutely necessary' that he should 'at all points conform to the moral law'; that there is 'only one possible condition' under which this 'irrefragably established end' can 'connect with other ends and thereby have practical validity', namely that 'there be a God and a future world'. 'I know', he added, 'with complete certainty that no one can be acquainted with any other conditions which lead to the same unity of ends under the moral law.' The foregoing discussion seems to me to show that these claims are unjustified. Kant is correct in arguing that the moral man wants more than the consciousness of his virtue if he is to live a good life; he needs further to feel confident that his efforts to produce a morally tolerable state of affairs will have some chance of achieving results. But he does not succeed in making clear that the only circumstances in which a moral agent could properly feel such confidence are those in which he assumes a moral governor of the universe, nor does he give anything like a satisfactory account of the way in which postulating such a being can really help the man who has moral doubts. His main moral proof of God's existence succeeds only if he is allowed to *identify* moral belief with confidence in at least some degree of moral success. But, of course, if we allow him that we make his task altogether too easy. We should all be theists on this way of thinking.

3. I should mention at this point that Kant sometimes suggests different lines on which a moral proof of God's existence might proceed. At one stage of his discussion in the first *Critique*[1] he argues that moral laws could not be properly regarded as *commands* 'if they did not connect *a priori* suitable consequences with their rules, and thus carry with them *promises* and *threats*. But this again they could not do, if they did not reside in a necessary being, as the supreme good, which alone can make such a purposive unity possible'. Kant is right in saying that we could not regard moral laws as commands (or even as laws) unless their non-observance would carry some sanction and their observance some reward, but he is wrong in thinking that God alone can provide these: they are commonly provided by the public opinion of the moral community concerned. A more interesting line of thought is to be found in § 86 of the *Critique of Judgement*, where Kant maintains that the occurrence of certain moral feelings is bound up with affirmation of God's existence. A man who

[1] B 839–40/A 811–12.

is 'in calm and serene enjoyment of his existence' amid beautiful natural surroundings feels a natural need to be grateful to someone; a man who regards himself as bound to obey the moral law even at the cost of personal sacrifice has the sentiment of obedience to 'a Supreme Lord'; a man who has diverged from the path of duty, though not in a way to make himself answerable to men, will none the less experience self-reproach and 'seem to hear the voice of a judge to whom he has to render account'. 'In a word', Kant adds, 'he needs a moral intelligence; because he exists for an end, and this end demands a Being that has formed both him and the world with that end in view.' What happens here, he explains further, is that 'the mind inclined to give expression to its moral sentiment voluntarily imagines an object that is not in this world, in order, if possible, to prove its dutifulness in the eyes of such an object also'. The fact that experiences of this kind are rare or fleeting, or indeed that they may occur without provoking thought about the object they 'shadow forth', is, he believes, quite immaterial.[1] It is not clear how seriously Kant intends these remarks, but they are evidence, at the least, of his highly individual attitude to the moral life. People sometimes complain that Kant thought you could have religion without religious experience, and it is true that he took a poor view of persons who claimed to be divinely possessed. But what he says here about the moral emotions demonstrates that, for him, the step from being in a moral to being in a religious frame of mind was a very short one. To think of the moral law as an object of awe is perhaps already to have made the transition, though we must remember that, in the famous passage at the end of the second *Critique*, the starry heavens above are also said to be awesome, without anything being supposed to follow about the necessity of a creator.

Kant's position on this point can be elucidated further if we compare it with that taken up by Wittgenstein, as reported by Professor Malcolm.[2] According to Malcolm, Wittgenstein was impatient with 'proofs' of the existence of God, and with 'attempts to give religion a *rational* foundation'. On the other hand he admired some religious writers enormously: St. Augustine, Kierkegaard, the Quaker George Fox, among others. He is also reported to have suggested once that 'a way in which the notion of immortality can acquire a meaning is through one's feeling that one has duties from which one cannot be released, even

[1] *C.J.*, § 86; Meredith, 112–13.

[2] Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: a Memoir* (1958), pp. 71–72.

by death'.[1] Kant was too much of the liberal intellectual to have any truck with the sort of religion which makes a virtue of not being rational; he would have had no more use for Kierkegaard than Kierkegaard had for people like him. But in other respects his standpoint is not very different from Wittgenstein's, for he too was impatient with ordinary philosophical proofs of God's existence and he too tried to find a meaning for religious concepts on the basis of the immediate experience of moral obligation. Both were men with an acute awareness of what was morally required of them, and neither was prepared to treat the phenomena of guilt and gratitude in an entirely naturalistic way. I do not know if Wittgenstein ever studied, or even knew about, Kant's moral theology; had he done so he must surely have found it more sympathetic than most other attempts to put religion on a rational foundation.

Kant's efforts to construct a formal moral proof of God's existence are at best unconvincing; moreover, it is difficult to see how such a proof could differ much in point of comprehensibility from the speculative arguments it was meant to replace. An appeal to the evident implications of commonly felt moral sentiments is clearly superior in this respect. Such an appeal is, as Kant requires, rooted in moral action, and its demands on the intelligence are scarcely exacting. It can, of course, be disallowed, both by the man who repudiates moral obligation as such and by those who interpret the phenomena of the moral life along naturalistic lines. But Kant was quite prepared to recognize its limitations as far as the first of these was concerned, whilst as regards the second he would have said simply that the practical fact of morality contradicts the naturalistic thesis. Whether he is correct in this contention is a point to which I shall return at the end of my discussion.

4. Meantime I wish to give some attention to the concept of *moral belief*,[2] which is, it seems to me, of independent philosophical interest. Two problems in particular arise about it. One concerns the *meaning* of the pronouncements which belong to this attitude, the other their *logical status*. I shall follow Kant in treating the second question at greater length than the first.

We have seen already that terms such as 'original being' and 'first cause' are of little or no value when it comes to explicating

[1] These words are Malcolm's, not Wittgenstein's.

[2] I use this phrase, here and elsewhere, in the special sense Kant gives to it. The German is 'moralischer Glaube'.

the concept of God (Kant could not bring himself to say that they were of *absolutely* no value, but held even so that they were of no value *if taken alone*). Most ordinary people in thinking of God make no attempt to use concepts of anything like this degree of abstraction, but try instead to apply terms with whose application they are familiar in common experience, adding that the qualities in question are possessed by God in a superior or even an infinite degree. The conception of God which emerges from this process is obviously anthropomorphic, and Kant insists that it is appropriate not to theology proper, but to what he calls in the *Critique of Judgement*[1] 'Demonology', a doctrine of gods or divine spirits such as was to be found among the early Greeks. 'In the history of Greek philosophy before Anaxagoras', he writes in another passage[2], 'there is no definite trace of a pure rational theology', the reason being not that the early philosophers lacked the ability to frame the concept of a single world cause, but that they saw the existence of evil as an insuperable objection to such an idea and at the same time had made little progress in ethical reflection. 'The concept of the Divine Being which we now hold to be correct' connects with, and arises out of, 'the extraordinary pure moral law of our religion';[3] it is, in essentials, to be understood in moral terms. For though we ascribe to God properties which are not primarily moral, such as omnipotence and omniscience, the predicates which belong to God 'exclusively and without qualification of magnitude' are all moral predicates. God is

> the only holy, the only blessed, and the only wise being, because these concepts of themselves imply unlimitedness. By arrangement of these He is thus the holy lawgiver (and creator), the beneficent ruler (and sustainer), and the just judge.[4]

These three descriptions, Kant adds, 'contain everything whereby God is the object of religion, and in conformity to them the metaphysical perfections of themselves arise in reason'.

The objection that this conception of God is no more than imaginative, that it offers a *façon de parler* rather than any real understanding, would not disturb Kant. He nowhere professes to be putting forward an idea which *explains* anything: to have recourse to the supersensible for explanatory purposes is in his view entirely without justification. If talk about God is to make sense, it must do so within the context of action, and must be intelligible to responsible agents of whatever degree of sophistication.

[1] § 89; Meredith, 130.

[2] *C.Pr.R.* v. 140; Beck, 242.

[3] *C.P.R.*, B 845–6/A 817–18.

[4] *C.Pr.R.* v. 130 note; Beck, 233–4.

The fact that our notion of God is that of a holy lawgiver, a beneficent ruler, and a just judge is an advantage rather than a disadvantage in these circumstances. The humblest person, provided only that he experiences common moral emotions, can give a sense to these expressions, and thanks to this bring the thought of God to bear on his actions. And if someone chose to say that he might be mistaken in thinking that anything actually corresponded to the words he used, Kant's reply would be, in effect, that the words get their meaning from the context of their use. Religious discourse is legitimate and meaningful because it is internal to moral discourse, whose propriety and significance no one would dispute.

But what, on this account of the matter, are we to say of the logical character of religious assertions? What sort of statement is made when the moral agent affirms God's existence? Is it, strictly, a statement of any kind, and, if not, how should we describe it? Kant discusses these questions repeatedly, if not quite explicitly: in the *Critique of Pure Reason* under the heading 'Opining, Knowing and Believing', in the second *Critique* in the sections 'On the Postulates of Pure Practical Reason' and 'On Assent arising from a Need of Pure Reason', finally in § 91 of the *Critique of Judgement*, which is entitled 'The Type of Assurance produced by a Practical Faith'. Despite this concern it is not clear that he satisfactorily resolved a fundamental difficulty in his position.

The difficulty can be brought out as follows. On the one hand Kant keeps insisting that, as a result of the transition from ethics to theology he has tried to explicate, 'theoretical knowledge of reason obtains an accession'.[1] This would seem to mean that there are statements about matters of fact which we are in a position to make after taking account of the 'need' of pure practical reason, but which we were not able to treat as more than mere possibilities so long as we stuck to the purely theoretical standpoint. God, freedom, and immortality are, Kant assures us,[1] theoretical concepts, but theoretical concepts for which we can find no application so long as we remain in the world of theory; it is their connexion with action which first gives them substance. As a consequence of that connexion there results 'an extension of theoretical reason and of its knowledge with respect to the supersensuous in general, inasmuch as knowledge is compelled to concede that there are such objects'.[2] But Kant immediately adds the words 'without more exactly defining them, and

[1] *C.Pr.R.* v. 134; Beck, 236. [2] *C.Pr.R.* v. 135; Beck, 237.

thus without being able to extend this knowledge of objects given to it only on practical grounds and only for practical use', and this seems to withdraw with the left hand what he has given us with the right. The sphere of theoretical reason is extended once we take account of moral theology, but the extension is not a real extension after all, since it obtains only from a practical point of view. If someone were to claim that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in natural philosophy, on the ground that God is also real, we should have to tell him that his claim was quite unjustified. For the man of theory, God is not a fact of any sort but, at best, the unsubstantiated object of a regulative idea.

We can bring out Kant's dilemma in another way. In the section titles from the three *Critiques* quoted above the words translated as 'assent' and 'assurance' are identical: the German for both is *fürwahrhalten*. Now *fürwahrhalten* means literally 'hold for true', and Kant's problem on this way of putting it concerns the type of truth-claim involved in the assertion that there is a God. There are places where Kant seems perfectly content to describe this assertion as a truth: in the *Critique of Practical Reason*,[1] for instance, he says of the ideas of God and immortality that though their 'possibility cannot be fathomed by human understanding', it remains the case that 'no sophistry will ever wrest from the conviction of even the most ordinary man an admission that they are not true'. But elsewhere he is more cautious. Belief or faith, he explains in an important but neglected section of the first *Critique*,[2] must be sharply distinguished both from opinion and from knowledge in the proper sense of the term. It differs from the first in that it involves a complete absence of doubt (a feature it shares with knowledge); it differs from knowledge in that it is, like opinion, objectively insufficient. There is, however, a still more important respect in which belief, and moral belief in particular, is different from the other two states: there is something inescapably personal about it. As Kant explains in a passage[3] where he remarks incidentally that if any man *knows* that there is a God, 'he is the very man for whom I have long sought', the conviction that God exists is 'not *logical*, but *moral* certainty'. The believer, in view of the fact that his conviction rests on 'subjective grounds', must not say that *it is* morally certain that there is a God; the only words he can legitimately use are '*I am* morally certain'. It follows that, if this article of belief is to

[1] *C.Pr.R.* v. 133; Beck, 236.
[2] B 848/A 820 ff.
[3] *C.P.R.*, B 856–7/A 828–9.

be seen as a truth, it will be a truth of a very peculiar kind, for it will not be communicable as other truths are: you could not *learn* from another man that God existed as you could learn of the existence of unsuspected galaxies. The inference may well be drawn that it is not *really* a truth of any kind. The words 'There is a God', taken in the way Kant takes them, do not express a proposition, but a formula internal to a moral attitude: they have nothing to do with how things are, but get their meaning and force from deliberation about how things ought to be. Or to put it another way, they have to do with the will, not the understanding, as Kant made clear in an unusually candid passage in the second *Critique*:[1]

> Granted that the pure moral law inexorably binds every man as a command (not as a rule of prudence), the righteous man may say: I will that there be a God.

Kant makes no systematic distinction between *belief in* and *belief that*, but it seems clear that what he calls moral belief falls under the first of these headings. As I have tried to explain, it is a form of belief which is intimately bound up with action and expresses itself in the adoption of a practical attitude; divorced from the context in which they have an immediate bearing on what I do, the bare words 'There is a God' are all but meaningless. But if this is so, we must surely conclude that it is entirely misleading to talk of moral theology resulting in an extension of the sphere of theoretical reason, even when this claim is hedged about with the reservations with which Kant surrounds it. If we follow Kant's account of it to its logical conclusion, moral theology does not issue in any assertions proper; strictly speaking, it is not even propositional. The moral agent is indeed committed on Kant's view to reciting certain sentences which look as if they were used to make assertions; if asked the question, 'Is there really a God?' he knows very well what to reply. But it cannot be claimed that in giving his reply he is enunciating a truth, even though his answer is the correct and indeed 'inevitable' one for someone in his position. Nor for that matter is the saying of the words here the thing that counts: the real point is that the agent's belief should show itself in his acts. He may protest as much as he likes that he believes in God, but unless he persists unremittingly in the moral struggle Kant will not accept his professions as seriously meant. Conversely, if he continues to do his duty whatever discouragements come his way, Kant will tell him that he believes, even when he says he does not.

[1] *C.Pr.R.* v. 143; Beck, 245.

Interpreted on these lines, the theology of Kant becomes identical in essentials with the theology of Professor Braithwaite as expressed in his well-known lecture 'An Empiricist's View of the Nature of Religious Belief'. For both philosophers the starting-point for any discussion of religious utterances is acceptance of an empiricist theory of meaning, a circumstance which of itself precludes the taking of those utterances as propositional. The only position left for someone who adopts this point of view and wants to retain religion as significant is to connect the pronouncements of religious men with action, and though Braithwaite and Kant follow somewhat different lines in working this alternative out, they end up with what is fundamentally the same view, namely that the whole force of a declaration of belief in God's existence is to be found in the adoption of a practical attitude. Braithwaite virtually identifies belief in God with acceptance of the command that we love one another; Kant equates it more generally with manifest confidence that the moral struggle will not be in vain. It is true that Braithwaite is concerned with a further issue about which Kant is silent, that of how to distinguish between the beliefs of one religion and another; it is in connexion with this that he introduces his not wholly plausible account of the different 'stories' which are 'entertained' in different religious traditions. Kant took no interest in this problem, partly because he accepted it as self-evident that there was at bottom only one true religion, the 'pure' religion which goes along with morals, partly because he shared the contemptuous attitude of the men of his time towards religious institutions. In so far as men differed in religious beliefs, he thought, they did so because they embraced, or were led into, a series of different errors. But I do not believe that this divergence between Kant and Braithwaite is of any fundamental importance.

5. What is the attraction of this way of looking at religion, and what is its value? The attraction lies in the possibility it offers, a possibility which has a particular appeal to contemporary philosophers, of combining a tough-minded, scientific approach to claims to knowledge with a repudiation of the extremer kinds of materialism. It is not easy for people brought up on a diet of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume to escape the insistent question, 'From what impression was that idea derived?'; the embarrassments of answering this question when the idea concerned is that of God do not need to be described. But to go on from there to the conclusion that religious beliefs are of merely

sociological interest is too violent a step for many of us. Ready as we are to acknowledge the tremendous advances which have been made in natural knowledge, we are none the less reluctant to accept the doctrine of the omnicompetence of science, the view that the scientist has the final answer to every question. A dispassionate survey of the evidence suggests that there are practices which can claim rational warrant in their own right, and among these, it is suggested, are at any rate some of the practices of religion. The attraction of the Kantian type of theory is that it provides a philosophical basis for this way of thinking. It keeps the world safe for the scientist without showing the door to the moralist and the religious man. And though the religious man is not always grateful for this kind of support—he complains that a Kant or a Braithwaite fails altogether to take account of the cognitive claims which religion involves, or again he complains that they are insensitive to the importance of corporate religious organization and tradition—it may well be that it is the best independent support he can get. Assuming that he does not want to put his trust in blind faith, and in so doing to part company from those of us who find such a step irrational and indeed repulsive, there is probably no better philosophical position he can call to his aid.

But does this mean that Kant's moral theology is really capable of defence? I shall not insist now on the detailed criticisms of his main moral proof which are set out earlier in this lecture; these may be thought to constitute local difficulties rather than objections of substance. Instead, I wish to concentrate, in my closing remarks, on a point which is central in Kant's exposition and which reappears, suitably though not essentially altered, in many contemporary discussions of the issue between religion and science. In Kant's version, the point is expressed in the form that practical and theoretical reason are independent of one another; nothing which is accomplished by the second can, on this view, have any bearing on the legitimacy of exercising the first. And since the exercise of practical reason carries with it belief in God's existence, fundamental religious belief is thus safeguarded from any attack which relies for its ammunition on scientific discoveries. In recent philosophy this doctrine appears under the guise of a theory of autonomous language-games, each of which is played for its own purposes and according to its own rules. It is alleged that the fact that such a game is played (more simply, that there is such an area of discourse) is enough in itself to authenticate the activity. And it is argued that the philosopher

who insists on asking whether the playing of one game does not rule out the playing of another is bemused by abstractions, nourished on a one-sided diet, as Wittgenstein put it: obsessed by questions which arise in only one field of concrete discourse, he makes remarks which are idle because they ignore the plurality of such fields and themselves belong to none.

I have made some criticisms of this general position, which I call the thesis of Metaphysical Neutralism, elsewhere; for the present I shall confine myself to considering it in its Kantian form. For Kant's view to be defensible it is essential not only that the critic be got to acknowledge the general autonomy of morals—the view I referred to earlier in describing morals as a field for the independent exercise of reason—but further that he agree to take the practical facts of morality in the way in which Kant did himself, that is to say as matters which call for wonder and even awe. In at least one version of the Kantian doctrine the path to God starts from the moral emotions; if the transition is to be safely accomplished it is vital that the moral agent look at these in a quite special way. If Kant had been asked why he saw, say, guilt or gratitude as he did, his best answer would be that this was how they present themselves, as undeniable constituents of our actual moral life. But he might, and I suspect would, have tried to reinforce this answer to guard the position against sceptics and debunkers, by suggesting that a naturalistic reading of moral phenomena was in any case only superficial. To maintain this view he would need to show that the very fact that we practise morality is evidence that we are more than natural beings. In Kant's own language, man is to be taken not merely as phenomenon, but also as noumenon; not merely as part of the world of nature, but also as belonging to a world of intelligent and intelligible beings which is non-natural or supernatural. And though Kant always insisted that man *qua* noumenon is unknowable, it seems to me that he inclined to the view that the proposition that man *is* noumenon as well as phenomenon is both true and important. We saw above that he was in some difficulty when it came to saying just what followed for theoretical reason from the fact that pure reason is practical; the confusion arose, I believe, because Kant saw quite clearly that the assertion that God exists, taken as he takes it, does not express knowledge, but nevertheless wanted to argue that the very existence of morality gives substance to the concept of the supersensible. That materialism is false and not merely misconceived was a central item in his catalogue of

philosophical beliefs. And what made him sure it was false was, among other things, the fact that we are sensitive to moral claims.

The trouble about this is that it opens the door to a counter-attack. If Kant is to maintain his position about moral belief he has to argue that morality be taken for what it is, without there being any possibility of revising or rejecting its concepts. Morality must be seen as a self-contained practical activity, exempt from criticism at the theoretical level because it carries its authenticity on its face. But once it is agreed that morality has implications for metaphysics, even when these are said to be of an extremely modest nature, the tenability of this view is challenged. For if what we do is to have a bearing on what we take to be the case, the latter may equally turn out to have a bearing on the former. To be less cryptic, new discoveries in the field of social science may sow dissatisfaction with established ways of moral thinking, and make it seem naïve to take moral concepts with all their traditional overtones. Nor need this process be carried to the point where morality as a whole is questioned to make itself felt: a position like Kant's is threatened as soon as it is suggested that, for example, the feeling of moral obligation is not something supernatural, but part of an attitude which is socially fostered and serves a vital social purpose. Kant looked on the moral law as an object of awe; the modern social scientist, by explaining its function in the social whole, strips it of its mystery, though this is not to say that he deprives it of its importance or its special character. To take the moral emotions as pointing beyond themselves in the Kantian manner is, to say the least, very difficult, once the legitimacy of this point of view is allowed.

Officially Kant might have been unmoved by these arguments, for he might have said that all he was committed to by the strict letter of his theory was the doctrine of the two standpoints, i.e. a version of Metaphysical Neutralism. The Critical Philosophy, on this way of taking it, puts forward no metaphysical position; it merely shows us how to avoid metaphysics of any sort. But in the first place I do not believe that Kant contrives to maintain this point of view consistently; I do not see, for instance, how he could regard noumena as the *ground* of phenomena if he really kept it up. Nor, secondly, do I think that his moral theology is adequately protected, even if Kant is allowed to affirm the formal distinctness of the spheres of action and theory. It is not enough to say that the language of morals is independent of the language of science, if you want to proceed from that to the construction of a moral theology; for that purpose, you need

to feel justified in adopting a certain attitude to the immediate facts of the moral life, in looking upon them with wonder, fear, or reverence. It seems to me quite obvious, both that it is much harder for people today to take up this attitude than it was for Kant, and that one reason for the difference is to be found in the growth of scientific understanding about these matters. To that extent, the barriers which Kant tried to set up, and which his successors today are busily re-erecting, are finally and irretrievably broken.