

A Via Positiva in Kant

Author(s): Walter H. Capps

Source: *The Journal of Religion*, Oct., 1968, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Oct., 1968), pp. 351-375

Published by: The University of Chicago Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1201443>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



The University of Chicago Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Religion*

JSTOR

A Via Positiva in Kant

Walter H. Capps

As has been duly and repeatedly noted, Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy stands as a veritable watershed in the history of Christian theology. With respect to previous systems and positions, it serves as an interruptive barrier, a censure which demands that the legitimacy of such thought be assessed in the light of specifiable criteria. With respect to future possibilities for theology, it functions as prefiguration, a fixer of limits and securer of prescribed opportunities. With respect to both past and future, it is the measure, the canon by which the permissible is distinguished from the illusive. For this reason Karl Barth can write of Kant: "He stands by himself. . . a stumbling-block and rock of offence also in the new age, someone determinedly pursuing his own course, more feared than loved, a prophet whom almost everyone even among those who wanted to go forward with him had first to re-interpret before they could do anything with him."¹ And, for this reason, those who sought to go beyond him, obliged to follow his directives, could only hope for a transcendence which nevertheless remained under the "discipline."

In the light of the history of this all-pervasive influence, it becomes something more than audacious to suggest that theological dependency upon Kant has issued frequently from an unrefined, if not illegitimate, use of his critical reflection. This is not to question the preoccupation of the theological community, or the attention which the critical philosophy rightfully deserves. Nor is it to qualify the influence of the Kantian outlook. It is rather to suggest that the response to Kant's contentions has generally overlooked the significant distinction between *analytic* and *constructive* reflection. What was intended by its author as a critique of reason has been taken as a description of reality (or even as providing an outline of an all-encompassing *Weltanschauung*). As a result, the dominant post-Kantian theological preoccupation has been

¹ Karl Barth, *From Rousseau to Ritschl* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1959), p. 150.

one of logistics. The fundamental concerns have reference to the possibility of establishing, or recovering, a place for locating and treating matters religious. In this way, the theologians have absorbed the *Critique* as though it were an index into the nature of things rather than primarily an analysis of reflection. It has served as a register of the components of a *Weltanschauung* instead of an exercise in critical reflexivity. To be sure, there are ways of transposing the product of analysis into ingredients of construction, but these are complex methodological procedures of translation which neither Kant nor his theological commentators are fully disposed to supply. To call attention to the distinction is to note that the mode of reflection affects its outcome: thus, the divergent results to which analysis and construction come must be viewed in the light of their respective capacities and interests. Part of the reason for the blurring of the distinction may perhaps lie with the confusion of which Kant himself is the author. As Anders Nygren has observed, though Kant is the father of critical philosophy, his philosophy of religion is still conditioned by a precritical *Weltanschauung*. This retention of the juxtaposition of post- and precritical perspectives perhaps serves as a precedent for the lack of clarity which the theological tradition exhibits. But to argue that a prime distinction has seldom, if ever, been honored is not to judge, as one observer put it, that theological reflection in the post-Kantian era can be represented as “a gigantic excursion in systematic error.” Nor, on the other hand, can it be made the basis for sustaining the hope that the dilemmas Kant placed before theology can be easily resolved. Rather, the worth of attention to the distinction pertains simply to the clarifying ability it possesses: by means of it, one is able to separate fruitful theological responses to the first *Critique* from those which are misguided. And, hopefully, one is thereby also enabled to cultivate implications still inherent in the Kantian “analytic” to aid theological self-consciousness.

I should like to begin the following study by reviewing the basis in the first *Critique* for theological reaction to Kant’s contentions.² Basic to that reassessment are Kant’s own directives. Second, I should like to explore the starting points of a small sampling of theological orientations which consciously refer to “possibilities” implicit or explicit in the *Critique*. Finally, I shall sketch out a program for theological reflexivity which honors the distinction between analysis and construction and

² Throughout the essay, the translation of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* I shall use is the one by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan Co., 1961).

draws significantly upon Kant's positive suggestions for methodological clarification.

I

The argument of our *Critique*, taken as a whole, must have sufficiently convinced the reader that although metaphysics cannot be the foundation of religion, it must always continue to be the bulwark of it.³

The distinction upon which this study focuses is prefigured in the conditions Immanuel Kant established at the beginning of his first *Critique*. At the outset he states that the purpose of his work is the exposition and analysis of the knowable as such: its limits, configuration, and the possibility of its extension.⁴ Thereupon follow two fundamental prescriptions. Kant contends that the method employed will be analytical and discriminatory. He also circumscribes the range of its employment in terms of that which can be known. Even at this point in the argument, a distinction has been made between that which can be known and that which can be.

Methodologically it becomes possible to view the *Critique* as a series of applications of Kant's distinction between matter and form. He refers to this distinction as the focal point of the "revolution" which his approach implies.⁵ Whereas in former positions matter had reference to the universal factor and form to the specific difference, Kant argues, the situation should be reversed: matter is the determinable, and form is the determinant. Among human faculties, for example, there is sensible intuition and understanding. In human knowledge, for example, there are a posteriori and a priori modes of apprehension. In each case, the former stands to the latter as matter to form. The distinction, as Kant conceives it, becomes necessary by virtue of the conflict between empiricist and rationalist schools. It was to this dilemma that Kant had submitted his reconciling thesis: all knowledge begins with experience, although by this, it does not follow that it all arises out of experience.⁶ That is to say, there is knowledge independent of all experience and knowledge which is possible only through experience; but this distinction is made possible only through analysis. In cognition, empirical knowledge is to pure knowledge as matter is to form, or, as the determinable is to its determinant. There is sensibility (i.e., that by which objects

³ *Ibid.*, A 849, p. 664.

⁴ *Ibid.*, B 6, p. 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, A 266–268, pp. 280, 1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, B 1, p. 41.

are given), and there is understanding (i.e., that by which objects are thought.⁷ As from sensibility intuitions arise, so from understanding concepts arise. The determination (form) of sensibility (matter) are the aesthetic forms, for example, space and time. The determination (form) of understanding (matter) are the logical forms, that is, the categories. Knowledge becomes possible through the determination of the sensuous manifold by a synthetic-mental act.

In asking the question concerning the possibility of a priori–synthetic knowledge, Kant is proposing to demonstrate that the synthesis upon which this possibility can be described; what is never separated in any *act* of knowing can, however, be abstracted for and by the *science* of knowing. It is upon the possibility of this sort of abstraction that the exercise in the *Critique of Pure Reason* rests. Since knowing is judging and judging is “putting together” (the objects of the mind agreeing with the mind), reason is capable of both synthesis (combination) and analysis (decomposition). Synthesis produces knowledge; analysis is the task of the *Critique*. From this perspective Kant proposes to provide an enumeration of the determinants of knowledge, that is, the a priori conditions under which matter becomes knowable. The discovery of those conditions is identical with a demonstration of the foundation of all theoretical sciences, including, quite eminently, metaphysics.

The argument in its early stages therefore resembles a process of sorting, distinguishing, and isolating types and frames of reference to which the variety of components of knowledge can be assigned. The concern to demonstrate the possibility of knowledge has required a basis for discriminating between sensible, mental, and extramental cognitive factors. Also implicit from the beginning is a separation of kinds of questions. The question concerning the possibility of knowledge, for example, is not the same as the question concerning “the nature of reality.” By limiting the scope of his examination to that which can be known (necessarily distinct from that which can be), Kant has given clear indication that an inquiry into knowledge’s possibility cannot also be expected to provide an exhaustive account of the sorts of things there are. But a distinction between questions does not imply total separation. Discriminatory techniques are being applied to reciprocally functioning organisms. The question of the *descriptive* possibility of knowledge comes to imply some sort of circumscription of the nature of things. Eventually the dominant distinction is refined in the following way: between that

⁷ *Ibid.*, A 19, p. 65.

which can be and can also be known, and that which simply can be.

Thus the question of the possibility of the extension of knowledge introduces the distinction between phenomena and noumena, as an amplification of the basic distinction between matter and form. When the focus of attention is on the possibility of knowledge, the issue can be clarified by specifying the way in which the determinant functions with respect to the determinable. But when the focal point becomes the problem of extending knowledge to that which is implied in the possibility of knowledge (but for which, nevertheless, no sensible intuition is available), then what is already determinable serves as the determinant by which the indeterminate can be distinguished. The relation between matter and form is still evident. With respect to the possibility of knowledge, form becomes associated with order. With respect to the possibility of extending knowledge, form is equivalent with circumscription. In the former instance (illustrated most vividly in the a priori-synthetic judgment) the determinable is the sensuous manifold whose determination has the form of a "boundary ascription"; *noumena* becomes the determination of phenomena, precisely by being its limitation.

It is exactly at this point that confusions are born. What has been presented thus far is a series of fundamental distinctions which operate as select frames of reference for purposes of ordering relevant data. Necessary to the entire series of distinctions is the achievement of some kind of careful balance, or reciprocity, between frames. Ultimately that delicate balance (which is always threatened by the abstractive nature of the Kantian inquiry) depends upon the co-operation of discrimination and circumscription. Though distinct and discrete, the various canons of discrimination must so work together that their combined activities will accurately represent the organic interaction of the components of knowledge. Because of the workings of the relation of matter and form, the frames of reference must enjoy a reciprocal relationship with each other. But this occurs only in the context of the totality of the organism. Short of that totality, reciprocity becomes illusory.

It is this complexity which Kant seeks to trace in the chapter *Phenomena and Noumena*.⁸ (Out of this complexity, we recall, the theological implications are drawn, also.) It was not enough, Kant states, that the

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 257-275.

The Journal of Religion

possibility of *knowledge* be assessed. This merely introduced the related issue concerning the possibility of determining the limits of the employment of *understanding*. Earlier it was asserted that “all concepts and with them all principles . . . relate to empirical intuitions . . . to the data for a possible experience.”⁹ But this assertion concerning the way in which potential knowledge becomes actual knowledge implies a related inquiry concerning the range of potential knowledge:

If the understanding in its empirical employment cannot distinguish whether certain questions lie within its horizon or not, it can never be assured of its claims or of its possessions, but must be prepared for many a humiliating disillusionment, whenever, as must unavoidably and constantly happen, it oversteps the limits of its own domain, and loses itself in opinions that are baseless and misleading.¹⁰

In short, it was not enough to specify the relationship between determinant and determinable. Account has still not been taken of that which is not an object of the senses, and, thus, is indeterminate. But this is a further reflection upon the necessary distinction between that which can be known and that which can be. To assert that understanding can never admit of any but an empirical (as distinct from a transcendental) employment is also to note that a circumscription of the range of the understanding is not equivalent to a circumscription of all the domains there may be. Thus, while it has been shown that understanding serves as the determinant by which intuitions are characterizable, determination has not yet been given to understanding. Understanding, unlike the forms of intuition, owns a potential capacity of extension beyond the limits of sensibility.

The question can be put in the following way: Has understanding a transcendental function in addition to its demonstrated empirical employment? The answer comes in the form of a distinction between phenomena and noumena. The latter can be of two sorts. In the negative sense, a noumenon is “a thing in so far as it is not an object of sensible intuition.” And, in the positive though problematic sense, a noumenon is “an object of a non-sensible intuition.”¹¹ The description in the negative sense has reference to the character of the object (i.e., that it is non-sensible). In the positive sense, the description refers to the character of the mode of apprehension (i.e., that it is non-sensible).

⁹ *Ibid.*, A 239, p. 259.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, A 238, p. 259.

¹¹ Only B contains the distinction between positive and negative senses. See *Ibid.*, B 307, pp. 268 ff.

When the question arises as to the function of the understanding with respect to that which is not determined by sensibility, the answer must be in the form of an explication of noumena in the negative sense: the concept of a noumena is a limiting concept, with no positive affirming ability beyond the field of sensibility.

What our understanding acquires through this concept of a noumenon is a negative extension; that is to say, understanding is not limited through sensibility; on the contrary it itself limits sensibility by applying the term noumena to things in themselves. . . . But in so doing it at the same time sets limits to itself, recognizing that it cannot know these noumena through any of the categories, and that it must therefore think them only under the title of an unknown something.¹²

One of the chief purposes of the *Critique* was to illustrate the way in which knowledge has the tendency to leave appearances in order to extend itself beyond the limits of experience.¹³ Along the way Kant charted that tendency in the form of two assertions: (a) that understanding can never admit of a transcendental employment, and (b) that the synthetic order which understanding imposes implies a kind of problematic predication beyond the field of experience.

It is precisely by means of the latter modes of knowledge, in a realm beyond the world of the senses, where experience can yield neither guidance nor correction, that our reason carries on those enquiries which owing to their importance we consider to be far more excellent, and in their purpose far more lofty, than all that the understanding can learn in the field of appearances.¹⁴

Understanding is not only the determinant of empirical sensibility; it itself is determinable by reason. Reason prescribes a direction to the understanding "toward a certain unity of which it has itself no concept, and in such manner as to unite all the acts of the understanding . . . into an absolute whole."¹⁵ As distinct from understanding, reason can be transcendently employed. Its concepts, the transcendental ideas, per-

¹² *Ibid.*, B. 312, p. 273

¹³ "But what is still more extraordinary than all the preceding is this, that certain modes of knowledge leave the field of all possible experience and have the appearance of extending the scope of our judgment beyond all limits of experience, and this by means of concepts to which no corresponding object can ever be given in experience" (*Ibid.*, A 2,3, p. 45).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, A 3, pp. 45,6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, A 326, p. 318.

The Journal of Religion

tain to “the unconditioned synthetic unity of all conditions.”¹⁶ Those ideas, that is, soul, world, and God,

can be arranged in three classes, the first containing the absolute (unconditioned) unity of the thinking subject, the second the absolute unity of the series of conditions of appearance, the third the absolute unity of the conditions of all objects of thought in general.¹⁷

Regulating the entire discussion is Kant’s working axiom that “everything that has its basis in the nature of our powers must be appropriate to, and consistent with, their right employment.”¹⁸ Consistent with the relation between matter and form, this axiom demands that a distinction be made between the regulative and constitutive functions of the transcendental ideas just as it had previously required a distinction between the empirical and transcendental employments of the concepts of the understanding. The function of reason is the ordering of understanding, as the function of understanding is the ordering of sensibility. Understanding can represent no object in concepts except under the conditions of sensibility; reason ascribes a certain completeness to acknowledge by unifying the concepts of understanding. And yet, because both concepts and ideas contain something of that which is also indeterminate, neither is able to transcend the conditions of sensibility. Kant’s point can be put as follows: although the determinant—even though it be the transcendental ideas—can be abstracted, it cannot thereby be hypostatized.

Transcendental ideas never allow a constitutive employment. They cannot be utilized to make objects corresponding to concepts certain. Indeed, reason cannot create concepts or objects; it simply orders and unifies them. The idea of God is appropriate as a regulation within a systematic ordering of the world. But any attempted constitutive employment would be self-defeating since it would imply the extension of knowledge “into a realm where no experience is possible.” The indeterminate can become determinant but is not thereby determined.

Thus in his chapter, “Critique of all Theology,” Kant directs his discussion toward an assessment of the classical proofs for the existence of God. In so doing, he shifts the emphasis. The possibility of predicating attributes to the divine is transferred from theoretical speculation to moral judgment. Since God is an idea for which no corresponding

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, A 334, p. 323.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, A 643, p. 532.

intuition can be supplied (since transcendental questions admit only transcendental answers), the reality of God is secured only on the basis of practical utility. Since all constitutive speculative endeavors have been foreclosed.

the only theology of reason which is possible is that which is based upon moral laws or seeks guidance from them. All synthetic principles of reason allow only of an immanent employment; and in order to have knowledge of a supreme being we should have to put them to a transcendental use, for which our understanding is in no way fitted.¹⁹

Throughout the discussion of the relation between the reality of God and the possibility of knowledge, Kant does not violate the thesis that synthetic propositions are not established by conceding the divine reality. The certainty of knowledge does not depend upon the reality and/or the goodness of God. For Kant the conditions of knowledge are complete with the formal and empirical components of the synthetic judgment. The idea of God regulates inquiry (when there is concern for unity) but neither produces it nor insures its outcome. Nor on the basis of that inquiry can the idea of God be so construed as to constitute an object. This cognitive limitation (i.e., that all concepts relate to empirical intuitions or to the data of possible experience) also establishes the occasion for utilizing God in the valuational sense. The deepest penetration into the realm of unknowable, indeterminate, and supersensible, therefore, is via the fulfillment of duty. Not only is knowledge limited by a series of applications of the matter-form relation, but that limitation can also be taken as evidence that man is ever on his way to a goal determined by his own freedom. The totality of things gives a place and prescribed function to religion. But the character of that totality is such that the formalization of religious affirmations is to be regarded as a matter of moral purposefulness.

And yet, these are conclusions which do not seem to take the original conditions of the *Critique* seriously. Their author is usually careful to restrict his analysis to the knowable (i.e., to that which can be known as distinct from that which can be). He has not provided additional specifications by which to transpose analyses of possibilities into a constructed index into the nature of things. To be sure, analysis makes clear that such ideas as God, world, and self behave differently in reflection than do concepts for which empirical intuitions are available. It also discloses that the determinant and determinable operate reciprocally,

¹⁹ *Ibid.* A 636, p. 528.

and that ideas of particular religious interest are often introduced when this reciprocity requires coherence, order, and unification. Kant has further contended that the necessity of such ideas for knowledge is not sufficient basis upon which to secure their constitutive reality. (Constitutive reality is different from regulative employment, we recall, just as world is not equivalent to the sum total of empirical data which the determinants of knowledge dispose.) A basis has not been established, that is to say, by which to turn critical analysis into a schema by which to refer matters religious to the jurisdiction of morality. Rather, it appears that a foundation has been laid for a project which is not developed, that is, an analysis of the behaviour of such ideas as God, self, and world in systematic reflection. The development of an analysis of the way in which these “regulative” ideas are utilized for reflective purposes can become, it seems, a fresh way of utilizing the *Critique* for purposes of theological self-consciousness. But, before further developing a reflexive response to Kant’s proposals, I should like to provide a paradigmatic sketch of a sampling of traditional theological reactions to the dominant implications within those proposals.

II

Historically considered, theological response to Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* seems to have focused primarily upon this appraisal: the inquiry into the conditions of knowledge was valid in principle, but its implications were neither exhausted nor yet quite rightly disposed within the treatise itself. This assessment was not out of keeping with the author’s own fuller directives which were expressed in other writings, especially in the *Critique of Practical Reason* and in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. There, Kant had repeatedly, amplified the dominant suggestion that religious affirmations be regarded as postulates required by moral judgment. Implicit in this suggestion are large unfinished tasks, including a detailed tracing of religious vis-à-vis moral dependencies.

Schematically, additional modifications are possible without greatly disturbing the initial outline. While those intent upon preserving the variety of forms of “natural theology” would notice the severe restrictions the *Critique* places upon the possibility of knowledge of God, others could utilize those same conclusions as an argument for ascribing “wholly-otherness” to the divine. Kant’s demonstration of the impotency of human knowledge vis-à-vis God, that is to say, can also be welcomed as a supporting witness to the uniqueness and holiness of

God. That testimony was based on the necessity of the distinction between phenomena and noumena as well as on a certification of the essential unknowability of the *Ding-an-sich*. Upon this precedent theology was free to devote its energies toward developing the ramifications of that distinction, especially its effect on the possibility of divine predication, the significance of worship, and the disposition of *homo religiosus*.

But other alternatives were and are available. Conceivably, the Kantian contentions can be accepted, though in terms of significant, qualifying additions. One can argue, as many have, that unless the organon represented in the three *Critiques* is exhausted by the domains of pure, practical, and aesthetic reason, accessions can be made without seriously threatening the initial starting points. This, it appears, is the methodological precedent for the Lundensian theological endeavor, which begins by extending the organon in order to refer the experience of religion to its own peculiar a priori and categorial scheme.²⁰ The development of the *religious a priori* in the philosophy of religion of Nygren, for example, is calculated to denote a form of human experience which, though unique, is complementary to the ones Kant isolated and yet one of which he was not completely aware. Nygren observes:

But Kant lacks the third religious premise completely. One cannot detect any first-hand knowledge of religion in his works. He shared with the age in which he lived an inability to see something specific and unique in religion. It was clear to him in advance that one cannot talk about religious experience in a literal sense without having to look at religion as a singular modification of another known form of experience. Now when his examination of the theory of knowledge led to an unfavorable result for metaphysical knowledge, and the refutation of the rational proofs of God further inculcated the impossibility of connecting religion with metaphysics, a way out of the dilemma spontaneously presented itself, a way out which Kant moreover resorted to, i.e., to try to break religion up into ethics. In his effort to try to overcome the intellectualism of the age of Enlightenment, the intellectualism which Kant finds unsatisfactory not so much because of its scientific insolidity, he instead gets into the moralism of the age of Enlightenment, without really

²⁰ Nygren's attitude to Kant is spelled out most clearly in the chapter "Den transcendentala deduktionens ide hos Kant" (pp. 206–15) in his *Religiöst Apriori* (Lund: Gleerupska, 1921). A recent treatment of Nygren's methodology is presented in William A. Johnson, *On Religion: A Study of Theological Method in Schleiermacher and Nygren* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964). See also William A. Johnson's essay, "Developments in Swedish Theology, 1939–1966," in the Torchbook edition of Nels F. S. Ferré, *Swedish Contributions to Modern Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 242–95.

The Journal of Religion

having vanquished intellectualism by this (because, actually, it is all the while the same intellectual system which here is furnished with a moral foundation.) The reason why it was impossible for Kant to escape from an intellectual and moralistic understanding of religion is simply that he from the beginning excluded the third possibility . . . i.e., that religion should be considered a third, independent experience beside the intellectual and the moral.²¹

But, in addition to being a form of experience which cannot be derived from pure and practical reason, religion, Nygren argues, is also that upon which the validity of those forms depends. The argument runs as follows: (1) the religious category of the eternal is presupposed by the other forms of experience and their respective categorial systems; (2) as an a priori, it possesses an independent status such that theology's tasks cannot be derived from the fields of study (e.g., philosophy, ethics, and finally, even aesthetics) which apply to the other forms of experience; and (3) theology's proper work is the description of the content which historical religions have rendered with respect to the categorial question of religion.

Though this approach seeks at least qualified confirmation by Kantian criteria, its full development only illustrates its sharp divergence from that starting point. Seen alongside Kant's suggestions, Nygren's modifications become alterations. Kant had ascribed a regulative function to a select number of religious concepts in bringing about a synthesis in knowledge. But under Nygren's insistence that religious concepts be taken on their own terms and not according to whatever functions they might also perform in other disciplines or ranges of experience, the situation changes. For Nygren, religious concepts can be understood only in relation to religion's historical and cultural forms. This implies that the content of religion is accessible only by means of a penetration of given historical religions. It also means that a regulative function can be assigned only to that *fundamental motif* which characterizes the historical response given the question of categorial preoccupation. Furthermore, that response is registered solely within the complex of affirmations of the representative religious community. In the case of Judaism, the fundamental motif which is responsible for the uniqueness of the religion is *Nomos*. In Platonism, the fundamental motif which is both characteristic and definitive of the entire orientation is *Eros*. And in the case of Christianity—the religion in which Nygren

²¹ Anders Nygren, "Dogmatikens Vetenskapliga Grundläggning." *Lunds Universitets Arsskrift*, XVII, No. 8, (1921), 64.

is particularly (and perhaps almost exclusively) interested—the fundamental motif, that without which Christianity would be something other than it is, is *Agape*. The task of the Lundensian theologian, then, is to elucidate and describe that which is characteristic of the Christian religion's response to the question regarding the eternal. Speaking of the function of theology, Gustaf Aulen, Nygren's associate, writes:

It does not seek to demonstrate 'the truth' of faith, nor to provoke rational grounds for faith, nor to furnish proofs of the reality of God. . . . Theology must focus its attention upon what is and what is not characteristically Christian.²²

Conceivably, that same descriptive function can be assumed by a theologian who seeks to represent the attitude and response of a religion other than Christianity. In any case, the theological task is an accurate depiction of that which uniquely characterizes a particular religion's set of affirmations regarding the category of the eternal (i.e., that category which cannot be derived from any of the other valid forms of human experience). And, in this way, Nygren regards himself as having established a "scientific basis" for the study of religion in both generic and specific terms.

Implicit in the Lundensian approach is an assumption that the Kantian inquiry cannot safeguard the uniqueness of religious experience and affirmation. This same attitude can be formulated in other ways, and can serve as the source of other kinds of response. But even here, once again, the modification is disposed to take the form of an addition. Nygren argued, for example, that the organon implicit in the *Critiques* was not exhaustive of human experience, and could indeed tolerate a significant embellishment. What one might also contend is that the organon requires extension, not primarily in terms of quality, but more fundamentally in terms of depth. Then the argument can take something of the following form: (1) Kant's inquiries are distinctive in that they treat forms of *rationality*; (2) human experience also registers a certain describable dimension which might appropriately be referred to as the *prerational* or the *mythical*. By means of this sequence of thought one can identify religion with the *preconceptual*, and thus shelter it from the penetrating censures of critical analysis.

Something such as this is made possible, for example, on the basis of the close association between the locus of religion and what Ernst

²² Gustaf Aulen, *The Faith of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 6.

Cassirer refers to as “mythical consciousness”. This reversion to a form of language and thought which is prior to discursive knowledge allows one to retain the validity of the Kantian analysis in that specific area to which it is appropriate. At the same time, it finds Kant to be insufficiently aware of the range and depth of human experience, and accuses him of an isolated view of objectivity.²³ This line of response can be developed further in at least a twofold way. On the one hand, it can cultivate a fresh recognition of the influence of mythical consciousness even upon that restricted form of experience which one finds represented in the first *Critique*. And, on the other hand, it can lend support to the numerous ventures to associate religion with the modes, patterns and rhythms of “pre-reflection”.²⁴

A concerted theological attempt to cultivate an extension of the latter project—though by focusing on the pre-reflective and not the mythical—is recorded in Joseph Maréchal’s multivolumed *Le Point de Départ de la Métaphysique*. As is almost customary in Thomistic commentary on Kant, Maréchal argues that the starting point of the original

²³ In *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. II: *Mythical Thought* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1955), Ernst Cassirer indicates that his own project can be regarded as an extension of the critical philosophy, though by an embellishment of the meaning attributed to “objectivity”: “It is one of the first essential insights of critical philosophy that objects are not ‘given’ to consciousness in a rigid, finished state, in their naked ‘as suchness,’ but that the relation of representation to object presupposes an independent, spontaneous act of consciousness. The object does not exist prior to and outside of synthetic unity but is constituted only by this synthetic unity. . . . The ‘Philosophy of Symbolic Forms’ takes up this basic critical idea, this fundamental principle of Kant’s ‘Copernican Revolution,’ and strives to broaden it. It seeks the categories of the consciousness of objects in the theoretical, intellectual sphere, and starts from the assumption that such categories must be at work wherever a cosmos, a characteristic and typical world view, takes form out of the chaos of impressions. All such world views are made possible only by specific acts of objectivization. . . . Our investigation has already shown that this direction is by no means ‘simple’ . . . that the ways in which the diversity of sensory impressions can be synthesized into spiritual unities can reveal the most diverse nuances. And this conclusion is strikingly confirmed when we contrast the mythical process of objectivization with that of theoretical, pure empirical thought” (p. 29).

²⁴ The identification of religion with the “pre-conceptual” is only a step away from assigning religion a place among realities “non-conceptual” or “a-conceptual.” Should one care to extend this line of response in this way, he would be able to build a good case for associating religion, for instance, with the “play element” in culture—as Roger Caillois has done (*Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash [New York: Macmillan, Co., 1961]), as Johan Huizinga allows (cf. his *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1949]), and as even Alfred North Whitehead conceives (cf. his *Religion in the Making* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930]). To my knowledge, this line of response has not been fully explored and developed.

critical philosophy is overly restrictive. Fundamentally, it is limited by virtue of its focus upon the *representation* of knowledge instead of upon the fuller capacities of the intellectual act. In refining a distinction which has become the basis for something already called a “movement”,²⁵ Maréchal attempts to insert an epistemological dynamism in the place of Kant’s formalism. Calling attention to the dynamic character of the intellectual act, Maréchal goes on to substantiate the dependence of knowledge upon such factors as intention and affirmation. The effect, in short, is to reclaim as *Grenzbegriffe* the whole spectrum of ingredients within St. Thomas’ notion of being—which Kant’s strictures upon *noumena* and the *Ding-an-sich* tended to rule out—as necessary conditions of knowledge. In this way, Maréchal seeks to justify metaphysics by referring it to those elements anterior to cognition which do not always register in formal analyses.²⁶ Bernard Lonergan, who shares something of Maréchal’s background, summarizes the function within this dynamistic perspective when he writes:

It remains that the main method in metaphysics is a mediation of the immediate. There exists a latent metaphysics, present and operative in all our knowing; it is the metaphysical *Ureinsicht* (primary insight) in its immediacy; but it has to be thematized and made explicit, to be brought out into the open in accurately defined concepts and certain judgements. The main task of the metaphysician is not to reveal or prove what is new and

²⁵ The development of Maréchal’s directives into a movement is discussed in Emerich Coreth, *Metaphysik. Eine methodisch-systematische Grundlegung* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia Verlag, 1961); in Bernard Lonergan’s comments on Coreth’s work, “Metaphysics as Horizon,” *Gregorianum*, XLIV (1963), 307–18, and reprinted in *Cross Currents*, XVI, No. 4 (1966), 481–94; in George A. Lindbeck’s provocative use of those directives for additional purposes in “The *A Priori* in St. Thomas’ Theory of Knowledge,” in *The Heritage of Christian Thought: Essays in Honor of Robert Lowry Calhoun*, ed. Robert E. Cushman and Egil Grislis (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 41–63; in Helen James John, *The Thomist Spectrum* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), pp. 139–49; and in Georges Van Riet, *Thomistic Epistemology* (St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder Book Co., 1963), pp. 237–72.

²⁶ Maréchal summarizes his criticism of Kant in *Le Point de Départ de la Métaphysique* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1926), V, 549, in the following way: “La Critique kantienne fut destructrice, non pas en raison du principe méthodologique que nous venons de rappeler, mais parce qu’elle omit de prendre en considération une hypothèse nullement chimérique: celle où tout objet, dans la conscience, serait intrinsèquement constitué, en tant qu’objet, par une synthèse d’acte et de forme, de telle manière que la réflexion analytique pût y discerner, non seulement les propriétés logiques d’échelonnements formels, mais les propriétés logiques d’exigences dynamiques—propriétés garanties les unes et les autres pas la nécessité primordiale de la pensée objective comme telle.” For description and extensive bibliography of other (sometimes like-minded) discussion and criticism of Kant, see *Kant und die Scholastik heute*, ed. Johannes B. Lotz (Pullach bei München: Berchmanskolleg, 1955).

The Journal of Religion

unknown; it is to give scientific expression to what already is implicitly acknowledged without being explicitly recognized.²⁷

One of the chief results of this penetration of the immediate is the contention—even illustration—that the fact of knowledge itself implies the truth of the judgment, “God exists.”

The tendency inspired by Maréchal is vividly exemplified and articulated in Carlos Cirne-Lima’s study *Der Personale Glaube. Eine erkenntnismetaphysische Studie*.²⁸ Here the “immediate” is explored by means of a distinction between personal and discursive knowledge. Cirne-Lima contends that discursive knowledge is “merely a poorer, fainter, and less certain expression”²⁹ of that which was previously grasped (both spontaneously and in totality) by intuition. Intuitive knowledge, which forms the basis for personal knowledge, is prior to the concepts, judgments, and syllogisms which seek to explicate one or another of its aspects. On this basis, one can define faith—the object of religion’s concern—as a form of personal knowledge, since it is immediate (rather than mediated), spontaneous (rather than representational) and totalistic (rather than discursive) in its apprehension. This implies that religious consciousness refers to an intuitive level of knowledge which is both more dynamic and of greater depth than cognition.³⁰ As Cirne-Lima’s analysis progresses one notices that the primary distinction is cultivated in order to secure a place for pre-predicative assent to revelation and the truth with which faith deals. But, beyond that, Cirne-Lima has endeavored to refer ontological questions to a framework within which they can be adequately treated: “the question about Being manifests itself in its fundamental originality as the transcendental condition of possibility of any question whatever.”³¹ His goal is to found a place for the side of truth and reality which preoccupation with *discursiveness* tends to disclaim.

In many outward respects, then, the reactions to Kant of those inspired by Joseph Maréchal are like the ones we have already observed.

²⁷ Lonergan, *op. cit.*, p. 482.

²⁸ Carlos Cirne-Lima, *Personal Faith: A Metaphysical Inquiry*, trans. G. Richard Dimler (New York: Herder & Herder, 1965). I have reviewed this book at greater length in the *Journal of Religion*, LXVII, No. 4 (1967), 358–61.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

³⁰ For elaborations of this theme, see August Brunner, “Von der Entfaltung der christlichen Erkenntnis,” in *Stimmen der Zeit*, CLXXII, 172, No. 9 (June, 1963), 168–81; and in several essays in “Spirit as Inquiry: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lonergan,” published in *Continuum*, Vol. II, No. 3 (1964).

³¹ Cirne-Lima, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

They all seek to recover a place for theological content by demonstrating the limitations of the Kantian framework. Hence, they are alike in offering alternatives to what we have called the “negative” implications of the first *Critique*. Though they differ in very significant respects, they seem to agree that matters religious must be distinguished from the range of discourse and/or experience which is illumined by the Kantian analysis. According to one response (and in keeping with the original Kantian pattern), religion is to be associated with morality under the rubric of purposeful action. For another, the stress is placed on the wholly-otherness of the divine, which, conveniently as Kant seems to suggest, is characterized in terms of its lack of correspondence with that for which empirical evidence is available. The position reflected in Anders Nygren’s writings seeks grounds for securing a unique and exclusive a priori which will give religion its own *suigeneris* status and function. And the Maréchal tradition endeavors to expand the dimension of the a priori to include non-formal, dynamic, intuitive, and hence, religious prerequisites of knowledge. Even the philosophy of religion which is built upon the distinction between “objectivity” as Kant uses the term and the “objectivity” which Cassirer extends and discovers in mythical consciousness does not go untouched by this generalization: each of the responses is like the other in regarding the critical analysis as being more or less circumscriptive of theoretical, formal, or conceptual knowledge with respect to which matters of prime religious concern stand by some specifiable contrast.

But since that contention implies a distinction which can be viewed from one of two sides, it can also be taken in two ways. By means of the distinction one can abstract and/or separate discursive rationality—or the product of pure reason—from all other forms of experience and discourse. This abstractive technique enables one to focus on rationality as an isolatable phenomenon in order to examine its components, form, and logic. (This, apparently, is one way in which to construe the purpose of the first *Critique*.) Turning it the other way, the same distinction can be used to clarify the range of things which has been differentiated from “pure reason.” Both of these turns can claim the Kantian dictum as motto: “I have denied [or restricted] knowledge in order to make room for faith.” That is, since the source of “faith” is not pure reason—as all examined spokesmen (especially the author of the *Critique*) seem to agree—there is ample justification for attention to one of several frameworks other than “knowledge.” This, apparently, is the intention of Nygren (when he explored a distinctively religious a priori), Maréchal

The Journal of Religion

(when he called Kant's focus "representation"), Cassirer (when he fixed objectivity in a prerational mode), and a host of others.

The matter becomes complicated, however, when one notes that the sources of religious affirmations, on the one hand, and theology, on the other, are not the same. Hence, locating the former in a frame different from the one explored in the first *Critique* is not necessarily to locate the latter there. Religion and theology, in short, do not have the same point of origin, nor are their spheres of applicability the same. While the former can be described as prerational, a-rational, non-rational, or other-than-rational, the latter is difficult to conceive as something other than a reflective discipline. Theology is reflection. And, if Henry Duméry's definition is an apt one, theology is the product of a coherence achieved in reflection with respect to religious affirmations by means of formal procedures.³² If this be the case, the legacy to be received from the critical philosopher is the reflexivity he cultivated regarding the way in which coherence is effected in reflection. One can justify retaining the legacy in this form on the basis of sheer interest alone: the distinction Kant drew can be viewed from either side. Denying knowledge in order to make room for faith, that is to say, can be viewed from either the side of "knowledge" or the side of "faith." We have chosen the side of reflection (or "knowledge") on the assumption that the *Critique's* influence on theology issues first of all from its intensification of self-consciousness regarding the nature of thought. Its influence on religion (or "faith") is a matter of a different kind, since this would imply viewing the distinction from the other side.

Our contention, therefore, can be reduced to this: Many previous reactions to Kant have failed to keep two distinctions in mind: (1) the distinction between *religion* and *theology*, and their respective interests, forms, and content, and (2) the distinction between *analysis* and *construction*, and their respective spheres of operation, techniques, and peculiar sensibilities. Because the two sets of distinctions can be placed side by side and can be referred to one another, they have spawned a number of intriguing responses to Kant (some of which we have already examined). We ourselves have chosen to focus on the nature of theology, however, by paying close attention to Kant's description of the kind of order or coherence upon which theological reflection depends. Someone else can draw such inferences from the *Critique* as will illumine the nature

³² Henry Duméry's definition, in *Critique et Religion* (Paris: Sedes, 1957), p. 271, is phrased as follows: "Dans ce sens, une théologie, c'est d'abord le choix d'une philosophie en vue de 'reflechir' la foi."

of religion. But the *Critique* will serve that interest only by contrast; that is, it discloses the nature of religion only by illustrating the characteristics of a range of discourse which religion is not. Someone else can attempt to derive a world view from the *Critique*. But he does so only by inference. The *Critique* itself does not contain an index into the complex transitional steps necessary to transpose *analysis* into *construction*. Both of these reactions operate on the basis of negation: they cultivate possibilities which the *Critique* (taken on its own terms) treats only indirectly. On the other hand, we have chosen to focus on *analysis* and the characteristics of *theology*: two factors directly in keeping with Kant's positive remarks. But we must turn now to an example.

III

In the foregoing sections of this study I have submitted an argument that in drawing valid implications from Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* the recoverers of theology must be attentive to two basic distinctions. I have contended that a description of the conditions of knowledge, which is retrospective, cannot be employed as a logistical account of the nature of reality. I have also argued that theology should acknowledge the first *Critique* as an aid toward its own critical self-consciousness, and that Kant's work should not be construed as the basis for a new *Weltanschauung*, or as an index into the place and function of religion. Focusing upon these factors, I have chosen to stress the significance of Kant's book the following way: it marks the birth of a new style of self-consciousness in the history of theological reflection, an awareness of the function, limits, components, and conditions of ordered reflection, a consciousness we have referred to as reflexivity.

We have known for some time, for example, that the theological tradition consists of a variety of styles and orientations. Some of these are accounted for on the bases of philosophical precedents in the classical Greek past. (Some are Aristotelian in tone, for instance, while others reflect a Platonic bent.) And others are known by their characteristic marks or tendencies: "process," "emanationists," etc. We are also aware that these styles sometimes handle identical themes in strikingly different ways, and that one and the same concept will behave differently in different orientations. For example, a "Platonic model" has almost built-in difficulty giving due status to time, history, mutability, change, etc., as it seems obliged to in order to take biblical

affirmations about the goodness and reality of the created order seriously. A process orientation, on the other hand, is particularly vulnerable in preventing the dominance of change from qualifying the omnipotence of God. And, yet, each of these—and a host of others we might name—exhibit consistent patterns of reflection. In any one of them one can reason from point to point, making sense of statements and contentions by reference to the conceptual framework within which they occur. In each instance a form of order is implicit to give to the pattern of reflection the formal and internal coherence which it is able to display.

It is at this point that Kant can be helpful. The first *Critique* is not only a characterization of reflection in general but also an analysis of the components of systematic thought. Hence, part of its author's task is the sorting of the ingredients of systematic reflection so that they become self-conscious to thought. Since Kant's task was not first of all a disclosure of the formal components of theological stylings, he will not have developed the project we are pointing him toward in any but embryonic fashion. But this does not imply that the capability is not there. The reflexivity he cultivated can be indeed fitted to undertake the task we have outlined, and by means of his own directives. One major point of contact between reflexive self-consciousness and theological reflection, then, is the method and procedures which culminate in coherence in thought. The theologian utilizes them, and the critical philosopher has disclosed some of them. The history of theology is composed of such patterns of coherence, and the *Critique* fosters a penetration of the way in which such patterns are composed. In short, if theology is indeed an instance of coherence in reflection, a tracing of understanding's activity in effecting unity in thought offers the prospect of acquainting the theologian with the techniques by which his ploy is fashioned.

Kant's account of systematization develops from a discussion of the following ingredients: transcendental ideas, a principle of unity, and interests of reason. The ideas (i.e., self, world, and God) direct the understanding to a unity which exhibits an interconnection of parts. The idea of self functions to establish a connection between the appearances and the actions of the self, the idea of world functions to establish a ground or condition for the appearances of nature; and the idea of God functions to establish a unitary ground, or all-sufficient reason, for the sum of all appearances. Again and again Kant sounds the precautions: the transcendental ideas are posited in the interests of both systematic and purposeful unity, and function only regulatively,

not constitutively. The principle of unity, also called a logical principle, serves as a rule for the understanding (and in reciprocity with what Kant calls the law of specification). The twofold interest of reason has reference to unity and specification: specification has primary association with “lower concepts,” and unity retains fundamental relation with “high concepts.”³³ Because of the necessary interdependence of higher and lower generality, Kant comes to distinguish three kinds of principles in the systematization of knowledge: homogeneity, specificity, and that by means of which these are related, affinity. Again, to insure that these principles are properly employed, Kant also calls them “maxims of reason.”

Amplification of this account of systematization, but with respect to the coherence between various modes (or subjects) of knowledge, is given in the section, “The Architectonic of Pure Reason.” Kant does not specifically refer this account of system in the larger sense to the discussion of system under the rubric, “the natural dialectic of reason.” Yet it is apparent that the two accounts follow the same general lines. In both cases, system requires a technique (by means of an idea, principle, or law) to refer the particular to the more general, and a schema by which to establish the interrelatedness of parts. In both cases, the movement from particularity to universality parallels the series of gradations between the sensibly conditioned and the transcendental.

Kant has made it clear, therefore, that principles and interests of reason (functioning reciprocally) are implicit in the unification of knowledge. He has also noted that in any such context regulative ideas will be called upon to help effect unification. But when one seeks more precision from the Kantian account, he notes its particularistic character as well as its lack of attention to variant cases. It is clear, for example, that unity in thought requires specification—under any circumstances—just as specification requires homogeneity. But this does not imply that systematization must always be directed to what Kant selected as his own dominant technical interest. Indeed, in some cases, specificity (instead of being subsumed within homogeneity) might itself become a basis for systematization. In general terms, what is required for the achievement of systematization is the operation of determinants on determinables in ways which create unitary order. But, as the histories of both philosophy and theology testify, those ways are numerous.

³³ Kant, *op. cit.*, A 644, p. 540.

For the same reasons, the transcendental ideas may serve systematization in ways different from Kant's outline. It is significant methodologically, for example, that the idea of God is called upon to regulate knowledge in the way Kant records it when the interest of reason is in *synthesis*. When *affinity* becomes the dominant interest—as it is, for example, in forms of process philosophy—God is often given the role, of insuring connections within the totality and is appropriately represented as a mediating agent rather than as a principle of unification.³⁴ When reason's interest is further altered, it often becomes appropriate to select another idea as the dominant principle. Similarly, when the interest is neither homogeneity or affinity, it becomes difficult to employ the idea of God at all.³⁵

For example, in the Cartesian system, the same ideas (i.e., self, world, and God) become principles of regulation, but in strikingly different ways. The primary difference is that the basic interest in specificity demands that coherence be achieved in terms of an isolation of the select number of “indubitables” upon which the reality of all else depends. These “indubitables” are not made the ingredients of still higher syntheses, nor is their sum necessarily equivalent to the totality of things. Neither is this kind of reflective movement which comprehends kinds in terms of classes. For Descartes, the “indubitables” remain distinct, and their individual realities are affirmed. Yet there is ample basis here for coherent (indeed, systematic) order.

But the qualification that the fact of alternative cases places on Kant's account of systematization need not nullify its basic insight, that is, that reason achieves unity by means of the reciprocity between principles and interests. The interest indicates the kind of relationship which is to exist between determinant and determinable; the principle signifies the locus of orientation, the basis of stability, or the referent from which determination occurs. Principle and interest work together according to the sort of systematization intended. The variety among kinds of systems accompanies the possibility of utilizing different principles,

³⁴ In rudimentary form, this may be a basis for Whitehead's conception of God as “the ultimate, basic adjustment of the togetherness of eternal objects on which creative order depends.” Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 345.

³⁵ In this case, we refer for illustrations to the theological approach of Luther, who fixes the Word as the point of orientation, which, as the singular locus of divine determination of world, nevertheless functions as a basis for a unique kind of systematic unity.

under divergent interests, for establishing coherence in thought.³⁶ But, by virtue of the nature of reflection, such possibilities and their modifications are not infinite in number. Instead, limits are implicit in the combinations available to the interaction of principle and interest in effecting a relationship between determinant and determinable.

From here the reflexive possibilities open up in gigantic proportions. If individual theologies are also instances of systematic reflection, they are susceptible to examination in terms of their formal constituents. This method of penetration can thereupon be called upon to discern and perhaps, prefigure systematic strengths and weaknesses. But beyond this form of assessment is the possibility of establishing definite criteria by which to view differences between theological orientations. Again, as the history of scholarship testifies, it is neither quite accurate nor conclusively helpful to attempt to negotiate conflicts between St. Augustine and St. Thomas, for example, by referring to their dependencies on alternative classical philosophical backgrounds. Much distance can be gained in this particular quest for clarity by subjecting those theologies to the methodological scrutiny which reflexivity supports. In the same way, the differences between fundamental Catholic and Protestant theology might be significantly clarified if one could demonstrate that their respective theoretical bases exhibit divergent systematic principles and interests. But the comparative task is not the only project the cultivation of reflexivity might inspire. Given the fact that systems are shaped by interests, for example, the large question concerning the uniqueness or distinguishing marks of the Christian thought form, vis-à-vis other instances of religiously inspired systematic reflection, might also be illumined. Indeed, reflexivity opens the possibility of charting the exigencies (to use a Blondelian term) which normative religious affirmations place on the structure of Christian theological expression. Perhaps commitment to the primitive *kerygma* obliges the theologian to shape the formative determinant-determinable relationship of his system according to the *asymmetrical* model. Perhaps, that is to say, this transposition toward asymmetry is implicit in the fundamental conviction that, while God alone is good and the world is a derivative

³⁶ For a fuller, much greater detailed analysis of the relation between principles and interests, see the following works by Richard P. McKeon: "Philosophy and Method," *Journal of Philosophy*, XLVIII, No. 22 (1951), 653-82; "Principles and Consequences," *Journal of Philosophy*, LVI, No. 9 (1959), 385-401; *Thought, Action, and Passion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954); "Philosophy and the Development of Scientific Methods," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXVII, No. 1 (1966), 3-22.

reality, the goodness of God safeguards the actuality of world in such a way that a regulated bipolarity between the two is never threatened.³⁷ To call this participational relation between God and world “asymmetrical” is not only to denominate its form in systematic reflection, it is also to distinguish the Christian pattern from other possible forms of bipolarity. Further, within Christian theological history, this is to differentiate authentic structures from ones which do not dispose the rudiments of their kerygmatic source accurately.

But this is merely a sampling of prospects open to the application of techniques of critical reflexivity to the materials which comprise Christianity’s reflective history. By prefiguring such projects, we have merely sought to illustrate a relevant theological use of an extension and de-particularization of some of the *Critique’s* positive implications. To be sure, the aid Kant offers theology’s efforts toward self-consciousness is only embryonic and is disappointing when measured against the persistent hope of negotiating the *Critique’s* negative implications. At the same time, this aid is consistent with the function that critical reflexivity assumes in the theological tradition. The turning of thought back upon itself had not been a theological possibility before. Thus, the effect of the *Critique* is not to supplant one system by another, but, instead, to so transcend the reflective tendency toward systematization that its components are recognizable. This is not simply another approach to the same thing, another elaboration of the same sets of convictions, or another option of the sorts already in operation. Hence, any attempt to answer the manifold questions the *Critique* also raises in terms of a repetition of previous efforts to construct systems can only be regarded as a failure to sense the new moment in Pierre Thévenez’ chronicle of the *elan of transcendence*.³⁸

But reflexivity is probably never a final goal, nor is disciplined analysis of historical theological patterns a substitute for present and future expression. Nevertheless, as we noted at the outset, it may yet be that a vital interest in the *elan’s* transcendence of Kant will require a circumscription of the range of his rightful function. If this be an interruption,

³⁷ Provocative elaborations of this issue are presented by Claude Tresmontant, “Biblical Metaphysics,” *Cross Currents*, X, No. 3 (1960), 229–50, and *La Métaphysique du Christianisme et la Naissance de la Philosophie Chrétienne* (Paris: Seuil, 1961); and by William A. Christian, “God and the World,” *Journal of Religion*, XXVIII, No. 4 (1948), 255–62, and “The Creation of the World,” in *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. Roy Battenhouse (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 315–42.

³⁸ Pierre Thévenez, *What Is Phenomenology?* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962).

or a pause, it is in typical Kantian fashion the sort of clarifying denial which is also calculated to make room: a bracketing of the constructive in order to cultivate the reflexive. It is then not a restriction of reflection in order to safeguard religion, but a disclosure of reflection in order to discern the formal and contentual lineaments of one of its dominant manifestations. And whether the pause be long or temporary, there is encouragement, as P. F. Strawson noticed, since Kant, like Aristotle, and more than any other, repays the “effort of rethinking.”³⁹

³⁹ P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1963), p. xv.