

Is Kant (W)right? – On Kant’s Regulative Ideas and Wright’s Entitlements

Jochen Briesen
University of Konstanz

(This is the penultimate draft of a paper that is forthcoming in *Kant-Yearbook 5/2013*)

1. Introduction

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and especially in the *Transcendental Dialectic*, Kant radically restricts the epistemic value of reason. According to Kant, reason does not play any significant role in the cognition and knowledge of objects as given in experience, and reason’s attempt to expand our knowledge beyond the limits of experience only leads to contradiction and confusion.

Of course Kant still allows that reason has a positive role to play in practical matters:

[...] if there is to be any legitimate use of pure reason, in which case there must also be a canon of it, this will concern not the speculative but rather the practical use of reason, [...]. (A 797/B 825)

Furthermore, despite the devastating criticism of reason in the *Dialectic* and the remarks that seem to restrict the positive role of reason to practical issues, in the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic* Kant nevertheless tries to find some positive *theoretical* value for reason. His considerations in the *Appendix* can be roughly outlined as follows: Reason inevitably produces the concepts “Soul”, “World”, and “God”, which he calls “transcendental ideas” or “ideas of reason”. While the unreflected and careless use of these concepts leads to contradiction and confusion, there is another, ultimately recommendable use of these concepts, namely a purely regulative use. On Kant's view, the ideas of reason are indispensable in performing epistemically valuable projects of systematization. So if we use these concepts in order to direct and structure the execution of these projects, then we use them in a merely regulative manner, and *this* usage is supposed to be epistemically valuable. Thus, the positive epistemic value of reason depends on the positive epistemic value of transcendental ideas to which reason inevitably gives rise – and the epistemic value of these ideas in turn depends

upon their indispensability with regard to the performance of epistemically valuable projects of systematization.

If this rough sketch of Kant's intention in the *Appendix* is correct, then there is a putative analogy to a contemporary debate in epistemology, namely the debate regarding Crispin Wright's notion of epistemic entitlement (see Wright 2004). Wright thinks that we can be epistemically entitled to accept certain propositions even though there are no reasons or other truth-conducive factors that speak in favor of them. Wright calls these kinds of propositions "entitlements" and subdivides them into four classes. One class of entitlements, namely entitlements of cognitive projects, can roughly be characterized as follows: If p is a presupposition of a cognitive project meeting certain conditions, then we are entitled to accept p independently of truth-conducive factors. Just as Kant thinks that the epistemic value of transcendental ideas is located in their indispensability in performing and structuring cognitive projects of systematization, Wright thinks that the positive epistemic status of *entitlements* depends on the fact that they are presuppositions for cognitive projects of a certain kind.

This paper takes a closer look at this putative structural analogy. I will argue that the analogy actually obtains and that because of this analogy certain problems of Kant's view might be solved by recourse to Wright's theory.

In section 2, I will propose a reconstruction of Kant's theory of regulative ideas as it is developed in the *Appendix*. First, I will specify Kant's general approach with respect to regulative ideas and principles. Second, I will reconstruct Kant's argumentative execution of this approach by answering different sets of questions. Especially with respect to the last set of questions, serious exegetical problems will emerge. I will argue that these exegetical difficulties rest on a systematic problem which will inevitably arise and which, given other assumptions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant is unable to solve satisfactorily. In section 3, I will discuss Wright's theory of entitlements and elaborate on the suggested structural analogy between Wright's thoughts and Kant's views in the *Appendix*. Finally in section 4, I will try to show how, despite the identified difficulties for Kant's view, the project he pursues in the *Appendix* can be rehabilitated by recourse to Wright's theory.

2. Kant's Theory of Regulative Ideas and Regulative Principles

One may summarize the negative result of Kant's *Transcendental Dialectic* as follows: Reason has the natural propensity to produce transcendental ideas ("Soul", "World", "God"). These concepts do not contribute anything to our cognition and knowledge of reality. Furthermore, these concepts (and the principles based on these concepts) tempt us to engage in inquiries

“that would carry us out beyond the field of possible experience” and can therefore be nothing but “deceptive and groundless” (A 642/ B 670).

But since Kant holds on to the view that everything “grounded in the nature of our powers must be purposive” (A 642/ B 670), he eventually has to find some positive role for these ideas to play. In the *Appendix* Kant tries to argue that even in light of the conclusions drawn in the *Dialectic*, transcendental ideas can in a certain sense still be considered to be of significant epistemic value.

The outline of his strategy can be characterized as follows: In the first few paragraphs of the *Dialectic*, Kant specifies reason as a faculty of organizing and systematizing the cognitions delivered by the interaction of experience and understanding (A 298ff./B 354ff.). In the *Appendix*, this specification of reason is combined with transcendental ideas insofar as Kant considers these ideas to be conducive with respect to the specified aim of reason, namely finding “systematic unity of the manifold of empirical cognition” (A 671/ B 699). Kant is convinced that transcendental ideas do not correspond to any accessible objects, so by using these ideas or concepts no justifiable judgement can be made. But nevertheless Kant thinks that these ideas or concepts could be used to formulate principles that direct and structure our quest for systematicity. So on Kant’s view it would be a mistake to interpret transcendental ideas – or, more precisely, the principles which can be formulated utilizing these ideas – as saying something about reality because these ideas are of purely regulative use, i.e., they are used to formulate principles from which instructions can be derived regarding how to proceed in our projects of systematizing our cognitions:

Accordingly, I assert: the transcendental ideas are never of constitutive use, so that the concepts of certain objects would be given, and in case one so understands them, they are merely sophistical (dialectical) concepts. On the contrary, however, they have an excellent and indispensably necessary regulative use, namely that of directing the understanding to a certain goal respecting which the lines of direction of all its rules converge to one point, which although it is only an idea (*focus imaginarius*) – i.e., a point from which the concepts of understanding do not really proceed, since it lies entirely outside the bounds of possible experience – nonetheless still serves to obtain for these concepts the greatest unity alongside the greatest extension. (A 644/ B 672)

Assume Kant is right in thinking that transcendental ideas are conducive with respect to projects of systematization, why should this confer any genuine epistemic value to them? As an answer to this question, one might suspect that systematicity itself is one of our epistemic ends and that therefore all means conducive to this end are epistemically valuable. But (at least in the *Appendix*) Kant seems to have another answer in mind. He writes that the “systematic unity of the understanding’s cognitions” can be considered “the touchstone of truth” (A 647/B 675), thereby suggesting that the systematic unity of our empirical cognitions is a criterion by

which we test whether these cognitions are true or false (see also A 651/B 679). Thus, the epistemic value of transcendental ideas can be explained with regard to our most central epistemic goal, namely maximizing our set of true beliefs while at the same time avoiding false ones: On Kant's view, transcendental ideas and principles (in their regulative use) play a significant role in the systematization of our empirical cognitions and beliefs, thereby helping to establish a criterion by which we can test whether these cognitions and beliefs are true. Thus, even though transcendental ideas cannot be used to form justifiable judgements about reality, they nevertheless contribute something positive to our central epistemic. Hence, transcendental ideas are of significant epistemic value.

Viewed in this way, the general outline of Kant's approach in the *Appendix* is not very difficult to grasp. But as soon as one tries to reconstruct Kant's thoughts in more detail, one is confronted with a whole string of problems. In order to understand the details of Kant's argumentation and the difficulties that arise here, one has to answer the following sets of questions by recourse to the relevant passages in the *Appendix*.

- (1) According to Kant, transcendental ideas are supposed to be conducive to projects of systematization. How can the systematization-projects Kant is interested in be characterised? What exactly is systematized in these projects and what exactly does Kant mean by bringing "systematic unity" to something?
- (2) After the systematization-projects are specified, we have to ask: Which transcendental idea (or which principle derived from that idea) is supposed by Kant to be indispensably helpful with respect to the specified projects? And *in what way* is the idea (or the principle derived from that idea) supposed to be helpful?
- (3) Finally, the epistemic status of the principles derived from transcendental ideas has to be discussed. Indeed, in light of Kant's considerations, the following question will emerge: How can it be rational for an epistemic subject to engage in projects of systematization at all, given that these projects depend substantially on principles that cannot be justified in the first place.

Given the focus of this paper, (3) is especially interesting because with respect to (3) problems will arise that might be solved by recourse to Wright's theory of entitlements. However, without giving at least partial answers to (1) and (2) (see sections 2.1-2.2), the problems and difficulties concerning (3) cannot be adequately addressed (see section 2.3).¹

¹ Even though Kant broaches the issue of ideas and principles of reason again in the *Critique of Judgement*, my discussion will be restricted to the *Appendix* and other parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This restriction is due to the fact that the relation between the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the

2.1. Projects of Systematization

In order to specify the projects in which Kant is interested, one should first specify what these projects are supposed to systematize. In the *Appendix* Kant mostly writes that the objects of systematization are cognitions. But of course the term “cognition” (“*Erkenntnis*”) is used by Kant to refer to different things. In some passages, however, Kant is more explicit. In his attempt to characterize the systematic unity reason aims to achieve, for example, he explicitly speaks of *concepts* (*Begriffe*).

Systematic unity [...] can be made palpable in the following way. One can regard every concept as a point, which, as the standpoint of an observer, has its horizon, i.e., a multiplicity of things that can be represented and surveyed, as it were, from it. Within this horizon a multiplicity of points must be able to be given to infinity, each of which has its narrower field of view; i.e., every species contains subspecies [...]. But different horizons, i.e. genera, which are determined from just as many concepts, one can think as drawn out into a common horizon, [...], which is the higher genus, until finally the highest genus is the universal [...] horizon, determined from the standpoint of the highest concept and comprehending all manifoldness, as genera, species, and subspecies under itself. (A 658f. /B 686f.)

This passage illustrates three points. First, the objects reason tries to bring into a systematic unity are concepts. Second, the systematic unity reason aims at is a hierarchical organization of concepts in generic terms, subconcepts, sub-subconcepts, etc. In the best case this hierarchical organization will have a highest concept which subsumes all other concepts, but there will be no lower boundary of concepts. Third, Kant thinks that by hierarchically organizing our concepts we also organize the objects referred to by our concepts into a hierarchical order of species, subspecies, sub-subspecies, and so on.

When we engage in such a project of systematization, we are instructed with respect to a given concept that determines a specific genera or species to find the next higher concept that determines the next higher species until we have determined the highest species through the highest concept. At the same time, we are also instructed with respect to a given concept to find various subconcepts that assign various subspecies to a given species.

However, it is important to note here that Kant not only claims that our attempts of systematization concern concepts and things, “but even more the [...] properties and power of things” (A 662/B 690) and thereby eventually our (empirical) *beliefs*. The systematic unity reason seeks to achieve with respect to our beliefs is best understood as a tightly meshed net of

Critique of Judgement is hard to specify. It is unclear whether the relevant considerations in the succeeding work should be considered as a development and specification of the related theses in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, or whether they should rather be considered as a fresh start in a whole different setting. For the purposes of this paper, this complicated question does not have to be answered. For interesting discussions of this issue, see, e.g., Guyer 1990; Horstmann 1997, V-VII.

beliefs, where all beliefs stand in dense inferential connections to one another. This understanding fits well with Kant's characterisation of reason at the beginning of the *Dialectic*, where he states that reason, in inferring conclusions from propositions, "seeks to bring the greatest manifold of cognition [...] to [...] the highest unity" (A 305/B 361).

When we engage in a project of systematization in this sense, we are instructed to interpret our beliefs as premises in possible arguments, which lead to conclusions that in turn can be used as premises in further arguments. On the other hand, we are also instructed to find with respect to a given belief B_1 a set of other beliefs B_2 - B_n which could serve as premises from which B_1 could be inferred. In the best case we thereby achieve systematic unity with respect to our beliefs understood as a dense net of beliefs held together by various inferential connections. In this way, the systematic unity with respect to beliefs seems to have a hierarchical structure as well. At its top there are a few fundamental beliefs which can be used to infer other beliefs, which in turn can be used to infer even more beliefs, and so forth. Analogously to the organization of concepts, Kant thinks that the systematic organization of our beliefs as characterized here also leads to a systematic organization of the states of affairs to which our beliefs refer.

In summary, the projects of systematization on which Kant focuses in the *Appendix* can be characterized as projects aiming at a complete and hierarchical organization of our empirical concepts and beliefs, and thereby also aiming at a systematic organization of the things to which these concepts and beliefs refer.

2.2. Transcendental Ideas and Projects of Systematization

In light of the above characterization of our projects of systematization, how do we have to understand Kant's claim that transcendental ideas – "Soul", "World", and "God" – are indispensably helpful for successfully executing these projects? Are all three ideas equally conducive to the success of these projects, or might one of these ideas be more conducive than the others? Or do we have to further specify these projects in order to find different subprojects which then could be said to depend substantially on each one of the transcendental ideas respectively? On the basis of Kant's text these questions are not easy to answer.

The *Appendix* is organized into two sections. In the first section, entitled "*On the regulative use of the ideas of pure reason*", Kant speaks of a transcendental idea as a "principle of (systematic) unity", which is supposed to be indispensable for the projects of systematization (A 644ff./ B 672ff.). Not until the second section, entitled "*On the final aim of the natural dialectic of human reason*", does Kant refer to the specific ideas of "Soul",

“World”, and “God” (A 669ff./ B 697ff.). Unfortunately, Kant never systematically discusses how these ideas are related to the so-called principle of systematic unity and its role in the performance of systematization-projects. Only with respect to one of these ideas, namely the idea “God”, does Kant explicitly draw a connection to reason’s principle of systematic unity. What does this principle say, and how is it connected to the idea “God”?

The principle of unity merely says that reality is constituted in a way that projects of systematization can be performed successfully. Thus, according to the principle of unity, reality itself is systematically and hierarchically structured (A 645f./ B 673f.). By accepting this principle, we are obliged to think that in performing the relevant projects we are at least approaching the truth with respect to the structure of reality. But if the principle “means nothing more than that reason bids us consider every connection in the world according to principles of systematic unity”, then on Kant’s view the principle requires us to consider the various relations in the world “as if they had all arisen from one single all-encompassing being, as supreme and all-sufficient cause” (A 686/ B714). Since this all-encompassing being is God, considering the world according to the principle of unity is for Kant nothing more than considering the world as if God has created and organized it systematically. We can therefore proceed as follows: As soon as we have reconstructed in detail in what way the principle of systematic unity is supposed to be conducive to projects of systematization, we have also thereby reconstructed the way in which the transcendental idea “God” – or more precisely the proposition “God exists”, which relies on the idea “God” – is supposed to be conducive to these projects.²

So to what extent does Kant take the principle of systematic unity to be conducive to our projects of systematization? Immediately after Kant elaborates on the content of the principle, he calls it a “logical principle” (A 648/ B 676), meaning in this context that the principle should not be taken to have any assertive force, rather it should be taken as an instruction or guideline. In this sense, the principle is not used to make the *assertion* that reality is in fact organized systematically but rather is used as a *directive to find* systematicity and hierarchical organization in reality.

² Before following this strategy, one might wonder how the other ideas, namely “Soul” and “World”, fit into the picture. On my interpretation of the relevant passages in the *Appendix*, Kant takes the idea “God” – via its close connection to the principle of unity – to be conducive with respect to the systematization-projects characterized in section 2.1. The ideas “Soul” and “World”, on the other hand, are then supposed to be conducive to more specific subprojects (see A 672ff. / B 700ff.). For the purposes of this paper, however, it is not necessary to defend this interpretation in detail. In the remainder of the paper I will therefore concentrate on the transcendental idea “God” and thereby on the principle of unity and its positive role in performing projects of systematization. Considering the other ideas and their specific role in performing certain subprojects would take us too far afield from the main topic of the paper, namely the interesting relations of Kant’s thoughts in the *Appendix* and Wright’s theory of entitlements.

Regarding this usage, Kant subdivides the general principle of unity into three subprinciples: First, the *principle of homogeneity*, which instructs us to find the next higher genera with respect to a given species. Second, the *principle of specification*, which instructs us to find lower species with respect to a given genera. Third, the *principle of continuity*, which instructs us to find species between already determined species and subspecies (A 658/B 686).

Given the way we characterized the projects of systematization regarding our empirical *concepts*, one can clearly see that the regulative use of the principle of unity – by means of its subprinciple – requires us to perform exactly those actions we have to perform in order to make progress in those projects. Kant also seems to hold an analogous view with respect to the execution of projects concerned with our *beliefs* (A 662f./ B 690f.). Thus, Kant thinks that the principle of systematic unity (and thereby the transcendental idea “God”, or more precisely the proposition “God exists”) is indispensably helpful in its regulative use with regard to both of the above-specified projects of systematization, as this regulative use explicitly directs the execution of both projects in various ways: By means of its subprinciples, the principle directs one to perform exactly those actions one has to perform in order to make headway in the projects at issue.

However, it is important to note that on Kant’s view the aforementioned principles do not only exercise this *directive function* but serve an *explorative* and *corrective* function as well.

They are insofar *explorative*, as they are “[...] indispensably necessary if besides the objects before our eyes we want to see those that lie far in the background, i.e., when [...] the understanding wants to go beyond every given experience [...], and hence wants to take the measure of its greatest possible and uttermost extension” (A 645 / B 673). Thus, the principles (or more precisely the instructions and maxims arising from them) are supposed to help us expand the realm of reality that is accessible to us empirically. In this sense it might, for example, be argued that the *principle of specification* helped physicists first to conceptually grasp subatomic particles, whereupon they eventually developed procedures to prove the existence of these particles empirically. Going in the other direction, it might also be argued that the *principle of homogeneity* helped physicists to first hypothetically postulate the unity of electrical and magnetic forces, whereupon they eventually developed procedures to prove its existence empirically (cp. Rauscher 2010, 296).

Besides these directive and explorative functions, Kant also takes the principles to exercise an important *corrective* function. Since within this paper Kant’s view on this matter cannot be discussed in detail, I will, for the purposes of this paper, simply propose the following interpretation of the relevant passages (s. A 662f./B 690f.): In the context of

systematization-projects the principle of unity (together with its subprinciples) exercises insofar a *corrective function*, as it eventually empowers us to correct, adjust, and specify experiential data which can be used as evidence for our theories (cp. Thöle 2000, 128f).

We are now in a position to clearly summarize Kant's view regarding the relation of the transcendental idea "God" and the specified projects of systematization: The transcendental idea "God", or more precisely the proposition "God exists", is on Kant's view closely related to the principle of systematic unity. In fact, Kant takes them to be so closely related that in order to reconstruct how the idea "God" (or the proposition "God exists") is supposed to be conducive to systematization-projects one can just as well reconstruct how the principle of unity is supposed to be so conducive. The principle of systematic unity basically says that reality itself is systematically structured. It is a specific use of this principle that is supposed to make the principle conducive to the characterized projects, namely its *regulative use*. In its *regulative use*, the principle is not taken as an assertion (in Kant's terms, that would be its *constitutive use*), but rather as an instruction regarding the execution of these projects. In order to specify the instruction delivered by the principle, Kant subdivides the principle into three subprinciples—the principles of homogeneity, specification, and continuity—thereby also subdividing the instruction delivered by the principle into three correlated submaxims. Kant takes these maxims to exercise different functions: In their *directive function*, they instruct us to perform exactly those actions we have to perform in order to make progress within the characterized systematization-projects. In their *explorative function* they eventually expand the realm of reality that is accessible through experience. And finally in their *corrective function* they eventually put us in position to correct, adjust, and specify experiential data.

2.3 The Epistemic Status of the Principle of Unity

What is the epistemic status of reason's principle of systematic unity? This question is of great importance to Kant. But understanding his approach to the question involves considerable exegetical and systematic difficulties. In what follows, I will first explicate the exegetical problems. Then I will argue that these exegetical difficulties reveal a substantial systematic problem.

The previous section highlighted that in the *Appendix* Kant understands the principle of systematic unity as a regulative principle, i.e., the principle is not understood as *assertion* that reality is systematically structured, but rather as an *instruction* as to how to look for

systematic structure in reality. In the same vein, Kant writes in the beginning of the *Transcendental Dialectic*:

Yet such a principle [the principle of systematic unity, J.B.] does not prescribe any law to objects and does not contain the ground of the possibility of cognizing and determining them as such in general, but rather is merely a [...] law of economy for the provision of our understanding, so that through comparison of its concepts it may bring their universal use to the smallest number, without justifying us in demanding of objects themselves any such unanimity [...], and so give objective validity to its maxims as well. (A 306/B 362f.)

This quote unmistakably clarifies that the principle of unity is neither supposed to formulate a transcendental condition in the Kantian sense, i.e., it does not formulate a condition for the possibility of the objects given in experience, nor does it justifiably assert anything else about objective reality. Rather the principle is interpreted as regulative principle guiding the organization of our concepts.

However, in marked contrast to these claims, Kant writes a few pages later, that interpreting the principle as a regulative principle actually *presupposes* that the principle has *transcendental status* in the Kantian sense and does thereby also *assert* something about objects:

In fact it cannot be seen how there could be a logical principle of rational unity [i.e., the principle of unity as a regulative and action-directing principle, J.B.][...], *unless a transcendental principle is presupposed, through which such a systematic unity, as pertaining to the objects itself, is assumed a priori as necessary* [italics, J.B.]. (A 650f./B 678.f)

This quote and other relevant passages in the *Appendix* illustrate that Kant seems to think that in our *search* for systematic unity, we have to presuppose “that this unity of reason conforms to nature itself” (A 653/B 681). Thus we have to concede the principle an objective status, i.e., we have to understand the principle as asserting something about reality. Furthermore, Kant seems to think that we are allowed to concede this objective status to the principle because without the principle “no empirical concepts and hence no experience would be possible” (A 654/B 682) – which appears to give the principle a *transcendental status* in the Kantian sense.

So on the one hand, Kant claims that reason’s principle of systematic unity is neither assertive nor transcendental, and on the other hand he explicitly claims the opposite. Because of this tension in the Kantian text, many commentators have judged Kant’s arguments and considerations in the *Appendix* to be obscure and confused (see, for example, Smith 1918, 547ff.; Bennett 1974, 258ff.; etc.). Even Kant himself admits that his characterization of the regulative principles of reason is a little strange.

What is strange about these principles [...] is this: that they seem to be transcendental, and even though they contain mere ideas to be followed in the empirical use of reason [...], these principles, as synthetic propositions a priori, nevertheless have objective but indeterminate validity, and serve as a rule of possible experience [...], and yet one cannot bring about a transcendental deduction of them, which, as has been proved above, is always impossible in regard to ideas. (A 663f./B 691f.)

All in all, the strangeness that Kant addresses himself can be located in three pairs of contradictory claims.

First: On the one hand, Kant claims that the principle of systematic unity is nothing but a regulative principle guiding the execution of specific projects. On the other hand, he also claims that the principle cannot merely be interpreted as a regulative principle, but has to be interpreted as an assertion about objective reality as well (A 650f./ B 691f.).

Second: Kant claims that the principle of systematic unity is *not* transcendental, insofar as it “does not prescribe any law to objects” and therefore “does not contain the ground of the possibility of cognizing [...] them” (A 306/ B 626). Yet he confers transcendental status to the principle, precisely because “without it no empirical concepts and hence no experience would be possible” (A 654/B 682).

Third: Kant claims that the principle of systematic unity has transcendental status and can therefore be considered as a synthetic proposition a priori (A 636/B 691). However, he also claims that “one cannot bring about a transcendental deduction” (A 663/ B692) of it, which in the light of other assumptions in the *Critique of Pure Reason* seems inconsistent. Kant reserves many pages of the *Critique* to argue that synthetic propositions a priori (at least if we ignore mathematical propositions) are only possible if they formulate conditions for the possibility of experience and thereby also conditions for the possibility of objects given in experience. But whether a proposition formulates such conditions must on Kant’s view be provable by a transcendental deduction – this is the main result of Kant’s *Transcendental Analytic*. And since it is impossible to give such a deduction with respect to ideas and principles of reason by recourse to these ideas and principles, no synthetic judgements a priori can be formulated – this is the main result of Kant’s *Transcendental Dialectic*. But then, in the *Appendix*, Kant claims that one of the principles of reason, namely the principle of systematic unity, *does* formulate a synthetic proposition a priori, which cannot be proven by a transcendental deduction at all. In the broader context of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* this claim seems not only a little strange but outright inconsistent with other things he has asserted.

A satisfying reconstruction of Kant's thoughts in the *Appendix* has to deal with these supposed inconsistencies. Basically there are two options: (a) One can either try to interpret the relevant passages in a way that all the apparent inconsistencies disappear; or (b) one can

admit that Kant is inconsistent, but try to give an explanation of why Kant is led to make all these inconsistent claims.

In what follows, I will adopt approach (b). I will argue that there is a serious systematic problem that inevitably arises in the context of the *Appendix* which eventually misled Kant into making these various contradictory claims.³

The discussion in the previous section has revealed that for Kant the principle of unity (via its subprinciples) is supposed to perform a directive, explorative, and corrective function. In order to exercise all these functions, it seems as if the principle has to be interpreted not only as an assertion, but as an assertion that is epistemically justified in some way. Because only if the principle – interpreted as an assertion about reality – has some positive epistemic status, can it be rational for an epistemic subject to perform the characterized projects. Why?

Assume the principle is wrong and the world itself is not systematically structured. In this case, I do not only waste my time in executing the specified projects of systematization, as some commentators seem to think (see, for example, Guyer 1997, 49f.). More dramatically – given its supposed explorative and corrective functions – if the principle is false, I will be systematically led astray (on this point cp. A 660/B 688). Thus our projects of systematization are conducive to our epistemic aim of maximizing true beliefs while at the same time avoiding false ones, only if the principle of unity is true. Otherwise, we will be led astray systematically and executing the project might even be detrimental to this epistemic aim. From an epistemic perspective, only those procedures with a real chance of being conducive with respect to our epistemic aim can be considered rational. Thus we can conclude: Performing the characterized projects of systematization is epistemically rational, only if the principle of systematic unity has itself some positive epistemic status. Kant seems to have been well aware of this point (cp. A 660/B 688 & A 650f./B 678f.). However, in the context of Kant's theory there are only two ways to attribute to a principle a positive epistemic status: One can either give empirical or a priori reasons which make the truth of the principle at least probable. Unfortunately, within

³ Within this paper option (a) cannot be discussed in detail, so I will content myself with short remarks. Option (a) can be spelled out in two different ways. One can either defend (a1) a weak or (a2) a strong reading of Kant's claims concerning the transcendental status of principles of reason. According to (a1), Kant's talk of the "transcendental status" regarding the principle of unity, is not supposed to mean that the principle is a condition for the possibility of experience (s. McFarland 1970, 14ff.; Walsh 1975, §41; Wartenberg 1979). Thereby the apparent inconsistencies are supposed to disappear. Following (a1) has two difficulties: First, one has to find a convincing alternative what Kant actually means by calling the principle of unity transcendental. Second, one is forced to ignore passages where Kant explicitly claims that the principle *is* a condition for experience (see especially A 654/B 682). According to (a2), these passages have to be taken at face value: By calling the principle of unity "transcendental" Kant really wants to say that it is a condition for the possibility of experience. With regard to Kant's broader approach – especially if one takes the *Critique of Judgement* into account – this might be an interesting position. But the fact remains that in the context of the *Critique of Pure Reason* such a reading is implausible, since it seems to involve a revision of many central theses of this work (for a similar view see Horstmann 1997, VII).

Kant's own theory the principle of systematic unity can neither be justified by empirical nor by a priori reasons.

Why is Kant unable to justify the principle of unity by empirical reasons? We have seen that on Kant's view the principle of systematic unity and the proposition "God exists" are very closely related (see section 2.2). Sometimes it even seems as if he takes them to be equivalent. But if they are supposed to be equivalent, then in the context of his theory Kant cannot claim that the principle of unity is justified by empirical reasons because the main result of his discussion of the so-called "physicotheological" proof of God in the context of the *Transcendental Dialectic* consists precisely in the claim that the existence of God *cannot* be defended by experience, i.e., cannot be justified by empirical reasons.

But even independently of the assumed (and admittedly questionable) equivalence one can argue that Kant is unable to justify the principle of unity by empirical means. The principle says that reality is systematically structured, and in order to justify this principle by empirical reasons, one is committed to the following strategy: One has to focus on one's experiences, empirical concepts, and beliefs, and then show that (i) all these experiences, concepts, and beliefs stand in various systematic relations; from that one would have to infer that (ii) reality – to which one's experiences, concepts, and beliefs refer – is systematically structured as well.

However, from a Kantian perspective this strategy is epistemically circular. It is circular because the justification of (i) already presupposes the justification of (ii). Why? Kant thinks that in order to show that one's experiences, concepts, and beliefs stand in systematic relations, one has to perform various systematization-projects based on the principle of unity. But the results of these projects are justified, only if it is already justified that reality itself is systematically structured. If reality were not systematically structured – i.e., if the principle of unity were false – then executing projects of systematization would lead us astray, such that these projects would produce many wrong results. Thus, the results of these projects, i.e., the assumption that my empirical experiences, concepts, and beliefs are systematically organized, can only be justified to the degree the principle of systematic unity is justified in the first place. Therefore the principle of unity cannot be justified by pointing to the results of our systematization projects – such an attempt would be question-begging, in that it would already presuppose the justification of the principle it sets out to justify.

It seems as if Kant was aware of this apparent circularity as well. In explaining why the regulative use of the principle of systematic unity demands that "systematic unity be presupposed [...] as unity of nature [...] *a priori* [italics, J.B.] ", he claims that otherwise "a vicious circle in one's proof" (A 693/ B 721) would arise. We can therefore conclude that from a Kantian perspective, every attempt to justify the principle of systematic unity by empirical reasons is bound to fail due to epistemic circularity.

However, justifying the principle a priori seems impossible as well, at least from within the broader context of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Again, this is due in part to the equivalence Kant seems to assume with regard to the principle of systematic unity and the proposition “God exists”. Obviously, the chief result of *The Ideal of Pure Reason* is that the existence of God cannot be proven a priori. Hence, given the equivalence-assumption, an a priori justification of the principle of unity is precluded as well.

But again, nothing important hinges on the supposed equivalence-assumption. Even independently of this assumption an a priori justification of the principle of unity seems impossible – at least in the context of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. The principle of systematic unity is, in Kant’s terms, not an analytic but rather a synthetic judgment. Apart from mathematical sentences, Kant thinks that synthetic judgements can only be justified a priori if they assert a condition for possible experiences and thereby a condition for possible objects of experience – so far the main result of the *Transcendental Analytic*. Within this *Transcendental Analytic*, Kant puts tremendous effort into the task of specifying these conditions by means of the so-called *categories*, which he takes himself to have listed exhaustively in the *table of categories* (see A 80/B 106).⁴ However, the *principle of systematic unity* can be found neither in Kant’s *table of categories* nor in the list of judgements and principles which can be derived from these categories. Hence, at least within the context of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant does not appear to have the resources to consider the principle of unity justified by either empirical or a priori means.

In summary, the difficulties with respect to the status of the principle of unity can be characterized like this: The principle of systematic unity says that reality is structured systematically. In its regulative use, the principle is interpreted as an instruction regarding how to execute systematization-projects. On this interpretation, the principle (together with its subprinciples) exercises directive, explorative, and corrective functions. However, these functions can only be exercised adequately, if the principle is interpreted not only as an instruction but also as a justified assertion about reality. If the principle were not justified, then its regulative use – especially given its explorative and corrective functions – would be epistemically irrational. For Kant there are only two ways a principle can be justified: either by empirical or by a priori reasons. However, in light of central theses of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant cannot consistently consider the principle to be justified by either type of reason. Hence, by Kant’s own lights the regulative use of the principle of unity must seem epistemically irrational. But then Kant’s undertaking in the *Appendix* seems doomed to fail. How should the regulative use of the principle of unity be accountable for the positive

⁴ For a recent and detailed discussion of the Kantian *table of categories* and a defence of its supposed completeness, see Hoepfner 2011.

epistemic status of this principle – and thereby for the positive status of the transcendental idea “God” – if this regulative use is epistemically irrational?

While working on the first *Critique*, Kant presumably was not aware of the depth of this problem, so he was misled to make the aforementioned contradictory claims. He first points to the mere regulative use of the principle of unity. But he quickly realizes that this regulative use with all its functions can only be epistemically rational if the principle is also understood as representing a justified assertion about reality. Since he is well aware that the principle cannot be justified empirically, he is left with the option to consider the principle to be justified a priori. But in the light of other assumptions in the *Critique*, an a priori justification of the principle seems impossible as well. This is why in the *Appendix* Kant keeps oscillating between attributing to the principle a transcendental and thereby a priori status and denying the principle such a status.

In retrospect, however, Kant seems to have realized the significance of the problem. In §60 of the *Prolegomena*, he writes with regard to the *Appendix* and the task of specifying the epistemic status of the principles of reason that “in the book itself” (meaning the *Critique of Pure Reason*) he has “indeed presented this problem as important, but [...] not attempted its solution,” (4: 364). This can also be read as the admission that, within the context of the *Critique*, the positive epistemic value of ideas and principles of reason cannot be satisfactorily explained. Consequently, Kant takes up this task together with the general topic of systematicity again in the *Critique of Judgement*. However, his discussion of the topic there is thoroughly different, since there the faculty of reflective judgment is introduced.⁵

In the next section 3, I will turn to a contemporary theory, which is in a certain sense comparable to Kant’s position in the *Appendix*, namely Crispin Wright’s theory of entitlements. After this theory is discussed in some detail, I will argue in section 4 that via recourse to Wright’s theory Kant’s position in the *Appendix* could be rehabilitated.

3. Wright’s Theory of Epistemic Entitlements

In the article *Warrant for Nothing (and Foundations for Free)*, Crispin Wright motivates and develops an epistemological theory that allows for a specific form of justification that is both non-evidential and internalist. It is non-evidential insofar as it is supposed to be independent of empirical and a priori evidence or reasons (see Wright 2004, 174-175). However, this feature alone would not account for a new and very interesting variant of justification. After all, there

⁵ Concerning the relation of Kant’s reflections on systematicity in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Judgement*, see Guyer 1990, Horstmann 1997, V-VII.

are a lot of externalist conceptions of justification which are non-evidential in this sense as well. But the form of justification Wright is interested in – which he calls “entitlement” – is also explicitly internalist.

[...] its spirit has been very much internalist: entitlements, it appears, in contrast with any broadly externalist conception of warrant, are essentially recognisable by means of traditionally internalist resources – a priori reflection and self-knowledge – and are generally independent of the character of our actual cognitive situation in the wider world – indeed are designed to be so. (Wright 2004, 209-2010)

This quote firstly specifies what Wright means by calling his conception of justification *internalist*. It secondly illustrates some terminological points. Wright uses the term “warrant” as a general term that covers all kinds of epistemic justification, evidential or non-evidential. The term “entitlement” denotes a non-evidential internalist kind of warrant, and the term “justification” an evidential internalist kind. Wright does not coin a specific term for the externalist kind of warrant, merely calling it “externalist warrant”. In what follows, I will adopt this terminology.

Wright discusses four specifications of entitlement, but for the purpose of this paper only the so-called “entitlement of cognitive project” is relevant (see Wright 2004, 188-197). It is this kind of entitlement that allows for interesting connections to Kant’s theory of regulative ideas and principles. Thus, the following discussion is exclusively concerned with entitlement of cognitive project. In subsection 3.1, I will first introduce and explain Wright’s theory. In subsection 3.2, I will consider a central problem for the theory and at least point in a direction a solution might go. The relation of Wright’s theory to Kant’s thoughts in the *Appendix* will then be discussed in section 4.

3.1. Entitlement of Cognitive Project

Wright’s theory of entitlement of cognitive project can be characterized as follows:

An epistemic subject *S* engaged in a cognitive project *CP* is entitled to accept/trust⁶ *p* iff

⁶ In Wright’s view it is unclear whether the propositional attitude *belief* is conceptually tied to truth-conducive factors. Maybe it is conceptually impossible to believe that *p* without having any kind of reason in favor of *p*. Therefore, since entitlement is supposed to be independent of reasons, Wright only claims that one can be entitled to *accept* or *trust* that *p*, where the propositional attitudes of *acceptance* and *trust* are supposed to be not as closely tied to reasons as the attitude of *belief* (see Wright 2004, 175-178). Even though I do not share Wright’s worry – I do not think that *belief* is conceptually tied to reasons – I will, nevertheless, adopt Wright’s cautious terminology.

- (i) p is a presupposition of CP ,
- (ii) S does not have sufficient reason to believe $\neg p$,
- (iii) any attempt to justify p would involve presuppositions of no more secure standing than p ...and so on (see Wright 2004, 191-192).

Before discussing conditions (i)-(iii), we first need to clarify what a cognitive project is. Unfortunately, Wright himself does not go into this issue in detail. But he seems to assume that a cognitive project is a project, which, if successfully executed, could be considered a cognitive achievement (see Wright 2004, 189-190). A cognitive achievement is presumably best understood as an achievement with respect to our central epistemic aim of maximizing the set of true beliefs while at the same time avoiding false ones. In this sense, an attempt to determine the correct number of books in my office by counting, for example, can be considered a cognitive project. For the purposes of this paper, this rough characterization of cognitive projects will be good enough, so let us now turn to conditions (i)-(iii).

In order to understand (i), we need to clarify what “presuppositions of cognitive projects” are. Wright specifies presuppositions of cognitive projects as follows: p is a presupposition of a project CP , if to doubt p would rationally commit one to doubting the successful execution of CP (see Wright 2004, 191). In this sense it is, for example, a presupposition of the above characterized project of determining the number of books that my senses and my counting abilities work reliably. If I were in serious doubt regarding these facts, I would be rationally committed to doubt that the project in question could be executed successfully. Thus, in order to be rational in executing CP , one has to be in a positive and doubt-excluding epistemic position with respect to the presuppositions of CP .

How should we understand (ii)? (ii) is a merely negative condition that illustrates that positive evidence that speaks in favor of p is not necessary for S 's entitlement to trust p . All that is called for is the *absence* of evidence speaking for the *falsity* of p . Entitlement with respect to p can therefore always be challenged by counter-evidence.

What does condition (iii) say? (iii) claims that S can only be entitled to accept p , if every attempt to evidentially justify p would involve at least one further presupposition q of no better epistemic standing than p , where the evidential justification of q would in turn involve at least one further presupposition r of no better epistemic standing than q , etc. Thus, S is entitled to trust p independently of evidence, only if every attempt to evidentially justify p would inevitably lead to a regress or a circle.

To illustrate this condition, let us recall the example mentioned above. Assume I pursue the project of determining the number of books in my office by counting. A presupposition of this project is that my senses work reliably. How can I evidentially justify

that presupposition? A priori reasons seem to be excluded, because the reliability of my senses depends on various empirical factors and conditions – for example that nobody put any hallucinogenic drugs in my coffee this morning, etc. Whether or not these conditions obtain cannot be discovered by a priori reflection – I have to take a look at the world. Thus, if I want to evidentially justify that my senses work reliably, I have to do it via *empirical* evidence. But how is that supposed to be accomplished? Gathering empirical evidence will depend on empirical methods and every empirical method I might use to justify the reliability of my senses will, precisely because it is an empirical method, presuppose that my senses work reliably. Thus, every attempt to evidentially justify that my senses are reliable will involve further presuppositions that are of no more secure standing than the proposition I wanted to justify in the first place. In this example, this is quite obviously the case because in order to justify that my senses work reliably by empirical evidence, I have to presuppose just that – namely, that my senses work reliably. Thus, assuming that regresses and circles are inadmissible justification procedures, we can characterize the main claim of (iii) like this: We are entitled to trust p independently of any evidence, only if *any* attempt to justify p by *evidence* are bound to fail.

In summary, two features of Wright's theory of entitlement of cognitive project seem especially important. First, Wright's theory aims at specifying a certain form of warrant, namely entitlement, that is not truth-conducive. In the light of his theory, one can be entitled to accept p , even if there are no factors that speak in favor of p , i.e., no factors that raise the probability of p 's truth. Second, even though entitlement is not truth-conducive, it should not be considered an epistemic "free pass". Entitlement of cognitive project is reserved for presuppositions of cognitive projects, which themselves are directed at our central epistemic goal of maximizing the set of true beliefs while at the same time avoiding false ones (see (i)). Furthermore, entitlements can always be challenged by upcoming counter-evidence (see (ii)). And finally, one is non-evidentially entitled to accept p , only if all attempts to *evidentially* justify p are bound to fail (see (iii)).

Wright's motivation for developing this theory of entitlement is grounded in the hope that the theory will provide the resources for a powerful anti-skeptical strategy. Unfortunately, to discuss this fascinating strategy here would take us too far afield. However, before turning to the connection between Wright and Kant, it is essential to consider an important problem for Wright's theory – especially because this problem will also be relevant for transferring some of Wright's ideas to Kant's thoughts in the *Appendix*.

3.2 Is Entitlement an Epistemic Notion?

Traditionally, philosophers have distinguished between epistemic and pragmatic forms of warrant or justification. Assume a person *S* believes *q*: that her son, who is accused of murder, is innocent. *S* can be pragmatically justified in believing *q*, perhaps because otherwise *S* would not be able to continue living her life as she is used to living it. Thus, one is pragmatically justified in holding a specific attitude towards a proposition when holding that attitude is conducive to achieving one's practical goals (assuming no other practical considerations count overridingly against one's holding that attitude). But of course that does not mean that one is thereby also *epistemically* justified to believe the proposition in question. Pragmatic and epistemic justification can come apart. Assume *S* has many good and undefeated reasons to believe that her son actually committed the crime. In this case *S* does not appear epistemically justified in believing *q*, yet as we have seen, *S*' belief that *q* might still be pragmatically justified.

In the light of this distinction, it seems to be a definitional feature of genuinely *epistemic* justification, or more generally of genuinely epistemic warrant, to be truth-conducive, or again more generally to be somehow directed at truth somehow. Thus, with respect to Wright's theory one might ask why we should be said to have any genuinely *epistemic* warrant to accept *p*, just because *p* is a presupposition of one of our cognitive projects that additionally meets conditions (ii) and (iii). If in such a case we have any warrant at all, it looks much more like a *pragmatic* than an *epistemic* kind of warrant. We are interested in executing a certain project *CP*, and since *p* is a presupposition of *CP* that also satisfies conditions (ii) and (iii), we are in Wright's view entitled to accept *p*. But is this characterization of entitlement not very close to our characterization of *pragmatic* warrant? Indeed, if one wants to claim that entitlement is a genuinely *epistemic* form of warrant, then one has to account for the constitutive truth-directedness of *epistemic* warrant, i.e., one has to show that entitlement can also be characterized as being directed at truth (on this point, see Pritchard 2005, Jenkins 2007, Pedersen 2009).

In what sense is Wright's conception of entitlement directed at truth and therefore a genuine epistemic form of warrant? Wright himself does not answer this question in detail, but he at least points to a certain direction an answer might take.

If a cognitive project is indispensable, or anyway sufficiently valuable to us – in particular, if its failure would at least be no worse than the costs of not executing it, and its success would be better [...] –, then we are entitled to – may help ourselves to take for granted – the original presuppositions without specific evidence in their favour. (Wright 2004, 192)

Presumably the terms “worse”, “success”, and “better” are meant to be normative terms with respect to certain epistemic goals we have. If so, then Wright’s idea that is expressed in this quote can be specified like this: We are *epistemically* entitled to accept presupposition p , because accepting p can be considered to be the dominant strategy with respect to the achievement of certain epistemic goals. It is the dominant strategy, because with respect to the goal in question it cannot lead to worse, but will maybe lead to better results than the alternative strategies. If we further assume that maximizing the set of true beliefs is one of our epistemic goals, this line of thought explains in what way Wright’s conception of entitlement is directed towards truth and therefore a genuinely *epistemic* form of warrant.

Again, this can be exemplified by reconsidering the project of determining the number of books in my office by counting. A presupposition of this project, which also satisfies (ii) and (iii), is that my senses work reliably. With respect to the goal of maximizing the set of true beliefs *accepting that my senses work reliably and executing the project* can be regarded as the dominant strategy. Take a look at the following diagram:

	A	B
	r is true	r is false
Accepting r and executing the project	$+T$	$-T$
Not-accepting r and not-executing the project	$-T$	$-T$

Fig. 1

Here, “ r ” stands for the proposition that my senses work reliably, “ $+T$ ” abbreviates that true beliefs have been added to my set of beliefs, whereas “ $-T$ ” abbreviates that no true beliefs have been added.

Fig. 1 illustrates that *accepting p and executing the project* can be considered the dominant strategy with respect to the specified epistemic goal. This strategy dominates its alternative, because in column B it does not do worse and in column A it actually does better. Thus, even though there might be no truth-conducive factors available with respect to r , I am still entitled to accept r , where this entitlement can be considered a genuinely *epistemic* form of warrant, because accepting r is part of the dominant strategy regarding our *epistemic goal* of maximizing our set of true beliefs.

Unfortunately, this simple line of thought is mistaken (with respect to the following, see Pedersen 2009). The mistake consists in the specification of the epistemic goal. Our epistemic goal does not simply consist in maximizing our set of true beliefs. Otherwise it would be epistemically appropriate to believe any proposition whatsoever. To be sure, this

would lead to the maximal amount of true beliefs, but at the same time it would lead to countless false beliefs as well, which from an epistemic perspective is obviously bad. Thus, our epistemic goal has to be specified a little more carefully: Our epistemic aim consists in maximizing the set of true beliefs *while at the same time avoiding false beliefs*. But with respect to this slightly more complicated epistemic aim, the given dominance-strategic consideration collapses. Again, this can be easily illustrated by a diagram:

	A	B
	r is true	r is false
Accepting r and executing the project	$+T \ \& \ -F$	$-T \ \& \ +F$
Not-accepting r and not-executing the project	$-T \ \& \ -F$	$-T \ \& \ -F$

Fig. 2

“ $+F$ ” means that the set of false beliefs is increased and “ $-F$ ” means that the set of false beliefs is not increased. Fig. 2 illustrates that, with respect to the more adequate epistemic goal, the strategy of *accepting r and executing the project* provides the best results in column A. In column B, however, this strategy does worse than its alternative. Therefore, as long as one accepts that avoiding false beliefs is from an epistemic perspective at least as valuable as increasing the set of true beliefs, the strategy of *accepting r and executing the project* cannot be considered the dominant strategy with respect to our central epistemic aim.

Thus, the given dominance-strategic consideration cannot explain why entitlement should be considered an *epistemic* form of warrant. Because it is not true that with respect to our central epistemic aim *accepting r and executing the project* has either good or at least not worse consequences than *not-accepting r* .

One way of solving this problem might be to differentiate between *actual* and *intended* consequences. In this respect, a comparison to the ethical theory of consequentialism will be helpful. This theory has been defended in an actualist and various non-actualist forms. The actualist consequentialist claims that the moral value of an action depends on the actual consequences of that action. Some non-actualist consequentialists, on the other hand, claim, that the moral value of an action does not depend on the actual, but rather on the intended consequences of that action. This latter variant of the theory is motivated by examples of the following kind: Assume I donate money with the intention to help people in need. Unfortunately, my donated money gets stolen and is eventually used for realizing morally very bad projects. In the light of actualist consequentialism my action of donating money is in this case morally wrong, since it has led to morally bad consequences. In the light of non-actualist consequentialism, however, my action of donating money is in this case morally right (or at

least permissible), since the action was directed at something morally good, i.e., the action was executed with the intention of achieving a morally valuable aim.

With respect to Wright's theory of entitlement, one might try to defend an epistemological position analogous to the characterized non-actualist consequentialism in ethics. If one is entitled to accept p , then it is not guaranteed that this acceptance actually has good epistemic consequences, i.e., it is not guaranteed that it actually is conducive to our epistemic aim. But nevertheless, if one is entitled to accept p , then this acceptance of p is at least intended to achieve epistemically good consequences, i.e., it is at least *directed* at our central epistemic aim. After all, one is entitled to accept p , only if p is a presupposition of a cognitive project. In other words: One is entitled to accept p , only if acceptance of p enables one to execute a cognitive project, where cognitive projects themselves have been characterized as projects directed at our epistemic aim of maximizing the set of true beliefs while at the same time avoiding false ones. Thus, if one is entitled to accept p , then this acceptance is directed at our epistemic aim, because this acceptance enables one to execute a cognitive project that itself is directed at our epistemic aim – even though it is not *guaranteed* that the execution of the project will actually be conducive to that aim.

In this way, the definitional truth-directedness (or more generally, the directedness towards epistemic aims) of genuinely *epistemic* forms of warrant can be attributed to Wright's notion of entitlement as well. Entitlement is not truth-conducive in the usual sense. One can be entitled to accept p , even though there are no reasons or other factors that would make the truth of p more probable. Furthermore, it is not guaranteed that the acceptance of p will actually lead to epistemically valuable consequences, i.e., that it will lead to more true or at least not to more false beliefs. But even though entitlement is not truth-conducive in this strong sense, it nevertheless aims at truth indirectly. Entitlement concerns presuppositions of cognitive projects, which themselves are directed at our epistemic aim of maximizing the set of true beliefs while at the same time avoiding false ones. In this way entitlements are differentiated from mere pragmatic forms of warrant and characterized as a genuine *epistemic* kind of warrant – thereby a serious objection to Wright's theory is answered.

By accepting the outlined defense of Wright's theory, one is committed to a *non-actualist epistemic consequentialism*: The epistemic status of a belief (or other propositional attitudes, for example: trust, acceptance, etc.)⁷ depends not only on reasons, evidence, or other truth-conducive factors – it is also epistemically relevant whether the belief (trust, acceptance, etc.) is in a certain sense directed at achieving valuable epistemic goals.

⁷ Regarding the relation between belief, trust, and acceptance in the context of Wright's theory, see fn. 1.

Even though Wright's theory and the outlined defense have further problems and interesting consequences (see, for example, Jenkins 2007), these problems and consequences cannot be discussed in the context of this paper. Thus, in what follows I will turn to the main concern of this paper, namely the relation of Wright's theory of entitlement and Kant's position in the *Appendix of the Transcendental Dialectic*.

4. Kant's Regulative Principles and Wright's Entitlements

The discussion so far has revealed a structural analogy between Kant's theory of regulative principles on the one hand and Wright's theory of epistemic entitlement on the other: On Kant's view, the epistemic value of the principle of systematic unity depends on its indispensability for specific, epistemically valuable projects of systematization. And on Wright's view, entitlement as a genuinely *epistemic* kind of justification⁸ also depends on the indispensability of certain propositions for cognitive projects that are supposed to be epistemically valuable as well.

But on neither Kant's nor Wright's view is it guaranteed that the enabled execution of these projects will, in fact, be conducive to our epistemic aim. With respect to Wright's position, it has been argued that in case the presupposition of a cognitive project is false, the execution of the project will not lead to epistemically satisfying results. And with respect to Kant, it has been argued that in case the principle of unity is false, we will be led astray systematically in executing the projects enabled by the principle. Nevertheless, enabling the projects in question is supposed to give epistemic value to principles of reason (Kant) as well as positive and genuinely *epistemic* status to entitlements (Wright).

How this is supposed to be possible can be described in consequentialist terms: Neither the Kantian principle of reason nor Wright's presuppositions guarantee that the projects, enabled by those principles and presuppositions, will deliver epistemically valuable results. However, the projects enabled by the principles and presuppositions are designed and executed with the purpose of achieving our epistemic aim. This is why Kant's principle of systematic unity is supposed to be of epistemic value and Wright's presuppositions (that also satisfy conditions (ii) and (iii)) are supposed to be cases of genuinely *epistemic* entitlement.

In the remainder of the paper I will argue that this analogy between Wright's theory and Kant's position in the *Appendix* can be used in a philosophically interesting way. By

⁸ In section 4, I will no longer restrict the use of the term "justification" to *evidential justification*. Instead, I will use it more generally to cover all forms of epistemic warrant. This will simplify the discussion of the various relations between Kant's thoughts and Wright's theory.

recourse to Wright's theory, the problem with respect to Kant's position discussed in section 2 can be solved.

The problem can be summarized like this: Kant's principle of systematic unity claims that reality is systematically structured. This principle is in Kant's view of epistemic value insofar as the regulative and action-directing use of this principle is epistemically valuable. However, Kant realizes that using the principle regulatively is epistemically rational, only if the principle itself has a positive epistemic status, i.e., only if the principle is justified in some way. But in the context of the *Critique of Pure Reason* – which is set by the *Analytic* and the *Dialectic* – the principle of systematic unity can neither be justified by empirical nor by a priori reasons. But since for Kant every justification is either a justification through empirical or a priori reasons, the principle of unity cannot be justified at all. But then, from a Kantian perspective, the regulative use of the principle is epistemically irrational, which in turn seems to make it impossible to explain the epistemic value of the principle by recourse to its regulative use. In light of this difficulty, Kant's project in the *Appendix* – namely explaining the epistemic value of ideas and principles of reason through the regulative use of these ideas and principles – cannot be consistently executed, at least not in the context of other central theses of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

This negative conclusion might be circumvented by recourse to Wright's theory of entitlement. If Kant's principle of systematic unity could be shown to be epistemically justified independently of empirical and a priori reasons, i.e., if it could be shown that we are (in Wright's sense) *entitled* to accept the principle, then the above mentioned difficulty would disappear. Because in this case, one could concede the Kantian results of the *Analytic* and the *Dialectic* – which preclude both an empirical and an a priori justification of the principle – without immediately forfeiting the epistemically justified status of the principle and thereby the epistemic rationality of its regulative use. And if one can hold on to the epistemic rationality of using the principle of unity regulatively, then one does not face a principled difficulty anymore in deriving the epistemic value of the principle from its regulative use.

In developing this outlined defense of Kant's position in the *Appendix*, I will answer the following questions:

- (I) Does Kant's principle of systematic unity meet Wright's conditions for epistemic entitlement?
- (II) Assuming the Kantian principle does meet the conditions, how exactly is Kant's position in the *Appendix* thereby rehabilitated?

- (III) Does the *Critique of Pure Reason* allow for a non-evidential kind of epistemic justification (i.e., for entitlement) and its consequentialist implications? Or does the outlined defense contradict other central claims of the *Critique*?

Questions (I) and (II) will be answered in subsections 4.1 and 4.2. Since the issues surrounding question (III) are very complicated, I can only give a partial answer to (III) and point to directions for further work.

4.1 The Principle of Unity and the Conditions of Entitlement

Does the Kantian principle of systematic unity satisfy Wright's conditions for entitlement?

An epistemic subject S engaged in a cognitive project CP is entitled to accept p iff

- (i) p is a presupposition of CP ,
- (ii) S does not have sufficient reasons to believe $\neg p$,
- (iii) any attempt to evidentially justify p would involve presuppositions of no more secure standing than p ...and so on.

Does the principle of systematic unity meet (i)? The answer to this question has two parts. The reconstruction in section 2 obviously shows that Kant considers the principle as a presupposition of various systematization-projects. However, two points are unclear. (A) Are these projects of systematization cognitive projects in Wright's sense? (B) Can the principle be considered a presupposition of systematization-projects, when "presupposition" is interpreted in the way Wright uses the term? The principle of systematic unity meets condition (i), only if both of these questions can be answered affirmatively.

Regarding question (A): As mentioned above, Wright does not put a lot of effort into characterizing cognitive projects. But he assumes that a cognitive project is a project, which, if successfully executed, can be considered a cognitive achievement (see Wright 2004, 189-190), where a cognitive achievement is plausibly understood as an achievement with respect to our epistemic aim of maximizing the set of true beliefs while at the same time avoiding false ones. Now, of course Kant's projects of systematization are directed at this aim, after all Kant even calls such a project a criterion of truth for our beliefs (see A 647/ B 675 & A 651/B 679). Thus, a successful execution of this kind of Kantian systematization-project can plausibly be considered a cognitive achievement, and the Kantian projects of systematization may thereby be characterized as cognitive projects in Wright's sense.

Regarding question (B): As we have noted above, according to Wright, p is a presupposition of a project CP , if to doubt p would rationally commit one to doubting the successful execution of CP as well (see Wright 2004, 191). Now, my reconstruction in section 2 has revealed that it is one of Kant's important insights in the *Appendix* that it is epistemically rational to execute a systematization-project, only if the principle of systematic unity – which in its regulative use guides the execution of such projects – itself has a positive epistemic status (i.e., is justified in some way). Thus, from a Kantian perspective, doubts with respect to the principle obviously have to be excluded. Kant thinks that if the principle of systematic unity is false, then in the context of systematization-projects it will radically lead us astray. Thus, if we doubt the principle, we are rationally committed to doubt the successful execution of the systematization-projects based on that principle as well. Hence, the Kantian principle of systematic unity is a presupposition of systematization-projects in Wright's exact sense of the term "presupposition".

But what about condition (ii)? The principle of systematic unity says that reality is systematically structured insofar as we at least approach the truth concerning the structural constitution of reality by executing the characterized projects of systematization. From neither a Kantian nor a contemporary point of view do we have serious reasons to assume that this principle is false – otherwise every execution of such a systematization-project would have to be classified as epistemically irrational. Thus, the principle of systematic unity meets condition (ii) as well.

Finally, we must ask whether the Kantian principle of systematic unity satisfies condition (iii). In order to answer this question a comparison to the aforementioned example is helpful. As an example for a proposition that satisfies condition (iii), we have identified the proposition that our senses work reliably. It has been argued that this proposition cannot be justified by a priori reasons. Likewise, every attempt to justify that proposition by empirical evidence would already presuppose that our senses in fact work reliably. Thus, every attempt to *evidentially* justify that proposition must be circular and thereby presupposes something that is of no more secure standing than the proposition that is supposed to be justified – after all, such an attempt presupposes *the exact same* proposition that it sets out to justify in the first place.

With respect to the Kantian principle of systematic unity, analogous points can be made. Given the results of the *Transcendental Analytic* and the *Transcendental Dialectic*, the principle cannot be justified by a priori reasons. And Kant explicitly argues that every attempt to justify the principle by empirical reasons is bound to be circular (see the reconstruction of the Kantian thought in subsection 2.3). Thus, exactly the same characteristics which are accountable for the fact that the above mentioned example satisfies condition (iii) can also be

found with respect to the Kantian principle of systematic unity. Hence, the Kantian principle satisfies Wright's condition (iii) as well.

At least from a Kantian perspective the principle of systematic unity seems to meet Wright's conditions (i)-(iii) for epistemic entitlement. Thus, if Wright's theory is correct, then from a Kantian perspective it would appear that we are epistemically justified in trusting the principle of systematic unity, even though the principle cannot be justified by either a priori or empirical reasons.

4.2 Defending the Kantian Project in the *Appendix*

If the reconstruction of Kant's undertaking in the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic* given in section 2 is not totally misguided, then Kant seems to hold the following views:

- (a) The regulative use of the principle of systematic unity is accountable for the epistemic value of the principle (and thereby also accountable for the epistemic value of the ideas of reason that give rise to the principle).
- (b) The regulative use of the principle of systematic unity is epistemically rational, only if the principle itself is epistemically justified.

However, the combination of (a) and (b) is in conflict with other passages of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, namely the results of the *Transcendental Analytic* and the *Transcendental Dialectic*. Given the *Analytic* and the *Dialectic*, the principle of systematic unity can be justified by neither empirical nor a priori reasons. Thus, as long as one holds on to the view that every justification is a justification through empirical or a priori reasons, the principle is not justified at all. From this, it follows that, in combination with (b), the regulative (action-guiding) use of the principle is epistemically irrational. But if the regulative use of the principle is epistemically irrational, then a fundamental difficulty with respect to (a) arises because it is hard to understand how the regulative use of the principle is supposed to be accountable for the epistemic value of the principle, if this regulative use is itself epistemically irrational.

This fundamental difficulty vanishes, if one shows by recourse to Wright's theory that one's acceptance of the principle of systematic unity can be considered to be an instance of epistemic entitlement and thereby epistemically justified independently of empirical or a priori reasons. In this case, one can hold on to the results of the *Analytic* and the *Dialectic* – which seem to preclude an *evidential* justification of the principle – without thereby losing the

positive epistemic status of the principle – because in this case the principle is *non-evidentially* justified, i.e., we are entitled to trust the principle independently of empirical or a priori reasons. But if the principle is justified, then it does not follow from (b) that it is epistemically irrational to use the principle in a regulative way. And if the regulative use of the principle is not epistemically irrational, then no fundamental difficulty with respect to (a) arises. Hence, by demonstrating that Kant's principle of systematic unity meets Wright's conditions for entitlement, Kant's position in the *Appendix* is rehabilitated, and the conflict between Kant's claims in the *Appendix* and certain results of the *Analytic* and the *Dialectic* is thereby resolved.

However, by recourse to Wright's theory not only can we overcome certain difficulties with respect to the *Appendix*, we can even confirm one of its main claims, namely:

Indispensability-Claim. The epistemic value of the principle of systematic unity follows from the indispensability of the principle with respect to epistemically valuable systematization-projects.

By showing that our acceptance of the principle of systematic unity is an instance of epistemic entitlement in Wright's sense, this claim can be confirmed. Why?

Our discussion of whether Wright's conception of entitlement is genuinely *epistemic* has revealed that Wright's condition (i) is of special importance. It is condition (i) that makes entitlement a genuinely *epistemic* form of justification. Condition (i) assures that entitlement – unlike other non-epistemic forms of warrant – is directed at our central epistemic aim of maximizing our set of true beliefs and avoiding false ones. After all, (i) essentially says that one is epistemically entitled to accept *p*, only if *p* is a presupposition and thereby indispensable for a cognitive project – where cognitive projects are epistemically valuable insofar as they are executed in order to achieve our chief epistemic aim. Thus, by showing that the Kantian principle of systematic unity satisfies Wright's condition (i), one shows that the principle of systematic unity is indispensable for the execution of epistemically valuable cognitive projects. The aforementioned *indispensability-claim* is thereby in a certain sense confirmed. After all, the indispensability-claim says nothing other than that the genuinely *epistemic* value of the principle follows from its indispensability with respect to certain epistemically valuable projects, namely projects of systematization.

Therefore, we can conclude that by recourse to Wright's theory of entitlement Kant's position in the *Appendix* can be rehabilitated and in a certain sense confirmed.

4.3 Entitlement in the Broader Context of the *Critique of Pure Reason*

The aim of section 4 is to defend Kant's position in the *Appendix* even in light of the broader context of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In sections 4.1 and 4.2 it has been argued that by recourse to Wright's theory the conflict of Kant's views in the *Appendix* and certain results of the *Analytic* and the *Dialectic* can be resolved. But this still leaves open the question of whether the given defense is in conflict with *other* central claims of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

By following the Wrightian defense of the Kantian position, one obviously has to give up the *prima facie* plausible principle that every justification is a justification either through empirical or a priori evidence. Even though Kant does not explicitly mention this principle, he nevertheless seems to assume it, because otherwise the reconstructed systematic difficulties that eventually misguided him to make all the supposedly inconsistent claims in the context of the *Appendix* (see section 2.3) would not even arise. Thus, the important question with respect to the Wrightian defense of Kant's position is whether the principle that every justification is a justification through evidence (empirical or a priori) plays a significant role in the *Critique of Pure Reason* or whether that principle may be given up in the context of the *Critique*. Furthermore, since by accepting Wright's theory of *non-evidential* justification, one is also committed to a specific form of epistemic consequentialism, we also have to ask whether the *Critique* allows for a consequentialist position regarding epistemic justification.

In order to answer these questions satisfactorily, Kant's conception of epistemic justification has to be reconstructed in detail. Such a reconstruction is not an easy task because it involves an analysis of various passages of the *Critique*, especially the passage *On having an opinion, knowing, and believing*. This is too much to take on within the context of this paper, so I have to confine myself to a few short remarks.

As far as I can see, it is at least not precluded that there is room in the Kantian theory for a non-evidential and consequentialist form of epistemic justification. After all, Kant's conception of epistemic justification is pluralistic anyway. Some passages of the *Critique* suggest that Kant holds a foundationalist view with respect to justification, whereas other passages suggest that he also allows for a coherentist form of justification. Furthermore, the passage *On having an opinion, knowing, and believing* can be interpreted in such a way as to maintain that Kant allows for a mixture of internalist and externalist views of justification (cf. Chignell 2007). But if Kant's conception of justification is pluralistic anyway, then within this conception there might also be room for a non-evidential and consequentialist form of justification. At least there is, to the best of my knowledge, no central Kantian thesis – be it in *On having an opinion, knowing, and believing* or in other relevant passages – that definitely

rules out such a form of justification. Thus, at least *prima facie* the attempt to rehabilitate Kant's position in the *Appendix* by recourse to Wright's theory of epistemic entitlement does not appear to contradict any central claims of the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

5. Concluding Remarks

In the *Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic*, Kant tries to relegate to ideas and principles of reason a positive theoretical and epistemic value. This attempt is based on the assumption that principles of reason are, in their regulative (and action-guiding) use, indispensable for the execution of epistemically valuable projects of systematization. It is this regulative use that is supposed to account for the epistemic value of these principles.

Grasping the argumentative details of Kant's view is problematic in various ways. First, there is the exegetic difficulty that in the context of the *Appendix* Kant puts forward a whole set of contradictory claims. I argued that these contradictions are the expression of an underlying systematic difficulty in the Kantian approach. The systematic difficulty is that, given certain results of the *Transcendental Analytic* and the *Transcendental Dialectic*, the project of the *Appendix* does not appear able to be consistently executed. But I have also argued that this problem can be solved by recourse to Wright's theory of epistemic entitlement. Since at least *prima facie* Wright's theory does not seem to contradict any central claims of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, even in the broader context of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant's position in the *Appendix* can be rehabilitated.

References

Works by Kant:

Citations from Kant's work are from the Akademie Ausgabe, with the *Critique of Pure Reason* cited by the A/B edition pagination, and the other works by volume:page. Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, (Königlich-Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (now de Gruyter): Berlin, 1902-). English translations are from the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, general editors Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992-).

Other Works:

Bennet, Jonathan (1974): *Kant's Dialectic*, Cambridge.

Chignell, Andrew (2007): *Kant's Concepts of Justification*, in: *Nous* 41, pp. 33-63.

Goldman, Alvin (1979): *What is Justified Belief*, in: G.S. Pappas (ed): *Justification and Knowledge*, Dordrecht.

Grier, Michelle (2001): *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion*, Cambridge.

Guyer, Paul (1990): *Reason and Reflective Judgement: Kant on the Significance of Systematicity*, in: *Nous* 24, pp. 17-43.

Guyer, Paul (1997): *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, Cambridge.

Hoepfner, Till (2011): *Kants Begriff der Funktion und die Vollständigkeit der Urteils- und Kategorientafel*, in: *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung*, Band 65, pp. 193-217.

Horstmann, Rolf-Peter (1997): *Bausteine kritischer Philosophie*, Bodenheim.

Jenkins, Carrie S. (2007): *Entitlement and Rationality*, in: *Synthese* 157, pp. 25-45.

MacFarland, J.D. (1970): *Kant's Conception of Teleology*, Edinburgh.

Pedersen, Nikolaj Jang (2009): *Entitlement, Value and Rationality*, in: *Synthese* 171, pp. 443-457.

Pritchard, Duncan (2005): *Wittgenstein's On Certainty and Contemporary Anti-Scepticism*, in: D. Moyal-Shartok & W.H. Brenner (ed.): *Readings of Wittgenstein's On Certainty*, London, pp. 189-224.

Rauscher, Frederick (2010): *The Appendix to the Dialectic and the Canon of Pure Reason: The Positive Role of Reason*, in: P. Guyer (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge, pp. 290-309.

Smith, Norman Kemp (1918): *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, London.

Thöle, Bernhard (2000): Die Einheit der Erfahrung, in: R. Enskat (ed.): Erfahrung und Urteilskraft, Würzburg, pp. 113-134.

Walsh, W.H. (1975): Kant's Criticism of Metaphysics, Edinburgh.

Wartenberg, Thomas E. (1979): Order Through Reason, in: Kant-Studien 70, pp. 409-424.

Wright, Crispin (2004): On Epistemic Entitlement: Warrant for Nothing (and Foundations for free), in: Aristotelian Society Supplementary, Vol. LXXVIII, pp. 167-212.