

## *Kant's Concepts of Justification*

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Epistemologists surveying the literature on “Kant’s epistemology” often feel at sea. Even bracketing differences in terminology and emphasis, Kant’s writing about knowledge can seem foreign to the contemporary discussion in a way that, for instance, Hume’s or Reid’s does not. Those working in Kant’s epistemology, on the other hand, dissect with great care his arguments about space and time as the forms of intuition, the deductions of the categories, the structure of the antinomies, the prohibition on knowledge of things-in-themselves, and so forth. But none of these topics bears any obvious relation to what goes on in much contemporary epistemology. The main exception, perhaps, is the literature on the Refutation of Idealism: there we find an attempt on the part of commentators to articulate Kant’s anti-skeptical argument in a way that contemporary epistemologists will appreciate. Typically, however, the conclusion is that Kant’s argument is a miserable failure when judged by contemporary standards or successful only insofar as it is bound up with Kant’s other views and thus of less interest to the general philosophical public.

In this paper I want to discuss a neglected portion of Kant’s epistemology that, by contrast, *does* connect directly to topics of great interest in contemporary thinking about knowledge, and does *not* rely on any peculiarly Kantian doctrines. I will also suggest, however, that understanding this portion of the critical philosophy can be very useful for those interested in the finer details of Kantian exotica.

The portion of Kant’s epistemology that I have in mind is his theory of justification, where by “justification” I mean the *evaluative concept that specifies conditions under which a propositional attitude is rationally acceptable with a moderate-to-high degree of confidence*. Kant employs both epistemic

and non-epistemic concepts of justification. An *epistemic concept* of justification sets out conditions under which a propositional attitude is rationally acceptable with a moderate-to-high degree of confidence *and* a candidate (if true and Gettier-immune) for knowledge. A *non-epistemic concept* of justification, by contrast, sets out conditions under which attitudes are rationally acceptable with a moderate-to-high degree of confidence but *not* candidates for knowledge (even if true). The latter conditions will typically be “pragmatic” or “practical,” and thus license acceptance from a “practical” point of view. For Kant, only broadly-speaking practical reasons can provide adequate motivation for adopting a positive attitude towards a proposition (rather than suspending judgment) in the absence of sufficient epistemic grounds.

In order to understand what Kant has to say about justification, we have to be clear about the kind of propositional attitude to which the evaluative concepts apply. That’s my project in the first section of the paper. In contemporary discussions, the fundamental attitude is assumed to be *belief*. For Kant (as for Locke, Leibniz, and some others in the early modern tradition), the attitude is *Fürwahrhalten*—“assent” or, literally, “holding-for-true.” Assent for these writers is the genus of which most other positive propositional attitudes (opining, having faith in, knowing, and the like) are species. Kant doesn’t have an exact equivalent of our contemporary concept of *belief*, but if he did that concept would also fit under the genus of assent. This is not to say, however, that every positive attitude towards a proposition counts as an assent. *Hoping that p* and *expecting that p* don’t involve assenting to *p*, although they might involve assenting to propositions in the neighborhood of *p*.

After laying out Kant’s account of assent, I go on in the second section to analyze his view of what it is for an assent to count as justified (his language is usually adverbial: “assenting sufficiently” (*halten etwas zureichend für wahr*)). It turns out that for Kant there are four different ways of assenting sufficiently: one “objective” way and three “subjective” ways. *Knowledge* (*Wissen*), for Kant, requires not only objective sufficiency but also the first kind of subjective sufficiency as well. *Opinion* (*Meinung*) requires neither kind of sufficiency in order to count as rational (though as a result it must always be held with a low degree of confidence). *Belief or faith* (*Glaube*) needn’t be objectively sufficient but requires the second kind of subjective sufficiency, and it can be held with a very high degree of confidence. *Reflective belief* requires both the second and the third kinds of subjective sufficiency.

I find it striking that many commentators on Kant’s theoretical philosophy discuss the various *knowledge-claims* and *knowledge-denials* that Kant makes, and many commentators on the ethics and religious philosophy discuss the various *belief-claims* and *belief-denials* that Kant makes, without analyzing what *Wissen* and *Glaube* actually amount to for Kant. This paper is an attempt to get started on the latter project, and to do so in a way

that explicitly connects Kant's account with the concerns of contemporary epistemology.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Assent (*Fürwahrhalten*)

Assent is the most general category of positive attitude towards a proposition. By "positive attitude," I don't mean *pro*-attitude—i.e., gladness or hope or goodwill towards the proposition or its truth; rather, I just mean (as the German term itself suggests) a willingness to take it on board, to take it to be true. As noted earlier, assent is a vast rubric under which people in this tradition bring positive attitudes ranging from *adopting as a working assumption* to *knowing with absolute certainty*. Kant's most explicit discussion of assent in the *Critique* is found in the section of the Canon of Pure Reason titled "On Opining, Knowing, and Believing." He also discusses assent at some length in his lectures on logic. In both contexts, the reference to *Meinung*, *Glaube*, and *Wissen* as the three species of assent follows G.F. Meier's logic textbook, which itself echoes Locke's triad in the *Essay*: "Knowledge, Belief (or 'Faith'), and Opinion." For all of the writers in this tradition, assent comes in degrees of strength, and it can be voluntary or involuntary depending on its other features.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the first thing to note here is the difference between assent and judgment (*Urteil*). Readers of the *Critiques* will know that Kant speaks of assent comparatively seldom, whereas judgment is much-discussed (the third *Critique* is, of course, the critique of the "power of judgment" (*Urteilskraft*)). The difference, in short, is that *assent* is a psychological concept whereas *judgment* is strictly speaking a logical concept. I say "strictly speaking" because Kant uses "*Urteil*" in a number of different ways—sometimes to refer to the logical object or content of an assent, but other times to refer to the act of judging or to the faculty of judgment itself. In the strict sense, however, "*Urteil*" for Kant (as for others in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century German context) plays a role similar to that played by "proposition" in contemporary English-language philosophy. It is the logical object of an attitude, and for Wolff, Meier, Kant et al. (as for Aristotle) it always has a subject-predicate structure. So although Kant speaks loosely of "forming" or "making" judgments, what he really means is forming *assents* which have a subject-predicate judgment as their object (A6–9/B10–13, 24:273–4, 9:101ff).<sup>3</sup>

Because assent is such an expansive concept, Kant is quite sensibly a direct voluntarist about some species of assent, and a direct involuntarist about others. In other words, he thinks that in some circumstances we can just *decide* to assent to a proposition, and that that decision will suffice for assenting to it. For example, I can choose to take an unproved theorem in mathematics on board as a working assumption. If I am being rational, my assent in such a case (and everything that it implies) will be a weakly-held "opinion" (*Meinung*), at least until the theorem is somehow confirmed.

Kant also thinks that under some conditions we can just decide to adopt belief (*Glaube*) towards certain propositions—most notoriously, propositions about the existence of God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul. In the second *Critique* he says that this sort of assent is at once demanded of all rational agents, and yet still a “voluntary (*freiwillig*) determination of our judgment” for which we are fully responsible (5:146; 9:67–70).

But there are other species of assent—and in particular those that may (if true and justified) count as knowledge—that are not under our direct control. Kant typically refers to these knowledge-candidates as “convictions” (*Überzeugungen*).<sup>4</sup> This suggests that the title of the third section of the Canon is misleading, since for Kant the three main species of assent are really *conviction*, belief, and opinion, with knowledge being just one sub-species of the first. *Mere conviction* would be the other sub-species.

It also suggests that Kant agrees with the dominant Humean picture in contemporary philosophy according to which convictions are, as Bernard Williams puts it, “things which we . . . *find we have*” and, thus, “there is not much room for deciding to believe.”<sup>5</sup> Here is a decisive quotation from the logic lectures compiled in the 1790’s by Kant’s student G.B. Jäsche:

The will does not have any influence immediately on assent; this would be quite absurd . . . If the will had an immediate influence on our conviction concerning what we wish, we would constantly form for ourselves chimeras of a happy condition, and always hold them to be true, too. But the will cannot struggle *against* convincing proofs of truths that are contrary to its wishes and inclinations. (9:73–4)

Kant overstates his case in the first sentence, since as we have seen he elsewhere says that we can at times have immediate *freiwillig* assent that counts as *Meinung* or *Glaube*. Here however, where he is concerned with conviction in particular, the involuntarist strain in his thinking comes to the fore. Convictions are determined in us by the objective grounds or evidence that we have: if the grounds are compelling enough, we will simply find ourselves with the relevant assent, whether we like it or not. Thus

a businessman, e.g., who sees from his bills that he owes much, more than he possesses or can hope to possess, will of course not be able to withdraw his approval and consent (*Beifall und Consens*) from this cognition, which is so evident, however much he might like to . . . since he is too much and too evidently convinced (*überzeugt*) of the correctness of the arithmetic in this matter, and the account of the debts contains far too much evidence . . . The free *arbitrium* in regard to approval . . . disappears entirely in the presence of certain degrees of the grounds, and it is always very hard, if not utterly impossible, to withhold approval. (24:157–8)

So Kant is not a *direct* voluntarist about conviction.<sup>6</sup> He is an *indirect* voluntarist about conviction, however, because he thinks that there are things we can choose to do that will, in the long run, have the effect of producing convictions in us:

Insofar as the will either impels the understanding toward inquiry into a truth or holds it back therefrom, however, one must grant it an influence on the *use of the understanding*, and hence indirectly on conviction itself, since this depends so much upon the use of the understanding. (9:74)

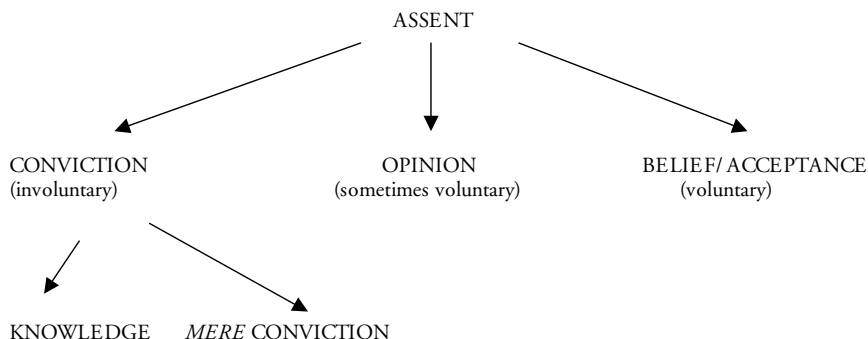
If approval does not arise immediately through the nature of the human understanding and of human reason, then it still requires closer direction of choice, will, wish, or in general of our free will, toward the grounds of proof. (24:158)

Here the thought is that we can choose to direct our attention to certain bits of evidence, survey the evidence we do have more closely, or even go out and seek more evidence in the hopes that what we find will compel our assent. And these choices will typically in the long run produce convictions in us. The main difference between Kant and many contemporary epistemologists on this score, then, is not along voluntarist/involuntarist lines, but rather consists in the fact that Kant thinks involuntary attitudes do not exhaust the field of psychological states with which epistemologists should be seriously occupied.

By now it should be clear that we must resist the temptation to think of “assent” as the Kantian equivalent of our contemporary concept of “belief.” There are, of course, some important similarities: both are positive propositional attitudes and both are the sort of thing which may, if other conditions are met, count as knowledge. But, again, Kant and the others in this tradition include many attitudes under the rubric of assent that we would simply *not* consider beliefs. These include hunches, working assumptions, scientific hypotheses, and other weakly-held opinions. I wouldn’t call my hopeful hunch that there will be wine at the reception a *belief*. But for Kant it is already an assent—a first step, perhaps, towards what we would call belief. In the contemporary context, Kant’s concept of assent is much closer to Robert Stalnaker’s concept of “acceptance.”<sup>7</sup> It is the genus under which belief falls as a species, but it is by no means exhausted by that species.

Kant’s own conception of “belief/faith” (*Glaube*) or “acceptance” (*Annehmung*) is different yet again from both our concept of belief and his concept of assent. It is most similar, I think, to the non-Stalnakerian concept of “acceptance” which has been developed in the contemporary literature by L. Jonathan Cohen and Michael Bratman.<sup>8</sup> I’ll say more about *Glaube* below.<sup>9</sup>

The following, then, is a preliminary map of the territory (we’ll fill in some more of the details later):



## 2. Epistemic Sufficiency

Two central goals of our intellectual lives are to assent to truths and to avoid falsehoods within a large and diverse body of propositions. We want to have many true assents about the world, other people, and ourselves—for both instrumental and intrinsic reasons—and we want to avoid falsehoods about these things. Thus we will not achieve our goals if we somehow avoid assenting to all but a small number of propositions of which we are absolutely certain. The term “*Fürwahrhalten*” itself makes explicit reference to this goal: we typically hold propositions not for fun or because they make us feel good, but rather because we take them to be *true*. And we do this a lot: “our understanding is so desirous of expanding itself and enriching itself with cognitions by judging” (9:74).

Kant speaks of these goals as set for us by reason’s “drive for cognition” (8:139n). William James goes so far as to characterize them as duties:

There are two ways of looking at our duty in the matter of opinion,—ways entirely different, yet ways about whose difference the theory of knowledge seems hitherto to have shown little concern. We *must know the truth*; and we *must avoid error*,—these are our first and great commandments . . .<sup>10</sup>

The language of deontology here, however bracing, surely needs to be qualified. It is unlikely that we can have a *duty* to know truth and avoid error, since oftentimes the achievement of this goal is fully outside of our control. I can diligently seek the truth regarding some issue and acquire overwhelming evidence for a proposition, and yet the proposition may still turn out to be false.<sup>11</sup> Thus it is better to say that the *setting* of these goals—of knowing truths and avoiding errors within a large and diverse body of propositions—is our duty, or at least a good and wise thing to do. The use of a reliable means to these goals will then inherit that obligatory, virtuous, or prudent quality. And a full-blown epistemology will provide such a means by laying out principles that point the way to these goals—principles that show us how to acquire assents that are likely to be true.

Kant opens his discussion of these matters in the Canon by characterizing *Fürwahrhalten* as “an occurrence in our understanding that may rest on objective grounds (*Gründen*), but that also requires subjective causes (*Ursachen*) in the mind of him who judges” (A820/B848). The idea, I take it, is that while *some* assents have an objective ground, *every* assent has a subjective “cause” or ground. I will consider these notions in turn.

### 2.a. Objective

For Kant, “a ground is that from which something can be cognized” (24:42). An *objective ground* is a state that provides reliable information about “the constitution of the object” or state of affairs described by some proposition (A821/B849). The ground indicates that the proposition has some objective probability of being true (24:143f; 24:194; 9:81–82). If that probability is high enough, then the ground renders the proposition worthy of rational assent, since acquiring truth is one of our main goals in forming assents: “Every ground of truth is a ground of assent” (24:143).

Two questions can be raised about this preliminary characterization of objective grounds. First, we might worry about whether such a sophisticated use of the notion of objective probability is legitimate in connection with a reconstruction of an eighteenth-century text. Second, we might wonder whether the ground of an assent regarding an external state of affairs is supposed to be an *internal* psychological state, rather than the external state itself.

In answer to the first question, it is worth noting that historians of probability typically locate the birth of the modern notions in the decade around 1660 or so: Huygens published the first textbook on probability in 1657, and Pascal’s wager argument is summarized at the end of the 1662 Port Royal *Logic*.<sup>12</sup> In the subsequent century, many scholars were working furiously on the logic of probability, especially as the scholastic goal of demonstrative *scientia* in the natural sciences was abandoned in favor of the inductive, experimental knowledge that was being generated by scientific practice itself. Much of this work focused on statistical probability in nature and in games of chance, but the connection to epistemology was often explicit. Indeed, the concept of the “probable” inherited from the scholastics was originally epistemological: it meant something like “testified to by reliable authorities.” By the seventeenth-century, this scholastic appeal to the testimony of the authorities had largely been replaced with an appeal to the testimony of “signs” in nature, but the epistemological connection remained.<sup>13</sup> The research program was so active that in 1736 Joseph Butler could claim that, from the point of view of rational assent, “probability is the very guide in life.”<sup>14</sup>

Kant himself says quite a bit about probability in his published writings and his lectures on logic, not all of which is consistent (and of course we have to take the student transcriptions of Kant’s lectures with a measure of salt).<sup>15</sup> It does seem clear, however, that by the critical period he was

carefully distinguishing the objective probability (*Wahrscheinlichkeit*) of an assent from its subjective probability or “plausibility” (*Scheinbarkeit*). In the lectures transcribed by Jäsche, for instance, Kant says that “the ground of assent can be either *objectively* or *subjectively* greater than [the ground] of its opposite.” Objective probability is determined by considering whether the strength of its ground is “greater than the ground of the opposite *can be*.” In other words, objective probability is the degree to which the ground of an assent renders it likely *as a matter of fact* to be true. “With *Wahrscheinlichkeit*, then, the ground of the assent is *objectively valid*.” *Scheinbarkeit*, on the other hand, measures the degree to which the subject *takes* the assent to be likely given her grounds; it “is merely quantity of persuasion . . . and is only *subjectively valid*” (9:81–2).

Kant’s central thought here is that there is a fact of the matter about the degree to which a particular ground makes a particular proposition probable. The standard against which objective probability is measured is “fully sufficient” grounds—i.e., grounds which render the proposition 100% probable, or certain. Outside of demonstrative contexts, however, Kant rightly says we will rarely know precisely how the grounds that we have measure up against the standard. The relevant facts about objective probability are simply not accessible to the subject herself, and so she will have to work with mere plausibility—i.e., her *own estimation* of the degree to which her grounds render the proposition probable. This sort of “plausibility can alter greatly, for its certainty is grounded in the subject, but probability always remains unchanged, and this merely because it is grounded in the object” (24:195).

There are a number of ways to further specify the notion of objective probability. We could construe it as what might be called “objective logical probability”—i.e., the probability that a logically omniscient being would assign to  $p$  given a subject’s grounds. Such a being would presumably be able to assess the subject’s grounds perfectly, to employ the correct logical criteria, and to have awareness of all the logical possibilities and what they entail. Or we could construe it in a statistical fashion, where one type of event (a process of assent-formation from grounds of a certain sort) has a high statistical likelihood of being accompanied by another type of event (the formation of a true assent).<sup>16</sup> Either way, *Scheinbarkeit* would then measure the degree to which the *particular subject* with her finite logical understanding and her finite grasp of the statistical regularities *takes* her grounds to render the relevant proposition probable. This gap between *Wahrscheinlichkeit* and *Scheinbarkeit* leaves plenty of room for cases of what Kant calls “persuasion” in which the subject takes herself to have better grounds than she actually does (9:53–4).<sup>17</sup>

In response to the first question above, then, I think we can say that though the details of Kant’s theory are murky, the fact that there is this objective/subjective distinction in his theory of probability is indisputable.



And it's also clear that he wants to analyze the objective sufficiency of an assent in terms of some kind of objective probability.

In order to respond to the second question—regarding whether an objective ground is a psychological state or not—we need to know more about what it is for a subject to “have” an objective ground. Kant often says that the fact that a ground is objective means that it is something that all rational inquirers in the same situation could take to be indicative of the truth of the assent that the subject “rests” or “bases” (*beruht*) on it. The metaphor of resting is suggestive, assuming (plausibly enough) that it is meant to be an evidential one. Assents *typically* rest, evidentially speaking, on other psychological states: they are either inferred from other assents, or based on experiential or memorial states of some sort. It would be odd to say that my assent that Matt has grown a Lincolnesque beard *evidentially rests* on Matt's beard, or on the state of affairs <Matt's having a Lincolnesque beard>. This is not to say that psychological states such as assents and experiences aren't *caused* by non-psychological states, of course. But the suggestion here is that the lion's share of a person's objective grounds will be the perceptual, memorial, and introspective states that she has, as well as her various other assents—inferences, arguments, memory-based assents, perceptual assents, assents about what others have testified, and the like.

In support of this interpretation, consider Kant's assertion that “assent based on a ground . . . is *empirical* or *rational*, accordingly as it is grounded either on *experience*—one's own as well as that communicated by others— or on *reason*. This distinction relates, then, to the two sources from which the whole of our knowledge is drawn: *experience* and *reason*” (9:70). Here it seems clear that convictions rest (evidentially speaking) on other states of mind (experiences, memories, inference from other assents, etc.), though they are also sometimes caused by and refer to external states in the world.

Unfortunately, Kant isn't always this clear. In another passage from the Canon he says that the basis of intersubjective agreement regarding particular assents is that they “rest on the communal ground, namely the object (*auf dem gemeinschaftlichen Grunde, nämlich dem Objekte, beruhen*)” (A821/B849). Here the object itself is the communal “ground” of assent insofar as it part of the causal chain by which the assent is produced. And perhaps this is meant to be more than a causal notion: perhaps Kant means to say that the object or state of affairs in the world *itself*, rather than experiences of or assents about it, is the evidential *Grund* on which the assent is based.<sup>18</sup> I remain neutral on this issue here, since nothing crucial to my reconstruction of Kant's view rests on it. As we will see later, in order to *know* something a subject must be able to cite or pick out what she takes to be her objective grounds. As long as that is possible with respect to the relevant *external* states or objects, then perhaps we can allow them to count as objective grounds as well. Again, however, I think that the lion's share of a subject's evidence for an assent will consist of other psychological states (propositional or non-propositional) that she has.

If this is correct, then for a subject to “have” an objective ground for a proposition  $p$  is for her to have psychological states and/or an appropriate kind of access to external states that render  $p$  probable to some degree or other.

Objective grounds can be either “sufficient” (*zureichend*) or “insufficient” (*unzureichend*). A *sufficient objective ground* is one that renders the proposition in question moderately-to-highly likely. The ground is thus “sufficient” to motivate rational assent to the proposition, given our overall goal of truth-acquisition and error-avoidance. Other things being equal, a sufficient objective ground will license rational assent with a degree of confidence precisely equivalent to the degree to which it renders the proposition likely. The *ceteris paribus* clause is important, however, because Kant is typically a fallibilist about sufficient objective grounds in non-demonstrative contexts. At 9:72, for instance, he says that even when one has objectively sufficient conviction “one still listens to opposed grounds.”<sup>19</sup> So strictly speaking “sufficiency” in an objective ground is the quality of being such that *prima facie* a rational subject can hold the assent that it supports with a moderate-to-high degree of confidence. There may still be “undercutting” or “rebutting” defeaters with which he’ll have to reckon.<sup>20</sup>

The fact that a ground of assent is objectively sufficient entails that it is something that any rational subject in the same situation could take to recommend the assent. In Kant’s words, the objectively sufficient ground makes the assent “intersubjectively valid” and “communicable.” But the entailment does not go the other way: assents can count as intersubjectively valid and communicable (and thus “objective” in some broad sense<sup>21</sup>) without being based on grounds that render them probably true. Consider the postulates of practical faith, for instance, or assents about the beauty of vistas and art objects.

Exactly how probable does a ground have to render an assent in order for it to count as objectively sufficient? Kant often indicates that he thinks a sufficient objective ground is one that simply renders the proposition more probable than not. He says in the Blomberg lectures that “if the degree of truth is greater than the degree of the grounds of the opposite, then the cognition is probable . . . With probability (*Wahrscheinlichkeit*), there really is sufficient ground, and yet this ground of truth is greater than the grounds of the opposite; it outweighs them” (24:143). And later: “if there is even one more degree of truth on the side of . . . the ground than there is on the side of the opposite, then the cognition is no longer *ambigua* but rather probable” (24:144; see also Blomberg 24:194; Dohna-Wundlacken 24:742ff; and *Real Progress* 20:299).

Despite the presence of these texts, I don’t think we should draw a hard and fast line at .5. I don’t think we should do that because Kant often expresses skepticism about the project of using precise numerical formulations outside of purely logical and mathematical contexts to characterize objective

probability (24:38–9; 24:82). Bernoulli's attempt to calculate precise degrees of probability is acceptable, says Kant, but only because "it is nothing but a mathematics that is applied to cases of chance. He shows, e.g., how one can throw eight times according to the rules of probability" (24:38). Bernoulli does not try to extend his account of probability to the justification of assent in other situations. And this is wise because "in philosophical cognition [objective] probability cannot be determined, on account of the heterogeneity of the grounds; here the weights are not all stamped, so to speak. Hence it is only of *mathematical* probability that one can really say [with certitude] *that it is more than half of certainty*" (9:82). Presumably what Kant says here about philosophical reasoning would extend to other non-demonstrative types of cognition as well.

Given this skepticism about the use of precise calculations of probability outside of mathematical contexts, I think we would do best to leave the degree to which a sufficient ground has to render an assent objectively probable somewhat vague. Clearly, though, the ground has to render the assent *fairly* probable, by which I mean probable to a degree that is *comfortably* more than .5. This coheres with the idea that objective sufficiency is supposed to be *sufficient for* licensing rational conviction with a *moderate-to-high degree of confidence*. Grounds that render the proposition 50.000001% probable do not license conviction with even a moderate degree of confidence; not, anyway, if we agree with Kant that conviction is aimed at truth.

What kinds of sufficient objective grounds are there? A deductive or transcendental argument would presumably qualify *in excelsis*. Theoretical as well as perceptual, memorial, and testimonial evidence would also count. These sorts of grounds license different *degrees* of assent: the deductive and transcendental proofs license "rational certainty"; scientific inference and sense-perception license "empirical certainty"; testimony licenses "probable assent," and so forth.<sup>22</sup> They are similar, however, in that they are each capable of rendering a proposition rationally acceptable with at least a moderate degree of confidence for a subject who has it.

I noted earlier that sufficient objective grounds typically not only license but also "necessitate" firm conviction: once we acquire sufficient objective grounds for *p*, we usually find our assent to *p* just following along. Convictions are "determined [in us] through objective grounds of truth that are independent of the nature and interest of the subject" (9:70). This does not mean, of course, that there is not *some* sort of "spontaneity" involved in the formation of convictions—Kant famously says that there is in his discussion of category application and the role of the productive imagination.<sup>23</sup> But it does mean that the sort of "spontaneity" involved is not one that is under the direct control of the phenomenal will.

So much, then, for sufficiency in an objective ground. An *insufficient objective ground*, by contrast, is one that does not necessitate assent, and does not render a proposition probable enough to be rationally held with a

moderate-to-high degree of confidence. It may be a *partial* ground—i.e., a ground that makes the proposition *somewhat probable* for the subject who has it. But the probability is too meager for the ground to count as sufficient. Kant says that if “there is a lesser degree of truth on the side of the insufficient ground than there is on the side of its opposite, then the cognition is not only uncertain, not probable, either, but even improbable” (24:144). This need not mean, however, that rational assent to the proposition is not possible. For, as noted earlier, “opinion” (*Meinung*) is *weakly-held* but still permissible assent on the basis of insufficient objective grounds. Opinions of this sort will typically be voluntary, although there may be some hunches or presumptions which are not under the direct control of the will. The key is that they must be held with a low degree of confidence if they are to be rational.

By way of summary: to have an objective ground for an assent to a proposition *p* is simply to have experiences and/or assents that render *p* objectively probable to some degree or other.<sup>24</sup> To have a *sufficient* objective ground for an assent that *p* is to have experiences and/or assents that render *p* objectively probable to a moderate-to-high degree—i.e., probable to a degree that licenses assent with a moderate-to-high degree of confidence. Insufficient grounds can license rational assent in some contexts, but only with a very low degree of confidence.

With this account of objective grounds and their sufficiency in the background, we can formally characterize the evaluative concept of objective sufficiency as follows:

- (1) S’s assent that *p* is objectively sufficient iff S has a sufficient objective ground for assenting to *p*.

(Note again that given Kant’s fallibilism, we should think of the objective sufficiency here and throughout this discussion as *prima facie*. All-things-considered sufficiency will require something else: the absence of defeaters. I will ignore this qualification in what follows.)

### 2.b. Subjective

Kant says that assents may or may not have an objective ground, but that every assent has a *subjective* cause or ground. These subjective grounds have to do with “internal” processes by which a person comes to hold an assent. An assent that is subjectively grounded in an *appropriate* fashion is said by Kant to be “subjectively sufficient.”

Clearly the most obvious candidate for an appropriate subjective ground is the subject’s own recognition that his assent is based on sufficient objective grounds. This ground is appropriate because it is directly connected to the subject’s intellectual goal of maximizing truths and minimizing falsehoods

among a wide and diverse body of propositions. Thus as a first try we might say that

(2) S's assent that  $p$  is subjectively sufficient iff S determines that he has a sufficient objective ground for assenting to  $p$ .

Although (2) is on the right track, it is clearly too "active" to serve. It requires that the subject actually reflect and then assent to the proposition that his objective grounds are sufficient in order for the assent to be subjectively sufficient for him. Our ordinary concept of justification is ambiguous at precisely this juncture: sometimes we speak of *justifying* a belief as an active process of reflection and investigation. And Kant, too, sometimes seems to take an activist stance on this issue.<sup>25</sup> Typically, however, the sort of justification that is of interest in epistemological discussion is of the "static" sort: a subject can *be justified* in assenting to  $p$ , even if he doesn't do anything to show or determine that he is justified in assenting to  $p$ .<sup>26</sup> For example, Joe's assent that the sky is blue can *be justified* simply by way of his having the experience of the sky as blue; he doesn't also need actively to introspect and determine *that* his perceptual experience is a sufficient objective ground for his assent. Kant would presumably agree with this.

What we need, then, is a conception of subjective sufficiency that does not involve activism. One "static" way to go is to say that the subject must *be in a position to cite, on reflection, a ground that he takes to be objectively sufficient for the assent*. Kant seems to go this route when he says that the "criteria of truth" of our assents are either "objective criteria, which contain the ground for why some [assent] is really true or false . . . [or] subjective criteria . . . by means of which one is in a position to make a supposition about the truth or falsehood [of the assent]" (24:87–88, my emphasis). We can leave this notion of "being in a position" unanalyzed, but it should be clear that it need not require serious effort or long periods of reflection. Rather, the subject simply has to be able to use memory, reason, and introspection to cite, on relatively short notice, what he takes to be his sufficient objective ground. Thus

(3) S's assent that  $p$  is subjectively sufficient iff S is in a position, on reflection, to cite what he takes to be his sufficient objective ground for assenting to  $p$ .

(3) gets rid of the activism. But it might be thought that the reflective "citation" on the right-hand side of the bi-conditional must itself be subjectively sufficient. That would mean that in order for S's assent that  $p$  to be subjectively sufficient, S's assent (should he form it) to the proposition that *those are my sufficient objective grounds for assenting to  $p$*  (call this second-order proposition  $p^*$ ) would also have to be subjectively sufficient. But in order for *that* to be the case, S's assent (should he form it) to the proposition that *those are my sufficient objective grounds for assenting to  $p^*$*  (call this third-order

proposition  $p^{**}$ ) would have to be subjectively sufficient as well, and so on *ad infinitum*. This regress seems at worst vicious and at best undesirable, because it implies that in order for S's assent that  $p$  to be subjectively sufficient, S must be in a position to have an infinite number of assents.<sup>27</sup> In order to avoid the regress, we have to keep subjective sufficiency out of the analysans.

We also can't require that the reflective assent referred to on the right-hand side of (3)—i.e., the “citation” of grounds—be *objectively* sufficient. That's because, as we will see in a moment, Kant defines “persuasions” (*Überredungen*) as assents that are objectively insufficient and subjectively sufficient. Such a combination would be ruled out *a priori* if the objective sufficiency of the second-order citation of grounds is *required* for subjective sufficiency. In other words, if I have to be in a position to cite what are *in fact* good grounds for my assent in order for that assent to count as subjectively sufficient, then cases in which my assent counts as subjectively sufficient even while I'm citing bad grounds would not be possible. And yet that is precisely what persuasion is supposed to be: I cite grounds that I *erroneously* take to be good ones. In order to leave logical space for persuasion in Kant's system, then, we have to leave “sufficiency” out of the analysans altogether.

Of course, in doing so we open up the possibility that an assent that  $p$  counts as subjectively sufficient for S even if, on reflection, S makes an *insufficient* assent to the proposition that *those are my sufficient grounds for p*. I don't think this should be too troubling: what we want out of an analysis of subjective sufficiency is not a prescription for epistemic perfectionism, but rather an account of what a normal subject has to be in a position to do (from the inside, so to speak) in order for her assent to be rationally acceptable. We typically think it is okay to hold assents that in good faith we take to have good grounds, even if the latter “taking” turns out, itself, to be unjustified. Kant seems optimistic that in most cases we won't go too far off track in our reflective estimation of the probative force of our objective grounds: most of us, he says, have a decent intuitive grasp of the contrastive probability relations used to evaluate the objective sufficiency of our assents.<sup>28</sup>

There is a related problem with (3), however, which is more serious. The problem is that by leaving sufficiency out of the analysans, we open up the possibility that S's assent that  $p$  is not *well-founded*. For example: suppose that Joe has sufficient objective grounds (his perceptual experience of the sky) for assenting to the proposition that the sky is blue, but suppose also that Joe bases his assent on the fact that someone colorblind from birth told him that the sky is blue. In such a case, Joe's assent would be objectively sufficient according to (1) and subjectively sufficient according to (3). That is clearly a bad result. In order to rule out this sort of case, we have to add something further to the analyses, without introducing a regress.

With this in mind, consider the following:

- (4) S's assent that  $p$  is objectively sufficient iff ( $\exists g_1$ ) such that
- (i)  $g_1$  is a ground that S has, and

(ii)  $g_1$  is a sufficient objective ground for assenting to  $p$ .

(4) is just (1) with a bound variable introduced to pick out the objective ground. The counterpart for subjective sufficiency would then be

(5) S's assent that  $p$  is subjectively sufficient iff  $(\exists g_2)$  such that

(i)  $g_2$  is a ground that S has,

(ii) S's assent is based on  $g_2$ , and

(iii) on reflection, S would cite  $g_2$  as a sufficient objective ground for his assent.

In both formulations, the ground is explicitly identified in order to insure that, if all goes well, the grounds that make the assent objectively sufficient are also the grounds on which S bases his assent and which S is in a position, on reflection, to cite as his sufficient grounds. I have strengthened the "in a position" condition in (3) by adopting the conditional in (5.ii): the idea is that S is *not only* in a position to cite what he takes to be his sufficient objective grounds; he also *would* cite those grounds if he were to reflect. (The truth-conditions for this are located in the nearest world in which S reflects on his grounds.) We can rule out well-foundedness problems, then, by thinking of Kantian knowledge as true assent that satisfies both (4) and (5) where  $g_1 = g_2$ . Or, encapsulated in one principle:

**Knowledge (Wissen):** S's assent that  $p$  counts as knowledge iff  $(\exists g)$  such that

(i)  $g$  is a sufficient objective ground that S has,

(ii) S's assent is based on  $g$ ,

(iii) on reflection, S would cite  $g$  as a sufficient objective ground for his assent, and

(iv)  $p$  is true.

Of course, all does not always go well, and a subject might have a subjectively sufficient assent according to (5) that is not objectively sufficient according to (4), or he might have an assent that satisfies both (4) and (5) where  $g_1 \neq g_2$ . As I mentioned earlier, Kant calls this sort of assent "persuasion" (*Überredung*). A subject is persuaded of a proposition when she would hold, on reflection, that she has sufficient objective grounds for taking a proposition to be true but when the grounds which she would cite are not really "in the object." "Persuasion is mere semblance (*Schein*), since the ground of the judgment, which lies solely in the subject, is held to be objective" (A820/B848).

By way of example, consider the following scenario. A judge is presiding over a case which involves a good friend of his. The evidence that he hears is mixed, but on the whole it points towards the guilt of his friend. The judge, swayed by his friendship with the defendant, takes himself (wrongly)

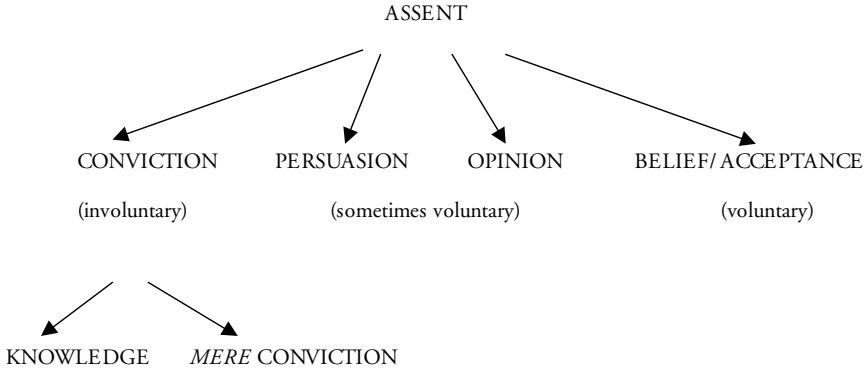
to have an objectively good ground for thinking that his friend is innocent, and he cites that ground in rendering his decision. Given that the evidence is mixed, it's true that the judge has *some* ground for holding that his friend is innocent, but it is not in fact objectively sufficient given all of the evidence at his disposal. Still, the assent is subjectively sufficient according to (5), since the judge holds his assent on the basis of evidence that he has, and he would, on reflection, cite that evidence as sufficient for assenting as he does. This citation would be mistaken, of course, since we've stipulated that his ground is not sufficient for his assent. And this is true even if (despite the judge's evidence to the contrary) the friend *is in fact* innocent.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the judge is persuaded that his friend is innocent but doesn't know that he is. According to Kant, this sort of persuasion can afflict even the best of us: "Even an honest man is incapable, as judge, of distinguishing the subjective grounds of his judgment from the objective ones when he is inclined favorably toward his friend's case" (24:747).

There are many different sorts of subjective "causes" or grounds of an assent which can lead a person to hold it, and wrongly to assume that it has sufficient objective grounds. Wishful thinking (as in the case just mentioned) is a good example. Some self-deception cases would fit here as well: W.K. Clifford's shipowner who deceives himself into thinking that his ship is seaworthy assumes that he has sufficient objective grounds for his assent, whereas in fact he doesn't.<sup>30</sup> In both kinds of persuasion case, the mistaken assumption—that the grounds are objective and sufficient—is the essential ingredient. "Judgment according to the measure of probability (*Wahrscheinlichkeit*) is not persuasion; instead, judgment from mere plausibility (*Scheinbarkeit*) is. Persuasion is really a kind of illusion" (24: 143–4).<sup>31</sup>

Kant employs the term *Ursache* rather than *Grund* to describe the ubiquitous subjective basis of assent-formation in the Canon: some assents have an objective *Grund*, he says, but every assent has a subjective *Ursache*. Later Kant says that in persuasion cases the subject mistakenly takes a "mere appearance of the mind" or a "private" cause of assent to be objective and communicable. Given the closeness of meaning of *Grund* and *Ursache* in German, I think we shouldn't rest too much on the terminological variation (especially as Kant elsewhere speaks of subjective *Gründe*).<sup>32</sup> But Kant may be hinting that the mechanism by which persuasion occurs is sometimes *merely* causal rather than normative-rational. For example, my mistaken assumption that I have good objective grounds may be caused by an irrational wish or a latent fear; it may even be caused by something I ate. But the fact that Kant makes it clear that commendable and rational states like knowledge are also subjectively sufficient should lead us to resist the thought that these subjective *Ursachen* are *always* non-rational mechanisms. When things are going well, it is the fact that I do have good grounds for my assent that is the basis of my reflective assumption that I have such grounds.

We can now elaborate our diagram so as to include persuasion:





The analyses could be developed in several further directions, but they will be enough for our purposes. With (4) and (5), I submit, we have arrived at a respectable account of objective and subjective sufficiency in an assent, and one that moreover adequately represents Kant's basic picture in the Canon and the logic lectures. It does not represent the *whole* picture, however, since it does not yet capture Kant's discussion of what he variously calls "belief/faith" (*Glaube*) or "acceptance" (*Annehmung*)—an important type of assent that is also supposed to be objectively *insufficient* and subjectively sufficient. As we will discover below, the presence of *Glaube* in Kant's system forces us to develop secondary and tertiary concepts of subjective sufficiency. In what follows, then, I'll refer to the subjective sufficiency characterized in (5) as "subjective sufficiency<sub>1</sub>."

It's worth noting—to put this discussion into a contemporary framework—that this account of epistemic justification or sufficiency looks like an externalist one at bottom. That's because some of the facts on which an assent's objective sufficiency supervenes—and in particular facts about its objective probability—will typically be inaccessible to a normal subject.<sup>33</sup> This is true whether we construe objective probability here as statistical—i.e., the likelihood of one type of event being accompanied by another type of event—or as the probability that a logically omniscient being would assign to *p* given S's grounds. Kant doesn't distinguish between these two different construals of objective probability, and so an interpretation can remain neutral between them. Either way, however, it is clear that the facts on which the *sufficiency* of our objective grounds supervenes will not be internally accessible to a normal, finite subject, though the grounds themselves may be.<sup>34</sup>

Having said that, it is also worth noting that despite the at bottom externalist character of the account, there is an emphatic nod to internalist intuitions in (5). Knowledge cannot *merely* be based on sufficient objective grounds; rather, the subject must also be in a position, on reflection, to cite those grounds, although she need not be (and usually is not) able to determine

that they're objectively sufficient.<sup>35</sup> Kant invokes this weak internalist constraint from the very beginning of his career, and even thinks of it as common sense. In the *Nova Dilucidatio* of 1755 he writes that “it has been established by the common opinion of all mortals that *knowledge (scientia)* of the truth is always based upon an intuition of the ground (*rationis semper intuitu niti*)” (1:394). One must not only *have* the ground in order to achieve knowledge; rather, one must also “intuit” it in inner sense—i.e., be able introspectively to cite it.<sup>36</sup>

### 3. Non-epistemic Sufficiency

Now that we have a grasp of the basic picture, it should be clear that Kant does not accept the following principle:

**Evidentialist Principle 1:** S is rational in assenting to a proposition *p* iff S has sufficient objective grounds for assenting to *p*.

This principle is far too extreme because the concept of *Fürwahrhalten* is so broad, covering our concepts of, for example, presupposition, hypothesis, and working assumption as well as our contemporary concept of belief. Indeed, I'm not aware of any philosopher who advocates Evidentialist Principle 1: even the “delicious *enfant terrible*” of evidentialism, W.K. Clifford, restricts his evidentialism to belief.

It is impossible to say whether Kant would follow Clifford and recommend a version of the Evidentialist Principle 1 for belief rather than assent, because Kant doesn't use our concept of belief. But what about this weaker principle of assent?

**Evidentialist Principle 2:** S is rational in assenting to a proposition *p* with a high degree of confidence iff S has sufficient objective grounds for assenting to *p*.

For Kant, the answer is still no. Evidentialist Principle 2 leaves no room for highly confident rational assents for which we don't (or even couldn't) have sufficient objective grounds, but which serve some other purpose for us. Kant, however, does want to leave room for such assents; they fall under the category of *Glaube*. For example, Kant thinks that a scientist's interest in learning about the character of biological systems recommends firm assents about the teleological structure of organisms and about the existence of an intelligent designer—assents for which she does *not* have sufficient objective grounds (i.e. arguments, evidence, testimony). That's because assenting to these propositions with confidence makes it rational for the scientist to spend time and effort studying nature in a particular way (i.e., as teleologically structured). And this in turn provides the opportunity for her to discover many *other* truths that have predictive and descriptive value, and also to

“unify” her various assents about goal-directed systems in nature under the organizing principle of intelligent design.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, the cancer patient who has inadequate evidence for the conviction that she’ll recover is still rational in assenting to the proposition *that* she’ll recover, in part because doing so actually makes it more likely that she will.<sup>38</sup> Such assents have what I will call *sufficient non-epistemic merits* for the subjects in question, even though they don’t have sufficient objective grounds. Let me pause here to introduce this new piece of terminology.

The language of “merits” is not Kant’s, but I think it can be usefully employed in an exposition of his view.<sup>39</sup> I will use “merit” to designate a property of an assent that makes it valuable or desirable for a particular subject to have it given her goals, interests, and needs. Kant does often speak of the speculative or moral “interests” that human subjects have in the truth of certain propositions and of the “needs of reason” that make certain assents desirable for us (cf. A305/B362; A309/B365; A450/B478; 8:136–41). A merit, then, is simply a property possessed by an assent which allows a subject who holds the assent partially or wholly to meet one of these goals, interests, or needs.

The merits of being objectively sufficient and subjectively sufficient<sub>1</sub>, as defined in (4) and (5), are clearly two of the most important merits that an assent can have. They are *epistemic* merits stemming from our general intellectual goal of maximizing the number of truths we hold, and minimizing the number of falsehoods. A *non-epistemic* merit, on the other hand, is a property of an assent that makes it valuable or desirable for a subject—given her needs, interests, and goals—but which does not do so by way of indicating that the assent is probably true. The property of satisfying Johnson’s desire to add a new bird to his life-list is a non-epistemic merit of Johnson’s assent that he has just seen a Kentucky warbler. The merit is connected, not to Johnson’s goal of maximizing truth and minimizing falsehood, but rather to his avocational interest in expanding his life-list of birds. (Note: Kant does *not* think that this sort of wish-fulfilling merit can make an assent rationally acceptable!) According to Kant’s “moral proof” of God’s existence, assent to the proposition that God exists has the non-epistemic merit of allowing us to avoid a sense of practical absurdity or incoherence in the performance of our moral duties. The merit in this case is connected to our universal practical interest in having a coherent moral self-understanding. (Note: Kant *does* think that such an absurdity-avoiding merit can render an assent rationally acceptable).

It is possible to distinguish between merits that are *directly* connected to a goal, interest, or need and those that are *indirectly* so connected. A merit is directly connected to a goal, interest, or need when it is such that if an assent has that merit, then the goal, interest, or need is by virtue of that fact alone at least partially met. Thus, for example, Joe’s assent that the sky is blue, when based on his perception of the color of the sky, has the *direct epistemic* merit

of having a sufficient objective ground. This merit is directly connected to Joe's epistemic goal of forming assents that are likely to be true, because that goal is partially met simply by virtue of his having an assent with that merit.

In contrast, a merit is *indirectly* connected to a goal, interest, or need when it is such that an assent that has it plays a role *in a larger process* by which a subject's goal, interest, or need is at least partially met. Johnson's assent to the proposition that he has seen a Kentucky warbler thus has the *indirect non-epistemic* merit of making him feel good. This merit is *indirectly* connected to Johnson's goal of feeling good because it is part of a larger process (his adding a bird to his life-list) by which his goal of feeling good is at least partially attained.

We can use this distinction to make sense of the biologist case too. The biologist's assent about teleology in nature has the *direct non-epistemic* merit of making it possible for her rationally to proceed with her research. It also has the *indirect epistemic* merit of leading her to further biological truths. The case of the researcher who, in the face of ambiguous evidence, firmly holds that his spouse is not cheating on him in order not to be distracted from his research is similar: the assent involved has both a direct non-epistemic merit and an indirect epistemic merit. (These examples make it fairly clear that indirect epistemic merits will not typically render an assent that has them objectively sufficient.)

Having flagged this conceptual distinction between direct and indirect merits, I should also note that in application it is often so vague as to be of no use. That's because an indirect connection to a goal can almost always be re-described as a direct connection to some slightly different goal. Thus we might say that Johnson's assent to the proposition that he has seen a Kentucky warbler is indirectly connected to his goal of feeling good, or directly connected to his goal of adding a bird to his life-list, or even more directly connected to his goal (assuming he has it) of seeing a Kentucky warbler. So the assent has a number of direct and indirect non-epistemic merits for Johnson, and it is not always clear which are the salient ones. Likewise, Joe's assent about the color of the sky is directly connected to his goal of having objectively sufficient assents, and indirectly connected to his goal of gaining knowledge. Because of this vagueness and description-sensitivity, I will largely ignore the distinction between direct and indirect merits here.

Most assents will have a number of different merits for a given subject, and a fully-orbed ethics of assent will identify which sorts of merits in which sorts of situations render an assent rationally acceptable. According to a theory in which Evidentialist Principle 1 holds, *only* the epistemic merit of having a sufficient objective ground can make an assent rationally acceptable. We have seen that Kant would reject this principle because he believes that the possession of non-epistemic merits can make an assent rationally acceptable for certain subjects in certain situations. Thus, again, the biologist's assent to the proposition that an intelligent designer exists is rational for her *when she is*

attempting to systematize her cognitions about the nature of biological systems (but not when she is at home having dinner). That's because the assent has the merit of allowing her (in *that* situation) to discover sufficient objective grounds for many *other* important assents, and to "unify" the assents she does have under the idea of intelligent design. By contrast, Kant thinks that *Glaube* that a "moral author of the universe exists" is rationally acceptable for *every finite moral agent at every time and in every situation*. That's because the assent has the merit of allowing everyone to make sense of his or her vocation as an agent under the demands of the moral law.

Confusingly enough, in the Canon Kant also refers to this sort of non-epistemic merit as "subjective sufficiency." But clearly the kind of subjective sufficiency that is at work in such cases is not subjective sufficiency<sub>1</sub>. It is not that the biologist would hold, on reflection, that she has such-and-such sufficient objective grounds for her assent about teleology in nature or that Kantian moral theists would hold, on reflection, that they have such-and-such sufficient objective grounds for their assents about a benevolent deity. Rather, these assents have non-epistemic merits which make them rationally acceptable for the subjects in question. I have been using the phrase "sufficient non-epistemic merits" to describe a set of such merits. The secondary sense of "subjective sufficiency" at work in Kant's discussion, then, can be characterized as follows:

- (6) S's assent that *p* is subjectively sufficient<sub>2</sub> iff it has sufficient non-epistemic merits for S.

It should be reiterated here that Kant is *not* writing a blank check that would allow *any* old non-epistemic merit to count towards an assent's subjective sufficiency<sub>2</sub>. On the contrary, he is quite careful to identify which sorts of goals, interests, or needs an assent has to respond to in order for it to have merits that can play this role. Generally speaking, the goals, interests, and needs in question must somehow arise from what Kant thinks of as our rational nature (in its drive for unified knowledge, or its need for moral coherence, and so on). An assent's connections to other goals, interests, and needs (the goal of feeling pleasure or fulfilling a mere wish, for example) contribute nothing whatsoever to an assent's subjective sufficiency<sub>2</sub>. As we might have expected, Kant is not a utilitarian in his ethics of assent.

It is also worth pointing out the "static" spirit of (6): Kant does not suggest that in order for *Glaube* to be subjectively sufficient<sub>2</sub>, the agent must *actively* discern whether the assent has sufficient non-epistemic merits for him. Rather, it is enough for subjective sufficiency<sub>2</sub> that the assent simply has those merits. In fact, according to (6) the subject doesn't even need to be *in a position* to cite the merits which make her assent subjectively sufficient<sub>2</sub>. *Glaube* is in this regard the practical analogue of *conviction* rather than *knowledge*: in both cases, if the relevant merits are present then the assents count as

sufficient—objectively sufficient in the case of *Überzeugung*, and subjectively sufficient<sub>2</sub> in the case of *Glaube*. This is presumably why Kant often associates both sorts of attitude with the “common understanding,” and why in the discussion of *Glaube* he sees himself as defending rather than undermining the inarticulate moral and religious commitments of the common person. Let me pause here to consider this point in more detail.

Kant concludes the Canon’s discussion of *Glaube* in God and immortality by raising the following objection to his own account:

But is that all, one will say, that pure reason accomplishes in opening up prospects beyond the bounds of possible experience? Nothing more than two articles of *Glaube*? This much the common understanding (*der gemeine Verstand*) could also have accomplished without taking advice from the philosophers! (A830–1/B858–60)

Kant’s response to the objection is first to concede its substance, though he does insist that the “negative” benefits of his critique of metaphysics should be acknowledged. The critical philosophy defends commonsense *Glaube* by showing that knowledge about such things isn’t even possible, and so no one should be disturbed by demands to make their assent about such things meet higher theoretical standards. He then responds to the questioner with another question: “But do you demand then that a cognition that pertains to all human beings should surpass common sense and be revealed to you only by philosophers?” On the contrary, Kant says,

in what concerns all human beings without exception, nature is not to be blamed for any partiality in the distribution of its gifts, and in regard to the essential ends of human nature even the highest philosophy cannot advance further than the guidance that nature has also conferred on the most common sense. (A831/B859)

Here we see, with sparkling clarity, Rousseau’s influence on Kant’s mature thinking. With respect to the maximally important assents, nature has not left humanity in bondage to its philosophers. Rather, mere common sense leads us to firm assent about, for instance, the existence of an Ultimate Ground upon consideration of the conditioned character of empirical things. This kind of cosmological inference is

so simple and natural that it is suited to the commonest human understanding as soon as the latter is once led to it. One sees things alter, arise, and perish; therefore they, or at least their state, must have a cause. About every cause, however, that may be given in experience, the same thing may once again be asked . . . . The highest cause we then take to be absolutely necessary, because we find it absolutely necessary to ascend to it and no ground for going still further beyond it. Therefore even through the blindest polytheism in all peoples we see

shimmering a few sparks of monotheism, to which they have been led not by reflection and deep speculation, but only in accordance with a natural course of common sense becoming gradually more intelligible. (A589–90/B617–8)

Of course, the average person may not make it through even this short chain of reasoning,<sup>40</sup> and he is unlikely to bother reading Kant's philosophy to discover that his grounds are really subjective rather than objective.<sup>41</sup> But this doesn't matter from the point of view of the subjective sufficiency<sub>2</sub> of his assent. For, again, there is no requirement in (6) that the subject actually *determine* or even *hold* that his assent has sufficient non-epistemic merits. Rather, the assent simply has to *have* those merits. In setting up his view in this way, Kant reveals both a deep respect for common sense, and a poignant concern that the majority of humankind not be dependent, when it comes to assent about very important matters, on the successful appropriation of abstruse philosophizing (even his own).<sup>42</sup>

Of course, Kant does *not* think that common sense is incapable of making errors. On the contrary, he often charges it with a variety of philosophical misdemeanors, including that of "taking as known (*bekannt*) what has [merely] become familiar to it through repeated usage," and "imagining itself to have insight and knowledge into whatever its apprehensions or hopes impel it to accept or believe" (*er bildet sich ein, das einzusehen und zu wissen, was anzunehmen, oder zu glauben, ihn seine Besorgnisse oder Hoffnungen antreiben*) (A473–4/B501–2). Thus, although the critical philosophy serves common sense insofar as it fends off the dogmatic unbeliever who claims to *know* that its deep-seated assents are false, critique is also required to chasten the overweening enthusiasm of common sense itself. We must deny both speculative *and* commonsense claims to *Wissen* in order to make room for *Glaube*.

This suggests that Kant would allow, despite his Rousseauian inclinations, that there is a higher reflective state that a subject can achieve with respect to *Glaube* that would transform her assent into the non-epistemic analogue of *Wissen* rather than *Überzeugung*. If she *has* gone through the moral arguments for the freedom of the will, for instance, or if she *has* gone to the trouble of seeing that she needs to presuppose natural teleology in order rationally to proceed with her biological research, then her assents will not only *have* sufficient non-epistemic merits; she will also be able to cite them. That is clearly a higher and more impressive intellectual state.

With this in mind, we can now reformulate our concept of subjective sufficiency<sub>2</sub> and introduce a new concept:

- (7) S's assent that *p* is subjectively sufficient<sub>2</sub> iff ( $\exists m_1$ ) such that
- (i)  $m_1$  is a merit which assent that *p* has for S, and
  - (ii)  $m_1$  is a sufficient non-epistemic merit for assenting to *p*.

(7) is just (6) with a quantifier and a variable introduced to bind the relevant merits. The new concept would then be this:

(8) S's assent that  $p$  is subjectively sufficient<sub>3</sub> iff  $(\exists m_2)$  such that

- (i)  $m_2$  is a merit which assents that  $p$  has for S,
- (ii) S's assent is based on  $m_2$ , and
- (iii) on reflection, S would cite  $m_2$  as a sufficient non-epistemic merit for his assent.

(7) and (8) are the non-epistemic analogues of (4) and (5). Assents that satisfy only (7) are rational, and “commonsense” people will have a lot of them (just as they will also have a lot of convictions that satisfy only (4)). But an assent that satisfies both (7) and (8) where  $m_1 = m_2$  is even more desirable. It is self-conscious, reflective *Vernunftglaube*—rational assent based on sufficient non-epistemic merits which the subject herself is able to identify. This is the counterpart of knowledge in the realm of *Glaube*, and it is the highest state that assent based on non-epistemic merits can achieve.

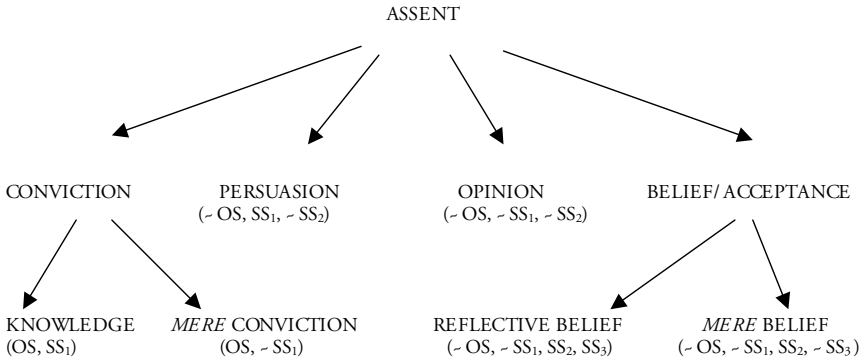
**Reflective Belief (*Vernunftglaube*):** S's assent that  $p$  counts as reflective belief iff  $(\exists m)$  such that

- (i)  $m$  is a sufficient non-epistemic merit which assent that  $p$  has for S,
- (ii) S's assent is based on  $m$ , and
- (iii) on reflection, S would cite  $m$  as a sufficient epistemic merit for his assent.<sup>43</sup>

It is important to reiterate that Kant is not offering us here some sort of procedural or quasi-practical argument for full-blown *belief* in natural teleology or freedom or the existence of God. But he is also not advocating the mere entertainment of regulative ideas. Rather, *Glaube* is something like what a number of contemporary philosophers have called “acceptance.” I noted earlier that Kant, too, sometimes calls it acceptance (*Annehmung*), defining the term in the Dohna-Wundlacken lectures as “a contingent approval that has sufficient ground in regard to a certain purpose” (24:735); its mode is not problematic but rather firmly “assertoric” (9:66). This sounds very close to the way that Cohen and Bratman think of acceptance: it is a firm and positive propositional attitude that is rational for a particular subject in a particular circumstance, given her ends, and that has implications for her action, argumentation, and deliberation. Acceptance of this sort differs from belief in that it is voluntary, context-relative, and lacks the phenomenology—the “feeling” that the proposition is true—which is a typical hallmark of belief.<sup>44</sup>

Our diagram can now be filled out as follows, with OS and SS representing “objective sufficiency” and “subjective sufficiency” respectively:





It is of course possible to imagine other combinations. For instance: what of an assent that is  $(OS, \sim SS_1, SS_2, SS_3)$ ? That is not something Kant considers, but I suspect he would say that it is a case of mere conviction for which the subject also has non-epistemic grounds which she is in a position to cite. Other combinations can be handled analogously.

Let me conclude this section by highlighting a significant piece of obscurity in Kant's account of subjective sufficiency<sub>2</sub>. When considering objective sufficiency above, we confronted the question of *how* probable a ground has to render an assent in order for it to count as a sufficient objective ground for the latter. I said that Kant's answer there is vague, but that in any case he clearly thinks that the ground has to render the assent *fairly* likely—i.e., comfortably more than 50%. The analogue with respect to subjective sufficiency<sub>2</sub>, however, is hard to make out. How adequately must the assent meet a need in order for the relevant merit to be sufficient? And how significant must that need be? Does an assent that partially meets a very significant need count as subjectively sufficient<sub>2</sub>? Is it more subjectively sufficient<sub>2</sub> than an assent that completely meets a less significant need? Kant is silent on these issues, but they would have to be worked out in more detail if the theory were to have a claim to full-scale applicability. Still, setting aside these borderline cases we can at least say that for Kant a significant, non-epistemic, rational need (such as the need to make sense of our situation as agents under the demands of the moral law) can motivate firm confidence in an assent that fully meets it.

#### 4. Conclusion

Kant's theory of justification is sophisticated and subtle: it involves four different species of justification which combine in various ways to produce at least six different kinds of assent. I hope it is clear that acquaintance with the theory gives us a better grasp of Kant's view of knowledge and of the various ways in which assents can fail to count as knowledge. It also provides insight

into the complex notion of *Glaube*, although much more work remains to be done on that topic. We can now see Kant's famous dicta about the limits of our knowledge and the "primacy" of *Glaube* as motivated by the idea that there are assents for which we can't locate sufficient objective grounds in either reason or experience, but which are still acceptable because they meet some non-epistemic need that we have as rational agents. In effect, Kant is offering the pendant of Locke's position according to which in matters of "maximal concernment" such as ethics and religion we *all always* have a duty to seek out and carefully follow our evidence.<sup>45</sup> Kant's claim is that it is precisely there, with respect to matters of maximal concernment, that we are rationally permitted to go beyond our evidence and form assents that are merely subjectively sufficient<sub>2</sub>.

I hope it is also clear from the above that Kant's account has much by way of independent plausibility. It is a hybrid theory of justification—the sort of theory that some epistemologists call (however perplexingly) "internalist externalism."<sup>46</sup> Epistemic justification is at bottom externalist for Kant because it is based on complex and typically inaccessible probability relations. But the reflective access condition in (5) mitigates concerns about how unbridled externalism is supposed to accommodate some of our most important (internalist) intuitions about knowledge. The fact that Kant generated this sort of sophisticated hybrid in the eighteenth-century is more confirmation of his standing as an impressive epistemologist, worthy of attention from both historians and contemporary philosophers alike.<sup>47</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Although I disagree with him in a number of places, some of them indicated below, I should note that Leslie Stevenson employs a similar method, and that his work on this part of Kant's philosophy has been of great use to me. See especially his "Opinion, Belief or Faith, and Knowledge," *Kantian Review* 7 (2003): 72–101. Quotations from Kant's work are from the Akademie Ausgabe, with the first *Critique* cited by the A/B edition pagination, and the other works by volume:page. Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, (Königlich-Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (now de Gruyter): Berlin, 1902- ). English translations usually differ insubstantially from those in the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, general editors Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992- ).

<sup>2</sup> Not everyone uses "assent" in this way of course. Cardinal Newman, for instance, rejects Locke's assertion that assent comes in degrees of strength and that it should be proportioned to one's evidence. For Newman, assent is an all-or-nothing affair: you either assent or you don't, and talk of degrees or "species" of assent is nonsensical. This use of "assent" has caught on to some extent, particularly in theological circles, but I do not mean to be invoking it here. See Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (New York: Longman Greens, 1906).

<sup>3</sup> This makes sense of Kant's claim that *Urteilen* are intrinsically "problematic"—i.e., they are logical structures to be entertained, analyzed, and then *perhaps* assented to in the "assertoric" or "apodictic" modes (9:108-9; A75-6/B100-1). An *Urteil* is different from a *Satz*, which is a genuine attitude in the "assertoric" mode. So a *Satz* is a positive attitude towards an *Urteil*, and the notion of "a problematic *Satz* is a *contradictio in adiecto*" (9:109). Unfortunately, "*Satz*" is sometimes used in the first *Critique* as a synonym for "*Urteil*," and Kant himself employs the

phrase “problematic *Satz*” in places (A75/B101, for instance)! This is perhaps what motivates many English translators to render “*Satz*” as “proposition,” though given what Kant says at 9:109 it seems that “statement” might be preferable. In order to avoid massive confusion, I will adhere to contemporary English practice and speak of “forming attitudes towards propositions” or, more simply, “assenting to propositions,” instead of “forming attitudes towards judgments” or (*horribile dictu*) “forming propositions towards judgments.”

<sup>4</sup> This is a simplification, because Kant’s use of “*Überzeugung*” is equivocal. In the Canon he first says that convictions are objectively sufficient and as a result intersubjectively communicable (A820/B848). A mere two pages later he says that “Subjective sufficiency is called **conviction** (for myself), [and] objective sufficiency [is called] **certainty** (for everyone).” So in the space of two pages he goes from saying that the hallmark of conviction is its objective sufficiency to claiming that conviction just is subjective sufficiency! He then adds, in an astonishing phrase, that “I will not pause for the exposition of such readily grasped concepts” (A822/B850).

In the logic lectures it becomes clear that Kant is simply working with two different notions of conviction. The first is “logical conviction”—an involuntary, objectively sufficient sort of assent which may (if it meets other conditions) count as knowledge. The other is “practical conviction,” which is not objectively sufficient but rather enjoys what I will later call “subjective sufficiency<sub>2</sub>” (9:72). “Practical conviction” is thus another name for belief/acceptance. By “conviction” in this paper I mean logical conviction.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, *Problems of the Self* (New York: Cambridge, 1973), 147, my emphasis. The central “direct doxastic involuntarist” doctrine that Williams defends is that belief is not something that we can form an intention to acquire and, merely by way of forming that intention, actually acquire it. For recent work on this issue, see Richard Feldman, “The Ethics of Belief,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60, 3 (May 2000): 667–695; Carl Ginet, “Deciding to Believe,” in *Knowledge, Truth and Duty*, ed. M. Steup (New York: Oxford, 2002); Feldman and Earl Conee, *Evidentialism: Essays in Epistemology* (New York: Oxford, 2004); and many of the papers in the July 2002 edition of *The Monist* on belief and the will.

<sup>6</sup> Locke agrees: “Assent is no more in our power than knowledge . . . what upon full examination I find the most probable I cannot deny my assent to.” John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), IV.20.16. Compare Leibniz in *New Essays*, trans. and ed. Peter Remnant and Jonathan Bennett (New York: Cambridge, 1981), 520.

<sup>7</sup> Stalnaker, *Inquiry* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1984), ch. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Cohen, *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance* (New York: Oxford, 1992); Bratman, “Practical Reasoning and Acceptance in a Context,” *Mind* 101, 401 (Jan. 1992): 1–15.

<sup>9</sup> It will become obvious in what follows that for Kant the term “*Glaube*” has a much more restricted meaning than the term “belief” does in English, and a somewhat broader meaning than our word “faith.” For this reason, I typically leave the German term untranslated.

<sup>10</sup> William James, “The Will to Believe,” in *The Theory of Knowledge*, 2nd edition, ed. Louis Pojman, (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1999), 555–562.

<sup>11</sup> This assumes some form of the correspondence theory of truth. Kant explicitly embraces a version of that theory at A58/B82: “The nominal definition of truth, namely that it is the agreement of cognition with its object, is here granted and presupposed.” See also 9:50ff.

<sup>12</sup> For much of the information in this paragraph, cf. Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability* (New York: Cambridge, 1975).

<sup>13</sup> For example: the young Leibniz used the notion of probability to describe how evidence that renders a proposition likely is used in legal settings; Jean Bernoulli showed how calculations of probability can guide rational assent, especially in contexts where the degree of probability that a proposition enjoys relative to some evidence can be made exact and explicit; and William Derham argued that the “Author of Nature” has embedded many “natural signs” in his work which provide probabilistic evidence sufficient for assents about God’s existence and character.

Cf. G.W. Leibniz, *De conditionibus* (Berlin, 1665), Jean Bernoulli, *Ars conjectandi* (Basel, 1713), and William Derham, *Physico-Theology: or a Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God from his Works of Creation* (London, 1713).

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (London, 1736).

<sup>15</sup> For more on the development of Kant's theory of probability, see L. Cataldi Madonna, "Kant und der Probabilismus der Aufklärung," *Aufklärung* 7(1) 1992: 25–41.

<sup>16</sup> These two varieties of objective probability are akin to what Carnap calls "probability<sub>1</sub>" and "probability<sub>2</sub>." The former measures the degree to which a proposition is rendered likely by some evidence, while the latter is a statistical notion that measures proportions of events in some (finite or infinite) class that are generated by a repeatable process. See Rudolf Carnap, *Logical Foundations of Probability* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1950).

<sup>17</sup> Keynes makes an analogous objective/subjective distinction, noting that objective probability which is not "relative to human powers" is a coherent heuristic notion, but that with respect to it we are usually "altogether adrift in the unknown; for we cannot ever know what degree of probability would be justified by the perception of logical relations which we are, and must always be, incapable of comprehending." See J.M. Keynes, *A Treatise of Probability* (New York: MacMillan, 1921), 32.

<sup>18</sup> Thanks to Hannah Ginsborg for making this clear to me in discussion.

<sup>19</sup> Admittedly, there are places where Kant seems to flirt with infallibilism, saying that assents with sufficient objective grounds are "certain" and "universal and necessary" and that the "opposite is not even possible" (24:145). But typically we find fallibilism (as at 8:141n and 9:71–2). The ambiguity is very likely a result of Kant's vacillation between the scholastic doctrine that genuine *Wissen* (*scientia*) is apodictic, metaphysically-certain true assent and the modern thought that we can *know* things on the basis of induction, hypothesis, probabilistic evidence and the like. Unlike Locke, who is quite restrictive about the extent of our knowledge, Kant accepts the modern thought most of the time. Vestiges of the traditional doctrine are evident in places, however.

<sup>20</sup> These are John Pollock's terms. For a discussion of defeaters and their varieties, see his *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1986), 38ff.

<sup>21</sup> For this broader notion of "objective" or "objectively valid" see, for instance, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:4 and 5:146.

<sup>22</sup> Kant writes in "What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" that "to the *firmness* (*Festigkeit*) of belief belongs the consciousness of its *unalterability*"—in other words, the degree of confidence with which we should hold an assent depends on the extent to which we think it will not turn out to be false. With respect to assents about non-demonstrabilia, our assent will always be less than completely firm, since we'll know that "it is always possible that proofs of the contrary might be found out and one must always harbor the reservation that one might alter one's opinion if our information about the matter should be extended" (8:141n). For Kant's discussion of these "grades" of certainty see Jäsche 9:70–71.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, A51/B75, A68/B93, B130, B132. Leslie Stevenson also notes the important difference between the sort of "spontaneity" described in these passages and the full-blooded voluntarism that is found in the Cartesian tradition. See his "Opinion, Belief or Faith, and Knowledge," *Kantian Review* 7 (2003): 72–101, esp. p. 75.

<sup>24</sup> Here for the sake of simplicity I am leaving out the qualification noted above that external states to which the subject has the right sort of access may also be able to count as objective grounds.

<sup>25</sup> Here is an example of a very "activist" (and very implausible) statement: "we cannot and may not judge concerning anything without *reflecting*, i.e., without comparing a cognition with the power of cognition from which it is supposed to arise (sensibility or the understanding)" (9:76).

<sup>26</sup> It is also sometimes noted that one can *be* justified in believing that *p* even if one doesn't actually believe that *p*. I won't take this into consideration here, because I think it is obvious that philosophers in the early modern period (and certainly Kant) were interested in the justificatory status of cases of actual assents (occurrent or dispositional).

<sup>27</sup> Peter Klein has argued that a regress like this isn't vicious, and that it is not a problem to ascribe an infinite regress of justifying reasons to a finite subject. If that's correct, then perhaps we should be content to ascribe (3) to Kant. See Klein's "Foundationalism and the Infinite Regress of Reasons," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 58, 4, (Dec. 1998): 919–925; and "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons," *Philosophical Perspectives* 13 (1999): 297–325.

<sup>28</sup> In a discussion of what he saw as Crusius' attempts to work out the probability relations between grounds and assents, Kant writes: "What Crusius says in his writings is quite pleasing to very many. But in fact it is nothing but *what we already know through merely common cognition*. Only it is expounded with a certain pomp, which is always very characteristic of Crusius" (24:82, my emphasis). Kant is right to suggest that we have a commonsense grasp of contrastive probability relations, but only to a certain point. Contemporary psychological research shows that we fail miserably when things get even moderately complex. Many people will explicitly claim, for instance, that the probability of "*p* & *q*" is greater than the probability on the same evidence of one of its conjuncts. See the articles by Nisbet & Ross, and by Stephen Stich in Hilary Kornblith, ed. *Naturalizing Epistemology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Kant himself notes that persuasion can be "false as to form (*formaliter*) . . . [but] it can nonetheless be true as to matter (*materialiter*)" (9:73).

<sup>30</sup> W. K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief," in *The Ethics of Belief and other Essays*, ed. Timothy J. Madigan (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> In the Introduction to the Dialectic, Kant says that error or illusion occurs when "the subjective grounds of the judgment join with the objective ones, and make the latter deviate from their destination, just as a moved body would of itself always stay in a straight line in the same direction, but starts off on a curved line if at the same time another force influences it in another direction" (A294/B350–1). The idea seems to be that if we could always simply follow our objective grounds, we would never err. Sometimes, however, we make mistakes regarding what we *take* to be our objective grounds, and are thus led into error, especially in metaphysics. Kant identifies the source of the mistake here as "sensitivity," but similar errors can surely be made even with respect to *a priori* judgments. For an analogous passage in Jäsche, see 9:54.

<sup>32</sup> Thanks to Ulrich Schlösser and Stefanie Grüne for discussion of this issue.

<sup>33</sup> In taking this interpretive position, I am disagreeing with Stevenson who assumes that if an assent is objectively sufficient it will *necessarily* be such that the subject is conscious that it is objectively sufficient. I don't find any argument in Stevenson's paper for this assumption, and I think that the texts quoted above regarding objective probability show that it is mistaken. See his "Opinion, Belief or Faith, and Knowledge," 79.

<sup>34</sup> Alternatively, Kant might be read as putting forward a *very* permissive internalism which says that the grounds need be accessible in only the loosest of idealized senses (i.e. accessible to a subject with an infinitely better grasp of the criteria of objective logical probability and ideal knowledge of all the relevant logical possibilities). Of course, if the "statistical regularity" construal of the sufficiency of objective grounds is right, then Kant would not even be an internalist of this very permissive sort. Thanks to Karl Schafer for discussion of this point.

<sup>35</sup> Here Kant differs from Locke, who suggests that only poorly-equipped people are incapable of "weighing the probabilities" properly. Others, presumably, should not only be able to cite their grounds but also be able to show that they are sufficient: "Those who want skill to use those evidences they have of probabilities; who cannot carry a train of consequences in their heads, nor weigh exactly the preponderances of contrary proofs and testimonies, making

every circumstance its due allowance, may be easily misled to assent to positions that are not probable. There are some men of one, some but of two syllogisms, and no more; and others that can but advance one step farther. These cannot always discern that side on which the strongest proofs lie; cannot constantly follow that which in itself is the more probable opinion.” (*Essay* IV,20,5).

<sup>36</sup> There is also the issue of whether the sufficiency of the *basing relation* between ground and assent has to be reflectively accessible to the subject. I leave this open here, since Kant doesn’t say anything about it. Thus an assent can be subjectively sufficient<sub>1</sub> according to (5) as long as the subject would reflectively cite what she takes to be good grounds, and holds the assent on those grounds. She needn’t believe or be able to say something about *why* those grounds are good ones for that particular assent.

<sup>37</sup> For the biologist, “the presupposition of a wise author of the world is a condition of an aim which is, to be sure, contingent but not yet inconsiderable, namely that of having a guide for the investigation of nature” (A826/B854). Kant explicitly says here that this is a “theoretical” sort of assent, one which he often refers to as “doctrinal *Glaube*.”

<sup>38</sup> This is not an example that Kant himself develops, but it is clearly a case of what he calls “pragmatic *Glaube*” in the Canon. The examples that Kant provides are not very persuasive.

<sup>39</sup> For some of the taxonomy in what follows I am indebted to John Heil, “Believing What One Ought,” *Journal of Philosophy* 80 (1983): 752–764.

<sup>40</sup> “This is the natural course taken by every human reason, even the most common, although not everyone perseveres in it” (A584/B612).

<sup>41</sup> Kant says in the Canon that assent about the existence of an Ultimate Ground counts not as *Wissen* (given his well-known critique of the cosmological argument) but rather as the theoretical species of assent which he calls “doctrinal *Glaube*” (cf. A825–6/B853–4). This sort of assent is acceptable because it possesses the sufficient non-epistemic merit of satisfying reason’s fundamental desire or need for ultimate explanations. This desire was of course what motivated the rationalists’ Principle of Sufficient Reason. So although Kant rejects the PSR as a means of acquiring *Wissen*, he still thinks that it can underwrite doctrinal *Glaube*. The latter is thus a very interesting category, because it allows for sufficient *theoretical* assent (though not knowledge), even about things-in-themselves. As long as we don’t mistake our subjective grounds for sufficient objective grounds, then, “a principle that would otherwise be *dialectical* will be transformed into a *doctrinal* principle” (A516/B544). I examine doctrinal *Glaube* in more detail “Belief in Kant,” *Philosophical Review*, forthcoming 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Consider also A467/B495, where Kant says that the interests of common sense or “popularity” often align here with the speculative interests of the philosopher: “The common understanding does not find the least difficulty in the idea of an Unconditioned Beginning for every synthesis, since in any case it is more accustomed to descending to consequences than to ascending to grounds; and in the concept of something absolutely first (about whose possibility it does not bother itself) it finds both comfort and simultaneously a firm point to which it may attach the reins guiding its steps, since otherwise, always having one foot in the air, it can never take any delight in the restless climb from the conditioned to the condition.”

<sup>43</sup> Note that there is no truth condition here, so the analogy to “knowledge” is not complete. Also, with the addition of “reflective *Glaube*” there is now logical space for an analogue of persuasion in the realm of *Glaube*: an assent could be subjectively sufficient<sub>3</sub> but *not* subjectively sufficient<sub>2</sub>. Kant would no doubt place the assents of many religious “enthusiasts” in this category.

<sup>44</sup> Cohen, *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance*; Bratman, “Practical Reasoning and Acceptance in a Context.” See also Keith Lehrer, “Reply to Christan Piller’s ‘On Keith Lehrer’s Belief in Acceptance,’” *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 40 (1991): 62–69.

<sup>45</sup> See Locke, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (Indianapolis, Hackett: 1996), section 8.

<sup>46</sup> See William Alston, “An Internalist Externalism,” in his *Epistemic Justification* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1991.

<sup>47</sup> For helpful discussions of this paper, I wish to thank Robert Adams, Troy Cross, Keith DeRose, Dina Emundts, Hannah Ginsborg, Stefanie Grüne, Harold Hodes, Desmond Hogan, Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Terence Irwin, Patrick Kain, Philip Quinn, Karl Schafer, Ulrich Schlösser, Houston Smit, Nick Stang, Daniel Warren, Eric Watkins, Nicholas Wolterstorff, Allen Wood, and two referees for this journal. Discussions at Cornell, Fordham, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Pomona, and Notre Dame were also very helpful.