Meeting of the Aristotelian Society held at Senate House, University of London, on 2 June 2014 at 5:30 p.m.

XIV—Kant on the Ethics of Belief

Alix Cohen

In this paper, I explore the possibility of developing a Kantian account of the ethics of belief by deploying the tools provided by Kant's ethics. To do so, I reconstruct epistemic concepts and arguments on the model of their ethical counterparts, focusing on the notions of epistemic principle, epistemic maxim and epistemic universalizability test. On this basis, I suggest that there is an analogy between our position as moral agents and as cognizers: our actions and our thoughts are subject to the same rational norm.

According to Kant, we are responsible for, and can be blamed for, our beliefs.

> [W]e can of course blame someone who has given approval to a false cognition, namely, when the responsibility actually lies with him for rejecting those grounds that could have convinced him of the object of the cognition he has, and could have freed him from his error. (LL, p. 126 [24:160])[1,2]

In line with many contemporary philosophers, Kant treats as obvious the fact that we are epistemically responsible and yet denies the possibility of a direct influence of the will on our beliefs:[3] 'The will does not have any influence immediately on holding-to-be-true; this

[1] Kant's works are cited using the following abbreviations: A: *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*; CF: *Conflict of Faculties*; CJ: *Critique of the Power of Judgement*; CPR: *Critique of Pure Reason*; CPrR: *Critique of Practical Reason*; G: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*; LA: *Lectures on Anthropology*; LL: *Lectures on Logic*; MM: *Metaphysics of Morals*; WE: *What is Enlightenment?*; and WOT: *What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?* The citation in square brackets refers to the Akademie edition of Kant's works by volume and page number. See the References section below for publication details.

[2] See also LL (p. 130 [24:165]): '[W]hen one judges and accepts something before investigation, with the resolve not to undertake any closer investigation concerning the whole thing, but rather to rest completely content with it, then this is in fact a punishable prejudice'.

[3] See, for instance, Shah (2002, p. 436). For traditional arguments against doxastic voluntarism, see Williams (1973).

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would be quite absurd' (LL, p. 577 [9:74]). Although many, if not all, of our beliefs are beyond the realm of direct voluntary control, he allows for an indirect form of influence of the will on judgement, through the capacity to direct our cognition according to principles. Whether we are right or wrong, whether our beliefs are justified or unjustified, we can be held responsible for them because we have this capacity.[4] The aim of this paper is not defend this claim but to draw out its implications for the possibility of developing a Kantian account of the ethics of belief. To do so, I deploy the tools provided by Kant's ethics in order to determine whether a coherent account of the ethics of belief can be gleaned.

I begin with the exposition of what I take to be Kant's account of the fundamental norms that govern our epistemic activities, the principles of the *sensus communis*. I then propose that an epistemic universalizability test can be formulated on the model of its ethical counterpart. I discuss the test cases of evidentialism and testimony, and show that they produce the right kind of results. I conclude by drawing the implications of my account for Kant's ethics of belief, and in particular the claim that our actions and our thoughts are subject to the same rational norm. Although much of the interpretation put forward in this paper will remain programmatic, I hope to show that it has the potential to provide a robust Kantian account of the ethics of belief, an account that is both plausible from the perspective of Kant scholarship and capable of contributing to current debates in the ethics of belief.

I

Epistemic Principles and the Maxims of Thinking. Throughout Kant's works, from his early *Lectures on Logic* to his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, he distinguishes three 'principles of thinking' under the label *sensus communis*: first, to think for oneself ('the maxim of thinking for oneself can be called the *enlightened mode of thought*'); second, to think in the place of another ('the maxim of putting oneself in the viewpoint of others in thought, the *extended mode of thought*'); and third, to always think consistently with oneself ('the maxim of always thinking in agreement with

[4] I have defended this claim in Cohen (2013).

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oneself, the *consequent* or *coherent mode of thought*') (LL, pp. 563–4 [9:57]).[5] These three '[u]niversal rules and conditions for avoiding error' are the principles according to which we ought to think. Their function is to guide our thoughts, or to use the title of one of Kant's essays, to orient ourselves in thinking. They are second-order principles that specify the correct way of thinking and thereby guide the reflective attitude we should adopt upon our first-order cognitive procedures.

Once an agent adopts a principle, it becomes what Kant calls his maxim: 'A rule that the subject makes his principle is called a maxim' (LL, p. 473 [24:738]). A maxim formulates an agent's policy or intention. Most familiar are the maxims that guide our actions, which include our moral maxims. They are 'the subjective principle[s] of acting … the principle[s] in accordance with which the subject *acts*' (G, p. 73n. [4:421]). Less familiar are our epistemic maxims, the subjective principles of thinking that constitute 'the *way of thinking* [*Denkungsart*] needed to make a purposive use of [the faculty of cognition]' (CJ, p. 175 [5:295]).[6] Whilst this definition may not be particularly enlightening, what Kant has in mind is, I believe, relatively straightforward. Epistemic maxims constitute an agent's epistemic strategy: how should he think about the world? How can he make the best use of his cognitive abilities? Quite tellingly, Kant notes that the aim of university education is to instil students with the right epistemic principles:

> [I]nstruction in universities is properly this, to cultivate the capacity of reason, and to get [students] into the habit of the method of ratiocinating, and to establish the appropriate maxims of reason. (LA, p. 107 [25:547])[7]

[5] See also LA (p. 520 [25:1480]), CJ (pp. 174–5 [5:294–5]) and A (p. 333 [7:228]). I cannot discuss the content of these maxims here due to lack of space, but for helpful discussions see McBay Merritt (2011, §2), Wood (2002, p. 103) and O'Neill (1989, chs. 1–2).

[6] Note that this paper is not concerned with regulative principles of reason such as the principle of systematic unity in CPR (pp. 620–1 [A700/B729]). They are commonly interpreted as either transcendental or methodological principles (respectively, in Guyer 2000 and Grier 2001, amongst others), but it has recently been argued that they should be thought of as practical principles (Mudd 2013). As far as I can tell, my account is neutral on this question.

[7] See also Kant's claim that we recognize a sound reason 'by the maxims, when its maxims are so constituted, that its greatest use is possible by their means. … The maxim of sound reason is as follows: not to accept as valid any other rule in its use than this, [the one] whereby the most universal use of reason is possible, and whereby its use is facilitated' (LA, p. 109 [25:548–9]).

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Once the right epistemic maxims have been adopted, actual awareness of them and conscious reflection upon them is not necessary for every single case of belief acquisition: 'For common cognition it is not necessary that we be conscious of these rules and reflect on them' (LL, p. 15 [24:27]).[8] Reflection is required only in cases where we are considering complex or uncertain beliefs:

> [I]f our understanding wants to have ascended to learned cognition, then it must be conscious of its rules and use them in accordance with reflection, because here common practice is not enough for it. (LL, p. 15 [24:27])

In certain cases, when judgements are not immediately certain, when new evidence emerges or when what we believe is thrown into doubt, we can, and ought to, reflect upon our beliefs by investigating their 'grounds of proof' (LL, p. 125 [24:158]). In this sense, epistemic principles leave plenty of room for differences of opinion, arguments and even disagreements, and following the right ones is not sufficient to ensure that our beliefs are justified. What counts as a sufficient ground, what constitutes indisputable evidence, how probable a hypothesis is, are all a matter of the exercise of 'a practised faculty of judgment' (LL, p. 577 [9:74]). Thus, whilst the principles of the *sensus communis* express the fundamental normative requirements of cognition, they do not exhaust the demands on our first-order epistemic activities.

> [W]e must first of all reflect, i.e., see to which power of cognition a cognition belongs, and then investigate, i.e., test whether the grounds are sufficient or insufficient in regard to the object. (LL, pp. 576–7 [9:73])

The nature of the grounds of our beliefs determines their epistemic mode. Depending on whether they are subjective or objective, sufficient or insufficient, different modes of 'holding to be true' (*fürwahrhalten*) obtain:[9] knowledge (*wissen*), which is both subjectively

[8] See also CPR (p. 366 [A261/B317]): 'Not all judgments require an investigation, i.e. attention to the grounds of truth; for if they are immediately certain, e.g., between two points there can be only one straight line, then no further mark of truth can be given for them than what they themselves express.'

[9] As Stevenson has noted, 'it has recently been common for philosophers writing in English to use the word "believe" (or "assent") in this wide sense, meaning *any* sort of holding a proposition to be true, however confident or hesitant, rational or irrational, justified or unjustified. It would thus be tempting to translate Kant's verb *fürwahrhalten* as "believe". In

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and objectively sufficient; opinion (*meinen*), which is subjectively as well as objectively insufficient; and faith (*glauben*), which is only subjectively sufficient and objectively insufficient (CPR, p. 686 [A822/B850]).[10] For a belief to count as knowledge, it requires sufficient subjective as well as objective grounds. Otherwise it is not knowledge but mere opinion or faith. And whilst it is permissible to hold opinions, it is only so qua opinion, 'with the consciousness that it is' (CPR, p. 686 [A822/B850]). As long as we acknowledge the sufficiency of their grounds or lack thereof, all these modes of holding to be true are epistemically legitimate in their own right.[11] Yet this does not entail that they each come with their own epistemic standards. For as I will show in §II, they have one crucial thing in common, namely, they all obey the same rational norm. To support this claim, I will defend the thesis that the rational procedure that in many ways defines Kant's ethics, the universalizability test, is also applicable to the epistemic domain.

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that usage, knowledge implies belief; and "mere" belief, without any sufficient justification, will then be the kind of belief which does not amount to knowledge' (Stevenson 2011, p. 97). See also Chignell (2007b, p. 34): '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.'

[10] By contrast with subjective grounds, objective grounds 'are independent of the nature and interest of the subject' (LL, p. 574 [9:70]). Objective grounds may originate from experience or reason. They may include perceptions, memories, observations as well as evidence, inferences, deductions, logical proofs, or some combination thereof. Their strength warrants a matching degree of objective certainty in the subject, from insufficient to sufficient: 'When we know, namely, that we are free of all subjective grounds and yet the holding-to-be-true is sufficient, then we are *convinced*, and in fact *logically* convinced, or convinced on *objective* grounds (the object is certain)' (LL, p. 576 [9:72]). Since there is no space to develop Kant's account of the grounds of cognition here, see Chignell (2007a) for useful discussions of this issue.

[11] Kant adds that if we fail to acknowledge the grounds of our beliefs, we are merely persuaded, 'a holding-to-be-true on insufficient grounds, of which one does not know whether they are merely subjective or also objective'. Unsurprisingly, 'Many remain with persuasion. Some come to reflection, few to investigation' (LL, p. 576 [9:73]).

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II

The Epistemic Formula of Universal Law: The Universalizability Test of Epistemic Maxims. Famously for Kant, maxims of action are only morally permissible if they pass a universalizability test. Its function is to rule out any maxim that cannot become a universal law. In the following passage, Kant suggests that epistemic maxims should also pass a universalizability test.

> To make use of one's own reason means no more than to ask oneself, whenever one is supposed to assume something, whether one could find it feasible to make the ground or the rule on which one assumes it into a universal principle for the use of reason. This test is one that everyone can apply to himself. (WOT, p. 18 [8:146 n.])

Whilst this is as close as Kant gets to explicitly formulating an epistemic universalizability test, I aim to show that such a test can be reconstructed on the model of the formula of universal law.

The moral version of the formula of universal law states that 'I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law' (G, p. 94 [4:402]). Testing the universalizability of a maxim establishes whether it is permissible by determining whether it can become a universal law without generating contradictions. Thereby, it stipulates what is morally wrong (to act on any maxim that cannot be universalized without leading to a contradiction); what is morally obligatory (to refrain from acting on any impermissible maxim and to act on the opposite maxim); and what is morally permissible (to perform any action based on a maxim that passes the universalizability test).[12] If we apply this model to the epistemic realm, the formula of universal law might be formulated as follows: 'I ought never to think except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law.' What does it mean for an epistemic maxim to be able to become a universal law? To make sense of this, I shall begin by looking at maxims that are unable to become universal laws.

A function of the universalizability test is to identify the maxims that necessarily produce unjustified beliefs, maxims that Kant refers to as prejudices. Whilst it is commonly thought of as an unjustified

[12] There is controversy surrounding the interpretation of Kant's universalizability test. See, for instance, Wood (1999, pp. 40–2), O'Neill (1989, pp. 83 ff.) and Sullivan (1989, pp. 47–53). However, these debates are irrelevant to my argument, at least as it is stated here.

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belief, for Kant a prejudice is an illegitimate principle the subject has adopted as his epistemic maxim: 'Prejudice is a maxim of judging objectively from subjective grounds' (LL, p. 473 [24:737]).[13] Kant distinguishes between prejudices according to their source, and in particular whether they are based on inclination, habit or imitation.[14] First are excluded maxims that base beliefs on inclinations. Feelings only yield subjective certainty, and as such, they should not be used as objective grounds. Second are excluded maxims that base beliefs on habits. The fact that things have been a certain way until now does not justify the belief that they will remain the same in the future. Third are excluded maxims that base beliefs on imitation. Parroting beliefs fails to provide any insight into their grounds.[15] What these different types of maxims have in common is that they all use subjective grounds (i.e. inclination, habit and imitation) as though they were objective. Since subjective grounds are incapable of being universalized, they cannot be shared by all, and on this basis these maxims are impermissible. By contrast, the maxims that are permissible can be adopted by all, at least in principle: they are 'valid for the reason of every human being to take it to be true; … regardless of the difference among the subjects' (CPR, p. 685 [A820–1/B848–9]).

To substantiate this claim, let's apply the universalizability test to a maxim based on inclination. Say I am in the process of determining whether I should believe that *p*. As I do so, I encounter a piece of evidence that falsifies it. If I ignore this evidence and believe *p* anyway because it suits my desires, I am effectively thinking under the maxim:

(¬EM): I will ignore evidence in cases when it falsifies a belief I desire to be true.[16]

[13] See also LL (pp. 315–16 [24:864–5]): 'The principal sources of prejudices are subjective causes, accordingly, which are falsely held to be objective grounds. They serve, as it were, in place of principles, because prejudices must be principles.'

[14] 'The principal sources of prejudices are above all imitation, custom, and inclination' (LL, p. 316 [25:865]; see also LL, p. 579 [9:76]). For a discussion of prejudice, see Frierson (2014, ch. 6).

[15] Note that a different kind of imitation can be legitimate in an educational context. See, for instance, A (p. 329 [7:225]).

[16] Typical examples of maxims of this kind are maxims of wishful thinking: 'Frequently we take something to be certain merely because it pleases us, and we take something to be uncertain merely because it displeases or annoys us. This certainty or uncertainty is not objective, however, but instead subjective' (LL, p. 157 [24:198]).

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I believe that applying the universalizability test to this maxim should be done according to the model of the practical maxim of refusing to help others.

According to Kant, I cannot will the maxim 'I do not care to contribute anything to [others'] welfare' (G, p. 75 [4:423]) as universal law without generating a contradiction in the will. For I am a finite dependent being and I will most likely need help from others at some point; or at least I cannot be certain that I will not need it. Yet if the maxim of refusing to help others were universalized, I would never receive help from others, and I cannot possibly will this to be the case in light of my lack of self-sufficiency. Therefore, the universalization of the maxim not to help others leads to a contradiction in the will, from which it follows that first, I ought not to act on it, and second, I have the duty to act on the opposite maxim: 'I ought to help others'. As is well known, what the contradiction in the will actually consists in is the object of numerous debates in the literature, and it falls beyond the remit of this paper to defend a particular interpretation of it.[17] Instead, I will focus on the epistemic version of the test and show that the maxim 'I will ignore evidence in cases when it falsifies a belief I desire to be true' (¬EM) cannot be willed as universal law without generating an epistemic contradiction in the will.

The epistemic version of the argument goes as follows. I am a cognitively dependent being who needs epistemic help from others. Yet if the maxim ¬EM were universalized, others' beliefs would be unreliable. I could never be sure whether any given belief they hold is based on their wishes or on objective grounds.[18] On this basis, I could never rely on their cognitive contribution, which, as an epistemically dependent being, I cannot possibly will. Therefore, the maxim ¬EM leads to a contradiction in the will: I cannot consistently will it to be a universal law.

Of course, one might object that this argument faces the same dif-

[17] It is generally agreed that three interpretations are available. The logical contradiction interpretation suggests that the universalization of the maxim would make the action it proposes inconceivable. The teleological contradiction suggests that the universalization of the maxim is inconsistent with a systematic harmony of purposes. Finally, the practical contradiction suggests that the universalization of the maxim would be self-defeating in the sense that the agent would be thwarting his own purpose. For a discussion of these interpretations, see Korsgaard (1996, pp. 78–102).

[18] Note that the difference between the world where ¬EM is a universal law and the actual world is that in the former I know that I can never rely on others' beliefs. In the actual world, others do not necessarily ignore evidence in cases when it falsifies a belief they desire to be true.

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ficulties as its moral version. Just as with Sidgwick's self-sufficient man (i.e. a strong man could choose to adopt an egoistic practical maxim without contradiction if it were advantageous to him), a strong mind could choose to adopt an individualistic epistemic maxim.[19] For instance, someone endowed with remarkable cognitive talents could decide that epistemic self-reliance would be more beneficial to him in the long run. He would thus be able to renounce others' cognitive help and adopt ¬EM as an epistemic maxim without generating a contradiction in the will. However, irrespective of our particular talents, I believe we cannot possibly renounce others' cognitive contribution.[20] As far as cognition is concerned, no one can get by alone, since 'Whoever is excellent in one talent, is not necessarily for that reason excellent in all of them. For the kinds of cognition involved are diverse' (LA, pp. 419–20 [25:1308–9]).[21] The erudite person's talent for scholarship is worthless without the architectonic mind's capacity to make use of it by drawing unexpected connections. The mechanical mind may not be capable of the inspired insights of natural minds, but they are both necessary to human cognition. Knowledge is by nature a collaborative task, and renouncing others' cognitive contribution would amount to renouncing the whole of human knowledge all together, which I cannot possibly will to do.[22] On

[19] According to Sidgwick, 'a strong man, after balancing the chances of life, may easily think that he and such as he have more to gain, on the whole, by the general adoption of the egoistic maxim; benevolence being likely to bring him more trouble than profit' (Sidgwick 1966, p. 389n.). Thanks to John Callanan for raising this point and encouraging me to refine my account of the epistemic test.

[20] As Kant often notes in his anthropological works, there is a great variation amongst human beings' cognitive talents—there are the great geniuses who 'take new paths and open new prospects', the mechanical minds who '[advance] slowly on the rod and staff of experience', the universal mind who 'grasps all the various sciences', the superficial mind 'who knows the titles of everything but not the contents', the architectonic mind who 'methodically examines the connection of all the sciences and how they support one another', the natural minds who think 'out for themselves', and the gigantic erudite mind who misses 'the eye of true philosophy' (A, pp. 330–1 [7:226–7]). As I have shown elsewhere, on Kant's account, Nature has intended to realize the cognitive unity of the human species by spreading out cognitive talents amongst various types of knowers. Therefore, it is part of its plan for the species to use their cognitive diversity to secure their survival and progress towards cognitive perfection; see Cohen (2014).

[21] See also A (p. 332 [7:227]): '*What do I want*? (asks understanding). *What does it matter*? (asks the power of judgment). *What comes of it*? (asks reason). Minds differ greatly in their ability to answer all three of these questions.'

[22] One could be tempted to put forward a weaker claim. For instance, I can never be sure that I will not need others' cognitive help at some point. However, this argument would be more vulnerable to Sidgwick-type objections than the one based on the anthropological characteristics of human cognition.

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this basis, since I cannot consistently will ¬EM to be a universal law, first, I ought to refrain from acting on it. And second, I have the duty to act on the opposite maxim (¬¬EM ⊢ EM): 'I will not ignore evidence in cases when it falsifies a belief I desire to be true.'[23]

Therefore, in the case of the epistemic role of evidence, the application of the universalizability test to the epistemic realm produces results that are compatible with Kant's familiar epistemic positions. In the following section, I turn to the case of testimony in order to show that the universalizability test also produces unexpected results, and that these results have the potential to form the basis of fresh Kantian answers to contemporary questions.

III

Test Case: Testimony. A number of commentators have argued that Kant belongs to an individualist tradition according to which testimony has little epistemic importance.[24] If testimony is epistemically unreliable, it should follow that either we have a duty not to rely on it or we can only rely on it if it plays a merely corroborative role. Either way, on this view testimony is not, and should not be, a fundamental source of knowledge. By contrast with this interpretation, I contend that Kant's epistemic universalizability test commits him to the opposite position. To support this claim, I will test the maxim that rejects belief in testimony (what Kant calls the maxim of incredulity, 'To be *incredulous* means to stick to the maxim not to believe testimony at all': CJ, p. 336 [5:472]) and show that it fails the universalizability test in more than one way.

First, if I were to reject testimony as a source of information, I would be unable to perform the duty to think myself in the place of others (i.e. the duty of extended thought). For the realization of this duty requires that one 'reflects on his own judgment from a *universal standpoint* (which he can only determine by putting himself into

[23] Of course, a lot of work remains to be done in order to determine whether a general evidentialist maxim can be grounded on the basis of the epistemic formula of universal law and what form it should take. For instance, the degree of certainty of my belief ought to be proportioned to the evidence I possess. However, it falls beyond the remit of this paper to do so. For an insightful Kantian inspired discussion of evidentialism, see Wood (2008).

[24] See, for instance, Schmitt's claim that in Kant's philosophy, 'there is no reliance on testimony' (Schmitt 1987, p. 47).

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the standpoint of others)' (CJ, p. 175 [5:295]). Yet I cannot access the standpoint of others without relying on their testimony. Therefore, trusting testimony in the absence of defeating conditions is a pragmatically necessary means to realize one of my core epistemic duties.

Second, the maxim 'I will not believe testimony' can be thought of on the model of the maxim not to keep promises. The latter, when universalized, entails what Kant calls a contradiction in conception. Its universalization would lead to the destruction of the very practice of promise-making, which would entail that 'my maxim, as soon as it were made a universal law, would have to destroy itself' (G, p. 57 [4:403]).[25] Similarly, the universalization of the maxim not to believe testimony would entail the disappearance of the practice of testimony, since in a world in which no one believed testimony, giving it would become a pointless exercise. Therefore, this maxim generates a contradiction in conception, and I have the duty to refrain from not believing testimony in the absence of defeating conditions.

Third, the maxim 'I will not believe testimony' can also be thought of on the model of the maxim of refusing to help others in need. As already spelt out, the latter, when universalized, generates a contradiction in the will. Similarly, the universalization of the maxim not to believe testimony would lead to an inconsistency. Since I am a cognitively dependent being who relies on epistemic cooperation in a variety of ways, including testimony, my lack of self-sufficiency leads me to will that I rely on testimony if and when I need it. Therefore, first, I cannot consistently will that the maxim 'I will not believe testimony' be universalized. Second, I have the duty to will the opposite maxim, namely, 'I will believe testimony'—although I should only do so in the absence of defeating conditions.[26]

As a result, the application of the epistemic universalizability test

[25] See also G (p. 74 [4:422]). Just as with the contradiction in the will, Kant's account of the contradiction in conception is the object of interpretative debates I cannot engage with here. See, for instance, Korsgaard (1996, pp. 95–7), Herman (1993, pp. 137–41) and O'Neill (1989, pp. 94–8).

[26] Far from recommending credulity, the maxim that commands to believe testimony is one of innocence until proven guilty, what Gelfert calls 'a presumptive principle regarding the acceptance of testimony' (Gelfert 2006, p. 627). As Kant writes, 'As for other things that concern the credibility and honorability of witnesses who make assertions about experiences they have obtained, everyone is taken to be honorable and upright until the opposite has been proved, namely, that he deviates from the truth' (LL, p. 196 [24:246]). For an insightful parallel between trust and testimony, see Gelfert (2006, pp. 634–5, 647).

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to the issue of testimony suggests ways that it can be used to provide a number of argumentative strategies. For, as I have sketched, testimony is not merely ineliminable given the kind of cognitive creatures we are. Rather, first, we need it; second, we ought to refrain from not believing it; and third, we ought to believe it.

IV

Implications for Kant's Ethics of Belief: One and the Same Reason. This paper has argued that the rational procedure that applies to the moral domain equally applies to the cognitive domain. There is thus an analogy between our position as moral agents and as cognizers: our actions and our thoughts function analogically in so far as they are subject to the same rational norm. However, does the analogy go all the way down, to the claim that the same normative power is at work in both the moral and the cognitive domains? By way of conclusion, I would like to outline some reasons why this is a plausible implication of the account I have just defended, beginning with the notion of autonomy.

As a result of the Kantian picture put forward in this paper, and contrary to what is often assumed, autonomy is not just the remit of practical reason. Our capacity for rational agency underlies all our cognitive activity: '[T]he power to judge autonomously—that is, freely (according to principles of thought in general)—is called reason' (CF, p. 255 [7:27]). Just as we act autonomously if we act on the moral principles we give ourselves, we believe autonomously if we believe on the basis of the epistemic principles we give ourselves.

> [F]reedom in thinking signifies the subjection of reason to no laws except those which it gives itself; … if reason will not subject itself to the laws it gives itself, it has to bow under the yoke of laws given by another. (WOT, p. 16 [8:145])

To make sense of the notion of epistemic autonomy, let's look briefly at Kant's account of moral autonomy. According to Kant, all competing ethical theories share a common premiss: they define what is morally good on the basis of what agents (supposedly) want, and prescribe what they should do if they want it to obtain, whether it is happiness, pleasure, maximum utility, what god wants,

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and so on. By relying on agents' ends in one form or another, these theories defend what Kant calls heteronomous accounts of moral value—the good is agent-relative, subjective and contingent. They prescribe that 'If I want my action to be right, then I should act on the basis of *X*', with *X* taking the place of whichever value they put forward. By contrast, Kant's moral law is of the form 'You ought to *X*'; no 'if', no 'then'.[27] Autonomy as the source of moral value is defined in terms of what all agents can will as a universal law. It prescribes for everyone, equally and necessarily, irrespective of their ends.

On my interpretation of Kant's account of cognition, the same conception of autonomy applies to the epistemic realm. All competing epistemic theories make the same mistake: they assign an unconditional value to a given conception of truth, whether it is what is supported by evidence, what is useful, what the community believes, what god tells me and so on. They prescribe that 'If I want my belief to be true, then I should accept it as true on the basis of *X*', with *X* taking the place of whichever epistemic value they put forward. By contrast, just like his moral principles, Kant's epistemic principles are of the form 'You ought to *X*'; no 'if', no 'then'.[28] They command all, in the same way, and in all cases: 'Thinking according to a commonly ruling maxim … is only using your own reason as the supreme touchstone of truth' (LA, p. 521 [25:1481]). The application of reason's authority to a particular domain, whether we are deliberating about what to believe or what to do, gives rise to moral or epistemic norms. But Kant's overall point is, I believe, that whatever the domain, the source of normativity is the same: 'there can, in the end, be only one and the same reason, which must be distinguished merely in its application'—what he calls somewhat cryptically 'the unity of practical with speculative reason in a common principle' (G, p. 46 [4:391]), namely, the categorical imperative.[29]

[27] For instance, 'Act only …' (G, p. 73 [4:421]).

[28] For instance, 'Always thinking …' (LA, p. 520 [25:1480]).

[29] See also CPrR (p. 213 [5:91]): '… to attain insight into the unity of the whole rational faculty (theoretical as well as practical) and to derive everything from one principle—the undeniable need of human reason, which finds complete satisfaction only in a complete systematic unity of its cognitions'. Whilst it goes beyond the remit of this paper to defend Kant's claim about the unity of reason, my point is that the interpretation defended in this paper can be seen as supporting it. For useful discussions of the unity of reason see, for instance, O'Neill (1989, part I), Neiman (1994, pp. 76–7, 126–8), Kleingeld (1998) and Nuzzo (2005, pp. 57ff.).

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As a final piece of evidence for this claim, I would like to propose that each of the principles of the *sensus communis* could be interpreted as the epistemic equivalent of one of the formulations of the moral law (*Table* 1). First, the principle to think for oneself and the formula of the law of nature both reject heteronomy. As shown in §II, they command that I act and think on universalizable principles that can be shared by everyone. Second, the principle to think oneself in the position of everyone else and the formula of humanity both prescribe that I take others into consideration as rational beings, whether mor-

TABLE 1: MORAL VERSUS EPISTEMIC PRINCIPLES

MORAL FORMULA	MORAL PRINCIPLE	EPISTEMIC FORMULA	EPISTEMIC PRINCIPLE
Formula of the law of nature (FLN/FUL)	'Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law.'	Formula of enlightened thought	Think for oneself.
Formula of humanity (FH)	'So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or that of another, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.'	Formula of extended thought	Think in the position of everyone else.
Formula of the realm of ends (FRE/FA)	'Act in accordance with the maxims of a member giving universal laws for a merely possible kingdom of ends.'	Formula of coherent thought	Think consistently.

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ally or cognitively.[30] Cognition ought not be an isolated enterprise in principle, even if it could be in practice. I ought to include the point of view of others as rational beings worthy of (theoretical) consideration and (practical) respect.[31] Finally, the principle to always think consistently and the formula of the realm of ends both express a requirement for systematicity in form as well as content.[32] The worlds of nature and freedom both require consistency in acting and thinking, and these principles are expressions of this requirement for lawlikeness. In this sense, the equivalence of our epistemic and our moral principles could help us make sense of the idea that on the Kantian picture we ought to act *and* think 'only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law' (G, p. 73 [4:421]).[33]

Department of Philosophy
University of Edinburgh
Dugald Stewart Building
3 Charles Street
Edinburgh EH8 9AD
UK

[30] 'So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or that of another, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means' (G, p. 80 [4:429]). 'As far as the second maxim of the way of thinking is concerned, … the *way of thinking* … reveals a man of a *broad-minded way of thinking* if he sets himself apart from the subjective private conditions of the judgment, within which so many others are as if bracketed, and reflects on his own judgment from a *universal standpoint* (which he can only determine by putting himself into the standpoint of others)' (CJ, p. 175 [5:295]).

[31] 'A narrow-minded person is not one who has learned little, but who has no broad-minded concepts. His mode of thought is limited, he cannot put himself in the place of another, but judges merely from his own standpoint in his own way, and never sees a matter from another point of view' (LA, p. 521 [25:1481]).

[32] 'Act in accordance with the maxims of a member giving universal laws for a merely possible kingdom of ends' (G, p. 88 [4:439]). 'To think consistently is also called "well-grounded thinking", so that one always remains in connection and is in agreement with another' (LA, p. 521 [25:1482]).

[33] I would like to thank the audience at the Aristotelian Society meeting for a very stimulating discussion. Unfortunately, I was unable to address all the questions they raised here, but I hope to be able to do so in future work on these issues. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Colloque of the Université de Neuchâtel, and I am grateful to the participants, and in particular Daniel Schultess, for helpful comments. Out of the many people who have helped me in thinking about this topic, particular thanks go to John Callanan, Cain Todd, and most of all Sasha Mudd for her insightful feedback and her unwavering support.

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