

Thomas Höwing

## Kant on Opinion, Belief, and Knowledge

*Penultimate draft only. Please cite published version. Final version is forthcoming in The Highest Good in Kant's Philosophy, edited by Thomas Höwing. Walter de Gruyter, 2016.*

Kant's doctrine of the highest good is part of a broader philosophical agenda that is expressed by his famous slogan "I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith" (*KrV* Bxxx). As Kant argues in the first *Critique*, any attempt to gain knowledge of God, the human soul, and freedom of the will is doomed to fail. What is more, since these objects transcend the limits of possible experience, we are not even entitled to form scientific hypotheses or opinions about them.<sup>1</sup> However, as moral agents, we are justified in holding the Belief that God exists, that the human soul is immortal, and that we have free will. And what justifies this moral Belief is a genuinely practical consideration – a consideration about the way in which we might realize the highest good.<sup>2</sup>

Kant's agenda is based on a novel account of the traditional distinction between opining (*Meinen*), Believing (*Glauben*), and knowing (*Wissen*).<sup>3</sup> According to Kant's rationalist predecessors, the three attitudes present different grades on an ascending scale of epistemic justification. Roughly speaking, the rationalists associate opinion with probabilistic justification, Belief with testimony, and knowledge with demonstrative reasoning.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, Kant's agenda presupposes that the attitude of Believing differs in a

---

<sup>1</sup> See *KrV* A769-75/B797-803, A827/B855; *KU* 5:465f.

<sup>2</sup> See *KrV* A810-14/B838-42, A828/B856; *KpV* 5:142ff.; *KU* 5:447ff.

<sup>3</sup> The term *Glauben*, as Kant uses it, is notoriously difficult to translate. 'Faith' is too narrow since, in principle, *Glauben* is not restricted to matters of faith. 'Belief' is problematic as well. For one thing, it is controversial whether *Glauben*, as Kant understands it, involves outright belief, as opposed to what some recent philosophers have called 'acceptance' (see Chignell 2007a: 37; Chignell 2007b: 335). Moreover, Kant thinks that *Wissen* and *Glauben* are mutually exclusive. If you know that *p*, you cannot *glauben* that *p*, and *vice versa*. Thus to avoid misunderstanding, I shall follow Chignell (Chignell 2007b: 335n.) and write "Belief" with a capital B.

<sup>4</sup> See Wolff, *Deutsche Metaphysik, Vorbericht* §2 and Chapter 7, §§1, 3, 19f.; Wolff, *Latin Logic* §§594, 602, 611; Baumgarten, *Acroasis Logica* §§349, 357f., 397f.; Meier, *Vernunftlehre* §§191, 203, 213, 236. See also Theis 2010.

crucial respect from both knowledge and opinion: a Belief in the Kantian sense requires *non-epistemic justification*. As Kant puts it in the first *Critique*, “[o]nly in a practical relation, [...] can a theoretically insufficient holding-to-be-true be called believing” (*KrV* A823/B851; my trans.). In other words, a Belief is justified not by virtue of evidence but by virtue of its relation to action.

This departure from the rationalist tradition at least partly accounts for the impression of imbalance conveyed by Kant’s discussion of the tripartite division in the first *Critique*. Rather than carefully laying out his version of the division, Kant devotes less than half a page to it and rushes on to argue that Belief, as he understands it, differs in quality from the other two attitudes. Indeed, it has already been noted that Kant’s official formulation of the distinction is incredibly dense and obscure:

*Having an opinion* is taking something to be true with the consciousness that it is subjectively as well as objectively insufficient. If taking something to be true is only subjectively sufficient and is at the same time held to be objectively insufficient, then it is called *believing*. Finally, when taking something to be true is both subjectively and objectively sufficient it is called *knowing* (*KrV* A822/B850).

What seems to be clear is that all three attitudes involve *assent*, or what Kant calls ‘holding to be true’ (*Fürwahrhalten*). In other words, if an agent opines, Believes or knows that *p*, she takes *p* to be true. What is less clear is how the three attitudes differ from one another. A major reason for this obscurity is that Kant never really explains the underlying distinction between the *subjective/objective insufficiency/sufficiency* of an assent (or, in short, the SOIS-distinction).

What is more, the way in which the SOIS-distinction figures in Kant’s formulation creates a major exegetical puzzle. Consider a more schematic version of Kant’s formulation:

- (i) Opinion is *subjectively insufficient* and *objectively insufficient* assent.
- (ii) Belief is *subjectively sufficient* and *objectively insufficient* assent.
- (iii) Knowledge is *subjectively sufficient* and *objectively sufficient* assent.

To see the puzzle, consider Kant’s description of Belief. Kant describes Belief in terms of two features, namely, a positive feature that it shares with knowledge (*subjective sufficiency*) and a negative feature that it shares with

opinion (*objective insufficiency*). In other words, Kant suggests that Belief is something like a ‘mixed’ assent that shares its essential features with knowledge and opinion. However, this seems to run counter to Kant’s central claim that Belief has at least one unique feature – it requires non-epistemic justification.

My aim in this paper is to explore this puzzle in further detail. In the first section, I will argue that the two most recent interpretations of Kant’s distinction – those offered by Andrew Chignell and Lawrence Pasternack – fail to provide an adequate solution to the puzzle. In the second section, I shall outline an alternative reading of Kant’s tripartite division that emerges from a much-neglected passage in the late *Jäsche Logik*. As we will see, however, my reading will not yield a full-blown analysis of the three attitudes. Rather, it will show that Kant’s division is based on a more elementary classification of the different ways in which a *ground* (*Grund*) might make it rationally appropriate for the agent to assent to some judgment. In the third and final section, I shall argue that, once we spell out Kant’s SOIS-distinction in terms of this classification, the above-mentioned exegetical puzzle dissolves.

## 1 Two Recent Interpretations

To begin with, one might wonder whether there is a puzzle at all. Kant’s formulation, one might say, concerns not different modes of justification but different kinds of *assent*. Thus it might seem that Kant’s formulation is simply not intended to capture epistemological differences between types of justification but is instead meant to capture psychological differences between types of *attitude*. In other words, it might seem that there is simply no need for Kant to mention the fact that Belief requires non-epistemic justification.

However, other passages clearly suggest that Kant’s formulation is meant to capture differences at the level of justification. For instance, in the late *Jäsche Logik*, Kant presents the following version of the formulation:

- (i) Opinion is “based on a ground of cognition that is neither subjectively nor objectively sufficient” (*Logik* 9:66).
- (ii) Belief is “based on a ground that is objectively insufficient but subjectively sufficient” (*Logik* 9:67).

- (iii) Knowledge is “based on a ground of cognition that is objectively as well as subjectively sufficient” (*Logik* 9:70).

In this modified formulation, Kant applies the SOIS-distinction not to different types of assent but to different types of *ground*. This suggests that, in distinguishing the three attitudes, Kant is concerned with different modes of justification after all. Kant’s focus seems to be the different ways in which a ground might make it rationally appropriate for the agent to assent to some judgment.<sup>5</sup>

In light of this suggestion, we may articulate the puzzle a bit more clearly. Kant describes the grounds required for Belief in terms of two features, namely, a positive feature shared with grounds required for knowledge (*subjective sufficiency*), and a negative feature shared with grounds required for opinion (*objective insufficiency*). And this seems to run counter to Kant’s claim that the grounds of Belief have at least one unique feature: they count as non-epistemic or as “practical” grounds.

Now one might still object that this is not a real puzzle. Kant, one might say, is simply drawing a *distinction* between the three kinds of ground, and to do so he does not need to refer to the unique features of these grounds. To take a somewhat artificial example, suppose I were to draw a distinction between a snake, a house and an elephant. To distinguish these items, I obviously don’t *need* to refer to the fact that the house has some unique feature (such as, for instance, the fact that the house is not a living being). I might also refer to a set of non-unique features that, taken together, are sufficient to distinguish the house from both the snake and the elephant. Thus I might say that, just like the elephant and unlike the snake, the house is around 4 meters high, and just like the snake and unlike the elephant, the house does not have a trunk.

The objection shows that there is no need to assume that Kant’s tripartite division provides us with full-blown descriptions or with self-standing definitions of the three kinds of ground. Kant might just as well refer to those features of the three grounds that allow him to draw a distinction between the corresponding attitudes. However, even if this is granted, Kant’s silence on the supposedly ‘non-epistemic nature’ of grounds of Belief remains puzzling. As we have seen, the claim that Belief requires non-epistemic justification

---

<sup>5</sup> This assumption seems to be supported by the fact that, in the case of opinion and knowledge, Kant speaks of an underlying “ground of cognition” (*Erkenntnisgrund*). This term is of course familiar from Kant’s famous claim that the consciousness of the moral law justifies our holding that we have free will – or, as Kant puts it, that the moral law serves as the ‘ground of cognition’ (*ratio cognoscendi*) of the possibility of freedom (*KpV* 5:4n.).

lies at the very centre of Kant's overall agenda of 'denying knowledge in order to make room for faith'. Moreover, this claim must have been quite controversial among eighteenth-century German philosophers. After all, as we have also seen, it departs from the prevailing rationalist account of the three attitudes. In other words, although Kant's official formulation of the tripartite division might not entail a straightforward inconsistency, it is just not clear why it should remain silent on the non-epistemic nature of grounds of Belief.

That there is something puzzling about Kant's formulation is also suggested by the different readings that recent commentators have proposed. To begin with, Andrew Chignell claims that Kant is operating with two different notions of *subjective sufficiency*. The first notion denotes an internalist condition on the justification required for knowledge. Roughly speaking, the notion requires that the agent be in a position to cite, upon reflection, what she takes to be the objectively sufficient ground of her assent to some proposition.<sup>6</sup> By contrast, the second notion denotes a pragmatic condition on the justification required for Belief. Again putting things very roughly, the second notion requires that a firm assent to some proposition have sufficient 'non-epistemic merits' for the agent, i.e. it allows the agent to meet some non-epistemic goal or interest.<sup>7</sup>

Chignell's reading has an obvious advantage: it preserves the idea that Kant's description of Belief makes reference to non-epistemic justification. However, it seems that the reading also has an obvious disadvantage: it assumes that Kant's formulation rests on an ambiguity. To be sure, it is a sad fact that Kant often uses the same term in different ways, sometimes doing so even though he is perfectly aware that the term has different meanings. When he does this, however, there is typically some other passage that accounts for the ambiguity, in which he distinguishes between the different senses of the term.<sup>8</sup> In the case before us, however, we lack any such passage. As Lawrence Pasternack has already pointed out, nowhere does Kant indicate that he uses 'subjective sufficiency' in different senses.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the SOIS-

<sup>6</sup> Chignell 2007a: 41, 44-50; Chignell 2007b: 328-30.

<sup>7</sup> Chignell 2007b: 333-5; Chignell 2007a: 50-7, esp. 53.

<sup>8</sup> To take a thematically related case, in the first *Critique* Kant introduces the concept of *conviction*, and he suggests that the latter refers to objectively sufficient assent (*KrV* A820-1/B848-9). However, Kant then moves on to claim that "[s]ubjective sufficiency is called *conviction* (for myself)" (*KrV* A822/B850). As Chignell suggests (correctly I think), Kant is working with different concepts of conviction in the passage. But this suggestion is supported by the fact that, in other passages, Kant clearly distinguishes between different senses of the term (see *Logik* 9:72; Chignell 2007a: 59 note 4).

<sup>9</sup> Pasternack 2014: 44f. note 7.

distinction appears not only in the first *Critique* but also in Kant's late writings and lecture notes, and always in roughly the same way.<sup>10</sup> This suggests that Kant did not feel the need to revise or even clarify the distinction in a substantial way. In short, I think it is implausible to assume that Kant's division rests on an ambiguity.

More recently, Lawrence Pasternack has proposed an alternative interpretation of Kant's tripartite division (see Pasternack 2011a, 2011b, 2014). In response to the puzzle, Pasternack adopts a somewhat different strategy – he simply denies that Kant's description of Belief makes reference to non-epistemic justification. Instead, Pasternack suggests that Kant describes Belief in largely psychological terms, by referring to the high degree of firmness involved in this kind of assent.<sup>11</sup> More specifically, Pasternack argues that Kant describes Belief in terms of two features: (i) a high degree of firmness, which it shares with knowledge (*subjective sufficiency*), and (ii) a lack of strong epistemic support, which it shares with opinion (*objective insufficiency*). Pasternack's reading thus preserves the consistency of Kant's formulation – it shows that the two terms Kant uses in his description of Belief can be consistently applied to knowledge and opinion, respectively.

However, Pasternack's reading also has an obvious disadvantage: it gives us a largely psychological description of Belief. One worry is that this runs counter to the philosophical importance that Kant attaches to the non-epistemic justification of Belief. Another worry is that it is doubtful whether Pasternack is right in suggesting that a Belief always involves a high degree of psychological firmness.<sup>12</sup> Although there is evidence pointing in this direction,<sup>13</sup> at least in the first *Critique* Kant suggests something different.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, *Logik Busolt* (1789), 24:637f.; *Logik Dohna Wundlacken* (1792), 24:732; *Jäsche Logik* (1800), 9:66, 67, 70.

<sup>11</sup> As Pasternack suggests, the Kantian term 'firmness' (*Festigkeit*) is to be taken in an absolute sense, as denoting "both the stability of one's commitment to the proposition and the feeling of surety one has when reflecting upon it" (Pasternack 2014: 43-4; see 8:141f. note).

<sup>12</sup> Note that a similar assumption is made by Chignell, who argues that *subjective sufficiency*, as it appears in the description of Belief, denotes the non-epistemic merits of *firm* assent.

<sup>13</sup> In the first *Critique*, Kant introduces the notion of doctrinal Belief, i.e. Belief that concerns thoroughly theoretical issues (*KrV* A825-8/B853-6; Chignell 2007b: 345-54; Pasternack 2011a). He goes on to explain that the "expression of belief is in such cases an expression of modesty from an *objective* point of view, but at the same time of the firmness of confidence in a *subjective* one" (*KrV* A827/B855; see Chignell 2007b: 340f. note 20). Similarly, in the very same passage, Kant points out that the degree of firmness or confidence with which a proposition is held by an agent can be determined by introducing an imaginary betting scenario. As Kant puts it, "[t]he usual touchstone of whether what someone asserts is mere persuasion, or at least subjective conviction, i.e., firm belief, is *betting*" (*KrV* A824/B852).

Shortly after presenting his formulation of the division, Kant introduces the notion of *pragmatic Belief*, i.e. an assent that is justified by virtue of instrumental considerations. And Kant goes on to suggest that pragmatic Belief has “only a degree, which can be large or small according to the difference of the interest that is at stake” (*KrV* A825/B853). If Pasternack were correct, Kant would be committing something like a blatant inconsistency here: he would be claiming, in the very same passage, that Belief involves a high degree of firmness by definition and that certain Beliefs may involve a small degree of firmness.<sup>14</sup>

In this section, I have argued that the two recent attempts to deal with the puzzle face a variety of exegetical difficulties. But even if we ignore these difficulties for the moment, it seems that both readings share a more general disadvantage. Rather than dissolving the puzzle, they are somehow built around it. Both Chignell and Pasternack seem to assume that, in interpreting Kant’s formulation of the division, we have two options: *either* we show that Kant’s description of Belief makes reference to a justificatory feature not shared by knowledge or opinion *or* we show that the two terms used by Kant to describe Belief can be consistently applied to knowledge and opinion, respectively. We simply cannot have both. And this, of course, is just what the puzzle suggests. In other words, if we want to dissolve the puzzle, we need something different, namely, an interpretation that shows that *both* of these seemingly conflicting tasks can be met. As I want to suggest in the remainder of the paper, such an interpretation can be given.

## 2. An Alternative Interpretation

To develop this interpretation, it will be necessary to consider another passage from the late *Jäsche Logik* in somewhat more detail. In this passage,

---

However, in these passages, ‘firmness’ and related expressions may also be taken in a relative sense. In the first passage, Kant compares doctrinal Beliefs and scientific hypotheses. And his claim seems to be that, while the former do not require the theoretical support of the latter, they are at least as firmly held by the agent. In the second passage, Kant is talking about the degree of firmness that can be detected by introducing imaginary betting scenarios.

<sup>14</sup> Pasternack recognizes this, but he argues that there is a tendency in Kant’s later works to restrict Belief to moral Belief, the latter being always firmly held by the agent. As Pasternack suggests, this more restrictive view is already present in the formulation of the division in the first *Critique*, but not in the subsequent treatment of pragmatic Belief (Pasternack 2011b: 292f., 299-302). It seems implausible to me to suppose, however, that Kant should have mixed up two inconsistent accounts within the span of only three pages.

Kant provides an alternative formulation of his tripartite division that does not rely on the SOIS-distinction. Let me begin by quoting the whole passage:

Opining is *problematic* judging, believing is *assertoric* judging, and knowing is *apodeictic* judging. For what I merely opine I hold in judging, with consciousness, only to be *problematic*; what I believe I hold to be *assertoric*, but not as objectively necessary, only as subjectively so (holding only for me); what I *know*, finally, I hold to be *apodeictically certain*, i.e., to be universally and objectively necessary (holding for all), even granted that the object to which this certain holding-to-be-true relates should be a merely empirical truth (*Logik* 9:66).

In this passage, Kant formulates the division of justified assent in terms of the three modal modes of judgment, i.e. in terms of his distinction between problematic, assertoric, and apodictic judging.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Kant suggests that, at least partly, the three attitudes differ with regard to the intersubjective validity of the corresponding judgments. As Kant puts it, what I know holds “for all” judging agents, but what I Believe holds “only for me”.

Unpacking this passage would require a detailed discussion of central parts of Kant’s epistemology, which is beyond the scope of this paper. Thus in this section I shall confine myself to giving an outline of what I take to be the most plausible reading. As I want to suggest in the next section, however, this reading has at least one exegetical merit – it allows us to solve the exegetical puzzle raised by Kant’s division.

To begin with, in the passage Kant describes knowledge as “apodeictic judging”, but he also points out that this does not rule out knowledge of empirical truths. In other words, my assent that there is a chair in the room might count as knowledge and hence as apodictic judging. This claim is puzzling, given that Kant tends to associate apodictic judgment with *a priori* knowledge. However, if we recall that Kant also describes knowledge in terms of an underlying *ground*, the following explanation suggests itself. When I know that *p*, my assent is based on a ground that makes it *rationally necessary* for me to assent that *p*. In other words, grounds of knowledge have what one might call strong normative force – they don’t merely license assent; they *rationally require* it.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> It is remarkable that this passage has received no attention in the more recent debate on Kant’s account of the tripartite division. The most detailed discussion of which I am aware is that offered by Matthey (see Matthey 1986; see also Motta 2012: 33-5).

<sup>16</sup> For a similar reading of Kant’s description of knowledge in terms of an underlying obligation, see Matthey 1986: 426ff., 435ff. Matthey also offers an interesting proposal as to



Let me briefly pause to say something about the terminology I will be using. In the sense that I am using the term, to say that  $x$  is rationally required to  $\varphi$  is to say that  $x$  ought to  $\varphi$ . However, in what follows I shall speak of rational requirement simply because this allows me to treat *ought* as a normative relation that holds between a ground, an agent and an assent that  $p$ . Moreover, to have a broader notion of that relation, I shall speak of a ground that makes it *rationally appropriate* for an agent to assent that  $p$ . Thus to say that a ground rationally requires an agent to assent that  $p$  is to specify the way in which the ground in question makes it rationally appropriate for the agent to assent that  $p$ . As we will see, however, certain grounds – grounds of opinion, that is – make it rationally appropriate for the agent to form an assent, but they don't rationally require the agent to form an assent.<sup>17</sup>

Returning to the passage before us, it seems that the description of knowledge in terms of an underlying requirement does not yet provide a full explanation as to why Kant thinks that knowledge involves apodictic judging. As Kant explains in the passage, “what I know [...] I hold to be apodeictically certain, i.e., to be universally and objectively necessary (holding for all)” (9:66). In other words, a ground of knowledge does not simply make it *necessary* for the agent to assent to some judgment; it makes it *universally and objectively necessary*. The notion of universal and objective necessity that Kant is invoking here is reminiscent of his famous claim in the *Prolegomena* that objective validity and necessary universality for everyone are interchangeable concepts (*Prol* 4:298; see also Matthey 1986: 437). However, even without entering into a lengthy discussion of this latter claim, I think the upshot of Kant's description is clear enough from the passage currently before us. Consider how Kant summarizes his description in parentheses. As Kant puts it, what I know holds “for all” rational agents. In other words, knowledge that  $p$  will entitle me to assert  $p$  to others, with the contention that they should assent to  $p$  as well.

Now in light of what we have seen so far, it is tempting to explain this feature of knowledge in terms of an underlying ground. Thus we might say

---

how we might relate this description to Kant's account of the laws of the understanding (Matthey 1986: 437f.).

<sup>17</sup> Strictly speaking, to say that something – a fact or state – is a *ground* for an agent to assent that  $p$  is to say that this fact or state stands in a relation to the agent and the assent, namely, the relation of ‘being a ground for’ (for a similar view see Scanlon 2014). Now one might ask whether, according to Kant, this relation just is the rational appropriateness relation. At least on the face of it, Kant seems to allow for grounds that don't make an assent rationally appropriate, such as, for example, ‘grounds of persuasion’ (see *KrV* A820/B848). In what follows, I shall thus attempt to leave the question open by using ‘ground’ simply as a placeholder for the relevant fact or state.

something along the following lines: what ultimately entitles me to assert  $p$  to others is the fact that my assent that  $p$  is based on a ground that imposes something like a universal requirement on me – the ground in question requires not only me but *all* rational agents to assent that  $p$ .

However, as it stands, this can hardly be correct. For example, suppose I know that there is a chair in my room by virtue of seeing that there is a chair in my room (where seeing that  $p$  entails  $p$ ). Now if Kant is correct, there will be something about this perceptual state, or about the fact with which it presents me, that requires me to assent that there is a chair in my room. It is hard to see, however, how this state, or the corresponding fact, could also require *you* to form the assent in question. You are simply not in a state that qualifies as seeing that there is a chair in Thomas's room; nor are you presented with the corresponding fact that there is a chair in my room. In other words, Kant's description must entail an important proviso. My ground of knowledge will require you to assent that there is a chair in the room *provided that it is available to you*. If you were in my room and were to see that there is a chair, it would – at least under ordinary circumstances – be just as necessary for you to form the relevant assent as it is for me.<sup>18</sup>

The example I have just given is meant to suggest two things. First, it is meant to suggest quite generally that a ground – a certain fact or state – must be available to the agent if it is to make a corresponding assent rationally appropriate or even rationally necessary for her. In other words, the availability of a ground is a *necessary condition* for its having a normative grip on the agent. Second, the example makes explicit Kant's claim that what I know holds "for all". Suppose that a fact or state counts as a ground of knowledge with respect to an agent's assent that  $p$ . Kant's claim is not that this state or fact requires every agent to assent that  $p$ . Rather, his claim is that this state or fact requires every agent *to whom it is available* to assent that  $p$ . In other words, in the case of grounds of knowledge, availability is not only a necessary but also a *sufficient condition* for their having a normative grip on the agent.

---

<sup>18</sup> Note that statements like 'My ground of knowledge that  $p$  is available to you' allow for two readings. On a *de dicto* reading, what is available to you is the fact that some state or fact counts as a ground of knowledge with respect to my assent that  $p$ . By contrast, on a *de re* reading, what is available to you is something – a fact, or a certain kind of state – that also happens to count as a ground of knowledge with respect to my assent that  $p$ . Kant's claim requires the *de re* reading. If you were to see that there is a chair in the room, what would be available to you would be a state or fact that also happens to count as a ground of knowledge with regard to my assent that there is a chair in the room. Note that in what follows I shall quite generally stick to the *de re* use of similar statements, such as 'x's ground of Belief that  $p$  is available to y'.

Of course, much more needs to be said about these claims. In particular, one would have to give a Kantian account of the kind of state or fact that might actually count as a ground of knowledge, and of what it is for that state or fact to be available to the agent. I am far from being able to provide such an account. But I suspect that any such account would have to involve the notion of a state that provides the agent with *infallible access to truth*, such as, in the aforementioned example, my state of seeing that there is a chair in the room. Suppose I merely *seemingly see* that there is a chair in my room, where seemingly seeing that  $p$  is compatible with both  $p$  and  $\text{not-}p$ . In such a case, we might very well conceive of another rational agent who is in the very same kind of state but who is not, or at least not by the state in question, required to assent that there is a chair in my room. The agent in question might simply know that her being in the relevant state is compatible with there being no chair in the room, or she might know that there is no chair in the room at all.<sup>19</sup>

Now be this as it may, it seems that Kant's description of knowledge is ultimately based on a description of the grounds required for knowledge. This latter description might be summarized as follows. If a state or fact,  $g$ , counts as a ground of knowledge with respect to  $S$ 's assent that  $p$ , then  $g$  will satisfy the following two conditions:

- (i)  $g$  rationally requires  $S$  to assent that  $p$ , and
- (ii) necessarily, for any rational agent  $x$ , if  $g$  is available to  $x$  then  $g$  rationally requires  $x$  to assent that  $p$ .

In other words, there is no possible scenario in which  $g$  is available to a rational agent  $x$  and  $g$  does not require  $x$  to assent that  $p$ .

As for Belief, Kant claims that the latter qualifies as "assertoric judging". As Kant puts it, "what I believe I hold to be assertoric, but not as objectively necessary, only as subjectively so (holding only for me)" (9:66). By associating Belief with assertoric judgment, Kant does not want to suggest that the latter is merely an 'actual' assent that is not formed on the basis of some ground.<sup>20</sup> As Kant indicates in the passage, in forming a Belief the

---

<sup>19</sup> The view I am tentatively attributing to Kant here is similar to the disjunctivist view that John McDowell has defended with regard to perceptual experience; see, for example, McDowell 1995, 1998 as well as Matthiessen 2014.

<sup>20</sup> For a reading on these lines see Matthey 1986. As Matthey suggests, an agent's judgment that  $p$  is an assertoric judgment iff the agent actually affirms the truth of  $p$  (Matthey 1986: 426-8, 431). Moreover, Matthey argues that a Belief is a mode of assent where one is subjectively

agent is still responsive to a necessity, albeit to a merely *subjective necessity*. And once again Kant summarizes the upshot of this description in parentheses. An assent that qualifies as Belief will hold “only for me”. In other words, if I Believe that *p*, I am not entitled to assert *p* to others with the intention that they should assent to *p* as well.

Taking the description of knowledge as our guide, we may likewise explain this feature of Belief in terms of an underlying ground. If I Believe that *p*, my assent will be based on a ground that rationally requires me to assent that *p*. However, this requirement, or this necessity, will be merely subjective. The ground in question will require *me* to assent that *p*, but it will not require everyone to whom it is available to assent that *p*.

Now to see why this is so, it can be helpful to consider two examples that Kant gives for the attitude of Believing. In the first *Critique*, Kant makes the following remark about moral Belief: since my moral Belief “depends on subjective grounds (of moral disposition) I must not even say ‘*It is morally certain that there is a God,*’ [...] but rather ‘*I am morally certain*’” (*KrV* A829/B857). Suppose I were to say to you that it is certain that God exists. In saying this, I would imply that I am in possession of a ground that potentially requires both of us – me and you – to assent that God exists. However, as Kant explains in the passage just quoted, I am not entitled to make such a claim, simply because my moral Belief depends on “subjective grounds (of moral disposition)”. In other words, the requirement that the relevant ground imposes on me is *conditioned* by my moral disposition; it is conditioned by my decision to act in accordance with the moral law. And since you might not have made this decision, I should say that I am morally certain that God exists.<sup>21</sup>

Now one might wonder whether this implies that the state or fact that constitutes my ground of Belief may not be *available* to you. Once again, a full answer to this question will depend on what kind of state or fact constitutes a ground of Belief. In light of what we have just seen, an obvious

---

caused to accept the truth of some judgment but at the same time realizes that one lacks sufficient theoretical justification (Mattey 1986: 434).

<sup>21</sup> Recent commentators have argued that moral Belief is valid for everyone (Wood 1970: 14-17; Chignell 2007a: 42; Pasternack 2014: 47). Wood cites a passage in which Kant claims that moral Belief is subjectively sufficient “absolutely and for everyone” (*KrV* A824/B852; Wood 1970: 15). However, the context of the passage suggests that Kant’s claim may be read in a different way. According to Kant, the *content* of our moral Beliefs can be determined on *a priori* grounds. Even before I ask whether I should hold a moral Belief, I may know that this Belief will concern the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and so on. As Kant puts it, “I [...] know with complete certainty that no one else knows of any other conditions that lead to this same unity of ends under the moral law” (*KrV* A828/B856).

candidate would be an agent's *decision* to act in a certain way. On this account, my ground for holding that God exists is simply my decision to act in accordance with the moral law. On the other hand, this account does not fit very well with the idea of a *conditional requirement* that Kant is invoking in the passages before us. The idea is not that there is an available ground – my decision to act in a certain way – that requires me to assent to some judgment. Rather, the idea is that there is an available ground – a state or fact – that requires me to assent to some judgment, *conditional* on my decision to act in a certain way.<sup>22</sup>

I think what Kant has in mind emerges in a second example from the first *Critique*. There, Kant presents the case of a doctor who is confronted with a patient in critical condition. As Kant puts it, the doctor “looks to the symptoms, and judges, because he does not know of anything better, that it is consumption” (*KrV* A824/B852). And Kant goes on to suggest that, given the doctor's subsequent decision to treat the patient for consumption, he will be required to form the (pragmatic) Belief that the patient suffers from consumption.

The passage is rather obscure, and Kant does not say what the doctor's ground of Belief is. However, in light of what Kant does say, it is tempting to suppose that the doctor's ground of Belief is simply constituted by those facts about the patient's disease that are available to him. As Kant points out, these facts include facts about the patient's symptoms, but presumably they also include more general facts about the kinds of diseases that are likely to generate such symptoms. Moreover, Kant suggests that, considered by themselves, these facts provide only limited epistemic support for the doctor's estimation. In other words, taken by themselves, these facts would *at best* make a corresponding assent rationally appropriate for the doctor, but they would certainly not require such an assent. However, given the doctor's decision to treat the patient for consumption, these facts will do exactly this – they will rationally require the doctor to assent that the patient has consumption.

---

<sup>22</sup> Note that, according to Kant, not just any decision will do. Rather, the decision has to qualify as a rational decision, and perhaps it also has to be responsive to a practical requirement, or to what Kant calls an imperative (the latter is clearly suggested by Kant's account of moral Belief). However, since nothing hinges on the matter here, in what follows I shall simply speak of a ‘decision to act in a certain way’, leaving open how exactly the decision in question should be described.

Admittedly, much more would be needed to spell out the reading of Kant's account of Belief that I have just sketched.<sup>23</sup> However, the above reading does seem to fit well with the idea of a conditional requirement that Kant associates with grounds of Belief. Moreover, the reading allows us to think of various scenarios in which the doctor's ground of Belief is available to some *other* agent but it fails to require the latter to form a corresponding assent. For instance, we might think of a second physician, who finds herself in the very same epistemic situation as the doctor but who does *not* decide to treat the patient for consumption. Or we might think of a third physician, who later investigates the case and who knows that the doctor's patient did not suffer from consumption. Both physicians might have access to the very same facts that required the doctor to form a particular assent, but these facts won't require them to form the assent in question.

In sum, we might summarize Kant's description of grounds of Belief as follows. If *g* counts as a ground of Belief with respect to an agent *S*'s assent that *p*, then *g* will satisfy the following conditions:

- (i) *g* rationally requires *S* to assent that *p*, and
- (ii) it is not the case that necessarily, for any rational agent *x*, if *g* is available to *x* then *g* rationally requires *x* to assent that *p*.

As should be clear by now, Kant's description of grounds of Belief reflects his overall account of non-epistemic justification. Putting things very roughly, according to Kant, non-epistemic justification is to be explained in terms of a requirement that arises from a combination of a lack of sufficient evidence and the decision to act in a certain way. On the one hand, the agent has access to certain facts that provide only insufficient evidence with regard to the truth of some proposition. On the other hand, she is required by these facts to assent to the proposition in question *given* that she has decided to act in a certain way. And this opens up a space for various scenarios in which

---

<sup>23</sup> I discuss Kant's conception of pragmatic Belief in more detail in Höwing, unpublished. One might also ask what kind of facts will constitute a moral agent's ground for Believing that God exists, that the soul is immortal, and so on. I have to confess that I lack a full-blown answer to this question. As Kant argues, due to the limits of cognition, there is simply nothing available to us that would support the truth of these propositions. However, he also argues that, due to the limits of human cognition, there is nothing available to us that would support the *falsity* of these propositions. In other words, we have at least access to facts that completely rule out the possibility of counterevidence. And perhaps it is these facts that constitute the grounds of moral Belief (see *Logik* 9:67.27-31 for a passage that points in this direction).

these facts are available to some other agent but fail to impose a rational requirement on them.

Finally, as for opinion, Kant explains: “[W]hat I merely opine I hold in judging, with consciousness, only to be problematic” (9:66). What Kant has in mind here, I think, emerges from the account of problematic judgment in the first *Critique*. There, Kant explains that “[t]he problematic proposition is [...] that which expresses merely logical possibility [...], i.e., a free choice to count such a proposition as valid” (*KrV* A75/B101). In light of this remark, it is tempting to read Kant’s description of opinion in a similar fashion. According to Kant, an agent’s opinion that  $p$  is based on a ground that leaves the agent a certain ‘freedom of choice’ – the ground in question does not rationally require the agent to assent that  $p$ .<sup>24</sup>

To be sure, this is not to say that the ground in question will fail to make an assent rationally appropriate for the agent. In fact, in this latter regard an opinion seems to involve something more than a merely problematic judgment. As Kant points out in the first *Critique*, an opinion must be based on facts that are available to the agent in the mode of knowledge and that provide at least weak to moderate epistemic support for the proposition in question.<sup>25</sup> Thus, to say that an opinion counts as problematic judging is merely to say that the underlying ground fails to impose a *rational requirement* on the opining agent. To take a simple example, I may assent that it is going to rain in the next few hours on the ground that my somewhat unreliable weather app says so. In such a case, it seems that the ground in question makes it rationally appropriate for me to assent that it is going to rain. But it certainly does not rationally require me to assent that it is going to rain.

Interestingly, in the passage Kant remains silent as to whether a judgment that is held in the mode of opining is intersubjectively valid. To take up

---

<sup>24</sup> According to Matthey, judging problematically that  $p$  is neither accepting  $p$  as true nor accepting not- $p$  as true. As Matthey suggests, this is because in making the judgment in question the agent acknowledges that she is under no rational constraint to take a stance (Matthey 1986: 428). Accordingly, Matthey defends the view that opinion is merely a “preliminary judging in which one does not accept the truth of the judgment” (Matthey 1986: 433). Matthey seems to be right in suggesting that an opinion is formed in the absence of an underlying rational requirement. However, as we have seen both in the first *Critique* and in the *Logik*, Kant makes clear that, just like the other two kinds of assent, opinion involves a “holding to be true”, i.e. accepting some proposition as true (see *Logik* 9:66-7; *KrV* A 822/B850).

<sup>25</sup> As Kant puts it, “I must never undertake to have an opinion without at least knowing something by means of which the in itself merely problematic judgment acquires a connection with truth” (*KrV* A 822/B850).

Kant's wording, will what I opine hold for all, or will it hold only for me? In light of what we have seen so far, it is tempting to assume that the judgment in question will hold *neither* for me *nor* for all. This is because, ultimately, to say that a judgment is 'holding' (*geltend*) for an agent is to say that it is not left to the agent's *discretion* to take the judgment on board. In other words, it is to say that there is something that *rationally requires* the agent to assent to the judgment in question. And as we have just seen, my opinion that  $p$  is based on a ground that does *not* rationally require me to assent that  $p$  – the ground in question leaves it to my discretion to take  $p$  on board. And therefore, in such a case  $p$  will not hold for me.

Now it follows straightforwardly that  $p$  won't be 'holding for all'. However, while this is correct, it is important to note what it means. The notion of holding for all, as Kant uses it in the passage from the *Logik*, is a *relativized* notion. Suppose you *know* that it is going to rain in the next few hours. In such a case, it seems that, from your perspective, the judgment in question holds for all. That is, you are in possession of a ground that requires not only you but everyone to whom it is available to assent to the judgment in question. By contrast, suppose I opine that it is going to rain in the next few hours. In such a case, from my perspective, the judgment in question holds neither for me nor for all. That is, I am in possession of a ground that does not require me to assent to the judgment in question. And therefore, my ground doesn't require everyone to whom it is available to assent to the judgment in question.

In sum, we might say that, if  $g$  counts as a ground of opinion with respect to an agent  $S$ 's assent that  $p$ , then  $g$  will satisfy the following conditions:

- (i)  $g$  does not rationally require  $S$  to assent that  $p$ , and
- (ii) it is not the case that necessarily, for any rational agent  $x$ , if  $g$  is available to  $x$  then  $g$  rationally requires  $x$  to assent that  $p$ .

Note that this description does not rule out a scenario in which  $g$  is available to some other rational agent  $T$  and in which  $g$  rationally requires  $T$  to assent that  $p$ . In such a case,  $g$  would obviously count as a *ground of Belief* with respect to  $T$ 's assent that  $p$ . In other words,  $g$  would require  $T$  to assent that  $p$ , but  $g$  would not require everyone to whom it is available (such as, for example,  $S$ ) to assent that  $p$ .

On the face of it, this might sound puzzling. But on closer inspection, the scenario in question fits very well with Kant's conception of grounds of Belief. Consider once again Kant's example of the doctor. As we have seen,



the doctor's Belief is based on facts that, taken by themselves, would at best make it rationally appropriate for him to assent that his patient has consumption. However, these facts would certainly not require him to form the assent in question. In other words, considered by themselves, these facts would at best license an *opinion* that the patient has consumption. However, we have also seen that, given his decision to treat the patient for consumption, the *very same* facts will rationally require the doctor to form the assent in question. In other words, in certain cases, a ground of opinion may *convert* into a ground of Belief – namely, where the agent has made a corresponding decision to act in a certain way.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, one might wonder why Kant's description of grounds of opinion does not bring out an essential feature of these grounds, namely, that they make an assent rationally appropriate for the agent. Although I lack a full answer to this question, I think something like an explanation emerges from what we have seen in the first section. Kant's description of grounds of opinion is simply not meant as a self-standing definition of these grounds. Rather, it is part of a more complex *classification* of different grounds. And presumably the 'genus' of this classification just is the notion of a ground that makes an assent rationally appropriate for the agent. In other words, the two conditions outlined above allow us to distinguish grounds of opinion from both grounds of knowledge and grounds of Belief. However, what we should take for granted in making this distinction is that all three grounds have one thing in common – they all make an assent rationally appropriate for the agent.

This suggests that in the passage from the *Logik*, Kant is ultimately concerned with a classification of grounds of assent. In fact, the passage from the *Logik* yields a classification of grounds that is surprisingly similar to that

---

<sup>26</sup> As a matter of fact, Kant suggests that there is some such connection when, in the *Logik*, he presents the example of a businessman who asks himself whether he should strike a deal that has been offered to him. As Kant puts it, "the businessman, [...] to strike a deal, needs not just to opine that there will be something to be gained thereby, but to believe it, i.e., to have his opinion be sufficient for an undertaking into the uncertain" (*Logik* 9:67f. note). Kant's remark is somewhat obscure, but it may perhaps be explained as follows. Suppose that the businessman has access to certain facts that make it likely that the deal will be a success. Taken by themselves, these facts at best justify an opinion that something will be gained from the deal. Yet in addition, given that the businessman has an interest in making a profit, these facts might also make it rational for him to actually strike the deal. In such a case, we may say, the businessman's opinion will be 'sufficient for an undertaking into the uncertain'. Accordingly, we may assume that the businessman goes for what is the rational thing to do and decides to make the deal. Now as Kant seems to suggest, in such a case the facts in question convert into a ground of Belief – they make it rationally necessary for the businessman to hold that something will be gained from the deal.

drawn by Kant in the first *Critique*. The classification that emerges from the passage in the *Logik* proceeds as follows. We begin by presuming that an agent's ground of knowledge has two features: (i) it requires the agent to form a particular assent and (ii) it requires everyone to whom it is available to form the assent in question. We then ask which of these features also pertain to grounds of Belief and grounds of opinion. As it turns out, grounds of Belief have the first feature but lack the second, whereas grounds of opinion lack both features. Now recall the classification that Kant draws in terms of the SOIS-distinction. Here, we likewise begin by presuming that grounds of knowledge have two features: (i) subjective sufficiency and (ii) objective sufficiency. And we then ask which of these two features also pertain to grounds of Belief and grounds of opinion. As it turns out, grounds of Belief have the first feature but lack the second, and grounds of opinion lack both features.

### 3. A Solution to the Puzzle

This suggests that we are on the right track. Thus, in the final section, I shall argue that the classification of grounds that emerges from the *Logik* can be fully mapped onto the classification that Kant draws in terms of the SOIS-distinction. Moreover, I shall suggest that spelling out the SOIS-distinction in this way allows us to solve the exegetical puzzle I presented in the first section of the paper.

As we have just noted, Kant's classification concerns the different ways in which a ground makes an assent rationally appropriate for an agent. Accordingly, to spell out Kant's classification of grounds, we should begin by making the following assumption. There is some state or fact,  $g$ , and some agent,  $S$ , such that  $g$  makes an assent that  $p$  rationally appropriate for  $S$ . This assumption is meant to make explicit the domain that Kant's classification is concerned with, namely, the domain of grounds that make an assent rationally appropriate for an agent.

Now with this assumption in place, we may introduce a first distinction by saying that (R) is either true or false:

(R)  $g$  rationally requires  $S$  to assent that  $p$ .

In other words, either it is true that  $g$  rationally requires  $S$  to assent that  $p$  or it is not true. In the first case,  $g$  counts as *subjectively sufficient* with respect to

S's assent that  $p$ . In the second case,  $g$  counts as *subjectively insufficient* with respect to S's assent that  $p$ .

A second distinction concerns the question as to whether  $g$  requires every rational agent to whom it is available to assent that  $p$ . Accordingly, we may say that (UR) is either true or false:

- (UR) Necessarily, for any rational agent  $x$ , if  $g$  is available to  $x$  then  $g$  rationally requires  $x$  to assent that  $p$ .

In other words, either it is true that  $g$  requires every rational agent to whom it is available to assent that  $p$  or it is not true. In the first case,  $g$  counts as *objectively sufficient* with regard to an assent that  $p$ . And in the second case,  $g$  counts as *objectively insufficient* with regard to an assent that  $p$ .

Finally, let us consider the possible ways in which these two distinctions may be combined:

1. In the first case,  $g$  qualifies as *subjectively and objectively sufficient* with respect to S's assent that  $p$ . In other words,  $g$  rationally requires S to assent that  $p$ , and  $g$  requires every rational agent to whom it is available to assent that  $p$ . As we have seen, in such a case,  $g$  counts as a *ground of knowledge* with respect to S's assent that  $p$ .

2. In the second case,  $g$  qualifies as *subjectively sufficient and objectively insufficient* with respect to S's assent that  $p$ . In other words,  $g$  rationally requires S to assent that  $p$ , but  $g$  does not require every rational agent to whom it is available to assent that  $p$ . As we have seen, in this case,  $g$  counts as a *ground of Belief* with respect to S's assent that  $p$ .

3. In the third case,  $g$  qualifies as *subjectively and objectively insufficient* with respect to S's assent that  $p$ . In other words,  $g$  does not rationally require S to assent that  $p$ , and  $g$  does not require every rational agent to whom it is available to assent that  $p$ . Recall, however, that we are assuming that  $g$  makes it rationally appropriate for S to assent that  $p$ . If this is taken into account, we may say that, in the third case,  $g$  counts as a *ground of opinion* with respect to S's assent that  $p$ .

Note that, within the domain we are considering, there cannot be a fourth case. In such a case,  $g$  would qualify as *subjectively insufficient and objectively sufficient* with regard to S's assent that  $p$ . To see why this is conceptually impossible, consider the following line of thought. To begin with, recall our initial assumption that  $g$  makes it rationally appropriate for S to assent that  $p$ . Furthermore, in the previous section we saw that the availability of a ground is a necessary condition for its making an assent

rationally appropriate for the agent. In other words, if  $g$  makes an assent that  $p$  rationally appropriate for  $S$ , then  $g$  will be available to  $S$ . Along with our initial assumption, it follows that  $g$  is available to  $S$ . Now consider the alleged fourth case. In this case,  $g$  counts as *objectively sufficient* with regard to an assent that  $p$ . In other words,  $g$  requires just any agent to whom it is available to assent that  $p$ . Since  $g$  is available to  $S$ , it follows that  $g$  requires  $S$  to assent that  $p$ . And this is just to say that  $g$  is *subjectively sufficient* with regard to  $S$ 's assent that  $p$ .

This, I take it, shows that the classification from the *Logik* may be consistently mapped onto the classification that Kant draws in terms of the SOIS-distinction. Now before we turn to the puzzle, we might define the two main concepts of Kant's SOIS-distinction. Consider the following definitions:

- (OS) A state or fact  $g$  counts as an *objectively sufficient ground* with regard to an assent that  $p$  iff necessarily, for any rational agent  $x$ , if  $g$  is available to  $x$  then  $g$  rationally requires  $x$  to assent that  $p$ .
- (SS) A state or fact  $g$  counts as a *subjectively sufficient ground* with regard to a particular agent  $S$ 's assent that  $p$  iff  $g$  rationally requires  $S$  to assent that  $p$ .

It might seem that the notions of subjective and objective insufficiency may be defined merely by negating the respective definiens in (OS) and (SS). However, while this is true with regard to *objective insufficiency*, there are two ways to define *subjective insufficiency*:

- (SIS<sub>1</sub>) A state or fact  $g$  counts as a *subjectively insufficient ground* with regard to  $S$ 's assent that  $p$  iff  $g$  does not rationally require  $S$  to assent that  $p$ .
- (SIS<sub>2</sub>) A state or fact  $g$  counts as a *subjectively insufficient ground* with regard to  $S$ 's assent that  $p$  iff (i)  $g$  makes it rationally appropriate for  $S$  to assent that  $p$  and (ii)  $g$  does not rationally require  $S$  to assent that  $p$ .

The definiens that appears in (SIS<sub>1</sub>) simply denies the definiens that appears in (SS). By contrast, the definiens in (SIS<sub>2</sub>) adds the condition that  $g$  makes it rationally appropriate for  $S$  to assent that  $p$ . In presenting the classification, I have implicitly worked with (SIS<sub>1</sub>) since this fits better with Kant's negative description of opining in terms of a merely problematic judgment. On the other hand, (SIS<sub>1</sub>) has crucial philosophical disadvantages. For one thing,

(SIS<sub>1</sub>) allows us to speak of a subjectively insufficient ground in cases where the corresponding facts don't lend any rational support to an assent that *p*, or, what seems to be worse, in cases where these facts rationally support an assent that not-*p*. What is more, (SIS<sub>1</sub>) allows for various combinations of the SOIS-distinction *outside* the domain of Kant's classification. For instance, it makes room for a scenario in which *g* counts as subjectively insufficient<sub>1</sub> and objectively insufficient with regard to S's assent, but in which *g* fails to make the assent rationally appropriate for S. In other words, in such a scenario *g* would *not* qualify as a ground of opinion for S.

In light of these considerations, I have a certain preference for attributing (SIS<sub>2</sub>) to Kant. But I simply don't see enough textual evidence to support such a reading. Be this as it may, all this does not seem to be much of a problem when it comes to our understanding of Kant's classification itself. As we have seen, this classification is concerned with the domain of grounds that make an assent rationally appropriate anyway. In other words, nothing hinges on the matter here, and thus I shall simply leave it to the reader to choose between (SIS<sub>1</sub>) and (SIS<sub>2</sub>).<sup>27</sup>

With this reading of Kant's classification now in place, let us turn to the second question of whether the reading solves the puzzle presented in the first section of the paper. In short, the puzzle was this. Kant describes grounds of Belief in terms of two features, namely, a positive feature shared with grounds of knowledge (*subjective sufficiency*), and a negative feature shared with grounds of opinion (*objective insufficiency*). And this seems to run counter to Kant's claim that the grounds of Belief have at least one unique feature – they count as non-epistemic grounds.

It should be clear by now that, if my reading is correct, there really is no such puzzle. This is because, according to the reading, Kant's description of grounds of Belief does seem to reflect his account of non-epistemic justification. To begin with, we have seen that an agent's ground of Belief has two features: (i) it requires the agent to form a particular assent (*subjective sufficiency*), and (ii) it does not require every agent to whom it is available to form the assent in question (*objective insufficiency*). Moreover, we have also seen that the first feature would also pertain to a corresponding ground of knowledge, whereas the second feature would also pertain to a corresponding ground of opinion.

---

<sup>27</sup> To be sure, I am not claiming that Kant commits an ambiguity by using two different notions of subjective insufficiency. Rather, I simply want to leave open the question which of the two notions Kant uses.

However, there doesn't seem to be anything puzzling about this description. This is because it is precisely the *combination* of the two features that reflects Kant's account of non-epistemic justification. As I have suggested, Kant holds the view that non-epistemic justification is to be explained in terms of a rational requirement that arises from a lack of strong epistemic support and the agent's decision to act in a certain way. On the one hand, the agent has access to certain facts that, considered by themselves, exert only weak to moderate normative force on the agent to form a corresponding assent. On the other hand, once the agent *decides* to act in a certain way, the normative force of these facts increases dramatically – the facts in question *rationally require* the agent to form the assent in question.

This explains why Kant describes an agent's ground of Belief in terms of features that would also pertain to a corresponding ground of knowledge and a corresponding ground of opinion. Just like a corresponding ground of knowledge, a ground of Belief *requires* the agent to form a particular assent. However, just like a corresponding ground of opinion, a ground of Belief does not require everyone to whom it is available to form the assent in question. For if we take away the agent's decision to act in a certain way, what is left are facts that provide only insufficient epistemic support to the assent in question. And this opens up space for possible scenarios in which these facts are available to some other agent but fail to impose a rational requirement on them.<sup>28</sup>

## References

- Baumgarten, Alexander G. 1973, *Acroasis Logica in Christianum L. B. de Wolff* (1725), in: Christian Wolff, *Gesammelte Werke*, Abt.3, Bd. 5, Hildesheim/New York: Olms
- Chignell, Andrew 2007a, "Kant's Concepts of Justification", *Nous* 41, 33-63
- Chignell, Andrew 2007b, "Belief in Kant", *Philosophical Review* 116, 323-60
- Höwing, Thomas (unpublished), "Kant on Justification, Rational Choice, and Pragmatic Belief"

---

<sup>28</sup> Work on this paper was supported by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG). I thank Kimberly Brewer, John Callanan, Andrew Chignell, Gabriele Gava, Johannes Höwing, Anselm Spindler and Eric Watkins for helpful comments on earlier drafts of the paper. Marcus Willaschek provided both oral and written comments that helped me to improve the paper at various stages.

- Mattey, G.J. 1986, "Kant's Theory of Propositional Attitudes", *Kant-Studien* 77, 423-40
- Matthiessen, Hannes Ole 2014, "Disjunktivismus. Die Auflösung des Dualismus von Anschauung und Welt", in: Christian Barth/David Lauer (eds.) 2014, *Die Philosophie John McDowells. Ein Handbuch*, Münster: mentis, 51-66
- McDowell, John 1995, "Knowledge and the Internal", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55, 877-93
- McDowell, John 1998, "Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge", in: John McDowell 1998, *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality*, Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 369-94
- Meier, Georg Friedrich 1997, *Vernunftlehre*, ed. Günter Schenk, 3 vols., Halle/Saale: Hallescher Verlag
- Motta, Giuseppe 2012, *Die Postulate des empirischen Denkens überhaupt. KrV A 218-235/B 265-287. Ein kritischer Kommentar*, Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter
- Pasternack, Lawrence 2011a, "Kant's Doctrinal Belief in God", in: Thorndike, Oliver (ed.) 2011, *Rethinking Kant*, Vol. III, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 200-18
- Pasternack, Lawrence 2011b, "The Development and Scope of Kantian Belief: The Highest Good, The Practical Postulates and The Fact of Reason", *Kant-Studien* 102, 290-315
- Pasternack, Lawrence 2014, "Kant on Opinion: Assent, Hypothesis, and the Norms of General Applied Logic", *Kant-Studien* 105, 41-82
- Scanlon, T.M. 2014, *Being Realistic About Reasons*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Stevenson, Leslie 2003, "Opinion, Belief or Faith, and Knowledge", *Kantian Review* 7, 72-101
- Theis, Robert 2010, "Du Savoir, de la foi et de l'opinion de Wolff à Kant", *Archives de Philosophie* 73, 211-28
- Wolff, Christian 1978, *Vernünfftige Gedanken von den Kräfte[n] des menschlichen Verstandes und ihrem richtigen Gebrauch in Erkenntnis und Wahrheit* [German Logic], Hildesheim: Olms
- Wolff, Christian 1983, *Philosophia Rationalis sive Logica* [Latin Logic], Hildesheim: Olms
- Wood, Allen W. 1970, *Kant's Moral Religion*, New York: Cornell University Press