

**“Practical Cognition, Intuition, and the Fact of Reason”**  
**Patrick Kain**

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**Abstract:** Kant’s claims about supersensible objects, and his account of the epistemic status of such claims, remain poorly understood, to the detriment of our understanding of Kant’s metaphysical and epistemological system. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and again in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant claims that we have practical cognition (*Erkenntnis*) and knowledge (*Wissen*) of the moral law and of our supersensible freedom; that this cognition and knowledge cohere with, yet go beyond the limits of, our theoretical cognition; and that this knowledge grounds rational belief (*Vernunftglaube*) in the existence of God, the immortality of our soul, and the real possibility of the “highest good.” This essay untangles some of these claims about practical cognition, practical knowledge, and practical belief and their relation to Kant’s account of theoretical cognition and theoretical knowledge. There is a core conception of cognition and knowledge underlying the accounts of theoretical cognition and practical cognition, which allows for a principled distinction between cases of practical knowledge and practical belief. Kant’s doctrine of the “fact of reason” turns out to be crucial to his claims about legitimacy of and distinction between the two forms of practical cognition, one which constitutes knowledge and another which cannot.

## **“Practical Cognition, Intuition, and the Fact of Reason”**

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With the wane of excessively positivistic interpretations and appropriations of Kant’s philosophy, the charge that Kant’s talk of noumena, things-in-themselves, or the “supersensible” must be, on his own terms, completely meaningless, has been largely abandoned. Yet Kant’s claims about supersensible objects, and his account of the epistemic status of such claims, remain neglected and poorly understood, to the detriment of our understanding of Kant’s metaphysical and epistemological system. It is with good reason that Kant’s account of theoretical cognition has been examined as closely as it has, but it is unfortunate that his account of practical cognition, and of its relationship to theoretical cognition, have been so little studied.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, and again in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant claims that we have practical cognition (*Erkenntnis*) and knowledge (*Wissen*) of the moral law and of our supersensible freedom: that this cognition and knowledge cohere with, yet go beyond the limits of, our theoretical cognition; and that this knowledge grounds rational belief (*Vernunftglaube*) in the existence of God, the immortality of our soul, and the real possibility of the “highest good.”<sup>1</sup> This essay is intended to untangle some of these claims about practical cognition, practical knowledge, and practical belief and their relation to Kant’s account of theoretical cognition and theoretical knowledge. I will argue that there is a core conception of cognition and knowledge underlying the accounts of theoretical cognition and practical cognition, which allows for a principled distinction between cases of practical knowledge and practical belief. Kant’s doctrine of the “fact of reason” turns out to be crucial to his claims about legitimacy of and distinction between the two forms of practical cognition, one which constitutes knowledge and another which cannot.

### **1. Intuition, Theoretical Cognition, and Knowledge**

Kant’s theoretical philosophy aims to provide an account of our empirical knowledge and of the *a priori* principles that make such empirical knowledge possible. In its theoretical employment, reason (or understanding) seeks extensive, rich, distinct, systematic, convincing, certain, and true representations of objects.(9:33-90 & A707-855/B735-883) Kant developed and deployed some technical terminology to classify our representations and their epistemically significant characteristics and relationships. Cognition (*Erkenntnis*) is an objective perception or representation that refers to an object (A320/B376), an acquaintance with something with some consciousness of its similarity

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<sup>1</sup> On the translation of *Glaube* as “belief,” see Chignell, 2007a, 335, and 2007b. One limitation of this translation is that Kant’s term is intended to connote *warranted* belief. For an excellent discussion of Kant’s conception of “doctrinal” or theoretical belief, see Chignell, 2007a, pp. 345-354. Chignell suggests that “acceptance” may be better than “belief” because the characteristic phenomenology of belief may be missing from *Glaube*. (2007a, pp. 341-343, 359-360.) I’m not convinced Kant thinks this about the case of the practical postulates, but that must be considered another day.

and difference from other things.(9:65)<sup>2</sup> Knowledge (*Wissen*) is a sufficiently convincing and sufficiently certain representation of an object's "constitution" or determinations, a cognition based on objectively sufficient, if fallible, grounds, grounds in principle available to all and ultimately "resting on" or "grounded in" the object and its constitution. (A821-2/B849-51; Refl. 2446, 16:371)<sup>3</sup> On Kant's account, all knowledge may be cognition, but not all cognition, not even all warranted and true cognition, constitutes knowledge in Kant's sense.<sup>4</sup>

Kant famously insisted that humans have two distinct sources for our representations, sensibility and understanding, and that this distinction between sources supports the distinct, yet complementary, roles that the resulting representations play in our cognitive economy.(A15/B29; A50/B74)(Caygill, 2003) In order to cognize [*erkennen*] something, that is, to be acquainted with it with consciousness of its similarity and difference from other things, finite subjects like us that represent objects discursively, that is by means of partial or incomplete representations or "marks" (9:58), must employ representations that, on the one hand, relate to the object directly and in its singularity and representations that, on the other hand, relate to the object mediately and by means of some common mark or marks which could facilitate its comparison with other objects. Kant calls representations which facilitate immediate and singular relation to an object *intuitions*; representations which relate to objects indirectly and in virtue of their generality are called *concepts*. (A320/B376)<sup>5</sup> So Kant's claim is that our cognition must involve both intuition and concepts.

"Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is **given** to us, through the latter it is **thought** in relation to that representation (as a mere determination of the mind). Intuition and concepts therefore constitute the elements of all our

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to deny that Kant sometimes uses the word *Erkenntnis* quite loosely, to refer, for example, to virtually any mental representation "of something" (9:65) or to refer to the elements of a cognition in the aforementioned sense, such as an intuition or a concept in their own right.(A320/B376) Even in the technical sense indicated in the text, cognition comes in a degrees. "What it [the principle of thoroughgoing determination] means is that in order to cognize a thing completely one has to cognize everything possible and determine the thing through it, whether affirmatively or negatively."(A573/B601) For more on the relationship between these senses of cognition, see Smit, 2000, pp. 239-247.

<sup>3</sup> For a more thorough analysis of Kant's conception of knowledge, see Chignell, 2007a & 2007b. It should be noted that Chignell prefers to say that cognition may ground knowledge, rather than that can be or constitute knowledge. 2007a, p. 348.

<sup>4</sup> This is one of several ways in which Kant's usage differs from contemporary English usage of such terminology. I should also note that I set aside questions about whether Kant allows a form of *Wissen* that is not *Wissen* of objects and so does not presuppose genuine *Erkenntnis*, such as possible *Wissen* of some propositions about things in themselves. See Smit, n.d.

<sup>5</sup> For an important discussion of "marks," see Smit, 2000.

cognition, so that neither concepts without intuition corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition. ... It comes along with our nature that **intuition** can never be other than **sensible**, i.e., that it contains only the way in which we are affected by objects. ... Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. It is thus just as necessary to make the mind's concepts sensible (i.e., to add an object to them in intuition) as it is to make its intuitions understandable (i.e., to bring them under concepts)." (A50/B74 f; cf. A15/B29; B 146; RP 20: 296, 325)

Kant's claim is that it is through sensible intuition that objects "are given to us;" without intuition we have mere thought. To properly grasp the significance of intuition in cognition and knowledge, it is important to sketch several of the distinct roles played by intuition in the generation of theoretical cognition.

First, in sensible intuition, a subject is affected by an object and receives certain sensations, representations with certain qualitative features, such as a certain degree of warmth, a particular texture, or a particular color or odor.<sup>6</sup> These qualitative features provide the *matter* of intuition and may be or indicate information about the constitution of an object, its features and causal powers. By touching an object, and receiving sensations of warmth and smoothness, for example, I am in a position to represent an object as warm and smooth (and to employ such representations, once acquired, in other ways and other contexts.) Our representations with this sort of qualitative content, Kant insists, must be derived from our sensible intuition. (A28-9/B44) Perceptual experience provides us with much of the content that can be ascribed to objects; it is the source of our concepts of sensible qualities and the matter of our empirical concepts of objects.

Second, sensible intuition plays a crucial role in establishing what Kant calls the "real possibility" of various kinds of object. Some concepts explicitly contradict other concepts and a combination of such contradictories cannot be genuinely thought, e.g., quadrangular triangles are absolutely impossible. (2:77) While the absence of such a contradiction is sufficient for a (possible) thought, Kant contends that it is not sufficient to establish the real possibility of a corresponding object.

"... I can think whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself, i.e., as long as my concept is a possible thought, even if I cannot give any assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object somewhere within the sum total of all possibilities. But in order to ascribe objective validity to such a concept (real possibility, for the first sort of possibility was merely logical) something more is required. This 'more,' however, need not be sought in theoretical sources of cognition; it may also lie in practical ones."(Bxxvi n)

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<sup>6</sup> The principle of the anticipations of perception is that sensation, or its phenomenal object, have intensive magnitude.(A165/B207)

For example,

“to have the opinion that there are pure, bodiless, thinking spirits in the material universe... is fiction, not a matter of opinion at all, but a mere idea left over if one takes everything material away from a thinking being but still leaves it the power of thought. But whether in that case thought remains... we cannot determine.”(5:467)

Or,

“... in the concept of a figure that is enclosed between two straight lines there is no contradiction, for the concepts of two straight lines and their intersection contain no negation of a figure; rather the impossibility rests not on the concept in itself, but on its construction in space...”(A220/B268; cf. A47/B65)<sup>7</sup>

In the latter case, Kant contends, the “more” that allows determinations of real possibility or real impossibility comes from the *a priori* form of spatial intuition. The real impossibility of a figure enclosed by only two straight lines, Kant claims, can be established by an examination of the conditions and determinations of space, which preclude such an exhibition. The real possibility of a figure enclosed by three straight lines can be exhibited in a geometrical construction. (A47/B65) Similarly, our perceptions can establish the real possibility of certain kinds of substances, forces, and interactions by exhibiting, within experience, that the relevant qualities can indeed be copresent in a unified object of possible experience. (A221/B268f. ; A770/B798; 8:161-2, 179)

Third, Kant argues that the spatio-temporal form of our intuition grounds the validity of a set of determinate *a priori* principles for experience. Because everything we can intuit or experience can only be experienced in time and/or space, certain characteristics of time and/or space can be known *a priori* to determine any such experience and render the pure concepts of the understanding, the categories (which are themselves independent of intuition and experience), applicable to experience in determinate ways.(A147/B186) For example, the pure forms of intuition play a crucial role in grounding the “Analogies of Experience,” the claims that, in experience, substance persists; alterations occur in accordance with the law of cause and effect; and simultaneously existing substances are in thoroughgoing interaction.(A176/B218ff.) The determinacy and certainty of such principles of possible experience, principles which are necessary for any empirical knowledge, is tied to the *a priori* form of intuition.

Fourth, intuition plays a crucial role in validating claims about the *actuality* of an empirical object or force and in securing reference to such objects. When representations are given to us in intuition, and are properly synthesized in experience (and thus in accord with the principles of possible experience), they may constitute knowledge of the actuality of an object or power with the relevant qualities (if subsumable under laws or a system of laws). “Whatever is connected with a perception according to empirical laws,

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<sup>7</sup> Other examples of something logically possible that is (or can be shown to be) really impossible: a triangle where one side is greater than the sum of the other two sides. (A25/B39) cf. A716/B744.

is actual.”(A376) The qualitative features of perceptual experience resulting from more or less direct and discernably lawlike effects of objects on us can provide us with “reliable information about the ‘constitution of the object’” or its powers, and the causal connection may ground the reference of these representations to those objects and powers. (Chignell, 2007b, p. 39, quoting A821/B849)<sup>8</sup> For example, my cognition and knowledge that *the sun is warming the stone* depend upon the sun, the stone, the sun warming the stone and my perception of those things (though it is also crucially dependent upon the range of perceptions that support the relevant empirical laws and the analogies of experience which underlie all empirical laws.) (4:301 n, 305 n, 312)<sup>9</sup> When such objects and perceptions actually ground such judgments of experience, we may have the combination of objectively sufficient grounds resting on the object and subjective conviction that can constitute empirical knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

Because of the crucial roles of sensation (and perception) and the forms of our sensible intuition in generating knowledge, Kant famously claims that we cannot have theoretical cognition of supersensible things, beings whose nature would preclude them from being presented in sensible intuition. Our thoughts of supersensible “objects” lack qualitative matter and determinacy (i.e., are quite sparse in terms of representational content), are incapable of having their real possibility as objects established, cannot be assumed to be subject to the principles of possible experience or other *a priori* principles, and lack comprehensible mode of reference to actual and knowable objects.

“We cannot think any object except through categories; we cannot cognize any object that is thought except through intuitions that correspond to those concepts. Now all our intuitions are sensible, and this cognition, so far as its object is given, is empirical. Empirical cognition, however, is experience. Consequently no *a priori* cognition is possible for us except solely of objects of possible experience.”(B165-6)<sup>11</sup>

The absence of possible sensible intuition precludes theoretical cognition of supersensible objects and *ipso facto* theoretical cognition with sufficient objective grounds, or theoretical knowledge, of such conceivable objects.

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<sup>8</sup> For an emphasis on questions of reference, see Hanna, 2004/2009.

<sup>9</sup> Other examples: “all bodies are heavy” (A8/B11); sunlight melts wax, but hardens clay (A766/B794).

<sup>10</sup> Again, see Chignell, 2007b, p. 47. On the role of the object in objective or logical grounds and objective or logical certainty, see (9:72; A829/B857; 5:461; 24: 198, 234). I emphasize, more than Chignell does, that objective grounds or logical grounds required for knowledge should ultimately “rest on” or be “grounded in” or connected to the object or its constitution, cf. Chignell, 2007b, pp. 41-42; 2007a, pp. 327, 337, 349. Depending upon how this is specified, it may build a “truth condition” into the notion of an objectively sufficient ground. Compare 2007a, p. 330.

<sup>11</sup> *A priori* cognition in mathematics is, in the first instance, of schemata, such as the schema of a triangle, rather than of any image of a triangle or any triangular object of possible experience. (A141/B180) Nonetheless, all of our theoretical cognition “is in the end related to possible intuitions...”(A720/B748; cf. B147)

In the Dialectic portion of the first *Critique*, Kant elaborates the implications of this doctrine for the Ideas of an immortal soul, a free agency, and God. In the Paralogisms, Kant argues that the “I think,” which may accompany all of my representations, has no content and is no more determinate than the unschematized pure concept of substance (e.g., A381). In the Antinomies, Kant emphasizes how the concept of (noumenal) freedom and intelligible character is purely negative and no more determinate than the unschematized pure concept of a ground (A541/B569; A546/B574). In the critique of speculative theology, Kant raises concerns about the content of the concept of God: for example, the concept of an *ens realissimum* cannot contain the concept of existence, the concept of absolutely necessary existent contains no real content, and the teleological concept of God as architect(s) lacks the determinacy of the concept of a creator.(A592-630/B620-658) The critique of pure reason in its theoretical employment teaches us “of our unavoidable ignorance [*Unwissenheit*] in respect of the things in themselves and [limits] everything that we can cognize theoretically to mere appearances.”(Bxxix) There can be no theoretical cognition or knowledge beyond the bounds of possible experience.

## 2. Practical knowledge: Understanding the Fact of Reason

Kant’s account of the role of intuition in theoretical cognition and the famous boundary condition that he infers from it appear, at first glance, to preclude any and all cognition and knowledge of supersensibles. Perhaps surprisingly, however, Kant persistently rejects this further conclusion. For example, late in the first *Critique*, right after re-articulating the boundary condition, Kant suggest that, “nevertheless, there must somewhere be a source of positive cognitions that belong in the domain of pure reason,” namely in pure reason’s “practical use.”(A796/B824; cf. Bxxi, etc.)<sup>12</sup> Kant suggests that in addition to intuition, an indispensable source of theoretical cognition, there may be “practical data,” “practical sources” of cognition.(B xxi, xxvi n) Similarly, in his never completed essay on the “real progress of metaphysics,” after summarizing the results of his critique of pure reason, Kant noted that it remained an open question “whether, in spite of that, there could not be a practico-dogmatic cognition of these supersensibles.”(20:296)<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The first edition of the first *Critique* is, especially early on, less than clear that it is focused on pure reason in only one of its uses, the theoretical, rather than practical use. The earliest mention of this distinction in this edition (A14-15) is itself confused, and the practical use of pure reason is hardly mentioned again until the Dialectic (A314-329, A366, A470, A589, A796f.) The second edition Preface and Introduction are somewhat better on this point (Bx, xxi, xxvi; B29) but the Aesthetic and Analytic remain silent on this point. See also 5:6-8 (at least in part in response to Pistorius’s reviews). Kant suggests that some of the most puzzling issues in his system may stem from how, prior to the second *Critique*, the practical use of reason was “known only by name.”(5:5)

<sup>13</sup> It is only in 1786, with the “What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?” essay, that Kant begins writing extensively about “cognition of the supersensible” and

Throughout much of the first *Critique*, Kant is certainly less conscientious than he could be about reminding his readers that the restriction of cognition to the domain of possible experience, i.e. to the “sensible,” is a restriction of *speculative* cognition or the limit of pure reason in its theoretical use.<sup>14</sup> Especially in the first edition of the first *Critique* it can be easy to miss or fail to see the significance of Kant’s claim that reason, indeed *pure* reason, has a practical as well as a theoretical use; in addition to being concerned with determining its concept of a given or sensible object, reason may also be concerned with the determining grounds of the will, with determining objects to make actual. (B x, 5:15, cf. 5:46, 89) In the first instance, pure reason in its practical use is concerned with *a priori*, objectively valid principles of rational willing.

Kant’s famous contention, in the second *Critique* and thereafter, is that “as soon as we draw up maxims of the will for ourselves,” “we become immediately conscious” that certain things are to be done, regardless of our desires. (5:29) In this sole “fact of reason,” we cognize with “apodeictic certainty;” we “know,” that there is an “undeniable” moral law to which we are subject. (5: 4, 29, 32, 47, 105; A823/B851; 9:70; 8:396n., 418) But practical cognition can be of both imperatives and of “the grounds of possible imperatives,” which might include free and immortal finite beings and God. (9:86, 24: 251, 751, 901) Kant contends that we also have practical cognition and knowledge of our freedom – the “condition of the moral law.” (5:4)<sup>15</sup> The fact of reason “points to a pure world of the understanding and, indeed, even *determines* it *positively* and lets us cognize something of it, namely a law” (5:43). This moral law, which we know, is supposed to provide the basis for our knowledge of our freedom:

“Freedom is real, for this idea reveals itself through the moral law. But among all the ideas of speculative reason freedom is... the only one the possibility of which we know [*wissen*] *a priori*, though without having insight into it, because it is the condition of the moral law, which we do know [*wissen*.] (5:4)

Our consciousness of the moral law, in the fact of reason, is the “*ratio cognoscendi*” of our freedom (5:4n.), and as he explains in the third *Critique*, this makes freedom “the only one among all the ideas of pure reason whose object is a fact and which must be counted among the *scibilia* [knowable].” (5: 468) Our cognition of freedom and the moral law is thus to be specifically distinguished from “matters of belief [*Glaube*]” such as the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. (see also 9:93, 20:295, 300-301, 310-

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metaphysics as “the science of progressing by reason from cognition of sensible to that of the supersensible.” (20:260) (Schwaiger, 2004, p. 333).

<sup>14</sup> This weakness is perhaps most obvious in the chapter on “Phenomena and Noumena” (A235/B294-A260/B315) which includes no explicit qualifications.

<sup>15</sup> Kant does sometimes seem to equate *Wissen* with (one of the highest forms of) speculative or *theoretical Erkenntnis* in particular (Bxxx; A799/B827; A805/B833; 5:475; 8:420-1). At least in the first *Critique*, Kant may have been thinking that practical freedom is as good as empirically-theoretically established (A802f/B830); in contrast, he explicitly denies knowledge of God and immortality (A805/B833, A828/B857), and in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* he suggests a theoretical deduction of freedom. On either of those accounts, the putative cases of *Wissen* of practical import would fit the theoretical model.

11)<sup>16</sup> The question is whether and how the characteristics of cognition and of knowledge can be present in the absence of intuition.<sup>17</sup> Much of the answer turns out to depend upon Kant's account of the nature and role of the fact of reason.

In one sense, Kant's descriptions of the *content* of the fact of reason are quite fluid, suggesting that the fact of reason is the moral law, or the categorical imperative, or consciousness of the moral law (and its unconditional validity), or consciousness of freedom.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, certain aspects of its content are quite clear. As stated in the second *Critique*, the fundamental law of pure practical reason contained in the fact of reason is, in its imperatival form, "So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law." (5:30) Kant contends that this principle is an objective law that governs, indeed the only possible law that could govern, the will of every rational being. It is also a "determinate law" for the will (5:474); it can serve as the "determining ground of the will" (5:15, 28, 42, 50, 89, 105). This law, though formal, has genuine content, content sufficient, at least in principle, to deliver a verdict of permissibility or impermissibility on any maxim.<sup>19</sup> On Kant's analysis, it is a certain *a priori* principle for determinate use in practice that makes possible the cognition of the moral status of particular maxims.

The determinacy and determinate use of this principle, however, cannot come from intuition. We have no "supersensible," "intellectual" or non-sensible intuition; and no sensible intuition or data, whether empirical or pure, could adequately present the categorical validity of the moral law. (5:31, 43, 91) This is one of the most fundamental ways in which practical cognition must differ from theoretical cognition, which must begin from pure and empirical intuition, from sensible data. (5:42, 91) Yet Kant is insistent that the fact of reason is itself something "given," itself "data," though of a unique sort. (5: 31, 47, 55, 66, 91, 105; 5:468; 8:396n, 8:403)<sup>20</sup> What is first given to us is

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<sup>16</sup> This seems contrary to Allison's suggestion that all three supersensibles (God, freedom, and immortality) are matters of belief "rather than knowledge," but as Allison notes there are two distinct senses of freedom operative in these contexts. (Allison, 2002, p. 344; Allison, 1991, 285n35.)

<sup>17</sup> For an earlier account that raises some of these issues in a complementary way, see Ameriks, 2003, esp. pp. 251, 258.

<sup>18</sup> On the relationship amongst Kant's various formulations, see Beck, 1960, pp. 166-7; Allison emphasizes "consciousness of standing under the moral law and the recognition of this law 'by every natural human reason as the supreme law of its will' [5:91]." (Allison, 1990, pp. 231-3, 283n12) Proops emphasizes the idea that the moral law has a pure origin, and suggests the variety of other formulations are linked by related objective and subjective senses of legal evidence. (Proops, 2003, p. 225, 228) Willaschek suggests that the act of "making conscious" of the validity of the moral law is central, and other variations are connected by the looseness in action and consequence descriptions. (Willaschek, 1991, 460-1) See also Rauscher, 2002, pp. 486-487; Kain, 2006, pp. 453-4.

<sup>19</sup> Even if Kant himself sometimes exaggerates the ease with which such verdicts may be arrived at. (e.g., 5:36)

<sup>20</sup> On "practical data," "practical sources of cognition" or "data of pure reason" more generally: 5:91, B xxi, xxvii, xxviii; A795/B823; 5: 468; 8:141.

not an intuition or a relation to an intuited individual, but rather a *principle*, indeed the categorical principle to which we are subject.(5:91, 42, 46, 29-30, 65, 104-5) We are immediately confronted with a determinate constraint on our action or constraint to action—at least initially we do not experience this as a constraint of our own making or of our own nature. My proposal is that Kant’s persistent characterization of the fact of reason as a “fact,” “given,” and “data” is intended to position it, within practical cognition, as an analogue of sensible intuition within the account of theoretical cognition: as an immediately received, non-derivative source of content, a source that might provide the determinacy, reference, and the subjective and objective sufficiency which are sufficient to constitute knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

Several recent commentators, however, have challenged apparent assertions of the “givenness” of the fact of reason, arguing that the fact of reason is intended as, first and foremost, an act or deed of reason, perhaps even as a “willful” and “violent” act, rather than as given *datum*.(Franks, 1997, pp. 318-320)<sup>22</sup> First, it has been noted that Kant’s German term “*Factum*” is derived from the Latin “*facere*,” meaning “to make,” and that Kant himself uses both the German term and its Latin cognates, in at least some contexts, to refer specifically to imputable deeds.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the German term “*Thatsache*” (cf. 5:468) can be applied to either deeds or generic states of affairs, as long as they are taken to be well-established.(Willaschek 1991; Franks 1997, p. 318) Some also place particular emphasis upon Kant’s allusion to Juvenal’s “*sic volo, sic jubeo*” (“What I will, I command”) in his description of the “sole fact of pure reason which, by it, announces itself as originally lawgiving.”(5:31)(Franks 1997, p. 320)<sup>24</sup>

In response, first, one must acknowledge the genuine ambiguities in many of the terms as they are found in general use, but Kant’s repeated assertions (cited above) that the fact of reason in particular is something “given” and amounts to “data” seem to reduce such ambiguities in the present case. Second, Kant’s allusion to Juvenal, when understood in fuller context, can be reconciled with the proposed reading. In its original context in *Satire* 6.223, the line certainly does connote arbitrariness, willfulness and violence: a demand for a slave’s execution is put beyond question by a declaration “*sit pro ratione voluntatis*” (“Let my will take the place of reason.”) Given Kant’s taste for the Latin classics and his other allusions to Juvenal, he might well have been familiar

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<sup>21</sup> For a similar suggestion, see Adams, 1997, p. 814; Beck, 1960, p. 273n (quoted below). Elements of this analogy can be found in Refl. 7201 (19:274-276), for example. But we should not forget the way Kant distances himself from too literal an interpretation of the parallels between the pure intuition of space and time and the principle of morality in the second *Critique* (5:42-3, 91). (Allison 1990, pp. 234-5; Beck, p. 1960, 166.) There are some disanalogies: the moral law is not sensibly given (though will have an effect on feeling/sense), consciousness of it is not itself of an individual, and it allegedly possesses absolute universality and certainty.

<sup>22</sup> For earlier responses to Franks, see Proops, 2003, p. 227; Kain, 2006, p. 454.

<sup>23</sup> Willaschek 1991; Sussman 2001, p. 111; O’Neill 1989, p. 65; O’Neill 2003, p. 363n3; Lukow 1993; Engstrom 2002, p. xlii. See 6: 23; 8:255; 19:159. One could add Kant discussion of “made concepts (*factitii*)” and “given concepts” in the *Logic* (9:93).

<sup>24</sup> See also Schicker, 1991.

with these connotations.<sup>25</sup> Yet, these particular lines also have a long history in legal and political discussions that is somewhat independent of their original context. Canonists, legists and jurists of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries employed the “*pro ratione voluntas*” without implications of arbitrary, willful, or unlimited absolutism.(Post, 1972) While also associated with the absolutism of Louis XIV, the line’s absolutist implications are qualified in the early modern period by Pufendorf.(Postema, 2001, p. 483)<sup>26</sup> Most significantly, Kant’s invocation of “*sic volo, sic jubeo*” in the second *Critique* must be understood in immediate relation to the provocations of an astute reviewer of the *Groundwork*, namely H. A. Pistorius. Pistorius had objected that legislation independent of all prior interest is indistinguishable from arbitrary legislation [*eigenmächtige Gesetzgebung*] and appears to be a blind procedure [*ein blindes Verfahren*], indistinguishable from “*stat pro ratione voluntatis*.”(Pistorius, 1786, p. 461)<sup>27</sup> Kant’s “*sic volo, sic jubeo*” cleverly invokes and embraces the other half of the thought, and only that half, in order to clarify his position, asserting that it is the unconditionality of the command which allows reason, as opposed to some arbitrary or irrational volition, to “announce itself as originally lawgiving.”(5:31)<sup>28</sup> Understood in this context, the point of Kant’s allusion is to emphasize the epistemic ultimacy of this fact, this consciousness of the moral law, and the limits of its comprehensibility.<sup>29</sup>

One persistent concern with such a construal of the fact of reason has been with its seemingly arbitrary or dogmatic implications. It does appear to represent a significant philosophical retreat from the grander ambitions of a deduction of the moral law found in the *Groundwork*. This construal of the fact of reason as a given or brute fact need not, however, entail that it need not or cannot be defended or supported or confirmed.<sup>30</sup> Just as the legitimacy of elements classified as experiential or intuitional within the theoretical domain may be subject to defeat and challenge against which it might be defended, the

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<sup>25</sup> On Kant’s Latin training, see Kuehn, 2001, pp. 47-50. Kant also alludes to Juvenal’s *Satire* 8.79-84 (5:158; 6:49n; 6:334) and *Satire* 1.74.(5:160) Kant explicitly names Juvenal at *Anthropology* 7:197, but that reference is to Persius’s *Satires* 3.78. (Louden 2007, p. 516n47.)

<sup>26</sup> Pufendorf was commenting on Hobbes’s allusion (Pufendorf, 1672, § I.6.1; Hobbes, 1642, §XIV.1) See also Leibniz, 1702-1703, §1, in Riley, 1988, p. 46; Locke, 1689, Book I, §51; Voltaire, 1765, “Liberté”.

<sup>27</sup> In the second *Critique*, Kant specifically admires Pistorius’s anonymous review of the *Groundwork*. (5:8-9) See also Kant’s “Vorarbeit.” (21:416) Kant was informed of Pistorius’s identity as the author in a letter from Daniel Jenisch (14 May 1787) 10:486.

<sup>28</sup> Hobbes had famously noted that absent the latter phrase, the implications of the former remained ambiguous. (Hobbes, 1650, §XIII.6) In his review of the second *Critique*, Pistorius refers to Kant’s “*sic volo, sic jubeo*” twice and chooses to only contest the determinacy of Kant’s moral principle and its arbitrariness in application, conceding its unconditionality, which seems to confirm my reading of the exchange. (Pistorius, 1794, pp. 81, 91)

<sup>29</sup> Cf. the rare other cases of this allusion in Kant: in a similar context, *Opus postumum* 21:23, 28; and concerning mathematical definitions, in Refl. 2930 (16:579).

<sup>30</sup> It may, however, limit its availability for radical constructivist anti-realist interpretations such as those of O’Neill and Lukow. See Kain, 2006, pp. 451-452.

legitimacy of the fact of reason may require defense. Proops has recently suggested, for example, that Kant's appeals to ordinary people's pangs of conscience and feelings of respect (5:32, 88, 91) may proffer "proof," in the legal sense of defeasible evidence, for the fact of reason. (Proops, 2003, pp. 225-7)<sup>31</sup> Rawls has emphasized Kant's suggestions that the "fit" between the determinate practical conception of freedom and the negative theoretical conception of reason may serve as a "credential," "authentication," warrant, or confirmation of it. (Rawls, 2000, pp. 253-272 emphasizing 5:46-57, cf. 5:5-6, 106)<sup>32</sup> Even if these suggestions increase the plausibility of the account, they by no means preclude all forms of skepticism; though Kant himself seemed to think he had systematic reason for discounting any serious threats to the certainty of the fact of reason and the freedom it reveals. An assessment of the systematic adequacy of such a position is beyond the scope of this paper. Our present concern is with how such an alleged fact, supposing its warrant remains certain or at least undefeated, could constitute knowledge, in Kant's sense of the term.

If we are to classify our cognition of the moral law and of freedom as knowledge, the real possibility and objective grounds of these cognitions must be identified. It is at this point that the epistemological "givenness" of the fact of reason must be linked to the account of reason's role in the law's ontological foundation. Kant's analysis of categorical obligation is intended to reveal that the moral law should be understood, once it is acknowledged, as a principle that is self-imposed, given, or legislated by a free rational being. (Kain, 2004) Only a free being can be unconditionally subject to a practical principle or act out of respect for such a principle, and a free being can only be categorically obliged by a law given by pure practical reason itself. (5:28-9, 33) Analysis of this determinate law thereby reveals its own relatively determinate *ratio essendi* or ontological grounding, that is, something determinate about the noumenal self of any agent bound by the law: the law gives determinate positive content to the concept of ourselves as *causa noumenon*. (5: 48, 50, 55, 105) Freedom is thus "the condition of the moral law... [its] *ratio essendi*... were there no freedom, the moral law would *not be encountered* at all in ourselves." (5:4n.) The givenness of the law- and the real possibility and actuality it must be granted if its warrant remains undefeated- can itself provide for the real possibility and actuality of its ontological grounds, as long as they can be determinately thought.<sup>33</sup>

Kant considers it quite important to stress that we encounter the moral law in ourselves and that the supersensible reality it (first) reveals is not "outside us." The "principle does not need to be searched for or invented; it has long been present in the reason of all human beings and incorporated in their being... The concept of freedom alone allows us to find the unconditioned and intelligible for the conditioned and sensible without going outside ourselves. For it is our reason itself which by means of the supreme and unconditional practical law cognizes itself and the being that is conscious of this law (our own person) as belonging to

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<sup>31</sup>Proops builds upon Allison's emphasis on such experiences in conjunction with the analysis of the concept of moral obligation. Allison, 1990, pp. 233-239.

<sup>32</sup> But see Timmermann, 2007.

<sup>33</sup> At least: if the ontological grounds of such a "given" are determinately thought, we have significantly "more" than a merely logically possible thought.

the pure world of understanding and even determines the way in which, as such, it can be active.”(5:105-6)

“We have in ourselves a principle that is capable of determining the idea of the supersensible in us,” freedom.(5:474, cf. 5:195, 20:295) Because each of us may find the principle within her own reason and that principle is revealing something about her own self, at least one referent of this determinate concept of a *causa noumenon* is unproblematic- what is designated is the subject herself.(5:56)<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, the grounds of this representation of the law, and of oneself as a *causa noumenon*, allow us to make sense of the claim that they constitute or indicate the presence of sufficient objective grounds “resting on” or grounded in the object in question. First, the grounds are not merely subjective in the sense that they are not idiosyncratic to an individual or subset of rational individuals. Each rational agent has relevantly similar grounds for these representations of herself. Second, they may provide objective grounds in the stronger sense that they purport to be, or be ontologically dependent upon, the constitution of or determinations of the object under consideration (the obligated being, the free being him or herself), rather than being merely features of the subject, distinct from the object. This is significantly aided by the fact that in this case, the rational agent is herself the object under consideration – the requisite connection can be granted without positing additional substances or relations between them. If this account is correct, then it turns out that we cognize our freedom *in virtue of* our freedom, because it is in virtue of our freedom that we are subject to the moral law that reveals our freedom to us. This is what allows Kant to classify these cognitions as knowledge.

While Kant seems to contend that in this case the reality of freedom is “proved by an apodictic law of practical reason,” without the need for any intuition (5:3, cf. 5:66), he also contends that the proof of the reality of every matter of fact, including the fact of reason and the freedom it directly reveals, does occur with the help of “some intuition corresponding to the concept,” or at least some possible intuition or possible experience.(5:468) Kant points to moral actions, unperformed yet obligatory actions, moral dispositions, and feelings of respect or guilt as possible empirical manifestations of the reality of the moral law and freedom of the will, and their applicability to the world of sense. In the case of the fact of reason, the reality is established “through practical laws of pure reason and, in accordance with these, in real actions, and thus in experience.”(5:468, cf. 5:66-71, A317/B374; A328/B385; A802/B830; A807/B835; 20:300; 8:403, 8:416) While there can be “no fully corresponding intuition”(5:66) that would allow us to infer the reality of freedom or the moral law simply from the observation of some events in the sensible world, possibly intuited events can be properly regarded as ultimately grounded in such freedom.

The immediacy of the fact of reason, and the identification of its *ratio essendi* in the agent herself are integral to Kant’s account of the givenness, determinateness, real possibility, actuality, objective grounding and apodeictic certainty that accompany such

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<sup>34</sup> This may constitute a partial response to one disanalogy with empirical cognition: the fact of reason does generate reference to particulars.

representations, the very qualities that allow them to be classified not only as practical cognition but also as practical knowledge, even though neither can be directly intuited.

### 3. Practical belief: firm cognition without *knowledge*

I have argued that Kant's doctrine of the fact of reason is intended to manifest the possibility of a distinctively practical form of cognition that could constitute knowledge, namely practical knowledge of the moral law and of our freedom. Now I will argue that this same fact is also intended to reveal the possibility of another sort of practical cognition, namely practical "belief" which cannot constitute knowledge.<sup>35</sup>

Kant's various enumerations of the examples of this sort of practical cognition can be somewhat confusing: sometimes he explicitly insists that there are only two such objects, namely God and immortality (A830/B858); other times he explicitly claims there are only three, listing the highest good, God and immortality (5:469, 20:299) or listing God, "freedom in its practical aspect," and immortality (20:298); yet other times he suggests that freedom, perhaps understood as virtue (or "autocracy")(20:295), or a propensity towards virtue, or a "moral order" morally progressing, or intelligible world (20:299, 306-7; 5:137, 143, cf. 4:462) be included. Particularly puzzling in this context is the apparent suggestion that the reality of freedom may itself be a matter of belief rather than of practical knowledge, suggested most prominently by seemingly competing accounts of the postulate of freedom in the Analytic and Dialectic sections of the second *Critique*.(cf. 5: 94,132) These confusions seem best understood as a result of ambiguous terminology, such as the multiple senses of freedom, complex relationships between the various items, and insufficient precision in certain contexts. At least with respect to freedom, however, clearer passages suggest both a distinction, and more important for our purposes, some principled reasons for distinguishing between objects of practical knowledge and those of practical belief.<sup>36</sup> To avoid some of these distracting details, we will focus primarily, as Kant himself typically does, on the account of the postulate of God's existence.

Since, on Kant's account, rational agency involves the choice of one's character (*Gesinnung*) or single fundamental maxim, and finite rational agents possess an interest in both happiness and the worthiness to be happy, then every possible fundamental maxim must include both elements; the only morally permissible way to relate these two

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<sup>35</sup> I do not mean to imply that all forms of belief (*Glaube*) involve cognition. Kant insists that theoretical or doctrinal belief is not cognition. (Chignell, 2007b, p. 351) But Kant insists that genuine moral belief is cognition. My suggestion in what follows is that the fact of reason provides positive content for moral belief, this would appear to be lacking in theoretical or doctrinal belief.

<sup>36</sup> On the distinction between freedom as autonomy and as autocracy and its relevance to this question, see Caswell, 2003, pp. 214-216; Allison, 1990, p. 285n35; Allison, 2002, p. 346; Beck, 1960, pp. 207-8.

elements is in terms of the highest good, the systematic union of virtue and happiness in proportion to it.<sup>37</sup> Thus, while Kant’s moral theory requires that the moral law, rather than some further end, be the fundamental criteria for and motivating ground of a good will, it turns out that finite rational beings ought, nonetheless, to intend to promote the highest good; it is a rationally required end. This analysis reveals one respect in which the resulting postulates rest on “subjective grounds” (A829/B857): this grounding applies only to *finite* rational agents. Relying upon his conception of real possibility, Kant supposes that rational agents can rationally will an end, in this case the highest good, only if they can rationally consider it to be *really possible*. (Guyer, 2000a, pp. 345-7) This leads to a second set of subjective factors: as finite beings with needs and cognitive limitations, living in a world where the proportionality between virtue and happiness is not guaranteed by the observable natural laws, we lack grounds in theoretical cognition for thinking that the highest good is really possible. In light of these factors, Kant concludes that the existence of God (along with the other postulates) is the only condition we can rationally consider to be adequate for the real possibility of the highest good, which we are required to promote. Kant concludes that we “must postulate the *existence of God* as belonging necessarily to the possibility of the highest good (which object of our will is necessarily connected with the lawgiving of pure reason)” (5:124).<sup>38</sup>

We have already seen Kant’s suggestion that the putatively rational demand of the moral law is part of what legitimates the assumptions of the real possibility of freedom and the moral law: the fact of reason provides “determinacy” for the concepts of freedom and the moral law, and the “proper” self it reveals purports to be the object of these concepts (5:105; 4:457–8, 461). This practical cognition and knowledge is supposed to provide part of the basis of the practical cognition of the postulates: their determinate content, real possibility, and sufficient warranted confidence (or conviction) in their actuality.<sup>39</sup>

The content of the highest good that finite rational beings ought to intend (the systematic union of virtue and happiness) is determined by the moral law and the structure of finite practical reasoning.(5:110f.; 5:450)<sup>40</sup> The concept of God is then

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<sup>37</sup> I have discussed this point in Kain 2006, pp. 456-457. See also Caswell, 2006; cf. Kain, 2003; Engstrom, 1992.

<sup>38</sup> For useful elaboration of and analysis of this argument, see e.g. Wood, 1970 and 1978; Kuehn, 1985; Hare 1996, 69-96; O’Neill, 1997. Sussman and Caswell have recently emphasized how Kant’s argument may be buttressed by bringing in an additional “subjective” factor: his doctrine of the human propensity to evil. (Caswell, 2006a; Sussman, 2001, pp. 144ff.) Kant repeatedly asserts that the *existence* of God is linked to the real possibility of highest good. The existence of God is considered to be an important necessary, though not sufficient condition for the highest good. Contra Ferreira, 1983, pp. 78-79, the actuality of God would not directly *entail* the realization of the “complete” highest good in the relevant sense, since it does not entail that we attain virtue.

<sup>39</sup> If veridical, it may also suffice for meaningful reference to ourselves, as free and immortal finite beings, and to God.

<sup>40</sup> While some of Kant’s other works focus on the promotion of more limited goals such as “perpetual peace” or an ideal “ethical commonwealth” which may not themselves

determined in relation to the highest good: God must be a being with sufficient intellect, power and will to render the highest good possible, which Kant contends amounts to omniscience, omnipotence, and all-beneficence.(5:129,140; 5:474, 481) The real possibility of the moral law and of freedom is also supposed to legitimate our assertion of the real possibility of the highest good and, through it, of the real possibility and actuality of God.<sup>41</sup>

“The ideas of God and immortality . . . are not conditions of the moral law but only conditions of the necessary object of a will determined by this law . . . They are . . . conditions of applying the morally determined will to its object given to it a priori (the highest good). . . . By means of the concept of freedom objective reality is given to the ideas of God and immortality and a warrant, indeed a subjective necessity (a need of pure reason) is given to assume them, although reason is not thereby extended in theoretical cognition.” (5:4–5)

How does the (alleged) real possibility of the moral law and of freedom legitimate these claims? By providing an example of a supersensible object (myself as *causa noumenon*) whose real possibility and actuality we can practically cognize, the fact of reason offers us something to add to the merely logical possibility of other conceivable supersensible objects. They are supersensible ideas tied to this practically known supersensible agency. Moreover, we have a “rational need” to acknowledge their real possibility in relation to our rational agency. The postulates of God and immortality purport to make explicit what we must consider to actually be the case, ontologically, supposing that the moral law is real and its object (the highest good) is really possible: they are the “physical or metaphysical conditions – in a word, those [conditions] which lie in the nature of things – of the possibility of the highest good” (5:143). The result is supposed to be a warranted assent with a firmness or stability comparable in degree to that found in knowledge. (8:141, 9:72, 16:371)<sup>42</sup>

For our purposes, what is equally important is that even though this account may show how the existence of God (and the other postulates) can be matters for firm practical cognition, Kant takes it to simultaneously preclude such cognitions from constituting practical knowledge. Recall that this latter point is not itself entailed by the nature of all practical cognition: Kant insists we do have practical *knowledge* of the moral law and our freedom. One thing Kant often emphasizes is that our cognition of the highest good and of God’s existence is dependent upon our cognition of our freedom and ultimately the fact of reason itself.(5:4, 105, etc.) But this need not be decisive either

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require as strong a set of postulates, there is no obvious incompatibility between these specific and more “secular” or “historical” components of the highest good and the larger whole of virtue and happiness, nor is there a clear shift in Kant’s corpus away from such a whole (Caswell 2003; Mariña, 2000; Kain, 2005, pp. 132, 143, discussing suggestions in Reath, 1988; Yovel, 1980; Pogge, 1997).

<sup>41</sup> For a similar contention, see Adams, 1997, pp. 814-815.

<sup>42</sup> I have argued elsewhere that these claims are best interpreted as involving full blown cognitive assent with genuine ontological commitment. Kain, 2006, pp. 458-459. See also Chignell, 2007a, pp. 341-343. For a different view however, see Guyer, 2000a, p. 364-371; Guyer, 2000b, p. 41; Sussman, 2001, pp. 117ff.; Caswell 2003, pp. 225ff.

because the dependency of one cognition on another need not preclude a dependent cognition from being knowledge, at least if what it depends on is knowledge.

Two other hints Kant provides are somewhat more promising. Kant insists that in the case of the objects of practical belief, there is something more subjective about their grounds and that the route to those objects involves reference to something external to us and to the moral law. Some rational agents (if only an infinite one) may not be obligated to promote the highest good or may be able to cognize its real possibility directly or at least without any additional postulates. Moreover, within each subject who must postulate any of these things, her commitment to the moral law and her rational need to cognize the real possibility of her intentions are also crucial to these postulations. At the same time, what is postulated (God or my immortality) is neither the ontological ground of the moral law that we encounter in the fact of reason nor is it represented as identical with the subject as directly revealed by the moral law.<sup>43</sup> The highest good, Kant insists, is the object of volition under the moral law, not the ontological ground of the law and its realization consists in much more than the volitional state of a single agent. Similarly, God is represented as a partial ground of the real possibility of the highest good, rather than as the ground of the moral law, and is represented as something distinct from the finite agent herself. The idea of God is the idea of a “supersensible above us” or “outside of us.”(20:295; 5:105; 5:474)<sup>44</sup> While the concepts we have of the highest good and of God are determined, they are determined by, “derived from” and “drawn from” our conception of ourselves as moral agents, rather than being derived or drawn from those external objects themselves.(20: 300, 305, 309)<sup>45</sup> This is all in marked contrast to the case of freedom: freedom is the ontological ground, the *ratio essendi*, of the moral law itself and freedom is represented as the supersensible in the agent herself, from which the concept itself is drawn.

What remains to be clarified is how these contrasts fit with and exemplify the distinction between practical knowledge and practical belief. In typical cases where the

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<sup>43</sup> Though, as I have suggested elsewhere, some of Kant’s comments do suggest that in the special case of agents like us, the postulates may constitute an ontological ground of the *full rational authority* of the moral law or of its command to promote the highest good. Kain, 2005, esp. n.30.

<sup>44</sup> Though we may, in a slightly different context, also need to represent God as ontological ground, i.e., creator of free beings. The postulates of immortality and of freedom conceived of as autocracy may turn out to be more problematic on this score—they seem to be grounds for the real possibility of complete moral adequacy itself (i.e., of the supreme element in the highest good rather than only of highest good as a whole) and they are represented as determinations of the agent herself (though not necessarily one’s immediately revealed by the mere fact of obligation— they may involve, for example, the assumption of radical evil.)

<sup>45</sup> These objects cannot be presented in experience, nor can more experience properly contribute greater determination to our cognitions of them, as if by empirical progression. In the case of the “supersensibles,” there is no possible (empirical) progression to the determination of concept (5:483). We cannot even fill in much about our contribution to the highest good, in contrast and relation to God’s contribution to it, though there is some discussion of this in *Religion*.

object of a cognition purports to be distinct from the agent or subject (or to be accessed by such a distinct object) one would expect the object to play a significant role in the generation of the cognition, at least if there is to be knowledge. On Kant's account of the cognitions in question here, it turns out to be determinations and rational needs of the subject that predominate. What we believe to be true of these objects is grounded in our rational agency, without even purporting to be grounded in any effect of these realities on us.<sup>46</sup> On this account, even if it is correct, we cognize the highest good's real possibility but we do not do so *in virtue of* its real possibility. On this account, even if it is correct, we cognize God's existence but we do not do so *in virtue of* God's existence.<sup>47</sup> Kant contends that such belief is rational and warranted cognition, but that it should be distinguished from cases of theoretical and practical knowledge. While there is no reason to dismiss such belief as itself illusory, it is an illusion to consider such cognitions to be knowledge, even if they are true. (20:298,300; cf. A473-4/B501-2) Even if they are true, and the account of our cognition of them is correct, the cognition lacks an objective ground of the cognition "resting on" or "grounded in" the object and its constitution, which is a requirement for knowledge in Kant's sense.

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<sup>46</sup> Indeed, Kant thinks it is morally important that God and our immortality do not directly effect our cognition of them. (5:147)

<sup>47</sup> At least in the case of this argument. A successful cosmological argument, or an argument from the dependent nature of finite rational agency that might bypass reference to the highest good might turn out different.

#### 4. A common concept of cognition and knowledge

Cognition, whether practical or theoretical, must involve the representation of a relatively determinate, really possible object. Kant contends that the determinacy and real possibility, in both practical and theoretical cognition, must derive from something given. In the case of theoretical cognition, sensible intuition and its pure form are required. The fact of reason, our immediate awareness of the moral law, is supposed to function analogously. Knowledge, whether practical or theoretical, requires sufficient objective grounds. Kant claims that the relationship between freedom and the fact of reason allows us to cognize their sufficient objective grounds and consider them knowledge, but that the different relationship between the fact of reason, the highest good, and God provides subjective grounds for firm assertoric cognition and confident belief, but cannot deliver the objective grounding constitutive of knowledge.

As Lewis White Beck once observed in passing,

“the fact of pure reason is the practical corollary of intuition ... in converting mere concepts of the logically possible into cognitions that the logically possible is really possible... [cf. KpV 5: 66]” (Beck, 1960, p. 273n, cf. p. 173.)

We can add that this fact’s differential relationship with such other cognitions, its ability or inability to indicate sufficient objective grounds for those cognitions, provides a key for distinguishing between practical knowledge and practical belief, as two forms of warranted practical cognition.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> I would like to thank Karl Ameriks, Andrew Chignell, and the editors of this volume for valuable comments on this project.

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