

The Distribution Problem in Kant's Doctrine of the Highest Good

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***Abstract:** A number of studies have been conducted on the distribution problem about the highest good in Kant's ethics. Kant defines the highest good as the perfect unity of morality and happiness and takes its attainment as a moral obligation, but in this context, Kant only shows the path to the perfection of morality. He does not provide any information about what man can do about the perfection of happiness. Instead he seems to bring up God as a convenient solution, that is, as a distributor of happiness in proportion to one's morality. Since such an eschatological idea of God has hardly been accepted, researchers seek another interpretation in which the distribution problem can be avoided. Some of them have tried to solve the problem without assuming the idea of God. Hence, firstly I shall examine this suggested solution and point out its reach and deficiencies (section 2). Against that, secondly, I shall examine the requisite for achieving the highest good and show that it is a necessary connection between morality and proportionate happiness (section 3). In section 4 and 5, I examine the possibility of the necessary connection, along the key words of cognitive faculty, hypothesis and Belief. Throughout this paper, I shall conclude that God as an arbitrarily assumed solution for distribution is not necessary. Rather a rationally justified Belief in God, in some sense, is necessary for human reason in order to hold the highest good attainable.*

1. What Is the Distribution Problem?

There is a common understanding that Kant's concept of the highest good consists of two elements, morality and happiness, and that the two elements are in a proportionate relationship, i.e. happiness proportionate to a virtuous state that deserves happiness.¹

¹ Cf. CPtR 5:110. With the exception of *the Critique of Pure Reason*, I have followed the convention for quotations from Kant's texts: the abbreviations, the volume and page numbers of the academy edition i.e. *Immanuel Kant's gesammelte Schriften*. Hg. von der Königlich Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften [und ihren Nachfolgern]. Berlin 1900-. With regard to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I have also followed the convention and indicated the page of A and B; "A" stands for the first edition and "B" for the second edition. A/B: *Critique of Pure Reason*.

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From this a sort of dualism seems to follow: morality² and happiness appear to be entirely different and opposing goods. This allows the idea that Kant's practical philosophy is a narrow deontology focused solely on morality. Moreover, this apparent dualism leads to a problem about the proportionate relationship of the both elements. I call this the "distribution problem"³: since morality by itself does not result in proportionate happiness, a third element, e.g. God,⁴ is theoretically required in order to distribute happiness in proportion to one's morality. This looks as if Kant left the fate of humans to a God whose existence is just an arbitrary imagination. Obviously, such an eschatological idea of God has hardly been accepted in contemporary Kant scholarship. Commentators are inclined to think that it is just *deus ex machina*, or at least involves some theoretical leap.

Some interpretation, however, arises, which says that one can hope for the attainment of the highest good without requiring the idea of God. This interpretation can be traced back to John Silber's distinction between the immanent and transcendent conceptions of the highest good in 1959. According to him, whereas the transcendent conception implies the regulative idea of achieving the highest good, the immanent conception boils down to the obligation that human beings can actually engage in within the world to promote the highest good.⁵ Although Silber believed that the concept of the highest good had both conceptions, in 1988 Andrews Reath argued that since the transcendent conception involves an unsolvable problem of distribution, only the immanent conception, i.e. the highest good that can be hoped to get realized within this world, should be interpreted as Kant's highest good.⁶ Even though this interpretation hardly seems to be a comprehensive understanding of Kant's moral system, such a tendency has become one of the current mainstream interpretations.⁷

G: *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*.

CPrR: *Critique of Practical Reason*.

² Kant counts into the good will not only virtue i.e. the state that one obtains through the proper control of one's inclinations, but also holiness i.e. a perfect state of being completely unaffected by sensible inclination. (CPrR 5:32) I would like to discuss the issue in the future.

³ Generally, the key issue under consideration has been called "distribution", e.g. by Reath 1988, 602 and Engstrom 2016, 90.

⁴ CPrR 5:125.

⁵ Silber 1959, 492.

⁶ Reath 1988, 594. Reath divides the concept of the highest good into theological and secular conceptions, but the implications of this classification can be considered almost synonymous with Silber's.

⁷ Ertl points out that Reath's interpretation remains only an attractive reconstruction: "Reath's aim is therefore mainly a highly attractive reconstruction of Kant from a secular perspective, and not an interpretation of Kant's original intentions, as he nonetheless has

Recently, a number of commentators, e.g. Stephen Engstrom and Pauline Kleingeld, propose a solution for the distribution problem within the immanent conception. Although sustaining Kant's idea of the highest good without theological notions seems a distinct advantage for the contemporary audience, is it really possible in Kant's approach to hope for achieving the highest good, or even promoting it, without any aid of the idea of God? I would like to argue that it is not possible by virtue of the requirement of a necessary connection between morality and proportionate happiness. In the next section, I shall expand on the non-theological solution for the distribution problem and point out the reach and the limitations of it. After that, I shall reconsider the requisites for achieving the highest good.⁸

2. The Highest Good without the Idea of God

As mentioned above, some commentators think that one can attain the highest good without divine aid. In order to understand their solution, let us begin with what Kant explains about the highest good.

So fern nun Tugend und Glückseligkeit zusammen den Besitz des höchsten Guts in einer Person, hiebei aber auch Glückseligkeit, ganz genau in Proportion der Sittlichkeit (als Wert der Person und deren Würdigkeit, glücklich zu sein) ausgeteilt, das höchste Gut einer möglichen Welt ausmachen: so bedeutet dieses das Ganze, das vollendete Gute

sometimes been understood to posit. Reath also tries to show that the numerous justified objections raised against Kant refer to the theological conception of the highest good. According to Reath, the secular conception not only fits better with Kant's overall position in moral philosophy, but is preferable on theoretical grounds because it omits the problematic principle of a proportional distribution of virtue and happiness. This principle, in his opinion, cannot be accounted for within Kant's own moral system" (Ertl 2021, section 2). Moreover, it has already been pointed out that even in order to realize the immanent conception, one must assume the transcendent conception. (Mariña 2000, 331)

⁸ Although I shall consider mainly the Belief in God in this paper (in section 5), it should be noted that this element is only one of the necessary conditions for the realization of the highest good. In addition to this consideration, a discussion of the immortality of the soul is also necessary, but I cannot deal with it in this paper due to space limitations. I shall make it a subject of future study. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider *grace* and the *ethical commonwealth* as essential elements of achieving the highest good, which is shown in detail by Nakano 2019a; Nakano 2019b. In the latter, the relationship between the ethical commonwealth and the highest good is discussed in detail.

Now, inasmuch as virtue and happiness together constitute possession of the highest good in a person, and happiness distributed in exact proportion to morality (as the worth of a person and his worthiness to be happy) constitutes the highest good of a possible world, the latter means the whole, the complete good. . . .⁹

Virtue consists of one's moral actions, hence one's morality, and therefore, the state of the highest good can be described as follows.

The Highest Good (HG): a person *x* acts morally, and this involves that *x* gets happiness in proportion to *x*'s morality.

In contrast, the state of this everyday world can be described as follows.

Present State: a person *x* acts morally, and *x does not*, at least not necessarily, get happiness in proportion to *x*'s morality.¹⁰

From this Present State to the state of HG, one must strive to make progress. For the sake of it, Kant requires the postulates of the idea of immortality and God; the former is for endless moral striving, whereas the latter seems to be for the distribution of happiness to each virtuous person.

The interpreters who think that there is a possibility to attain the highest good without divine aid, however, suggest that the duty of benevolence allows one to attain HG without divine arrangement. That is, HG cannot be attained by anyone acting on one's own, but through *collective* cooperation there is a possibility for all to attain it.¹¹

Before looking at their solution, we shall try to grasp what the duty of benevolence is. Let us see the context of the *Groundwork*. Kant divides all duties into four types, according to two criteria: the criterion of whether the duty is to others or to oneself, and the criterion of perfect duty, in which it is never permissible to give priority to inclination instead of a duty, and imperfect duty, with regard to which this

⁹ CPrR 5:110. Translated by Gregor.

¹⁰ Indeed, there is another possibility:

Present state*: *x* does not act morally, and *x* gets happiness.

Although this version also raises important issues regarding justice, I omit this case in this paper for lack of space.

¹¹ See Reath 1988, Engstrom 2016 etc.

can be the case in exceptional circumstances. The duty of benevolence belongs to the imperfect duty to others. Suppose that I live my life without problems and I find out about others' suffering and consider whether or not to help them. Although the maxim of not helping them is certainly not morally problematic on the grounds that there are no contradictions within it, I still *cannot will* that maxim as a universal law and therefore it is duty to help others.¹² Thus, it is the happiness of others in general that is subject to this duty.

Now Engstrom tries to resolve the distribution problem in the following way.¹³ That is, if I act in such a way that I set the happiness of others in general as my end, and promote the happiness of others as morally good acts, and if every other person acts in the same way as I do, considering the happiness of others as their ends, then in the ideal case every human being's happiness will be realized as the end of all the human acts involving this duty.¹⁴ In other words, virtue and happiness would be proportionate in the way that the happiness of all agents is attributed to the result of morally good acts performed by all. According to this understanding, there would be no need for a divine aid of distributing happiness in proportion to morality.

Kleingeld holds the same position and summarizes her account as follows.

If it is a moral duty to promote the happiness of others, then the highest good, conceived as an ideal moral world populated by virtuous agents, does include the happiness of all. In a moral world, I promote the happiness of others, and others promote mine. . . . This means that the virtuous agents in this world collectively aim at the happiness of all. . . .

In sum, the highest good, when conceived as a moral world, is the world that moral agents would bring into existence. . . if all moral agents were fully virtuous and their actions would achieve their moral ends. The highest good includes happiness because morality demands that we make the happiness of

¹² Cf. G 4:421–23.

¹³ There will be disagreement as to whether Engstrom's account belongs to the interpretation of *Kant's ethics*, i.e. textual studies, or *Kantian ethics*. (About this distinction, see Wood 2008, 1.) Indeed, he appears to be engaged in Kantian ethics in that he attempts to understand practical philosophy by setting aside the idea of God for the moment which Kant himself is explicitly drawing on. However, Engstrom's analysis is an interpretation close to Kant's text, and thus it can be said that Engstrom is carrying out a study of Kant's ethics, even though Engstrom tries to "repair" or improve Kant's position by using other elements of Kant's system. In this paper, I will therefore consider his analysis as belonging to Kant's ethics.

¹⁴ Engstrom 2016, 105f.

others our end, while making it a duty on the part of others to promote ours (as part of their duty to promote the happiness of others).¹⁵

In this vein, their explanation can be formulated in two propositions. The first is the case of one who acts morally on their own, and his or her distribution cannot be done. The second is the collective case in which every distribution can be done.

HG by Oneself: *for some x*, x acts morally, and this *does not* involve that x obtains happiness in proportion to x's morality.

HG in Collective Cooperation: *for all x*, x acts morally, and this involves that *it is possible* that *for all x*, x obtains happiness in proportion to x's morality.

Through this solution even though the proportion between morality and happiness of each individual does not occur, viewed as a whole, it occurs. For each individual, still, the proportion remains contingent; the HG in collective cooperation does not guarantee the HG for each person.

3. Necessary Connection between Morality and Happiness

There is a further point which needs to be clarified. That is, it is quite possible that even though there is collective cooperation for the HG, the actions will *fail*; because there is no guarantee for success. Commentators who regard the transcendent conception of the highest good as theoretically indispensable are prone to focus on the possibility of this failure. For instance, Ertl states as follows.

This point is complementary to the one Kant is making in a famous passage in the GMM in which he speaks of a possible “step-motherly nature” (GMM 4, 394) flouting the efforts of a good will. In this passage, he emphasizes that a will can be good *although* the consequences of its actions fail to emerge; plainly, such a scenario won't do for a self-rewarding morality. Free action needs to be successful at least with regard to the reward in terms of happiness to materialize.¹⁶

¹⁵ Kleingeld 2016, 40–41, italicized by AN.

¹⁶ Ertl 2021, section 2, italicized by the author. GMM in this quotation means *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Engstrom acknowledges the possibility of failure, but he has just claimed that the cause of the failure cannot be sought in the will, but in *bad luck*. That is, he states that the good will cannot be responsible for the failure.¹⁷ What matters, however, is not the possibility of imputation of each action, but the possibility of failure of all the actions. The problem is more radical than Engstrom admits; the failure here does not mean a failure of some of the actions, but of all the actions. In other words, central to this issue is the possibility that the world or nature does not harmonize with all the good actions.¹⁸

Kant clearly refers to this issue in the section of the existence of God as a postulate of pure practical reason.

Also ist in dem moralischen Gesetze nicht der mindeste Grund zu einem notwendigen Zusammenhang zwischen Sittlichkeit und der ihr proportionierten Glückseligkeit eines zur Welt als Teil gehörigen, und daher von ihr abhängigen, Wesens, welches eben darum durch seinen Willen nicht Ursache dieser Natur sein, und sie, was seine Glückseligkeit betrifft, mit seinen praktischen Grundsätzen aus eigenen Kräften nicht durchgängig einstimmig machen kann. Gleichwohl wird in der praktischen Aufgabe der reinen Vernunft, d. i. der notwendigen Bearbeitung zum höchsten Gute, ein solcher Zusammenhang als notwendig postuliert: wir sollen das höchste Gut (welches also doch möglich sein muß) zu befördern suchen.

¹⁷ Engstrom 2016, 96.

¹⁸ A. W. Moore's approach is also helpful to understand this point. He calls Kant's conception of freedom the Basic Idea and describes it this way: "there is a *nisus* in all of us, more fundamental than any other, towards rationality" (Moore 2003, 128). To rephrase, this states that the categorical imperative has priority when we act according to the law of freedom, that is, the moral law. He points out that in exercising the Basic Idea, the world must have such a stability that it accepts the Basic Idea regularly, and the agent needs to believe in that stability. Furthermore, the agent not only needs to believe in stability, but the agent needs to hope that moral actions will be reflected in the world in the most vital way. This hope is neither groundless nor random, but derives from the ought that the highest good should be realized. It can be said: in order for the failure of a moral act to be considered as exceptional, I need to believe in advance that the world would ordinarily accept moral actions. According to Moore's approach, in order to regard the possibility of failure of actions as really exceptional, one must first acknowledge the presence of a good will and, in addition, one needs to have a hope; when one does a good action, one must simultaneously believe or hope that the realization of that action will have stability.

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Consequently, there is not the least ground in the moral law for a necessary connection between the morality and the proportionate happiness of a being belonging to the world as part of it and hence dependent upon it, who for that reason cannot by his will be a cause of this nature and, as far as his happiness is concerned, cannot by his own powers make it harmonize thoroughly with his practical principles. Nevertheless, in the practical task of pure reason, that is, in the necessary pursuit of the highest good, such a connection is postulated as necessary: we ought to strive to promote the highest good (which must therefore be possible).¹⁹

The long first sentence shows that there is no ground for a necessary connection between morality and proportionate happiness within the moral law. Nevertheless, the second sentence indicates that this connection is indispensable for attaining the highest good.

Then, the requisite Kant shows here can be described as follows.

Necessary Connection (NC): morality *necessarily connects* with proportionate happiness.

We can add this condition to HG.

HG with NC: x acts morally, and this involves that *it necessarily connects* to x obtaining happiness in proportion to x's morality.

This clearly differs from the goal of the secular interpretation i.e. HG in collective cooperation, which supports only: *for all x*, x acts morally, and this involves that *it is possible* that *for all x*, x obtains happiness in proportion to x's morality. That is, a possibility of the connection between the morality and the proportionate happiness is not enough, rather a necessary connection is required.²⁰

¹⁹ CPrR 5:124f. Translated by Gregor.

²⁰ Engstrom himself, in 1996, believed that there is no guarantee that morality and happiness will be in proportion when an individual does a good action, but that on a global scale, social and natural external conditions provide some assurance. Social conditions are those in which the realization of the good is aimed at on a communal scale. The natural conditions are that "nature is congenial to this ultimate end" (Engstrom 1996, 130). From this, Engstrom himself seems to believe that the highest good is only possible if nature allows the realization of the good will. However, there is not much intention to extend this point until 2016. The fact that

Why is such a strong condition required? The reason has already been shown in the above quotation. That is, human's "reason cannot by his will be a cause of this nature and, as far as his happiness is concerned, cannot by his own powers make it harmonize thoroughly with his practical principles". In other words, in order to certainly realize one's moral actions in this world, one must be a cause of nature or control the law of nature to be in harmony with the moral law; but one has no such a power i.e. human beings have no power to make the NC.

So far I have shown three points. First, for the sake of attaining the highest good the solution of secular interpretation came up short in virtue of the possibility of failure of all the actions. Second, according to Kant's text, it was necessary to insert NC into the formula of HG. This meant that a necessary connection between the morality and the proportionate happiness was needed rather than a possible connection of them. Finally, we human beings have not been able to provide such a strong connection. Then again, is it still an unwarranted move to resort to God as a distributor, as an additional aid to the highest good theory?

4. The Possibility of Necessary Connection

Perhaps there are other options. Let us consider how we might understand the possibility of NC.

First, let us briefly review the scope of our cognitive faculty. It can be considered from both speculative and practical standpoints. The former is discussed in the first *Critique*, which is concerned with spatial-temporal objects; intuition captures appearances in space and time, and understanding raises it to a concept through its categories; the use of categories that do not relate in any way to spatial-temporal objects is transcendent and does not generate knowledge.²¹ Since NC—the thesis that morality necessarily connects with proportionate happiness—cannot be observed within space and time, nor does it relate to spatial-temporal objects, it can be concluded that in speculative cognition, there are no possible clues for humans to recognize the existence of NC or its possibility.

he resolved the distribution problem by the duty of benevolence in 2016 makes it clear that he does not regard the issue of natural conditions as significant.

²¹ About the word 'transcendent,' see: A327/B383.

The other cognitive faculty is practical. Although rarely mentioned in comparison to speculative cognition, Kant explains this in the second *Critique* as follows.

In der praktischen Erkenntnis, d. i. derjenigen, welche es bloß mit Bestimmungsgründen des Willens zu tun hat. . . [d]ie praktische Regel ist jederzeit ein Produkt der Vernunft, weil sie Handlung, als Mittel zur Wirkung, als Absicht vorschreibt. Diese Regel ist aber für ein Wesen, bei dem Vernunft nicht ganz allein Bestimmungsgrund des Willens ist, ein Imperativ. . . .

In practical cognition—that is, cognition having to do only with determining grounds of the will. . . [a] practical rule is always a product of reason because it prescribes action as a means to an effect, which is its purpose. But for a being in whom reason quite alone is not the determining ground of the will, this rule is an imperative. . . .²²

According to this quotation, our practical cognitive faculty concerns the determining grounds of the will; that is, it concerns a rule which prescribes action as a means to an effect, and for human beings as rational-sensitive beings it appears as an imperative. Although imperatives are either hypothetical or categorical, in this context, central to this issue is the latter. According to Wood's widely known reformulation of categorical imperatives, there are three formulas.

First formula

FUL *Formula of Universal Law*: “Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you at the same time can will that it become a universal law” (G 4:421),
with its more intuitive variant,

FLN *Formula of the Law of Nature*: “So act, as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature” (G 4:421).

Second formula

FH *Formula of Humanity as End in Itself*: “So act that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as an end and never merely as a means” (G 4:429).

²² CPrR 5:20. Translated by Gregor.

Third formula

FA *Formula of Autonomy*: “the idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law” (G 4:431; cf. 4:432), or “Not to choose otherwise than so that the maxims of one’s choice are at the same time comprehended with it in the same volition as universal law” (G 4:440; cf. 4:432, 434, 438),

with its more intuitive variant,

FRE *Formula of the Realm of Ends*: “Act in accordance with maxims of a universally legislative member for a merely possible realm of ends” (G 4:439; cf. 4:433, 437–439).²³

From the fact that there is no mention of NC in all the formulas of categorical imperatives, it can be concluded that even in practical cognition, at least in this narrow sense of establishing the basic normative principles, there are no possible clues for humans to recognize the existence of NC nor its possibility.

Thus, there is nothing I cognize, speculatively nor practically, that indicates that NC can exist. But still, there is also nothing I cognize that can refute the existence of NC or its possibility. It is, therefore, always possible to assume NC as a *hypothesis*. Then, I can assume a hypothesis of NC from neutral standpoint; there is not any basis for recommending or refuting this hypothesis.

5. Hypothesis and Belief

Now, let us return to the reason I came to assume the possibility of NC as a hypothesis. It was because I have a duty to achieve the highest good.²⁴ From this the following

²³ Wood 2017, 6.

²⁴ Engstrom argues how pure practical reason aims at the highest good as the final end, through his ‘hylomorphic analysis’ in Engstrom 2016. Since a discussion of this analysis as a whole is beyond the scope of a brief paper, I show only a rough outline of its direction below. To summarize Engstrom’s “hylomorphic analysis”, a good will uses the gifts— the gift of nature, to which belong the “talents of mind”, such as cleverness and the goodness of temperament, namely courage and perseverance; the other is the gift of fortune, such as power, riches, honor, health, and satisfaction about the present condition (see. G 4:393) —based on practical knowledge that has the efficacy of actualizing the object itself. Only in that way is a good action possible. Through it, Engstrom understands the relationship between virtue and

points result. First, this hypothesis is not groundless, but is something that any rational being obliged to achieve the highest good would need to inevitably assume.²⁵ In this sense it is connected to an actually given duty. For Kant, if one thinks of a possibility of an object which is not yet given, its hypothesis must have such a feature.

Wo nicht etwa Einbildungskraft schwärmen, sondern, unter der strengen Aufsicht der Vernunft, dichten soll, so muß immer vorher etwas völlig gewiß und nicht erdichtet, oder bloße Meinung sein, und das ist die Möglichkeit des Gegenstandes selbst. Alsdenn ist es wohl erlaubt, wegen der Wirklichkeit desselben, zur Meinung seine Zuflucht zu nehmen, *die aber, um nicht grundlos zu sein, mit dem, was wirklich gegeben und folglich gewiß ist, als Erklärungsgrund in Verknüpfung gebracht werden muß, und alsdenn Hypothese heißt.*

If the imagination is not simply to enthuse but is, under the strict oversight of reason, to invent, something must always first be fully certain and not invented, or a mere opinion, and that is the possibility of the object itself. In that case it is permissible to take refuge in opinion concerning the actuality of the object, *which opinion, however, in order not to be groundless, must be connected as a ground of explanation with that which is actually given and consequently it is then called an hypothesis.*²⁶

The hypothesis of NC is connected to the actually given duty of the highest good. Hence, it is bound up with pure practical reason.

For Kant, a matter that pure practical reason asserts is necessary.

Was reine Vernunft assertorisch urteilt, muß (wie alles, was Vernunft erkennt,) notwendig sein, oder es ist gar nichts. Demnach enthält sie in der Tat gar keine Meinungen. Die gedachten Hypothesen aber sind nur problematische Urteile, die wenigstens nicht widerlegt, obgleich freilich durch nichts bewiesen werden können, und sind also reine Privatmeinungen, können aber doch nicht

happiness by means of a model in which a good will as a form determines desires for happiness as a matter in the broad sense.

²⁵ This is basically the approach taken by Willaschek 2018, 270–275.

²⁶ A770/B798. Translated by Guyer and Wood. Italicized by AN.

füglich (selbst zur inneren Beruhigung) gegen sich regende Skrupel entbehrt werden.

What pure reason judges assertorically must be necessary (like everything cognized by reason), or it is nothing at all. Thus in fact it contains no opinions at all. The hypotheses in question are, however, only problematic judgments, which at least cannot be refuted, though of course they cannot be proved by anything, and they are therefore not private opinions, though against reigning scruples they cannot be dispensed with (even for inner tranquility).²⁷

Since the hypothesis of NC is grounded on pure practical reason, it is not just a private opinion, but “[t]he end here is inescapably fixed”,²⁸ namely, it is fixed to the duty of attaining the highest good. On the basis that the moral law commands it, now I can hold the hypothesis as a *Believing*.

Believing is a kind of subjective ground for taking something to be true.

Das Fürwahrhalten, oder die subjektive Gültigkeit des Urteils, in Beziehung auf die Überzeugung (welche zugleich objektiv gilt), hat folgende drei Stufen: Meinen, Glauben und Wissen. . . . Ist das letztere[Fürwahrhalten] nur subjektiv zureichend und wird zugleich für objektiv unzureichend gehalten, so heißt es Glauben.

Taking something to be true, or the subjective of judgment, has the following three stages in relation to conviction (which at the same time is objectively): having an opinion, [B]elieving, and knowing. . . . 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 [B]elieving.²⁹

²⁷ A781/B809. Translated by Guyer and Wood.

²⁸ “Der Zweck ist hier unumgänglich festgestellt. . . .” A828/B856. Translated by Guyer and Wood.

²⁹ A822/B850. Translated by Guyer and Wood. Italicized by AN. I changed the translation of the word “Glauben” from “believing” to “Believing”. For a comprehensive account of “Glaube” in Kant see Chignell 2007. Chignell 2007, 335n15 says that “Glaube” is a technical term in Kant (close to the contemporary notion of “acceptance”) which cannot be rendered simply as “belief” or “faith” in all cases so that it should be translated as “Belief”.

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In this vein, Believing is taking something to be true as subjectively sufficient and objectively insufficient. What the subjective sufficiency means is that something can obtain an influence or show a direction to reason.

Der Ausdruck des Glaubens ist in solchen Fällen ein Ausdruck der Bescheidenheit in objektiver Absicht, aber doch zugleich *der Festigkeit des Zutrauens in subjektiver*. . . . Das Wort Glauben aber geht nur auf *die Leitung, die mir eine Idee gibt, und den subjektiven Einfluß auf die Beförderung meiner Vernunft-handlungen, die mich an derselben festhält*, ob ich gleich von ihr nicht im Stande bin, in spekulativer Absicht Rechenschaft zu geben.

The expression of [B]elief 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*. . . . The word “[B]elief”, however, concerns only *the direction that an idea gives me and the subjective influence on the advancement of my actions of reason that holds me fast to it*, even though I am not in a position to give an account of it from a speculative point of view.³⁰

Thus, the subjective sufficiency of Belief is that it influences and confirms subjective actions and reinforces conviction. This is not a logical conviction, but it is a moral conviction.³¹

³⁰ A827/B855. Translated by Guyer and Wood. Italicized by AN. I changed the translation of the word “Glaube” from “belief” to “Belief”.

³¹ “Zwar wird freilich sich niemand rühmen können: er wisse, daß ein Gott und daß ein künftig Leben sei. . . . Nein, die Überzeugung ist nicht logische, sondern moralische Gewißheit, und, da sie auf subjektiven Gründen (der moralischen Gesinnung) beruht, so muß ich nicht einmal sagen: es ist moralisch gewiß, daß ein Gott sei etc., sondern, ich bin moralisch gewiß etc. Das heißt: der Glaube an einen Gott und eine andere Welt ist mit meiner moralischen Gesinnung so verwebt, daß, so wenig ich Gefahr laufe, die erstere einzubüßen, eben so wenig besorge ich, daß mir der zweite jemals entrissen werden könne./ Of course, no one will be able to boast that he knows that there is a God and a future life. . . . No, the conviction is not logical but moral certainty, and, since it depends on subjective grounds (of moral disposition) I must not even say “It is morally certain that there is a God”, etc., but rather “I am morally certain” etc. That is, the [B]elief in a God and another world is so interwoven with my moral disposition that I am in as little danger of ever surrendering the former as I am worried that the latter can ever be torn away from me”. (A828f./B856f. Translated by Guyer and Wood. I changed the translation of the word “Glaube” from “belief” to “Belief”.)

To sum up, regarding the NC, instead of simply holding a neutral hypothesis, I can hold it as a Belief, which in this case amounts to a kind of faith, from a universal standpoint as grounded on moral law. Hence, although I do not have any theoretical ground for proving the possibility of NC, I have a practical ground to *justify* its Belief.

As mentioned above, Kant refers NC in the section of the existence of God as a postulate of pure practical reason. It means that he regards NC, at least in practical sense, as requiring Belief in God. Of course, it is far different from simply assuming the existence of God as the distributor of happiness without any argument or justification.

What I have shown in this paper in one sense amounts to the same as the secular interpretation in that I conclude that God as an arbitrarily assumed distributor is not necessary. Meanwhile, in another sense, it rather amounts to something completely different in that I conclude that a Belief in God, by virtue of NC, is necessary for human reason in order to hold the highest good attainable. Kleingeld and Engstrom fail in their attempt to replace Kant's recourse to God by other means. Kant's recourse to God is not unwarranted nor ad hoc; but whether Kant's argument is a good argument is still a different question.

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