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# PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

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*Chapter 1*

## **HOPE AND BELIEF**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Although the concept of “hope” received attention from such notable philosophers as Aristotle, Aquinas, Spinoza, Hume and Kant, and is much discussed in religious philosophy and psychology, it has not been subjected to much analysis by modern analytical philosophers. There is general agreement that “A hopes that Q” is to be analysed as “A desires that Q; and A is uncertain that Q (or considers Q to be possible)”. There is, however, disagreement about the sense of uncertainty (or possibility) involved. By far the most comprehensive modern philosophical analysis of “hope” is provided by John Patrick Day, who interprets “A is uncertain that Q” as “A attaches a subjective probability to Q of more than 0 but less than 1”. Day also holds that “A hopes that Q” is compatible with “A believes that Q”, because he maintains that “A believes that Q” is to be analysed as “A attaches a subjective probability to Q of more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  but less than 1”. In this Chapter, it is argued, with particular attention to Day’s analysis, that “A hopes that Q” is better analysed as “A desires that Q; and, with Q in mind, neither believes nor disbelieves that Q” where “A believes that Q” is to be analysed as “A affirms that Q is actually, rather than probably or merely possibly, the case”. Interestingly, Kant held that hope is compatible with belief (viewed as affirmation), though not with

knowledge, being equivalent to affirmation grounded in what ought to be the case. It is argued that if Kant's notorious moral argument for God is reinterpreted as an argument for hope (analysed as precluding affirmation) that God exists, then it can withstand objections commonly brought against it.

## INTRODUCTION

The nature of hope has been a topic for philosophical reflection at least since the ancient Greeks and Romans. Aristotle [2, 449b] has views about it. So, too, do Aquinas [1], Spinoza [26, Part III, Definition of the Emotions], Hume [14, Book II Part III Section IX], John Stuart Mill [16], and Kant. Indeed, for Kant:

- All the interests of my reason, speculative as well as practical, combine in the three following questions:
  1. What can I know?
  2. What ought I to do?
  3. What may I hope? [18, A805 B833]

Despite this, the concept of hope has not received a great deal of attention by modern analytical philosophers, although it is much discussed in the philosophy of religion and by psychologists (e.g., [15], [27]).

It is widely accepted that "A hopes that Q"  $\leftrightarrow$ <sup>1</sup> "A desires Q; and A is uncertain (in *some* sense) that Q". The conative condition, "A desires that Q", covers "A wishes, wants, or values Q", indeed any positive attitude A has to Q, while "A does not desire that Q" covers any case where A wishes, or wants to avoid Q, or otherwise finds Q unattractive or unacceptable. The intensity of A's hope for Q will vary with the intensity of A's desire for Q. "A fears that Q"  $\leftrightarrow$  "A does not desire that Q; and A is uncertain that Q". "A hopes that Q"  $\leftrightarrow$  "A fears that  $\sim$ Q".<sup>2</sup> If A neither desires nor does not desire that Q (i.e., A is conatively indifferent to Q), A neither hopes nor fears that Q.

<sup>1</sup> "Entails and is entailed by" or "mutually entails".

<sup>2</sup> Spinoza (see [26, Part III, Definition of the Emotions XIII]) and Hume (see [14, Book II Part III Section IX]), both emphasise that hoping always involves fearing and vice versa. In ordinary use, "A fears Q" is ambiguous. It can mean, "A does not desire Q" = "A fears<sub>1</sub>Q" (e.g. "Paul fears spiders, is frightened of them", or it can mean "A fears<sub>2</sub> Q" = "A fears<sub>1</sub>Q;

My first aim in this chapter is to present an analysis of the cognitive condition, of the sense in which hope involves uncertainty about its object. I will argue that hoping that *Q* involves, *with the question whether Q is or is not the case in mind*, neither believing nor disbelieving that *Q*. I consider that a sound account of the idea of hope is vital for a sound account of rational action generally. I also consider that beings are subjects and objects of moral concern essentially because they are hoping and fearing subjects. These topics are too broad to pursue further here.<sup>3</sup> Here I will restrict application of my analysis to reflection on Kant's moral argument for the existence of God. I will argue that this argument is valid if it is understood not as an argument for believing that God exists on the presumption of a categorical imperative, but as an argument for hoping (in the sense I advocate) that God exists.

To place my analysis of hope in context, and to explain clearly how my arguments will proceed, it is necessary to begin with an outline of the different positions taken on the cognitive position.

## Positions on the Cognitive Condition

The definition of hope provided by St Thomas Aquinas provides a useful starting point. According to Aquinas, hope is "a movement of appetite aroused by the perception of what is agreeable, future, arduous, and possible of attainment" [1, p.7]. If we relate this to the widely accepted idea, Aquinas holds that "A hopes that *Q*"  $\leftrightarrow$  "A desires that *Q*"; and "A is uncertain that *Q* (for which the necessary and sufficient conditions are: A perceives *Q* to be future, arduous, and possible of attainment)".

"*Q* is future" means "*Q* is not already the case". If A must perceive *Q* to be *objectively* future, then this disqualifies statements like, "Peter hopes that Liverpool won their match against Arsenal last night", "Sally hopes that it is not raining in Chicago now", and "David hopes that he has won the race he

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and A is uncertain that *Q*" (e.g., "Paul fears that the spider on the carpet will bite him"). So "A fears<sub>1</sub> *Q*" means "*Q* is the object of A's fear<sub>2</sub> that *Q*" and "A fears<sub>2</sub> *Q*" is the contrary of "A hopes that *Q*". Ambiguity is removed if "A fears *Q*" is taken to mean "A does not desire that *Q*" and "A fears that *Q*" is taken to mean "A does not desire that *Q*; and A is uncertain that *Q*".

<sup>3</sup> The first of these topics is important for my project on the role that precautionary reasoning can legitimately play in law (on which see [6]). The second claim is an implication of the analysis of dignity in [5] (esp. Chapter 5), which also contains less refined reflections on Kant's moral argument for God than I present here. See also [4].

has just finished running,” none of which have objectively future objects.

Q, or  $\sim$ Q, has already happened or is happening.

John Patrick Day says that Q must be *subjectively* future, not *objectively* future, “that which is not yet within the subject’s experience” [8, p.23] in the sense that the subject “does not yet know of it” [8, n.3, p.28]. This, I think, is a key insight.

However, “to know of it” is open to interpretation. Since it is, in *some* sense, to be “certain” of it, we may say that when Q is subjectively in the future for A, A’s current *perception* of Q is, in some sense, uncertain.<sup>4</sup>

“Q is arduous” implies that Q is not already given, inevitable, pre-determined, or unavoidable: something must *be done* to achieve Q. However, since objects of hope are not necessarily ends of action (e.g., A might hope that the sun will shine, or that God exists), if “Q is arduous” is to be a universal condition, it must mean that *the existence* of Q (regardless of whether or not this requires action) is not certain, or that it is not necessarily the case that Q.<sup>5</sup> So, “Q is not certain” must be taken to mutually entail “Q might not be the case”  $\equiv$  “ $\sim$ Q is possible”.

Conversely, “Q is possible” mutually entails “ $\sim$ Q is not certain”. Therefore, we may state the combined condition in any of the following equivalent ways: “A perceives that neither Q nor  $\sim$ Q is certain or impossible”; “A perceives that neither Q nor  $\sim$ Q is certain”; “A perceives both Q and  $\sim$ Q to be possible”; “A perceives Q (or  $\sim$ Q) to be neither impossible nor certain”, which I will formulate as “ $As\pi(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ”.

Hence, Aquinas’ definition may be restated as: “A hopes that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A desires Q; and A is uncertain that Q (for which the necessary and sufficient conditions are: A’s current perception that Q is the case is uncertain; and  $As\pi(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ”). This will be formulated as: “A hopes that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A desires that Q; and  $Asu(Q) = >0 < 1$  ( $\leftrightarrow Asf(Q)$ ) and [ $As\pi(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ]”.

“ $Asu(Q) = 1$ ” means “A is certain that  $\sim$ Q”, whereas “ $Asu(Q) = 0$ ” means “A is certain that Q”. “ $Asf(Q)$ ” means “Q is subjectively future for A” (i.e., “A’s current perception of Q is uncertain”). “ $As\pi(Q) = 0$ ” means “A perceives that Q is impossible ( $\sim$ Q is certain)”. “ $As\pi(Q) = 1$ ” means “A perceives that  $\sim$ Q is impossible (Q is certain)”.

<sup>4</sup> Compare Spinoza: “Hope is an inconstant pleasure, arising from the idea of something past and future, whereof we to a certain extent doubt the issue” [26, Part III, Definition of the Emotions XII]).

<sup>5</sup> “That Q” or “Q is the case” will generally to be taken to cover objectively present, future and past objects.

The modern orthodoxy is simply: “A hopes that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A desires that Q; and “ $Asp(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ”.<sup>6</sup> Day, who presents by far the most sustained modern analysis of the concept, rejects both this and Aquinas’ definition, because, following David Hume [14, Book II Part III Section IX], he maintains that “Hope and Fear must be analysed in terms of Subjective Probability and not in terms of Subjective Possibility” [8, p.24]. This is because there are degrees of Hope and Fear and also degrees of Subjective Probability, but no degrees of Subjective Possibility. We say, *e.g.* (1) ‘A has high hope that Q’, [and] (2) ‘A has only a faint hope that Q’... [which] ... it is impossible to analyse ... in terms of Subjective Possibility, as the reader can verify for himself [8, pp.24-25].

Therefore he gives the following definition: “A hopes that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A desires (in some degree)<sup>7</sup> that Q; and A believes the subjective probability<sup>8</sup> of Q  $= >0 < 1$ ” (See [8, p.19; p.25]).<sup>9</sup>

Day’s definition will be formulated as: “A hopes that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A desires that Q; and  $Asp(Q) = >0 < 1$ ”. “ $Asp(Q) = >0 < 1$ ” replaces “ $Asf(Q)$ ” and “ $Asp(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ” in my reconstruction of Aquinas’ definition. So what has happened to “ $Asf(Q)$ ”? It seems that Day considers that “ $Asu(Q) = >0 < 1$ ”, is to be analysed as “ $Asp(Q) = >0 < 1$ ”, which (because of  $Asf(Q)$ ) is to be interpreted as “A *currently* estimates  $sp(Q)$  as  $>0 < 1$ ”.

I propose, instead, that: “A hopes that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A desires that Q; and  $Asb(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ”. “ $Asb(Q)$ ” stands for “A’s tendency to believe that Q” (or

<sup>6</sup> See, *e.g.*, J. J. Godfrey [11, p. 30]; J. Harrison (“Hoping that something is so implies two things, wanting it to be so . . . and neither believing that it is inevitable . . . nor impossible” [12, p.80]); H. H. Price, “If we hope that x will happen, we must at least believe it [not just logically but causally] possible that x will happen” [25, p. 268] (and that it will be a good thing if x happens); and S. R. Sutherland [28, pp. 197], who prefers Harrison’s formulation on the grounds that insisting on causal possibility rules out, *e.g.*, hope that God exists.

<sup>7</sup> Day always writes this qualification in. If I leave it out it is to be understood as being there.

<sup>8</sup> “Probability” covers both mathematical probability and “Inductive Probability (or Degree of Confirmation)” [8, p.35; p.87], and degrees of the latter can only, strictly speaking, be “expressed by ‘very probable’, ‘fairly probable’ etc., but cannot be measured by real numbers” [8, p.35] (see also [8, p.87]). Hence, any assignment of numerical values to them is purely for convenience (see 8, p.87). By the “subjective probability of Q”, Day means “the degree of probability which the subject, A, believes (estimates, thinks, judges) the object, Q, to possess” [8, pp.87-88].

<sup>9</sup> See also, R. S. Downie, according to whom, rather like H. H. Price [25] logical possibility is not enough, because “the typical cases of ‘hope that’ fall within a narrower scale—that of physical probabilities and likelihoods. By this I mean that we can only hope where we believe that there is a positive probability that the object of hope will be realized” [9, p.249]. Day’s definition is also in line with J. M. O Wheatley [30, p. 127], according to whom hoping always involves some degree of expectation. However, there is no reason to think that Downie or Wheatley would follow Day’s elaboration of this definition.

“the degree to which A *leans towards* believing that Q” or “the believability of Q for A”). “Asb(Q) = 0” means “A disbelieves that Q”  $\equiv$  “A believes that  $\sim$ Q”. “Asb(Q) = 1” means “A believes that Q”. Asb(Q)  $\neq$  0 and  $\neq$  1” means “A neither believes nor disbelieves that Q”  $\equiv$  “A unbelieves that Q”.<sup>10</sup> “A does not believe that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “Asb(Q) = 0’ or ‘Asb(Q)  $\neq$  0 and  $\neq$  1””.

I contend that “Asf(Q)” is to be analysed as “Asb(Q)  $\neq$  0 and  $\neq$  1”. However, *provided that A has Q in mind*, “Asb(Q)  $\neq$  0 and  $\neq$  1”  $\rightarrow$  “As $\pi$ (Q)  $\neq$  0 and  $\neq$  1” but not vice versa, and then “As $\pi$ (Q)  $\neq$  0 and  $\neq$  1” is cognitively redundant for “A *does* hope that Q” though not for “A *could* hope that Q”. However, there is no particular harm in contending that “A hopes that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A desires that Q; As $\pi$ (Q)  $\neq$  0 and  $\neq$  1; and Asb(Q)  $\neq$  0 and  $\neq$  1”.

Day’s opposed conception involves a view of “believing that” very different from my own. The concept of belief that I will employ, for reasons that will become clear, specifies that to believe that Q is to affirm Q, which is to be committed to treat “Q is the case” as a true proposition in thought and action. There are no degrees of believing that Q, though there can be degrees of leaning towards believing that Q, degrees of justification for believing that Q, and degrees of resistance to giving up believing that Q. But, “A believes that Q” entails nothing about the degree of justification or confirmation that A thinks there is for “Q is the case”. Day, on the other hand, holds that “A believes that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “Asp(Q) =  $>1/2 < 1$ ”.

[D]egrees of belief that Q correspond to the degrees of sp(Q) in the interval (1/2,1) exclusive. E.g. “A firmly believes that Q” corresponds to “sp(Q) = 2/3”. It follows [because, when A is hopeful that Q, “A estimates the probability of Q as  $>1/2 < 1$ ” [8, p.56]] ... that “A is hopeful in some degrees that Q” is equivalent to (entails and is entailed by) “A desires in some degree that Q, and A believes that Q”.<sup>11</sup> ... Belief that Q, then, entails the existence of a second-order belief about the probability of Q. [8, pp.72-73]

My argument will proceed as follows. First, I argue that the correct analysis of “Q is subjectively future for A” is “A currently neither affirms nor disaffirms that Q”. Hence, if “belief that” is equated with “affirmation”,

<sup>10</sup> “Asb(Q)  $\neq$  0 and  $\neq$  1” may also be written as “Asb(Q) =  $>0 < 1$ ” and read as “the subjective probability of Q for A =  $>0 < 1$ ”, but only when “A thinks that it is *probably true* that Q” (“Asb(Q) =  $>1/2 < 1$ ”) is contrasted with “A thinks that it is *actually true* that Q” (“Asb(Q) = 1”) not with “A thinks that it is *certainly true* that Q” (which Day has as “Asp(Q) = 1”).

<sup>11</sup> Day never actually says that “A believes that Q” means “Asp(Q) =  $>1/2 < 1$ ”, but it follows logically from these statements that he is committed to this view.



“ $\text{Asb}(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ” is necessary for “A hopes that Q”. I explicate belief as affirmation, and explain how it relates to various concepts of uncertainty, and defend the thesis that  $\text{Asb}(Q) = 0$  (or  $= 1$ ) is sufficient to negate hope against the obvious objection to it.

Secondly, I argue that Day’s view of belief is not merely incompatible with belief as affirmation: it sets up an infinite regress that can only be avoided if beliefs are affirmations or “A believes that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “ $\text{Asp}(Q) = 1$ ”. Either way, “A hopes that Q” cannot  $\rightarrow$  “A believes that Q”. Day’s view over-rationalises the concept of belief. His justification for his view is inadequate and cannot deal with these objections.

Thirdly, I respond to Day’s claim that “hope” cannot be analysed without reference to subjective (evidential) probability. The reason he gives for his claim has no bearing on the conditions for hope; it only bears on the degree to which the hoping subject considers it likely that the hope will be fulfilled.

I then apply the concept of hope developed to Kant’s moral argument for the existence of God. I argue that if Kant’s reasoning is interpreted or reconstructed as an argument for the rational/moral necessity of hoping that God exists in the terms of my analysis of “hope” rather than as an argument for the rational/moral necessity of faith (as involving belief) that God exists, then it survives the standard objections that are brought against it. This has, however, the radical consequence that to be committed to the idea of morality as categorically binding is to be committed to the idea that if God exists then God does not want us to believe that God exists.

## MY VIEW

### Hope and the Future

According to Day, an object of hope (or fear) is always *subjectively* future. For example:

Jack hopes that Jill has caught her train. Jill’s having caught her train is objectively past, but subjectively (*i.e.* for Jack) future” [8, p.22]. “That which is objectively (“actually”) past may also be subjectively future for A, in the sense that A does not yet know of it” [8, n.3, p. 28].

However, this must not be confused with the false theory which analyses “A hopes that B has caught her train” as “A hopes that A will learn that B has

caught her train". For, here, A's learning is of course objectively future, not subjectively future [8, n.3, p.28].

This is partly sound. In order to highlight the tenses involved in Day's example, I will restate it as: "Jack hopes now that Jill yesterday caught her train".

Whether Jill caught her train or missed her train, she did so yesterday (in the objective past), and John perceives now (in the objective present) that both alternatives are objectively past events. But Jack now is "uncertain" (i.e., does not perceive) which of these events occurred yesterday. While the object of Jack's hope (Jill yesterday caught her train) and the object of his correlative fear (Jill yesterday missed her train) lie in the objective past, John's perceiving that Jill yesterday caught — or missed — her train, lies in the objective future. Hence, to say that an event is subjectively future is to say that whether the event is objectively past, present, or future, the subject has not yet come to perceive the event as being actual (objective). It lies in the objective future whether or not the subject will come to perceive the event as part of the actual past, present, or future world.

Day's statement that "Jill's having caught her train is objectively past, but subjectively (i.e. for Jack) future", and that what "is objectively ('actually') past may also be subjectively future for A, in the sense that A does not yet know of it", is not inconsistent with this. Day is also right that this must not be confused with the false idea that "A hopes that B has caught her train" means "A hopes that A will learn that B has caught her train".

However, the difference between the false theory and the correct one is not that the false theory makes it a condition of "A hopes that Q" that "A's learning that Q" is an objectively future event instead of something subjectively future. The correct theory makes both A's learning that Q and A's learning that not-Q possible objectively future events! The reason why the false theory is false is that Jack is not hoping that he will come to perceive that Jill yesterday caught her train. He is hoping that Jill yesterday caught her train.

Having made this mistake, Day tells us that "the objects of hoping and fearing must be propositions about the future" [8, p.59]. This is also false. The object of Jack's hope (Jill yesterday caught her train) is, if actual, an objectively past event, not a proposition at all, let alone a proposition about the future. The proposition "Jack now hopes that Jill yesterday caught her train" describes an objectively present event (Jack's present hoping). The only thing that lays in the future — and this is the objective future — is Jack's coming to perceive whatever he will come to perceive about what Jill (yesterday) did. While this may be expressed by the proposition "Jack has not yet perceived

that Jill yesterday did (or did not) catch her train”, this is a proposition about Jack’s present ambivalence concerning whether or not Jill yesterday caught her train. The only relevant thing that lies in the future is the psychological fulfilment or dashing of Jack’s hope that Jill yesterday caught her train.

Of course, we can say that Jack, in hoping that Jill yesterday caught her train, hopes that the proposition “Jill caught her train yesterday” is true. And this does make the truth of this proposition the object of Jack’s hope. But its truth (which does not depend on when or even if it is perceived to be true) rests on its correspondence with the actuality of Jill’s yesterday catching her train; while Jack’s perception of its truth (if that happens) lies in the objective future. The only way in which the objects of hoping and fearing can be propositions about the future is if “A hopes that B has caught her train” means “A hopes that A will learn that B has caught her train”,<sup>12</sup> which is untenable.

The crucial question, however, remains: “What does it mean to say that A has yet to perceive what actually happened/is happening/or will happen?” I agree that it means that A has an uncertain perception of whether Q or  $\sim$ Q is the case (has happened/is happening/will happen).

So, with our example in mind, the question becomes, “In what sense is Jack uncertain (ambivalent) as to whether Jill yesterday caught or missed her train?” “What change in Jack’s mental state would constitute the removal of Jack’s uncertainty (ambivalence) about whether or not Jill yesterday caught her train?”

Because Day analyses “ $Asu(Q) = >0<1$ ” as “ $Asp(Q) = >0<1$ ”, it follows that  $Asf(Q)$  (“Q is subjectively future for A”) simply places a temporal restriction on  $Asu(Q) = >0<1/Asp(Q) = >0<1$ . “ $Asf(Q)$ ”, “ $Asu(Q) = >0<1$ ”, and “ $Asp(Q) = >0<1$ ” are to be treated as equivalent to “A *currently* considers neither Q nor  $\sim$ Q to be conclusively confirmed: each has a probability  $>0<1$ ”. Only when A judges that  $p(Q) = 1$  (or  $= 0$ ) does A cease to be uncertain that Q and Q cease to be subjectively future for A. Q does not cease to be subjectively future for A when A comes to believe that Q (or that  $\sim$ Q), no matter how firmly A believes that Q (or that  $\sim$ Q), because “A believes that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “ $Asp(Q) = >1/2<1$ ”. Since “A claims to know that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “ $Asp(Q) = 1$ ” (see [8, 72 ]), “A hopes that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “A currently does not think that A knows that Q (or that  $\sim$ Q)”.

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<sup>12</sup> Day claims that “A hopes that Q” is neither true nor false, because “it is arguable that propositions about the future are neither true nor false” [8, p.59]. There is no need to debate this here, given that it is false that “A hopes that Q” is in any relevant sense a proposition about the future.

Is this really what the ambivalence that constitutes “Asf(Q)” amounts to? Let’s return to our example. What essentially characterises the object of Jack’s hope, Jill having yesterday caught her train (Q) being subjectively future for Jack, is that neither the proposition “Jill yesterday caught her train” (“Q is the case”) nor the proposition “Jill yesterday missed her train” (“ $\sim$ Q is the case”) as yet describes part of Jack’s mental representation of the actual world. Both propositions are potentially items in Jack’s present representation of the actual world, but neither has yet become part of it. Each proposition, now, describes (for Jack) only a potential fact. Jack thinks it is possible that “Q is the case” is actually true, but also possible that “Q is the case” is not actually true. To say this is to say no less, and no more, than Jack does not as yet consider either proposition to be actually true. So, to say that the event referred to by “Jill yesterday caught (or did not catch) her train” is subjectively future (for Jack) is to say that Jack is in a state of mind that envisages both the proposition “Jill yesterday caught her train” and the proposition “Jill yesterday failed to catch her train” as only potentially true. To coin a metaphor, they are merely candidates for membership of the club that constitutes Jack’s idea of the actual world. At the moment, as far as Jack is concerned, both “Q is the case” and “ $\sim$ Q is the case” are only possible members of Jack’s actual world. But this is possibility v. actuality — “possibly true” v. “actually true”; not “possibly true” v. “certainly true”.

Jack now only accepts that Jill yesterday might or might not have caught her train. As such, he does not unequivocally accept either that Jill yesterday did catch her train or that Jill yesterday did not catch her train. Whatever else he thinks about the matter (and suppose that he thinks it is more probable, but only more probable, that Jill yesterday caught her train than that she missed it) he will not be required to say that he made an incorrect estimation if it turns out that he becomes aware (judges, perceives, understands, decides, determines, discovers, or whatever) that Jill yesterday did not catch her train. This is because what he has now committed himself to is consistent with either of the alternatives being the actual situation (and coming to be perceived by him as such). But this means that, at this moment, he doubts the truth of both propositions that represent the options, in the sense that he is not committed to the truth of either. His mind has not settled on one of them to the exclusion of the other. He has not ruled either of them out. And it is this sort of doubt that constitutes his uncertainty.

If, and as soon as, Jack comes to perceive one of the options (say “Q is the case”) as being true (hence Q as actual), he commits to it (affirms it). Indeed, his coming to perceive it as true just is his becoming

committed to it (affirming it), and this process results in (indeed, constitutes) logical exclusion of the other option (“ $\sim Q$  is the case”) from being able to inhabit Jack’s representation of the actual world for as long as Jack continues to affirm that  $Q$ . If the subjective uncertainty that defines being in a state of hope resides in the object of hope being subjectively future, then this uncertainty consists of the hoping subject not being unequivocally committed to either of the two options (“ $Q$  is the case” or “ $\sim Q$  is the case”) (i.e., by not making a positive commitment to one option to the exclusion of the other). Once the hoping subject comes to affirm one of the options (it matters not, how, or why) that equivocation or ambivalence ceases.

Affirmation of  $Q$  (or  $\sim Q$ ), therefore, is what happens when  $Q$  ceases to be subjectively future for  $A$ , and  $A$  ceases to hope that  $Q$  ( $A$ ’s hope is fulfilled or dashed). Furthermore, this is surely what believing that consists of. Strangely enough, Day, at one point, seems to agree, for, considering how a mother might come to believe that her son has been killed in battle by being shown his body and so ceases to hope that he is still alive (!), he says that “seeing is believing: *i.e.* ‘perceiving is ... the acquisition of beliefs’” [8, p.90].<sup>13</sup> Indeed it is, especially if we understand that “seeing” or “perceiving” encompasses “comprehending that” or “realising that” as well as “sense-perception of”. It is worthwhile outlining the elements of this view of belief as affirmation systematically.

## Belief as Affirmation

“ $A$  affirms that  $Q$ ”  $\leftrightarrow$  “ $A$  accepts ‘ $Q$  is the case’ is a true assertion”. “ $A$  asserts that  $Q$ ”  $\leftrightarrow$  “ $A$  puts forward ‘ $Q$  is the case’ for consideration as a true statement”. However, “ $A$  asserts that  $Q$ ” does not  $\rightarrow$  “ $A$  accepts ‘ $Q$  is the case’ is a true statement”.  $A$  might be guessing an answer to a question in a quiz with no idea as to whether the answer is correct.  $A$  might place a bet on Sea Fever to win the Derby without accepting that “Sea Fever will win the Derby” is a true statement.  $A$  might tell  $B$  that  $Q$  is the case just to get a rise out of  $B$ , whom  $A$  knows has a bee in her bonnet about people who assert that  $Q$ , without  $A$  accepting that “ $Q$  is the case” is a true statement. Indeed, when  $A$  asserts that  $Q$ ,  $A$  might even accept that “ $Q$  is the case” is a false utterance.  $A$  could be lying.

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<sup>13</sup> Quoting J. Heil [13, p. 238].

“A accepts that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A deploys, or is disposed to deploy ‘Q is the case’ as a premise in A’s thinking or acting for one or more purposes.” So, “A accepts that Q” does not  $\rightarrow$  “A accepts ‘Q is the case’ is a true statement”. This is because A might accept “Q is the case” as a mere hypothesis or simply for the sake of argument.

When A accepts that “Q is the case” is a true statement, A treats the propositional content of “Q is the case” as part of A’s mental representation of the actual world. In so doing, A treats “Q is the case” as a premise with which all other premises that A may allow to be part of A’s representation of the actual world must be consistent for as long as “Q is the case” remains part of A’s picture of the actual world. By affirming Q, A treats “Q is the case” as a given premise for what is the case (as against hypothetically, or for the sake of argument, or for what might be, or what probably is). In short, viewed as affirmation, it is a necessary condition of “A believes that Q” that A is committed to using “Q is the case” as an unquestioned or undoubted premise in A’s current thought about what is. But this is not to say that A treats this premise as unquestionable or indubitable, nor is it to say that A regards A’s commitment to it as neither revisable nor retractable.<sup>14</sup> Viewed functionally, to affirm (believe that Q) is to treat “Q is the case” as a true proposition, which is to act on the assumption that “Q is the case” is true (which is to prohibit action on “ $\sim$ Q is the case” whenever to do so is inconsistent with acting on the assumption that “Q is the case”).<sup>15</sup> Truth can be context-dependent. For example, it can be true that Donald owns Trafalgar Square in the game of Monopoly he is playing, though he does not own Trafalgar Square in the

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<sup>14</sup> This account entails that only beings capable of reasoning can have beliefs. A being incapable of doubting the truth of a proposition cannot have a belief, and this ability entails a capacity to understand the concept of logical contradiction. This, of course, does not entail that beliefs cannot be (subjectively) irrational. This account also requires beings with beliefs to be able to conceive of the future.

<sup>15</sup> This proposition is important when considering the conditions for rational belief. It entails that it is rational to believe that Q if and only if it is rational to act on the assumption that “Q is the case” is true. When the rationality of belief is at issue, it also entails that believing that Q is to be regarded as an action. Thus, it is coherent to prescribe that A believe that Q whenever it is possible for A to act on the assumption that “Q is the case” is true. It does not, however, entail that when A believes that Q, A’s belief - characterising commitment to “Q is the case” (constituted by the fact that A acts as if “Q is the case” is true) - results from a choice to make this commitment, let alone a rational choice. Correlatively, that A might not be able (willing) to believe that Q when A holds values or emotional commitments that conflict with A acting on the assumption that “Q is the case” is true, does not necessarily render it impermissible to prescribe that A ought to believe that Q.

“real” world.<sup>16</sup> But the logic of “truth” and of “affirmation” is the same whether we are referring to the real world or a fictional world.

## Concepts of Subjective Uncertainty

There are a number of different senses in which A might be certain/uncertain that Q that can be used to interpret “ $Asu(Q) = >0 < 1$ ”, the cognitive condition for “A hopes that Q”. Belief as affirmation provides an interpretation of them.

- 1) “A does not doubt that Q”. A’s reasoning (theoretical or practical) is not qualified by active attention to the possibility that  $\sim Q$  might be true instead. A is “positive” that Q, and does not waiver between being “positive” and “negative” that Q. For A to be certain that Q in this sense is for A to affirm Q, to believe that Q.
- 2) A might doubt both that Q and that  $\sim Q$ , but have less doubt that Q than that  $\sim Q$ . This is best described as “A is more inclined to believe that Q than that  $\sim Q$ ”. It is fine to say that A believes that it is more probable that Q than that  $\sim Q$ , but only on the understanding that this does not commit A to the idea that “Q is the case” is true. Values on the scale of subjective believability (inclination to belief), my “ $Asb(Q)$ ” scale, either answer the question “Does A believe that Q or that  $\sim Q$ ?” or the question “To what extent is A inclined to believe that Q?”

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<sup>16</sup> A thinking subject’s ideas of the “real” world and “fictional or imaginary worlds” are both products of the subject’s imagination. From the subject’s point of view, the distinction between the “actual world” and “possible worlds” can be drawn both within the “real world” (“Did Dr Shipman actually murder over a thousand patients or is this only a possibility?”) and within “a fictional world” (“In a game of Cluedo, did Reverend Green actually murder Mrs White, or is this only a possibility?”). The thinking subject distinguishes the “real world” from “a fictional world” in that the “real” world is that intuited by the subject as a world existing independently of the subject’s senses (the phenomenology of this world being that it is posited by the subject’s sense of being unable to control what the subject will experience). The picture is multi-layered, because, of course, a fictional character for A can be depicted as distinguishing between the real world and fictional worlds etc. Something can be true or believed to be true in a fictional context that is not true in a non-fictional (real world) context. In my opinion, however, necessary truths are true in all possible contexts, and include the necessary presuppositions of being able, intelligibly, to distinguish different contexts.

- 3) “A feels unable to doubt that Q” (which  $\rightarrow$  “A does not doubt that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “A affirms that Q”). “A is certain that Q” *in this sense* is a statement about the strength of A’s emotional attachment to A’s affirmation of Q. “A is totally attached to (A’s belief that) Q”  $\equiv$  “Asa(Q) = 1”. “Asa(Q) = 0” means “A is totally attached to disbelieving that Q”. “Asb(Q) = 1”  $\rightarrow$  “Asa(Q) =  $>0 \leq 1$ ”. Statements employing the Asa(Q) scale (for all values  $>0$ ) answer the question “How firmly does A believe that Q?” Asa(Q) values relate to the likelihood of A moving from affirming that Q to not affirming that Q. “A considers it to be indubitable that Q” means “A considers it categorically ought to be affirmed that Q”. Unlike (1) and (2), this does not  $\rightarrow$  “A affirms that Q”. It is possible for A to hold completely irrational beliefs on A’s own criteria. Two scales can, therefore, be generated using this sense of “A is certain that Q”. Where A is presumed to affirm that Q, we have a “subjective confidence scale” (Asc(Q)). Where A is not presumed to affirm that Q, we have a “subjective justifiability” scale (Asj(Q)).

“Asc(Q) = 1” means “A believes that Q and considers this is justified beyond any possible doubt”. “Asc(Q) = 0” means “A believes that Q; but A considers this is completely beyond justification or that this is completely unjustifiable”.<sup>17</sup> “Asc(Q) =  $>0 < 1$ ” means “A believes that Q and considers that this is justified to some degree”. The Asc(Q) scale answers the question “How justified is A *in believing* that Q?”

“Asj(Q) = 1” means “A believes that Q categorically ought to be affirmed”. “Asj(Q) = 0” means “A believes that Q categorically ought to be denied”. “Asj(Q) =  $>0 < 1$ ” means “A believes that neither Q nor  $\sim$ Q ought to be rejected categorically”. “Asj(Q) =  $>1/2 \leq 1$ ” means “A believes that there is better justification for believing that Q than for believing that  $\sim$ Q”. The Asj(Q) scale answers the question “How much justification does A think there is for believing that Q (or  $\sim$ Q)?” Day’s Asp(Q) scale is primarily an Asj(Q) scale with elements of some of the other scales. Its relations to them will be clarified later.

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<sup>17</sup> To differentiate the disjuncts requires reference to the Asj(Q) scale. “A believes that Q; but A considers that this belief is completely beyond justification”  $\equiv$  “Asc(Q) = 0 and Asj(Q) does not apply”; “A believes that Q; but considers this belief is completely unjustifiable”  $\equiv$  “Asc(Q) = 0 and Asj(Q) = 0”.



## An Objection

My claim at this point is that “A hopes that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “Asf(Q)”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A neither believes nor disbelieves that Q”, where “A believes that Q” means “A affirms Q”. I do not actually need to establish that belief is affirmation, though I will provide independent reasons for doing so later. It is sufficient for my analysis of hope that, with belief understood as affirmation, “Asb(Q)  $\neq$  0  $\neq$  1” is necessary for “A hopes that Q”. This requires, as I have shown, that “Asb(Q) = 0 or = 1” is sufficient to negate “A hopes that Q”, whatever else might be formally necessary.

The obvious objection to this claim is as follows. Mere belief (as affirmation) that Q (or that  $\sim$ Q) does not negate hoping that Q (hence non belief is not necessary for hope), because it is possible for A to believe that Q and still consider that it is possible that  $\sim$ Q. Unless A believes that  $\sim$ Q is impossible (As $\pi$ (Q) = 1), or is certain that Q (Asc(Q) = 1), or feels that believing that  $\sim$ Q is beyond A (Asa(Q) = 1), A will not have excluded  $\sim$ Q from A’s representation of the world, even though A believes that Q (Asb(Q) = 1). Therefore, Q will still be subjectively future for A!

This objection relies on an equivocation in the statement “It is possible for A to believe that Q and still consider that it is possible that  $\sim$ Q”. The statement is true if, in the sub-proposition “It is possible for A to believe that Q”, “that Q” is part of A’s representation of the actual world, while, in the sub-proposition “It is possible for A to consider that  $\sim$ Q”, “that  $\sim$ Q” is part of A’s representation of a possible world.

The statement is false if “that Q” and “that  $\sim$ Q” are both held to be part of A’s representation of the actual world. This is because, while A’s belief that Q does not exclude  $\sim$ Q from A’s representation of a possible world (because “Asb(Q) = 1” does not  $\rightarrow$  “As $\pi$ (Q) = 1”, or “Asc(Q) = 1”, or “Asa(Q) = 1”), it does exclude  $\sim$ Q from A’s representation of the actual world (for “Asb(Q) = 1”  $\rightarrow$  “Asb( $\sim$ Q) = 0”). A, in believing that Q is actual now, does not also believe that  $\sim$ Q is possible now (at the same time as believing that Q is actual), and so does not hope that Q now, because this requires A to entertain both that Q and that  $\sim$ Q now.

That “Asb(Q) = 1” does not  $\rightarrow$  “As $\pi$ (Q) = 1”, or “Asc(Q) = 1”, or “Asa(Q) = 1” does not show that “A hopes that Q” does not  $\rightarrow$  “Asb(Q)  $\neq$  0 and  $\neq$  1”. What “As $\pi$ (Q)  $\neq$  1”, or “Asc(Q)  $\neq$  1”, or “Asa(Q)  $\neq$  1” signify when “Asb(Q) = 1”, is that A envisages the possibility that A could change A’s mind that sb(Q) = 1.

While it is true that focussing on this possibility might lead A to cease to believe that Q (which will be subject to influence by how much A desires that Q, by how much below 1  $Asc(Q) \neq 1$  or " $Asa(Q) \neq 1$ " is, and by how rationally motivated A's beliefs are) this is not necessarily the case. In any event, the point is that only if and when A's recognition that  $\pi(Q) \neq 1$ , or  $c(Q) \neq 1$ , or  $a(Q) \neq 1$  leads to " $Asb(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ", will A hope that Q. Failing this, " $As\pi(Q) \neq 1$ ", or " $Asc(Q) \neq 1$ ", or " $Asa(Q) \neq 1$ " can (at most) only place A in a state of hope that A will cease to believe that Q, equivalent to A hoping to be able to hope that Q.

My reply, then, is that unless they lead to A ceasing to believe that Q, states of mind like " $As\pi(Q) \neq 1$ ", or " $Asc(Q) \neq 1$ ", or " $Asa(Q) \neq 1$ " do not signify that A continues to hope that Q.

From the point of view of the hoping subject, A, they only serve to generate a secondary object of hope, "A hopes that A can come to hope that Q". From a third person perspective " $As\pi(Q) \neq 1$ " is cognitively necessary *and sufficient* only to see Q as a possible (intelligible) object of hope for A, not as an actual one.

This distinction between primary and secondary hopes is not merely an ad hoc device to rescue my analysis. It is something that the objection itself must make unless it is to lead to an infinite regress. This being the case, my thesis that "A hopes that Q"  $\rightarrow$  " $Asb(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ " is not just a consistent view of "Q is subjectively future for A", but a necessary one.

According to the objection, " $Asb(Q) = 1$ " is not sufficient to negate "A hopes that Q" because, unless a stronger modal condition is operating, A has not altogether excluded the possibility of not believing that Q.

If, contrary to my claim, we suppose that this refutes my thesis, then we must note that all the alternative hope negating conditions involve believing (estimating, considering, judging, thinking, perceiving) that Q is impossible, or conclusively confirmed, etc.

As such, if it is claimed, e.g., that " $As\pi(Q) = 1$ " negates "A hopes that Q" then this claim must be false. This is because " $As\pi(Q) = 1$ " merely says that A believes that Q is certain ( $\sim Q$  impossible). Unless A believes that A's belief that Q is certain, is itself not capable of being false, A has not excluded the possibility that  $\sim Q$  is the case, and so on ad infinitum. The consequence is that "A hopes that Q" can never be negated except by "A does not desire Q". But this regress can only be stopped by distinguishing primary and secondary hopes and requiring " $Asb(Q) = 0$  (or  $= 1$ )" to be sufficient to negate "A hopes that Q".

### “ $As\pi(Q) \neq 0$ and $\neq 1$ ” Is Redundant

“ $As\pi(Q) = 0$  (or  $= 1$ )” negates “A hopes that Q”. However, I have now established that “ $Asb(Q) = 0$  (or  $= 1$ )” is also sufficient to negate “A hopes that Q”. This entails that both “ $As\pi(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ” and “ $Asb(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ” are both necessary for “A hopes that Q”. This, however, can only be the case if the two conditions mutually entail each other. This is because unless necessary conditions mutually entail each other (and are hence just one condition) they cannot be self-sufficient (only jointly sufficient).

It is clear that “ $As\pi(Q) = 0$  (or  $= 1$ )”  $\rightarrow$  “ $Asb(Q) = 0$  (or  $= 1$ )”. A cannot believe that Q is impossible (or certain) and not believe that  $\sim Q$  (or that Q). Therefore, “ $Asb(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ”  $\equiv$  “ $\sim[Asb(Q) = 0$  (or  $= 1)]$ ”  $\rightarrow$  “ $\sim[As\pi(Q) = 0$  (or  $= 1)]$ ”. On the other, hand, “ $As\pi(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ” does not  $\rightarrow$  “ $Asb(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ”, because A can believe that Q when A believes that Q is neither certain nor impossible. Since, provided that A has Q in mind, “ $\sim[As\pi(Q) = 0$  (or  $= 1)]$ ”  $\rightarrow$  “ $As\pi(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ”, the latter condition is then cognitively redundant as a necessary condition for “A *does* hope that Q”. While it is formally necessary for “A hopes that Q”, it is not sufficient, and it is satisfied whenever “ $Asb(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ” is satisfied. As I explained in the previous sub-section, however, “ $As\pi(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ” is a necessary condition for “A could hope that Q” (when A does not hope that Q). There is, however, no harm in specifying the redundant condition, which, in effect, specifies the “in mind” qualification.

## PROBLEMS WITH DAY’S VIEW OF BELIEF AND THE JUSTIFICATION OF BELIEF AS AFFIRMATION

To remind ourselves, according to Day, “A hopes that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “ $Asp(Q) = >0 < 1$ ” meaning “A considers that Q and  $\sim Q$  both have limited probability”. “ $Asp(Q) = 0$ ”  $\equiv$  “A is certain that  $\sim Q$ ”. “ $Asp(Q) = 1$ ” means “A is certain that Q” [8, p.32]  $\equiv$  “A is confident that Q” (see *ibid.*, but contrast [8, p.65])  $\equiv$  “A is convinced that Q”  $\equiv$  “A knows that Q” [8, p.72]. “ $Asb(Q) \Rightarrow >0 > 1/2$ ” means “A suspects that Q” [8, p.72]; “ $Asp(Q) = >1/2 < 1$ ” means “A believes that Q” [8, p.72].

This is counterintuitive. For example, if “A suspects that Q” means “ $Asb(Q) \Rightarrow >0 > 1/2$ ” and “A believes that Q” means “ $Asb(Q) \Rightarrow >0 > 1/2$ ”, then

“A suspects that Q” means “A believes that  $\sim Q$ ”. If “A believes that Q” means “ $Asb(Q) = >0 > 1/2$ ” then, because “A knows that Q” means “ $Asp(Q) = 1$ ”, “A knows that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “A does not believe that Q”, which also entails that knowledge cannot be justified as true belief. And none of this is improved if we replace “equivalence” with “ $\rightarrow$ ”.

If belief is affirmation, then the basic problem with Day’s view is that A must either believe that Q is probably the case or be certain that Q is the case. There is no space for something in between. “A perceives (comprehends) that Q is actually the case” is the central idea when belief is affirmation. But “Q is actually the case” either has no place at all in Day’s scheme or else must be reduced to “Q is probably the case” or to “(A’s) certainty that Q is the case”. “A believes that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “ $Asp(Q) = >1/2 < 1$ ” requires us to accept that “A believes that Q” means “A considers that the proposition ‘Q is the case’ is more likely to be true than not; but A is not certain that it is true”. If we accept this, then we must give up the idea that “A believes that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “A accepts that the proposition ‘Q is the case’ is true”. But to believe that something is the case is distinct from not being certain that it is the case but believing that it is probably the case. If A believes (on 20 November) that Q is actually the case (regardless of whether or not A is certain that Q is the case), and on 21 November comes to believe that Q is not the case, A must declare that A held a false belief on 20 November. On the other hand, if A (on 20 November) merely believes that Q is probably the case, and on 21 November comes to believe that Q is not the case, A has no need to accept that A held a false belief on 20 November. What A affirmed on 20 November was that Q is probably the case. In so doing, A neither affirmed that Q is the case nor that  $\sim Q$  is the case. So, by affirming (on 21 November) that  $\sim Q$  is the case, A does not deny what A affirmed on 20 November.

To this, of course, it will be responded that that I have not actually justified the thesis that belief is affirmation, and the idea that knowledge is justified true belief is not sacrosanct, etc. True, but there are problems with Day’s view which do not rest on assuming that belief is affirmation, which can only be remedied by holding that belief is affirmation.

## The Need for Belief as Affirmation

Day acknowledges that if “A believes that Q” entails “ $Asp(Q) = >1/2 < 1$ ”, then belief that Q “entails the existence of a second-order-belief about the

probability of Q“ [8, p.73], namely, the belief that the probability of  $Q = >1/2 < 1$ . But it follows that “A believes that the probability of  $Q = >1/2 < 1$ ”  $\rightarrow$  “A believes that the probability is  $>1/2 < 1$  that the probability of  $Q = >1/2 < 1$ “. This sets up an infinite regress. Day denies this, by rejecting the claim that the existence of the second order belief he identifies “entails the existence of a third-order belief about the probability of the belief about the probability of Q” [8, p.73]. He appeals to an analogy with a desire not to smoke tobacco, claiming that, while there can be a desire not to desire to smoke tobacco (which is true), it does not follow that there must be “a third-order desire to desire to desire not to smoke tobacco” [ibid] (which is also true). But the analogy is inappropriate, and this is because, while there can be a desire to desire not to smoke tobacco, it is not true (and Day does not claim that it is true) that a desire not to smoke tobacco entails a second order desire to desire not to smoke tobacco. The claim of entailment is what sets up the regress. Indeed, as I have noted,<sup>18</sup> he is actually committed to the idea that “ $Asp(Q) = >1/2 < 1$ ” is not only entailed by “A believes that Q”, it specifies the meaning of “A believes that Q”.

It might, perhaps, be thought that this problem can be avoided by specifying that “A believes that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “ $Asp(Q) = >1/2 \leq 1$ ”, which would avoid some of the counter-intuitive aspects of Day’s view. However, this still produces numerous problems. If A believes that  $p(Q) = 1$ , then he can only do so if he is certain that  $p(Q) = 1$ . Otherwise he believes that the probability of  $p(Q) = 1$  is  $>1/2 < 1$ , which means that it is  $>1/2 < 1$ . So, he can only ever be certain that Q, when he is certain that he is certain that Q. This does not set up a regress. It means that he can only believe that Q when he is certain that Q.

But if this move is not made, then how is it ever possible for A to be certain that Q? To be certain that Q, A must estimate  $p(Q) = 1$ . But to estimate, judge, perceive etc. that Q is to believe that Q. So, “ $Asp(Q) = 1$ ”  $\rightarrow$  “ $Asp(Q) = >1/2 < 1$ ”, which is self-contradictory. There is no need to go on pointing out the paradoxes that are generated by Day’s view: the problems arise from trying to find the essence of having a belief in attribution of a degree of confirmatory certainty or uncertainty. This, in effect, amounts to the reduction of to the idea of “the actual” to “the certain” or “the probable”.<sup>19</sup> The absurdities that result show that any adequate theory of belief must be able to distinguish (a) “A

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<sup>18</sup> See n.11 supra.

<sup>19</sup> This is an example of what Roy Bhaskar has called “the epistemic fallacy”, the “idea that being can always be analysed in terms of our knowledge of being” [7, p. 36]. The Verification Principle of Logical Positivism also involves this fallacy.

perceives that Q is actually the case” from (b) “A perceives that Q is probably but not actually the case” from (c) “A is certain that Q is actually the case”. This requires the distinctions between different ideas of certainty and possibility constituted by my  $Asb(Q)$ ,  $Asc(Q)$ ,  $Asj(Q)$ , and  $As\pi(Q)$  modalities, as co-ordinated by the idea that belief is affirmation.

## Day’s Justification for His View of Belief Is Inadequate

The only direct argument Day offers in support of his analysis of “A believes that Q” is contained in the following passage.

According to what may be called the classical theory of Belief, as propounded by Locke and Price, Belief is a genus, the different species of which are its degrees, which range from Suspicion at the bottom of the scale to Conviction at the top of it. But this seems to me to misrepresent the way in which the verb “believe” works. Thus it is correct to say “The police suspect that Sykes did it, but they do not yet believe it”. (They need more and better evidence for that). Again, if John is convinced that the Earth is flat, he will not say that he believes this; he will claim to know it. ... Belief does not comprehend Suspicion, Conviction *etc.*; it is just one propositional attitude among many, just as they are. The differences between e.g. Suspicion, Conviction and Belief are as follows: (i) “A suspects that Q” entails “ $sp(Q) > 0 < 1/2$ ”; (ii) “A is convinced that Q” entails “ $sp(Q) = 1$ ”; and (iii) “A believes that Q” entails “ $sp(Q) > 1/2 < 1$ ”. One cannot correctly say “A believes that Q although he believes that Q is unlikely (*i.e.* that Q has probability  $> 0 < 1/2$ )” [8, p.72].

I do not subscribe to what Day calls the “classical theory” of belief. In my view, “A believes that Q” means “A is unequivocally committed to the truth of ‘Q is the case’”; “A suspects that Q” means “A leans towards unequivocal commitment to the truth of ‘Q is the case’, but A does not yet have such a commitment”; while “A is convinced that Q” (meaning by this what Day does, that A is certain that Q or knows that Q, but noting that in ordinary usage this can also mean simply that A believes that Q)<sup>20</sup> means “A believes that Q and believes that this cannot possibly be doubted”. This attributes three different

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<sup>20</sup> Day has it that “A has the conviction that Q”  $\Leftrightarrow$  “ $Asp(Q) = 1$ ”. I find it more natural to say that “A has the conviction that Q” states that “A is positive (not + or -) that Q” rather than “A is normatively certain that Q” and merely states that “A believes that Q”; but this is incidental to the matter at hand.

modalities to the three attitudes. They are not, as Day claims the “classical theory” holds, different degrees on a scale with a single modality. This is ironic, because it is Day’s own explication of what these three attitudes involve that puts them all on the same scale, involving just one modality, that of subjective evidential probability.

It is true that Day does not hold that suspicion and conviction are degrees of belief: he holds, instead, that suspicion, belief and conviction are degrees of subjective probability.<sup>21</sup> So, what is his justification for this? The idea that when the police merely suspect Sykes did it, they do not yet believe it, and the claim that if John is convinced that the Earth is flat he will not claim to believe it, but claim to know it. Well, the first claim is true. “A believes that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “A does not (merely) suspect that Q”. And this does show that suspicion is not a kind of belief but a state leading up to belief. As I have said (see my  $Asb(Q)$  and  $Asj(Q)$  scales) this can be scaled. No disagreement here, except that for Day it is necessarily a justificatory scale.

The second claim, however, is different. John might not claim to believe that the Earth is flat, if he is certain that it is flat, but instead claim to know that it is flat. But this only shows that “A knows that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “A does not believe that Q” if it is necessarily true that if John said “I believe that the Earth is flat — in fact, I know that it is flat” he would be contradicting himself or changing his mind very quickly. But this is not the case if a claim to knowledge is (or John thinks it is) a qualification of a belief (e.g., the qualification that the belief is a justified true belief). Nothing in this example precludes interpreting John’s statement in this way, unless it is presumed (when this is just what the example is supposed to be demonstrating) that “Belief does not comprehend ... Conviction [i.e., being convinced]” in a way that does not permit an  $sp(Q) = 1$  to be associated with a belief.

So, what do I make of the paradox alleged in the final sentence of the quoted passage? Certainly, if “A believes that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “ $Asp(Q) = >1/2 < 1$ ”, then to hold “A believes that Q, but  $Asp(Q) = >0 < 1/2$ ” is self-contradictory, because this asserts “ $Asp(Q) = >1/2$  and  $< 1/2$ ”. But Day has given no justification for “‘A believes that Q’  $\leftrightarrow$  ‘ $Asp(Q) = >1/2 < 1$ ’” apart from a question-begging interpretation of his example about John being convinced that the Earth is flat.

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<sup>21</sup> Day’s claim that “Belief does not comprehend Suspicion”, which is correct, simply does not square with his view, which, as I have already pointed out entails “A suspects that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “A believes that  $\sim Q$ ”.

So, how does the idea that A believes that Q but thinks that Q is unlikely fare in my theory? In my scheme, “A thinks that Q is unlikely” is ambiguous as between “ $Asb(Q) = >0 < 1/2$ ” and “ $Asj(Q) = >0 < 1/2$ ”. On the one hand, to say that A believes that Q ( $Asb(Q) = 1$ ) but considers Q to be unlikely (less believable than  $\sim Q$ ) ( $Asb(Q) = < 1/2$ ) is contradictory. But this provides no support for Day’s view, because it is also contradictory to say that  $Asb(Q) = 1$  (to say that that “Q is the case” is true) and that  $Asb(Q) = > 1/2 < 1$  (to say that “Q is the case” is only probably true). On the other hand, to say that A believes that Q, yet considers that Q is unlikely (less justified than  $\sim Q$ ), is not self-contradictory. To say that A believes that Q is to say that  $Asb(Q) = 1$ , and to say that A considers Q to be less likely (less justified) than  $\sim Q$  is to say that  $Asj(Q) = >0 < 1/2$ . This is only a contradiction if it is a contradiction to say “A believes that Q but considers that A ought not to believe that Q”. This can only be a contradiction if it is a contradiction in terms for A ever to consider that A might hold what A considers to be a rationally unjustified belief or even one lacking a rational justification. This is simply not so, and Day, himself, points out that “It is no news that human beings are not always logical” [8, p.60]. Quite! Day’s analysis of belief is wholly dependent on over-rationalising the process and state of having a belief.

## ANSWERING DAY’S CHALLENGE

This brings us, finally, to Day’s direct argument that an analysis of “hope” requires reference to subjective probability. In effect, he agrees that “A hopes that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A desires that Q; and  $Asu(Q) = >0 < 1$ ”, and the reason he gives why “ $Asu(Q) = >0 < 1$ ” must be interpreted as “ $Asp(Q) = >0 < 1$ ” is that the analysis of, e.g. “A has high hope that Q”, requires reference to subjective probability.

It is true that “A has high hope that Q” requires reference to subjective probability. But it does not follow that “A hopes that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A desires that Q; and  $Asp(Q) = >0 < 1$ ”. This is because I (and proponents of the orthodox view) can claim that the correct analysis of “A has high hope that Q” is “A hopes that Q; and A estimates the probability of Q as high”. Here, “A hopes that Q” is not to be analysed as “A desires that Q; and  $Asp(Q) = >0 < 1$ ”, but (in my view) as “A desires that Q; and  $Asb(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ”, and in the orthodox view as “A desires that Q; and  $As\pi(Q) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ”. In my view, subjective probability seen as compatible with hope is measured in terms of “ $Asb(Q) =$



$>0 < 1$ ”, while orthodox views are likely to measure it in terms of “ $\text{As}_j(\text{Q}) = >0 < 1$ ” — rather than Day’s “ $\text{As}_p(\text{Q}) = >0 < 1$ ” — as they will not adopt Day’s view of belief.

Hence, in my view, “A has high hope that Q”  $\leftrightarrow$  “A desires that Q;  $\text{As}_b(\text{Q}) \neq 0$  and  $\neq 1$ ; and  $\text{As}_b(\text{Q})$  is high”. The negative point is that, while there can be no doubt that “A is hopeful that Q” cannot be analysed without reference to (subjective) probability, it simply does not follow that “A hopes that Q” cannot be analysed without reference to probability. More is required to show that.

The positive point is that the essence of hope lies in the intersection between desire and non belief, or (in the orthodox view) that between desire and subjective possibility, and that (in either case) subjective probability bears only on the degree of expectation<sup>22</sup> that A has that Q will be realised. In other words, subjective probability is the cognitive aspect of degree of expectation, not the cognitive aspect of hoping or even part of the cognitive aspect of hoping.

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<sup>22</sup> If A believes that Q then A expects Q. Since belief negates hope, A cannot hope that Q and expect Q at the same time. To expect Q is to depict Q as what will be, not as what might or might not be. Like believing that Q, there are no degrees of expecting Q. However, A can have degrees of expectation that Q, which track how probable A thinks Q is, parallel to the degrees to which A suspects that Q. There is an ambivalence here, similar that affecting “A is confident that Q” and “A is certain that Q”. In some contexts, we think that if A has any doubts that Q then A is not confident that Q. Being confident does not admit of degrees. But we do also speak of A being confident (or having confidence) to varying degrees. I suggest that the latter is actually a way of saying that A is lacking in confidence to varying degrees, enabling us to say how far from being confident in the all or nothing sense A is. (Day himself recognises this ambivalence without seeming to be aware of it, when he says that “A is confident that Q”  $\rightarrow$  “ $\text{As}_p(\text{Q}) = 1$ ” [8, p.32], but “ $\text{As}_p(\text{Q}) = >1/2 < 1$ ” [8, p.65]). Much the same can be said about “certainty”. We sometimes say that A is either certain or A is not. But we do also speak of A being certain to varying degrees. But is it not really that it is A’s uncertainty, A’s falling short of being certain, that varies in degrees? Whatever one makes of this, it is important to recognise these subtleties. Otherwise, they become a source of misunderstanding and equivocation.

In response to the charge that the Christian idea (as, e.g., expressed in the Anglican Burial Service) that Christians have a sure and certain hope and expectation of the life to come is, if meant literally, a self-contradiction, A. Phillips-Griffiths [24], claims that hope is “certainty about the hypothetical”. Christians are certain that God will save them *if* they carry out their Christian duties. The only uncertainty is about whether or not they will carry out their duties, not about what God will do. But, while Phillips-Griffiths renders the words of the Burial Service coherent, this does not answer the charge at all. His analysis has Christians expect that God will save them if they carry out their Christian duties and hope that they will carry out these duties. It does not portray Christians as hoping that God will save them if they carry out their duties. Contradiction is avoided by giving the hope and the expectation different objects.

The cognitive aspect of hoping is non belief (my view) or subjective possibility (the orthodox view). But neither non belief nor subjective possibility can vary in degree. Something is possible or it is not. A believes that Q or A does not believe that Q. While there can be degrees of leaning towards believing that Q (or towards disbelieving that Q) there cannot be degrees of believing that Q (or of non believing or disbelieving that Q).<sup>23</sup>

So, while I agree with Day that hope can vary according to degrees of the conative aspect, I do not agree that it varies according to degrees of the cognitive aspect, and this is simply because the cognitive conditions for hope as such do not vary in degrees.<sup>24</sup>

## IMPLICATIONS FOR KANT'S MORAL ARGUMENT FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Immanuel Kant famously argued that even though we cannot know whether or not God (conceived to be omnipotent and perfectly good) exists [18, A742 B 770; A 592-630 B620-658] God's existence is "postulated" by the moral law. Because the moral law is "connected (completely a priori) with the concept of the will of a rational being as such" [19, 4: 426] (i.e., morality is a requirement of pure practical reason), belief in God is rationally necessary in the strictest sense. Rational beings with a will ("agents"), i.e., those who pursue ends as reasons for their actions, contradict that they are agents if they do not consider themselves bound by the moral law [19, 4: 428-429]. Consequently, they must believe that God exists, not only to be consistent with any commitment they have to the moral law, but in order to be consistent with the idea that they are agents. Therefore, while theoretical reason requires agnosticism, pure practical reason requires theism.

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<sup>23</sup> Of course if "Q is the case" is a compound proposition that can be broken into a number of discrete propositions, then it is possible to believe that Q to a degree if what is meant is that some of the component propositions are believed whereas others are not. But this is trivial.

<sup>24</sup> In Day's view, when A desires Q, A's hope for Q increases as  $Asp(Q)$  increases within the interval  $1/2$  to 1. In my view, A's degree of hope remains constant and, *if anything*, A's attitude towards Q becomes *less* one of hope and more one of expectation (i.e. A leans more away from hope towards belief as the subjective probability of Q for A (short of amounting to belief) increases..

I understand Kant's argument, at least as presented in *Critique of Practical Reason* [20, 5:122-126], to be as follows:

- 1) If the moral law were fully complied with and never violated, happiness and worthiness for it would be in complete harmony. Such a state-of-affairs is the "*summum bonum*", the highest good.
- 2) The moral law "postulates" the *summum bonum*: i.e., under the moral law, the *summum bonum* is the "final" end of all action, which, ideally, ought to exist.
- 3) The moral law requires agents not only to want the *summum bonum* to be realized; it requires them to do whatever they can to bring it about. The *summum bonum* is a necessary object of the will.
- 4) Unless God exists (and agents are immortal),<sup>25</sup> the *summum bonum* is unrealisable.<sup>26</sup>
- 5) Since "'ought' implies 'can'", agents may take the moral law to prescribe that they pursue the *summum bonum* only if they assume that God exists.

Therefore

- 6) Agents who regard themselves as bound by the moral law ought, in consistency with this commitment, to believe that God exists.

Combined with Kant's view that commitment to the moral law is a requirement of pure practical reason, this result is sufficient to ground practical theism, the thesis that it is rationally necessary in the strictest sense for agents to believe that God exists.

However, Kant does not think that this proves that God exists [20, 5: 138]. Practical reason requires agents to have "faith" or "rational belief" that God exists; but they do not, thereby, know that God exists [20, 5: 144-146; 18, A829 B857]. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, he states that God's existence is certain, but this certainty is moral certainty not logical certainty [18, A829 B857]. When he says that belief in God's existence is certain, he means that it is necessary for agents, qua thinking of themselves as agents, to believe that God exists. However, since the requirement to believe that God exists is driven by the moral law (as a requirement of pure practical reason), he must also

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<sup>25</sup> To simplify presentation, I will not repeat the immortality condition, but take it as read.

<sup>26</sup> I think this claim is correct, but I will not attempt to defend it here.

claim that agents morally ought to believe that God exists (i.e., morally ought to treat “God exists” *as* true, which is to treat it as a premise for their thought and action), which makes it wholly unsurprising that in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, he declares that “to have religion is a duty of man to himself” [21, p.238]. In effect, practical reason via the moral law generates a maxim, “I *will* that there be a God!” [20, 5: 143], which is to say, “Act as if there were a God!” meaning “Act on the presumption that the *summum bonum* is, cosmologically, the purpose of existence!”

### A Standard Objection to Kant’s Argument

A standard objection is that (3) is false because “The *summum bonum* ought to be!” is not *a* command for action, but an “‘ought’ of evaluation”: eventuation of the *summum bonum* is good for finite agents, but not a duty of finite agents because it is not within their power (individually or collectively) to bring it about.

The moral law only commands that finite agents act in accordance with the moral law, which they can do, whether or not God exists. In the words of Lewis White-Beck, the moral law “as an imperative ... is a command only that we seek virtue, let the eschatological chips fall as they may” [3, p.275].

Consequently, (3) must be replaced with something like

- 3) Under the moral law, agents must want the *summum bonum* to be realized *and* do nothing contrary to its realization, for what they ought to desire (would desire if they were fully rational) and the ends they ought to pursue must be in harmony. *In this sense only* is the *summum bonum* a necessary object of the will.

In this sense, God is also a necessary object of the will; but if only in this sense, this means no more than that, under the moral law, agents must want God to exist.

With the moral law being rationally necessary, it follows only that it is rationally necessary for agents to want God to exist. Of course, if the world, in the cosmological order of things, is ordered as pure practical reason dictates it ought to be, then God necessarily exists. However, only if reason requires agents to think that the world is necessarily ordered as it ought to be, does it require agents to believe that God exists.

But, unless agents know that God exists (which they cannot), they have no good reason to suppose that the world is necessarily ordered as it ought to be. There is a circularity here that cannot be broken.

Kant's error, on this account, is that he equivocated between the *summum bonum* as an object of rationally required desire and the *summum bonum* as a morally required goal for action.

### **Nevertheless Kant's Argument Shows that Agents may Not be Atheists**

Even if this is so, it is a mistake to conclude that Kant's considerations are neutral as to what rational agents may believe about God. Atheism requires agents to characterize the moral law (and, indeed practical reason) as requiring them to want something to exist that cannot possibly exist. This is because the moral law requires them to want the *summum bonum* to be brought about, and given the realization that God must exist if the *summum bonum* can possibly be brought about, to believe that God does not exist is to believe that the *summum bonum* cannot possibly be brought about.

Now, if "'ought' implies can" applies to "'oughts' of evaluation" (as well as to "action-directing 'oughts'"), meaning that it is irrational to judge that something ought to exist if one supposes that it is impossible for it to exist, then the untenability of atheism on moral grounds is clear. The moral law requires agents to judge that the *summum bonum* ought to be, so agents cannot (in consistency with the idea that they are bound by the moral law) suppose that the condition required for it to be, God's existence, is not in place. Indeed, on the basis that the moral law is dialectically necessary, agents may not believe that God does not exist for any reason, because there are no rational grounds for believing that God does not exist more rationally compelling than those requiring agents to respect the moral law.<sup>27</sup>

However, rather than rely directly on the claim that "'ought' implies can" does apply to "'oughts' of evaluation", I will offer two other arguments against atheism. The first argument is that atheism undermines respect for the moral law and practical reason by challenging the idea that the moral law and pure practical reason are categorically binding.

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<sup>27</sup> The strongest arguments for atheism allege that an omnipotent perfectly good God cannot tolerate the existence of manifest evil in the world. This problem is tackled by theodicy, which is a large topic. I believe (and will here suppose) that the problem can be solved.

If God does not exist, and we (agents) are not immortal, then our lives and actions have, in the final scheme of things, no significance. In the words of the Anglican Burial Service, our existence is no more than a journey from “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust!” In the words of Johannes Brahms’ *German Requiem*: “Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras und alle Herrlichkeit des Menschen wie des Grases Blumen” (“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass”). If so, then even though morality and practical reason do, on their own terms, require us to attach categorical significance to ourselves, both have no ultimate significance in themselves and it is a deceit that their unconditional requirements are to be respected categorically. Indeed, Kant presses this very argument when he maintains that

righteous man (like Spinoza) who takes himself to be firmly convinced that there is no God and ... no future life ... [must, in the final analysis, view himself not as an end-in-itself, but as destined for] the abyss of the purposeless chaos of matter. ... [This] weaken [s] the respect, by which the moral law immediately influences him to obedience, by the nullity of the only idealistic final end that is adequate to its high demand (which cannot occur without damage to the moral disposition) [22, 5:452].

The second argument is that atheism renders the moral law’s requirements incoherent. Agents ought to be unhappy if their rationally required desires are not fulfilled. Not to get what we ought to desire is not merely just cause for dissatisfaction, but demands dissatisfaction. Under the moral law, we categorically ought to desire that not only ourselves, but all others, not be victims of violations of the moral law and we categorically ought to be unhappy when any agent is the victim of uncompensated injustice.

However, if we suppose that God does not exist, so that the *summum bonum* cannot be brought about, we must suppose that agents will inevitably suffer uncompensated injustice. We must, then, characterize the moral law and pure practical reason as unconditionally requiring us to be unhappy, whether or not we do our duty under the moral law. However, it is because the moral law postulates as an ideal good that we ought to achieve happiness if we do our duty that it postulates the *summum bonum*. Therefore, to believe that God does not exist is to portray the moral law as self-contradictory: it judges that we ought to be unhappy whether or not we do our duty, yet judges that we ought to be happy provided only that we do our duty.

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## **But This Does Not Entail that Agents Must Believe that God Exists**

This suggests, as an alternative to the standard account, that Kant's error in arguing that the moral law requires agents to believe that God exists is that he concludes from the valid inference (resting on the *summum bonum* as merely an object of rationally required desire) that agents may not believe that God does not exist that they must believe that God exists. For, while the negation of "God does not exist" is "God exists", the negation of "I believe that God does not exist" is not "I believe that God exists", but "I do not believe that God does not exist". The latter proposition is compatible with both "I believe that God exists" and "I do not believe either that God exists or that God does not exist". In short, if we may not be disbelievers (atheists), we need not be believers (theists). We may be non-believers (agnostics) instead.

I hesitate to suggest that this was Kant's error, because Kant was, at least in principle, aware of these distinctions [18, A503 B531; A791 B819]. In any case, we must at this point conclude that agents may be theists or agnostics, but not atheists.

## **Theism Is Also Incompatible with the Idea that Agents Are Bound by the Moral Law**

However, closer examination reveals that, under the moral law, it is not permissible to be theists either. Kant insisted that the moral law is not known on the basis of religious belief. Not only was he confident that agents can be certain that they are bound by the moral law on purely *a priori* grounds, he was adamant that the only basis they have for the idea that God is omnipotent and perfectly good is the moral law [19, 4: 408-409]. For Kant, God's existence is not a transcendental condition of the possibility of morality, but an inference from the existence of morality. Therefore, anything agents say about God must be consistent with the transcendental conditions of the possibility of morality.

Now, amongst these conditions are those that are necessary for morality to be intelligible, and Kant was aware that intelligible subjects and objects of the moral law, viewed as an imperative, must perceive themselves to be vulnerable both in being able to obey/disobey the moral law [19, 4: 414] and

in being capable of being harmed morally.<sup>28</sup> However, *if* God exists then the *summum bonum* will necessarily be realised. As Leibniz proclaimed [23, p.27], and Voltaire lampooned in *Candide* [29], if God exists then all must be for the best and this must be the best of all possible worlds, otherwise “God” cannot be both omnipotent and perfectly good. But this implies that no sincere and sane theist who understands the concept of God given by the moral law, having in mind God the all-loving savior — who guarantees full redress, and ultimately salvation for all — could possibly think that agents need the protection of a categorical imperative. In the words of Psalm 23,

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me ... . Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever [King James Version].

The idea that our actions can make a difference to the ultimate order of things becomes vain. The bringing about of the *summum bonum* is God’s responsibility, not ours. Our only responsibility is to obey the moral law. But that is not enough to bring about the *summum bonum*. Indeed, although our willing conformity is formally necessary (for the *summum bonum* will not be realized while there are transgressors), God, by definition, will bring about the *summum bonum* no matter what. In addition, all “harms” suffered must eventually be seen by their victims to be justified as being for the best in this the best of all possible worlds. And, with the *summum bonum* involving eternal salvation and redress, its achievement must constitute nothing less than the end of all harm and the end of any further need for the moral law as an imperative. In short, from the perspective of the achieved *summum bonum* there can be no moral harms at all.

Nor could a comprehending, sane, and sincere theist, having in mind God, the omnipotent and omniscient Judge, possibly be tempted to disobey the moral law, which makes a mockery of any idea of freedom. And Kant reasons in just this way when he asserts that an ability to prove that God exists would be disastrous for morality. If agents knew that God exists,

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<sup>28</sup> Kant has surprisingly little to say about this, but recognition of it is implicit in his depiction of the ‘starry heavens above’ as symbolizing a material world devoid of meaning and thereby threatening to annihilate not only agents’ physical selves but any pretensions to significance they might have [20, 5:161-162].



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Most actions conforming to the law would be done from fear, few would be done from hope, none from duty. The moral worth of actions ... would not exist at all. The conduct of man, so long as his nature remained as it now is, would be changed into mere mechanism [20, 5:147].

In short, those who were even momentarily tempted to transgress would display a lack of reason that would excuse them from responsibility for their actions. In effect, according to Kant, the idea that God's existence is knowable conflicts with the transcendental conditions of the possibility of the moral law presenting itself as a categorical imperative. However, Kant thinks that this conflict between theism and morality applies only to the supposition that God's existence can be proven, not to practical theism.

But why? The objections to theism just cited (including Kant's own) rest on the practical effect of believing (i.e., supposing it to be true) that God exists, not on the idea that the proposition that God exists is proven to be true (hence, certainly true). And, even if it did rest on supposing it to be certain that theism is true, it would still apply to Kant's practical theism, according to which agents are morally required to be certain that God exists [18, A829 B857].

### **The Implication is that Agents must be “Hopeful” Agnostics**

It follows that, while theoretical reason merely does not enable agents to know whether or not God exists, practical reason positively requires them not to believe either that God exists or that God does not exist, yet to want God to exist. How are we to describe such a state of mind?

On the conception of “hope” that I have argued for in this chapter, the conclusion we have reached is that agents must be agnostics in thought and action who, no more and no less, hope that God exists and fear that God does not (for hope and fear are opposite sides of the same coin).

Those who want God to exist but believe that God does not exist are not in a state of hope. If they consider that their belief that God does not exist might be mistaken, the only thing they can be properly said to hope is that they are mistaken in their belief that God does not exist, but unless (and until) this perceived possibility leads them to stop believing that God does not exist, they are (or ought to be) in a state of despair; for the world they see is very far from the best of all possible worlds. On the other hand, with parallel qualifications, those who want God to exist and believe that God does exist are in a state of

joyful expectation that all will (not might) prove to be for the best in this the best of all possible worlds.

In the Preface to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant declares, “I have ... found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith.” [18, Bxxx]. What he should have concluded was “I have denied knowledge and faith in order to make room for hope and fear, and, thereby, for morality!” And this is because there is nothing more poisonous to the moral disposition than loss of hope and its mirror fear, whether this be at the gain of despair (whose constituents, feelings of overwhelming impotence, insignificance and pointlessness, annihilate hope) or at the gain of joyful expectation (whose components, feelings of final security, significance and purpose, nullify fear).<sup>29</sup> We must, however, note that Kant (correctly) characterizes hoping in *Critique of Pure Reason* as standing “in the same relation to the practical and the law of morality as knowing and the law of nature to the theoretical knowledge of things”. But he then declares that, where something is necessary for something to happen, hoping “arrives ... at the conclusion that something is ... because something ought to happen as against that something is ... because something happens” [18, A805-806 B833-834].

But if the relation is the same in both cases, Kant should say that “something ought to be because something ought to happen”. If he is saying that where X is necessary for something that ought to happen, agents ought to hope that X will happen and this means they ought to believe that X will happen, this is clearly invalid and involves an idiosyncratic idea of hope (though it looks consistent with the way in which he tries to justify the postulate that God exists). However, he might just mean that in this scenario agents ought to “have faith” that X is the case and this means they ought to hope (according to my definition) that X will happen (involving no more than judging that X ought to be).<sup>30</sup> If we follow through on this, then we must

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<sup>29</sup> Though they lack a sound transcendental foundation, there are some excellent phenomenological accounts of these matters in the tradition of existential psychology. See, e.g., Rollo May [16], and Erich Fromm [10].

<sup>30</sup> Such a reading is not implausible if we attend to how Kant formulates his argument for God in *Critique of Pure Reason*. There, Kant asks, “If I so behave as not to be unworthy of happiness, may I *hope* [my emphasis] thereby to obtain happiness?” [18, A809 B837]. In answering this question he says,

“The alleged necessary connection of the *hope* [my emphasis] of happiness with the necessary endeavour to render the self worthy of happiness [this endeavour being obedience to the moral law] ... can be counted upon only if a Supreme Reason, that governs according to moral laws, be likewise postulated as underlying nature as its cause” [18, A810 B838].

understand Kant's practical 'belief' or 'faith', not as rationally necessary propositional belief, but as rationally required hope. Then, his claim that God's existence is morally certain must be taken to mean that hope that God exists is morally required. If so, then what Kant actually means by practical theism, is hopeful agnosticism.

## CONCLUSION

I have argued that "A hopes that Q"  $\leftrightarrow$  "A desires that Q; and A neither believes nor disbelieves that Q". Unbelief is the necessary and sufficient cognitive condition for hope. It is not sufficient for hope that the subject think of Q (and  $\sim$  Q) as being possible (as against impossible), for belief or disbelief will negate hope even though the subject thinks that Q is possible ( $\vee$  impossible), and when unbelief is in place, though subjective possibility is formally necessary for hope, it is cognitively redundant because it is satisfied by the unbelief condition whenever the subject has the question of the existence of Q in mind.

I argued further that to distinguish the "possible/probable" from the "actual" as well as from the "impossible/certain" requires analysis in terms of the concept of affirmation, and that "A believes that Q" is to be understood as "A affirms Q" in the analysis of "A hopes that Q". I scrutinised Day's claim that "A hopes that Q" is to be analysed in terms of subjective probability rather than subjective possibility, which rests on his thesis that "A believes that Q"  $\rightarrow$  "A estimates the subjective probability of Q as  $>1/2 < 1$ " and rejected this on the grounds that such a theory involves reducing all the modalities necessary to understand the concept of hope and belief to that of evidential justification. This cannot be done coherently and commits the fallacy of reducing the existence of an object to the conditions under which it can be known to exist.

I then applied the concept of hope developed to Kant's moral argument for the existence of God, and argued that it is sound if its conclusion is that commitment to morality requires agents to hope but not believe or disbelieve

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Kant continues that to make the supreme good (happiness standing in exact relation with morality) complete "he who behaves in such a manner as not to be unworthy of happiness must be able to *hope* [my emphasis] that he will participate in happiness" [18, A813 B841].

If Kant sticks to hope and leaves belief (as normally understood) out of it (so that to postulate God's existence is not to assume that God exists but to assume only the possibility that God exists, i.e., to hope that God exists), then we have in this earlier version of his argument for God what seems to me the basis of a sound argument for necessity of hope for God.

that God exists. This has what some might consider a rather startling consequence, which derives from the fact that if God exists, since the moral law must be God's law, God must want us to eschew belief in God, yet hope that God exists.

This being so, I should make it clear that I am not overly concerned about just how faithful my reconstruction or interpretation of Kant's argument is to his intentions. What I claim is that, whatever Kant really intended, the interpretation or reconstruction I have presented renders Kant's position impervious to his moral attack on a supposed proof of theism, simply because his practical theism does not then involve propositional belief that God exists. And this, furthermore, fits his adamant assertion that practical theism cannot provide a premise for knowledge claims [20, 5: 137]. Above all, it has the advantage of rendering his position sound!

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