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Faith in Kant

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1. *Introduction: faith and trust.* Can it ever be reasonable to trust other people, or to rely upon them, without evidence of their trustworthiness or reliability? According to Kant, it can. There can be *practical* reasons for holding things true, including that other people are trustworthy or reliable. I shall examine Kant's case for allowing that practical reasons can render trust in other people reasonable.

As limited beings, we often need to rely on the acts and attitudes of other limited beings. For example, I might need your help to reach a high shelf; you might need mine to open a lid. For it to be reasonable for us to rely upon others, it seems that we must have reasons to hold true that those we rely on will be appropriately reliable. And yet many of the circumstances in which we need to rely on others are precisely circumstances in which we lack evidence for holding true that they will be reliable. Thus, our practical and epistemic limitations conspire to produce a puzzle: how, if at all, can it be reasonable for us to do what it seems that we must: rely on, or trust, other limited beings?

Different cases might well call for different responses. One response to a case of the puzzle would be to withhold trust: we might sacrifice the benefits to be secured by relying on others in order to preserve our claim to reasonableness. A second response would be to rely on others whilst acknowledging that doing so is unreasonable. A third response would be to argue that our epistemic limitations are less stark than the puzzle makes them out to be—that, in a particular case, we have sufficient evidence to hold that people will be reliable. A fourth response would involve attempting to show that our reliance on others can be reasonable despite our lacking evidence, because we can possess practical reasons for holding that others will be reliable.

I want to explore a particular version of the fourth response to the puzzle. Kant's aim, in the discussions on which I focus, is to secure the reasonableness of what he calls *moral faith*. Moral faith, for Kant, is a form of holding something true that is grounded in practical reason. In particular, faith is grounded in the moral demands to which practical reason is subject. Thus, faith is grounded in practical

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rather than theoretical reason. It is a matter of holding, on moral grounds, that we are free, that we are immortal, and that God exists.

Kant understands faith in God to involve a form of trust:

Faith (simply so called) is trust in the attainment of an aim the promotion of which is a duty but the possibility of the realization of which it is not possible for us *to have insight into...* (Kant 1793: 5: 472)

Faith means the confidence that, so long as we have done everything possible to us, God will supply what does not lie in our power... The sole object of spiritual trust is in the pure morality, the holiness of man, and then his eternal blessedness under the conditions of morality... Hence, in order that our trust may coincide with the plan of wisdom, it must be a wise trust, and unconditional, so that we believe in general that God, in His goodness and holiness, will both lend us His aid in regard to acting morally, and also allow us to participate in blessedness. (Kant 1784–5: 27: 321–2)

However, my central interest in Kant's discussion is not in his entitlement to the specific objects of faith that he emphasizes. I draw on Kant's account of moral faith in order to provide a general justification of the rationality of holding things true on practical grounds—a justification that can then be applied to the special case of holding true that someone is, in relevant respects, worthy of trust. On this view, trusting someone can require holding true that they are trustworthy, without also requiring evidentially grounded belief in their trustworthiness. (The view thus connects with Pamela Hieronymi's (2008) proposal that fully trusting someone requires believing that they are trustworthy. The view affirms that trusting someone requires holding true that they are trustworthy, but rejects the assumption that holding true is a form of belief. It therefore avoids the problems that Hieronymi raises for views that seek to base belief in trustworthiness on purely practical reasons.)

I proceed as follows. In section 2 (*Kant on moral faith*), I expound Kant's case for moral faith and highlight two principles that figure in that case: that setting an end requires holding true that the end is in principle attainable; and that it can be rational to hold true that one's ends are attainable on practical grounds, in the absence of evidence. Section 3 (*Problematizing faith*) raises the central difficulty to be pursued: the need to divorce the attitude of holding true that is involved in faith from evidentially grounded belief. Sections 4 (*Defending Kant's principles*) and 5 (*Faith and evidence*) develop a case for the required divorce, thus opening space for the possibility of rationally holding things true for practical, as opposed to theoretical, reasons. In the concluding section, I indicate how the general account derived from Kant's case for moral faith provides the basis for a deflationary account of the special case of trust in other people.

2. *Kant on moral faith*. Let's begin with a sketch of Kant's case for moral faith in God. This will enable us to see the main moving parts of Kant's case, and to isolate those that are of greatest relevance to the reasonableness of extra-evidential

trust. (Kant presents versions of his basic case for moral faith in a large number of places, in particular: 1781/1787: A795/B823–A831/B859; 1786; 1788: 5: 107–148; 1790: 5: 397–415, 5:434–484; 1793: 6: 3–11. For present purposes, I won't be attending to the fine details of the texts.)

Kant's aim is to show that it is reasonable to hold true, with certainty, that there exists a being that is both willing and able to organize the world in accord with a moral design. Kant takes himself to have demonstrated, in the course of the first critique, that it is impossible for us to *know* that there is (or that there isn't) such a being. It is impossible for us to have theoretical, or evidential, grounds for holding with certainty that such a being exists. For evidence that is accessible to us must be grounded in our intuition, and our intuition is restricted to appearances; but if God exists, then He is super-sensible, so evidence for or against His existence is not to be found amongst the appearances. Reasons for holding with certainty that God exists must be non-evidential.

Practical reason provides the required non-evidential reasons. For practical reason gives rise to the moral law. Practical reason demands, moreover, that we act from respect for the moral law. And Kant argues that we can act rationally from respect for the moral law only on condition that we set what he calls *the highest good* as our ultimate end. The highest good unifies all more specific moral goods. The highest good would be a state of the world in which all persons acted only from respect for the moral law and, moreover, a state in which their doing so gives rise to their also being proportionately (so maximally) happy. But the rationality of our setting the highest good as our ultimate end depends upon its being reasonable for us to hold that the highest good is in principle attainable. And its being reasonable for us to hold that the highest good is in principle attainable requires that it is reasonable for us to hold true anything on which its in principle attainability depends. In particular, it requires that it is reasonable for us to hold two things. First, it requires that it is reasonable for each of us to hold not only that we will act only from respect for the moral law, but in addition that everyone else will do so too. And second, it requires that it is reasonable for us to hold that if everyone acts only from respect for the moral law, then their doing so will be efficacious in determining that everyone is made happy in proportion to their moral worthiness. Holding true that everyone will act from respect for the moral law requires reasonable faith or trust in one's own potential morality as well as in that of all other people. (Kant 1781/1787: A810/B838, 1785: 106.) Holding true that this will lead to proportionate happiness imposes a disjunctive requirement: either it must be reasonable to hold that nature is organized so that morality leads to proportionate happiness, or it must be reasonable to hold that the hedonic efficacy of morality is enforced supernaturally, by God. But we have evidence against holding that nature is so organized. Hence, the reasonableness of our setting the highest good as our end depends upon the reasonableness of our holding that God will enforce the efficacy of morality in determining happiness. Since it is reasonable for us to act from respect for the moral law, it is reasonable for us to set the highest good as our end; and since it is reasonable for us to set the highest good as our end, it is reasonable for us to hold that God exists and will ensure that everyone's doing their part—everyone's acting from respect for the moral law—will lead to their proportionate happiness.

The sketched argument requires development at a number of points.

First, the claim that it is reasonable to act from respect for the moral law (at least, *pro tanto*, on the assumption that the demands imposed by reason are consistent) requires defense.

Second, the claim that acting from respect for the moral law demands that we set the highest good as our end requires support. Kant vacillates over the precise relationship between the moral law and the highest good and about the precise nature of the highest good. And his most detailed accounts of the relationship fail to make transparent how precisely the rational demand that we act from respect for the moral law transmits to a demand that we set the highest good as our ultimate end.

Third, it needs to be explained why it is reasonable to set an end only on condition that it is also reasonable to hold that the end is in principle attainable. For the argument would fail, not only if it was reasonable to set an end that one held to be unattainable, but also if it were reasonable to set an end that one reasonably didn't hold to be unattainable. For the argument of the first critique precludes not only our acquiring evidence for the existence of God, but also our acquiring evidence against His existence. So, we can have no evidential grounds for holding that God doesn't exist, and so no evidential grounds for holding that the highest good is unattainable. Thus, if the requirement on rationally setting an end were only that we lack reason to hold that it is unattainable, then we could meet the requirement independently of possessing positive reasons to hold true that God exists.

Fourth, an explanation is needed for why we shouldn't hold that nature itself is organized in accord with the attainability of the highest good. Even if we agree with Kant that we currently lack evidence that nature is so organized, the absence of evidence need not be due to a failure of correlation between moral worthiness and happiness. It might be due, instead, to the current paucity of morally worthy people. If we were required to hold positively that the highest good is attainable in the absence of such evidence, our doing so would require a form of moral faith. But it would require faith in the organization of nature, rather than a supernatural organizer.

The third and fourth issues are connected. For suppose that rationally setting an end required only that one lacks reasons for holding that the end is unattainable and not that one possesses reasons for holding that it is attainable. In that case, the absence of evidence that nature is organized so as to sustain the attainment of the highest good would preclude our setting the highest good as our end. And so even if practical reason required us to set the highest good as our end, that wouldn't require us to hold that nature is organized so as to ensure the attainability of that end.

Fifth, argument is needed for the claim that the attainability of the highest good must be secured either by the intrinsic organization of nature or by the organizational work of God—that there is no third way.

Finally, sixth, the claim that the *pro tanto* practical reasonableness of our acting from respect for the moral law transmits to our holding true that God exists, rather than imposing on us a requirement to obtain independent theoretical grounds for holding that God exists, wants defense. Now the requirement that we

find independent grounds might be one that we cannot in principle satisfy. In that case, and assuming that the remainder of the argument were cogent, we would be presented with a conflict between the demands set by practical reason and demands set by theoretical reason. That might be unfortunate. But it's not clear why the hope of avoiding conflict between practical and theoretical reason should be taken to provide grounds for treating as spurious their apparent demands. And we would anyway have to confront the further question, why should it be the apparent demands of theoretical reason that are to be surrendered, rather than those of practical reason?

Proper assessment of Kant's argument would require extended labour, and would need to go to the heart of his moral theory. (An excellent attempt is made in Wood 1970. See also Gardner 2006; Kleingeld 1998; Moore 2003; Neiman 1994; O'Neill 1996; Timmermann 2009; Watkins 2010; Williaschek 2010.) However, for present purposes, we can restrict attention to the third and sixth of the points just listed: the purported demand on the rational setting of ends, according to which setting an end requires reason to hold that the end is in principle attainable; and the claim that that demand can serve to furnish extra-evidential reasons for holding things true. In doing so, we'll be pursuing the following questions:

Q1. What cognitive requirements must one meet if one is rationally to set an end? Must one, for example, hold true that the end is in principle attainable?

Q2. What is the nature of the attitude of holding true that figures in meeting those cognitive requirements? Is it a paradigmatic form of belief, or does it take some other form?

Q3. To what extent can the required form of holding true be sustained rationally by the needs of practical reason? Does the answer to that question depend on whether the operative needs arise from an absolute demand on practical reason, that we follow the moral law? And does it depend on whether the required form of holding true concerns only things about which we cannot know?

3. *Problematizing faith.* In order to fix ideas, it will be useful to sketch an argument that begins from Kant's principle governing the rational setting of ends and terminates in the conclusion that there is an evidential requirement on setting ends that precludes the possibility of moral faith.

The argument begins from a principle that Kant accepts (e.g. 1781/1787: A823/B851–A832/B852):

(P1) One can rationally set an end, *E*, only if one rationally holds true that *E* is in principle attainable.

Thus, for example, one can rationally set the end of winning the election if one holds that it is possible for one to win. The attainability in principle of *E* typically

depends, and typically is known to depend, on two sorts of factors. First, *E*'s attainability depends on what agents can do towards bringing the end about, conditional on their contingent circumstances. That is, it depends on the range of things that are within an agent's power to bring about, given specific ways things outside their power are. My winning the election depends on my campaigning. Second, *E*'s attainability depends upon those aspects of the agent's contingent circumstances that they are unable to affect. Since the successful attainment of one's ends is often dependent upon the activities of other agents, the latter conditions will often include those other agents' activities, and the willingness to act on which those activities depend. My winning the election depends on other people campaigning too. Let's label the former type of necessary condition on the attainability of *E* *agential conditions*, and the latter type of necessary conditions *environmental conditions*. A consequence of (P1), then, is (P2):

(P2) One can rationally set an end, *E*, only if, with respect to all conditions that one holds to be either agential conditions or environmental conditions, one rationally holds true that those conditions obtain or will obtain.

That principle now interacts with principles purportedly governing what one may rationally hold true so as to generate the putative difficulty for Kant's account. So, suppose that, in addition to (P2), one held (P3) and (P4):

(P3) One can rationally hold true that a condition will obtain only if one can rationally believe that the condition will obtain.

(P4) One can rationally believe that a condition will obtain only if one possesses evidentiary support for the obtaining of the condition.

(P3) and (P4) might be motivated by appeal to a conception of the constitutive aims of holding true on which the constitutive aim of holding something true is truth or knowledge. Plausibly, such a conception of holding true would align the constitutive aim of holding true with the constitutive aim of belief, so sustaining (P3). And it's plausible that the conception would, thus, sustain (P4) by sustaining the evidentiary requirement in (P4). On the basis of those principles, we could derive an evidentiary requirement on the setting of ends to the effect that one can rationally set an end only if one possesses evidentiary support for the obtaining of agential and environmental conditions on the attainability of the end.

That requirement on the rational setting of ends might appear too strong. For at least from an agent's own perspective, answering the question whether agential conditions will obtain seems to depend, not on the acquisition of evidence, but rather on making up one's mind to pursue specific ends. It is up to me whether I decide to campaign. However, we might attempt to finesse that condition by stipulating that with respect to agential conditions, the evidentiary requirement can be met on the basis of knowing which ends one has set. That leaves the environmental conditions. It is natural to hold that decision-independent evidence is required for the obtaining of environmental conditions. It

is natural to hold, for example, that evidence is required for believing that people are likely to vote for me.

On that basis, our principles dictate that with respect to ends for which there are non-agential environmental conditions, one can rationally set an end, E , only if one possesses evidence that E 's environmental conditions obtain. Thus, in cases in which the environmental conditions include the activities of other agents, one must possess evidence that the agents will be willing and competent to undertake those activities. The conclusion of Kant's argument for moral faith was that one can rationally set ends with environmental conditions for the obtaining of which one doesn't possess—indeed, for which one cannot possess—any evidence at all. So, Kant's claims for moral faith conflict with the argument we have just developed, and it is incumbent on the defender of Kant to say something in response. Minimally, they must provide grounds for rejecting either (P3) or (P4). In doing so, they should say something about the constitutive aims of holding true for practical purposes that supports the rejection of those principles. That is a large project. I shall make a start on pursuing it in the following two sections, by developing an alternative conception of holding true for practical purposes. According to the alternative conception, the operative form of holding true is not a paradigmatic form of belief (so that (P3) is unsupported) and, so, is not subject to the same evidentiary demands as paradigmatic forms of belief (so that (P4) is unsupported).

4. *Defending Kant's principles.* Kant's argument depends upon the following principles, purportedly governing the connection between one's rationally setting an end and one's holding true that the end is in principle attainable:

(P1) One can rationally set an end, E , only if one rationally holds true that E is in principle attainable.

(P2) One can rationally set an end, E , only if, with respect to all conditions that one holds to be either agential conditions or environmental conditions, one rationally holds true that those conditions obtain or will obtain.

Setting an end for oneself is freely adopting the aim of doing what one can in order to bring about, or preserve, the end. Setting an end has as upshot its passive counterpart, having an end, itself a mode of intention. The question whether (P1) and (P2) are correct is, therefore, a near relative of the question whether (rationally) intending to ϕ entails (rationally) believing that one will ϕ . I'll approach the question about ends indirectly, via its connections with the question about intentions.

In attempting to address the question whether intending to ϕ entails believing that one will ϕ , it is important to avoid conflating distinct issues. It is especially important to avoid two tempting conflations.

First, we should avoid conflating the question whether a rational intention to ϕ entails holding true that one will ϕ with the distinct question whether a rational intention to ϕ entails believing that one will ϕ . Although it may be that all cases of

holding true are cases of believing, it shouldn't be assumed from the outset that they are. Reasons to think that intending doesn't entail believing may be precisely reasons to think that holding true doesn't entail believing.

Second, we should hold distinct two forms that intention can take: on the one hand, having (or being) decided to ϕ and, on the other hand, merely having (set) the end of ϕ -ing. If I have (or am) decided to ϕ , then I have the end of ϕ -ing. However, the converse entailment fails. For I can have, and act upon, ends that I can't bring about merely by so acting—for example, I can have the end of winning a fair lottery. By contrast, I cannot decide to win a fair lottery; at best, I can decide to try to win it. It would be natural, therefore, to expect the cognitive requirements on deciding to ϕ to differ from those on deciding on the end of ϕ -ing. Suppose, for example, that deciding to ϕ entails believing that one will ϕ . And suppose, furthermore, that deciding on the end of ϕ -ing entails deciding to try to ϕ . It would follow that deciding on the end of ϕ -ing entails believing that one will try to ϕ . But it would be implausible to hold, on those grounds, that believing that one will try to ϕ entails believing that one will ϕ . Moreover, given that thought and talk about what someone intends can target either what they have decided to do or their wider ends—e.g., what they have decided to try to do—we would naturally expect our judgments about the cognitive requirements on intending to be pulled in opposing directions. On the one hand, insofar as our attention is focused on the requirements on deciding to ϕ , we will find it more intuitive that they include holding that one will ϕ . On the other hand, insofar as our attention is directed onto the requirements on merely deciding on the end of ϕ -ing, without deciding to ϕ , we will find it less intuitive that they include holding that one will ϕ , and will expect to discern, instead, somewhat weaker requirements on the rational setting of ends.

Although it is possible to decide on an end that depends upon one's ϕ -ing without thereby deciding to ϕ , we can nonetheless achieve insight into deciding on an end via reflection on deciding to ϕ . Let's begin, then, by considering principle (P5), governing rationally deciding to ϕ :

(P5) One can rationally decide to ϕ only if one rationally holds true that one will ϕ .

Two questions about (P5) are central. First, what reason is there to accept (P5) as a requirement on rational decision, rather than accepting some weaker principle? Second, how should we understand the nature of the attitude of holding true that is embedded in (P5)? How, in particular, does that attitude relate to evidence that one will ϕ , and in particular evidence that obtains independently of one's decision to ϕ ? And how, if at all, does one's holding that one will ϕ figure in bringing it about that one will?

One reason for endorsing (P5) is that it seems obviously correct. It seems obvious, for example, that I can rationally decide to campaign in the election only if I hold true that I will campaign. Going beyond that, (P5) can figure in explaining some of the other rational norms that govern deciding to ϕ . For

example, it seems plausible to accept that any reasonable account of holding true will impose a requirement like the following:

(P6) One can rationally hold that p , and hold that its being true that p entails its not being true that q , only if one doesn't hold that q .

(P5) and (P6) can be used to explain why one can't rationally both decide to ϕ and decide to ψ while one holds that its being true that one will ϕ entails its not being true that one will ψ . For example, they can explain why I can't rationally decide to campaign and decide to take a long vacation, given that I know that campaigning precludes vacationing. For according to (P5), one's rationally deciding to ϕ entails that one rationally holds that one will ϕ , and one's rationally deciding to ψ entails that one rationally holds that one will ψ . But according to (P6), one can't rationally hold that its being true that one will ϕ entails that one will not ψ and at the same time hold that one will ϕ and that one will ψ . So, in conjunction with principles governing rationally holding true, (P5) can figure in explaining why one can't decide to do things that one takes to be mutually incompatible.

Similarly, (P5) can figure, in conjunction with other principles governing rationally holding true, in deriving an analogue of (P2) that applies to deciding to ϕ . That is, it can support an analogue of Kant's principle, according to which the rational setting of ends requires holding that those ends are in principle attainable. Plausibly, (P7) governs rationally holding things true.

(P7) One can rationally hold that p , and hold that its being true that p entails its being true that q , only if one holds that q .

According to (P7), if one holds that its being true that q is a necessary condition on one's ϕ -ing, then one can rationally hold that one will ϕ only if one holds that q . But we have from (P5) that one can rationally decide to ϕ only if one rationally holds that one will ϕ . So, in the same circumstances, one can rationally decide to ϕ only if one rationally holds that q . Thus, we can derive the following analogue of (P2) for deciding to ϕ :

(P8) One can rationally decide to ϕ only if, with respect to all agential and environmental conditions that one holds to be necessary for its being true that one will ϕ , one rationally holds true that those conditions obtain.

Suppose, for example, that one holds that in order to canvass the electorate, one must leave home by 11am. And suppose that one knows that it is now well past 11am. In that case, according to (P8), what one holds true precludes one from now rationally deciding to canvass the electorate. That is, reason would permit one to decide to canvass the electorate only if there were a change in what one knew or held true about one's circumstances.

To this point, we've focused on deciding to ϕ and haven't spoken directly to (P1). However, analogous considerations apply with respect to (P1), on the plausible assumption that setting an end is at least approximately equivalent to

deciding to try. In both cases, there is a need to explain why certain patterns of decision or end-setting would not be reasonable, and explaining that requires connecting decision and end-setting with positive commitments about what one will do or try to do, and so with what it is possible for one to do or try to do. A mere absence of commitment to impossibility would not support the required explanations. However, although analogous considerations apply to both deciding and setting an end, there are also important differences between the two cases. In particular, (P1) is weaker than (P5) in a way that means that it does not rule out the possibility of rationally setting incompatible ends. For according to (P1), one can rationally set an end that one holds may not be attained. Since it is possible rationally to hold that it is possible that p and possible that q , even though it would not be rational to hold that it is possible that (p and q), the principle therefore fails to rule out the rational setting of incompatible ends. Thus, for example, it leaves open that I might set vacationing as an end, and set campaigning as an end; it precludes only my setting as an end vacationing and campaigning. (See e.g. Bratman 2009.) That result is not itself dramatically implausible. However, if we wished to defend the claim that perfect rationality is not consistent with the setting of incompatible ends, we could impose it as a requirement, without violence to (P1), by the addition of the following plausible seeming principle of unification:

(P9) One can rationally set oneself a totality of ends, Σ , only if one could rationally set oneself as an end the conjunction of all ends in Σ .

On this view, it would be imperfectly rational to retain both the end of vacationing and the end of campaigning. In order to be perfectly rational, I must decide on one end or the other.

The explanatory power of (P1) and (P5) in underwriting the various rational requirements that apply to deciding to ϕ and to setting oneself an end gives us *pro tanto* reasons to endorse those premises. However, those reasons might be defeated by reasons to hold that ordinary thought allows for the possibility of rationally deciding to ϕ whilst failing to hold true that one will ϕ . And they might also be defeated by our failure to make sense of rationally holding true that one will ϕ on the basis of a decision to ϕ . I won't here consider the first potential source of defeaters. (Holton 2009 discusses defeaters of the first sort, but from a perspective on which holding true is identified with believing.) However, it is important to say something about how we are to make sense of holding things true on the basis of decisions. To that end, I provide the outline of an account of the nature of deciding to ϕ that has the resources to make transparent the required connection between deciding to ϕ and holding true that one will ϕ . The account has been developed and defended by Matthew Soteriou (2013: 257–307). As we'll see, it has important affinities with Kant's thoughts about this topic.

Soteriou's account of deciding to ϕ builds on earlier discussions of ways in which one's deciding now to ϕ can figure in future deliberation and action, especially discussions by Michael Bratman (1987; 1999; 2006) and David Velleman (1989; 2000). Crucially, when one has decided to ϕ , one's further practical deliberation will take place under the constraint that one will ϕ . Thus, deciding to

ϕ is way of answering, for practical purposes, the question, what will one do? For example, in deliberating about what else to do, one will not, without revising or forgetting one's decision to ϕ , consider deciding to do things incompatible with one's ϕ -ing.

As we've discussed, there are good reasons to think that one's deliberating about future activities on the basis of having decided to ϕ is to be explained by appeal to one's holding true, on the basis of one's decision, that one will ϕ . That would be consistent with the view, defended by Velleman, that deciding to ϕ is a matter of forming the belief that one will ϕ . However, as Soteriou points out, there are good reasons to think that, unlike paradigmatic cases of belief, where a subject has decided to ϕ ,

...the constraint of treating as true the proposition that she will ϕ is a constraint on the subject's planning that the subject regards as *self-imposed*. (287)

Soteriou, following Velleman (2000: 32–55), explains the way in which a subject will regard their decision as a matter of their imposing constraints on their own deliberation by appeal to the seeming absence of any external source for those constraints:

Acceptance of the truth of the relevant proposition is not one that the subject takes to be grounded in evidence that she possesses, in so far as she takes herself to be epistemically entitled, given her evidence, to make alternative decisions and hence to make any one of a number of other inconsistent assumptions about what she is going to do. So when a subject decides to ϕ , and then subsequently plans on the assumption that she is going to ϕ , the subject assumes something about her own future on the basis of evidence that, *from the subject's own point of view*, simultaneously licenses her to assume something about her future that contradicts it. Note that even *after* she decides to ϕ the subject still takes herself to be *epistemically* entitled, given her evidence, to make an alternative decision, and thereby assume something else about her future. (Soteriou, 2013: 287)

To the extent that the constraints imposed on one's practical deliberation by deciding to ϕ are self-imposed, they are similar to the constraints one imposes on one's theoretical reasoning by supposing something for the sake of argument. Soteriou exploits the comparison in order to illuminate his proposal about the nature of deciding to ϕ :

When you assume that p for the sake of argument, you treat p as true, you regard and treat this constraint on your reasoning as self-imposed, and part of what is involved in treating the constraint as self-imposed is your treating the assumption as one that is to be discharged—e.g. with an outright conditional judgement that is outside the scope of the supposition. Likewise, when, having decided to ϕ , you plan on the assumption that you will ϕ , you

regard and treat this constraint on your planning as self-imposed. And likewise, I want to suggest, part of what is involved in treating the constraint as self-imposed is your treating the assumption as one that is to be discharged. However, in the case of your planning assumption...you treat the assumption as one that is to be discharged by the performance of an action that makes the assumption true. (288)

Deciding to ϕ is a matter of imposing on one's own future practical deliberation and activity a specific constraint. It is a matter of imposing on one's deliberation and activity the constraint of holding that one will make it true that one ϕ s and, so, that one will ϕ . In treating the constraint as self-imposed, we view our holding true as constraining us only via our sustained willingness to remain so constrained. In deciding to campaign, I hold true that I will campaign, and treat that as a constraint on further practical deliberation. But I treat it as a self-imposed constraint and, so, as figuring in my practical deliberation only insofar as I remain committed to campaigning. Thus, in deciding to ϕ one is constrained by one's own willingness, rather than by one's evidence. Soteriou's account of the power to decide thereby fits Kant's conception of an autonomous will, according to which the autonomy of a person's will amounts to its being

a free will which, in accordance with its universal laws, must necessarily be able at the same time *to agree* to that to which it is to *subject* itself. (1788: 5: 132)

Deciding to ϕ is a matter of imposing on one's own practical deliberation the constraint that one will ϕ . Similarly, but more generally, setting an end as a matter of imposing on one's own practical deliberation the constraint that one will strive to attain that end. Thus, we have presented an intelligible account of why, and how, principle (P1) can be true.

5. *Faith and evidence.* Soteriou's account of deciding to ϕ makes transparent the connection characterized in (P5) between deciding to ϕ and holding true that one will ϕ . The picture is one in which, prior to deciding what to do, one is faced with an array of evidence about one's capabilities in the circumstances. One is faced with evidence to the effect that there are some things one cannot do, and so some things that one will not do. If cognizant of that evidence, one cannot rationally decide to do those things. Thus, I have evidence that I can't reach the hall in time to speak to the electorate, and so I can't rationally decide to reach the hall in time. One is also faced with evidence to the effect that there are some things one can do. Typically, one is so presented with a range of things that one can do, and one's evidence fails to dictate which amongst them are things that one will do. To that extent, it is up to oneself which, if any, of those things one decides to do. Thus, I have evidence that I can canvass any of the houses on this street and it is up to me which house I decide to canvass. One therefore takes oneself to be free, with respect to any ϕ in that range, to decide whether or not to ϕ . And although one treats a decision to ϕ as constraining one's future practical deliberation, one views

that constraint as one that is self-imposed, and so as a constraint that one will respect only to the extent that one remains willing to adhere to it. So one does not treat a decision to ϕ as affecting one's evidential situation, by placing one's not- ϕ -ing outside the range of actions that one is then in a position to undertake. Thus, one's decision to ϕ is not treated as underwriting an ordinary theoretical belief that one will ϕ .

There are things that one has evidence that one cannot do. One cannot decide to do those things. There are things that one has evidence that one can do. One can decide to do those. To a good first approximation, reasons for belief suffice for reasons to hold things true. Given our epistemic limitations, there are liable also to be things about which one lacks evidence either way: potential courses of action for which one lacks evidence that one cannot complete them and also lack evidence that one can complete them. For example, I lack evidence that I can speak loudly enough to be heard at the back, and also evidence that I can't. Where one's ϕ -ing would fall within that penumbral region, is it possible for one rationally to decide to ϕ , where that would be a matter of one's holding true, by way of a planning assumption, that one will ϕ ? The question is whether reasons for belief are not only sufficient for holding true, but also necessary.

The way we earlier approached this type of question was via the following line of thought. What determines what one will do is a combination of what one has the power to do, given one's circumstances, and how one will make use of that power. What one has the power to do, given one's circumstances, is not up to one. But it is up to one how one will make use of that power. Forming a reasonable view of what one will do, therefore, requires forming a reasonable view both of one's power to act, given one's circumstances and of how one will make use of that power. In making a decision to ϕ , and so in imposing a constraint on one's practical deliberations, one aims to form a reasonable view about what one will do. One aims to form a view based on a combination of two factors: first, information about one's power to act, given one's circumstances; and, second, one's ongoing commitment to act in a particular way in order to discharge the assumptions that constitutes one's view about what one will do. One's view now about what one will do in the future can therefore turn out to be wrong on either of two grounds: one might have been wrong about what one had the power to do, given one's circumstances; and one might lose one's commitment to act, by ceasing to impose on oneself the constraint of seeking to discharge one's initial assumption about how one will act, either through changing one's minds, or through failing to remember what one had decided to do. That is, one might turn out to be wrong about either environmental or agential conditions.

Now if the extent of the space within which one is entitled freely to impose constraints on one's own practical deliberation is determined by what one is in a position freely to make true, then that space is determined, in turn, by facts about one's power, given one's circumstances. Since one is not in a position freely to determine facts about one's power to act, one is not in a position freely to impose constraints on one's own practical deliberation that amount to holding true specific propositions about that power. Rather, insofar as one's decision to ϕ involves one's holding things true about one's power to act, one's holding those things true will have the same status as other beliefs about things outside one's

active control, and will therefore be subject to whatever evidential demands such beliefs are subject. (That was the function of (P3) in the argument that was sketched in section 3.) But it is plausible that ordinary beliefs about things outside one's active control are reasonable only if one possesses positive evidence. That is, it is plausible that one cannot reasonably believe that p when one merely lacks evidence that it's not the case that p . Rather, it is plausible in that case that one should instead withhold belief. (That was the function of (P4) in the argument sketched in section 3.) Thus, in cases in which one's decision to ϕ involves one's holding things true about the prospective activities of other agents, one will require evidence that those activities will be forthcoming—evidence concerning the willingness and competence of those other agents. In cases in which one lacks such evidence, one should withhold belief, and so should not hold true, that the required activities of others will be forthcoming.

We are now in a position to see what is wrong with that line of reflection. It presupposes that holding things true for practical purposes is to be modeled on holding things true for theoretical purposes. That is, it presupposes that demands on theoretical belief, arising from its specific aims and functions, apply equally to holding things true for practical purposes. However, our epistemological perspective on what we hold true for practical purposes is quite different from our perspective on what we hold true for theoretical purposes. Thus, we are entitled to hold things true for practical purposes on the basis of what we regard as being a free decision, so a decision we regard as one that, consistently with our evidence, we might have failed to make. Even having made a decision, and so having come to hold something true for practical purposes, we do not regard ourselves as having thereby provided grounds for a theoretical belief about what we will do. For our theoretical beliefs provide constraints on what we can then decide to do, so that if our theoretical beliefs are inconsistent with its being true that we will ϕ , then, unless our theoretical beliefs change, we cannot decide to ϕ . If deciding to ϕ required forming a theoretical belief to the effect that one will ϕ , then, having decided to ϕ , we would be incapable of revoking that decision, without giving up a belief that is supported by evidence. So, insofar as one has a conception of belief as governed by evidence, one has reason not to conflate holding things true for practical purposes with holding things true for theoretical purposes. Thus, at least one of premises (P3) and (P4) in the argument sketched in section 3 should be rejected.

Kant gestures towards a distinction between holding things true for practical purposes and holding things true for theoretical—or speculative—purposes in the following passage:

Thus, in the union of pure speculative with pure practical reason in one cognition, the latter has primacy.... For, without this subordination a conflict of reason with itself would arise, since if they were merely juxtaposed (coordinate), the first would of itself close its boundaries strictly and admit nothing from the latter into its domain, while the latter would extend its boundaries over everything and, when its need required, would try to include the former within it. (1788: 5:121)

Kant's thought here is the following. Suppose that holding things true for practical purposes and holding things true for theoretical purposes constituted a single cognitive kind. In that case, we would be liable to be presented with candidates for being held true with respect to which practical and theoretical reason conflict. These would be candidates for being held true such that theoretical reason requires us not to hold them true—since we lack appropriate evidence for holding them true—whilst practical reason requires us to hold them true—since its aims require setting an end that depends upon holding them true. Kant's proposal for avoiding otherwise irresolvable conflicts of that sort is to distinguish holding things true for practical purposes from holding things true for theoretical purposes. In the context of defending specifically moral faith, Kant draws the distinction in the following way:

What belongs to duty here is only the striving to produce and promote the highest good in the world, the possibility of which can therefore be postulated, while our reason finds this thinkable only on the presupposition of a supreme intelligence; to assume the existence of this supreme intelligence is thus connected with the consciousness of our duty, although this assumption itself belongs to theoretical reason; with respect to theoretical reason alone, as a ground of explanation, it can be called a *hypothesis*; but in relation to the intelligibility of an object given us by the moral law (the highest good), and consequently of a need for practical purposes, it can be called *faith* and, indeed, a pure *rational faith* since pure reason alone (in its theoretical as well as in its practical use) is the source from which it springs. (1788: 5: 126)

Kant proposes that what we hold true for practical purposes is to be viewed, from a purely theoretical perspective, as a mere hypothesis. That allows that such a holding true can be detached from the requirement for positive evidential support whilst, at the same time, leaving open that it is not possible rationally to hold something true in the face of evidence that it isn't true. For one can be entitled rationally to accept hypotheses in the absence of positive evidence that they are true; but one must be prepared to reject them in the face of evidence that they are not true. And we've seen that deciding to ϕ , or setting E as one's end, and so holding true for practical purposes that one will ϕ , or seek to bring about E , are subject to an analogous pattern of requirements. (Kant discusses the government of rational hypotheses in 1781/1787: A769/B797–A782/B810. For useful discussions of Kant's views about the nature of holding true in general, see Chignell 2007 and Stevenson 2003.)

We ordinarily think that it can be perfectly rational to decide to ϕ in the absence of evidence that we will ϕ , and thus that we can set an end in the absence of evidence that the end is in principle attainable. For example, we hold that I can rationally decide to speak loudly enough to be heard at the back in the absence of evidence either that I will, or that I won't, be heard. Thus, we reject the combination of premises (P3) and (P4) in the argument sketched in section 3. I've drawn on the work of Soteriou and Kant in order to present a theoretical perspective on decision—and more generally, on holdings things true for practical

purposes—that supports our ordinary view. When one decides to ϕ , one thereby holds true that one will ϕ . If one realizes that one will ϕ only if certain environmental conditions obtain, then rationally holding that one will ϕ requires holding that those environmental conditions do obtain. Similarly, when one decides on an end, one thereby holds true that one will strive to attain that end and, so, that the end is in principle attainable. If one realizes that an end is attainable only if certain environmental conditions obtain, then one's rationally holding that the end is attainable requires that one hold that those environmental conditions do obtain. Thus, in particular, in cases in which one knows that the attainability of one's end is dependent on the activities of other agents, one must hold true that those activities will be forthcoming. However, holding things true for practical purposes differs in nature from holding things true for theoretical purposes, and so is subject to different requirements. The differences make space for rationally holding things true for practical purposes which one couldn't rationally hold true for theoretical purposes. So, the differences makes space for the possibility of rationally holding true that the activities of other agents on which one's successful attainment of an end depend will be forthcoming in the absence of evidence that those activities will be forthcoming. For example, I can have practical reasons for holding true that others will campaign for me in the absence of evidence that they will, as long as I lack evidence that they won't.

At the end of section 3, I suggested that a full defense of our ordinary view would require a response to the claim that holding true is governed by the constitutive aim of holding true only what is true. We are now in a position to see that such a response must embed an alternative account of the constitutive aims of the setting of ends and, so, of holding things true for practical purposes. However, our discussion has, from the outset, been shaped by just such an account. For Kant's account of practical reason is one according to which its constitutive aim is a moral aim: the attainment of the highest good.

Our ultimate moral end, the highest good, imposes upon us the need to set ourselves mediate ends, what we take to be means to our ultimate end. Our practical and theoretical limitations mean that the mediate ends that we set are liable to instability. For instance, our conception of our ultimate end is limited so that it leaves open various questions concerning the space between what is morally obligatory for us and what is morally impermissible for us. It leaves open some questions about the precise boundaries of the space. And, in addition, it leaves open questions about our optimal route through it. Thus, with respect to any mediate end that we set, it may turn out that between setting the end and attaining it, we will cease to constrain ourselves by holding true that we will strive for that end. For example, I might have decided to stand for election because I held that winning the election would be an optimal means of furthering moral ends. On realizing that my not standing would support a more efficient route to those ends, I might shed the self-imposed constraint of holding true that I will stand. Moreover, limited as we are, we may simply forget some amongst the ends that we have set. So, from a broadly practical perspective, our ends are liable to a certain amount of instability.

Our epistemic limitations mean that our mediate ends are liable to an additional layer of instability. For we often need to set mediate ends that we do

not know to be attainable. With respect to any of those mediate ends, it may turn out that between setting the end and attaining it, we acquire evidence that the end is in principle unattainable. If we were to acquire such evidence, then we would be required to stop holding true that we will strive for the end. I might discover, for example, that it is now impossible for me to win the election. If we set only those ends that we knew to be in principle attainable, our striving towards those ends would be to that extent more stable, and we would be more likely to attain those ends. But the gain in stability and likelihood of success would come at a cost: we would be restricted to deciding on ends that we knew to be attainable. If our most fundamental aim were success in attaining whatever ends we set, then the gain in likelihood of success would be privileged. That might be so, for example, if our fundamental aim in setting ends were the attainment of knowledge about what we will do. However, insofar as our ultimate practical aims go beyond success in whatever we decide to attempt, our commitment to those aims is liable to outweigh our concern to obtain prior guarantees of stability and success. Thus, my reasons for trying to win the election might trump my desire to avoid uncertainty about my future.

If one knew now that a particular outcome will be forthcoming in the future, one would be in a position confidently to rely on that outcome. In particular, one would be in a position to be confident that one will not later come across decisive evidence that the outcome will not occur. More generally, one would be in a position to be confident that one's current view about the future need not be dislodged by genuine reasons. I might be in that position if I knew that the election was rigged in my favour. One might lose one's view in other ways—for example, by losing confidence in the face of merely apparent counter-evidence, or simply by forgetting. But one will not be forced to shed it by reason alone. Although we typically lacks such a guarantee with respect to what we decide to do or to strive for, Kant holds that a guarantee is available with respect to the highest good. For according to Kant, neither of the two potential sources of instability in our ends applies there. There is no practical source of instability, since there cannot be genuine practical reasons for giving up the end of achieving the highest good. And there is no theoretical source, since there cannot be genuine evidence that the highest good is unattainable. Thus, one can be at least as confident in holding that the highest good is attainable as one could be if one knew that it were attainable. Holding true for practical purposes that the highest good is attainable is, therefore, distinctively stable and secure. However, that does not indicate that holding things true for practical purposes in more ordinary cases is unreasonable. Rather, it indicates only that the reasonableness of our holding things true for practical purposes in more ordinary cases is dependent on our being appropriately sensitive to the potential instability and insecurity of so doing.

Let's return to the three questions raised in section 2. The answer to (Q1) is that rationally setting an end requires holding true that the end is in principle attainable. That requirement trumps weaker requirements due to its superior capacity to explain constraints on the rational combination of the setting of ends. The answer to (Q2) is that the required attitude of holding true is not a paradigmatic form of belief. And the answer to (Q3) is that holding true can be grounded practically rather than evidentially. Typically, holding true is potentially

subject to practical or evidential defeat, and so lacks the stability of knowledge. Kant's more exigent demands on faith—according to which it is sustained by absolute moral demands and is insusceptible to evidential disconfirmation—are designed to align faith with knowledge; there is no reason to expect that alignment to obtain with respect to quotidian forms of trust.

6. *Conclusion: faith and trust.* According to Kant, there can be practical grounds for deciding to act, and thus for imposing on ourselves the constraint of holding true that we will so act. And there can be practical reasons for setting ends, and thus for imposing on ourselves the constraint of holding true that those ends will be attained. My aim has been to make space for Kant's otherwise plausible view by divorcing that view from some dubious near relatives. Thus, I've explained that such a view needn't allow that one can decide rationally to do things, or strive for things, that one knows are unattainable. And I've explained that such a view needn't be committed to the idea that practical reasons can provide grounds for belief. In doing so, I appealed to Kant's specific account of the constitutive aim of holding things true for practical purposes, according to which that aim is the attainment of the highest good. However, the same outcome would be achieved if it were shown, more minimally, that the constitutive aim of holding things true for practical purposes is distinct from the constitutive aim of belief. (Independently, there need be no commitment to the claim that one can decide to believe things, for there need be no commitment to thinking that, simply because deciding to ϕ entails holding true that one will ϕ , it follows that deciding to ϕ entails *deciding* to hold true that one will ϕ . So, even if deciding to ϕ on practical grounds entailed believing that one will ϕ on practical grounds, it need not entail in addition *deciding* to believe that one will ϕ on practical grounds.)

With those resources in hand, let's return to the question about trust with which we began. Can it ever be reasonable to trust other people, or to rely upon them, without evidence of their trustworthiness or reliability, given that trusting them requires holding true that they will do what they are trusted to do? The answer we have to this point is conditional: yes, provided, first, that there is not too much evidence that they are untrustworthy or unreliable and, second, that there are genuine practical reasons for trusting them or relying upon them. However, it seems obvious that we are constantly presented with genuinely practical reasons for trusting others. That is, it seems obvious that we are constantly presented with valuable ends the attainability of which is dependent on others. And typically, at least, our situation is one of lacking evidence for others' trustworthiness or reliability, rather than possessing evidence for their untrustworthiness or unreliability. Plausibly, then, it can sometimes be reasonable to trust other people, or to rely upon them, in the absence evidence of their trustworthiness or reliability.

That answer leaves open the extent to which trust is sometimes made reasonable in other ways—for example, by the obtaining evidential grounds for holding true (in that case, plausibly, for believing) that someone is reliable or trustworthy. That is, it leaves open that a full account of the bases of trust might need to include a response of the third type considered in section 1, an attempt to

argue that our epistemic limitations are less stark than the puzzle about trust makes them out to be. And it leaves open that there may be cases in which the potential cognitive consequences of trusting someone are dependent on the obtaining of such evidential grounds—for example, cases of testimony in which those consequences include knowledge or belief and, so, cannot straightforwardly be sustained by practical grounds for holding things true. (For relevant discussion, see Audi 2004.) However, my aims here have been limited to sketching out some space for the fourth response to the puzzle, by indicating ways in which trust might sometimes be reasonable in the absence of evidential grounds for belief despite the fact that trust involves holding true that another is trustworthy. From the deflationary perspective that I've recommended, the question whether trust is reasonable in particular cases can then be seen as a matter for ordinary practical deliberation. In general, no appeal need be made to special sources of evidence or trust-specific ends. However, some general questions about the reasonableness of trust remain, and I shall conclude by raising two of them. The questions concern the extent to which evidential grounds for distrusting others or practical grounds for trusting them can ever be decisive.

It seems obvious that we must often try to balance practical and theoretical grounds for trust. Kant himself expressed some pessimism about the results of the trade off:

We must so conduct ourselves to a friend, that it does us no harm if he were to become our enemy; we must give him nothing to use against us. We are not, indeed, to suppose that he may become our enemy, for then there would be no trust between us. But if we give ourselves entirely to a friend, and entrust him with all the secrets which might detract from our happiness, and might well be divulged if he did become an enemy, then it is very unwise to tell him these things, since he could either give them away through inadvertence, or use them to our hurt if he became our foe. (Kant 1784–5: 27: 429–430)

The two questions that I wish to table concern trust in other people's good disposition of will, rather than in other competences of theirs on which we might rely. The first question is this. Could there be cases in which trusting someone is made entirely unreasonable on evidential grounds? That is, could we know enough about someone's poor character that no countermending practical grounds, including grounds deriving from morality, would outweigh what we know and thus make it reasonable for us to trust them? The answer to this question will depend ultimately on answers to further questions, concerning the extent to which others may be regarded as free, not only from their own practical perspective, but also from our practical perspective. Can we have sufficient evidence about the dispositions of others' wills to rule out their striving to do what they are trusted to do? Could such evidence ever foreclose on their absolute freedom to go against all past evidence concerning their character and so redeem themselves by deciding to warrant our trust?

Second, could there be cases in which practical grounds would make it obligatory to trust someone, at least with respect to the disposition of their will?

Despite Kant’s animadversions about apportioning complete trust in a friend, we might reasonably wonder whether there might nonetheless be moral grounds for striving to trust others, insofar as doing so is made possible by our evidence. And we might wonder, in particular, whether the highest good could comprise a realm in which every person is in fact fully trustworthy with respect to the disposition of their wills, since their wills are disposed in accord with respect for the moral law, and yet in which not every person is fully trusting. Thus, we might wonder whether fully respecting the demands of morality, and so setting the highest good as one’s end, in turn imposes on one a requirement to strive to have faith in other people, insofar as one isn’t precluded from doing so by evidence of their liability to malevolence.

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