

KANTIAN THEORETICAL HOPE¹

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1. Introduction

Hope is ambiguous. It has been regarded as either the greatest of gifts or the worst of curses, even as early as the most archaic and iconic appearance of hope in the story of Pandora's Box. It isn't clear whether hope is among the curses left in the Box, or instead a comfort and pity left to us by Zeus. It appears, nevertheless, that there has always been philosophical interest in hope.

There has been a considerable amount of research concerning Kantian hope, but focused on the perspective of Kant's moral and religious philosophy. In this essay, I will present the Kantian theory of theoretical hope, as found in the first *Critique*. My argument first establishes that there is such a thing as Kantian theoretical hope. And the second part of the argument defines Kantian theoretical hope as a priori, necessary, and universal within the use of reason and understanding, or, in Kantian terms, as a transcendental concept.

I begin by presenting the concept or fact of hope in the context in which it is usually discussed, namely in Kant's practical philosophy. Then I discuss definitions and kinds of judgments in order to contextualize hope in Kant's theoretical philosophy. Finally, I conclude by giving an interpretation of the "Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic" in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that supports my the argument for the existence of a theoretical Kantian hope.

2. Kantian Hope

The most compelling evidence for the existence of theoretical hope in Kant's Critical philosophy is to be found in the first *Critique*, when he formulates the three fundamental questions that express the central concerns of our reason, both theoretical and practical:

"1. What can I know? 2. What should I do? 3. What may I hope?" (A805/B833, boldfacing in the original).

Looking at these questions, it seems that the question regarding hope has intentionally been placed last in the order and that the three questions are ordered in a step-by-step way. This in turn suggests that each question presents a necessary condition whereby only after answering the first question can the second question be answered, and only after answering the first and second questions can the third question be answered. The procedure of fulfilling necessary conditions, dealing with one order of problems, and then proceeding only after settling that order of problems, *prima facie*, represents the method of Kant's Critical philosophy. The Critical project is in part defined by its attempt to ground human thought and action in reason alone (see Axi-xii), hence the third question about hope is part of a critical process that demands a reasoned justification. In Kantian terminology, hope must meet the criteria for being an a priori principle. Only thereafter, can hope be applied prudently within practical reason, and/or possibly in religious practice. Otherwise, the hopeful person would be acting imprudently, and would be lacking rational justification for her hope. So, it seems, only after establishing the nature, scope, limits, and justification of human knowledge ("what can I know?") and the categorical imperatives of practical reason ("what should I do?"), can the question of hope be

¹ I am grateful to Yehuda Danziger, Moshe Halbertal, Ted Kinnaman, Nati Kupfer, Yadi Oren, Noam Pratzer, and Jacob Rosen; to the organizers of and participants in The Wuhan University Kant Conference, where I first presented this essay; and to the referees and editors at CSKP for their helpful comments on earlier drafts.

solved (“what may I hope?”). Bracketting the first two questions, however, what is the content of hope, and what is the third question really about?

The bulk of Kant-scholarship on Kantian hope has adopted this step-by-step approach to the three questions: for example, Curtis H. Peters’s *Kant’s Philosophy of Hope* (1993) and Onora O’Neill’s, Tanner Lectures on Human Values, *Kant on Reason and Religion* (1996). In these studies, hope is presented as an integral and indeed essential part of the Critical philosophy, arguing that there are rationally justified reasons for hope, and setting aside the reductive thesis that hope is nothing but a contingently given emotional fact of human psychology, capable of being studied only in empirical anthropology. On the contrary, for Kant, to hope is to have a warranted and reasoned expectation that is closer to a disposition than to an emotion, thereby distancing hope from mere emotion, and making it possible that a person can achieve the *right* to hope.² Correspondingly, in the first *Critique* Kant writes:

I say, accordingly, that just as the moral principles are necessary in accordance with reason in its practical use, it is equally necessary to assume in accordance with reason in its theoretical use that everyone has cause to hope for happiness in the same measure as he has made himself worthy of it in his conduct, and that the system of morality is therefore inseparably combined with the system of happiness, though only in the idea of pure reason. (A809/B837)

In this text, Kant presents a brief account of the objective end and content of hope, and concludes that hope is the *earned* or *legitimate* right of a person to the expectation of happiness, and is indeed the expression of the expectation that one’s desires for happiness shall be satisfied and fulfilled. In addition to being the earned or legitimate expectation of the satisfaction of all our desires for happiness, it is also the earned or legitimate expectation of achieving the state of moral virtue, i.e., having a good will, which is one’s capacity for reaching a state of complete moral goodness and thereby achieving the worthiness to be happy, insofar as this is possible for human agents, which is the *summum bonum* or highest good.³ The nature, scope, limits, and justification of hope in this sense come into play only following a prior understanding of the limits of human knowledge and of the foundations of the metaphysics of morals.

It is a commonplace of Kant scholarship that there is an important distinction to be made between the desire for happiness and the desire for moral virtue.⁴ It has also been argued (see, e.g., Hills, 2006:245) that Kant does not have a consistent concept of happiness. In fact, Kant distinguishes between (1) the pleasure achieved by satisfying all of one’s sensible desires (“lower” happiness), and (2) the satisfaction achieved via the consciousness of one’s moral virtue, which Kant calls “self-fulfillment” (*Selbstzufriedenheit*) in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (“higher” happiness) (5:117). Correspondingly, the distinction between lower happiness and higher happiness avoids the apparent problem that acting for the sake of lower happiness only is inconsistent with moral worthy action, by making it possible to act for the sake of the highest good, which, if successful, is then subjectively experienced as higher happiness. Hope is connected to both kinds of happiness: in hoping for happiness, the person is simultaneously expecting both lower and higher happiness, but only the person who is motivated in a morally worthy way is rationally justified in hoping for higher happiness.

Reconceiving hope as a rational disposition and not merely as an emotion yields a ground of rational justification, which, if fulfilled, vindicates our hoping for happiness. For example, in the case of Spinoza, the mental act of hoping is turned into a mode of cognition

² For a discussion of changes in the definition of the concept of hope in modern philosophy and an important general analysis, see (Day, 1969).

³ See also (Peters, 1993:27-33).

⁴ See, e.g., (Timmermann, 2007); and (Rohlf, 2016).

that has deliberative qualities, which, in addition to being emotional, are ultimately inclinations directed towards lower happiness in Kant's sense. Kant's thesis is that all human hope is ultimately directed towards happiness, whether lower (egoistic, hedonistic, or otherwise instrumental) *or* higher (non-egoistic, non-hedonistic, and non-instrumental) (A805/B833).

As a consequence, Kant has two primary questions about hope: (1) whether a person can justifiably hope for happiness?, and (2) what are the preconditions that the person must fulfill in having sufficient reasons for earning the right to hope for happiness? Kant's conclusion is that a person *can* become morally virtuous, which, if accomplished, constitutes the justification of hoping for happiness. This doctrine is further unpacked by Peters (1993) and others, which focuses either on practical hope or on religious hope in Kant's thought.⁵ The third of Kant's fundamental questions ("what may I hope for?") is then identified solely with religious hope.

By contrast, I would like to show that the Kantian conception of rationally justified hope is already present in Kant's theoretical philosophy. Indeed, Kant's own explanation of the third question in the first *Critique* seemingly refers to this possibility:

The third question, namely, "If I do what I should, what may I then hope?" is simultaneously practical and theoretical, so that the practical leads like a clue to a reply to the theoretical question and, in its highest form, the speculative question. (A805/B833)

It is somewhat unclear in this text what the precise meaning of "leads like a clue" is; but it is clear enough, at the very least, that hope is directly relevant to *each* of the three fundamental questions in the Canon. This naturally raises the further question: precisely *how* is the question of hope "simultaneously practical and theoretical"? In an attempt to answer this, I will now turn to the interpretation of the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic and the use of regulative judgments. However, properly understanding the Appendix requires some preliminary explanation of the nature of theoretical judgment.

3. Theoretical Judgment

There are several different kinds of distinctions made by Kant between several different kinds of judgments. One of the basic distinctions between different kinds of judgments is the distinction between theoretical judgments and non-theoretical judgments. Theoretical judgments are objective statements purporting to assert truths, hence theoretical judgments are propositions about how things contingently or necessarily *are*. By contrast, non-theoretical judgments are subjective statements that may or may not have a truth value,⁶ hence statements about how things relate to our own mental capacities, whether those capacities are theoretical, practical, or otherwise sensible (say, aesthetic). Theoretical judgments are bound up with cognition and scientific knowledge, and, as Kant repeatedly points out, they do not present the things in-themselves but instead only appearances or phenomena. Theoretical judgments can be either analytic or synthetic, and if synthetic, either a priori or a posteriori.

Moreover, there are two different *uses* of theoretical judgments: constitutive and regulative (A179/B221-A180/B222). The constitutive use of judgment is objective, truth-apt, and not dependent on any other existential or hypothetical condition or premise. By contrast, the regulative use is not necessarily objective, and dependent on some further assumption, hypothetical condition, or supposition. The constitutive vs. regulative distinction is also applied

⁵ See, e.g., (Peters, 1993), (Axinn, 1994), and (O'Neill, 1996).

⁶ Kant distinguishes more clearly between theoretical judgment and non-theoretical judgment in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, (20:196), but for our purposes the version presented in the first *Critique* will suffice.

to the principles of pure understanding, such that the Axioms of Intuition and Anticipations of Perception are said by Kant to be constitutive “mathematical” principles because they do not presuppose further existential assumptions, hypothetical antecedents, or suppositions, whereas the Analogies of Experience and the Postulates of Empirical Thought are said by Kant to be regulative “dynamical” principles because they do rest on certain kinds of existential assumptions, hypothetical antecedents, or suppositions. Kant says:

In the application of the pure concepts of understanding to possible experience the use of their synthesis is either **mathematical** or **dynamical**: for it pertains partly merely to the **intuition**, partly to the **existence** of an appearance in general. (A160/199, boldfacing in the original)

In the Transcendental Analytic we have distinguished among the principles of understanding the **dynamical** ones, as merely regulative principles of **intuition**, from the **mathematical** ones, which are constitutive in regard to intuition. (A664/B692, boldfacing in the original)

Mathematical theoretical judgments are constitutive because they are objective, truth-apt, and rest only on pure intuition, but not on existential assumptions, hypothetical antecedents, or suppositions.⁷ *Dynamical* theoretical judgments are regulative, although still objective and truth-apt, and correspondingly, Robert Hanna (2017) points out that they are objective, truth-apt judgements “based on existential assumptions about the existence of matter and the existence of antecedent events in causal relations.”

4. Regulative Judgments and Theoretical Hope in the Appendix

With this distinction between constitutive and regulative uses of theoretical judgments in hand, we can now focus on the regulative use of theoretical judgments in the first *Critique*, and their connection with Kant’s conception of hope. A further development of the notion of the regulative use of theoretical judgments is to be found in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, in Kant’s distinction there between “determining” and “reflecting” judgments. But for the purposes of this paper, in order to simplify my discussion, I am going to focus exclusively on the regulative use of theoretical judgments in the context of the Appendix.

In describing the limits of reason in the first *Critique*, the Appendix acts as a bridge that transitions from the first part of the book, to the second part, the Transcendental Doctrine of Method. The Appendix also presents an account of the regulative use of the Ideas of pure reason.

As I mentioned above, regulative theoretical judgments, by contrast to constitutive theoretical judgments, are based on further existential assumptions, hypothetical conditions, or suppositions, that exceed immediately given empirical evidence for the truth of the judgment. This distinction is repeated by Kant in the Appendix, but here he also explicitly connects the regulative use with speculative Ideas of pure reason:

And this is the transcendental deduction of all the ideas of speculative reason, not as **constitutive** principles for the extension of our cognition to more objects than experience can give, but as **regulative** principles for the systematic unity of the manifold of empirical cognition in general, through which this cognition, within its proper boundaries, is cultivated and corrected more than could happen without such ideas, through the mere use of the principles of understanding. (A671/B699)

Prior to the Appendix, in The Transcendental Dialectic, there is a critique of the *constitutive* use of Ideas of pure reason, and this point has been stressed throughout the *Critique* (see, e.g.,

⁷ For further discussion, see (Williams 2017).

A407/B433-A408-B434), Kant revisits this issue in the Appendix, and it is specifically emphasized there that our inability to set limits to human reason is an inevitable feature of human reason in general. Kant writes:

[H]uman reason has a natural propensity to overstep all these boundaries [of possible experience], and ... transcendental ideas are just as natural to it as the categories are to the understanding, although with this difference, that just as the categories lead to truth, i.e., to the agreement of our concepts with their objects, the ideas effect a mere, but irresistible, illusion, deception by which one can hardly resist even through the most acute criticism. (A642/B670)

So even after arguing repeatedly in the previous sections of the Dialectic for the need to liberate human reason from “mere ... illusion,” human reason nevertheless finds this illusion “irresistible” and therefore continues to create Ideas imprudently.⁸ As Alan Wood puts it:

The resulting illusion, Kant thinks, is not an error of particular philosophers but lies in our faculty of reason itself, which mistakes the necessity with which it forms certain concepts in the course of regulating inquiry for the givenness of objects corresponding to those concepts. Human reason itself is therefore afflicted with a “dialectic” or logic of illusion, which taunts it with the prospect of knowing what it can never know. This is like an optical illusion, moreover, in that it does not simply disappear or cease to tempt us toward error even when it has been exposed. (2005:84)

Indeed, this illusion is so powerful that elsewhere in the Appendix, Kant depicts this attempt to restrain and limit human reason as “humiliating” (795/B823) for our faculty of reason. Despite this humiliation, the unavoidable condition of reason’s perpetually superseding its own limits is precisely what the Appendix tries to ameliorate and negotiate. The regulative use of theoretical judgments in speculation not only contains an obligation to limit pure reason, but also acknowledges human reason’s inherent need to transgress those boundaries.

The Appendix is divided into two sections. The first section is dedicated to the nature of regulative judgement. The rest of the Appendix is dedicated to describing the methodology of regulative judgment. In this part, Kant explains that the regulative use involves three kinds of logical principles to accomplish reason’s demand for unity and coherence: manifoldness, affinity, and unity (A662/B690). The regulative use presents objects in their initial appearance and distinction (manifold), then reorders the objects according to their similarity to other objects (affinity), and finally assessing the object in terms of a broader and more basic category (unity) (A660/B688). These principles constitute the basic scientific method of categorizing objects through their similarities and differences. Thus the regulative use of judgment does have a necessary and indispensable use and purpose: expanding scientific knowledge and promoting the progress of scientific inquiry (A644/B645, A687/B715).

In the regulative use of Ideas there is an underlying presupposition of the principle of the systematic unity of nature. This includes the Idea that there is a “world-author” (A687/B715), which entails that there is already unity in the world by virtue of the fact that the world was intentionally created by God. According to this Idea, there is a preestablished design realized in the world that requires only discovery through the scientific method. The problem with the regulative use of judgment lies in its assumption that this unity in nature is beneficial for scientific progress (see, e.g., A643-644/B671-672). Correspondingly, in the second section of the Appendix, as part of a description of the final aim of the regulative use of Ideas, Kant lists several mistakes that might occur in the use of the regulative as a scientific method.

⁸ This is what Michelle Grier calls “transcendental illusion” in her (1997).

The first mistake is that of the “lazy Reason”: it is the “resting of reason, when, after formulating a coherent Idea, the scientific investigator mistakenly believes that she has reached the final conclusion, which is an explanation by means of the understanding (see, e.g., A689-692/B717-720). It is “convenient” (A691/B719) for us to predetermine conclusions in accordance with conclusions reached beforehand. Instead of reorganizing our thoughts and searching for discrepancies, premature discovery becomes dogmatized as the objective truth and final conclusion of scientific inquiry.

The second mistake is the misinterpretation and then misuse of the system of the unity principle (see, e.g., A692/B720). The presupposition of the unity of nature can cause the prearranging of empirical evidence in conformity with the conviction of unity, and in the process, creating a bias for discovering the unity of nature. In assuming a unified system of nature corresponding to our judgments, we can overlook empirical justification by experience. Indeed, it is by no means necessary that nature will actually conform to that proposed system of unity.

In the case of the regulative use of judgment that seeks a systematic unity between different competing theories, it may mistakenly surpass the limits of possible experience by advancing a presumption of unity beyond the scientist’s perceived experience. It is precisely this fallacious line of reasoning that Kant most wishes to avoid throughout the first *Critique*: it is the fallacy of deriving the actual from the conceptual, or the empirical from the logical.

Despite possible errors of misjudgment in the regulative use, Kant nevertheless reaffirms the importance of the regulative judgment, going even as far as to argue that there is a *necessary* use of regulative judgment. Thereby Kant transforms the regulative use of Ideas from a mere method of science into a transcendental condition of the possibility of human reason:

[Without this regulative use,] reason would proceed directly contrary to its vocation, since it would set as its goal an idea that entirely contradicts the arrangement of nature. Nor can one say that it has previously gleaned this unity from the contingent constitution of nature in accordance with its principles of reason. For the law of reason to seek unity is necessary, since without it we would have no reason, and without that, no coherent use of the understanding, and, lacking that, no sufficient mark of empirical truth; thus in regard to the latter we simply have to presuppose the systematic unity of nature as objectively valid and necessary. (A651/B679)

Insofar as the presumption of systematic unity remains as a mere Idea about nature, however, it does not necessarily tell what nature objectively *is*, although it is indeed “objectively valid and necessary” for the employment of the understanding (Rauscher, 2010:292). More specifically, the regulative use of Ideas constitutes what Kant calls, the “hypothetical use of reason” (A647/B675), which assumes that the world is a systematic unity, and therefore only *projects* a unity of nature, without necessarily discovering it in experience. The function of the regulative judgment is to be a necessary cognitive tool for the advancement of scientific progress, i.e., regulative judgment is instrumental, but this function also entails that the regulative judgment is indispensable to our understanding of nature, i.e., regulative judgment is indispensable.⁹

In the light of this ambivalence of the regulative judgment’s dual purpose (i.e., instrumentality and indispensability), Sasha Mudd has suggested the view that the function of the regulative reason is twofold: first, “projecting the idea of systematic unity as the goal of

⁹ The reasons for a systematic unity in order to move from cognition to science is further developed in the third chapter of the first *Critique*’s Transcendental Doctrine of Method, the “Architectonic of Pure Reason” (A832-851/B860-879).

our cognitive striving” (Mudd, 2013:82), and second, compelling “us to seek this unity...by striving to make our cognition ever more systematic and complete in accordance with the many subsidiary principles that derive from reason’s supreme demand for unity” (Mudd, 2013:82). The presumptive unity that is included in making a regulative judgment has the combined effect of creating coherence between perceived objects, and also, thereafter, directs our attention to larger or more intricate systems of knowledge. As Kant puts it, the use of the regulative judgment is to introduce “unity into particular cognitions as far as possible and thereby **approximating** the rule to universality” (A647/B675, boldfacing in the original). It is important to emphasize that this *approximation* has two aspects. On the one hand, it remains within the realm of theoretical judgments, while on the other, it cannot be considered a constitutive judgement.

Mudd also points out that the inconsistencies between Kant’s description of the use of regulative judgment has given rise to several interpretations. In these interpretations the regulative use has been described either as a strictly subjective principle, or as also an objective principle. In the exclusively-subjective interpretation, the regulative use seems to have “no valid claim of *any kind* about objects” (Mudd, 2013:82), and is merely a methodological tool for advancing scientific progress. Hence the regulative judgment has no truth value and does not state anything *about* objects. So according to this interpretation, the regulative use is a mere heuristic. By contrast, the objective interpretation says that the regulative judgment is also a necessary condition for the understanding of nature. As I mentioned above, reason itself has a transcendental aspect, namely the necessary assumption of the unity of nature;¹⁰ thus the reflective judgment’s presumption of a systematic unity of nature is a necessary precondition of reason itself (Mudd, 2013:83).

Both the subjective interpretation and the objective interpretation have some problems. As I mentioned earlier, part of the definition of regulative judgments is that they are theoretical judgments, and as such they have the characteristic of being *about* the world. To define the regulative judgment as purely subjective would eliminate that characteristic of *aboutness* and they would be then classified as non-theoretical judgements. But if the regulative judgment is taken to be strictly objective, like a judgment of experience, then that would be no less problematic, for how could the regulative use of an Idea approximate to an empirical truth about nature? In that case, it could not be an a priori judgment, but instead only an a posteriori judgment.

Mudd offers a helpful interpretation and a corresponding solution to this problem, Mudd (2013:85), by making distinctions between different senses of Kant’s terminology in the context of the regulative judgment. She argues that Kant uses the terms “objectivity” and “subjectivity” in both general and also specific ways within the Appendix. Granting this distinction, then a more coherent account is possible, that includes the objective and subjective aspects of the regulative use of judgment. The different senses of objectivity in the Appendix are dubbed by Mudd as “objectual” and “inter-subjectively valid.” The “objectual” sense refers to constitutive judgments, which are the transcendental conditions for the experience of an object. And the “inter-subjectively valid” sense refers to a judgment that is *a priori*, and independent from subjective variations. Mudd (2013:85-86) also argues that, for Kant, the subjective sense has three senses: (1) “subjectively grounded,” (2) “idiosyncratic,” and (3) “non-objectual.” The “subjectively grounded” sense is the thin concept of a judgment, whereby the judgment is formed and used, at least partly, in any manner decided by the judging subject. The “idiosyncratic” sense is when the judgment’s validity is contingent on the subjective variation of the subject’s judgment. And the third sense, the “non-objectual” sense, is when the

¹⁰ The Transcendental Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding also appeals to unity (B136-B139) but in that case it is the unity of particular *objects of experience*, whereas in this case it is the systematic unity of *nature as a whole*.

judgment is lacking the transcendental conditions of the possibility of experience and would be defined as completely outside the bounds of sense.

Correspondingly, Mudd describes the regulative use of Ideas according to the different senses of objectivity and subjectivity:

[The regulative use of Ideas would be]... “objective” not in the sense of being objectual but in the dual sense of being (1) intersubjectively valid, and (2) a transcendental condition on our cognitive activity (hence indirectly linked to objects). At the same time, it would be “subjective” not in the sense of being idiosyncratic, but in the dual sense of being (1) “subjectively grounded” and (2) non-objectual (hence not directly constitutive of objects). (Mudd, 2013:88)

Over and above resolving difficulties in the Appendix, and thereby providing a coherent picture of the regulative use of Ideas that does not result in any contradiction (Mudd 2013:87), Mudd also point out that the Appendix provides a general critical reassessment of the nature of human reason. We will recall that the fundamental problem Kant is struggling with is that the attempt to prohibit reason from exceeding the sensible limits of human knowledge is an impossible task, because this limitation is contrary to the inherent nature of reason. As a consequence, if we affirm that this is a normative state of reason, it could be argued that reason must necessarily violate its own limitations. The argument is as follows: In assuming a faculty of reason, there is a presupposition of a vocation that will constantly seek systematic unity. Our reason is indifferent as to whether that unity exists or not. Having the faculty of reason necessarily implies that there will be a search for coherence. Therefore, in assuming reason, one must recognize its inherently regulative nature as its condition of use.

This necessary infringement of the limits of pure reason creates a general worry for Kant, as he notes at the beginning of the Appendix:

Thus the transcendental ideas too shall presumably have a good and consequently immanent use, even though, if their significance is misunderstood and they are taken for concepts of real things, they can be transcendent in their application and for that very reason deceptive. (A643/B671)

Thus the limit of pure reason is placed at its most outer boundary. The regulative use of Ideas pushes up against that boundary, and Kant is aware of the precipice beyond. Despite that, without vindicating the regulative use of Ideas, science would be inert and reason would be forced to break that boundary, turning those limits to an impossible and forceless regulation.

To summarize: the regulative employment of the Ideas creates some rational uncertainty, by *seeming* to supersede the limits of pure reason in assuming a systematic unity of empirical nature. Nevertheless, the regulative use must constantly be restrained if it is to satisfy the basic definition of a theoretical judgment. Only thereby can the regulative use of judgments remain a justified representation of nature, and as expressing propositions that have truth value, or being *about* the world.

5. Theoretical Kantian Hope: *As If*

After working out an explanation of the relation between the theoretical judgment and the regulative use of Ideas in the Appendix, a tentative answer can now be given to the question of how to reconcile (1) hope’s identification with the “theoretical cognition of things” (*CPR*, A805/B833-A806/B834) in the realm of knowledge, with (2) hope in the practical philosophy. Even though there is no explicit mention of hope in the Appendix, and even though to assert hope’s centrality in the *Critique* might seem to be an overstepping of the boundaries of interpretation, I think it is at least arguable, and perhaps even convincingly arguable, that the

underlying aim of the Appendix is to establish a rationally *justified* hope in our complete scientific knowledge of nature, by virtue of basic parallels and similarities between Kantian hope and the regulative use of Ideas. As a consequence, the Appendix can then be viewed as an anticipation of Kant's theory of rationally justified hope in his practical philosophy.

As I mentioned earlier, my view is that there is an inherent element of hope within each of the three fundamental questions. This interpretation, in turn, implies that the regulative use of Ideas is an expression of Kantian hope that is grounded on an answer to the Canon's first question "What can I know?"

As I've shown, the standard description of Kantian hope says that hope is the rationally justified right to a disposition towards the expectation that in the future one shall be in a state of happiness. Kantian hope in this sense is a rationally justified desire of expectation, which is embodied in a person's disposition. But what is the content of the rationally justified desired expectation in the case of the theoretical regulative use of Ideas? Kant writes:

The ideal of the highest being is, according to these considerations, nothing other than a **regulative** principle of reason, to regard all combination in the world **as if** it arose from an all-sufficient necessary cause, so as to ground on that cause the rule of a unity that is systematic and necessary according to universal laws; but it is not an assertion of an existence that is necessary in itself. But at the same time, it is unavoidable, by means of a transcendental subreption, to represent this formal principle to oneself as constitutive, and to think of this unity hypostatistically. (A619/B647, boldfacing in the original)

The "ideal" of reason is contained in the regulative use of Ideas for theoretical judgment, which is reason's anticipation of the coherence and unity of our ideas within empirical experience. It is in this regulative rationally justified assumption of a systematic unity of nature that the expression of Kantian theoretical hope is to be found. Indeed, the recurring use of the term "as if" in the Appendix is an equivalent expression for the Kantian concept of hope. For example:

For the regulative law of systematic unity would have us study nature **as if** systematic and purposive unity together with the greatest possible manifoldness were to be encountered everywhere to infinity. (A700/B728)

One of the prerequisites of the regulative use of Ideas that the scientific investigator must think about nature "as if" there were a systematic unity. This "as if" scientific disposition is the required confidence of a scientist in the theoretical possibility of a systematic unity in empirical nature, which in turn partially constitutes the scientific conception of the world. The absence of this presumption of unity would result in scientific stagnation or even regression, because the assumption facilitates the ongoing progress of scientific research. Yet, the confidence that originates in the regulative use of Ideas is accomplished only through justified reasons. As I mentioned above, the justified reasons are derived from the fact that the regulative use is a necessary and *a priori* feature of our reason itself, including its credibility as a heuristic method in the progress of science.¹¹

The "as if" disposition expresses a self-conscious awareness of the skeptical aspect of the regulative use, and is thereby limited in its certainty and applicability to the empirical world. The regulative use, in Mudd's terms, is "subjectively grounded" and "non-objectual," hence it must not be confused with asserting an actual systematic unity of empirical nature. Kant explicitly describes this very tension in the Appendix:

¹¹ This interpretation is in line with Ido Gieger's "transcendental interpretation" of the Appendix in his (2003).

[L]ike all speculative ideas, [it] means nothing more than that reason bids us consider every connection in the world according to principles of a systematic unity, hence **as if** they had all arisen from one single all-encompassing being, as supreme and all-sufficient cause. From this it is clear that here reason could aim at nothing except its own formal rule in the extension of its empirical use, but never at an extension of it **beyond all the boundaries of empirical use**, consequently, that under this idea there does not lie hidden any constitutive principle for its use directed to possible experience.” (A686/B714, boldfacing in the original)

Assuming a “supreme and all sufficient cause,” hence referring to the belief in God who is supposed to be the “world-author,” is essential, but it does not go beyond human reason’s own limited capability. This mixture of expectation and actuality, and the tension between restraint and the release of freedom are common features of hope. For example, Erich Fromm (1968:9) describes the emotion of hope as “paradoxical” and like a “crouched tiger”:

[To hope is] to be ready at every moment for that which is not yet born, and yet not become desperate if there is no birth in our lifetime. There is no sense in hoping for that which already exists or for that which cannot be. Those whose hope is weak settle down for comfort or violence; those whose hope is strong see and cherish all signs of new life and are ready every moment to help the birth of that which is ready to be born...To hope is a state of being. It is an inner readiness, that of intense but not-yet-spent activeness. (Fromm, 1968:9-12)

Fromm also claims that hope is an emotion that includes a “not-yet-spent activeness,” which is not “busyness” or a form of activity, but the emotion of growth of the actual possibility of change, and that hope is the “transcending of the *status quo*” (1968:12-16). Now it is true that Kant regards hope as either a rational activity or a rational disposition, as opposed to Fromm’s appeal to a self-conscious emotion, but it also remains true Kantian theoretical hope always include a redefinition of the scientific “status quo.”

There is also a lucidity in Kantian theoretical hope that includes a realization of epistemic possibilities. Regulative uses of theoretical judgments reorganize our existing judgments into a new relationship with one another, thereby gaining a more coherent unity of reason. This occurs, however, only through a readiness and a moment of suspension that is between that which is known, on the one hand, and that which is possibly knowable, yet currently unknown on the other. Furthermore, Kant describes in the Appendix the telos that is inherent in the search for the systematic unity of nature:

This highest formal unity that alone rests on concepts of reason is the **purposive** unity of things; and the **speculative** interest of reason makes it necessary to regard every ordinance in the world as if it had sprouted from the intention of a highest reason Such a principle namely, opens up for our reason, as applied to the field of experience, entirely new prospects for connecting up things in the world in accordance with teleological laws, and thereby attaining to the greatest systematic unity among them. (A686-687/B714-715, boldfacing in the original)

It wouldn’t be in any way imprudent, and on the contrary it would be fully permissible, to recognize in Kantian theoretical hope a necessary and indispensable tool that licenses going beyond the limits of existing science in order to achieve ongoing progress in scientific knowledge. An analogy for Kantian theoretical hope would be the launching of a satellite into an uncharted region of outer space. It is necessary to recognize the current position of the satellite in order to be able to recognize that which is unfamiliar territory. Voyaging beyond that current point of intelligibility and the expectation of that which is unfamiliar, is a rationally justified hope. The reason for that rational justification is that all our empirical evidence up to that point has expressed and implied that possible outcome of systematic coherence. Therefore, those who control the satellite have the *right* to move it into the uncharted locations in space

with rationally justified epistemic confidence.¹² In short, Kantian theoretical hope is a rationally justified transcendental heuristic method.¹³

The broader implication of this kind of hope is that, even in cases in which hope is employed mistakenly, and the judgment results in error, this will not topple or undermine the validity of the larger Kantian Critical project. Although disappointed in one's own mistaken judgment, it does not result in radical skepticism and despair about reason, because in assuming "as if," there was already a recognition of fallibility built into the project of scientific research. Kant makes this point very clearly and explicitly:

As long as we keep to this presupposition as a **regulative** principle, then even error cannot do us any harm...in such a case we only miss one more unity, but we do not ruin the unity of reason in its empirical use. But even this setback cannot at all affect the law itself, in its universal and teleological aim. For although an anatomist can be convicted of error when he relates some organ of an animal's body to an end which, as one can clearly show, does not follow from it, it is nevertheless quite impossible to **prove** in any one case that a natural arrangement, whatever it might be, has no end at all. (A687/B715-A688/B716, boldfacing in the original)

Recognizing the possibility of mistakes as part of the scientific method means that the use of reason remains intact, even after committing errors. The hope for theoretical truth is rationally justified a priori, but only insofar as it *assumes* but also does not *assert* the unity of nature. So the limits of reason have been acknowledged and the method is "familiar." Any scientific setbacks do not revoke the legitimacy of the regulative use of Ideas, and errors that are discovered empirically do not impinge on the method itself.

In the Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant says that the final question needing to be solved by the first *Critique* is: "**How is metaphysics possible as science?**" (B22, boldfacing in the original). It may be concluded from what I have argued that Kant's answer to the possibility of a justified metaphysics is the philosophical disposition of theoretical hope. In that case, the Canon's first question, "what can I know?", can be equivalently rephrased as the question: "can I be rationally justified in hoping for speculative scientific knowledge?"

6. Happiness and Theoretical Hope

Let us return now to the questions posed at the beginning of this essay about the connection between theoretical and practical hope: How is the question of hope "simultaneously" practical and theoretical? What does Kant mean when he says that the practical hope is identical to the "theoretical cognition of things" in the realm of knowledge?

The key to answering these questions is found in another Kantian text about what he calls a "highest reason":

[T]he necessary connection of the hope of being happy with the unremitting effort to make oneself worthy of happiness that has been adduced cannot be cognized through reason if it is grounded merely in nature, but may be hoped for only if it is at the same time grounded on a **highest reason**, which commands in accordance with moral laws, as at the same time the cause of nature. (A810/B838, boldfacing in the original)

¹² This is an analogy that parallels Kant's astronomy example at A662-663/B690-691.

¹³ There are several other aspects of hope present in Kantian theoretical hope, and indeed present in all Kantian hope, that I have not discussed. For a general philosophical analysis of hope see (Steinbock, 2004).

The “highest reason” is a reason that results in the fulfillment of both the theoretical and moral requirements implied by the two canonical questions: “what can I know?” and “what should I do?” For Kant, even when human reason is grounded on the highest reason, there is always some remaining doubt and uncertainty; nevertheless there is a rational justification for the hope of achieving happiness. Kantian theoretical hope is identical to Kantian practical hope in the way that they respectively serve as the apex of each of the first two *Critiques*. Theoretical hope grounds the possibility of a justified hope for scientific judgments and theories, while the practical hope pursues the moral constitution and content of that hope. Finally, then, the answer to the third question, “what may I hope?” acts as a closure of the fundamental questions of reason, that thereby validates theoretical and moral faith. What I have just argued, therefore, offers an alternative interpretation of the fundamental three questions. Instead of being merely prioritized, the question of hope is the fundamental question of the Critical philosophy, regulating each basic aspect of human reason.

6. Conclusion

Prior to Kant, hope was reduced to a person’s desire under uncertain conditions and outcomes, and was taken to be nothing but an emotion, as per the philosophies of Descartes, Spinoza, and Hume.¹⁴ Kant transformed hope from a mere emotion into a transcendental fact, and a rationally justified disposition that can be employed only under certain necessary conditions. Departing from the earlier philosophical analyses of hope, instead of putting an emphasis on hope’s seeming irrationality, Kant shows that hope is in fact grounded on human rationality. Hope is thereby claimed to be necessary and rationally justified as a transcendental and a priori fact of human reason.

How can we respond to Kant’s query, “what indications may we use that might lead us to hope that in renewed attempts we shall be luckier than those who have gone before us?” (B15). We can now say that it is the awareness of the limits of our knowledge, while also fully acknowledging that there are *a priori* reasons which justify a hope for speculative knowledge. It may still also be asked: why is hope the cardinal concept implicit in all of the Canon’s three questions? The answer is that it is the uniqueness of hope that it is grounded in the known and the unknown, thereby moving between logical necessity and speculative possibility. Hope is then the disposition of a *properly disciplined faculty of human reason*, the achievement of which is the ultimate purpose of the first *Critique*. To quote Wood once again:

For Kant the most essential drama of philosophy is this struggle of reason with itself, and this is why he entitles its fundamental work “The Critique of Pure Reason” - in other words, it is reason's own criticism, which triumphs over the illusions of which reason itself is the author. (Wood, 2005:84)

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¹⁴ See (Descartes, 1989:article 165, (Spinoza, 2000:3P18p2S), and (Hume, 1978:section ix).

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