Kant’s Deconstruction of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* 

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ON THREE OCCASIONS IN THE CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON, KANT TAKES credit for having finally provided the proof of the ‘principle of sufficient reason’ that his predecessors in German post-Leibnizian philosophy had sought in vain. They could not provide such a proof, he says, because they lacked the transcendental method of the Critique of Pure Reason. According to this method, one proves the truth of a synthetic a priori principle (for instance, the causal principle) by proving two things: (1) that the conditions of possibility of our experience of an object are also the conditions of possibility of this object itself (this is the argument Kant makes in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, in the Critique of Pure Reason); (2) that presupposing the truth of the synthetic principle under consideration (for instance, the causal principle, but also all the other ‘principles of pure understanding’ in the Critique of Pure Reason) is a condition of possibility of our experience of any object, and therefore (by virtue of (1)), of this object itself. What Kant describes as his “proof of the principle of sufficient reason” is none other than his proof, according to this method, of the causal principle in the Second Analogy of Experience, in the Critique of Pure Reason.

Now this claim is somewhat surprising. In Leibniz, and in Christian Wolff—the main representative of the post-Leibnizian school of German philosophy discussed by Kant—the causal principle is only one of the specifications of the principle of sufficient reason. And Kant himself, in the pre-critical text that discusses this principle, distinguishes at least four types of reason, and therefore four specifications of the corresponding principle—ratio essendi (reason for being, that is, reason for the essential determinations of a thing), ratio fiendi (reason for the coming to be of a thing’s determinations), ratio existendi (reason for the existence of a thing), and ratio cognoscendi (reason for our knowing that a thing is thus and so). Only the second and the third kinds of reasons (reason for coming to be, reason for existence) are plausible ancestors of the concept of cause discussed in the Second Analogy of Experience. Why then does Kant describe as his proof of the principle of sufficient reason a proof that, strictly speaking, is only a proof of the causal principle, and what happens to the other aspects of the notion of reason or ground that Kant discussed in the pre-critical text?

I shall suggest in what follows that, in fact, Kant’s response to Hume on the causal principle in the Second Analogy of Experience results in his redefining all...
aspects of the notion of reason (and, therefore, of the principle of sufficient reason), not only the reason for coming to be and the reason for existing (ratio fiendi and ratio existendi), but also the reason for the essential determinations of a thing and the reason for our knowing that a thing is thus and so (ratio essendi and ratio cognoscendi)—at least when these notions are applied to the only objects for which one can affirm the universal validity of some version of the principle of sufficient reason, the objects of our perceptual experience.

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One interesting result of comparing Kant’s pre-critical and critical view is that a striking reversal in Kant’s method of proof becomes apparent. In the pre-critical text, Kant starts from a logical/ontological principle of sufficient reason, moves from there to a principle of sufficient reason of existence (which he equates with the causal principle), and from there to what he calls a principle of succession (a principle of sufficient reason for the changes of states in a substance). By contrast, in the critical text (the Second Analogy of Experience), Kant proves the principle of succession, which he equates with the causal principle, and in doing this provides “the only proof” of the principle of sufficient reason of existence and—I shall argue—also redefines the respective status of the ontological and logical principles themselves. In short, instead of moving from logic to time-determination, one moves from time-determination to logic. This reversal of method is related to the discovery of a completely new reason or ground: the ‘transcendental unity of consciousness’ as the reason of reasons, or the ground for there being any principle of sufficient reason at all. The discovery of this new ground has striking consequences for Kant’s critical concept of freedom, which I shall consider at the end of the paper.

1. The principle of determining, commonly called sufficient reason, in Kant’s New Explanation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Knowledge.

Kant first defines what he means by ‘reason’ or ‘ground’. His definition places this notion in the context of an analysis of propositions, or rather, of what makes propositions true. It is in this context that he explains why he prefers to speak of ‘determining’ rather than ‘sufficient’ reason.

To determine is to posit a predicate while excluding its opposite. What
determines a subject with respect to a predicate is called the reason. One distinguishes an antecedently and a consequently determining reason. The antecedently determining reason is that whose notion precedes what is determined, i.e. that without which what is determined is not intelligible.* The consequently determining reason is that which would not be posited unless the notion of what is determined were already posited from elsewhere. The former can also be called reason why or reason for the being or becoming (rationem cur scilicet essendi vel fiendi); the latter can be called reason that or reason of knowing (rationem quod scilicet cognoscendi).

* To this one may add the identical reason where the notion of the subject determines the predicate through its perfect identity with it, for instance a triangle has three sides; where the notion of the determined neither follows nor precedes that of the determining.4

Kant gives two examples. Here’s the first: we have a consequently determining reason for affirming that the world contains many ills, namely our own experience of those ills. But if we also look for an antecedently determining reason, we must search for that which, in the essence of the world, or in its relation to some other being, provides the ground or reason for the predicate’s (for example, “containing many ills”) being attributed to the subject (“world”) and its opposite (say: “perfectly good”) being excluded.

Kant’s second example is the following: we have a consequently determining reason for asserting that light travels not instantaneously but with an ascribable speed. This reason consists in the eclipses of the satellites of Jupiter—or more precisely, in the delay in our observation of those eclipses—a delay that is a consequence of the non-instantaneous travel of light. But we also have an antecedently determining reason. This consists, according to Kant, in the elasticity of the aether particles through which light travels, which delays its movement.5

The distinction between antecedently and consequently determining reason, as presented here, is a bit disconcerting: clearly, the two kinds of ‘reason’ are quite heterogeneous. One is a reason for holding the proposition to be true. The other is a reason for the proposition’s being true, that is, for the state of affairs to obtain. Kant does recognize this difference, since at the end of his definition he characterizes the former as a reason for knowing (ratio cognoscendi), the latter as a reason for being or becoming (ratio essendi vel fiendi). But he does not stress this aspect of the distinction in his initial characterization of reasons. Both reasons are described as reasons for the determination of a subject with respect to a predicate. This seeming hesitation in Kant’s definition of reason (ground) will be important for what follows.

Having thus defined the notion of reason (ratio) and distinguished two main kinds of determining reason, Kant criticizes Wolff’s definition. Wolff, he says, “defines reason (or ground) as that from which it is possible to understand why something is rather than is not” (definit enim rationem per id, unde intelligi potest, cur aliquid potius sit, quam non sit).6 Kant objects that this definition is circular. It amounts to saying: “Reason is that from which it is possible to understand for what reason something is rather than is not.” This circularity is avoided if one says, rather: reason is that by which the subject of a proposition is determined, that is, that by virtue of which a predicate is posited and its opposite is negated. That is why it is
preferable to speak of determining rather than sufficient reason.'

But is it so clear that the Wolffian definition is circular? It is so only if the same thing is meant by 'reason' (in: "reason is that from which it is possible to understand," ratio est, unde intelligi potest ) and by 'why' ("why something is rather than is not," cur aliquid sit potius quam non sit). But that's not necessarily so. Wolff might have meant that the reason in the proposition is that from which it is possible to understand the why (the reason) in things. The parallelism of logical and ontological relations would justify Wolff's statement and dissolve the objection of circularity. The reason that Kant nevertheless formulates this objection is probably that he shares Wolff's view that understanding the reason in propositions and the reason in things is really understanding one and the same thing, the same object of intellect. But what we want to know is what is understood is what determines a subject in relation to a predicate, that is to say, what posits the predicate and excludes its negation.

This is where the distinction between antecedently and consequently determining reason comes into play. But if one accepts it, then another, more severe objection to Wolff is in order. For as we saw, Kant expressly says that the antecedently determining reason is a reason why (ratio cur) but that the consequently determining reason is only a reason that (ratio quod). Given this distinction, why does Kant not make this objection to Wolff (the reason why is not the only kind of reason), an objection that seems, at this point, more damning than that of circularity?

This is probably because he also shares Wolff's (and Leibniz's) view that the only reason worthy of the name is the antecedently determining reason. For only it is not just a reason for our holding a proposition to be true but a reason for its being true. Here's what he says on the example of the world and its ills:

Suppose we look for the reason of ills in the world. We have thus a proposition: the world contains many ills. We are not looking for the reason that or reason of knowing, for our own experience plays this role; but we are looking for the reason why or the reason for coming to be (ratio cur scilicet fiendi), i.e. a reason such that when it is posited, we understand that the world is not undetermined with respect to the predicate but on the contrary, the predicate of ills is posited, and the opposite is excluded. The reason (ground), therefore, determines what is at first indeterminate. And since all truth is produced by the determination of a predicate in a subject, the determining reason is not only a criterion of truth, but its source, without which there would remain many possibles, but nothing true.8

The whole ambiguity of Kant's position is manifest in this passage. For on the one hand, Kant's notion of reason (ground) is characterized as a reason for asserting a predicate of a subject, without which there would be no proposition susceptible of truth or falsity, that is to say, on our part, us judging subjects, no act of asserting rather than suspending our judgment. And the force of his statement that there must always be a reason for determining a subject with respect to a predicate clearly rests on the common intuition that we need a reason for holding a proposition to be true. But understood in this way, the reason could very well be what Kant calls a mere criterion of truth and not its source. Nonetheless, Kant immediately adds: the reason is not simply a criterion. To deserve the name 'reason', it has to
be the *source* of the truth of the proposition.

The very same ambiguity is at work in Kant's pre-critical proof of the principle of sufficient reason (or of determining reason). The principle is thus formulated: "Nothing is true without a determining reason." Here, 'nothing' clearly means 'no proposition', as is shown in the proof that immediately follows his statement of the principle:

1. All true propositions state that a subject is determined in relation to a predicate, that is to say, that this predicate is affirmed and its opposite is excluded.
2. But a predicate is excluded only if there is another notion that, by the principle of contradiction, precludes its being affirmed.
3. In every truth there is therefore something that, by excluding the opposite predicate, determines the truth of the proposition. (from 1 and 2)
4. That is precisely what is called the determining reason. (definition)
5. So, nothing is true without a determining reason.⁹ (from 3 and 4)

This "proof" does little more than restate what was already said in Kant's initial characterization of a 'reason': a true proposition is one in which a subject is determined with respect to a predicate (premise (1)). What does the determination is the reason (premise (2), propositions (3) and (4) derived from (1) and (2)).

Consider again the proposition: "Light travels with an assignable, finite speed." To think that the proposition is true is to assert that the predicate, "traveling with an assignable, finite speed," belongs to the subject, "light," and that its negation, "travels instantaneously," is excluded (this is what premise (1) says). However, for such an exclusion to obtain, there needs to be a reason (otherwise we might admit as problematic or as possible both judgments, light travels instantaneously, light travels with an assignable, finite speed). Now, the consequently determining reason provided by the delay in our observation of the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites excludes that the travel should be instantaneous, by virtue of the syllogism in modus tollens: "If all light-travel is instantaneous, there is no delay in the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites; however, there is a delay. So, it is not the case that all light-travel is instantaneous." For its part the antecedently determining reason excludes instantaneous travel by the syllogism in modus ponens: "If aether particles are elastic, then all light travel is delayed (non-instantaneous); however, aether particles are elastic. So, all light travel is delayed." The exclusion of the opposite predicate may be derived either from the modus tollens appropriate to the consequently determining reason or from the *modus ponens* appropriate to the antecedently determining reason.¹⁰

We see again on this example that, even if it is granted that a *reason* is needed for moving from a merely problematic judgment (one with respect to which assent is suspended) to a proposition (a judgment asserted as true), it does not follow at all that for every truth there is an antecedently determining reason, *ratio cur.* Nonetheless, just as in his definition of 'reason' (*ratio, Grund, ground*) Kant moved without any argument from distinguishing between two types of reason (antecedently and consequently determining reason) to maintaining that only one *kind* of reason is relevant (the antecedently determining reason, reason for *being or becoming*, reason why), similarly here, Kant substitutes for the cautious conclusion
that it is in the nature of propositions (assertoric judgments) that there should be a reason for the determination of the subject in relation to the predicate (whether this reason be antecedently or consequently determined), a far more ambitious statement: there is always an antecedently determining reason.

That the knowledge of truth always demands that we perceive a reason, this is affirmed by the common sense of all mortals. But most often we are content with a consequently determining reason, when what is at issue is only our certainty; but it is easy to see, from the theorem and the definition, that there is always an antecedently determining reason or, if you prefer, a genetic or an identical reason; for the consequently determining reason does not make truth, but only presents it.¹¹

From this ambitious version of the principle of sufficient reason, Kant derives important metaphysical consequences that in the years to come will motivate his growing discomfort with his own pre-critical position, and more generally with rational metaphysics.

The first consequence of this is a proof of the principle of sufficient reason for the existence of contingent things. This is where the concept of cause occurs for the first time in the New Elucidation: the reason of existence is a cause.

As a preliminary to proving a principle of sufficient reason of existence, Kant first establishes the negative proposition, “It is absurd that something should have in itself the reason of its existence.”¹² His proof for this proposition rests on the unquestioned assumption that a cause necessarily precedes its effect in time. So, if a thing were the cause of itself, it would have to precede its own existence in time, which is absurd. Therefore nothing is the reason of its own existence: Kant expressly opposes Spinoza’s notion of a God that is causa sui, cause of itself.

On the other hand it is true to say that God’s existence is necessary, or that the proposition, “God exists,” is necessarily true. But this is not because God is the cause of Himself. It is not even because God’s existence is contained in His essence (as in the “Cartesian proof”). Rather, it is because He is the unique being that is the ground of everything possible. I will not attempt to lay out and analyze Kant’s proof of this point. I only want to point out that, according to Kant’s pre-critical view, if we affirm the existence of God, or if we assert the proposition, “God exists,” as necessarily true, it is not by virtue of an antecedently determining reason (whether of being, of coming to be, or of existing): We do not know why God exists. But we do know that He exists and that this existence is absolutely necessary. We know this by a reason for knowing of a unique kind, which Kant will further elaborate in the 1763 text, The Only Possible Foundation for a Proof of the Existence of God and then thoroughly refute in the Transcendental Ideal of the first Critique.¹³

Kant then sets about proving a principle of antecedently determining reason for the existence of contingent things. The principle is: “Nothing contingent can be without an antecedently determining reason (a cause) of its existence.”

The proof, summarized schematically, is the following.

(1) Suppose a contingent thing exists without an antecedently determining reason.

(2) As an existing thing, it is completely determined, and the opposite of
each of its determinations is excluded. (definition of existence as complete determination)

(3) But according to the hypothesis, this exclusion has no other reason than the thing’s existence itself. Even more, this exclusion is identical: the very fact that the thing exists is what excludes its non-existing.

(4) But this amounts to saying that its existence is absolutely necessary, which is contrary to the hypothesis.

(5) So, nothing contingent can be without an antecedently determining reason.

The proof rests on three presuppositions: (a) existence is complete determination: an existing thing is individuated by the fact that, given the totality of possible predicates, for each and every one of them, either it or its negation is true of the individual existing thing; (b) as such, it falls under the principle of determining reason stated above; (c) this principle should be understood as a principle of antecedently determining reason. If we accept all three presuppositions, then we can avoid the absurd conclusion that a contingent existence is absolutely necessary only if we accept that every contingent thing has an antecedently determining reason not only of its essential and accidental determinations (ratio essendi vel fiendi) but of its existence itself (ratio existendi).

The second consequence is a ‘principle of succession’, stated as follows: “No change can affect substances except insofar as they are related to other substances, and their reciprocal dependance determines their mutual change of state.” Kant’s argument for this principle is that if the ground or reason of the change of state of a substance were within it, then the state that comes to be should always have been (given that its ratio fiendi was always present in the substance). So, a state that was not and comes to be must have its ground not in the substance itself but in its relation to another substance or to other substances.

(This is of course a fundamentally anti-Leibnizian view: contrary to Leibniz, according to Kant individual substances have real influence upon one another’s states). 14

Finally, Kant devotes a fairly long discussion to the relationship between the principle of sufficient reason and human freedom. Here he opposes a view defended by his predecessor Crusius. According to Crusius, in some cases asserting the existence of a state of affairs or an event is without an antecedently determining reason. It can be affirmed only by virtue of a ratio cognoscendi, which is none other than existence itself as attested by experience. Such is the case with free action: that the will should decide of its own free choice, without any antecedently determining reason, in favour of one action rather than another, is a fact attested by experience. To this Kant objects that if an action, or the will’s determination to act, were without an antecedently determining reason, then, since the determination of the will to act and the ensuing action have not always existed, their transition into existence would remain undetermined—that is to say, for the action as well as for the determination of the will, it would remain undetermined that it should be rather than not be. Kant’s response in this case rests on the same presuppositions as his general argument concerning the reason of existence: in order to affirm that a thing has come to be, we need not only a ratio cognoscendi (ratio consequenter determinans),
but also a *ratio fiendi*, the *ratio antecedenter determinans* of its complete determination.\(^{15}\)

To the question: “is this principle of reason applied to human action compatible with freedom of the will and freedom of action?” Kant answers—again against Crusius—that being free is not acting *without a reason*, but on the contrary acting from an *internal* reason that inclines one to act without any hesitation or doubt in one way rather than another. Kant, here, is faithfully Leibnizian.

I have suggested above that the main weakness of Kant’s argument is the way in which Kant jumps from the distinction between antecedently and consequently determining reason for asserting the truth of a proposition to the claim that there is *always* an antecedently determining reason, a reason *why*. It will not be long before the universality of the *ratio cur* causes problems for Kant. But his doubt will focus at first not on the principle of reason and its proof, but on particular cases of connection between the *ratio* and the *rationatum*. For the analysis of these cases, Kant introduces, at the beginning of the 1760s, the distinction between logical reason and real reason (or logical ground and real ground) and underlines the synthetic character of the real ground. With the Humean alarm-clock doing its work, the investigation of the relationship of real ground to its consequences becomes generalized into an investigation concerning the notion of reason or ground in general, and the principle of sufficient reason itself.

**2. Sceptical interlude: logical reason and real reason. The synthetic *ratio ponens*.**

In the Lectures on Metaphysics from the early 1760s, Kant states the difficulty of accounting for the relationship between *ratio* and *rationatum* in the case of what he now calls *ratio realis* (real ground), so as to distinguish it from *ratio logica* (logical ground). The logical ground (or reason), he says, is posited by identity. But the real ground is posited without identity. The examples show that by ‘real ground’ he means the relationship of ground that connects one *existence* to another. In other words what, in the *New Elucidation*, he called *ratio existendi*, or cause.\(^{16}\)

All grounds (reasons) are either logical, by which the consequence is posited by the rule of identity, where the consequences is identical with the
antecedent as a predicate.

Or real, by which the consequence is not posited according to the rule of identity and is not identical with the ground.

For instance: whence evil in the world? Response as to the logical ground: because in the world there are series of finite things, which are imperfect; if one seeks the real ground, then one seeks the being that brings about evil in the world....

The connection between logical reason (or ground) and consequence is clear: but not that between real ground and consequence, that if something is posited, something else at the same time must be posited.

Example: God wills! The World came to be. "Julius Caesar!". The name brings us the thought of the ruler of Rome. What is the connection? 17

One can find almost the same examples in the Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy, which dates from the same period. 18

In the question, "what is the connection between two distinct existences?", one can recognize Hume's question. But, as I have shown elsewhere, when Kant poses the question it is in the terms of Wolffian School Logic: how are we to understand, "if one thing is posited, another thing is posited at the same time"? This vocabulary is that of Wolff's analysis of syllogisms in modus ponens. In a hypothetical syllogism, "si antecedens ponitur, ponendum quoque est consequens," (if the antecedent is posited, the consequent must also be posited). Interestingly, it is in the context of the modus ponens characteristic of real ground that, it seems, Kant introduced for the first time the distinction between analytic and synthetic connection:

The relation of ratio ponens is connection, that of ratio tollens is of opposition. The relation of logical ratio ponens or tollens is analytic—rational. The relation of real ratio ponens or tollens is synthetic—empirical. 19

Only with the Critique of Pure Reason does Kant think he has solved to his satisfaction the question: what is the nature of the synthetic connection between ratio and rationatum, what is the nature of real ground? His answer is the following: the relationship of real ground, that is to say, the necessary connection between two distinct existences, is the connection that must necessarily exist in order for any order of time to be determinable among the objects of our perceptual experience. But then, the 'principle of succession', which in the New Elucidation was a consequence of the principle of sufficient reason, becomes the ground of its proof. This means that the whole proof-structure of the New Elucidation is reversed: Kant does not proceed from a principle of reason that is both logical and ontological (every truth must have its reason, every attribution of a property to a thing must have its reason), to a principle of reason of existence (every contingent existence must have its reason), and finally to a principle of succession (every change of state of a substance must have its reason in the state, or change of state, of another substance). Instead, he now proceeds from a principle of succession (the Second Analogy of Experience: "everything that happens presupposes something else upon which it follows according to a rule") to a redefinition of the notion of reason or ground and, with it, to the revision of the principle of reason in all its aspects—whether it concerns the reason of existence, the reason of being or of coming to be, or even
the reason of knowing. It is this reversal that I would like now to examine.


The Analogies of Experience are the principles obtained by applying to appearances the three categories of relation: substance/accident, cause/effect, and interaction. The one we are going to be considering is the Second Analogy, the causal principle, the proof of which Kant takes to be "the only possible proof of the principle of sufficient reason."

Before considering the Second Analogy, I think I should briefly recall three points that Kant takes himself to have established in earlier parts of the Critique of Pure Reason, before reaching the Analogies. The three points are the following:

(1) Things as they appear to us are perceived as having temporal determinations (relations of succession and simultaneity) only if they are related to one another in one time (Transcendental Aesthetic, A30/B46).
(2) Things as they appear to us are related to one another in one time only if they appear to a perceiving consciousness aware of the unity and numerical identity of its own acts of combining the contents of its perceptions (Transcendental Deduction, §26, A107; B159-160).
(3) These acts are acts of forming judgments (Transcendental Deduction, §19, B140-41).

This being so, the progression I described a moment ago in Kant's reasoning in the critical period, from succession to reason of existence and from reason of existence to reason (ground) in general, is inseparable from Kant's discovery of a new reason or ground, one that has no precedent in his pre-critical text (or, for that matter, in the history of philosophy): what Kant calls the objective unity of self-consciousness (namely what I just described as the unity and numerical identity of the self-conscious act of combining representations), which is now the transcendental ground (Bestimmungsgrund) of grounds (reasons) and of the principle of sufficient reason itself.

In what follows I will first analyze Kant's principle of succession in the Critique of Pure Reason, namely the Second Analogy of Experience. I will then show how this principle and its proof lead to a redefinition of the reason or ground in all its aspects—reason of existence, of coming to be, of being, and even of knowing. Finally I will show what happens to the relationship between the principle of sufficient reason and Kant's concept of freedom.

3-1. The proof of the Second Analogy of Experience.

I have analyzed this proof elsewhere. I will not attempt to repeat this analysis here, nor will I evaluate Kant's argument in the Second Analogy. I will consider only those aspects of it that are necessary for our understanding of the critical notion of reason or ground, ratio.

The question Kant asks himself is well known: how do we relate the subjective succession of our perceptions to an objective temporal order, given that we
have no perception of "time itself" that could provide us with the temporal coordinates in reference to which we might determine the positions of things or their changes of state? More specifically—this is the problem Kant deals with in the Second Analogy—how do we relate the subjective succession of our perceptions to an objective succession of the states of things?

Kant's response is in two main stages. One, fairly swift, could be described as phenomenological. It consists in a description of our experience of an objective temporal order. The other, longer and more complex, rests on an argument developed earlier (in the Metaphysical Deduction and the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories), which concerns the role of the logical forms of our judgments in establishing an intentional relationship between our representations and the objects they are the representations of. I will call this second stage the logical stage of the argument of the Second Analogy.

First, the phenomenological stage. We relate the subjective succession of our perceptions to an objective succession of the states of things, Kant maintains, if, and only if, we hold the subjective succession to be determined in its temporal order. In other words, if the subjective succession of perceptions is the perception of an objective succession, perception A that precedes perception B cannot follow it—or rather, a perception A', generically identical to perception A that preceded B, cannot follow perception B. To take up the well-known example Kant uses in the Critique, perceiving that a ship moves downstream: when I have such a perceptual experience I am aware that I could not decide arbitrarily to reverse the order of my perceptions and, for instance, perceive the ship again at point 1 after perceiving it at point 2. On the other hand, if the subjective succession is only subjective, that is to say if there corresponds to it in the object a relationship of temporal simultaneity, then I could, if I decided to do so, reverse the order of my perceptions and have perception A again, or a perception A' generically identical to A, after having perception B (for instance—to take up again Kant's example—perceive the front of the house again after perceiving the back).

One quick comment on this 'phenomenological' stage of the argument and the examples that illustrate it. I think that the best way to understand the description Kant proposes is to consider it as a description of the use that we make of our imagination in perception. When we perceive a subjective succession as the perception of an objective succession, for instance in the perception of the ship moving downstream, at the very moment that we perceive the second position of the ship, if we imagine that our gaze returns to the point where we previously perceived the ship, what we imagine is that we would not perceive the ship in that place. This is what is meant by saying that the order of perceptions is determined. Of course, if the objective state of affairs were to change (if we had grounds for thinking that the ship had now been towed upstream), we could imagine that if we returned our gaze toward the preceding point, we would see the ship again. Therefore the awareness of the determined character of the order of our perception depends not only on our senses, but also on our imagination. It is precisely because it depends on the imagination that it can be guided both by and toward judgment.

And this leads us to the second stage of Kant's argument. In the first, Kant replied to the question, how is the subjective succession of our perceptions also the perception of an objective succession? His answer was that this is so just in the cases that the subjective succession is represented as determined in its temporal order (namely, when we don't imagine that we would perceive the same thing if our gaze were to
return to the point upon which it was focused a moment before). But this calls for a second question: how and why do we hold the subjective succession to be determined in its temporal order (why do we not imagine that we could again perceive the same state of things at the point upon which we focused our gaze a moment earlier)? Here Kant’s answer becomes more complex. I suggest that it is summed up by the following three points: we hold the subjective succession to be determined in its temporal order if, and only if: (1) we establish an intentional relation between the representation and the independent object of which we take it to be the representation; (2) in doing so, we are led to hold the order of perceptions to be determined in the object, which means that (3) we presuppose another objective state of things that precedes the perceived succession and that determines its occurrence, according to a rule. Now if this is so, we can conclude that all perceptions of objective successions rest on the presupposition that “something else precedes, upon which the perceived succession follows, according to a rule.” This “something which precedes, upon which the objective succession follows, according to a rule,” is precisely what is called a ‘cause’. It is therefore a condition of the experience of objective successions that every event (every objective succession of states in a thing) presupposes something else upon which it follows according to a rule. But according to the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, the conditions of the possibility of experience are also the conditions of the possibility of the object of experience. Therefore, it is a condition of the possibility, not only of our experience of an objective succession, but of that succession itself, that something should precede it, upon which it follows according to a rule.

It would be a mistake to believe—as Schopenhauer did—that Kant maintains the absurd position that every objective succession is itself a causal relation. What Kant maintains is that we perceive—that is to say, we identify or recognize under a concept (or, more exactly, under concepts combined in judgments)—an objective succession only if we suppose a state of things preceding it, upon which it follows according to a rule. For all that, we do not know this antecedent state of things. We only presuppose it, and because we presuppose it, we strive to identify it. So, for instance, perceiving that the ship, which was at point 1, has moved to point 2, is implicitly holding the proposition, “the ship, which was at p1, has moved to p2,” to be the conclusion of a hypothetical syllogism whose major premise, and therefore also whose minor premise, we do not know: “If q, then the ship, which was at p1, moves to p2; q; therefore, the ship, which was at p1, has moved to p2.” If we could not suppose the existence of something that we could think of as the antecedent q of a rule, “if q, then the ship, which was at p1, has moved to p2,” we would interpret the subjective succession of our perceptions differently. For example, I perceive a tower at point p1, and a moment later I perceive a (qualitatively) identical tower at point p2. It is impossible for me to suppose something that I could think of as the antecedent s of a rule, “if s, then the tower, which was at p1, has moved to p2.” I need to order the temporal relation of the objects of my perceptions differently. I conclude that two towers that are qualitatively identical exist simultaneously at two distinct points in space.

The conclusion of the argument, therefore, is: every objective succession of states “presupposes something else upon which it follows according to a rule,” that is to say, that it has a cause (ratio fiendi or existendi—both terms are appropriate here): the reason or ground is a ground of a state’s coming to be (ratio fiendi), but it is also the only possible version of the ratio existendi, or ground of existence. The
only existence for which one can seek a *ratio existendi* or cause is the existence of a state of a substance that did not exist beforehand. As for the substance itself, the permanent substratum of every change of state, there is no sense in seeking a *ratio existendi*, a ground of existence.

**3-2. ratio existendi, ratio fiendi, ratio essendi.**

Does all of this suffice to explain why the causal principle stated and proved in the Second Analogy of Experience should take over the role of the principle of sufficient reason stated in the *New Elucidation*, in all its aspects? So far I have only explained how a descendant of the principle of succession from the *New Elucidation* managed to take over the role of the principle of *reason of existence*, as well as that of the principle of reason of *coming to be*. But what happens to the other aspects of the principle of sufficient reason? And what happens to the objection I formulated earlier, which was that in the pre-critical period, Kant jumped too quickly from distinguishing between reason *that* and reason *why*, to asserting that there is *always* a reason *why*?

Well, this is perhaps where the most interesting aspect of Kant’s critical position lies: it provides a response to this objection that Kant’s pre-critical view could not provide. Kant can now assert that for every determination of a thing there is an antecedently determining reason (a reason determining by the antecedent), a reason *why*, whether this reason is contained in the essence of a thing (*ratio essendi*) or in its relation to other things (*ratio fiendi vel existendi*). But this is because the ‘essence’ of empirical things, or what Kant now calls their ‘nature’, consists in the marks under which they can be recognized as appearances, *not* in the properties they might have as things in themselves. This restriction is what makes it possible to assert the universal validity of the principle of sufficient reason understood as a principle of antecedently determining reason. The reason for a thing’s determinations may lie in the (relatively or absolutely) permanent characteristics by which a thing can be recognized as the kind of thing it is (this argument was made in the *first* Analogy of Experience, which I have not examined here). Or it may lie in “something that precedes any change of state, upon which this change of state follows, according to a rule,” (this is the argument of the *Second Analogy of Experience*, which I just briefly recounted). Finally, permanent as well as changing characteristics are determined in the context of the universal reciprocal interaction of all things coexisting in space (this is the argument of the Third Analogy of Experience, the
descendant of the principle of coexistence from the *New Elucidation*).

For the essence itself (what I called the relatively or absolutely permanent marks under which a thing is recognized as the kind of thing it is), there is no reason. It is just a fact about the relation between our cognitive capacities and the state of things that we recognize bodies in general under the marks of extension, figure, and impenetrability. It is a fact about the present use of our recognitional capacities that we recognize beeswax as the kind of thing that is hard, yellowish, and fragrant under normal conditions of temperature but becomes soft, sticky, browner, and so on when heated up. As for the changes of states, for which the Second Analogy provides a principle of sufficient reason, no ultimate determining reason, or ground, can be found. For any event, the search for "something that precedes, upon which it follows, according to a rule," can go on indefinitely. So, the proof of the principle of sufficient reason is also a severe restriction of its scope and force. Nevertheless, because he has thus proved a principle of sufficient reason that is understood as a principle of *antecedently determining* reason, that is reinterpreted in the terms of his critical philosophy, and that itself has its ground or reason in the unity of self-consciousness—the unity and numerical identity of the judging subject—Kant can affirm, in the Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* and then again in the Introduction to the Transcendental Dialectic, that it is an unavoidable destiny of reason (this time as a faculty, *Vernunft*) always to look for a further reason, or ground (Grund) of the objective determinations of things, while at the same time it can never claim to have found the ultimate ground.

Finally, it is clear that we must now distinguish between the principle of reason of propositions and the principle of reason of things and their determinations. It is a *logical* principle that every proposition (assertoric judgment) must have a reason, without which it would, at best, remain a merely problematic judgment whose negation could equally be admitted as problematic (possible). This principle, as Kant points out in the Introduction to the Logic collated by his student Jäsche, can be specified in two ways: every assertoric proposition (1) must have a reason and (2) must not have false consequences. In the first requisite, we may recognize the mere form of the modus ponens proper to the *antecedently determining* reason from the pre-critical *New Elucidation*, while in the second, we see that of the modus tollens proper to the *consequently determining* reason. But neither of these two versions of the *logical* principle of sufficient reason gives us any access to the reason, or ground, of the determinations of things. That there has to be a reason or ground for the determination of things was proven *not* from a *logical* principle of reason for the truth of propositions but from an elucidation of the conditions under which we can apprehend a temporal order among the objects of our perceptions.

This restriction of the principle of reason of things and their determinations to a principle of the determination of an *objective temporal order*, and the foundation of reasons, in the plural (whether empirical or logical), in *one* transcendental reason or ground—the unity and identity of the judging subject, or "transcendental unity of self-consciousness"—allow Kant to present an unprecedented solution to the problem of the relationship between the principle of sufficient reason and human freedom.
3-3. The principle of reason and human freedom: the ground beyond grounds (the reason beyond reasons)

In 1755, Kant insisted against Crusius that admitting the universal validity of the principle of sufficient (or determining) reason was compatible with affirming that human beings are free. For, he said, although it is true that everything that happens—and therefore also every human action—has an antecedently determining reason, in cases where this reason (ground) is not external (as in mechanical causality), but internal (as in divine action, and in those human actions where “the motives of understanding applied to the will provoke actions”), the action, although certain, is not necessitated. But in the Remark on the Analytic of the Critique of Practical Reason, Kant categorically rejects this kind of solution. Describing an action as free because its ground is not external but internal amounts to attributing to human beings the “freedom of a turnspit,” which has in itself the source of its movement, its position and internal structure at each moment determining its position at the following moment. The truth is that in such a situation, each change of state, far from originating from itself a new series of states, is strictly determined by the change that precedes it. In the same way, whatever their mode of determination (whether according to the rules of skill, the advice of prudence, or the imperatives of morality), human actions, insofar as they are events in time, are strictly determined by the events that precede them in time. The principle of reason of coming to be proven in the second Analogy applies to them as it applies to every event. But the distinction between things as they appear to the senses (phenomena) and things accessible to the pure intellect (noumena), as well as the discovery of the equivalence between freely determined action and action determined under the representation of the moral law, allow Kant at the same time to adopt a position that is in certain respects very close to the position of Crusius, which he criticized in the New Elucidation: it is also true to say that at each instant there is no other antecedently determining reason of action than the will itself, acting under the representation of the moral law—whether or not the agent makes this law the supreme principle of the discrimination and ordering of his or her maxims. The temporal determination of the action is no more than the expansion over time of an atemporal relation of the agent to the moral law for which, at every instant, s/he can and should be held accountable.

I will not try to untangle the well-known difficulties of Kant’s position here. I will note only that the determination of the maxims of action under the legislation of the categorical imperative—“I ought always to act in such a way that I could will that the maxim of my action should become a universal law of nature”—has, in the domain of morality, a role parallel to the role held in the domain of cognition by the determination of the laws of nature under the unity of self-consciousness that makes possible the unity of experience. The unity of self-consciousness, in its relation to the impressions of the senses, is the determining reason of the representation of reasons for an event’s taking place, having taken place, or being about to take place, that is, having a determinate position in time. Similarly, the unity of self-consciousness, in its relation to impulses and feelings of pleasure and displeasure, is the determining ground (Bestimmungsgrund) of the representation of reasons for action, which can in general be represented as possible antecedents of hypothetical judgments of the form: if \( p \), then do \( a \). But the unity of self-consciousness here is not simply a (transcendental) reason or ground of (empirical) grounds. Rather, it is
an additional reason for action: not only is it the source of the representation of reasons together with the form of their unity, but it is also itself a reason of action *that is that form itself*, motivating the choice of a maxim *for the sole reason that it is universalizable* (that is, can be required as a universal law of nature). It is by virtue of this generating of another reason, a reason *beyond reasons* (or perhaps beneath reasons, underlying all reasons), which is none other that *the form itself of the absolute unity of reasons*, that Kant can claim to have discovered a notion of freedom far more radical than that of Leibniz, which transcends the principle of sufficient reason defined in the domain of reasons.

Significantly, it is again in the vocabulary of 1755 that Kant defines the relationship between the moral law and freedom: freedom is the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, and the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom. But this vocabulary really indicates that we have now arrived at the limit of antecedently determining reasons. For human freedom, there is no other reason than a *ratio cognoscendi*, moral law as a *Faktum* of reason (*Vernunft*) (not a given of reason, but rather a production of reason). In the *New Elucidation*, for God only a ground of knowing could be stated, and not a ground of being or existing. With the critical system, for man as a free being we must affirm that we have a ground of knowing but not that we have a ground of being or existing. Of course, according to Kant the same ground of knowing—the moral law—that leads us to affirm the existence of human freedom, leads us also to postulate the existence of God as a ground for the synthetic connection between virtue and happiness. But this only serves to widen the gap between this and Leibniz’s principle of sufficient reason. The existence of God is not affirmed by an ontological, cosmological, or physico-theological proof (God does not have in Himself His ground, nor does the affirmation of His existence result from the ultimate application to finite things of the principle of antecedently determining reason). The existence of God is postulated by virtue of a *ratio* that is not even a *ratio cognoscendi*, but rather a *ratio credendi*, which human reason generates from its own resources as the only possible response to its inescapable demand for the Highest Good.

In brief: the thinned-out version of the principle of sufficient reason defended by Kant in his critical philosophy depends on the unity of self-consciousness that, he maintains, conditions all knowledge of objects on the one hand, and on the other, the ordered unity of the maxims of action under the legislation of the moral law. The destinies of the two notions—unity of self-consciousness, principle of sufficient reason—are from now on linked, for better or for worse: to dethrone the one is also to dethrone the other (as we can see for instance in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche).

But there is another way of challenging Kant’s principle of sufficient reason: in Kant’s argument, as we have seen, the principle in all its aspects is dependent on an Aristotelian predicative logic, which provides discursive thought with its form and toward which temporal syntheses are guided. To put this predicative logic in question is to deprive the principle of reason of its relevance in both of the senses the critical Kant gives it (logical principle of reason of propositions, the transcendental principle of reason of the temporal order of appearances). Of this principle there would then only remain, at best, a modest methodological imperative—for every thing and every event, there must be an explanation, which one must seek; for every action there must be a reason, which one must understand. And a practical
imperative of autonomy: for one’s own actions, one should, as much as can be done, be in a position to hold oneself accountable.

It is therefore tempting to disconnect Kant’s argument in the Analogies of Experience from Kant’s defense of the old principle of sufficient reason. One will then take Kant’s Analogies to be either an explanation and a defense of the epistemological presuppositions of Newtonian natural science (the option of Neo-Kantianism, taken up today by Michael Friedman). Or one will take it to be an explanation of the necessary conditions of our ordinary perceptual experience, which one must reconstruct without any reference at all to Kant’s dubious scholastic heritage (the option of Strawson and his followers). In this paper I have tried to offer a third option. I have tried to show that taking Kant’s scholastic heritage seriously does not mean reducing his view to this heritage, but on the contrary enables us to measure the full extent of the reversal he imposed upon it. Following up and reconstructing Kant’s argument all the way to its origin in the principle of sufficient reason and the reversal of its proof, then, echoes more familiar themes in today’s philosophical concerns: the relation between reasons and causes and the determination of reasons from a self-consciousness that has the capacity to generate from itself the norms of its theoretical and practical activity. How and why the modern developments of these themes differ from Kant’s, and what they nevertheless owe to him—it will take many more papers to try to come to terms with this question. φ

Notes

* An earlier version of this paper was presented (in French) at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris, in December 1999 and (in German) at the Ninth International Kant Congress in Berlin, in March 2000. Its penultimate version was presented to the Harvard Philosophy Colloquium in April 2000. I would like to express my gratitude to the participants in all three discussions for their insightful and challenging comments. Special thanks to Martine Pécharman (CNRS, Paris) for having suggested the project in the first place.

1. Cf. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 1st ed. (Riga: 1781), 200-1, 217, 783. Cf. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 2nd ed. (Riga: 1787), 246-7, 265, 811. Henceforth, references to the Critique of Pure Reason will be indicated only by the letters A and B, corresponding to the first and second editions respectively.

2. A point of vocabulary is in order here. The term Kant uses in the Latin New Elucidation is ratio. In German it becomes Grund. “Principle of sufficient reason” is principium rationis sufficientis, Satz vom zureichenden Grund. Because of the use of the word reason in the “principle of sufficient reason,” I will use the English “reason” for ratio and sometimes supplement it by the word “ground” to avoid confusion with the faculty of reason (German Vernunft). In the texts from the early sixties, when Kant distinguishes logischer Grund and Realgrund, we are used to the translations “logical ground” and “real ground,” so, in discussing these terms, I shall often switch to “ground.”

3. By “proposition,” Kant means what he calls in the critical period “assertoric judgment,” namely a judgment asserted as true. A judgment for Kant is the content or the intentional correlate of an act of judging. If I judge that the world contains many evils, “the world contains many evils” is the content of my act of judging. It is also a proposition, a judgment asserted as true. If I merely entertain the thought that the world may contain many evils, without taking the statement “the world contains many evils” to be true, then the content of my thought is a mere judgment, not a proposition, in Kant’s vocabulary. To move from a mere judgment to a proposition (a judgment held to be
true), one needs a reason. This, then, is the context in which Kant defines his notion of “reason” or “ground” (ratio, Grund).

4. Immanuel Kant, §2 of New Elucidation, §1 of Gesammelte Schriften (Berlin Academy, 1912), 391. Henceforth, Gesammelte Schriften will be indicated by the letters AA followed by the section number.

5. Kant’s view of light as a movement of fine aether particles is borrowed from Descartes. But Kant opposes Descartes in maintaining that these particles are elastic rather than absolutely hard, thus delaying the transmission of light (v. Kant, New Elucidation, AA2, 391-92, and René Descartes, part III, §§63-4 and part IV, §28 of Principes de la Philosophie. I am grateful to Michelle and Jean-Marie Beyssade for having clarified the Cartesian example for me and for having corrected an error in the comments I made on it in my book. On this point see note 16.

6. Cf. Christian Wolff, §56 of Philosophia Prima sive Ontologia. Kant alters the definition slightly. Wolff actually writes, “Per rationem sufficientem intelligimus id, unde intelligitur, cur aliquid sit.” As the main discussion is about the notion of cur, however, the variation is of no consequence and we can ignore it.

7. Kant, New Elucidation, AA1, 393, Pléiade 1, 121-22. In preferring the expression “determining reason” to “sufficient reason,” Kant probably recalls that Baumgarten reserved the qualifier “sufficient” for the reason of all determinations of a thing, that is to say, the reason of its individuation (cf. Baumgarten, §22 of Metaphysica, AA17, 28). Now it is clear that the notion of reason initially introduced by Kant in section II of the New Elucidation is more modest than a reason of individuation. This explains why Kant prefers the expression “determining reason,” which he borrows from Crusius.

8. Kant, New Elucidation, AA1, 392; Pléiade 1, 120. The last sentence italicized by me.

9. Kant, Prop.5 of New Elucidation, AA1, 393; Pléiade 1, 121-22. I have closely followed the progression of the argument, suppressing a few repetitions.

10. A few quick remarks regarding my presentation of the two kinds of reasons in terms of modus ponens and modus tollens: Kant does not explicitly give such an explanation. But the expressions “ratio consequenter determinans” and “ratio antecedenter determinans” seem to me to be an unambiguous reference to the idea of determining by the antecedent or determining by the consequent of a hypothetical judgment. The corresponding logical forms are modus ponens and modus tollens. Making this reference explicit has three main advantages: (1) We see more clearly that the two species of ratio do not have the same force. The ratio ponens allows us to assert universally that all light travel is delayed (it allows us to exclude in all cases that light travel is instantaneous). The ratio tollens only allows us to deny a universal judgment, excluding in this case that light travel is instantaneous and thus allows us to deny the universal judgment: all light travel is instantaneous. (2) We shall see in a moment that when Kant, just a few years later, puts into doubt the universal validity of the antecedently determining reason, he expresses this doubt in terms of ratio ponens: he asks, what is the synthetic ratio ponens? This confirms that his notion of reason or ground had always been thought in light of modus ponens (or tollens). (3) In the critical period, when Kant distinguishes a logical principle and a transcendental principle of sufficient reason, he will define the logical principle in terms that clearly refer to the two forms, modus ponens and modus tollens. There is thus a deep continuity in his thought on this point, which it is important to keep in mind (see below, p.19).

11. Kant, Prop.5 of New Elucidation, AA2, 394.

12. Kant, Prop.5 of New Elucidation, AA2, 394.

13. See Kant, New Elucidation, AA2, 395; Immanuel Kant, The Only Possible Ground for a Proof of the Existence of God, AA2, 83-84; and Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A581-82/B609-10. The pre-critical proof rests on the idea that the notion of possible has a “formal” aspect (what is possible is what is thinkable, and what is thinkable is what is non-contradictory) and a “real” aspect (something must be thought). Both aspects presuppose that what is possible (thinkable) is grounded in one and
the same being, which necessarily exists. The Transcendental Ideal will oppose to this “proof” that the matter of all possible or its reality, as well as the comparability of all possible (the formal aspect of the possible) are provided not by an absolutely necessary being, but by the collective unity of possible experience and of its objects (v. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A581-82/B609-10). Gérard Lebrun has convincingly shown that already in the pre-critical period, by renouncing the Cartesian ontological proof, Kant has given up the metaphysical notion of essence as a degree of perfection and initiated instead a consideration of the conditions under which thoughts have meaning. See Gérard Lebrun, Kant et la Fin de la Métaphysique (Paris: Armand Colin, 1970), 13-34. See also Béatrice Longuenesse, Kant and the Capacity to Judge (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 154. Henceforth, Kant and the Capacity to Judge will be indicated by K.C.J.

14. This principle is complemented by a ‘principle of coexistence’: “Finite substances stand in no relation to one another through their mere existence and have no community except insofar as they are maintained in reciprocal relations through the common principle of their existence, namely the divine intellect,” (AA1, 412-13). Just as the ‘principle of succession’ is the ancestor of the Second Analogy of Experience, the ‘principle of coexistence’ is the ancestor of the Third Analogy. But of course, in the Critique of Pure Reason, as we shall see, Kant will prove both principles from the conditions of our experience of objective time-determinations, not from the application of a previously established principle of sufficient reason to the changes of states of substances (principle of succession) or to the relations between substances that determine these changes of states (principle of coexistence). Undertaking a detailed analysis of these two principles and their proof in the New Elucidation is beyond the scope of the present paper.

15. See Kant, Prop. 8 and prop. 9 of New Elucidation, AA1, 396-97, 398-406.

16. Already in the New Elucidation, Kant stressed the necessity of distinguishing between the ground of truth and the ground of existence, that is to say on the one hand ratio essendi or fiendi, and on the other ratio existendi or cause. But he did not call the former ‘logical ground’ nor the latter ‘real ground’. True, he did mention the distinction made by Crusius between ideal ground and real ground. But this distinction is not the same as the one Kant introduced in the 1760s between logical ground and real ground. Rather, Crusius’ ideal reason, as Kant himself points out in the Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy is what Kant calls, in the New Elucidation, ratio cognoscendi, the ground of knowing. Cf. Kant, Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy, AA 11, 203 and Crusius, §34 ff. of Entwurf der notwendigen Vernunftwahrnehmungen, wie sie den zufälligen entgegen gesetzt werden (Metaphysik), 2nd ed. (Leipzig: 1753). In K.C.J., I made a mistake in identifying the type of relation Kant has in mind when he wonders about the nature of ratio realis (see Longuenesse, K.C.J., 353). What puzzled him was not the relation between the elasticity of air and the non-instantaneous travel of light. This relation falls under the ratio fiendi, that is to say, under one case of what Kant now calls logical ground. As Jean-Marie Beyssade pointed out to me, here the connection is identical. The ratio realis of 1763 is the ratio existendi, or cause, of the 1755 New Elucidation.

17. AA28, 12.

18. AA1, 202.


23. The ordinary objects of our perceptual experience, Descartes’ piece of wax, Kant’s planets in the Third Analogy, and Kant’s ship in the Second Analogy, are only relatively permanent; matter, if
we understand it, characterized by extension, figure, and impenetrability, to be the ultimate sub-
strate of all spatial-temporal appearances, is absolutely permanent. The argument that all changes of
state of a thing presuppose something permanent was made in the First Analogy (see Kant, New
Elucidation, A182/B224-A189/B232). On this point, see Longuenesse, K.C.J., 325-345 and
“Synthesis, Logical Forms, and the Objects of our Ordinary Experience: Response to Michael
Friedman,” in Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie (forthcoming.).
25. In the dismissive response he made to Eberhard in his 1790 On a Discovery According to Which
all New Critique of Pure Reason Has Been Made Superfluous by an Earlier One, Kant noted that
Eberhard entertained confusion when he formulated the principle of reason as: “Everything has its
sufficient reason.” “Everything,” Kant remarks, can mean “every proposition” or “every thing.” In
the former case the principle is logical; in the latter it is transcendental. The confusion he
denounces was his own in 1755—even if, as we have seen, he was careful to distinguish reason of
truths and reason of existences.
26. AA1, 401; Cambridge, 23.
27. Cf. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, AA5, 97, trans. L. W. Beck (University of
Chicago Press, 1949; reprint, Garland, 1949), 203-204. Henceforth, references to the Critique of
Practical Reason will be indicated by C. Pr. R..
30. C. Pr. R., AA5, 31-32; Beck, 142-3.
31. Cf. C. Pr. R., 124-32; Beck, 227-234. See also Immanuel Kant, §84 of Critique of Judgment,
AA5, 434-36, trans. W. S. Pluhar’s (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1987), 322-
23.
32. David Wiggins comes up with this kind of extremely modest version of the principle of suffi-
34. Peter Strawson, The Bounds of Sense (Methuen, 1968).

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