# Crusius & Kant on Determining Grounds

## PHIL 971

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Here I discuss Crusius's distinction between sufficient and determining grounds, and his related conception of freedom. I then explicate parts of Kant's conception of determining ground, his restriction of the application of the PSR, and his criticism of both Wolff's and Crusius's positions regarding freedom in contrast to his preferred form of Compatibilism.

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Christian August Crusius (1715-1775) was a professor of philosophy and theology at the *Universität Leipzig*. He was well known for his criticisms of German rationalists such as Wolff, and was one of Kant's most important influences in the development of the critical philosophy. Here's Watkins reporting on Crusius's importance:[1]

> Cruisus's importance for Kant's Critique of Pure Reason can hardly be exaggerated. As Guyer and Wood rightly note in their introduction to the first Critique: "To the extent that Kant was a critic of the Leibnizian-Wolffian philosophy, his criticisms came not only from Hume but even more from Wolff's Piet ist critic Christian August Crusius." If Wolff is important for laying out the general structure of traditional metaphysics

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[1] (Watkins 2009, 133–34). The quote from Guyer and Wood is found in (Kant 1998, 24).

> along with many of the rationalist doctrines that Kant would be attacking
> in the Critique of Pure Reason, Crusius is significant not only because he
> (1) develops various criticisms (especially of the rationalist position) that
> Kant ends up being quite sympathetic to and (2) adopts a position differ-
> ent in fundamental ways from Leibniz's and Wolff's, but also because he
> (3) transforms the very framework in which rationalist questions are posed.

The three important facets of Crusius's work that Watkins points to are especially important
for understanding Kant. Crusius develops trenchant critical arguments against both the
Leibnizian-Wolffian position that space and time are purely relations between subtances
and the Newtonian position that they are rather construed as substances (or substance-
like). Crusius is also importantly critical of the compatibilist position on freedom of the
will articulated by Leibniz and Wolff. Kant largely adopts this criticism in rejecting (in the
pre-critical period) their version of compatibilism.

Crusius's positive position on the nature of determining grounds, and on freedom is also an
important contrast case with respect to German rationalism, and as a foil for Kant's position.
Crusius is especially concerned to construct an ontology according to which it is coherent
to think that though nothing happens without a ground, not all grounds are "determining"
in a sense that would eradicate the possibility of an agent doing otherwise (i.e. not $\phi$-ing)
in the very same context in which they $\phi$. Thus Crusius distinguishes between a principle
of determining ground and a (weak) principle of sufficient reason in such a way that, he
contends, allows that an agent may be the sufficient cause of his action to $\phi$, while still
allowing that the agent could have not $\phi$'d under precisely the same circumstances. Perhaps
unsurprisingly, Crusius also construes God's activity voluntaristically, which is both in line
with his conception of free action and importantly limits the scope of what we can hope to
know or find intelligible.

Finally, Crusius offers, if not always in a fully explicit way, a significant criticism of the
post-Leibnizian tradition in Germany, one that would have radical consequences, in Kant's
hands, for the organization and status of ontology. He importantly anticipates one of Kant's
main criticisms of the German rationalist tradition in contending that the principle of con-
tradiction cannot provide us with positive cognition of the world. Crusius thus argues that
a further positive contribution is needed to separate what is merely logically possible from
what is genuinely metaphysically possible. As L.W. Beck says, "what Kant did learn from
Crusius must not be underestimated; he learned that 'the rain never follows the wind be-
cause of the law of identity'".[2]

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[2]  (Beck 1969, 94). Beck quotes here Kant's Negative Magnitudes from 1763 (NG, 2:203). See also (Hogan
2009a; Watkins 2005, 162–65) for related discussion.

# 1   Crusius on Ground & Its Varieties

Crusius defines "ground" (*Grund*, *Ursache*, *ratio*, *principium*) as "Everything that brings about something else either in part or in whole and insofar as it is viewed as such" (*Entwurf* §34/144). A ground thus sets a necessary connection between ground and grounded such that the first is (in some sense to be further specified) productive or generative of the second. Moreover, what is grounded cannot exceed, in terms of powers, what is to be found in the cause (§78). This is effectively a version of Descartes's "causal reality principle", and seems to be based, like Descartes's principle, on the truth of the *ex nihilo* principle.

Crusius contends that there are two general species of ground – ideal and real.

> what one calls grounded and whose production [dessen hervorbringen] one attributes to another is either cognition in the understanding or it is the thing itself, outside of our thoughts. For that reason a ground is either a ground of cognition, which can also be called an ideal ground (*principium cognoscendi*), or a real ground (*principium essendi vel fiendi*). A ground of cognition is one that brings about cognition of a matter with conviction and is viewed as such. A real ground is one that brings about or makes possible, either in part or in whole, the thing itself, outside of our thoughts. (*Entwurf* §34/144)

Real grounds themselves come in two further types, efficacious and in-efficacious (existential):

> When a **real ground** brings about or makes possible a thing outside of thought, it does so either by means of an efficacious power and, in that case, is called an **efficacious cause** [wirkende Ursache]. Or the laws of truth in general do not allow anything else other than that after certain things or certain of its properties have already been posited, something else is now possible or impossible, or must be possible in this way and not otherwise. This kind of ground I wish to call an **inefficacious real ground** or also an **existential ground** (*principium existentialiter determinans*). Accordingly, an existential ground is one that makes something else possible or necessary through its mere existence due to the laws of truth. E.g., the three sides of a triangle and their relations to each other constitute a real ground of the size of its angle, but only an inefficacious or existential ground. By contrast, fire is an efficacious cause of warmth. (*Entwurf* §36/144)

Thus, while ground is productive, not all forms of ground are productive in the same *way*. Ideal grounds are merely productive of thought. Real grounds are productive of things

"outside of thought" or things themselves (*die Sache selbst*). However these real grounds are themselves productive in different ways. Existential grounds are such as to non-causally (or at least not *efficient* causally) produce some fact. In contrast, as the name implies, efficacious grounds are those that are efficiently causally generative of the existence of an object or fact.

Importantly, Crusius denies that "ground", as such, should be taken to indicate or entail intelligibility of the ground-grounded relation.

> Some take the word **ground** in a narrower sense and understand by it something from which one can comprehend why something else exists and why it is such and not otherwise. Now when we pay attention to what we think with the word **why**, it is clear in that case that only **both senses of real grounds** [i.e., *a priori* and *a posteriori* ] along with **ideal grounds** *a priori* are to be counted as falling under the concept of ground. By contrast, when we attend to ideal grounds *a posteriori*, we find that we do not thereby cognize **why something exists**, but rather only **why we must let it be considered to be true**. (*Entwurf* §38/144-5)

So, when reasoning backwards from from grounded to ground, as with ideal grounds a posteriori, we do not thereby come to cognize or understand why something is the case, but only *that* it is.

## 2   Sufficient & Determining Ground

In order to understand what a determining ground is we need first understand what a determination is. Crusius explains that

> Now if a thing is an accident (*accidens praedicamentale*) of another, which is such as to not exist without its subject, though the subject can exist without *it*, and if the accident isn't there, there is instead another accident put in its place, then we call that accident a determination. Thus a determination is a possible manner of a thing's existing, which is necessarily disjunctive, such that the accident must either belong to the subject at all times, or is such as to be replaced by its opposing manner of existing. (*Entwurf* §23; my translation)

So a determination is such as to be an accident that must belong to some subject (substance) and which if it doesn't belong to that substance its opposing accident *does* so belong.

A *determining ground* is that which produces a determination. As Crusius puts it,

> a **determining ground** is one through which what is grounded in it is made actual or possible in such a way that it cannot be otherwise under these circumstances (*Entwurf* §84/160)

Crusius contends that while all existing contingent things have a sufficient ground or cause of their existence, not all existing contingent things a *determining* ground or cause of their existence. He says,

> everything that arises presupposes a sufficient cause, that is, a cause in which nothing is lacking that is necessary for causality, and that it must receive its actuality through the power of the cause (§31), and the distinguishing feature of whether something is contingent, and thus arose at one time, consists in whether its non-being can be thought (§33). (*Entwurf* §84/160)

The difference here is significant because Crusius contends that free acts must be *contingent*, and that contingency is compatible with having a sufficient ground, so long as the ground is not determining. Everything that is not an act of freedom (i.e. that form of activity that is not itself the effect of anything else) has both sufficient *and* determining grounds, while free acts have only sufficient grounds.

> we can define the true **principle of determining ground,** which must be as follows: **Everything that is not a fundamental activity of freedom has, when it arises, a determining ground, that is, a ground according to which, after it is posited, what it posits cannot be or occur otherwise**. (*Entwurf* §84/161)

## 3   Kant on Ground

In his extensive pre-critical discussion of ground in the 1755 *New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition*, Kant defines a ground as "[t]hat which determines a subject in respect of any of its predicates" (1:391). The notion of "determine" here is supposed to be exclusive. A determining ground excludes all other predicates except the one so determined (1:393). Hence, for Kant, unlike Crusius, /all grounds are determining by their nature. Alternately put,

> From the concept of a ground it is possible to understand which of the opposed predicates is to be ascribed to the subject and which is to be denied. (1:393)

Despite the appeal to the grammatical terms of "subject" and "predicate", Kant's conception of a determining ground here is at once both metaphysical and epistemic. The idea is that there is some basis in virtue of which a entity has a particular feature, and in virtue of which our concept of that entity attributes to it that feature. Hence, "subject" and "predicate" can be read here as designating both the subject position in a categorical judgment, as well as the object (the substance) so designated by the subject concept of that judgment.

To say any more than this quickly gets extremely messy. One important distinction, which we want to respect, is that between a logical ground and a real ground.

As Kant puts it in the ramp-up to the critical period,

> Every ground is either logical, by means of which the consequence that is identical to it is posited as a predicate according to the rule of identity, or real, by means of which the consequence that is not identical to it is not posited according to the rule of identity. (*Metaphysik Herder* (1762-4), 28:11)

This characterization of ground is virtually identical with Crusius's conception of the difference between ideal and real grounds. Both take "ground" to indicate a necessary relation between (possibly) existing objects or facts. The sense in which a ground "determines" is that it being posited excludes all but one consequence. So positing ground $\gamma$ excludes all but the consequent $\delta$.

What is meant by "exclusion" here? Consider Kant's remark in a letter to Reinhold during the "critical" period.

> A ground is (in general) that whereby something else (distinct from it) is made determinate {*quo posito determinate*[a] *ponitur aliud*) [that which being posited *determines something else/*]. A consequent (*/rationatum*) is *quod non ponitur nisi posito alio* [that which is not posited unless *something else* is posited]. The ground must thus always be something distinct from the consequent, and he who can provide no ground but the given consequent itself shows that he does not know (or that the thing does not have) any ground! Now this distinction of ground and consequent is either merely logical (having to do with the manner of representation) or real, that is, in the object itself. (11:35 To Karl Leonhard Reinhold. May 12, 1789)
> *a*: This expression must never be left out of the definition of "ground." For a consequent too, is something that, if I posit it, I must at the same time think something else as posited, that is, a consequent always belongs to something or other that is its ground. But when I think something as

> consequent, I posit only some ground or other; -which ground is unde-
> termined. (Thus the hypothetical judgment is based on the rule, "a po-
> sitione consequentis ad positionem antecedentis non valet consequentia"
> [the movement from the consequent to the antecedent is not valid].) On
> the other hand, if the ground is posited, the consequent is determined.

This 1789 account of a ground corresponds closely with Kant's account of ground in the pre-critical *Negative Magnitudes* as well as the *Metaphysik Herder* above.

## 4   Determination & Exclusion

Determination is a form of exclusion, which excludes according to a law. In the case of intellectual (i.e. logical) exclusion, the law is that of contradiction. However, in the case of real exclusion, the law of contradiction is not the basis of exclusion, but rather the structure of (for Kant) space and time (as the conditions of phenomena) itself—what we can literally think of as space or time's form. Since the law of exclusion by which space or time deter-mines something is fundamentally different from the law of contradiction (because Kant firmly distinguishes the intellect from sensibility), we cannot construe spatial or temporal determination as a function of the intellect's activity, for the law of contradiction is a basic law of the intellect's activity. Let me explain each of these points.

Determination is exclusion in the sense of "positing", or setting, one of two opposing predi-cates as the predicate of a substance.[3] As Kant puts it in the *New Elucidation*, "to determine is to posit in such a way that every opposite is excluded" (1:393).[4] Here "opposing" *can* mean *logically* opposing, as in, e.g., the predicates <hot> and <not-hot>. But the oppo-

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[3]   Kant has a tendency to slide between talk of predicates/marks and talk of properties/marks *in an object* (or its grounds) — e.g. JL 9:58; cf. Meier similarly elides the ontological and epistemic uses of "mark" or "predicate" in his *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre*, where he, e.g., describes a mark as "that in the cognition or the thing, which is the ground on which we are conscious to ourselves of it (§115; 16:296-7)". For extensive discussion of marks and of the connection between a mark-as-property and mark-as-predicate see (Smit 2000, sec. 3; Grüne 2009, chap. 1.2).

[4]   Kant distinguishes two senses of "positing"—relative and absolute. Relative positing is the assertion of a ground-consequent relation between two concepts, e.g. between <human> and <animal>. Absolute posit-ing asserts the existence of a non-conceptual ground of determination, e.g. an *object*. Relative positing thus involves the positing of a concept as a determining ground that "determines" in the sense of excluding its opposite. Absolute positing involves the positing of an extra-conceptual existence that functions as a de-termining ground in that its existence metaphysically excludes an opposing existence (e.g. in the manner that an attractive force of such-and-such magnitude opposes a repulsive force of similar magnitude. For discussion see (Stang 2016, chap. 2.8). Though Kant's views on ground evolve throughout his career, most especially concerning the difference between real and logical grounds, the basic conception of determina-tion remains stable. See (Longuenesse 2001; Watkins 2005; Stang 2019). I discuss these issues further below.

sition needn't take this merely logical form—i.e. it need not be determined by the law of contradiction. Kant's clearest examples of this are what he comes to call, starting in the 1760s but continuing through the critical period, "really opposing" grounds, as contrasted with merely "logically opposing" grounds.[5] For example in his *Negative Magnitudes* he says,

> Real opposition is that where two predicates of a thing are opposed to each other, but not through the law of contradiction. Here, too, one cancels what is posited by the other, but the consequence is something. The motive force of a body in one direction and an equal tendency of the same body in the opposite direction do not contradict each other; as predicates, they are simultaneously possible in one body. The consequence of such an opposition is rest, which is something. It is, nonetheless, a true opposition. For that which is posited by the one tendency is cancelled by the other tendency, and the two tendencies are true predicates of one and the self-same thing, and they belong to it simultaneously. (2:171-2)

Hence, forces can exclude one another through opposition, but the opposition appealed to here is not that of *contradiction*. One piece of evidence Kant offers for this is that opposing (i.e. contradictory) predicates cannot be combined in a unity—i.e. in a judgment (A150/B189-90)—while opposing forces *can* be combined in a unity (i.e. in a substance). Kant's example in the latter case is a stationary being that is so because of the outcome of being acted on by an opposing force.

So determination is the exclusion of a predicate or property in favor of its opposite. What "opposite" means here depends on the kind of law to which one appeals. In the case of *logical* determination, the exclusion is defined in terms of logically opposing predicates. In the case of *real* determination, the exclusion is defined merely negatively, in terms of predicates that oppose though not logically.

The critical period doctrine is thus one according to which a ground determines by virtue of (i) the predicate/property and (ii) the law governing the connection between positing that predicate and positing its consequent. In the case of a logical ground the law is that of contradiction, hence positing some predicate P has the consequence of excluding or opposing ~P. To use a simple example, predicating <bachelor> of John excludes John's being <not-bachelor>. Since <bachelor> consists of "marks" (*Merkmale*) like (let's assume) <male> and <unmarried>, predicating <bachelor> of John "determines" that he is male

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[5]   As Kant notes in a lecture: "Every ground is either logical, through which something is posited or cancelled according to the principle of contradiction; or real, through which something is posited or cancelled without the principle of contradiction. The first is analytic, the second is synthetic" (28:402). For discussion see (Stang 2019).

and unmarried, to the exclusion of his being non-male or married. Thus the logical ground `<bachelor>` is the basis of various other analytic truths concerning John, such as that he is male and unmarried.

Things work in an analogous manner for the case of real grounds/real determination. Let's look at another simple example. To predicate of a figure that it has three sides is thereby the ground of its being three-angled, and thus excludes its being not-three-angled. What is the law which, when connected with the predicate `<three-sided>` determines the figure as three-angled? It is not the law of contradiction (B16, A220-1/B268). Compare what Kant says about two lines not constituting a figure.

> in the concept of a figure that is enclosed between two straight lines there is no contradiction, for the concepts of two straight lines and their inter-section contain no negation of a figure; rather the impossibility rests not on the concept in itself, but on its construction in space, i.e., on the conditions of space and its determinations (A220-1/B268)

Space, or more specifically its nature as cognizable a priori, determines the laws according to which a ground in space excludes its opposite. In the case of pure geometric figures, the laws of exclusion are not those of contradiction but rather those of space itself—i.e. its topological and metric properties. A three-sided figure must be three-angled; its not being three-angled is excluded, not because of any fact about a logical exclusion of predicates by the relevant concepts, but rather because of facts about *space*, primarily that it has exactly three dimensions.

These examples hopefully make it easier to see how analogous points might hold for time. What makes one temporal determination a ground of another requires, just as with conceptual judgment, or representation of spatial figures, that we appeal to an exclusion law. So, for example, what makes one temporal region T the ground of another R, e.g. as determining that it is later than T, is not the law of contradiction but rather a law deriving from time. In this case the law is that derived from time's chronomorphic properties, and in particular that it is a continuous serial order.[6] Thus predicating that region T is *earlier* than region R thereby determines the other as later. (FIXME: this seems a bit tautological as stated – the important issue is that the concept `<earlier-than>` refers to a relation that has the relvant features, even if the concepts `<earlier>` and `<later>` are analytically related.)

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[6]   Another way of putting this point is that time, by virtue of its chronomorphic properties, provides a *subordinating* as opposed to a *coordinating* form of grounding relation. This also makes time, as opposed to space, uniquely suitable for schematizing the various grounding relations set out by the relational categories. See Kant's discussion of coordinate vs subordinate grounding relations at B112-13 and the many instances in his metaphysics lectures, cited in (Stang 2019, 86–87).

## 5   Ground & Intelligibility

In the pre-critical period Kant distinguishes two kinds of ground or reason – viz. 'antecedently' (*antecedenter*) and 'consequently' (*consequenter*) determining grounds.[7]

> That which determines a subject in respect of any of its predicates, is called the *ground*. *Grounds* may be differentiated into those which are antecedently determining and those which are consequentially determining. An *antecedently* determining ground is one, the concept of which precedes that which is determined, i.e. that in the absence of which what is determined would not be intelligible. A *consequentially* determining ground is one which would not be posited [poneretur] unless the concept which is determined by it had not already been posited from some other source. You can also call the former the reason *why*, or the ground of being or becoming [rationem cur scilicet essendi vel fiendi], while the latter can be called the ground *that*, or the ground of knowing [rationem quod scilicet cognoscendi] (NE 1:391-2)

Kant articulates these notions of ground, at least in part, for epistemic purposes. His concern is with the basis upon which we assent or deny the truth of a particular proposition (i.e. judgment). Kant's idea seems to be that, for any proposition, there must be some basis to which one can point that would allow one to decide between the truth of a proposition or its negation. If there were not, then we would have to suspend judgment concerning the proposition since each of its "two predicates [i.e. the predicate or its negation] remains possible, neither being established as true in respect of our cognition" (NE 1:392).

Hence, for Kant, two kinds of cognition are then possible. Cognition of the consequently determining ground is *cognition that* one of these predicates is excluded in favor of the other (NE 1:393, 396). Cognition of the antecedently determining ground provides not only cognition that one predicate is excluded in favor of another, but also *why* this is the case.[8]

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[7]   There is a helpful discussion of the pre-critical Kant on grounds in (Watkins 2005, 113 note 10, 119–29). See also (Longuenesse 2001).

[8]   Though Kant often puts the notion of a determining ground in terms of subject-predicate relations (and their corresponding substance-accident relations), by the mid 1760s Kant is also clear that the relation is one which can also hold between propositions. In Herder's metaphysics lecture notes from this period (cf. 28:12-13, as well as Kant's 1763 work on *Negative Magnitudes* (2:202-4) we see Kant distinguishing ground and consequent in terms of what is *inferred* (e.g. 2:203). By the critical period, Kant is also interchangebly talking of antecedently and consequently determining grounds with hypothetical modes of inference—viz. modus ponens and modus tollens respectively (e.g. JL 9:52). Importantly, only inferences of the modus ponens form are in a position to provide knowledge *why* something is the case. See also (Longuenesse 2001, 74–75).

One illustrative example Kant provides is that of the ground of evil in the world (NE 1:392). Our *consequently* determining ground for assenting to the proposition *there is evil in the world* is our own experience of such evil. So, with regard to the question 'is there evil?' our experience provides us the basis for a positive answer. It is sufficient for us to decide between the propositions *there is evil* and *there is no evil*. But this only gives a reason for thinking *that* there is evil in the world, not *why* there is such evil. An *antecedently* determining ground would give us such a reason why by giving us not merely the fact of evil's existence, but that in virtue of which it exists.

Despite its epistemic emphasis, Kant's notion of ground is also *ontological*. In the example of the ground of evil, Kant's notion of the antecedently determining ground is not simply one which gives an answer to a why question, but rather does so *because* it is the metaphysical basis of the evil. As Kant puts it, the "determining ground is not only the criterion of truth; it is also its source." (NE 1:392). This could be the case for one of two reasons. On the one hand, the ground could be a necessary condition of there being evil. Thus, a full explanation of why evil exists would have to include this ground. But, on the other hand, since all the necessary conditions of evil's existing could obtain and yet evil not exist, one must also ask after the sufficient conditions of this existence—i.e. after the *cause* of evil's existence. Alternately put, an antecedently determining ground is a ground of "being or becoming" (*essendi vel fiendi*), and it is precisely due to the generative status of the ground that it has its explanatory status (NE 1:396-7, 398).

Consider again the proposition *there is evil in the world*. To have cognition or knowledge (we can leave niceties of this distinction aside) of a determining ground for this proposition is to have knowledge that excludes the proposition's negation. In the case of a consequently determining ground, such as one's experience of evil, the basis for excluding the opposing proposition – viz. *it is not the case that there is evil in the world* – is something that is a result or effect of the truth of the proposition in question—i.e of the fact that makes *there is evil in the world* true. So one's ground for knowing the proposition *there is evil in the world* – e.g. one's experience – is a *consequence* of there being a fact which obtains and makes that proposition true – viz. the fact that there is evil in the world.

In the case of cognition or knowledge of antecedently determining grounds, one's knowledge is *not* a consequence of the fact which makes the proposition in question true, but rather knowledge of that which accounts for the existence of the fact in question. In this case, the ground for affirming the truth of *there is evil in the world* is not a consequence of the existence of the proposition's truth-maker, but rather explains why that truth-maker exists. In the case of evil, this might be knowledge of god's motives or intentions. To put things another way, if the proposition in question were the consequent of a material conditional, then one's knowledge of an antecedently determining ground would be knowledge

of the antecedent to that conditional. However, this is slightly misleading, since there is more than logical connection at work. Rather, the antecedent must also have explanatory priority.

## 6    Restricting the PSR in the Nova Dilucidatio

Kant advances several claims concering the nature and scope of the principle of sufficient reason or ground, which he also calls the principle of determining ground.

When advanced as an ontic principle, it is restricted to all and only contingently existing things (NE II.6)

> it is only the existence of contingent things which requires the support of a determining ground, and that the unique and absolutely necessary Being is exempt from this law. (NE I:396)

Necessarily existing beings exist groundlessly (i.e. they lack antecedent grounds).

> If anything, therefore, is said to exist absolutely necessarily, that thing does not exist because of some ground; it exists because the opposite cannot be thought at all. This impossibility of the opposite is the ground of the knowledge of existence, but an antecedently determining ground is completely absent. *It exists*; and in respect of the thing in question, to have said and to have conceived this of it is sufficient. (NE I:394)

This is actually rather unhelpful. It seems to simply claim by fiat that necessarily existing things lack any antecedent ground. So there is no saying *why* a necessary being exists. There is only the claim that it *is* and *must* exist.

So there is a question here as to whether Kant really thinks there is an answer to the question "Why does God exist?" or "Why is there something rather than nothing?". Hence, even prior to the articulation of the critical philosophy and Kant's doctrine of epistemic humility, he holds that the *metaphysics* of ground is such as to show that there cannot be any reason why God exists.

## 7    Kant's Pre-Critical Compatibilism

It is generally accepted that Kant in the 1750s and 60s, like Leibniz, Wolff, and Baumgarten, construes free action as consisting in determination by reason (or the intellect more broadly).

Kant thus holds at this time that freedom of action is perfectly compatible with its being fully (temporally) determined. As Kant puts it in the *New Elucidation* of 1755,

> *spontaneity* is action which issues from an *inner principle. When this spontaneity is determined in conformity with the representation of what is best it is called freedom* (NE 1:402; original emphasis)

Kant thus conceives of the freedom of action as wholly compatible with its being determined—i.e. necessitated—so long as that action occurs through a determination *by the intellect* concerning what is represented by it as good.

However, Kant also rejects an important element of the Leibniz-Wolff-Baumgarten view, namely its leeway compatibilist aspect, which holds that while an agent is free only insofar as the agent could do otherwise, the notion of "could" here must be compatible with necessitation by a sufficient reason or ground. Kant denies that the Leibniz-Wolff-Baumgarten view can maintain a coherent conception of such leeway by means of a distinction between so-called "hypothetical" and "absolute" necessity (1:400). Kant cites Crusius as originating this critique.[9]

> The illustrious Crusius attacks the often used distinction between absolute and hypothetical necessity, his opponents thinking that, by means of this distinction, they would be able to escape him, as through a crack. But the distinction obviously has no power at all to break the force and effective power of necessity (NE 1:399)

The distinction to which Kant refers here is that between $\phi$-ing on the basis of a particular contingent motive, and $\phi$-ing due to logical necessity. The former is mere "hypothetical" necessity, and allows that one could have acted otherwise (i.e. there is no logical contradiction in not acting that way) had one's motives differed, while the latter is an "absolute" necessity.

As Kant, following Crusius, argues however, this is a distinction without a difference, for

> the distinction, which everyone recites parrot-fashion, does little to diminish the force of the necessity or the certainty of the determination. For just as nothing can be conceived which is more true than true, and nothing more certain than certain, so nothing can be conceived which is more determined than determined (NE 1:400).

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9    See (Byrd 2008) for discussion of Kant's compatibilist argument in the NE. See (Dyck 2016; Allison 2020) for extensive discussion of the progression of Kant's view from the 60s to the 90s.

Kant's point here being that while there is a sense in which it is possible that things occurred differently than they did, there is no sense in which the *agent* could have (de re) acted differently. Hence agents are wholly determined in what they do to the exclusion of all else. Put in terms of Kant's later distinction between logical and real possibility, we can restate his position as saying that the mere logical possibility of acting differently does not secure the real possibility of so acting, and so does not secure the conditions of freedom necessary for responsibility.

It is important to note here though that while Kant rejects the leeway compatibilism of the Leibniz-Wolff-Baumgarten view, he does not reject compatibilism itself. Instead, he rejects any sort of ability specific leeway condition—i.e. the position that freedom requires the (real) possibility of doing otherwise in a particular situation. For Kant, the problem for freedom does not lie with whether one possesses leeway, nor is the issue one concerning necessitation (whether absolute or hypothetical) per se, but rather the *nature* of the necessitation. As he puts it,

> here the question hinges not upon *to what extent* [somthing is necessitated] but upon *whence* [unde] the necessary futurition of contingent things derives. Who is there who would doubt that the act of creation is not indeterminate in God, but that it is so certainly determinate that the opposite would be unworthy of God, in other words that the opposite could not be ascribed to Him at all. Nonetheless, however, the action is free, for it is determined by those grounds, which, in so far as they incline His will with the greatest possible certainty, include the motives of His infinite intelligence, and do not issue from a certain blind power of nature to produce effects. So, too, in the case of the free actions of human beings: in so far as they are regarded as determinate, their opposites are indeed excluded; they are not, however, excluded by grounds which are posited as existing outside the desires and spontaneous inclinations of the subject, as if the agent were compelled to perform his actions against his will, so to speak, and as a result of a certain ineluctable necessity. (NE 1:400)

In short, Kant points out here that although everything that exists is determined, not everything is determined in the same *way*, and it is precisely the manner in which (i.e. "from whence") a consequence is derived or connected to its ground that decides the issue in favor of freedom as opposed to bondage. When the existence of an effect is determined from an intellectual ground, one that involves a representation of the good, then the effect is determined but nevertheless free, or so Kant contends.

Kant contrasts his source compatibilist view with what he sees to be the only putative alternative—namely the libertarian "freedom of indifference" articulated by Crusius. However, Kant rejects Crusian indeterminism on the grounds that it must construe free action as "the product of chance" (NE 1:402), and chance events are neither free nor freedom-enabling. Since they have no cause they simply happen, and are not appropriate objects for imputation. Kant makes this point in his dialogical presentation of his and Crusius's views:

> If any deity granted you this wish [for libertarian freedom], how unhappy you would be at every moment of your life. Suppose that you have decided to follow the path of virtue. And suppose that your mind is already sustained by the precepts of religion and whatever else is effective in strengthening your motivation. And suppose that now the occasion for acting arrives. You will immediately slide in the direction of what is less good, for the grounds which solicit you do not determine you. I seem to hear you expressing still more complaints. Ah! What baleful fate has driven me from my sound decision? Of what use are precepts for performing the work of virtue? Actions are the product of chance; they are not determined by grounds. (NE 1:402)

We see here a version of the often discussed "luck objection" to libertarianism.[10] The objection can be stated in a variety of ways. But the point Kant makes above indicates one such version, according to which the libertarian account lacks any resource to explain why the agent chooses as they do. Since the answer to such a why question requires, at least for Kant and his contemporaries, appeal to a determining ground, there can be no answer to this question forthcoming from the libertarian picture of agency. All that can be said is that the agent does so act.[11] But this is effectually to say that they act for no reason at all – i.e. by chance.

In Kant's estimation then, there are two cases in which control is undermined in a way that negates imputability, namely "blind" or "fatalistic" determination, where the positing of the ground determines the effect independent of any representation, or of chance, where there is no determining ground for an event at all. In either case we lose the control necessary

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[10] See (Mele 2006) for general discussion of the objection and (Scholten 2022, 89) for a pithy examination of the issue with respect to Kant.

[11] For an especially clear discussion of this point see (Hogan 2009b, 363–64). In lecture notes, Kant also objects to the very concept of action from a complete "indifference" or equilibrium of motives as incoherent. He's reported to say that "the freedom of indifference is an absurdity [/Unding/]", effectively equivalent to saying that one can act from no motive at all, which Kant takes to be an absurdity, in that it is indistinguishable from a random or chance event.

for imputation.[12] Freedom thus cannot be construed as indeterministic (i.e. uncaused) and it cannot be the result of "blind" necessity. As Kant will later put it, "[b]etween nature and chance there is a third thing, namely freedom" (R5369 18:163 (1776-78)).

To summarize, Kant's pre-critical position on freedom accepts the following claims:

1. Free action is compatible with being determined/necessitated to so act.

2. Action that is not the result of determination is merely chance.

3. Leeway is neither necessary nor sufficient for responsibility/imputation.

4. The determination of free action must be "spontaneous", in that it is necessitated according to the will's own (causal) law of activity in representing the good, otherwise it is either "blind" necessity (i.e. "fatalism") or chance.

We've already seen that Kant makes a distinction between determinism and predeterminism, and that he sees freedom as a "third thing" between temporal necessitation and pure chance. As we saw above, this view is present at least as early as the mid-70s – here is another particularly clear example:

> Free actions happen in accordance with a rule just like natural ones. But they are not therefore determinable a priori [i.e. from the antecedent time] like the latter [/sie sind darnach nicht a priori zu bestimmen wie diese/]; both are thus in conformity with reason, while blind fate and blind chance [/blind Schiksal und blindes Ohngefehr/] are *qualitates occultae* and are contrary to reason (R4783, 17:726 (1775–1779)).[a]
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> [a] See also *Metaphysik Pölitz* (L$_1$) 28:199–20 (1777–1780); *Metaphysik Mrongovius* 29:935 (1782/83); *Metaphysik* (L$_2$) 28:582-3 (1790/1). Kant continues to refine his distinction between different forms of necessitation, and clearly states in published work (as well as in lectures and notes) in the 80s and 90s that only the necessitation dictated by predeterminism serves as a threat to freedom. See, e.g., Rel 6:49-50n (1793); MM 6:280n (1797) – quoted below. See also *Metaphysik Vigilantius* (K$_3$) 29:1019, 1021 (1794-1795)). For further discussion of Kant's views of rational necessitation as opposed to chance see (Forman 2022).

The question then, as we move to the critical period of the 1780s, is which, if any, of the above four claims Kant revises or rejects. The most central issues concern whether Kant indeed rejects the compatibility of control with necessitation, and whether he considers

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[12] Kant understands "chance" as that which occurs "from no cause at all" (*aus gar keiner Ursache*). See *Metaphysik Herder* 28:41 and Kant's note dated between 1766–1769 (R3906 17:335–336), which opposes freedom to chance (*casus, fortuitum, blindes ohngefehr*) and rejects Crusius's view of freedom as a case of causation. See also R4091 (1769–1775), 17:412; R4929 (1776–1778), 18:31; R5373 (1776–1789), 18:165. For further discussion of these passage see (Forman 2022, 41–42 ff). Thanks to David Forman for bringing several of these passages to my attention.

leeway in an indeterminist sense as necessary. And again, given the overall motivating question about Kant's position regarding the relation between temporal causation (predeterminism) and control, we want to distinguish between three reasons why Kant might reject predeterminism—viz. that (i) it entails the existence of a causal ground distinct from and independent of the agent; (ii) it entails the existence of a ground over which the agent can exert no causal influence; (iii) it entails the operation of a form of causality that is not characteristic of the activity of the agent's intellectual faculty.

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