

The Second Analogy (1)

This week we are turning to one of the most famous, if also longest, arguments in the *Critique*. This argument is both sufficiently and the interpretation of it sufficiently disputed for us to need to spend two weeks on it. This section has widely been regarded as central to the understanding of Kant's "reply" to Hume's view of causation, although this has been disputed in recent years. It is certainly where Kant presents the schematization of the category of causality. The formulation of both the principle and of its title alters between the two editions of the *Critique*. In the first edition the principle is stated to be a principle of production and is given as follows: "Everything that happens, that is, begins to be, presupposes something upon which it follows according to a rule" (A189). In this formulation it is the way in which something begins to be that is put as the issue and the suggestion of the way something begins to be is referred merely to a rule without making this rule itself determinate. In the second edition, by contrast, the principle is now termed a principle "of succession in time, in accordance with the law of causality" so that the second edition principle is determinate in a way the first edition principle was not, namely, as it does, both causality and succession in time and viewing the latter in terms of the former. Not only is this the case but the principle itself as stated in the second edition is as follows: "All alterations take place in conformity with the law of the connection of cause and effect" (B232). Since, in the subsequent first paragraph added to the second edition an alteration is

something we are reminded as including “a successive being and not-being” of the determination of a substance it includes more than the “happening” referred to in the principle of the first edition since it not just involve beginning to be but also being open to the succession that ends something. Hence, in all these respects, the second edition formula is superior to the first.

The first two paragraphs are added to the second edition and the very first paragraph is presented in parentheses. This very first paragraph forms a link between the preceding argument of the First Analogy and the opening of the discussion of the Second. Here Kant reminds us that the result of the First Analogy’s argument has been to show that the appearance of succession is an alteration only of the determinations of substance and not a change of the substance itself and that there is no “coming into being or passing away of substance” (B233). Since this is so all change is in fact only alteration. It is after reminder of this point, a point that connects the forthcoming argument concerning alteration (as expressed in the principle as given in the second edition) that the argument proper begins. This argument opens by returning to the basic data of perception which involves the recognition that there is something occurring or “a state of things at one time the opposite of which was in the preceding time” (B233).

Perception hence requires connection over time. As follows from the argument of the Transcendental Deduction this connection is not something that resides in sensation itself but rather requires the active addition that Kant terms “synthesis”, basically, the synthesis of imagination. However, at

this point, Kant points to a limitation involved in this synthesis to the effect that it is open to variation. That is, given the connection of perceptions in a succession, it is always possible for this connection to place the perceptions in an opposite order to that one given. This is so since there is no perception of time itself, that is, no way in which time is given as a distinct element of perception separately from what is given *in* time (which Kant also expresses by stating that there is no “empty time”). Without any sense of a time separable from what is given *in* it there appears no evident ground for why the order of the perceptions should occur in any particular way. For the order of the perceptions to have a determination that is not susceptible to such reversal requires something necessary to be given in addition to the mere fact of the synthetic connection and this Kant presents as a concept of pure understanding, namely, the concept of causation (or “cause and effect”). Hence, for the temporal relation to express necessity this concept is needed and since it is it apparently follows that experience in general – understood as something that includes states of knowledge of appearance, hence as “Kantian experience” – requires the concept of causation as appearances will only be possible if they are given in conformity with it.

It is possible to construe this argument as giving what is essential to Kant’s overall proof and it is so understood by Graham Bird, for example, who describes it as “the basic proof”. However, whilst the argument as given evidently does outline the basic characteristic argument Kant requires as it demonstrates the need for the pure concept of causality to be added to the perceptions in order for there to be something like experience there is a

basic problem with understanding this as capturing all that is required. This is that Kant does not here yet show that we even have experience of something that we could term an “object”. That this is missing and that it is required for the argument become clear when we move on to the next paragraph which was already present in the first edition and is left unchanged as the next step for the argument in the second edition. Here Kant begins by again referring to how apprehension of the manifold is always successive and specifying this as involving a claim that representation of parts follow upon one another. However, he then adds: “Whether they also follow one another in the object is a point which calls for further reflection, and which is not decided by the above statement” (A189/B234).

One of the reasons why this is “not decided” is that the sense of “object” itself has not yet been determined either. The term “object” is in fact a very general one as just to represent a relationship in thought alone is, in a sense, to give oneself an “object”, that is, a “state of affairs”. This kind of “object” is what is represented in contemporary philosophy as an “intentional object” and it is often distinguished from what we might term an object “in a full sense”, that is, something that exists separately and independently of us. Kant begins to reach now for something like this distinction as he tells us that the appearances, considered simply as representations of consciousness, are not different from what is given to the synthesis of imagination and that how such should relate to things given “beyond” us is yet to be considered. The distinction between appearances

and things-in-themselves is required here Kant suggests as without it we would have to take our representations of consciousness to be things-in-themselves and we would never be sure how these could relate to things “outside” us since the latter would be a separate group of things-in-themselves. However, even when we introduce this Critical distinction we still have a problem.

The problem is illustrated by means of a contrast that has been the subject of considerable interpretative disagreement. To begin with, reminding us again that all apprehension is successive, Kant looks at the example of the representation of a house and asks whether the succession involved in representing the house is mirrored in succession being part of the “object” that “is” the house. Kant indicates that no one would accept that this was the case and he begins to outline the reason why.

Since truth consists in the agreement of knowledge with the object, it will at once be seen that we can here enquire only regarding the formal conditions of empirical truth, and that appearance, in contradistinction to the representations of apprehension, can be represented as an object distinct from them only if it stands under a rule which distinguishes it from every other apprehension and necessitates some one particular mode of connection of the manifold. The object is *that* in the appearance which contains the condition of this necessary rule of apprehension. (A191/B236)

So here Kant moves to stating that to get from the sense of “intentional object” to a more fully-fleshed out sense of “external object” requires some conditions of empirical truth and that these conditions require references to rules of necessitation. This appears to reiterate the point of the second paragraph concerning experience and now connect this notion of experience to the sense of external object. This point leads Kant to state that

he will now proceed to his problem. This is done by returning to the notion that something “happens” that is key to the formula of the principle of the first edition. Happenings are beginnings so we have a happening when some appearance occurs that was not present previously. In connection with this point Kant points to the condition that for a happening to be perceived there must have been, prior to its appearance, a preceding one that was different from it. The reason why there must have been a preceding appearance is that empty time is, as we have already noted, something that cannot be perceived so it follows from this that we also could not perceive a happening without an event prior to it since to do so would require a lapse between points of time.

So perceptions are related to each other. However, again, this only leads us to a sense of the synthesis of imagination without the connections in question having any necessary relation to each other. We can see this in the case of the house where we have successive apprehension although the house itself is not undergoing an “event”. For an event to take place requires us to understand the conditions of happenings in which one state, A, is given as preceding and bringing about another state, B. In this case the preceding A cannot follow B can only precede it. The example given is that of a ship moving downstream in which the perception of it at one point of the stream has to precede the perception of it at another point so that the order of the perceptions involves something determinate. There is no such order involved in the perception of the house so that it can be given in any order but the ship cannot so the latter includes something that is *necessary*.

To mark the difference between the case of the house and that of the ship Kant argues that in the latter case the *subjective* apprehension must be derived from the *objective succession*. If this does not take place then we have undetermined apprehension and with that alone we could never arrive at the view that there are any such things as objects at all. The means in which the subjective apprehension is derived from the objective one is that the latter is governed by a *rule* and it is only in accordance with this rule that we can come to understand that there are purely subjective apprehensions as without it we would have no way of demarcating the difference. A succession that follows a *determinate* invariant ordering is one that we can term causal.

This argument in which the house/ship example is used to reach a case for determinate invariant ordering as requiring the concept of causation is what the majority of commentators on the Second Analogy have assumed to be its core argument, an argument commonly known as the Irreversibility Argument. Despite this general consensus on the importance of this argument, however, there is little agreement as to what Kant has shown in this argument or how he has shown it. For the rest of the time we will look at some of the ways it has been discussed although next week I will be suggesting that it is only this argument is connected to some of the subsequent argument of the Second Analogy that we will really be able to understand the fundamental argument of the Second Analogy.

The disputes over the argument turn on two questions, firstly, what the principle itself is that Kant is ultimately proving and, secondly, what is

the way that the Irreversibility Argument does it? The argument over the principle is that Kant's causal law could mean one of two different things. On one view, the causal law that Kant is seeking to establish is Every-Event-Some-Cause (EESC) which Steven Bayne describes as follows: "For every event e there is some event c and c causes e ".¹ This principle is what the argument of the Second Analogy is supposed to be for according to Henry Allison, Norman Kemp Smith and Graham Bird. By contrast, some other commentators take the principle that Kant is really trying to prove to be Same-Cause-Same-Effect. Steven Bayne contrasts this with the first view by formulating it as follows: "SCSE = (1) For every event e there some event c and c causes e , and (2) If c causes e , then there is some event type C of which c is an instance and some event type E of which e is an instance such that whenever an event of type C occurs an event of type E will follow."²

The difference between these two views of the causal law is clearly that the first view allows only for an understanding of this law as providing a *general* conception of relations between events whilst the latter suggests that there is a further element to having such a notion as a causal law which is that events that stand in causal relation to each other do so in virtue of being events of certain specified *types* and that such *types* have the continuity of connection that would enable us to say that nature is governed by continuous laws. In addition to the difference between these two possible

¹ Steven M. Bayne (2004) *Kant on Causation: On the Fivefold Routes to the Principle of Causation* (SUNY: Albany), p. 36

² *Ibid*, p 37.

principles that could each be the point of the argument of the Second Analogy there are also understandings of the specific argument that the Irreversibility Argument is thought to present that evaluate both its point and its success in relation to different criteria. Whilst there are quite a number of interpretations of the Irreversibility Argument Bayne classifies them into five different groups. These are: the Veridical Strategy (where Kant is apparently trying to draw a distinction between purely subjective phenomena and objective reality), the Event/Object Strategy (in which Kant is trying to draw a distinction between events and objects that exist simultaneously), the Event/Event Strategy (in which Kant is trying to draw a distinction between the temporal positions of distinct events), the Justification Strategy (in which Kant is trying to show how we justify the claim that a particular event has occurred) and the Object of Experience Strategy (in which the key claim is that succession of appearances has to be subject to a rule). In the seminar we'll review how each of these strategies has been used to make sense of the Irreversibility Argument and to which form of causal law they have been connected.