
‘*Omnimoda determinatio est existentia’?! Wolff, Baumgarten, and the Principle of Thoroughgoing Determination in Kant’s *Opus postumum*’

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This chapter is concerned with the relationship between the idea of thoroughgoing determination and the concept of existence. Above all, it deals with how Kant understands this relationship in the context of the *Opus postumum*. Accounting for what Kant does in the *Opus postumum*, however, will also lead us chronologically backwards, away from Kant’s ‘late philosophy’ to his treatment of the ideal of pure reason in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and from there to certain views on Wolff and Baumgarten that we encounter in his pre-critical metaphysics. First, I focus on the fact that Kant, in the final fascicles of the *Opus postumum*, consistently considers the connection between the notions of *omnimoda determinatio* and *existentia* in ways that seem radically opposed to his long familiar view that existence is not a real predicate, but is instead the absolute position of a thing together with all its predicates. Second, given this apparent inconsistency, I discuss certain aspects of the first *Critique’s* treatment of the principle of thoroughgoing determination in connection with the ideal of pure reason. Third, I relate the results of this discussion to the existence proof for a necessarily existent being that Kant provides in *The Only Possible Basis of Proof for a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (1763) in connection with his criticism of Wolff’s definitional account of existence and his use of Baumgarten’s concepts of thoroughgoing determination and internal possibility. Finally, I turn back to Kant’s *Opus postumum* and its view of the relationship between thoroughgoing determination and existence, with a result that may be as surprising as it is unfamiliar.
A key issue in much of the bundle of manuscripts that we call the *Opus postumum* is the problem of a mediating science that Kant standardly referred to as “transition” (Übergang). It is clear that this transitional science is supposed to mediate between, on the one hand, the *a priori* principles of Kant’s metaphysics of corporeal nature and, on the other hand, empirical physics with its special concepts and principles as well as its observational and experimental methods. Apart from this, however, there has never been any firm agreement about the Transition Project’s significance for Kant’s critical theory of *a priori* cognition. In particular, the Transition’s implications for the transcendental part of Kant’s metaphysics of nature have provided the subject matter for widely divergent interpretive approaches in the secondary literature.²

The history of scholarly disputes concerning the role and the particular contents of the *Opus postumum*’s transitional science need not concern us here. Thus, I will not say anything more about Kant’s idea of Transition, except to state that the following positional claim is beyond serious question: in at least one pivotal phase of Kant’s thinking in the *Opus postumum*, his Transition Project was to be grounded by means of an *a priori* existence proof for a material plenum of attractive and repulsive forces that causally determine the whole of cosmic space.

This existence proof, found mainly (though by no means exclusively) in a set of thematically related manuscripts titled Transition 1-14 (Übergang 1-14), is commonly referred to as the *Opus postumum*’s “aether deduction.” Strictly speaking, this standard designation is inappropriate.³ Nonetheless, given its currency in (Anglophone) Kant scholarship, I will use it throughout this

² For discussion of Kant’s Transition project and treatment of some of the more recent secondary literature, see Edwards 2004.
³ See Rollmann 2015.
chapter when discussing Kant’s concern to demonstrate a priori the spatial existence of a cosmic continuum of forces as a way of determining the character of the material setting within which the perceptual relation of the human subject to a universe of empirically identifiable interacting objects is possible.⁴

Given our thematic focus on the relationship between thoroughgoing determination and existence, our interest is directed to the passages in Transition 1-14 where Kant endeavors to make metaphysical sense of his Transition Project by appealing to the idea of thoroughgoing determination. Kant’s attempts at providing such a demonstration involve a fair number of quite striking (not to mention extremely puzzling) claims. Kant holds, for example, that it is necessary to “postulate materialiter in the representation of the subject an object of physics as the basis of the combination of all moving forces into One Experience” since “to be an object of the absolute unity of the whole of possible experience is itself the experience of the object of experience and, as the whole of the determination of the object (omnimoda determinatio), the existence of the object” (Op 21:583).⁵ Kant also maintains that his a priori proof of the existence of this object of experience applies to a singular object that comprises “a collective totality (omnitudo collectiva) of the objects of One Experience’ (Op 21:586). Accordingly, he holds that the thoroughgoing determination of this singular totality-constituting object as something existent (that is to say: the omnimodal determination that necessarily accrues to it as something that exists) is possible only with reference to “the absolute unity of possible experience in general insofar as the object of

⁴ “Now the concept of the whole of outer experience presupposes all possible moving forces of matter conjoined in collective unity and, indeed, in filled space (for empty [space,] whether within or outside bodies, is no object of possible experience). But that concept presupposes also a continual movement of all matter, which acts upon the subject as object of the senses; for without this movement […] no perception of any object of the senses whatever, and hence also no experience, would take place […]” (Op 21:572-573).
⁵ The translations of passages taken from Kant’s Opus postumum are my own.
this concept” (i.e., the object of the concept of the absolute unity of possible experience in general) is the “One and All of outer objects of the senses” (Op 21:586). Moreover, in conjunction with this position regarding the possibility of thoroughgoing determination, Kant asserts that the “deduction” of the matter that furnishes the basis of the system of moving forces has an a priori principle, namely, the principle of “necessary unity in the comprehensive concept [Gesamtbegriff] of One Experience” that “identically involves,” and thus “analytically entails,” the actuality of the collectively omnitudinous object in question (Op 21:586).

The substantive principle of thoroughgoing determination to which Kant appeals in the passages just summarized (i.e. the principle “existentia est omnimoda determinatio”) is of course one that is long familiar to us from the Transcendental Dialectic of the Critique of Pure Reason as well as from other published works, lecture manuscripts, and handwritten reflections, especially those in which Kant is focused on the corresponding formulations in Wolff’s Ontologia and in Baumgarten’s Metaphysica. Yet it is a principle that comes to have a very surprising twist in the context of Kant’s Opus postumum, as we can see from the following:

[A] This way of proving the existence of an external object of the senses must[,] as a unique manner of proof (which is unparalleled), appear quite striking. Yet it should not disconcert us because its object also has the special feature that it is singular and does not (like other representations from a priori concepts) contain in itself merely distributive but collective universality. — Existentia est omnimoda determinatio, says Christian Wolff, and so too, conversely, omnimoda determinatio est existentia as a relation of equivalent concepts. But this notional thoroughgoing determination cannot be given; for it stretches to infinite empirical determinations. Only in the concept of One Object of possible experience, which is derived from no experience but instead makes experience possible,
is that [concept? object?] necessarily allowed objective reality [and] this omnitudo determinatio [—] not synthetically but analytically according to the principle of identity; because that which is in itself singular is also, as unique, not determinable in various ways but is instead determined for experience. (Op 21: 603)

The salient lines here really do jump right out at us, and not just because the operative propositions are italicized in the Academy Edition’s printed text: “Existenta est omnimoda determinatio, says Christian Wolff, and so too, conversely, omnimoda determinatio est existentia as a relation of equivalent concepts.”

Say again? Amazingly, Kant seems to imply that the two propositions at issue are materially equivalent in virtue of the substitutional equivalence of the concepts of thoroughgoing determination and existence. The element of surprise here does not really lie in the fact that Wolff does not put his point in quite the way that Kant says he does. Instead, the source of abiding wonder (and perhaps irritation) is this: by turning Wolff on his head, Kant appears to be launching himself upward for fireworks display, if not outright self-immolation. Not even the most rationalistically wild-eyed Christian Wolff, in the guise of his most metaphysically optimistic Voltairian caricature, would want to come anywhere close to where Kant appears to be going when he brings to bear the proposition omnimoda determinatio est existentia in an a priori existence proof for a material entity. It is not just that Wolff (not to mention Baumgarten) provides for arguments against the sort of conversion move that Kant seems to be advocating. Even more significantly, Kant is apparently intent on galloping full-tilt against the stone wall

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12 Wolff says: “Quicquid existit, vel actu est, id omnimode determinatum est” (WO, §226); but Kant’s point about what Wolff says is well enough taken.
13 See, e.g., WO. §§171-175 and WTN1, §§47-57; cf. BM, §§59, 295, 806-807, 810-824, 840-842, 857.
presented by one of the most basic tenets of his theory of metaphysical cognition from the year 1763 onwards, that is, the tenet that existence cannot furnish a real predicate.

In a Kant-Studien article published nearly forty years ago, Peter Rohs gives the following account of the problem that is inherent in Kant’s conversion move:

[B] With this conversion Kant clearly wants to express the notion that one can derive existence from thoroughgoing determination […]. Kant evidently does not notice that he here runs into contradiction with an insight that he himself had achieved in the Critique of Pure Reason: namely, the insight that existence is no real predicate. Thoroughgoing determination is indeed without question a real predicate, and when both it and existence serve as equivalent concepts, then the latter must also be a real predicate, which is contrary to what the Critique teaches.

To state the obvious, I should point out here that the conversion (Umkehrung) at issue is one that abstracts from the logical quantity of the propositions involved. Moreover, for reasons that will become apparent in the course of this chapter, I very much doubt that Kant failed to notice what he was asserting in the Opus postumum passage under consideration. But apart from that (and bearing in mind the fact that Kant’s insight was achieved well before the Critique of Pure Reason), Rohs’s account hits the problem nail quite solidly on its head: Kant’s conversion move seems to presuppose that the term existence can designate a constitutive predicate, i.e., not

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14 On this point, see the final section of this chapter.
15 “Mit dieser Umkehrung will Kant offenbar zum Ausdruck bringen, dass man von durchgängiger Bestimmung auf Existenz schliessen kann [...] Kant bemerkt anscheinend nicht, dass er hier in Widerspruch gerät zu einer von ihm selbst in der Kritik gewonnenen Einsicht: das nämlich Existenz kein reales Prädikat ist. Die durchgängige Bestimmung is ja ohne Frage ein reales Prädikat, und wenn sie und Existenz als gleichgeltende Begriffe gelten, dann muss auch letztere ein reales Prädikat sein, entgegen dem,was die Kritik lehrt” (Rohs, 1978: p. 177).
16 In other words, we are not dealing here directly with the conversion of categorical statements according to the logical square of opposition.
merely a logical predicate or a “predicate of all predicates” (MM 28:1258) that abstracts from every content of possible predication, but also a determination of a thing that must be thought of as contained in that thing’s possibility insofar as the thing is posited as an object in relation to its concept.¹⁷ In other words, the logical operation in question seems to assume that existence can be as much “a predicate of the thing itself as of the thought that one has of the thing” (contrast EMB 2:72).

So just what is Kant up to when he uses the concept of thoroughgoing determination to prove a priori the existence of a material entity? One way of getting around this question would be to regard Kant’s conversion move in Transition 1-14 as involving nothing more than a conceptual misfire as far as the basic tenets of his critical theory of a priori cognition are concerned. That is, we might take it to be an unfortunate and misguided twist in Kant’s thinking that results from his apparently bizarre concern to work out an a priori existence proof for a universal material entity that is also supposed to be the One Object of possible experience. And indeed, if we are willing to entertain this interpretive approach, it behooves us to examine what Kant does with the principle of thoroughgoing determination elsewhere in the Opus postumum. Thus, we may reasonably ask whether the later fascicles of this manuscript packet, in particular those containing Kant’s so-called doctrine of self-positing (Selbstsetzungslehre), offer less puzzling considerations on the relationship between the concepts of existence and thoroughgoing determination.

If we do this, however, we are soon brought face to face with portrayals of this relationship that appear to be at least as odd as those we encounter in the context of Transition 1-14. Kant consistently makes use of the Wolff-inverting conversion formula of the principle of

¹⁷ See, e.g., KrV A598/B626-A599/B627; EMB 2:156; MM 28:1258).
thoroughgoing determination when accounting for the subject’s self-positing activity. For example, when establishing the connection between the act of conscious self-determination and the existence of the dynamical cosmic matter, Kant maintains:

[C] The first thing is that […] the subject determines its self-consciousness and makes itself an object and appearance of itself. Synthetically and analytically. [¶] The unity of space, of time and of the possibility of experience (i.e., of thoroughgoing determination in space and time); for *omimoda determinatio est existentia*. [¶] Upon this and upon the principle of the possibility of experience is grounded the idea of the existence of a ubiquitous, all-penetrating etc. matter [*Stoff*] which constitutes the basis of the possibility of One Experience, as can be understood *a priori*. For attractive forces, repulsion and centrifugal forces are what makes possible experience in general as a system, and without this absolute real unity even the negative principle of empty [space and time] is impossible. (Op 22:88-89)

In the context of the *Selbstsetzungslehre* we also encounter passages in which Kant is concerned with the relationship between the concept of self-consciousness at issue in the *cogito*, the idea of *omnimoda determinatio*, and the conversion formula of the principle of thoroughgoing determination:

[D] I think (*cogito*). I am conscious of myself (*sum*). I, the subject, make myself into the object […] and this act is not yet a judgment, i.e., is not yet a representation of the relation of one object to another, i.e., is not yet a judgment: I am thinking (*iudicium*), much less an inference of reason: I think, therefore I am (*ratiocinium – cogito, ergo sum*). [There is] no progression from a representation as predicate to another as the determination of a concept but merely the formal element of judging [*das Formale des
Urtheilens] according to the rule of identity; not a real relation of things but merely a logical relation of concepts to one another. [¶] For the cognition of things, however, there is required: intuition, concept, and a principle of the determination of concepts that are included in this [concept]; which [determination], if it is thoroughgoing determination (omnimoda determinatio), contains the representation of an Existing Thing as existent [die Vorstellung eines Existirenden Dinges als eines solchen]. [¶] The modality of the cognition of an object as an omnimodally determined thing is experience. (Op 22:93)

[E] I am the object of my own representation, i.e., I am conscious of myself. This logical act is not yet a proposition, for it lacks a predicate. The former is complemented by the real act: I exist (sum) thinking (cogitans), whereby something (I myself) is not merely thought but is also given (cogitabile vt dabile). But this act is not an inference (cogito, ergo sum). Rather, only the subject thought of in its thoroughgoing determination [and] thus represented not analytically (according to the principle of identity) […] but synthetically […] yields the proposition of the existence of an object (omnimoda determinatio est existentia). (Op 22:98)

Given the telegraphic quality (not to mention the syntax-bending style) of these experimental sketches, it is exceedingly difficult to construe just what Kant has in mind when he brings to bear the concept and principle of thoroughgoing determination in order to account for the complex relationship between (i) the ‘I think,’ (ii) the acts of judgment that can determine relations between objects as well as real relations between things, and (iii) the cognition of things involving the determination of concepts that contains the representation of an ‘Exiting Thing as existent.’ Perhaps, though, we can get a clearer sense of what Kant might be driving at if we link
this last-mentioned representation to the idea of existent matter thematized in the third paragraph of quotation C. If we do this, we can understand Kant as implicitly taking the following position in D and E: no act of thinking through which one is conscious of oneself as a subject that is to be thought of in *its* thoroughgoing determination can be anything more than a logical act that makes possible the logical relation of concepts, unless, that is, its representation (i.e., the ‘I think’) is synthetically linked *a priori* to the *existence* of the omnimodally determined object that furnishes “the basis of the possibility of the One Experience” as “an absolute real unity.” And if this is the case, we can also see why Kant would want to maintain that the key to understanding how this kind of necessary synthetic connection is possible is furnished by the formula *omnimoda determinatio est existentia*, i.e., by the version of the principle of thoroughgoing determination according to which the actuality of the collectively unifying “One Object” of experience follows analytically in accordance with the logical principle of identity.\(^\text{23}\)

At any rate, the crucial point to bear in mind at the present juncture is this: it is by focusing on that formula’s employment in *Opus postumum*’s later account of self-positing that we can grasp the seriousness with which Kant undertakes the conversion move that we encounter in Transition 1-14. Establishing this last point, of course, also serves to underscore the significance

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\(^{23}\) To be sure, this may well leave us wondering exactly what has happened to Kant’s principle of the transcendental unity of apperception in the context of his late reflections on thoroughgoing determination, existence, and self-positing. Let me pose this problem in view of the criticism of Descartes that is evident in quotations D and E: Kant’s reflections are not obviously inconsistent with his ‘classic’ position that “the synthetic unity of apperception is the highest point to which one must affix all use of the understanding, even the whole of logic and, after it, transcendental philosophy” (KrV, B134 n.). At the same time, though, they do seem to suggest that this highest transcendental philosophical point has to be understood as something far removed from the Archimedean ‘fixed and immovable’ point by means of which the Cartesian subject is supposed to provide itself with epistemic leverage (cf. Descartes, paragraph 1 of Meditation II)—much further removed, in fact, than is already the case in the first *Critique’s* Transcendental Deduction and in Kant’s accounts of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason.
of the issue that this Wolff-inverting move raises, namely, that it involves the supposition that
existence can, in some sense, designate a constitutive or real predicate. So just what sense could
this be for Kant?

II

Clearly, the answer to this question (if indeed there is one) must involve coming directly to grips
with the issues of existence and predication so usefully addressed by Peter Rohs decades ago. I
will undertake to do this in due course. But we need to cover some further preparatory
background if the answer that I will ultimately suggest is to make good sense. I propose, then, to
work through two facets of this background in this section. First, I will give a brief sketch of
what I take to be the main transcendental theoretic import of the Opus postumum’s aether
deduction. Second, in view of this import, I will discuss certain aspects of the first Critique’s
treatment of the principle of thoroughgoing determination in connection with the transcendental
ideal.

Needless to say, Kant’s concern with the type of epistemic condition at issue in the aether
deduction raises questions about what can be established by means of a priori argument, given
the limits that he otherwise places on the proper scope of transcendental argumentation, and
above all, the limits treated in the Critique of Pure Reason. In the analytic part of his
transcendental logic, Kant presents arguments that prove conditions for the possibility of
experience. But these arguments are supposed to be in keeping with the standpoint that the
“understanding can never accomplish anything more than to anticipate the form of a possible
experience” (KrV, A246/B303). This key programmatic tenet of the Transcendental Analytic, in
view of which “the proud name of an ontology […] must give way to the modest one of a mere analytic of pure understanding” (KrV, A247/B303), is intended to underscore the restriction of our non-empirical knowledge of sensible nature to the formal features of our experience of objects. More precisely, that tenet implies that our a priori cognition of objects is limited to these formal features insofar as they are features that can be specified in terms of the formal properties of our sensibility, and insofar as they are features that rest on the understanding’s capacity to put together and order (that is: to combine or synthesize) representations in general. It is thus in keeping with Kant’s tenet concerning the anticipation of the form of a possible experience that the understanding must be thought to exercise its synthetic functions of representational combination (Verbindung) in general in such a way that sensible representations can be referred to objects of empirical intuition on the basis of a natural and (as far as we can know) metaphysically contingent fact: the fact that the human subject happens to possess the type of sensibility the forms of which exhibit the properties just mentioned (namely, the properties of sensibility in terms of which the formal features of our experience of objects are specifiable).

That programmatic tenet of the Transcendental Analytic therefore does not entail that the objective contents, or material, of the experiences involving these sensible representations could present us with something the existence of which must be regarded as a necessary condition for our experience of objects in general.

In the context of the Critique of Pure Reason, then, the arguments that establish epistemic conditions as a priori necessary possibility conditions (i.e., transcendental conditions) are supposed to accord with the idea that all a priori determinable conditions of our experience of objects are purely formal conditions. Moreover, the examination of these formal conditions is supposed to proceed on the metaphysically revolutionary ‘Copernican’ assumption that objects
of the senses must “conform with the constitution of our faculty of intuition” (KrV, BXVII), and that our perceptual cognition of these objects is grounded in rules of the understanding that “find expression in the a priori concepts to which all objects of our experience necessarily conform and with which they necessarily agree” (KrV, BXVII-XVIII). The formal conditions of our cognition of objects that the Critique of Pure Reason reveals are therefore the fundamental subjective conditions of objectively valid cognition. As subjective conditions, they are supposed to be brought to light by investigating the formal conditions of our sensibility, by providing a systematically exhaustive account of the particular synthetic functions of pure (i.e., strictly non-empirical) understanding, and by establishing the necessary connection between these functions of the understanding and those formal sensible conditions (i.e., the connection between the pure a priori concepts of the understanding, on the one hand, and space and time qua forms of intuition and pure intuitions, on the other). The Opus postumum’s aether deduction, however, aims to establish the epistemic necessity of a condition that is both non-subjective (given the sense of subjective just indicated) and material. Thus, Kant’s intention to prove a priori the existence of a universal dynamical plenum seems to be radically incompatible with the epistemological formalism of intuition and understanding on which the Critique of Pure Reason bases its account of our a priori knowledge of sensible nature.

Given this apparent incompatibility, it may be tempting to play down the aether deduction’s significance for Kant’s transcendental theory and metaphysics of material nature; and some commentators have viewed the deduction as a fundamentally misguided project that occupied Kant for only a brief period in the compositional history of the Opus postumum.²⁴ There are,

²⁴ For further discussion of the aether deduction’s place in the Opus postumum, see Edwards 2000, pp. 154, 167-170; Förster 2000, pp. 75-116.
however, hermeneutically decisive reasons for rejecting this interpretive evaluation of the aether deduction. Without going into the wide range of these reasons, let me make two points that are specifically relevant to this chapter’s argument. First, Kant never abandoned this project of *a priori* argument in the *Opus postumum* manuscripts written after Transition 1-14. More precisely, he continued to be centrally concerned with the most basic epistemological thesis that the aether deduction is meant to support with respect to space, namely, the thesis that our experience of objects and physical events in space is possible only on the condition that the whole of physical space is something completely determined in all of its parts as a dynamical plenum or continuum of material forces.\(^{25}\) It is this thesis, I take it, that underlies Kant’s characterizations of his dynamical plenum as, for instance, “space itself represented as object of possible experience” (Op 21:228), as “space itself as the universal sum total of the moving forces of matter” (Op 21:231), as “*hypostatically* conceived space [*hypostatisch* gedachter Raum]” 21:221, and as “hypostatized space itself, as it were [*gleichsam*], in which everything is in motion” (Op 21:224). In view of these characterizations, the second point that I want to make is this: there are essential links between the aether deduction’s basic epistemological thesis and the portrayal of a hypostatizing procedure of reason that Kant provides in the first *Critique’s*

\(^{25}\) For details, see chapter 9 in Edwards 2000. But the following lines from Transition 1-14 may serve well enough to exemplify the thesis in question: “What was said of the existence of such a [dynamical cosmic] matter and its inner movement in time is true also of cosmic space; that is: in the coexistence of all parts of cosmic space [*im Zugleichsein aller Theile desselben*] this matter sets all corporeal things in community and places the subject in the condition of possible experience of even the most remote corporeal things—e.g. it makes the celestial bodies perceptible to the senses and the object of possible experience” (Op 21:563; cf. KrV, A213/B260-A214/B261). Kant’s opening reference to the existence of the dynamical cosmic matter and its movement in time is no doubt of as much interest as his consideration of the existence of matter in space. For the sake of simplicity, however, I disregard in this chapter the cosmogonic ramifications of the aether deduction for Kant’s account of the possibility conditions of objective experience.
Transcendental Dialectic in connection with the principle of thoroughgoing determination and the ideal of pure reason. The rest of this section is devoted to shedding light on these links.

According to Kant’s account of the ideal of pure reason, “every thing stands under the principle of thoroughgoing determination,” which states: “among all possible predicates of things, insofar as they are compared with their opposites, one must apply to it [i.e., to every particular thing]” (KrV, A571/B599-A572/B600). The principle of thoroughgoing determination thus provides “the principle of the synthesis of all predicates that make up the complete concept of a thing” (KrV, A572/B600). But such a principle of predicate synthesis is one that “deals with the content and not merely the logical form” of possibility (KrV, A572/B600). It therefore “contains a transcendental presupposition, namely that of the material [Stoff] OF ALL POSSIBILITY, which is supposed to contain a priori the data for the PARTICULAR possibility of every thing” (KrV, A572/B600-A573/B601). In keeping with this transcendental presupposition, which pertains to the thinkable content of possibility and not merely to its logical form, the concept of thoroughgoing determination must be grasped as “the idea of the SUM TOTAL OF ALL POSSIBILITY”. Although this idea is a concept that “can never be exhibited in concreto in its totality”, at least not by us or other finite rational beings, it nonetheless “refines itself to a concept omnimodally determined a priori, and thereby becomes the concept of an individual object that is omnimodally determined merely through the idea” (KrV, A574/B602). The concept of this object (i.e., the ideal of pure reason) is the representation that furnishes the single “transcendental substratum that contains, as it were, the entire storehouse of material from which all possible predicates of things can be taken” (KrV, A575/B603). This substratum itself is “nothing other than the idea of an All of reality (omnitude realitatis)” that in turn necessarily correlates with the concept of an ens realissimum as an individual being. According to Kant’s
portrayal of the ideal of pure reason as transcendental substratum, the most real individual entity here in question must be understood as “the basis of the thoroughgoing determination that is necessarily encountered in everything existing, and that constitutes the supreme and complete material condition of its possibility, to which all thinking of objects in general must, as regards the content of that thinking, be traced back” (KrV, A576/B604).

In its adherence to the principle of thoroughgoing determination that grounds the thinking of its transcendental ideal, reason does not have to presuppose the actual existence of any being that forms the substratum constituting the supreme and complete material condition of everything existing. Yet in following this ideal through its further specifications and, in particular, in following it through its hypostatizing specification as the idea of *ens originarium*, reason does inevitably come face to face with the idea of God that furnishes the subject matter of the existence proofs of rational theology:

[F] [I]f we pursue this idea of ours so far as to hypostatize it, then we will able to determine the original through the mere concept of the highest reality as a being that is singular, simple, all-sufficient, eternal, etc., in a word, we will be able to determine it in its unconditioned completeness through all predications. The concept of such a being is that of *God* thought of in a transcendental sense […]. (KrV, B580/B608)

According to Kant, of course, reason has already overstepped the boundaries of its proper vocation by the time it pursues its ideal to the point at which it engages in the kind of hypostatization just described. The crucial task of reason’s self-criticism with respect to this ideal is thus to explain *how* we get to this point. In view of our previous considerations on what goes on in the *Opus postumum*, Kant’s explanation merits quotation in full. Here is the relevant passage in its now standard English translation:
[G] The possibility of objects of sense is a relation of these objects to our thought, in which something (namely the empirical form) can be thought *a priori*, but what constitutes the material, the reality in appearance (corresponding to sensation) has to be given; without that nothing at all could be thought and hence no possibility could be represented. Now an object of sense can be thoroughly determined only if it is compared with all the predicates of appearance and is represented through them either affirmatively or negatively. But because that which constitutes the thing itself (in appearance), namely the real, has to be given, without which it could not be thought at all, but that in which the real in all appearances is given is the one all-encompassing experience, the material for the possibility of objects of sense has to be presupposed as given in one sum total; and the possibility of empirical objects, their difference from one another and their thoroughgoing determination, can rest only on the limitation of this sum total. Now in fact no other objects except those of sense can be given to us; and they can be given nowhere except in the context of a possible experience; consequently nothing is an object *for us* unless it presupposes the sum total of all empirical reality as condition of its possibility. In accordance with a natural illusion, we regard as a principle that must hold of all things in general that which properly holds only of those which are given as objects of our senses. Consequently, through the omission of this limitation we will take the empirical principle of our concepts of the possibility of things as appearances to be a transcendental principle of the possibility of things in general. [¶] That we subsequently hypostatize this idea of the sum total of all reality, however, comes about because we dialectically transform the DISTRIBUTIVE unity of the use of the understanding in experience, into the COLLECTIVE unity of a whole of experience; and from this whole
of appearance we think up an individual thing containing in itself all empirical reality, when then—by means of the transcendental subreption we have already thought—is confused with the concept of a thing that stands at the summit of the possibility of all things, providing the real conditions for their thoroughgoing determination. (KrV, A581/B609-A583/B611).

Let us examine the first sentence of this translated passage in conjunction with Kant’s own corresponding text, which runs as follows:

[H] Die Möglichkeit der Gegenstände der Sinne ist ein Verhältniß derselben zu unserm Denken, worin etwas (nämlich die empirische Form) a priori gedacht werden kann, dasjenige aber, was die Materie ausmacht, die Realität in der Erscheinung (was der Empfindung entspricht), gegeben sein muß, ohne welches es auch gar nicht gedacht und mithin seine Möglichkeit nicht vorgestellt werden könnte.

From a strictly grammatical point of view, I suppose there could be two possible referential candidates for the pronoun es as it is used in the final clause of this highly complex sentence. One possibility would be the “relation [Verhältnis]” mentioned in the first line of the quotation, i.e., the relation of objects of the senses to our thought. The other possibility is “that [dasjenige]” (which constitutes matter as reality in the appearance—i.e., what corresponds to sensation). I opt for the second reading for two reasons: first, it is the one more in keeping with the usual syntactical rhythms of Kant’s (often somewhat disconcertingly open-ended) use of pronouns; and second, Kant is here concerned to contrast the formal condition of the possibility of objects of the senses with that which constitutes the matter of appearance (cf. KrV, A20/B24). At any rate, neither of the referential options just mentioned seems to indicate that the clause under consideration should be translated starting with “without that nothing at all could be thought”
For Kant is not concerned, at this particular juncture, with the supreme material condition of possibility to which all thinking of objects in general must be traced back. Instead, his focus is on a possibility condition of our thinking of things as objects of the senses. Consequently, my reading of what Kant is arguing in the first sentence of the German text runs as follows:

[1] The possibility of objects of the senses is a relation of these objects to our thought, in which something (namely, the empirical form) can be thought a priori, but in which that which constitutes the matter, the reality in the appearance ([i.e.,] what corresponds to sensation), must be given, since without it [i.e., without this givenness of what corresponds to sensation] that which constitutes the matter in question could not be thought, and hence its possibility could not be represented.

Now let me explain why I think it is reasonable to regard these last ruminations as amounting to something more than a pedantic exercise in translational nitpicking. While recognizing that Kant’s aim in the passage as a whole is to account for how reason comes to regard all the possibility of things as derived from a single possibility, it is still essential for us to bear in mind that in the first paragraph of quotation G he is not primarily concerned with the metaphysical possibility of a thing or things tout court. His focus there is limited to the possibility of our thinking of objects of the senses, and thus to the presupposition that the matter for such objects (i.e., the real in the appearance which corresponds to sensation and is given in one all-encompassing experience) must be thought of as something given in a single sum total (Inbegriff).

We must bear in mind Kant’s sharply circumscribed thematic focus on this presupposition if we are to understand the account of hypostatization at issue in the second paragraph of quotation
G. Kant asserts there that the idea of the transcendentally presupposed sum total of reality just mentioned comes to be hypostatized in the course of the dialectical transformation of the distributive unity of the understanding’s use in experience into the collective unity of a whole of experience. But he does not maintain that that idea is the same as the idea of reality at issue in the transcendental principle of thoroughgoing determination on its interpretation as a principle of the possibility of things in general. Specifically, he does not maintain that the hypostatized idea of the sum total of all reality in appearance is one and the same as the idea of the omnitudo realitatis that furnishes the transcendental substratum of all things without qualification, i.e., the substratum that presents, as it were, “the storehouse of material from which all predicates of things can be taken” (KrV, A575/B603 – italics mine). The former idea is the one that (as Kant states) is subsequently hypostatized when, in consequence of the transformation of the distributive unity of the use of the understanding in experience into the collective unity of a whole of experience, we come to think of this collectively unified experiential whole as an individual thing containing in itself all empirical reality; and then, by way of transcendental subreption, we come to conflate the idea of such a thing with the concept of a thing that stands at the summit of the possibility of all things sans phrase.

The special significance of this stage-ordering account of hypostatization up to the point at which transcendental subreption occurs comes out when we turn to Kant’s explanation of the dialectical illusion that underlies all of theoretical reason’s proofs of the existence of a necessary being. Two passages from this explanation, which is given after Kant’s treatments of the impossibility of the ontological and cosmological proofs of God’s existence, are especially relevant to our line of investigation:
Since each determination of matter that constitutes what is real in it [...] is an effect (action) that must have its cause, and hence is always derivative, matter is not suited to the idea of a necessary being as the principle of all derivative unity, because each of its real properties as derivative is only conditionally necessary and hence can in itself be cancelled; but then the entire existence of matter would be cancelled; but if this did not happen, we would have reached the highest ground of unity empirically, which is forbidden by the second regulative principle; thus it follows that matter, and in general everything belonging to the world, is not suited to the idea of a necessary original being, as a mere principle of the greatest empirical unity, but this must be posited outside the world [...]. (KrV, A618/B646)

The ideal of the highest being is [...] nothing other than a *regulative principle of reason*, to regard all combination in the world *as if it* arose from an all-sufficient necessary cause, so as to ground on that cause the rule of a unity that is systematic and necessary according to universal laws; but it is not an assertion of an existence that is necessary in itself. But at the same time it is unavoidable, by means of a transcendental subreption, to represent this formal principle to oneself as constitutive, and to think of this unity hypostatically. For, just as with space, since it originally makes possible all forms which are merely limitations of it, even though it is only a principle of sensibility, it is necessarily held to be a Something subsisting in itself with absolute necessity and an *a priori* object, given in itself, so it also comes about entirely naturally that since the systematic unity of nature cannot be set up as a principle of the empirical use of reason

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27 See next footnote.
except on the basis of the idea of a most real being as the supreme cause, this idea is thereby represented as an actual object, and this object again, because it is the supreme condition, is represented as necessary, so that a regulative principle is transformed into a constitutive one; this substitution reveals itself by the fact that if I now consider this supreme being, which was absolutely (unconditionally) necessary respective to the world, as a thing for itself, no concept is susceptible of this necessity; and thus it must have been encountered in my reason only as a formal condition of thought, and not as a material and hypostatic condition of existence. (KrV, A619/B647)

I call attention to the following facets of Kant’s reasoning in the texts just quoted:28 In quotation J Kant argues that matter is not suited to the idea of an absolutely necessary being qua principle of all derivative unity. He also argues that through the concept of matter we cannot reach the highest ground of unity empirically, even in the event that the entire existence of matter is not cancelled in thought. Yet he does not argue that matter is not suited to the idea of a conditionally necessary entity qua principle of empirical unity. Nor does he argue that through the concept of matter we cannot reach a highest ground of all empirical unity as a unity that is systematic and necessary according to universal laws. Nor, finally, does he argue that we cannot reach such a

28 Proper explication of passages J and K, which I must forego due to limitations of space, would demand extended discussion of Kant’s considerations on reason’s formal interest in its regulative fulfillment of the dual epistemic requirement that underlies our thinking of existence, namely: “on the one side for everything given as existing to seek something that is necessary, i.e., never to stop anywhere except with an a priori complete explanation, but on the other side also never to hope for this completion, i.e., never to assume anything empirical as unconditioned, i.e., thereby exempting oneself from its further derivation” (KrV, A616/B644). We would also have to go into the particular reasons why Kant holds that the “philosophers of antiquity” could not satisfy this twofold requirement of speculative reason’s regulative use when they dealt with necessary existence in terms of matter as “substratum […] respective to appearance” (A617/B645).
ground in an *a priori* manner through the concept of matter, provided, of course, that the entire existence of matter is not cancelled in thought.

In the second textual segment at issue K Kant gives an of account the transcendentally subreptive hypostatizing procedure whereby reason represents the *ens realissimum* as an actual object in order to ‘set up’ the systematic unity of corporeal nature. He also compares this procedure of representation with the thinking of space as an *a priori* object, which he holds to be necessary if we are to make sense of the notion of spatial form. We should take particular note of the key claim that underlies the comparison (along with my suggestion for what I take to be an essential change in its English rendering):

[L] [S]pace, since it originally makes possible all forms which are merely limitations of it, even though it is only a principle of sensibility, is necessarily held to be an absolutely self-subsistent something [*ein schlechterdings für sich bestehendes Etwas*] [...].

Obviously, this claim raises questions about Kant’s understanding of the transcendental ideality and the empirical reality of space. But let us simply sidestep this broad issue for the sake of comprehending what Kant is doing in the passage under consideration. While Kant clearly does hold that transcendental subreption is involved in our hypostatic thinking of the unity of nature as a unity deriving from a highest being that is also an all-sufficient necessary cause, he does not maintain that such subreption is part and parcel of our thinking in conformity with the corresponding epistemic requirement that pertains to space, i.e., to the necessity of our thinking of space as something that subsists simply for itself (*schlechterdings für sich*). Thus, there is no clear implication here that in thinking of space in this way, that is to say, in thinking of space as a material and hypostatic condition in relation to sensibility, we must overstep the proper boundaries of reason’s empirical use when we think of the systematic unity of nature according
to universal laws. Quite the contrary: when Kant maintains that space is necessarily held to be
something self-subsistent, i.e., something that has to be thought of hypostatically even though it
is only a principle of sensibility, he implies that we are subject to such a requirement of reason.

Evidently, this is the sort of epistemic requirement of reason’s empirical use that ought to
obtain even if it emerges when the distributive unity of the understanding’s use in experience is
thought of as a unity transformable into the collective unity of a whole of experience. In the
context of the Transcendental Dialectic, reason’s crucial critical task in thinking through this
process of dialectical transformation, again, is to uncover the juncture at which its hypostatizing
procedure necessarily becomes subreptive, thereby casting us adrift in the seas of rational
theology and its theoretically impossible existence proofs. But completing this task does not do
away with that requirement. That is, exposing the juncture at which reason’s hypostatizing
procedure conflates a condition of our thinking of the existence of something with the existence
of something thought is not to establish that a requirement of reason no longer obtains after it has
been shown how we fall prey to this kind of subreption on account of the unavoidability of
transcendental illusion. For it can still be necessary for us to think of space as something
subsisting for itself even when it has been revealed that the idea of an ens realissimum as a
supreme being or supreme cause is “encountered in my reason only as a formal condition of
thought, and not as a material and hypostatic condition of existence” (KrV, A619/B647)—i.e.,
not as a material and hypostatic condition of the existence of things in general.

Let us pause here for a moment to reflect back on what Kant does in the **Opus postumum**. I
mentioned above (see p. ***) what I take to be the basic epistemological thesis that the aether
deduction is meant to support with respect to space, i.e., the thesis that our experience of objects
and physical events in space is possible only on the condition that the whole of space is
determined as a dynamical plenum or continuum of material forces. Now the requirement of reason just discussed puts us in a position to work out how this thesis can be understood as compatible with the portrayal of the possibility conditions of existence that Kant develops in the Transcendental Dialectic. Specifically, we can understand how that thesis could cohere with the account of these conditions that Kant provides on the basis of his treatment of the concept of thoroughgoing determination as the idea of the sum total of all possibility, and thus in connection with his treatment of the ideal of pure reason as the concept of the omnimodally determined single entity that is nothing other than the _omnitude realitatis_. For we can now see that Kant’s account of this ideal as the transcendental substratum that furnishes the supreme and complete material condition of the possibility of all things in general quite literally leaves enough space for there to be a material and hypostatic condition of existence that applies to the possibility of our experience of the objects of outer sense. It is, I take it, this space of possibility, or rather this possibility of our thinking of space as a material and hypostatic condition of existence in relation to sensibility, that underlies the _Opus postumum_’s considerations on “hypostatically conceived space” and “hypostatized space itself” that were cited above (see p. **).

IV

We can now see that the account of a dynamically determined cosmic space at issue in the _Opus postumum_’s aether deduction can be made consistent with what Kant argues concerning material conditions of existence in the Transcendental Dialectic on the basis of the principle of thoroughgoing determination. Yet the very fact that we are able to discern the possibility of establishing this consistency seems to make Kant’s use of this principle’s conversion formula in the _Opus postumum_ even more problematic (if indeed not more outrageous) than it would
otherwise appear to be: *ominmoda determinatio est existentia*. Really? Seriously? Our investigations up to this point, then, amount to not much more than a brush-clearing exercise when this Wolff-inverting formula of the principle of thoroughgoing determination is placed before our eyes once again. For there is of course no indication in the Transcendental Dialectic that Kant’s use of the non-converted version of this transcendental principle involves the demand that existence should be able to furnish something more than a merely logical predicate. The conversion move that Kant advocates in Transition 1-14, however, seems unavoidably to presuppose that this demand must be satisfiable, at least as long as the concept of thoroughgoing determination is restricted to a material and hypostatic condition of existence that applies to our experience of objects of outer sense. Is there, then, any way to make good sense of such a presupposition in the face of Kant’s long familiar stance that existence is *not* a (real) predicate, but is instead the absolute position of a thing together with all its predicates? It is with this question on the table, once again, that I now turn to Kant’s 1763 treatise, *The Only Possible Basis of Proof for a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (EMB).

Due to limitations of space, my presentation of the relevant facets of EMB will have to be as compact as possible. Without further ado, let us examine four passages either involving or stemming from Kant’s understanding of Baumgarten’s revision of Wolff’s definitional account of existence in terms of internal possibility. Each of these is found in the first section of the 1763 treatise.

Our first passage of interest is taken from this section’s First Reflection, which deals with the concept of existence in general:

[M] *Wolff’s definition of existence, that it is a complement [Ergänzung] of possibility, is obviously very indeterminate. If one does not already know in advance what can be thought*
about possibility in a thing, one is not going to learn it from Wolff’s definition.

*Baumgarten* introduces the concept of thoroughgoing internal determination, and maintains that it is this which is more in existence than in mere possibility, for it completes what is left indeterminate by the predicates inhering in or issuing from the essence. But we have already seen that the difference between a real thing and a merely possible thing never lies in the connection of that thing with all the predicates that can be thought in it. Furthermore, the proposition that a possible thing, regarded as such, is indeterminate with respect to many of its predicates, could, if taken literally, lead to serious error. For such indeterminacy is forbidden by the law of excluded middle which maintains that there is no intermediate between two predicates which contradict each other. (EMB 2:276).

The second passage is taken from the Second Reflection, which deals with internal possibility insofar as it presupposes existence:

[N] That by means of which all possibility whatever is cancelled, is absolutely impossible, for the two expressions are synonymous. Now, to start with, the formal element of all possibility [*das Formale aller Möglichkeit*], namely, agreement with the law of contradiction, is cancelled by that which contradicts itself. Hence, that which is self-contradictory in itself is absolutely impossible. This, however, is not the case where we have to consider the complete elimination of all existence. For, as we have proved, the complete cancellation of all existence whatever involves no internal contradiction. However, the means by which the material element and the data of all that is possible [*das Materiale und die Data zu allem Möglichen*] is cancelled is also the means by which all possibility itself is negated. Now this is effected by the cancellation of all existence. Thus,
when all existence is denied, then all possibility is cancelled as well. As a consequence, it is absolutely impossible that nothing at all should exist. (EMB 2:279)

The third and fourth passages are found in the Third Reflection, which treats the notion of absolutely necessary existence that grounds the necessity of existence presupposed by internal possibility:

[O] [T]he necessity in the predicates of merely possible concepts may be called logical necessity. But the necessity, for which I am seeking the ultimate ground [Hauptgrund], namely, the necessity of existence, is absolute real necessity. What I find to start with is this: that which I am supposed to regard as absolutely nothing and impossible must eliminate everything which can be thought. For if there were still something left to be thought, then it would not be completely unthinkable or absolutely impossible. (EMB 2:282)

[P] All possibility presupposes something actual in and through which all that can be thought is given. Accordingly, there is a certain reality, the cancellation of which would itself cancel all internal possibility whatever. But that, the cancellation of which eradicates all possibility, is absolutely necessary. Therefore, something exists absolutely necessarily. (EMB 2:283)

Let us consider the interpretation of Baumgarten at issue in quotation M. Kant refers there to Baumgarten’s specifying refinement of the Wolffian definition of existence in terms of internal possibility. On Kant’s reading, Baumgarten’s revision of Wolff’s definition includes a concept of thoroughgoing determination. It is worth noting here, however, that Baumgarten’s own basic definition of existence is couched simply in terms of internal possibility, and not in terms of thoroughgoing internal determination. In *Metaphysica* §55, Baumgarten states:
[Q] EXISTENCE (act [...] actuality) is the collection of affections that are compossible in something; i.e. the complement of essence or of internal possibility, insofar as essence is considered only as a collection of determinations.34

Baumgarten’s definition of existence, taken by itself, thus does not introduce the concept of thoroughgoing determination to which Kant refers. That is, it does not yet include the determination of the “something” (aliquod) in which there is a collection (i.e., a sum total [complexus = Inbegriff]) of compossible affections as something omnimodally determined. This further specifying determination occurs only in §148, i.e., in Baumgarten’s definitional account of an ens singulare. It is thus offered in the systematic context of Baumgarten’s account of internal disjunctive predicates, which is given after his completed presentation of the universal internal predicates of beings that furnishes the systematic framework for the basic definition of existence in §55.35 To be sure, there is nothing to stop either Baumgarten or Kant from analytically relating the former thinker’s basic definition of existence to the systematically developed account of the ominmodally determined ens singulare. But it is still worth bearing in mind the extent to which this relation informs the view of the connection between necessary existence and internal possibility with which Kant is concerned in quotations N, O, and P. By 1763, Kant already clearly understands internal possibility directly in terms of the possibility of thoroughgoing determination. Indeed, as Kant helpfully points out against possible

34 EXISTENTIA (actus [...] actualitas) est complexus affectionum in aliquo compossibilium, i.e. complementum essentiae sive possibilitatis internae, quatenus haec tantum, ut complexus determinationum spectator.

35 Perhaps most significantly, Baumgarten specifies the notion of the sum total of compossible determinations in a being in terms of thoroughgoing determination only after his account of the determination by which an entity can be understood as something perfect (ens perfectum) in the transcendental sense (see BM, §99).
misinterpretations of Baumgarten’s concept of existence, all indeterminacy with respect to the predicates of even a merely possible thing is prohibited by the logical law of excluded middle.

Let us now consider what Kant argues in the remaining passages quoted from EMB. In quotation N he makes the assumption that the means by which “the material element and data of everything possible” is cancelled is also the means by which all possibility is negated. He uses this assumption to establish the absolute impossibility that nothing at all should exist even when the complete cancellation of all existence is thinkable in agreement with the logical law of contradiction. The assumption here at issue finds support in quotation O, where Kant in effect maintains this: to leave anything at all to be thought as the data of possibility cannot be to leave something absolutely impossible according to principles of logical necessity. In quotation P, building on the supporting position just characterized, Kant seeks to establish the absolutely necessary existence of something on the basis of the non-eradicability of all possibility. This basis of proof itself depends on the non-eliminability of internal possibility, which (according to the Kant of 1763) in turn presupposes something actual (i.e., something existent) in and through which everything thinkable is given.

In sum, Kant takes the position in EMB that (1) internal possibility must be understood in terms of the possibility of thoroughgoing determination; (2) the elimination of the material element and data of everything possible is the means of negating all possibility; and (3) the basis (indeed the only possible basis) for proving the existence of an absolutely necessary something presupposes something actual in and through which everything is given, which is to say that that basis presupposes a necessarily actualized ground of the material element of possibility which furnishes the data for all that can be thought as internally possible according to the law of
contradiction (i.e., the data for everything that must be understood in terms of the possibility of thoroughgoing determination in keeping with the law of excluded middle).

The overall position just characterized is of course undercut by the account of transcendental subreption that we have encountered when discussing the Transcendental Dialectic’s treatment of the ideal of pure reason in connection with the concept of thoroughgoing determination. But let us also recall what this dialectical account leaves open with regard to thoroughgoing determination and matters of possibility. Specifically, let us recall what is permitted by Kant’s treatment of the Transcendental Ideal when our thinking of material and hypostatic conditions of existence is related to the possibility conditions of our experience of objects of outer sense qua the collective unity of a whole of experience. As we have seen, that treatment both leaves open and requires that a self-subsistent spatial something should be thought of as a hypostatic and material condition of existence in relation to sensibility. We have also seen that this sort of material condition can be understood in relation to Kant’s considerations in the *Opus postumum* on the existence of a universal dynamical matter that furnishes an *a priori* specifiable possibility condition of the “One all-encompassing Experience” (Op 21:563) What happens, then, when we relate this possibility condition and that requirement of reason’s empirical use to what remains of Kant’s EMB position once the demands of the later critique of reason’s transcendentally subreptive procedure are satisfied?

Let us disregard for a moment the actual existence of the later fascicles of the *Opus postumum*. Focusing exclusively on Kant’s EMB position and the epistemic requirement of reason’s empirical use just mentioned, I suggest the following hypothetical picture (as it were) of what would remain. First, we would have at our disposal the basis of an *a priori* existence proof for a necessary something. But this would be something whose necessity in existence could not
be thought of as absolute even if it would have to be thought of as the spatial something that furnishes the universal material condition of the unity of objective experience as a collective or absolute real unity. Second, the existence proof in question would be one involving a principle of thoroughgoing determination. But this would be a principle according to which this spatial condition’s actuality can be established analytically from the concept of the internal possibility of one and the same experience of a corporeal world through time. Thus, the existence claim involved in this version of the principle of thoroughgoing determination, i.e., the formula omnimoda determinatio est existentia, would necessarily be consistent with the law of contradiction (as well as with the law excluded middle, of course); but it would only follow according to the principle of identity that logically grounds our thinking of the omnimodally determined ens singulare which furnishes the (materially omnitudinous) ‘One Object’ of our experience as a collectively unified self-same whole.

The picture that I have just sketched exhibits, of course, the distinct interpretive advantage of conforming quite exactly to what actually Kant argues in the Opus postumum (see above, pp. **). Thus, it seems that we have now cleared away enough underbrush so that we can finally lay hold of what we have been looking for, and have indeed been looking at, the whole time. So one more time: just what is Kant up to with regard to the issue of existence and predication in his employment of the principle of thoroughgoing determination’s conversion formula?

Consider this question in view of the severely restricted set of material possibility conditions mentioned in our ‘hypothetical’ sketch, that is, in view of the set whose membership consists of exactly One. It seems that the only response that could plausibly be given is one that would have to run roughly as follows. If existence could not be said to supply a constitutive or real predicate

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36 Regarding this reference to temporal identity, see note 24.
on the condition allowed by the restriction just noted (i.e., on the condition under which the actualized existence of a single material object follows \textit{analytically} from a principle of the possibility of experience in accordance with the logical principle of identity\textsuperscript{37}), then we just would not know what else to call it. Nor apparently would Kant.

Does this line of response represent an adequate answer to the question that emerges when Kant maintains the equivalence of the concepts of thoroughgoing determination and existence in order to prove \textit{a priori} the actuality of an omnimodally determined entity that is also a material condition of possible experience? If it doesn’t, then it at least shows us how to go about looking for one. More accurately, it will point us in the appropriate direction if we are willing to follow along on Kant’s path when, in his late critical philosophy, he maintains that the metaphysics of corporeal nature must include the account of a transcendental condition of universal spatial existence that is both non-subjective and non-formal. For it is only with reference to this kind of necessary condition of objective experience’s internal possibility as a collective unity that it can make any sense at all for Kant to hold that \textit{existence} can furnish a predicate concept for a principle of thoroughgoing determination. Specifically, it is only with reference to the material transcendental condition at issue in the aether deduction that Kant can try to carry out two otherwise incompatible tasks of reason at once: he can in effect hold that the term \textit{existence} expresses the predicate concept employed in the conversion formula of the principle of thoroughgoing determination even when he continues to insist, in keeping with his ‘classic’ critical doctrine of existence and predication (cf., e.g., KrV, A598/B626), that “existence is not a certain \textit{gewisses} predicate of the thing but the thing’s absolute position together with all its predicates” (Op 21:571).

\textsuperscript{37} See above, pp. \textsuperscript{**}. 

Can Kant self-consistently do this? The answer depends on whether or not the substantive refinement of the classic critical doctrine that we encounter in the *Opus postumum* can be successful. This chapter will have achieved its aim if it has shown that Kant’s attempted refinement is philosophically interesting in its own right and on its own terms.