

THE LOCATION OF KANT'S REFUTATION OF IDEALISM

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In the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant inserts an entirely new section: the Refutation of Idealism. Here he defends our claim to know that external, spatially extended objects such as apples, books and cups of tea actually exist. He constructs what he describes as 'a strict proof... of the reality of outer intuition' (Bxxxix). There are many difficult questions about this section of the *Critique*. There are questions about the structure of Kant's proof, about his motivation for adding it to the second edition, and about its relationship to the treatment of idealism in the Fourth Paralogism of the first edition. In this article I am going to focus on a question about the *location* of the Refutation of Idealism: why does Kant add it to the second edition of the *Critique* at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate of Empirical Thinking in General?¹

Kant appears to provide an answer to this question in a sentence that he adds at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate just before the Refutation of Idealism itself. He writes: 'A powerful objection against these rules for proving existence indirectly is made by *idealism*, the refutation of which is here in its right

¹All references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* take the standard A/B form. All other references to Kant's works are to the Academy Edition. All translations from Kant's works and from the German secondary literature are my own.

place' (B274).² The trouble is that it isn't easy to think of a satisfactory explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism that is also plausibly expressed by this sentence.³ One possible explanation is that the Refutation of Idealism and the Second Postulate are both concerned with our knowledge of the actual existence of objects. Whereas the Second Postulate is a principle that specifies the conditions under which we can know that a given object actually exists, the Refutation of Idealism is a proof that the objects that we can know actually exist include external, spatially extended objects such as apples, books and cups of tea. The trouble with this explanation is that it isn't plausibly expressed by the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate. It doesn't refer to any 'powerful objection... made by *idealism*', nor does it refer to any 'rules for proving existence indirectly'. Now, one of the parts of the Second Postulate is the claim that the Analogies of Experience (i.e. the principle that every change is an alteration, the principle that every change has a cause, etc.) are the rules for proving existence indirectly. So an explanation that *is* plausibly expressed by the sentence Kant adds at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate is that the Refutation of Idealism is his response to the objection that the Analogies of Experience must be false since idealism is true. The trouble with this explanation is that it is open to serious textual and philosophical objections.

My aim in this article is to provide an explanation for the location of the Refu-

²In the original: 'Einen mächtigen Einwurf aber wider diese Regeln, das Dasein mittelbar zu beweisen, macht der *Idealism*, dessen Widerlegung hier an der rechten Stelle ist' (B274).

³Heidemann writes that 'an enquiry concerning the Refutation of Idealism has to pose not only questions about the Kantian proof of the existence of the external world, but also the question about the location of the Refutation of Idealism within the *Critique of Pure Reason*' (1998: 94). Some commentators have concluded that there is no satisfactory answer to this question. Strawson writes that the Refutation of Idealism is 'not very strategically placed in the middle of the Postulates of Empirical Thought' (1966: 122). Bennett writes that the Refutation of Idealism 'is placed, for a silly reason, in the middle of [Kant's] discussion of the Postulates', even though 'it has more in common with the second Analogy of Experience' (1966: 166). Wolff writes: '[the Refutation of Idealism] has nothing especially in common with the teaching of the Postulates and I shall therefore treat it separately, taking the opportunity to connect it up with several related passages from other parts of the *Critique*' (1963: 293).

tation of Idealism that is plausibly expressed by the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate and that is not open to serious textual or philosophical objections. I shall argue that the powerful objection to which the Refutation of Idealism is Kant's response is not an objection against the Analogies of Experience, but rather an objection against the Second Postulate. In particular, I shall argue that it is an objection against the claim that the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly, or, to be precise, against the claim that if we cannot perceive a given object, then we can know that this object actually exists only if there is some other object such that (1) we can perceive this other object, and (2) it would violate the Analogies of Experience if this other object actually existed, but the object that we cannot perceive did not actually exist. Furthermore, I shall argue that the powerful objection made by idealism against the Second Postulate is not that the Second Postulate must be false since idealism is true, but rather that the Second Postulate must be false since *otherwise* idealism is true. The point of Kant's Refutation of Idealism is to defend the claim that he has just made about the conditions under which we can know that an object actually exists from the objection that it is too restrictive. We can know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist. But the Second Postulate implies that we cannot know that external, spatially extended objects such as apples and books and cups of tea actually exist. So the Second Postulate must be false.

§1. THE SECOND POSTULATE

At the beginning of the Postulates of Empirical Thinking in General, Kant introduces the Second Postulate as the principle that '[what] is connected with the material conditions of experience (sensation) is *actual*' (A218/B266).⁴ One important question regarding this principle is whether it should be interpreted as a *metaphysical* claim about the conditions under which an object actually exists, or as an *episte-*

⁴In the original: 'Was mit den materialen Bedingungen der Erfahrung (der Empfindung) zusammenhängt, ist *wirklich*' (A218/B266).

mological claim about the conditions under which we can *know* that a given object actually exists. Another important question has to do with the material conditions of experience. Kant thinks that an object is connected with the material conditions of experience if we can perceive this object. But he doesn't think that an object is connected with the material conditions of experience only if we can perceive this object. The second question is under what conditions Kant thinks that an object that we cannot perceive is nonetheless connected with the material conditions of experience.

To answer these questions, it is helpful to take a closer look at Kant's elucidation of the Second Postulate. Here he writes that '[the] postulate for cognizing the *actuality* of things requires *perception*... not indeed the immediate perception of the object itself the existence of which is to be cognized, but still the connection of this object with some actual perception in accordance with the Analogies of Experience' (A225/B272). He also writes that although 'perception... is the unique characteristic of actuality', 'the existence of a thing can be cognized prior to the perception of the thing, and so comparatively *a priori*, if only it is connected with some perceptions in accordance with the principles of the empirical connection of perceptions (the Analogies)' (A225/B273). These passages strongly suggest that that the Second Postulate should be interpreted an epistemological claim about the conditions under which we can know that an object actually exists. They also suggest that, according to Kant, an object that we cannot perceive is connected with the material conditions of experience if and only if there is some other object such that (1) we can perceive this other object, and (2) it would violate the Analogies of Experience (i.e. it would imply that there was a change that was not an alteration, or an event that lacked a cause, etc.) if this other object actually existed, but the object that we cannot perceive did not actually exist. Kant's example of an object that is connected with the material conditions of experience in this way is a 'magnetic matter permeating all bodies', which he claims we can know actually exists 'from the perception of attracted iron filings, although an immediate perception of

this matter is impossible for us given the constitution of our senses' (A226/B273).⁵ Putting these points together, I suggest that the Second Postulate should be understood as the principle that we can know that an object x actually exists if and only if either (1) we can perceive x or (2) there is some other object y such that (a) we can perceive y , and (b) it would violate the Analogies of Experience if y actually existed, but x did not actually exist.⁶

There are two points about the Second Postulate to which I want to draw particular attention. First, it is an implication of the Second Postulate that there is both a direct and an indirect way in which we can know that a given object actually exists. Suppose I can know that a given object actually exists because I can perceive it. My knowledge that this object actually exists would be direct in the sense that it would not be based on my knowledge that any other object actually exists. By contrast, suppose I can know that a given object actually exists because there is some other object such that (1) I can perceive this other object, and (2) it would violate the Analogies of Experience if this other object actually existed, but the object that I cannot perceive did not actually exist. My knowledge that the first object actually exists would be indirect in the sense that it would be based on my knowledge of the actual existence of some other object.

Second, it is an implication of the Second Postulate that our knowledge of the

⁵According to Michael Friedman, the magnetic matter is an 'aether', which is affected by the presence of a magnet. The magnet 'causes the surrounding aether to be put into a certain state, which then causes the attracted iron filings to move - presumably by some kind of pressure' (2013: 357).

⁶There are some alternative interpretations in the recent secondary literature. According to Giuseppe Motta, the Second Postulate implies that '[the] determination of the actuality of a thing requires always at the same time the matter of the senses and the form of the pure concepts of the understanding, for the thing can be determined in existence only on the basis of the lawfulness and necessity of experience' (2012: 116). Motta interprets the Second Postulate as an epistemological claim. But he appears to take this principle to imply that it is not sufficient for us to know that that an object actually exists that we have perceived it. He thinks that some sort of appeal to the Analogies of Experience is a necessary condition of knowing that an object actually exists. James Van Cleve appears to interpret the Second Postulate as a metaphysical claim. He writes that 'Kant is telling us that to be actual is to be either given in perception or causally connected with perception' (1999: 234). I find it hard to square these interpretations with the text of Kant's elucidation of the Second Postulate.

actual existence of objects is restricted to what we can perceive, and what it is connected to what we can perceive in accordance with the Analogies of Experience. As Kant puts it in his elucidation of the Second Postulate, ‘our cognition of the existence of things reaches as far as perception and what is appended to it in accordance with empirical laws’ (A226/B273). The objects that we can know actually exist do not include any non-empirical, super-sensible objects such as Cartesian souls or Leibnizian monads.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this article, one possible explanation for the location of Kant’s Refutation of Idealism is that both the Refutation of Idealism and the Second Postulate are concerned with our knowledge of the actual existence of objects.⁷ A more precise version of this explanation is that both the Refutation of Idealism and the Second Postulate are concerned with the extent of our knowledge of the actual existence of objects. They are both concerned with the answer to the question: which objects can we know actually exist? Part of the lesson of the Second Postulate is that the objects that we can know actually exist do not include any non-empirical, super-sensible objects such as Cartesian souls or Leibnizian monads. And part of the lesson of the Refutation of Idealism is that the objects that we can know actually exist *do* include external, spatially extended objects such as apples and books and cups of tea. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Kant inserts the Refutation of Idealism at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate because they are both concerned with our knowledge of the actual existence of objects? or, more precisely, with the question which objects we can know actually exist. The trouble with this explanation, as I mentioned in the introduction to this article, is that it is not plausibly expressed by the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate. The sentence in question refers to a ‘powerful objection... made by *idealism*’ (B274). It also refers to ‘rules for prov-

⁷The sort of idealism that Kant refutes in his Refutation of Idealism is what he calls *problematic idealism*. He defines this at the beginning of the Refutation of Idealism as ‘the theory that declares the existence of objects in space outside us.. to be doubtful and *unprovable*’ (B274). In the first edition of the *Critique* Kant defines this sort of idealism, which he calls sceptical idealism (A377), as the theory of the uncertainty of ‘the existence of all objects of outer senses’ (A367).

ing existence indirectly' (B274).⁸ So there is clearly more to Kant's explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism than the fact that both the Refutation of Idealism and the Second Postulate are concerned with our knowledge of the actual existence of objects.⁹

§2. THE ANALOGIES OF EXPERIENCE

In §1, I discussed the proposal that Kant inserts the Refutation of Idealism at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate simply because these sections of the *Critique* are both concerned with our knowledge of the actual existence of objects.

⁸Ralf Bader writes: 'Occasionally commentators simply state that the Second Postulate is concerned with what is actual and that Kant wants to show in the Refutation that external objects are actual... While this is correct, there is more to be said and one ought to take seriously what he himself says, namely that idealism raises a serious objection to the arguments of the Second Postulate, insofar as it poses "what is a serious objection to these rules for proving existence mediately"' (2012: 67).

⁹The same objection applies to Paul Guyer's explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism. He writes that 'Kant's motivation for inserting [the Refutation of Idealism] in the Postulates rather than elsewhere in the *Critique* can be understood as an attempt to complement the arguments already considered: on the one hand, the section on the postulates is intended to argue that the categories of possibility and necessity have no gainful employment outside the sphere of experience; on the other hand, Kant will now argue that our experience of the actual itself is an experience of the existence of objects other than our own representations that can be secured from the threats of skepticism and traditional idealism' (1998a: 308-309). There is a similar passage in the introduction to Guyer and Wood's translation of the first *Critique*. They write that '[this] may seem like an inauspicious location for such an addition, but Kant's intention in choosing it can only have been to show that empirically meaningful judgments about the modalities of possibility and necessity all depend upon connection to the actual in perception, and then to show what he means by the actual in perception: that which we judge to exist independently of our representation of it, even if we also know that the form in which we represent the independence of such objects is itself dependent upon the constitution of our own sensibility' (1998b: 71). Guyer thinks that the implication of the Refutation of Idealism is that the objects that we know actually exist do include objects other than representations in our minds. Whereas the Second Postulate establishes that our knowledge of the actual existence of objects is restricted to what we have experienced, the Refutation of Idealism establishes that our knowledge of the actual existence of objects is not restricted to representations in our minds. Guyer thinks that this shared concern of the Refutation of Idealism and the Second Postulate with the extent of our knowledge of the actual existence of objects is the only possible explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism. The trouble is that this explanation is not plausibly expressed by the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate.

As I said, this explanation is not plausibly expressed by the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate: ‘A powerful objection against these rules for proving existence indirectly is made by *idealism*, the refutation of which is here in its right place’ (B274). In this section I am going to consider an explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism that this sentence does plausibly express.

This sentence raises two important questions. The first is what exactly Kant means by a powerful objection ‘against these rules for proving existence indirectly’, and the second is what exactly Kant means by a powerful objection against these rules for proving existence indirectly ‘made by *idealism*’. Now, one of the claims that Kant makes in his elucidation of the Second Postulate is that if we cannot perceive a given object, then we can know that this object actually exists only if there is some other object such that (1) we can perceive this other object, and (2) it would violate a particular set of rules, viz. the Analogies of Experience, if this other object actually existed, but the object that we cannot perceive did not actually exist. So it is a reasonable assumption that what Kant means by a powerful objection ‘against these rules for proving existence indirectly’ is precisely a powerful objection against the Analogies of Experience (the principle that every change is an alteration, the principle that every event has a cause, etc.). He means a powerful objection against what he has just specified in his elucidation of the Second Postulate as the rules for proving existence indirectly. It is also a reasonable assumption that what Kant means by a powerful objection against these rules for proving existence indirectly ‘made by *idealism*’ is a powerful objection on the part of idealism: the objection that these rules must be false since idealism is true. If these assumptions are correct, then Kant’s claim in the sentence that he adds at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate is that he has inserted the Refutation of Idealism at this particular point in the *Critique* because it is his response to the objection that the Analogies of Experience must be false since idealism is true.

This explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism is based on a plausible interpretation of the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of

the Second Postulate.¹⁰ Unfortunately, it is also open to serious textual and philosophical objections. The first objection is based upon a widely accepted assumption about the Refutation of Idealism. The second premise of Kant's argument is that '[all] time-determination presupposes something *persisting* in perception' (B275). The widely accepted assumption is that this premise is the principle of the First Analogy.¹¹ If this assumption is correct, then it appears that Kant's argument that idealism is false is based on the premise that at least one of the Analogies of Experience is true. But it is an implication of the present explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism that Kant's argument for the Analogies of Experience is based on the premise that idealism is false. So it is an implication of the present explanation that Kant is guilty of circular reasoning. His Refutation of Idealism is based on one of the Analogies of Experience and his argument for the Analogies of Experience is based on his Refutation of Idealism.

The second objection is simpler. Kant adds the Refutation of Idealism to the section of the first *Critique* the subject (and title) of which is the Postulates of Em-

¹⁰Both Luigi Caranti and Henry Allison think that this explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism is the one expressed by the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate. Allison writes that Kant's 'stated justification for placing the Refutation in this context is that idealism "poses a powerful objection against these rules" (B274)', which 'suggests that the dispute with idealism is directly concerned with the validity of these rules, or, more precisely, the a priori principles on which they are based' (2004: 286). Caranti writes that '[the] reason given by Kant for placing the Refutation after the Second Postulate is that Cartesian idealism poses "a serious objection to these rules for proving existence mediately" (B274)', which 'invites us to think that the disagreement between him and the sceptic is about specific rules for inferring the existence of external objects' (2007: 129).

¹¹Heidemann writes: 'Kant shows in the Refutation of Idealism that the existence of the external world is provable on the basis of a law that governs the necessary connection of our experience, namely on the basis of the principle of persistence' (1998: 98). Guyer writes that 'the argument for the connection between permanence and time-determination on which Kant obviously means to rely.. is, of course, the first Analogy of Experience' (1987: 283). Allison disagrees. He writes that the Refutation of Idealism 'relies only on one portion of the progressive argument of the first Analogy, namely, the backdrop thesis' (2004: 291), by which he means the principle that 'an enduring, perceivable object (or objects) is required to provide the backdrop or frame of reference by means of which the succession, simultaneity, and duration of appearances in a common time can be determined' (2004: 239). Allison insists that this thesis is 'far from the overall conclusion at which the argument [of the First Analogy] aims' (2004: 239).

pirical Thinking in General. He does not add it to the earlier section of the first *Critique* the subject (and title) of which is the Analogies of Experience. But if the Refutation of Idealism is Kant's response to an objection against the Analogies of Experience, then this earlier section of the first *Critique* is surely a more appropriate place for the Refutation of Idealism. If the Refutation of Idealism is Kant's response to an objection against the Analogies of Experience, then he should not have inserted it at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate. In response to this objection, it might be said that it is perfectly reasonable for Kant to consider an objection to the Analogies of Experience in his elucidation of the Second Postulate, given that the Second Postulate makes specific reference to the Analogies of Experience, and the section of the first *Critique* the subject (and title) of which is the Analogies of Experience is complicated enough as it is.

A third objection to the present explanation has been raised by Henry Allison. The earlier section of the first *Critique* the subject (and title) of which is the Analogies of Experience consists of what are clearly marked as proofs of the Analogies of Experience.¹² But if Kant thinks that he has succeeded in proving the Analogies of Experience by the end of this earlier section, he cannot think that the Analogies of Experience are open to a powerful objection in the Postulates of Empirical Thinking in General. If the Refutation of Idealism is Kant's response to a powerful objection against the Analogies of Experience, then it is only at the end of the Refutation of Idealism that his proof of the Analogies of Experience has been completed. This is a weaker objection. It would be perfectly reasonable for Kant to provide a proof of the Analogies of Experience based on premises that are only subsequently proved in a later section of the *Critique*. Although in that case we might at least have expected him to point out in the earlier section that his proofs are provisional on the success of his refutation of idealism.

In any case, I submit that the first two objections are sufficiently serious to undermine the present explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism.

¹²In the First Analogy, A182 and B224, in the Second Analogy, A189/B232, and in the Third Analogy, A211/B256.

Kant does not add the Refutation of Idealism at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate because it is his response to the objection that the Analogies of Experience must be false since idealism is true.

§3. ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

Luigi Caranti thinks that Kant's claim in the sentence that he inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate is 'inaccurate and perhaps even misleading' (2007: 129). He suggests that 'Kant's stated justification for placing the Refutation where he does... is plausible only because there is a vague resemblance between the inference Kant defends (from perceived to unperceived) and the inference the sceptic attacks (from a representation to its object)' (2007: 129). According to Caranti, the powerful objection to which the Refutation of Idealism is Kant's response is an objection against the Second Postulate. In particular, it is an objection against the claim that we can know that an object actually exists if we can perceive it. The first premise of the objection is that our perception of an object is sufficient for us to know that this object actually exists only if our perception of this object is direct in the sense that it does not depend upon some sort of causal inference 'from a mental state to the object that supposedly caused it' (2007, 129). The second premise of the objection is that our perception of objects is not direct in this sense. As Caranti puts it, '[for] the idealist, even when I *directly* perceive an object [by which he means: even when I know that an object actually exists, but not because of the connection between the actual existence of this object and the actual existence of some other object], its existence is inferred indirectly' (2007: 129). The conclusion of the objection is that our perception of an object is not sufficient for us to know that this object actually exists. It is not true that if we can perceive an object, then we can know that this object actually exists.

According to Caranti, Kant thinks that the fact that an object is 'bound up with sensation' is a 'reliable mark of [its] actuality' (2007: 130). The idealist objects to this claim by questioning 'the reliability of a sensation for determining an existence

- that is, the immediacy of outer perception' (2007: 130). Caranti thinks that Kant adds the Refutation of Idealism at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate precisely because it is his response to this objection against the claim that if we can perceive an object, then we can know that it actually exists. He concludes that 'it is... only natural that Kant places what can serve as a defence of his Postulate - the Refutation - immediately after the exposition of the Postulate itself' (2007:130).¹³

This explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism is more plausibly expressed by the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate than the explanation that I discussed in §1, since it treats the Refutation of Idealism as Kant's response to a 'powerful objection... made by *idealism*'. And it is not open to the same objections as the explanation that I discussed in §2, since it treats the Refutation of Idealism as Kant's response to an objection against the Second Postulate as opposed to an objection against the Analogies of Experience. The problem with this explanation is that it still doesn't quite fit the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate. And this is a point that Caranti is prepared to accept. Kant clearly indicates that the powerful objection is against the part of the Second Postulate that has to do with knowing that objects actually exist indirectly. But according to Caranti, the powerful objection is against the part of the Second Postulate that has to do with knowing that objects actually exist directly, viz. the claim that we can know that a given object actually exists if we can perceive it.

¹³ Another commentator who accepts this explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism is Henry Allison. Like Caranti, Allison rejects Kant's 'stated justification' for the location of the Refutation of Idealism in the sentence that he inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate. He writes: '[A] more plausible interpretation of Kant's explanation is that the idealist's challenge is to the premise underlying the applicability of these rules rather than to the rules themselves. What the idealist questions is the assumption that being connected with sensation (a mental occurrence) is a reliable mark of actuality with regard to the external world (2004, 286-287)'. Like Caranti, Allison thinks that the idealist objects to the claim that it is sufficient for us to know that an object actually exists that we have perceived it. Allison's language is almost identical to Caranti's. While Allison's discussion of the location of the Refutation of Idealism precedes Caranti's by three years, Allison writes in an endnote that his position is influenced by Caranti's 2001 dissertation *The Development of Kant's Refutation of Idealism* (2004: 494)

Another recent explanation for the location of Kant's Refutation of Idealism is due to Ralf Bader. Bader's answer to the question why Kant adds the Refutation of Idealism to the first *Critique* at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate has three parts. First, Bader makes the familiar point that the Refutation of Idealism and the Second Postulate are both concerned with the actual existence of objects. Second, he suggests that Kant's argument in the Refutation of Idealism 'appeals to the conditions for determining one's existence in time' (2012: 69), which is an application of the schema of the concept of actuality. Third, he argues that the Second Postulate is 'directly threatened by problematic idealism', inasmuch as it 'requires that something be given by perception rather than merely imagined' (2012: 69). As Bader also puts it, '[if] nothing were to be given in perception, but instead everything were to be a product of the imagination, then this Postulate would become irrelevant' (2012: 69). It is not clear exactly what Bader means by the relevance of the Second Postulate. His assumption seems to be that if idealism is true then it follows that no objects satisfy what are, according to the Second Postulate, the conditions under which we can know that a given object actually exists, and this is as much as to say that the Second Postulate is irrelevant. One problem with this assumption is that if idealism is true, then it doesn't immediately follow that no objects satisfy what are, according to the Second Postulate, the conditions under which we can know that a given object actually exists. After all, these conditions might still be satisfied by objects that are not external or spatially extended.¹⁴ Another problem with Bader's interpretation is that it is not clear why it is such a powerful objection against the Second Postulate that it is irrelevant in this sense. After all, the Second Postulate might be irrelevant in this sense, but true nonetheless.¹⁵

¹⁴To this Bader might respond that, as far as Kant is concerned, these conditions are satisfied by internal objects only if they are also satisfied by external objects. Now, this may well be true. But it isn't relevant. The question is not whether Kant subscribes to the premise that the Second Postulate is relevant only if idealism is false, but whether an idealist objecting to Kant would subscribe to this premise, and so argue that since idealism is true, the Second Postulate is irrelevant.

¹⁵This is a highly selective treatment of Bader's nuanced and complex discussion of the location of

There is one final explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism that it is important to consider. According to this explanation, the powerful objection to which the Refutation of Idealism is Kant's response is an objection against a particular argument for the Second Postulate. The first premise of the argument is that it is a condition of the possibility of our experience of external, spatially extended objects that the Second Postulate is true. The second premise of the argument is that we have experience of external, spatially extended objects. From these premises it follows that the Second Postulate is true. The powerful objection against this argument for the Second Postulate is that we do not have experience of external, spatially extended objects. Since we do not have experience of external, spatially extended objects, the fact that the truth of the Second Postulate is a condition of the possibility of our experience of external, spatially extended objects gives us no reason to think that the Second Postulate is true. According to the present explanation, Kant inserts the Refutation of Idealism at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate precisely in order to respond to this objection against his argument for the Second Postulate.¹⁶

This is a simple and attractive explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism. But it is also open to at least two objections. The first objection is that Kant's argument for the Second Postulate is not obviously based on the premise that the truth of the Second Postulate is a condition of the possibility of our experience of external, spatially extended objects. There is plenty of evidence that Kant's arguments in the *Analytic of Principles* are supposed to establish that the Pure

Kant's Refutation of Idealism. One of Bader's most interesting proposals is that the Refutation of Idealism is Kant's response to an objection against the applicability, or external validity, of the Principles of Pure Understanding in General, where a principle is applicable or externally valid if and only if there are external, spatially extended objects to which it applies. I have neglected this aspect of Bader's discussion because while it might explain why Kant inserts the Refutation of Idealism into the System of Principles, it doesn't explain why he inserts the Refutation of Idealism at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate.

¹⁶I would like to express my gratitude to an anonymous reviewer for the *European Journal of Philosophy* for suggesting this alternative explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism.

Principles of the Understanding are conditions of the possibility of experience.¹⁷ But it is not at all clear that what Kant means by experience in this context is experience of external, spatially extended objects.¹⁸ He could just mean experience in general. And an idealist does not deny that we have experience. This is clear from Kant's remark that his strategy in the Refutation of Idealism is to show 'that our *inner* experience, undoubted by [the problematic idealist], is possible only on the presupposition of *outer* experience' (B275). If Kant's argument for the Second Postulate is based on the premise that it is a condition of the possibility of experience in general that the Second Postulate is true, the idealist will not object to this argument on the grounds that we do not have experience.

The second objection against the present explanation is a more familiar one. If this explanation is correct, then the powerful objection to which the Refutation of Idealism is Kant's response is not an objection against the part of the Second Postulate that has to do with the 'rules for proving existence indirectly', but rather an objection against Kant's argument for the Second Postulate as a whole. So it doesn't quite fit the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate.

¹⁷At the beginning of the second chapter of the *Analytic of Principles*, Kant raises the question how synthetic judgments *a priori* are possible. His answer to the question is that '[the] *possibility of experience* is that which gives all of our cognitions *a priori* objective reality' (A156/B195). He also writes that '[in] this way are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible, if we.. say: the conditions of the possibility of experience in general [my emphasis] are at the same time conditions of the possibility of objects of experience, and therefore have objective validity in a synthetic judgment *a priori*' (A158/B197).

¹⁸When Kant first introduces his answer to the question how synthetic judgments *a priori* are possible in the second chapter of the *Analytic of Principles*, he remarks that in a synthetic judgment *a priori*, 'a third thing is necessary, from which alone the synthesis of the two concepts can result'. He then explains what this 'third thing' consists in: '[there] is only one totality, in which all our representations are contained, namely inner sense, and the form of inner sense *a priori*, time. The synthesis of the representations depends rests on the imagination, but the synthetic unity of the representations (which is required for judgment), on the unity of apperception' (A155/B194). Here Kant appears to identify the 'third thing' that is involved in synthetic judgments *a priori* with the possibility of experience in general, the sensible form of which is time, not with the possibility of outer experience, the sensible form of which is space.

§4. A NEW EXPLANATION

So far in this article, I have discussed five possible explanations for the location of Kant's Refutation of Idealism. According to the first explanation, which I discussed in §1, the reason why Kant inserts the Refutation of Idealism at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate is simply that both of these sections are concerned with our knowledge of the actual existence of objects. According to second explanation, which I discussed in §2, and which is based on an interpretation of Kant's claim that '[a] powerful objection against these rules for proving existence indirectly is made by *idealism*' (B274), the reason why Kant inserts the Refutation of Idealism at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate is that it is his response to the objection that the Analogies of Experience (the principle that every change is an alteration, the principle that every event has a cause, etc.) must be false since idealism is true. According to the three explanations that I discussed in §3, Kant inserts the Refutation of Idealism at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate because it serves as his response to the objection that the Second Postulate is false, or irrelevant, or that his argument for the Second Postulate is unsound, since idealism is true. My aim in this final section is to defend an explanation for the location of Kant's Refutation of Idealism that is plausibly expressed by his claim that '[a] powerful objection against these rules for proving existence indirectly is made by *idealism*' (B274), and that is not open to serious textual or philosophical objections.

As I explained in §1, part of the Second Postulate is the claim that if we cannot perceive a given object, then we can know that this object actually exists only if there is some other object such that (1) we can perceive this other object, and (2) it would violate a particular set of rules, viz. the Analogies of Experience, if this other object actually existed, but the object that we cannot perceive did not actually exist. This is the claim that the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly. So, as I pointed out in §2, it is a reasonable assumption that what Kant means by a powerful objection against 'these rules for proving existence indirectly' is a powerful objection against the Analogies of Experience. I

suggest that this assumption, although reasonable, is false. What Kant means by a powerful objection against ‘these rules for proving existence indirectly’ is not an objection against the Analogies of Experience, but rather an objection against the claim that the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly. To put it another way, what Kant means by a powerful objection against these rules for proving existence indirectly is not an objection against the principles that he has just specified as the rules for proving existence indirectly, but rather an objection against his specification of these principles as the rules for proving existence indirectly.

As I also pointed out in §2, it is a reasonable assumption that what Kant means by a powerful objection ‘made by *idealism*’ against a particular claim is an objection on the part of idealism: the objection that this claim must be false since idealism is true. I suggest that this assumption is also false. What Kant means by a powerful objection ‘made by *idealism*’ against a particular claim is the objection that this claim must be false since *otherwise* idealism is true.

Putting these points together, I suggest that when Kant refers to a ‘powerful objection against these rules for proving existence indirectly... made by *idealism*’, what he has in mind is an objection of the following form: (1) If the Second Postulate is true - in particular, if the Analogies of Experience (the principle that every change is an alteration, that every event has a cause, etc.) are the rules for proving existence indirectly - then it follows that we cannot know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist, but (2) we can know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist, so (3) the Analogies of Experience are not the rules for proving existence indirectly, and the Second Postulate is false. I am going to call this the Common Sense Objection against the Second Postulate. And I suggest that the reason why Kant inserts the Refutation of Idealism at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate is precisely that he thinks this is the appropriate place to respond to this objection.

As I explained in §1, the Second Postulate is a claim about the conditions under which we can know that a given object actually exists. At first glance, there are two

reasons why we might think that a claim of this sort is false. First, we might think that it is too *restrictive* a claim about the conditions under which we can know that an object actually exists. We might think that there is an object x that we can know actually exists in spite of the fact that (1) we cannot perceive x and (2) there is no other object y such that (a) we can perceive y and (b) it would violate the Analogies of Experience if y actually existed, but x did not actually exist. Second, we might think that the Second Postulate is too *permissive* a claim about the conditions under which we can know that an object actually exists. We might think that there is an object x that we cannot know actually exists in spite of the fact that (1) we can perceive x or (2) there is some other object y such that (a) we can perceive y and (b) it would violate the Analogies of Experience if y actually existed, but x did not actually exist. What I am calling the Common Sense Objection to the Second Postulate is an objection of the first sort. The objection is that the Second Postulate is too restrictive since it follows from this claim that we cannot know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist.

There are two obvious objections to this explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism that I want to address right away. The first objection is that it isn't plausibly expressed by the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate. It might be said that if this explanation is correct, then the powerful objection to which the Refutation of Idealism is Kant's response isn't an objection made by *idealism*. After all, one of the premises of the Common Sense Objection against the Second Postulate is that we *can* know that external objects actually exist. The trouble with this objection is that it simply takes it for granted that what Kant means by an objection 'made by *idealism*' is an objection on the part of idealism: an objection one of the premises of which is that idealism is true. But it is also possible that what Kant means is an objection based in some way on the logical connection between idealism and the claim that is the target of the objection. There is a clear sense in which the Common Sense Objection against the Second Postulate is made by idealism. The key premise of this objection is that if the Second Postulate is true, then so too is idealism.

This brings me to the second objection against my explanation. There is no question that the Refutation of Idealism works as a response to an objection against the Second Postulate (or the Analogies of Experience) one of the premises of which is that idealism is true. For if the Refutation of Idealism is sound, then idealism is false, which implies that any objection of this kind is unsound. It is much less obvious that the Refutation of Idealism works as a response to an objection against the Second Postulate one of the premises of which is that idealism is false, such as the Common Sense Objection. At first glance, the Refutation of Idealism appears to provide support for an objection along these lines. To explain why the Refutation of Idealism works as a response to the Common Sense Objection against the Second Postulate, we need to take a closer look at the first premise of this objection, which is the claim that if the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly, then we cannot know that external objects actually exist. I propose that this premise of the objection is plausible on the basis of the following sub-argument: (1) We can know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist only if either (a) we can know directly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist or (b) we can know indirectly that external objects actually exist. But (2) we cannot know directly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist. So (3) we can know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist only if we can know this indirectly. But (4) if the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly, then we cannot know indirectly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist. So (5) if the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly, we cannot know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist. If this reconstruction is correct, then the first premise of the Common Sense Objection against the Second Postulate is based on the assumption that we cannot know directly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist. It is based on the assumption that we cannot perceive external, spatially extended objects. If we can know directly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist, then we can know that these objects actually exist whatever the rules for proving existence indirectly.

Now, it is clear from the text of Kant's Refutation of Idealism that his aim in this section of the first *Critique* is to establish not only that we can know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist, but also that we can know this directly.¹⁹ In his first remark on the Refutation of Idealism, Kant writes that '[the] *immediate* consciousness of the existence of outer things is in this theorem not presupposed, but proved' (B276). He also writes that '[idealism] assumed that the only immediate experience is inner experience, and that outer things could only be *inferred* from inner experience, but only unreliably, as is always the case when *determinate* causes are inferred from given effects... But here it is proved that outer experience is really immediate' (B276). Kant's claim in this passage is that idealism is based on the assumption that we cannot know directly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist, which implies that we can know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist only if we can know this indirectly. What the Refutation of Idealism establishes is that we can know directly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist.²⁰ This is also clear from Kant's argument in the Refutation of Idealism, which concludes: 'the consciousness of my own existence is at the same time an *immediate* consciousness of the existence of other things outside me' (B276, my emphasis).²¹

¹⁹I should stress that it doesn't follow from the claim that we can know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist directly, that the Analogies of Experience are entirely redundant as far as our knowledge of the actual existence of external, spatially extended objects is concerned. There may still be some external, spatially extended objects - Kant's 'magnetic matter', for example - that we can know actually exist only indirectly. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for the European Journal of Philosophy for prompting me to clarify this point.

²⁰Kant's aim in his treatment of idealism in the Fourth Paralogism in the first edition of the *Critique* is also to establish that we know directly that external objects actually exist. He writes: 'I have as little need to infer the existence of external objects as I do to infer the existence of the objects of my inner sense (my thoughts)' (A371). He also implies that a realist 'concedes to matter [...] an existence that need not be inferred, but is immediately perceived' (A371).

²¹Michael Friedman writes that the suggestion 'that the existence of outer objects would need to be proved by some kind of mediate inference' from the existence of other objects 'is precisely what the refutation of idealism denies' (2013: 584). Luigi Caranti writes that 'idealism questions... the immediacy of outer perception', and that the question whether outer perception is direct or indirect is the 'main point of disagreement' between idealists and their opponents (2007: 130).

This puts me in a position to explain why the Refutation of Idealism works as a response to Common Sense Objection against the Second Postulate, which I am claiming is the ‘powerful objection’ to which Kant refers in the sentence that he adds at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate. The objection, remember, is that it must be false that the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly, since otherwise we cannot know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist. This objection is plausible only on the assumption that we cannot know directly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist. Only if we cannot perceive external, spatially extended objects is there any reason to think that if the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly, then we cannot know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist. If cannot perceive external, spatially extended objects, then we can know that they actually exist only if we can know this indirectly. And in that case the question whether or not we can know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist is plausibly tied to the question what are the rules for proving existence indirectly. But what the Refutation of Idealism establishes is precisely that we can perceive external, spatially extended objects. I conclude that the Refutation of Idealism serves as a response to the Common Sense Objection against the Second Postulate. The conclusion of the Refutation of Idealism is that we can know directly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist, and if we can know directly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist, then there is no reason to think that if the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly, then we cannot know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist. It is also plausible that the appropriate place for Kant to respond to the Common Sense Objection is at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate. For the claim that the Analo-

However, Caranti also claims that Kant fails to make it clear in the Refutation of Idealism that ‘idealism questions... the immediacy of outer perception’. He suggests that this because Kant ‘is trying to avoid a direct confrontation with the sceptic on the issue of the immediacy/mediacy of outer perception’ (2007: 130). I find this implausible since Kant makes it perfectly clear in the lines that I have quoted that the key question is whether or not we know directly that external objects actually exist.

gies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly is a component of the Second Postulate. Finally, it is plausible that the Common Sense Objection is the objection to which Kant is referring in the sentence that he inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate. This objection is ‘made by *idealism*’ in the sense that it tells us that a particular claim must be false since otherwise idealism is true. And this objection is also directed ‘against these rules for proving existence indirectly’ in the sense that its target is Kant’s specification of the Analogies of Experience as the rules for proving existence indirectly. For these reasons, I conclude that the most plausible explanation for the location of the Refutation of Idealism is that it serves as Kant’s response to the Common Sense Objection against the Second Postulate.

There is one final point that I want to make about this explanation. The Common Sense Objection against the Second Postulate turns on the assumption that if the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly, then we cannot know indirectly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist. According to the interpretation that I have just outlined, Kant does not take issue with this assumption in his response to the objection. A possible objection to my interpretation is that it isn’t clear why Kant, or why a philosopher objecting to Kant, would accept this assumption. This threatens to undermine my claim that Kant would consider the Common Sense Objection to be a *powerful* objection made by idealism. I suggest that the assumption in question is perfectly reasonable. Suppose that the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly. Suppose that if we can know that a given object actually exists, but we cannot perceive this object, then there must be some other object such that (1) we can perceive this other object, and (2) it would violate the Analogies of Experience if this other object actually existed, but the object that we cannot perceive did not actually exist. Suppose, furthermore, that we can know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist, but that we cannot perceive them. It follows that there must be some other objects such that (1) we can perceive these other objects, and (2) it would violate the Analogies of Experience if these other objects actually existed, but external,

spatially extended objects did not actually exist. As far as Kant is concerned, the only objects that we can perceive apart from external, spatially extended objects are the representations in our minds.²² Now, it would certainly violate the Second Analogy of Experience if there were no object that caused a given representation in my mind. But it would not violate the Second Analogy of Experience if the object that caused this representation were something other than an external, spatially extended object. As Kant puts it in the Refutation of Idealism, it is ‘always the case when *determinate* causes are inferred from given effects...’ that the inference is made ‘only unreliably, because the cause of the representations, which we perhaps falsely ascribe to outer things, can also lie in us’ (B276).²³ Again, it might well violate the First Analogy of Experience if there were no object to which a given representation stood as a determination. But it would not violate the First Analogy of Experience if this object were something other than an external, spatially extended object. It is therefore perfectly reasonable for Kant to assume that if the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly, then we cannot know indirectly that external, spatially extended objects actually exist.²⁴

§5. THE REFUTATION OF IDEALISM

It might be asked what advantages this explanation has in terms of helping us to understand Kant’s Refutation of Idealism. In the remainder of this paper, I am going to briefly describe two such advantages. The first advantage of this explanation is that it helps us to understand how the Refutation of Idealism works as a response

²²I should stress that, according to my interpretation of the Second Postulate, it isn’t possible for us to have only indirect knowledge of the actual existence of objects. If we know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist only indirectly, then there must be some other objects that we know actually exist directly.

²³This echoes a point that Kant makes (or, rather, that the idealist makes and that Kant accepts) in the Fourth Paralogism in the first edition of the Critique: ‘in the relation of perception to its cause, it always remains doubtful whether this cause is internal, or external’ (A368).

²⁴I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for the European Journal of Philosophy for pressing me to substantiate this aspect of my interpretation.

to the claims about the *Critique* in the famous Göttingen Review. The Göttingen Review was a brief critical summary of the first edition of the *Critique* drafted by Christian Garve, edited by Johann Georg Heinrich Feder, and published in 1782 in a supplement to the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*.²⁵ The Göttingen Review describes the first *Critique* as a ‘system of higher... idealism’, that ‘transforms the world and ourselves into representations.’²⁶ It ascribes to Kant the claim that ‘everything of which we can know and say something... is merely representation and law of thought’, and that ‘representations in us, modified and ordered in accordance with certain laws are just that which we call object and world.’²⁷ It concludes on this basis that, in spite of his protestations to the contrary, Kant is an idealist. Idealism, according to the Göttingen Review, is an implication of the claims to which Kant is committed.

It is widely accepted that many of Kant’s modifications to the second edition of the *Critique*, including the addition of the Refutation of Idealism at the end of the elucidation of the Second Postulate, were intended as a response to the Göttingen Review. Ralf Bader writes that the addition of the Refutation of Idealism ‘probably occurred due to historical reasons as Kant wanted to avoid the charge made by the Feder-Garve review... that his theory was... a system of “idealism that encompasses spirit and matter in the same way, and transforms the world and us into representations”’ (2012: 54). Similarly, Giuseppe Motta writes that ‘the reason for this not insignificant change... was the necessity of supplying as precise and well-structured as possible a response to the objections that, in particular, Johann Georg Heinrich Feder had voiced on the basis of the revision of an original text by Christian Garve in an anonymously published review of the *Critique*’ (2012: 117). If this is correct, then we should expect the aim of the Refutation of Idealism to be to establish that the truth of idealism is not an implication of the claims to which Kant is committed. And this is precisely the case according to the explanation for the location of the

²⁵For the historical background, see Sassen (2000).

²⁶Sassen 2000:53.

²⁷Sassen 2000:58

Refutation of Idealism that I introduced in §4. The Refutation of Idealism is Kant's response to the objection that a particular claim to which he is committed, viz. the Second Postulate - and, in particular, the claim that the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly - implies that idealism is true. So my explanation helps us to understand how the Refutation of Idealism works as a part of Kant's response to the Göttingen Review.

Compare any of the other explanations for the location of the Refutation of Idealism that I considered in §2 and §3 of this article. These explanations treat Kant's Refutation of Idealism as a response to an objection against the Analogies of Experience or the Second Postulate on the part of idealism: an objection based on the premise that idealism is true. But there is clearly no objection of this sort in the Göttingen Review. The reviewers do not object to the *Critique* on the grounds that it fails to refute idealism and therefore leaves open the possibility of an objection to the Analogies of Experience or the Second Postulate based on the premise that idealism is true. As Frederick Beiser puts it, the Göttingen Review is 'a hostile polemic that judge[s] the [*Critique*] from the standpoint of the philosophy of common sense' (2002: 89). It is not a hostile polemic against the *Critique* from the standpoint of the philosophy of idealism. On behalf of the other explanations that I discussed in §2 and §3 it may be suggested that the Refutation of Idealism still works as a response to the objection in the Göttingen Review because it shows that Kant is committed to the claim that idealism is false. The trouble with this suggestion is that it doesn't follow from the fact that Kant is committed to the claim that idealism is false that it is not also an implication of the claims to which he is committed that idealism is true. Suppose that the reviewers object that it is an implication of the claims to which Kant is committed that idealism is true, and that Kant's response is to insist that he is committed to the claim that idealism is false. The reviewers will not conclude on this basis that their objection was mistaken. They will conclude instead that Kant's position is contradictory. If Kant wishes to respond to the objection in the Göttingen Review, what he needs to show is not that he is committed to the claim that idealism is false, but rather that it is not an

implication of the claims to which he is committed that idealism is true. And this is precisely what he is doing in the Refutation of Idealism according to the explanation that I introduced in §4.

This explanation also sheds light on Kant's argumentative strategy in the Refutation of Idealism. As I mentioned in §4, Kant's argument establishes that we are immediately conscious of external, spatially extended objects. It establishes that 'the determination of my existence in time is possible only by means of the existence of actual things *that I perceive* outside myself' (B275-276, my emphasis). If my explanation is correct, then it is possible to understand why it is so important to Kant to establish not only that we can know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist, but also that we can perceive objects of this sort. His aim in the Refutation of Idealism is to respond to an objection against the claim that the Analogies of Experience are the rules for proving existence indirectly. In particular, his aim is to respond to the objection that this claim must be false since otherwise we cannot know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist. This objection is based on the assumption that we cannot know that external, spatially extended objects actually exist directly, which is to say, the assumption that we cannot perceive objects of this sort. So Kant's response is to show that we can perceive external, spatially extended objects. In this way, the explanation that I have introduced in this article helps us to understand Kant's argumentative strategy in the Refutation of Idealism.

§6. CONCLUSION

In the course of this article I have defended an explanation for the location of Kant's Refutation of Idealism that differs significantly from other explanations in the recent secondary literature. What these other explanations have in common is the assumption that Kant inserts the Refutation of Idealism at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate because he thinks that this is the appropriate place to respond to an objection against the Second Postulate based on the premise that idealism is true. I have argued that this assumption is false. In particular, I have

argued that the objection that worries Kant is not that the Second Postulate must be false since idealism is true, but rather that the Second Postulate must be false since *otherwise* idealism is true. I have argued that what Kant has in mind is the Common Sense Objection against the Second Postulate. This explanation for the location of Kant's Refutation of Idealism is plausibly expressed by the sentence that Kant inserts at the end of his elucidation of the Second Postulate. It also sheds light on the broader purpose and argumentative strategy in the Refutation of Idealism. It helps us to understand what exactly Kant is trying to achieve in this important section of the *Critique*.

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