

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87271-3 - Arthur Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: On Vision and Colours: On Will in Nature

Edited by David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway

Excerpt

[More information](#)

I

*On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of  
Sufficient Reason*

*A Philosophical Treatise*

by

*Arthur Schopenhauer*

---

Second, Quite Improved and Considerably Enlarged Edition<sup>1</sup>

Ναὶ μὰ τὸν ἀμετέρα ψυχῆ παραδόντα τετρακτύν,

Παγὰν ἀενάου φύσεως, ρίζωμά τ' ἔχουσιν.

[‘By the one who bestows on our mind the number four, fount and root of ever-flowing creation.’: Pythagorean oath]

I

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87271-3 - Arthur Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: On Vision and Colours: On Will in Nature

Edited by David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway

Excerpt

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87271-3 - Arthur Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: On Vision and Colours: On Will in Nature

Edited by David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Preface*

V

This treatise in elementary philosophy, which first appeared in the year 1813, when I had gained my doctorate with it, has since become the underpinnings of my whole system. For this reason it cannot be allowed to remain out of print, as has been the case for four years, without my knowing it.

However, to send such a youthful work into the world again now with all its flaws and faults seems to me to be irresponsible. For I am aware that the time in which I will no longer be able to emend it cannot be very far distant, but with time the period of my real effectiveness will first appear, and that it will be a long period I am consoled by a firm trust in Seneca's promise: 'although envy imposed silence on everyone living with you, they will come who will judge without offence and without partiality'<sup>a</sup> (*Letters* 79). I have, therefore, as far as it is possible, helped the present youthful work and given the brevity and uncertainty of life, I must even regard it as a special good fortune that it has been granted me in my sixtieth year still to correct that which I had written in my twenty-sixth.

But now, in doing so, it has been my plan to deal with my youthful self indulgently, and as far as it is ever possible, to let him have his say and to speak freely. But where he advanced something incorrect or superfluous, or even omitted the best part, I have had to cut him off, and this has often enough been the case, so that perhaps many will get the same impression as when an old man reads a young man's book aloud, but often puts it down in order to indulge his own digressions on the theme.

VI

It is easy to foresee that a composition of this sort, improved after so long a time, could never again achieve the unity and finish that belongs to one that is a harmonious whole. Even in style and execution, such an unmistakable difference will make itself palpable that the sensitive reader will certainly never be in doubt whether he hears the cadence of the old or

<sup>a</sup> *etiamsi omnibus tecum viventibus silentium livor indixerit; venient qui sine offensa, sine gratia judicent* (*Ep[istles]* 79[, 17])

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87271-3 - Arthur Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: On Vision and Colours: On Will in Nature

Edited by David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway

Excerpt

[More information](#)

the young man. For certainly there is a distant interval between the mild, unassuming tone of the young man, who advances his subject confidently because he is still naïve enough to believe quite seriously that all those who occupy themselves with philosophy could have nothing to do with anything else but the truth, and that, as a result, they would welcome anyone who furthers this – and the firm, but at times somewhat acerbic voice of the old man who finally had to discover what a noble society of tradespeople and submissive sycophants he has fallen among and what they aimed at. Indeed, if at times indignation now gushes from all his pores, then the reasonable reader would not blame him; for has the result not already taught the reader what happens when there is always talk of striving for truth, but eyes are always fixed on the intentions of supreme authorities, and when, conversely, ‘a god can be made of anything’<sup>a</sup> has also been extended to great philosophers and, thus, a clumsy charlatan like Hegel is confidently branded as such? German philosophy is precisely so, laden with contempt, mocked abroad, rejected by honest sciences – like a strumpet who, for filthy lucre, yesterday gave herself up to one, today to another; and the minds of the contemporary generation of scholars are jumbled by Hegelian nonsense: incapable of thought, coarse and stupefied, they become the prey of the vulgar materialism that has crept out of the Basilisk’s egg. Good luck! I return to my subject.

VII

One will thus have to be content with the disparity of the tone since here I could not append the later additions separately as I have done with my principal work; so it does not matter what I had written in my twenty-sixth year and what in my sixtieth; rather, it only matters that one wants to get one’s bearings, to gain a firm footing and become clear about the fundamental concepts of all philosophizing and to receive in these few sheets a small book through which one is able to learn something sound, solid, and true; and this, I hope, will be the case. With the expansion that many parts have now received, a compendious theory of the entire cognitive faculty has even come about, in that the theory always proceeds only from the principle of reason,<sup>b</sup> advances the subject from a new and peculiar direction, but then, is enlarged by the first book of the *World as Will and Representation*, along with the relevant chapters of the second volume, and by my ‘Critique of the Kantian Philosophy’.

Frankfurt-am-Main in September 1847.

<sup>a</sup> *e quovis ligno fit Mercurius* [lit.: ‘a Mercury can be made of whatever wood’]

<sup>b</sup> *Satz vom Grunde* [i.e. principle of sufficient reason]

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87271-3 - Arthur Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: On Vision and Colours: On Will in Nature

Edited by David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Contents*

IX

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| First Chapter: Introduction  | <i>page</i> 7 |
| Second Chapter: Survey of what is most important in previous teachings about the principle of sufficient reason                    | II            |
| Third Chapter: Inadequacy of previous accounts and sketch of a new one   | 29            |
| Fourth Chapter: On the first class of objects for the subject and the form of the principle of sufficient reason governing in it   | 33            |
| Fifth Chapter: On the second class of objects for the subject and the form of the principle of sufficient reason governing in it   | 93            |
| Sixth Chapter: On the third class of objects for the subject and the form of the principle of sufficient reason governing in it    | 123           |
| Seventh Chapter: On the fourth class of objects for the subject and the form of the principle of sufficient reason governing in it | 133           |
| Eighth Chapter: General remarks and results  | 143           |

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87271-3 - Arthur Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: On Vision and Colours: On Will in Nature

Edited by David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway

Excerpt

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87271-3 - Arthur Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: On Vision and Colours: On Will in Nature

Edited by David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## FIRST CHAPTER

I

*Introduction*

## § I

## THE METHOD

Plato, the divine, and the amazing Kant unify their impressive voices in the recommendation of a rule for the method of all philosophizing, and indeed of all knowledge in general.\*<sup>2</sup> They say that one should comply with two laws equally, that of *homogeneity* and that of *specification*, but not the one to the detriment of the other. The law of *homogeneity* enjoins us through attention to the similarities and correspondences among things, to comprehend species, and to unify these into genera, and these into families until we at last arrive at the supreme, all-encompassing concept.<sup>3</sup> Since this law is a transcendental one, essential to our reason, it presupposes that nature is in agreement with it, which presupposition is expressed in the old rule: ‘entities are not to be multiplied without necessity’.<sup>a</sup> – In contrast, Kant expresses the law of *specification* as: ‘the varieties of entities are not to be diminished rashly.’<sup>b</sup> It demands that we clearly distinguish among genera unified under an all-encompassing concept of a family and again among the higher and lower species comprehended under these genera, guarding against making any kind of leap by directly subsuming the lower species, or even the completely individual, under the concept of a family, while any concept of a family is still capable of a classification into sub-classes and yet none reaches down to mere intuition.<sup>c</sup> Kant teaches

2

\* Plato, *Philebus*, pp. 219–223 [16c–18d]. *Politicus* [*Statesman*] 62–63. *Phaedrus* 361–363, edn [published at] Bipontium [1781–7]. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic

<sup>a</sup> *entia praeter necessitatem non esse multiplicanda* [*Critique of Pure Reason* A652/B680. For a discussion of the origin of this rule, see Guyer and Wood, p. 749, n. 116]

<sup>b</sup> *entium varietates non temere esse minuendas* [*Critique of Pure Reason* A656/B684]

<sup>c</sup> *Anschauung*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87271-3 - Arthur Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: On Vision and Colours: On Will in Nature

Edited by David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway

Excerpt

[More information](#)

that both laws are transcendental *a priori* principles of reason<sup>a</sup> postulating correspondence between things and the laws themselves, and Plato seems to express the same in his own way, as he says these rules, to which all sciences are indebted for their origin, were tossed down to us from the seat of the gods along with the fire of Prometheus.

## § 2

## ITS APPLICATION IN THE PRESENT CASE

I find the latter of these laws, such a powerful recommendation notwithstanding, applied too seldom to a fundamental principle<sup>b</sup> of all cognition,<sup>c</sup> *the principle of sufficient reason*. For although it has for a long time been frequently put in a general form, nonetheless, no one has distinguished among its highly differing applications, in each of which it acquires another meaning, and which, therefore, reveal its origin from differing cognitive powers.<sup>4</sup> However, applying the principle of homogeneity, while neglecting its opposite, has bred many persistent errors, particularly in the observation of our powers of mind; whereas, applying the law of specification has brought about the greatest and most important advances – a comparison of Kantian philosophy with all earlier philosophy teaches this. I may be permitted to quote a passage in which Kant recommends the application of the law of specification to the sources of our cognition, since it justifies my present effort. ‘It is of the utmost importance to isolate cognitions that differ from one another in their species and origin, and carefully to avoid mixing them up together with others with which they are usually connected in their use.

3 What chemists do in analysing matter, what mathematicians do in their pure theory of magnitude, the philosopher is even more obliged to do, so that he can securely determine the proper value and influence of the advantage that a special kind of cognition has over the aimless use of the understanding.’ (*Critique of Pure Reason*, the Doctrine of Method, 3rd Section.)<sup>d</sup>

## § 3

ADVANTAGE OF THIS INQUIRY<sup>5</sup>

Should I succeed in showing that the principle that constitutes the subject of this inquiry derives not immediately from *one*, but above all from

<sup>a</sup> *Grundsätze der Vernunft*<sup>b</sup> *einen Hauptgrundsatz*<sup>c</sup> *Erkenntniß*<sup>d</sup> [A842/B870]

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87271-3 - Arthur Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: On Vision and Colours: On Will in Nature

Edited by David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway

Excerpt

[More information](#)*First chapter*

9

*differing* basic cognitions of our mind, then it will follow that the necessity that it entails as a firmly-established *a priori* principle likewise is not *one* and everywhere *the same*, but just as various as the sources of the principle itself. Then, however, anyone who grounds<sup>a</sup> a conclusion on the principle has the obligation to determine precisely which of the different necessities that lie at the basis of the principle supported his conclusion, and he should indicate as much with a specific name (which I will propose). I hope that thereby something will be gained for clarity and precision in philosophizing, and I consider it an unavoidably necessary prerequisite for philosophy to attain the greatest possible intelligibility, through precise determination of the meaning of any expression, so as to protect us from error and intentional deception and make any knowledge gained in the domain of philosophy a secure possession rather than one that can be torn away from us by a misunderstanding or ambiguity discovered later.<sup>6</sup> Above all the genuine philosopher will generally seek lucidity and clarity and will always strive not to be like a turbid, raging, rain-swollen stream, but much more like a Swiss lake, which, in its peacefulness, combines great depth with a great clarity that just reveals its great depth.<sup>7</sup> Clarity is the good faith of philosophers,<sup>b</sup> Vauvenargues has said. Conversely the fraudulent philosopher will certainly not seek to conceal his thoughts through words, according to Talleyrand's maxim,<sup>c</sup> but will seek to conceal his deficiency of thought and to shift onto the reader's conscience the unintelligibility of his philosopheme, which grows out of the obscurity of his own thought. This explains why, in some writings, e.g. those of Schelling,<sup>8</sup> the didactic tone so frequently turns into the reproachful; indeed, the readers are often reproached in advance, in anticipation of their incompetence.

4

## § 4

## IMPORTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF SUFFICIENT REASON

It is extremely great, so it may be called the basis of all science.<sup>9</sup> *Science* specifically means a *system* of findings,<sup>d</sup> i.e., a unity of connected findings in opposition to a mere aggregate of the same.<sup>10</sup> But what else than the

<sup>a</sup> *gründet*      <sup>b</sup> *La clarté est la bonne foi des philosophes* [*Réflexions et Maximes*, 729]

<sup>c</sup> [The maxim is *l'homme a reçu la parole pour pouvoir cacher sa pensée*: 'Humans have received speech in order to conceal their thoughts.' *Mémoires*, Paris, 1842, 4. 447; letter of Talleyrand to the Spanish diplomat Izquierdo]

<sup>d</sup> *Erkenntnissen*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-87271-3 - Arthur Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason: On Vision and Colours: On Will in Nature

Edited by David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway

Excerpt

[More information](#)

10

*On the Fourfold Root*

principle of sufficient reason connects members of a system? The very thing that distinguishes any science from a mere aggregate is that each of a science's findings follows from another as its ground. Therefore, Plato already says, 'For true opinions are not worth much until someone binds them through reasoning'.<sup>a</sup> *Meno* p. 385 Bip.<sup>11</sup> – Moreover almost all sciences contain<sup>12</sup> knowledge<sup>b</sup> of causes from which effects can be determined and likewise other findings of the necessities of the consequent<sup>c</sup> from grounds, as they will be presented in our later observation; which Aristotle already expressed in the words 'all knowledge which is rational or somewhat partakes of the rational concerns causes and principles'.<sup>d</sup> *Metaphysics* v, 1.<sup>13</sup> – Since it is now the presupposition that we always make *a priori*<sup>14</sup> that everything has a reason<sup>e</sup> which justifies our everywhere asking why, so this 'why' may be called the mother of all sciences.

## § 5

## THE PRINCIPLE ITSELF

5 Later it will be shown that the principle of sufficient reason is a common expression of many findings given *a priori*. Provisionally, it must meanwhile be put forth in some kind of formula. I choose the Wolffian as the most general: *Nihil est sine ratione cur potius sit quam non sit*.<sup>f</sup> Nothing is without a reason why it is.

<sup>a</sup> και γὰρ αἱ δόξαι αἱ ἀληθεῖς οὐ πολλοῦ ἄξια εἰσιν, ἕως ἄν τις αὐτὰς δῆσῃ αἰτίας λογισμῶ· (*etiam opiniones verae non multi pretii sunt, donec quis illas ratiocinatione a causis ducta liget*). [Schopenhauer cites the Bipontium edn, summarizing here Socrates' remarks at 97e–98a]

<sup>b</sup> *Kenntnisse*      <sup>c</sup> *Folgen*

<sup>d</sup> πᾶσα ἐπιστήμη διανοητική, ἣ καὶ μετέχουσα τῆς διανοίας, περὶ αἰτίας καὶ ἀρχῶν ἐστὶ (*omnis intellectualis scientia, sive aliquo modo intellectu participans, circa causas et principia est*) [1025b6]

<sup>e</sup> *Grund*

<sup>f</sup> ['Nothing is without a reason why it is rather than is not.' Wolff, *Philosophia prima, sive Ontologia*, rev. edn, Frankfurt, 1736, section 70, p. 47]

Sufficient reason is just that something is only explained with reference to something else, sufficient as in enough to explain its existence. Sufficient is not the same as necessary as a cause may have different effects and an effect may have different causes, it is the mutual relation between different things not in identity that defines causality. But is a relation that can only be for actually existing things. Nothing comes from nothing, something comes from something. This being based on the fundamental division of subject and object. The big point to all this is that the principle of sufficient reason and therefore all we can know is a result of the division of world into subject and object. It is that simple. Without this division, things wouldn't follow one after another, they would just be. On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and On the Will in Nature: Two Essays (revised edition). This is a git repository of the source files for the book On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and On the Will in Nature: Two Essays (revised edition) by Schopenhauer, Arthur. This book is in the Public Domain, see the LICENSE file for details. Found an error? For more information and how to get involved see the CONTRIBUTING section of the GITenberg website. Technical details. The main source file for this book will be a file with the name `` with a file extension (ex. .txt, .rst, .tei, .tex). Some books also contain generated ebooks, html versions, and images/figures from the text as image files. On the fourfold root of the principle of sufficient reason, and On the will in nature; two essays. Translated by Mme. Karl Hillebrand. Copyright-evidence. Evidence reported by scanner-scott-cairns for item onthefourfoldroo00schouoft on Aug 28, 2006; no visible notice of copyright and date found; stated date is 1903; not published by the US government; Have not checked for notice of renewal in the Copyright renewal records. Copyright-evidence-date. 2006-08-28 21:14:33. SUFFICIENT REASON ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER wikisource The Author's Preface To The Second Edition THIS treatise on Elementary Philosophy which first appeared in the year 1813, when it procured for me the degree of doctor, afterwards became the substructure for the whole of my system. It cannot, therefore, be allowed to remain out of print, as has