

Critiquing the Cosmological Argument

Principle of Sufficient Reason

“There can be found no fact that is true or existent, or any true proposition, without there being a sufficient reason for its being so and not otherwise, although we cannot know these reasons in most cases.”



Gottfried W. Leibniz
1646-1716

Leibniz, *Monadology*, §32.

Problems with these Arguments

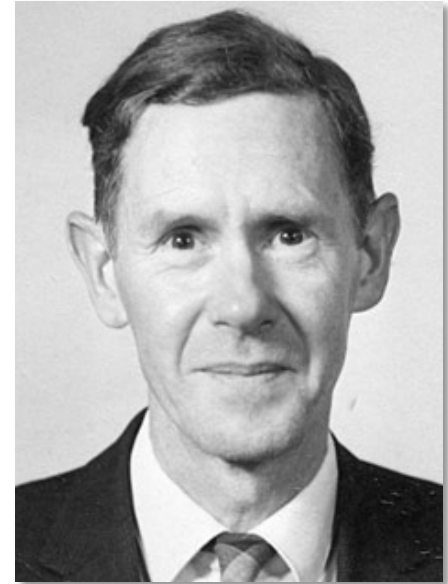
All cosmological arguments require some version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, but:

(1) Why should we accept the PSR?

It isn't *a priori* true, and it “expresses the demand that things should be intelligible through and through.”

But what justifies this demand?

(2) How can there be a necessary being that contains its own sufficient reason?



J. L. Mackie
1917-1981

Necessity (and contingency)

Logical: It is impossible to conceive of X not existing [necessarily true = true by definition]

Ontological/Metaphysical: X is self-existent; *if* X exists, then X exists necessarily.

Physical/Empirical/Hypothetical: Given the conditions in the actual world, X has to exist or happen. [necessary = actual]

Mackie on the Kalam Argument

Kalam: The past must be finite because an infinite past would have been impossible to complete (to get to the present).

Mackie: Actual infinities do not have starting points from which one begins; every starting point is always a finite distance from the present.

Kalam: Necessarily, what begins in time cannot cause itself, but needs a creator.

Mackie: So does God need a creator? If not, why not posit a self-existent matter?