

Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 1 | Issue 4

Article 1

10-1-1984

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Recommended Citation

Rowe, William L. (1984) "Rationalistic Theology and Some Principles of Explanation," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 4 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol1/iss4/1>

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RATIONALISTIC THEOLOGY AND SOME PRINCIPLES OF EXPLANATION

William L. Rowe

Rationalistic theologians in the 18th century held that given the existence of the physical world reason can *demonstrate* that there exists a being which explains the world and which carries the determining reason of its existence within itself. It's not that reason demands an explanation of the world, finds that explanation in God, and then withdraws, somehow content in accepting God as the ultimate, unexplained explainer. The demands of reason, as these rationalists saw it, play no favorites. If the existence of a physical universe without explanation would be an unintelligible brute fact, an affront to reason, then so would the existence of an almighty creator, if His existence were without explanation. Leibniz and Clarke, the two most illustrious supporters of rationalistic theology, held that there must be a determining reason for the existence of any being whatever—God included. Thus, since no other being could account for God's existence, the explanation must lie within God's nature. God's nature is such that it necessitates His existence and thus provides the determining reason or explanation of His existence.¹

In contrast to rationalistic theology is the view of empirical theology. According to the latter, given the existence of the world reason can show that it is in some way *probable* that there exists a being which explains the world, but this being itself has no explanation; it is the unexplained explainer. And unlike the rationalists, the empirical theologians view God's existence as logically contingent. In the 18th century Butler and Paley stood for empirical theology; whereas, as mentioned above, Leibniz and Clarke advanced the cause of rationalistic theology.

These two approaches to theology, rationalistic and empirical, are not without their advocates in contemporary philosophy. To give a recent example of each: Richard Swinburne's *The Existence of God* carries on the work of empirical theology; whereas James Ross's *Philosophical Theology*, although critical of views held by Leibniz and Clarke, is beyond question an attempt to establish rationalistic theology on a firm philosophical foundation.

What I wish to examine is rationalistic theology, not in its entirety, but as it finds expression in the work of Clarke and Leibniz, and recently in Ross's *Philosophical Theology*. My aim is largely analytical and critical: to lay bare



the basic principles of explanation embodied in rationalistic theology and to expose the fundamental difficulties to which these principles lead.

I

We noted that the 18th century advocates of rationalistic theology held as a fundamental principle that there must be a determining reason for the existence of any being whatever. This principle is a good bit stronger than the principle that there must be a determining reason for the existence of any being that *comes into existence*. The latter principle was defended by all rationalists, moderate as well as extreme. Unfortunately, however, if we allow that it is possible for there to have been an infinite series of beings, each one of which comes into existence at a certain time by virtue of the causal activity of a preceding being in the series, the weaker principle will not enable us to demonstrate the existence of God from the existence of the physical universe. So, since Clarke and Leibniz admitted this possibility, the stronger principle, the principle that requires that there be an explanation of any being whatever—whether it came into existence or always existed—was required in their cosmological demonstrations of God’s existence. One problem with the stronger principle, however, is that although Clarke and Leibniz may have held it to be self-evident, a number of philosophers and theologians regarded it as implausible, if not manifestly false.² So for them at least Clarke’s “demonstration” of the existence of God, developed in his famous Boyle lectures of 1704, was entirely unconvincing. As Anthony Collins, the free-thinker, was noted to have remarked: “No one doubted the existence of God until the Boyle lecturers undertook to prove it.”

Two objections were raised against the strong principle. First, it was agreed by all that the cause or reason of a thing’s existence would have to be *prior* to the existence of the thing, otherwise the cause or reason couldn’t be that which explains and accounts for the existence of the thing. But since nothing could be prior in time to the existence of an eternal being it would seem that an eternal being would have to exist without any reason or explanation. Clarke’s reply was that in the case of an eternal being the reason of its existence is prior not in time but in *the order of nature* to the existence of the eternal being.³ And when the reason for an eternal being’s existence lies within the nature of that being there will be an aspect of its nature which is prior in the order of nature to the being’s existence and which contains or is the reason why that being exists. This aspect Clarke referred to as “absolute necessity” or “necessity of existence.”

What sort of thing is “necessity of existence”? Since it is an aspect of God’s nature one might suppose that it is a property or attribute that God has essentially. But since Clarke shared the commonly held view that the properties and attributes of a substance presuppose the substance and thus can’t be its ground or reason,

he was hard put to give any clear philosophical account of this necessity of existence, other than to affirm that it is the ground or reason of God's existence.⁴

The second objection to the principle was that it leads to an absurdity. For if, as Clarke claims, every thing that exists, and every circumstance of it, must have a reason why it is rather than not, then we must also have a reason for that absolute necessity of existence which is the reason for God's existence. As Clarke's antagonist, Daniel Waterland put it:

...if we admit but one antecedent necessity as prior, in order of nature, to the first cause, there is no reason at all for stopping at the first remove, or for dismissing the notion of an antecedent necessity so soon, or at all. The same thought, the same suggestion will come over again at every new advance higher in the series of antecedent necessities. For every one of them will want a new ground, a new internal cause, a new antecedent necessity, to determine its being; and all for the same reason as the first cause was supposed to want one. Therefore, I say, it is perfectly arbitrary and unaccountable to make a full pause at one single antecedent necessity, and not to continue and carry on necessities higher and higher, without number, and without end.⁵

The same point, perhaps expressed more succinctly, was made by Edmund Law in the notes attached to his translation of Archbishop King's *De Origine Mali* (1702). Law remarks:

"...supposing this necessity, this ground or reason could be considered as *antecedent* to the Divine Nature, and inferring its actual existence—there will be the same necessity for demanding a reason for that reason, a ground for that ground, and so on in infinitum."⁶

Although I do not know of any place where Clarke fully replies to this objection, it is not, I think, overly difficult to see what his reply should be.⁷ He clearly holds that the existence of any substance must have an explanation. But he need not hold that every explanation must itself have an explanation. If the fact that explains consists in some feature of the *nature* of a substance, he need not hold that there must also be a determining reason or explanation of the fact that the nature of that substance has that feature. As one of his followers argued: "When it appears that an absolute necessity in the nature of things themselves is the reason and ground of their being what they are, we must necessarily stop at this ground and reason; and to ask what is the reason of this reason which is in the nature of things the last of all reasons, is as absurd as to ask, what is the cause (the efficient cause) of the first (efficient) cause."⁸

There remains a further difficulty—not with the principle itself but with Clarke's use of it. Clarke thought that with this principle alone reason could

move from a world of dependent beings—beings whose determining reasons lie in the causal activity of other beings—to a self-existent being, a being whose determining reason lies within its own nature. I've argued elsewhere that Clarke was very likely mistaken in this, since his argument will work only if the infinite succession of dependent beings is itself regarded as a dependent being.⁹ So, as strong as the principle we're considering appears to be, it is perhaps not strong enough to do away with the supposition that every being that exists or ever did exist is a dependent being. For this task the Cosmological Arguments of Clarke and Leibniz required a stronger principle, the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR). Since it is this fundamental principle that lies at the heart of 18th century rationalistic theology, and is the chief source of its intellectual difficulties, we may as well put aside the explanatory principle we've been examining and turn our attention to the Principle of Sufficient Reason.

II

Leibniz expresses PSR as the principle "...that no fact can be real or existent, no statement true, unless there be a sufficient reason why it is so and not otherwise,..."¹⁰ Clarke appears to embrace the principle. Thus he remarks: "Undoubtedly nothing is, without a sufficient reason why it is, rather than not; and why it is thus, rather than otherwise."¹¹ At the risk of historical inaccuracy, I shall understand PSR to hold that every fact has an explanation, a sufficient reason. So understood, PSR suffices to rule out the supposition that every being is dependent. For if every being were dependent there would be a fact without any explanation—the fact that there are and always have been dependent beings.¹²

The Principle of Sufficient Reason, as we have formulated it, holds that every fact has an explanation. If we add to this the auxiliary principle that when X explains Y and Y is a fact, X is also a fact, then either there will be no stopping point in our series of explaining facts or there will be at least one fact that is self-explanatory. Suppose, for example, that the fact of God's existence has an explanation. According to our auxiliary principle what explains the fact of God's existence is itself a fact. Now either this fact is identical with the fact of God's existence or it is distinct from it, presumably a fact about God's nature. In the latter case it is a fact which, according to PSR, must have an explanation—and we are off to the races, the fact about God's nature requiring an explanation in some other fact or being self-explanatory.

It's clear, I think, that those who emply PSR wish to avoid the first alternative—that every fact has an explanation in some fact that is distinct from it. If so, then either we must allow self-explanatory facts or we must revise PSR so as to allow that certain facts are ultimate in the sense that they are neither self-explanatory nor have their explanation in other facts. The latter seems to be what Clarke's

follower, quoted earlier, had in mind. Clarke, too, seems committed to this position. Leibniz's view is perhaps less clear. However, what these extreme rationalists held as certain is that no fact consisting in the *existence* of a substance could be either self-explanatory or ultimate—thus the conviction that even though God's existence is logically necessary there must be a sufficient reason determining His existence.

To allow for ultimate facts we need to restrict the demand for explanation. But how shall we restrict it? One plausible move is to restrict it to facts that might not have obtained, to contingent facts. Thus we might revise PSR so that it requires an explanation not of every fact but of every contingent fact. So revised, PSR will still do much of the work required of it by Clarke and Leibniz in their Cosmological demonstrations of God's existence.¹³ And, so revised, PSR leaves us free to hold of any particular *necessary* fact that it is self-explanatory, explained by some other fact, or ultimate in the sense of lacking any explanation.

We have, then, two ways of taking PSR. In its unrestricted form it holds that every fact has an explanation; in its restricted form it holds that every contingent fact has an explanation. One important difference between these two ways of taking PSR is that the first precludes any fact being ultimate; whereas the second precludes only contingent facts from being ultimate.¹⁴ We must now consider some of the intellectual difficulties to which this principle, in either its restricted or unrestricted form, leads.

One difficulty is whether rationalistic theology, committed as it is to PSR, can really avoid the dark night of Spinozism, a night in which all facts appear to be necessary. This difficulty was particularly acute for Leibniz. He explained God's creation of this world by this world's being the best and God's choosing to create the best. But what accounts for God's choosing to create the best, rather than some inferior world or none at all? God chooses the best because of His absolute perfection—being absolutely perfect He naturally chooses to create the best. The difficulty is that God's being perfect is a necessary fact. It seems, then, that His choice to create the best must also be necessary and, consequently, the existence of this world is necessary. Leibniz's solution to this difficulty is embodied in his phrase, "motives incline but do not necessitate," and in his distinction between moral necessity and absolute necessity. As Leibniz sees it, God's absolute perfection inclines Him to choose the best, but does not necessitate that choice. The necessity by which he chooses the best is moral, not absolute.

For this way of avoiding Spinozism to work, Leibniz must be willing to contemplate a possible world in which God is absolutely perfect and yet does not create the best. Moreover, there is the added difficulty of providing a full explanation of God's choosing to create the best.¹⁵ Perhaps God's absolute perfection when conjoined with his choice to exercise his goodness is a full explanation.¹⁶ But what then explains his choice to exercise his goodness? That choice

must be contingent and thus not necessitated by His absolute perfection. It looks, then, as if God's choice to exercise his goodness must have its explanation, at least in part, in a prior choice, etc., ad infinitum. And once again we are off to the races, each reason determining a choice only by virtue of a prior choice to act in accordance with that reason.¹⁷

The most severe difficulty resulting from rationalistic theology's commitment to PSR is that there are good reasons for thinking that rationalistic theology has built itself upon an unstable foundation—for there are good reasons for thinking that PSR, in either its unrestricted or restricted form—is false. Perhaps, then, instead of examining some of the apparent implications of PSR that conflict with other items important to rationalistic theology, we should turn our attention to PSR itself and the reasons for judging it to be false.

III

Spinozism aside, I think we can see that there must be contingent facts. Take any contingent proposition *p* and consider the disjunction *p* or not-*p*. It must be that one of these disjuncts is true, although contingently true, and, hence, it must be that there is an actual, contingent state of affairs corresponding to whichever disjunct happens to be true. Whatever else may be the case, we can be confident that something contingent is the case.

If we can show that it is logically impossible for there to be any contingent facts without some contingent fact lacking an explanation then we will have shown either that PSR is false or that there are no contingent facts. For if PSR were true then every contingent fact would have an explanation. Therefore, if it is logically impossible for there to be any contingent facts without some fact lacking an explanation then either there are no contingent facts—every fact is necessary—or PSR is false. Moreover, given our argument above that there must be contingent facts, it will follow that PSR is necessarily false if it is logically impossible for there to be a sufficient reason for every contingent fact.

I shall make the assumption—plausible, but an assumption nevertheless—that if one state of affairs *S* is the sufficient reason for (explains) another state of affairs *S'*, then *S* entails *S'*.¹⁸ Given this assumption, can it be shown that it is impossible for every contingent fact to have an explanation? As a first effort, consider the following. For any contingent fact *C* the fact which explains it cannot be a necessary fact, otherwise *C* would not be contingent. Since either there are no self-explanatory facts or they are all necessary, no contingent fact can be self-explanatory. Hence, it must be either (i) that *C* itself is unexplained, (ii) that some fact in the explanatory chain ending with *C* is unexplained, (iii) that the explanatory chain is circular, or (iv) that the explanatory chain is infinite. Perhaps it is impossible for an explanatory chain to be circular. But, even if it

is possible, note that we would still be left with a fact—that this circular chain of facts obtains—that would be a *contingent* fact. For it would be possible that some other circular chain obtain instead. What then accounts for the fact that this particular circular chain obtains? Possibility (iii), I believe, becomes a special case of one of our other possibilities. For the circular chain is either unexplained (i), such that some fact in the explanatory chain ending with it is unexplained (ii), or the end point of an explanatory chain that is infinite (iv). Suppose then that the explanatory chain is infinite. Surely the fact that such an infinite chain obtains is itself a contingent fact. It is possible, after all, that some other infinite chain should obtain rather than this one. What then accounts for the fact that this infinite explanatory chain ending with C obtains, rather than some other infinite chain? It seems, then, that the regress of explanatory facts ending with C is *vicious*. No matter how many such explanatory facts are introduced, even an infinite number, there will remain a contingent fact lacking an explanation. The conclusion to be drawn, therefore, is that it is logically impossible for every contingent fact to have an explanation. For, as we've seen, if we suppose some actual, contingent state of affairs C, there are but four possibilities, (i) - (iv), and on each of these possibilities there is an unexplained contingent fact. Since each possibility involves an unexplained contingent fact, it is impossible for every contingent fact to be explained. This being so, either PSR is false or every fact is necessary. But, as we earlier saw, there must be contingent facts. So PSR is not just false, it is necessarily false.

The argument just sketched begins with *any* contingent fact and concludes that some contingent fact or other is unexplained. Other arguments have been proposed that begin with a *certain* contingent fact and conclude that that fact lacks an explanation.¹⁹ One such argument has been advanced by James Ross who, as I noted earlier, is a contemporary champion of rationalistic theology. It will be instructive to summarize his argument before we look more fully at his attempt to place rationalistic theology on a firmer foundation than is provided by PSR.

Ross notes that within the set of logically contingent propositions there is a proper subset: "the contingent propositions which are true." (p. 297) 'w' is the logically complex proposition constituted by the conjunction of every true contingent proposition which is not equivalent to 'w'. w is the state of affairs corresponding to 'w'; "namely the entire actual but contingent state of affairs which constitutes (along with any existential necessities there may be) the actual universe." (p. 297) In addition to the logically complex proposition 'w' and the logically complex state of affairs w, Ross introduces a definite description "w": "The one and only actual state of affairs constituted by every state of affairs expressed by a true contingent statement." (p. 307)

Ross argues that w is a contingent state of affairs, that there is no state of

affairs q that explains or accounts for w , and that, therefore, PSR is false. His argument, in brief, is that if q explains w then q cannot be contingent; otherwise it would be part of w , and w (a contingent state of affairs) would be self-accounting, which is impossible. But if q is a necessary state of affairs we must ask whether q 's explaining w is also necessary. If it is then w would be necessary (which it clearly is not). If q 's explaining w is contingent, then it is part of w and itself requires explanation—in which case we are led into a vicious infinite regress. Consequently, there can be no explanation of the contingent state of affairs w ; and PSR, therefore, is false.²⁰

Both of these arguments against PSR make use of the notion of a “vicious regress.” But just what is it for a regress to be vicious? I suggest the following: A regress is vicious with respect to a certain end E iff with each step of the regress E is unattained, and even if the regress is infinite E is still unattained. The E in question in both arguments is its being the case that every contingent fact is explained. In the first argument, at whatever step we stop the regress we will be left with a contingent fact lacking an explanation. And if the regress is infinite, the entire infinite chain will lack an explanation. In Ross's argument the contingent fact of q 's explaining w will lack an explanation unless q explains it, and so on. But this too is a regress that is vicious with respect to its being the case that every contingent fact is explained.

I think Ross's argument has merit and, like the argument presented earlier, gives us a sufficient reason for rejecting the restricted version of PSR and, *a fortiori*, the unrestricted version as well.

IV

18th century rationalistic theology was built on a principle that suffers from two serious defects: there are good reasons to believe that the principle is false; and even if there were no such reasons, the principle is such that very few who have considered it have professed to know that it is true. Should we then bury rationalistic theology in the graveyard of faulty intellectual systems or try to free it from its dependence on PSR, perhaps finding a new foundation on which it might rest? The latter course is pursued with imagination and rigor by James Ross in his influential work, *Philosophical Theology*. As we saw, Ross rejects PSR. But he hopes to replace it with another principle which, although weaker, is capable of playing the role in metaphysical and theological thinking once played by PSR. We may best conclude our examination of rationalistic theology by considering Ross's principle in an effort to determine whether it escapes the arguments which appear to have done in PSR.

The principle of explanation which Ross substitutes for PSR is labeled “Principle E” and can be stated as follows: For any actual, contingent state of affairs

p it is *logically possible* that there is some actual state of affairs q that explains p.²¹ Concerning his principle, he remarks: "...the most basic metaphysical questions such as whether God exists, can be handled just as well with Principle E as with the traditional, universally generally apodictic statement that every existent, event, fact, and thing has a sufficient reason for being." (p. 294) The problem, however, is that w *appears* to be an actual, contingent state of affairs which not only has no explanation but logically could not have one.²² We must now look at Ross's attempt to solve this problem.

w is the complex state of affairs designated by the definite description: "The one and only state of affairs constituted by every state of affairs expressed by a true contingent statement." "Is there anything to account for w? No, as the earlier arguments made clear: w is unexplained, unaccounted for." (p. 307) But could w have been accounted for? Is w in principle explicable? In working his way to the conclusion that w logically could have an explanation Ross points out that although w is actual it need not have been. Put differently, Ross notes that w is *contingently identical* with the one and only actual state of affairs constituted by every state of affairs expressed by a true contingent statement.

However, there is no set of contingent states of affairs, w, such that by virtue of what it is—by nature, from the "list" of its contents—it is the entirety of what is actual. This follows from the fact that w is contingent; for if it followed from what w is, that w is the entirety of what is actual, then w would not be logically contingent. Hence, that w (the conjunction of what happens to be actual) is what is actually described by "w" is itself contingent. The definite description "w" applies necessarily and by definition to the *entirety* of the contingent and the actual; but that what is contingent and actual is identical with w is itself logically contingent. (pp. 307-308)

What Ross says here is exactly right. If his earlier argument against PSR is correct then the following proposition is *necessarily true*: The one and only state of affairs constituted by every state of affairs expressed by a true contingent statement is without explanation. But, as Ross notes, it is only *contingently* true that w is the state of affairs—and this is so just because w is itself contingent and therefore might not have been actual at all. Some state of affairs other than w might have satisfied the definite description "w." For each possible world contains an analogue of w, a complex state of affairs constituted by every state of affairs expressed by a contingent statement that is true in *that possible world*. Any of the analogues of w logically could have been actual and therefore could have been designated by the definite description "w." All this is true but the question that remains is how this point establishes that even though w lacks an explanation w is nonetheless explicable, w logically could have an explanation.

Ross completes the passage just cited with the following remark: It is logically possible that w_1 may have been the actual state of affairs, and that it would have been distinct from w (what is in fact actual) merely by the addition of some state of affairs, q , which is sufficient explanation for the occurrence of all the elements of w_1 which are not entailed by—namely, those things which constitute w . (p. 308)

Of course, if this is so then it will follow that w , although unexplained, is in principle explicable. But I think we can see that what Ross here claims to be logically possible isn't logically possible at all. More importantly, I think we can see that if w does not have an explanation, as Ross believes, then w cannot have an explanation—there is no possible world in which w is explained.

Perhaps Ross was reasoning thus. Suppose the actual world contains some contingent state of affairs p that we have succeeded in showing has no explanation. It won't follow of course that p is in principle inexplicable. For p is contingent and there will be a possible world containing q and p , a world in which q explains p . Had that world been actual then p would have had an explanation. Now we have just seen that w need not have been actual. Had it not been actual, some possible world containing q and w might have been actual, a world in which q explains w .

The mistake in this reasoning is that what can be true of p *cannot* be true of w . No possible world other than the world which happens to be actual contains w as a constituent. That this is so follows from what w is and what it is to be a possible world. w is the state of affairs corresponding to the proposition ' w ', the conjunctive proposition whose conjuncts include *every* true contingent proposition not equivalent to ' w '. It follows immediately that there can be no conjunctive proposition ' w_1 ' that satisfies the two conditions: (i) ' w_1 ' logically might have been true; (ii) ' w_1 ' includes ' w ' as a conjunct and some contingent proposition q that is neither identical with ' w ' nor with any conjunct included in ' w '. For if q is a contingent proposition then it is either true or false. If it is true then it is already included in ' w '. If it is false then its negation not- q is true and is included in ' w ', in which case ' w_1 ' logically couldn't be true since it will include as conjuncts both q and not- q . The same holds for the state of affairs, w , which corresponds to ' w '. There is no possible world w_1 which includes both w and a contingent state of affairs q which is neither identical with w nor with any conjunct of w .

The plain fact is that every possible world other than the world that happens to be actual must contain some contingent state of affairs that is *inconsistent* with some state of affairs that is a constituent of w . This being so, no possible world other than the actual world can contain w as a constituent. Hence, Ross is mistaken in claiming that there is some possible world such that had it been

actual *w* would have been explained. *w* would not have been explained for the simple reason that had any other possible world been actual, *w* would not have been actual. It follows then that if *w* has no explanation it logically could not have had one. If Ross is right in holding that *w* has no explanation then he is wrong in holding that Principle E is true.

V

We've had a look at what I've been calling rationalistic theology, a position whose primary thesis is that given the existence of the physical world reason can demonstrate the existence of a being that cannot not have existed and which carries within itself the explanation of its existence. As a subsidiary thesis, rationalistic theology holds that reason can demonstrate that a self-existent being possesses the fundamental attributes of the theistic God. What we've seen is that the 18th century proponents of this view rested it on a principle (PSR) which has the defect of being demonstrably false. We've also looked briefly at a major contemporary attempt to rest rationalistic theology on a more durable foundation—Principle E. This attempt, however, seems to flounder on the very argument its author uses to refute PSR. There are, of course, other principles of explanation that may come along to supplant PSR and Principle E, principles which will do the work originally assigned to PSR and which will survive philosophical criticism. But until such principles come along, I think our judgment must be that the outlook for rationalistic theology is not particularly bright.

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NOTES

1. 18th century rationalistic theologians come in two varieties: extreme and moderate. It is the extreme variety that I am here describing, a variety that finds its paradigm in Samuel Clarke. Moderate rationalistic theologians hold that reason can demonstrate the existence of God, but they allow that some of God's important attributes can be supported only by probabilistic arguments and, as opposed to the extreme rationalists, tend to regard God's existence as logically contingent.

2. Edmund Law, noting that Locke and Wollaston rejected it, says: "...as to that position of Dr. Clarke's...viz. 'Whatever exists has a cause, reason, etc.,' I must think it so far from being a self-evident truth, that it is manifestly false, since it appears to be repugnant to the notion of a first cause, which is demonstrable." Edmund Law, *An Enquiry into the Ideas of Space, Time, Immensity and Eternity; as also the Self-Existence, Necessary Existence, and Unity of the Divine Nature*, (1734), p. 148.

3. See "The Answer to a Sixth Letter," appended to the ninth edition of *A Demonstration of the*

Being and Attributes of God (London, 1738).

4. Clarke explicitly addresses this issue in "The Answer to a Seventh Letter," appended to the ninth edition of *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*.

5. "A Dissertation Upon The Argument Priori," (pp. 56-57). This work is appended to Edmund Law's treatise cited in note 2.

6. Quoted by John Jackson, *The Existence and Unity of God* (London, 1734), p. 37.

7. For what seems to be a brief reply see "The Answer to a Seventh Letter."

8. J. Jackson, *The Existence and Unity of God*, (London, 1734), p. 39-40. It is however, difficult to reconcile this view with the unrestricted version of PSR. See below.

9. See *The Cosmological Argument* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 145-148.

10. *Monadology* (1714), paragraph 32.

11. *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*, edited with an introduction by H. G. Alexander (Manchester: Manchester University press, 1956), Third Reply.

12. Matters may be a bit more complicated than I here represent them as being. For more on this issue see B. F. Keating, "Rowe, Self-existence, and the Cosmological Argument," *Analysis*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (March 1982), pp. 99-102, and W. L. Rowe, "Self-Existence and the Cosmological Argument," *Analysis* (forthcoming).

13. That is, PSR will rule out the supposition that every being is dependent. The revised PSR, however, will not enable us to conclude that there is self-existent being. All that we will be entitled to conclude is that there exists at least one being that does not exist by virtue of the causal activity of any other being/s. The restricted PSR, therefore, will fail to support the fundamental conviction that there must be a reason determining the existence of each substance that exists.

14. I mentioned earlier that Clarke *appears* to accept PSR. Actually, his position is such that he can fully accept neither the unrestricted nor the restricted version of the principle. Clarke holds that in the case of two choices, where nothing recommends one over the other, that there is no sufficient reason for the will contingently making the *particular* choice that it makes. See "Dr. Clarke's Third Reply," *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*.

15. A full explanation of E is such that from the fact that it obtains it follows the E obtains. See R. Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), Chapter 2.

16. Leibniz remarks: "...but having proposed to himself an end, which is to exercise his goodness, wisdom has determined him to choose the means best fitted to his end." *The Theodicy: Abridgement of the Argument Reduced to Syllogistic Form* (1710), VIII.

17. That Leibniz may have accepted the conclusion that in willing to create the best God has willed so to will, *ad infinitum*, is suggested in the following passage:

If anyone asks me why God has decided to create Adam, I say, because he has decided to do the most perfect thing. If you ask me now why he has decided to do the most perfect thing, or why he wills the most perfect...I reply that he has willed it freely, i.e., because he has willed to. So he willed because he willed to will, and so on to infinity.

Quoted by E. M. Curley in "The Root of Contingency," *Leibniz: A Collection of Critical Essays* (ed. by Harry G. Frankfurt), p. 96.

18. It may be objected against this assumption that we often accept as explanations of facts and events other facts and events that do not *entail* the facts and events that are explained. This is true. The assumption, however, does not claim that every explanation entails what it explains. The

assumption is that if an explanation constitutes a *sufficient reason* (in the sense required by PSR) of what it explains then the explanation entails what it explains. Moreover, the fact that we accept *a* as an explanation of *b* does not preclude there being conditions *c* which in conjunction with *a* entail *b* and which would also be counted as an explanation of *b*. Following Swinburne's distinction between a "full explanation" and a "partial explanation" (*The Existence of God*, Ch. 2), we may express the assumption in question as the view that an explanation of some event *e* that is a sufficient reason (in the sense required by PSR) of *e* is a full explanation of *e*.

19. I proposed such an argument in *The Cosmological Argument*, pp. 103-107. An important criticism of this argument has been advanced by Robert M. Adams in his review of *The Cosmological Argument* in *The Philosophical Review*, July 1978, pp. 445-450.

20. See pp. 295-304 of *Philosophical Theology*. Ross's argument is needlessly complex. For a simpler argument against PSR that does not depend on rejecting an infinite regress as vicious see Christopher Hill's "On a Revised Version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 63, (1982), pp. 236-242.

21. Actually, Ross's principle is stronger than this. He holds that any contingent state of affairs, whether actual or nonactual, is such that it is explicable in principle. See p. 124 and p. 138 of *Philosophical Theology*.

22. Ross remarks: "...it appears that there can be no sufficient explanation of the entire state of the world, which we call *w*. This seems to require that there be one actual contingent state of affairs, call it *w* (namely, the entire set of actual and contingent states of affairs), for which no sufficient explanation is possible. If this reasoning is correct, then Principle E is false." (pp. 306-307)