The Principle of Sufficient Reason

The Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR) says that all contingent facts must have explanations. In this volume, the first on the topic in the English language in nearly half a century, Alexander Pruss examines the substantive philosophical issues raised by the PSR, which currently is considered primarily within the context of various cosmological arguments for the existence of God. Discussing several forms of the PSR and selected historical episodes from Parmenides, Aquinas, Leibniz, Hume, and Kant, Pruss defends the claim that every true contingent proposition must have an explanation against major objections, including Hume’s imaginability argument and Peter van Inwagen’s argument that the PSR entails modal fatalism. Pruss also provides a number of positive arguments for the PSR, based on considerations as different as the metaphysics of existence, counterfactuals and modality, negative explanations, and the everyday applicability of the PSR. Moreover, Pruss shows how the PSR would advance the discussion in a number of disparate fields, such as metaethics and the philosophy of mathematics.

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The Principle of Sufficient Reason

A Reassessment

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For my father and mother
Contents

Acknowledgments  xiii

Part I  The Principle of Sufficient Reason
and the Causal Principle

1 Introduction  3
  1.1. The Significance of the PSR  3
  1.2. A Restriction to Contingent Truths  10
  1.3. Why Accept the PSR?  13
  1.4. What Are We Talking About?  16

2 Reflections on Some Historical Episodes  20
  2.1. Parmenides  20
  2.2. Thomas Aquinas  26
  2.3. Leibniz  28
  2.4. Hume  31
  2.5. Kant  37

3 The Causal Principle and the PSR  41
  3.1. Chains of Causes  41
  3.2. The ex Nihilo Nihil Principle, the PSR, and the CP  58
  3.3. Resisting the Extension to Necessary Truths  62
  3.4. Resisting the Restriction to Positive States of Affairs  64
  3.5. A Survey of Some Principles  66

Part II  Objections to the PSR

4 A Modern Version of the Hume Objection  75
  4.1. Toy Models  75
  4.2. A Possibility Principle  76
  4.3. A Stronger Possibility Principle  77
  4.4. The Empty World  78
  4.5. Physicists Are Not Merely Logicians  79
5 The Anti-theological Argument That There Are No Necessary Beings
5.1. Cosmological Arguments 82
5.2. Necessary Beings and Absurdity 84
5.3. Rescher’s Alternatives to Invoking the Existence of a Necessary Being 85
5.4. Is the Notion of a Necessary Being Absurd? 90
5.5. Philosophy of Mind Objections 93
5.6. Lawmakers and Laws 95
6 Modal Fatalism 97
6.1. Van Inwagen’s Argument 97
6.2. The Existence of the Big Conjunctive Contingent Fact 99
6.3. The Nature of Explanation 103
7 Free Will 126
7.1. How to Explain Free Actions? 126
7.2. Reasoned Choices 132
7.3. Objections to Libertarianism 138
7.4. Sufficient Reasons 142
7.5. An Incredulous Stare 147
7.6. Contrastive Explanations? 148
7.7. The Modesty of This Account and Some Alternatives 155
7.8. Conclusions 158
8 Quantum Mechanics 160
8.1. The Problem of Indeterminism 160
8.2. Rejecting Indeterminism 161
8.3. Indeterminism and PSR 168
8.4. Particles Coming into Existence ex Nihilo 169
9 Turning Leibniz against the PSR 171
9.1. In Favor of (86) 171
9.2. A Defense of the TPII 175
9.3. Against (86) 177
9.4. Against (87) 178
10 What Survives the Criticisms of the PSR? 184

Part III Justifications of the PSR
11 Self-Evidence 189
11.1. A Definition of Self-Evidence 190
11.2. The Objection from Smart People Who Disagree 190
11.3. But Isn’t the PSR Easy to Understand? 191
11.4. Two Ways Not to Understand 193
11.5. More Detail 196
11.6. Smart People Who Accept the PSR but Not as Self-Evident 198
11.7. The Impasse 199
11.8. Mathematical Analogies 200
11.9. What Self-Evidence Could Be 205
11.10. Paradoxes 207

12 Three Thomistic Arguments 209
12.1. First Thomistic Argument: The Regress of Existence 209
12.2. Second Thomistic Argument: The Interdependence of Existence and Essence 217
12.3. Third Thomistic Argument: Substance-Accident Ontology 229

13 Modal Arguments 231
13.1. The Strategy 231
13.2. Sullivan’s Argument for the CP 232
13.3. The Weak PSR 234
13.4. Causality and Counterfactuals 239
13.5. Conclusions 248

14 Is the Universe Reasonable? 249

15 Explanation of Negative States of Affairs 252
15.1. The Argument 252
15.2. The Defectiveness Objection 252
15.3. The Nomic Necessity Objection 253

16 The Puzzle of the Everyday Applicability of the PSR 254
16.1. The Argument 254
16.2. An Abundance of Objections 255
16.3. Laws of Nature 262
16.4. Laws of Nature and the CP 267

17 Inference to the Best or Only Explanation 280
17.1. Can Inference to Best or Only Explanation Be Rational without the PSR? 280
17.2. Preference for Explanatory Theories 281
17.3. The Sherlock Holmes Principle 283
17.4. Alternatives to the PSR That “Do the Job” 285

18 Inductive Skepticism 295

19 The Nature of Possibility 299
19.1. Alethic Modality 299
19.2. A Formalist Account 301
19.3. Lewis’s Theory 302
19.4. Platonism: The Main Extant Realist Alternative to Lewis 312
19.5. An Aristotelian Alternative 316
20 Conclusions 321

Bibliography 323
Index 331
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