The Cosmological Argument

Notes on Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, chapter 7

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Metaphysics
Spring, 2005
Cosmological Argument - van Inwagen’s Formulation

1. There are contingent beings.
2. For every truth, there is a sufficient reason.
3. (1) is either necessary or contingent.
4. If (1) is necessary, then it is necessary that something exists.
5. If (1) is contingent, then its sufficient reason cannot consist of facts about contingent beings.
   (Why? Because the existence of a class of things can only be explained by something outside that class.)
6. If (1) cannot be explained by facts about contingent beings, then its sufficient reason can only be facts about a necessary being.
7. If (1) is contingent, then it is necessary that something exists.
   (from 5-6, by transitivity of the conditional.)
8. It is necessary that something exists.
   (from 3, 4, and 7, by disjunction elimination.)
The Principle of Sufficient Reason - Critique

0. For every truth, there is a sufficient reason.
1. Assume that there are contingent propositions (for reductio).
2. A contingent proposition is true in some worlds and false in others.
∴ 3. There is more than one possible world. (from 1, 2)
4. Exactly one of these worlds is actual (call it ‘@’).
∴ 5. There is a sufficient reason why @ is actual (call it ‘S’).
6. S must be a proposition true in @ and false in all other worlds.  
   (Because it must give a characteristic only the actual world has.)
∴ 7. S is the conjunction of all true contingent propositions.  
   (Because that’s the only thing true only at the actual world.)
∴ 8. S is equivalent to the proposition that @ is the actual world.  
   (B/c by def, the actual world is the one that contains all truths.)
9. A proposition cannot explain itself.
∴ 10. Contradiction. (5, 8, 9)
∴ 11. There are no contingent propositions. (1,10, reductio ad absurdum.)