

Gott's Doomsday Argument

Monton, Bradley and Roush, Sherri (2001) Gott's Doomsday Argument.

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Abstract

Physicist J. Richard Gott uses the Copernican principle that “ we are not special” to make predictions about the future lifetime of the human race, based on how long the human race has been in existence so far. We show that the predictions which can be derived from Gott’ s argument are less strong than one might be inclined to believe, that Gott’ s argument illegitimately assumes that the human race will not last forever, that certain versions of Gott’ s argument are incompatible with Bayesian conditionalization, and that Gott’ s argument is self-refuting.

Keywords: J. Richard Gott, Doomsday argument, Copernican principle

Subjects: [Specific Sciences: Probability/Statistics](#)
[General Issues: Decision Theory](#)

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Additional Information:

Additional comment added by Bradley Monton on January 21, 2005: I now think that Gott's argument is mostly right; in the absence of other information, it is reasonable to predict future duration from present age in the way that Gott proposes. Brian Kierland and I have written a paper defending Gott's reasoning; email me at bmonton@uky.edu if you would like a copy.