Three views universe







On this view, everything which begins to exist at some time must have a cause. Because the universe — including the Big Bang — has a beginning in time, the universe as a whole — again, including the Big Bang — must have a cause. So the Big Bang can't be the first cause and indeed nothing in the universe can be.

If one accepts this extra premise, and one accepts the assumption that the universe came to exist at some time, then it follows that the universe was caused to exist by something outside the universe.

And then there are just two options — that thing must be eternal, or it must have come to exist at a certain time.

If we go with the second option, then it must have had a cause. And then that thing would have to be eternal, or have come to exist a certain time.

There are a number of questions one could raise about this argument. But let's focus in on one premise:

10. If there is a beginningless first cause of the universe and everything in it, then God exists.

Could one object to this premise in much the way that we objected to Aguinas' assumption that if there is a first cause, then that thing must be God? How do we know that this beginningless thing which is outside of the universe and caused the universe to exist is God?

This is a reasonable question. Here is one way which a defender of the kalām argument might respond.

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But let's focus in on one premise:



10. If there is a beginningless first cause of

the universe and everything in it, then God

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Aquinas' assumption that if there is a first cause, then that thing must

be God? How do we know that this beginningless thing which is outside

Could one object to this premise in much the way that we objected to

of the universe and caused the universe to exist is God?

This is a reasonable question. Here is one way which a defender of the

kalām argument might respond.

grounds that there can't be an uncaused cause, like the explosion of

particles described?

Might one defend (8) by saying that this hypothesis is impossible, on the



first cause, then

8. If there is a

God exists.

Bang could genuinely be a first cause. Things like the Big Bang have to

have a cause; but things like God don't.

Instead, it seems like Aquinas has to argue that nothing like the Big

God has, but the Big Bang does not.

which was an uncaused cause would have to have other properties, which

And that is, in a way, exactly what Aquinas tried to do (though of course

he did not have the Big Bang in mind). He tried to argue that something

Might one defend (8) by saying that this hypothesis is impossible, on the

grounds that there can't be an uncaused cause?

Instead, it seems like a defender of the first cause argument has to argue that

nothing like the Big Bang could genuinely be a first cause. Things like the Big

Bang have to have a cause; but things like God don't. But why?

some reason for rejecting the above hypothesis.

This would appear to be a description of a world in which there is a first

simple atheism. So it looks as though, if we are to believe (8), we must have

cause, but God does not exist. And it appears to be entirely consistent with

The Big Bang

The first event in the history of the universe was an explosion of an extremely dense collection of particles, with every particle moving apart from every other particle. This event had no cause - in particular, no being set it into motion - and, further, every subsequent event has been an effect of this event.

Many arguments for God's existence are best thought of as

good arguments for the existence of God then depends in part on

how seriously you take quasi-theism. This is something to which

arguments against simple atheism. Whether they also amount to

we will return.

Let's turn then to our first argument for the existence of God: the

first cause argument we find in the reading from Thomas Aquinas.









of itself, it would be prior

1. If something were the cause

itself.

4. There are no infinite

2. Nothing is prior to itself.

then God exists.

6. Every causal chain must be

(1,2)itself.

chains. causal

5. At least one thing has a

(7,8)C. God exists.

3. Nothing is the cause of

(i) circular, (ii) infinite,

cause.

(3,4,5,6)

7. There is a first cause.

or (iii) have a first cause.

8. If there is a first cause,







be God? How do we know that this eternally existing first cause of the

Could one object to this premise in much the way that we objected to

universe is God?

Aquinas' assumption that if there is a first cause, then that thing must

Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.











There are a number of questions one could raise about this argument.

But let's focus in on one premise:



12. If there is an eternally existing first cause of the

universe and everything in it, then God exists.

This is a reasonable question. Here is one way which a defender of the

kalām argument might respond.