







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:

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 eternally existing first cause of the universe is God?

Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.

We are going to look at some arguments for the conclusion that God exists, and some arguments for the conclusion that God does not exist.

How, in general, might we go about giving an argument that some particular thing exists?

Let's approach this question by setting aside questions about the existence of God for a minute. Suppose that you wanted to show that Santa Claus exists. How would you do it?

A natural thought is that you would begin by thinking about what Santa Claus is supposed to be like. Suppose that the key (alleged) properties of Santa are that he is a bearded jolly elf who is thousands of years old who lives at the North Pole and delivers toys to children all around the world with the help of his flying reindeer. Let's call these "the Santa properties."

we will return.

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

arguments against simple atheism. Whether they also amount to

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

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

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

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

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Three views universe





1. If something were the cause

4. There are no infinite

cause.

6. Every causal chain must be

7. There is a first cause.

5. At least one thing has a

itself.

3. Nothing is the cause of

chains. causal

or (iii) have a first cause.

of itself, it would be prior

2. Nothing is prior to itself.

(7,8)C. God exists.

(1,2)itself.

(i) circular, (ii) infinite, (3,4,5,6)

8. If there is a first cause,

then God exists.









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

particles described?

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



8. If there is a

first cause, then

God exists.

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

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

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

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

God has, but the Big Bang does not.

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

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

grounds that there can't be an uncaused cause?

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

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

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

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

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

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.





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