Three views universe







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?

Let's turn to premise (8). Here is one hypothesis which would seem to falsify

8. If there is a

first cause, then God exists.

This would appear to be a description of a world in which there is a first cause, but God does not exist. Indeed, it appears to be entirely consistent with simple atheism. So it looks as though, if we are to believe (8), we must have some reason for rejecting the above hypothesis.

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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grounds that there can't be an uncaused cause?

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

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



(3,4,5,6)

1. If something were the cause

5. At least one thing has a

or (iii) have a first cause.

6. Every causal chain must be

of itself, it would be prior

(1,2)itself.

cause.

7. There is a first cause.

2. Nothing is prior to itself.

chains. causal

(i) circular, (ii) infinite,

4. There are no infinite

8. If there is a first cause,

itself.

3. Nothing is the cause of

then God exists.

(7,8)C. God exists.





and indeed nothing in the universe can be.

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 —

cause. Because the universe — including the Big Bang — has a

On this view, everything which begins to exist at some time must have a

the universe came to exist at some time, then it follows that the universe

was caused to exist by something outside the universe.

If one accepts this extra premise, and one accepts the assumption that

must have come to exist at a certain time.

And then there are just two options — that thing must be eternal, or it

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

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

But let's focus in on one premise:

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

universe is God?

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

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

Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.













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particles described?

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

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

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

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

God has, but the Big Bang does not.

some reason for rejecting the above hypothesis.

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

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





8. If there is a

God exists.

first cause, then

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

we will return.

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

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.

