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:

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

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

Many theists are less certain that God exists than they are that 2+2=4; many atheists are less certain than God does not exist than they are that 2+2=4. So many people think that there is some chance that God exists and some chance that God does not exist.

Keeping this in mind, recall the three hypotheses about reality with which we began.

Simple theism God exists, and

God exists, and created the universe.

Simple atheism

The universe (or perhaps several universes) are all that exists. Nothing created it (or them).

Quasi-theism

The universe was created by something outside of it, but not by God.

If you agree that the kalām argument shows that that there is a beginningless being outside of the universe which caused the universe to exist, that rules out simple atheism. So the simple atheist cannot respond to the argument just by denying (10).

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(7,8)C. God exists.

(3,4,5,6)

1. If something were the cause

or (iii) have a first cause.

6. Every causal chain must be

4. There are no infinite

then God exists.

(1,2)itself.

cause.

of itself, it would be prior

5. At least one thing has a

(i) circular, (ii) infinite,

3. Nothing is the cause of

8. If there is a first cause,

2. Nothing is prior to itself.

chains. causal

7. There is a first cause.









Our first topic is the question of whether 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.

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

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

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

God has, but the Big Bang does not.

grounds that there can't be an uncaused cause?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

we will return.

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

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

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

arguments against simple atheism. Whether they also amount to

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



Most theists are less certain that God exists than they are that 2+2=4;

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