







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?

How could we argue that God exists?

Just as in the case of Santa, a demonstration of the existence of God will have to be a demonstration of the existence of something with certain properties associated with God.

In this class, we'll be working with the conception of God common to what are often thought of as the major monotheistic religions — Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Here is the view of God common to these religions:

The classical conception of God

God is not part of the universe, but is the creator of the universe. God is also all-powerful, all-knowing, and perfectly good. God has always existed, and always will exist. God is the greatest being that could exist.

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

will have to be a demonstration of the existence of something with

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

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

particles described?



8. If there is a

God exists.

first cause, then

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

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

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

God has, but the Big Bang does not.

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

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

grounds that there can't be an uncaused cause?

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

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

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

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

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.

Three views universe







Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.



(7,8)C. God exists.

then God exists.

5. At least one thing has a

or (iii) have a first cause.

(3,4,5,6)

4. There are no infinite

6. Every causal chain must be

1. If something were the cause

3. Nothing is the cause of

chains. causal

2. Nothing is prior to itself.

(1,2)itself.

cause.

(i) circular, (ii) infinite,

8. If there is a first cause,

7. There is a first cause.

of itself, it would be prior

itself.







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

arguments against simple atheism. Whether they also amount to

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

we will return.

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

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.



Let's try to apply some of these lessons to the question of whether God

will have to be a demonstration of the existence of something with

certain properties associated with God.

Just as in the case of Santa, a demonstration of the existence of God

these religions:

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