







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?

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

The idea is **not** that this is the only view of God which is possible — of course there are others. But in order to sensibly enter into an inquiry whether God exists, we have to have some fixed meaning for the term "God." This is as good a starting point as any.

With this conception of God in mind, we can state two views about the nature of reality.

#### Simple theism God exists, and

God exists, and created the universe.

universes) are all that exists.

Nothing created it (or them).

Simple atheism

The universe (or perhaps several

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

arguments against simple atheism. Whether they also amount to

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

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

we will return.

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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#### universe is God?

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#### Three views universe



particles described?

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

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



#### first cause, then

#### 8. If there is a

### 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

# 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

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

God has, but the Big Bang does not.

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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

some reason for rejecting the above hypothesis.

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

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.







Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.



#### 4. There are no infinite

### 8. If there is a first cause,

## 3. Nothing is the cause of

(i) circular, (ii) infinite,

#### then God exists.

## of itself, it would be prior

## 1. If something were the cause

## 5. At least one thing has a

#### 7. There is a first cause.

or (iii) have a first cause.

## 6. Every causal chain must be

#### (1,2)itself.

#### chains. causal

#### cause.

#### 2. Nothing is prior to itself.

itself.

(3,4,5,6)

\_\_\_\_\_\_

#### (7,8)C. God exists.









universe and everything in it, then God exists.

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

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#### different ideas of what God could be?

# But what does it mean to say that God exists? Don't people have

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