









Three views about the universe



Two objections to Aquinas



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

Bang — must have a cause. So the Big Bang can't be the first cause —

beginning in time, the universe as a whole — again, including the Big

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

and indeed nothing in the universe can be.

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

was caused to exist by something outside the universe.

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

But let's focus in on one premise:

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

Aquinas' 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?

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

Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.















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

particles described?



8. If there is a

first cause, then

God exists.

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

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

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

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

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

grounds that there can't be an uncaused cause?

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

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

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

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

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.

Three views universe







we will return.

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

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

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





1. If something were the cause

itself.

of itself, it would be prior

2. Nothing is prior to itself.

(i) circular, (ii) infinite,

chains. causal

6. Every causal chain must be

3. Nothing is the cause of

4. There are no infinite

or (iii) have a first cause.

(3,4,5,6)

8. If there is a first cause,

5. At least one thing has a

(1,2)itself.

cause.

7. There is a first cause.

(7,8)C. God exists.

then God exists.





