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, 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.

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.

Everything which begins to exist at some time must have a cause.

Let's look at what happens if we add this assumption to some of the premises from Aquinas' argument.

Consider Bob, some individual who came to exist at a certain time.

We know from our new assumption that Bob has a cause. What might the causal chain which leads to Bob look like?

We know that it can't be circular, and it can't be infinite. It also can't have a first cause which begins to exist in time, since everything that begins to exist in time has a cause.

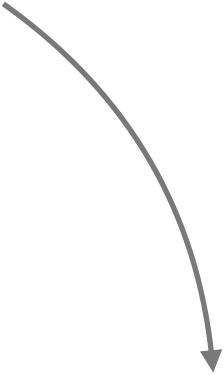
Nothing is the cause of itself.

There are no infinite causal chains.

Every causal chain must be (i) circular, (ii) infinite, or (iii) have a first cause.

So it looks like Bob's causal chain must have a very unusual sort of first cause: one which has no beginning in time.

Everything which begins to exist at some time must have a beginningless first cause.









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

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.

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

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



Everything which

begins to exist at

some time must have

cause.

Let's look at what happens if we add

this assumption to some of the

premises from Aquinas' argument.

Consider Bob, some individual who

came to exist at a certain time.

look like?

the causal chain which leads to Bob

We know from our new assumption

that Bob has a cause. What might

have a first cause which begins to

We know that it can't be circular,

begins to exist in time has a cause.

exist in time, since everything that

and it can't be infinite. It also can't



the cause

Nothing 18

tsel1 OI



infinite

There are no

nains



(ii) circular,

Everv causal

chain must be (i)

first cause.

(iii) have a

infinite,

cause: one which has no beginning in

So it looks like Bob's causal chain

must have a very unusual sort of first



time must at some

first cause.

Everything which

beginningless

begins to exist

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?

some reason for rejecting the above hypothesis.

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

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.



first cause, then

8. If there is a

God exists.

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

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

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

and indeed nothing in the universe can be.

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

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

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

universe is God?

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

Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.















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.

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.





4. There are no infinite

(1,2)itself.

1. If something were the cause

2. Nothing is prior to itself.

chains. causal

(3,4,5,6)

cause.

of itself, it would be prior

(i) circular, (ii) infinite,

7. There is a first cause.

6. Every causal chain must be

or (iii) have a first cause.

5. At least one thing has a

3. Nothing is the cause of

then God exists.

8. If there is a first cause,

(7,8)C. God exists.

itself.









Everything which begins to exist at some time must have a cause.



Nothing is the cause of itself.



There are no infinite causal chains.

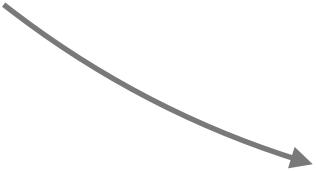


Every causal chain must be (i) circular, (ii) infinite, or (iii) have a first cause.

Everything which begins to exist at some time must have a beginningless first cause.









cosmology:

The argument continues with an assumption

which is widely accepted in contemporary

Everything which begins to exist at some time must have a cause.

Nothing is the cause of itself.

There are no infinite causal chains.

Every causal chain must be (i) circular, (ii) infinite, or (iii) have a first cause.

Everything which begins to exist at some time must have a beginningless first cause.