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.

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Instead, it seems like a defender of the first cause argument 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. But why?

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

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

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.



God exists.

first cause, then

8. If there is a



(7,8)C. God exists.

(3,4,5,6)

chains. causal

of itself, it would be prior

1. If something were the cause

7. There is a first cause.

(1,2)itself.

itself.

2. Nothing is prior to itself.

or (iii) have a first cause.

3. Nothing is the cause of

5. At least one thing has a

(i) circular, (ii) infinite,

4. There are no infinite

then God exists.

8. If there is a first cause,

6. Every causal chain must be

cause.









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

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

arguments against simple atheism. Whether they also amount to

we will return.

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





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

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

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

and indeed nothing in the universe can be.

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

And then there are just two options — that thing must be eternal, or it

must have come to exist at a certain time.

then that thing would have to be eternal, or have come to exist a certain

If we go with the second option, then it must have had a cause. And

But let's focus in on one premise:

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

universe is God?

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

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

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

Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.













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