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?

Nothing is the cause of itself.

There are no infinite causal

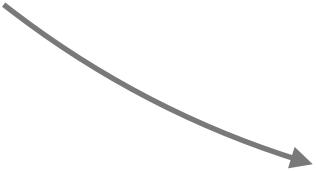
chains.

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.









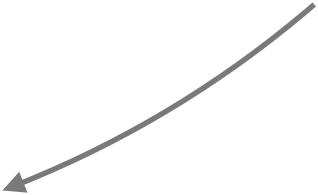
The argument continues with an assumption which is widely accepted in contemporary cosmology:

The universe and everything in it began to exist at some time.

There is a beginningless first cause of the universe and everything in it.

If there is a beginningless first cause of the universe and everything in it, then God exists.

God exists.









arguments against simple atheism. Whether they also amount to

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

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

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

we will return.

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.

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



8. If there is a

God exists.

first cause, then

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

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Bang could genuinely be a first cause. Things like the Big Bang have to

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time must have some

Everything which

begins to exist at

cause.

Let's look at what happens if we add

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premises from Aquinas' argument.

Consider Bob, some individual who

came to exist at a certain time.

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We know from our new assumption

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Nothing 18

of itself.

the cause



4 P

There are no

infinite



(iii) have a

infinite,

(ii) circular,

first cause.

chain must be (i)

Everv causal



beginningless

Everything which

first cause.

begins to exist

time must at some

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The argument continues with an assumption

cosmology:



began to exist at

everything in it

The universe and

some time.



There

beginningless first

universe and

everything in it.

of the cause



beginningless first

of the cause

If there is a

everything in it,

then God exists.

universe and



God exists.









chains. causal

2. Nothing is prior to itself.

cause.

itself.

(1,2)itself.

(3,4,5,6)

(7,8)C. God exists.

8. If there is a first cause,

(i) circular, (ii) infinite,

4. There are no infinite

6. Every causal chain must be

3. Nothing is the cause of

5. At least one thing has a

of itself, it would be prior

then God exists.

1. If something were the cause

7. There is a first cause.

or (iii) have a first cause.







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

grounds that there can't be an uncaused cause?

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

universe is God?

Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.











give us the following kalām argument (named after the school of Islamic

We can put this together with pieces of the argument from Aquinas to

thinkers who developed several versions of it).