The second way is from the nature of efficient cause. In the world of sensible things we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither, indeed, is it possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause ... Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate, cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.



Here is the central argument of Aquinas' second way - the second of five proofs that Aquinas gave for the existence of God.









Let's have a look at the next sentence. How would you state this claim in simple language?

# There are some

causes.

# Nothing is the cause of itself.



## sensible things we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no

be no ultimate, nor any intermediate, cause. But if in efficient causes it

case known (neither, indeed, is it possible) in which a thing is found to

be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is

first cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.

the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the

ultimate cause ... Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect.

neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient

because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of

is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause,

## The second way is from the nature of efficient cause. In the world of

## Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will

causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a

impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity,

proofs that Aquinas gave for the existence of God.

## Here is the central argument of Aquinas' second way - the second of five

## 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.

arguments against simple atheism. Whether they also amount to

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

## you state this claim in simple language?

Let's have a look at the next sentence. How would



some

### causes.

#### There are



#### the cause

#### Nothing 18

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### Three views universe







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

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.

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

# 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.

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

But let's focus in on one premise:

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

### universe is God?

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

# 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

Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.











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



### God exists.

## first cause, then

### 8. If there is a

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

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

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

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

God has, but the Big Bang does not.

# And that is, in a way, exactly what Aquinas tried to do (though of course

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

grounds that there can't be an uncaused cause?

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

Instead, it seems like a defender of the first cause argument has to argue that

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

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

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.









itself.

## 5. At least one thing has a

#### chains. causal

## 2. Nothing is prior to itself.

or (iii) have a first cause.

#### (1,2)itself.

## 6. Every causal chain must be

(3,4,5,6)

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

### 4. There are no infinite

## 1. If something were the cause

### then God exists.

#### cause.

(i) circular, (ii) infinite, \_\_\_\_\_\_

## 3. Nothing is the cause of

### 7. There is a first cause.

## of itself, it would be prior

## 8. If there is a first cause,







The second way is from the nature of efficient cause. In the world of sensible things we find there is an order of efficient causes. There is no case known (neither, indeed, is it possible) in which a thing is found to be the efficient cause of itself; for so it would be prior to itself, which is impossible. Now in efficient causes it is not possible to go on to infinity, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause, and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate cause ... Now to take away the cause is to take away the effect. Therefore, if there be no first cause among efficient causes, there will be no ultimate, nor any intermediate, cause. But if in efficient causes it is possible to go on to infinity, there will be no first efficient cause, neither will there be an ultimate effect, nor any intermediate efficient causes; all of which is plainly false. Therefore it is necessary to admit a first cause, to which everyone gives the name of God.



## There are some causes.

# Nothing is the cause of itself.

# Nothing is the cause of itself.