

1. If something were the cause of itself, it would be prior to itself.
 2. Nothing is prior to itself.
 3. Nothing is the cause of itself. (1,2)
 4. There are no infinite causal chains.
 5. At least one thing has a cause.
 6. Every causal chain must be (i) circular, (ii) infinite, or (iii) have a first cause.
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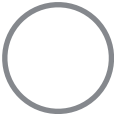
C. There is a first cause. (3,4,5,6)

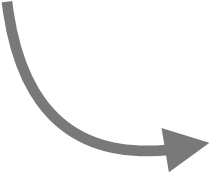


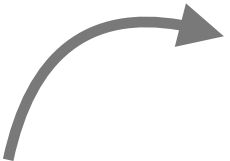






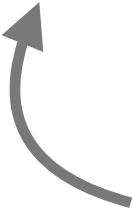












This is a little tricky. There is a sense in which in this example nothing is the cause of itself, because nothing is **directly** the cause of itself. But it still seems like things are **indirectly** the cause of themselves. After all, if A causes B and B causes C, isn't there also a sense in which A causes B?

Let's agree to understand "causes" in our argument as meaning "directly or indirectly causes." Then the kind of causal chain pictured above is ruled out by premise (3).

Aquinas' ultimate aim is not to argue for the existence of a first cause; his ultimate aim is to argue for the existence of God. So the thing we have labeled as a conclusion must actually just be a (derived) premise in the overall argument.

How can we get from our
argument to the conclusion
that God exists?


So far, so good. But there is
an obvious sense in which our
argument so far is
incomplete.

The simplest way is to add a
premise which Aquinas seems
to assume:

If there is a
first cause,
then God exists.



Three views
about
the universe



Aquinas'
first cause
argument



Two
objections
to Aquinas



the kalām
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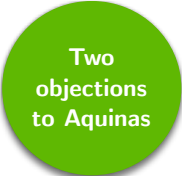




A large red circle with a slight drop shadow, containing the text "Three views about the universe" in white. The text is centered and arranged in three lines.

Three views
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the universe

Aquinas'
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argument



Two
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the kalām
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A large red circle with a slight drop shadow, containing white text.

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Aquinas'
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The Big Bang

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Two objections to Aquinas



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