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.

Aquinas did have things to say about this. But rather than pursue Aguinas' thought on this further, let's consider one way of developing the argument which was prominent in a school of Islamic thought which predates Aquinas. This version of the argument makes use of the following premise:

This looks pretty plausible. Surely things can't just pop into existence at a certain time with no cause at all; if they come to exist at some time. something must have caused them to exist.

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

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

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