Three views universe







and indeed nothing in the universe can be.

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

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

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

the universe came to exist at some time, then it follows that the universe

If one accepts this extra premise, and one accepts the assumption that

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

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

But let's focus in on one premise:

12. If there is an eternally existing first cause of the universe and everything in it, then God exists.

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

universe is God?

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

kalām argument might respond.

This is a reasonable question. Here is one way which a defender of the

and some chance that God does not exist.

Most theists are less certain that God exists than they are that 2+2=4;

2+2=4. So most of us think that there is some chance that God exists

most atheists are less certain than God does not exist than they are that

Keeping this in mind, recall the three hypotheses about reality with

which we began.

Simple theism God exists, and

God exists, and created the universe.

Simple atheism

The universe (or perhaps several universes) are all that exists. Nothing created it (or them).

Quasi-theism

The universe was created by something outside of it, but not by God.

exist, that rules out simple atheism. So the simple atheist cannot

beginningless being outside of the universe which caused the universe to

If you agree that the kalām argument shows that that there is a

respond to the argument just by denying (12).

looks like the kalām argument should not convince at least some kinds of

Does the existence of such a being rule out quasi-theism? No. So it

quasi-theists that God exists.



50%



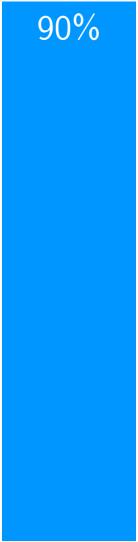


SIMPLE ATHEISM











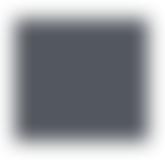
Just to have an example, let's imagine that you are an agnostic, and

5% chance of being true.

simple atheism has a 50% chance of being true, and quasi-theism has a

that you think that simple theism has a 45% chance of being true,





10%





kalām argument.

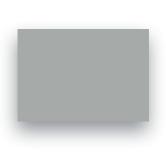
One might make a parallel point about the quasi-theist response to the



universe and everything in it, then God exists.

12. If there is an eternally existing first cause of the





















Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.

















(i) circular, (ii) infinite,

(7,8)C. God exists.

1. If something were the cause

itself.

of itself, it would be prior

2. Nothing is prior to itself.

chains. causal

(3,4,5,6)

or (iii) have a first cause.

(1,2)itself.

3. Nothing is the cause of

then God exists.

cause.

7. There is a first cause.

6. Every causal chain must be

4. There are no infinite

8. If there is a first cause,

5. At least one thing has a







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



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.

God has, but the Big Bang does not.

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

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

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

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.

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

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

we will return.

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

