




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  
about  
the universe

Aquinas'  
first cause  
argument



# Two objections to Aquinas



the kalām  
argument

On this view, everything which begins to exist at some time must have a cause. Because the universe — including the Big Bang — has a beginning in time, the universe as a whole — again, including the Big Bang — must have a cause. So the Big Bang can't be the first cause — and indeed nothing in the universe can be.

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.

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 time.

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.

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?

This is a reasonable question. Here is one way which a defender of the kalām argument might respond.

Most theists are less certain that God exists than they are that  $2+2=4$ ;  
most atheists are less certain than God does not exist than they are that  
 $2+2=4$ . So most of us think that there is some chance that God exists  
and some chance that God does not exist.

Keeping this in mind, recall the three hypotheses about reality with  
which we began.

**Simple theism**

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.

If you agree that the kalām argument shows that there is a beginningless being outside of the universe which caused the universe to exist, that rules out simple atheism. So the simple atheist cannot respond to the argument just by denying (12).

Does the existence of such a being rule out quasi-theism? No. So it looks like the kalām argument should not convince at least some kinds of quasi-theists that God exists.

But that does not mean that the argument should not convince many people that it is much more likely that God exists than they thought it was before encountering the argument.

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# SIMPLE THEISM

SIMPLE  
ATHEISM



# QUASI- THEISM

Here an analogy might help. Consider the question of whether Santa Claus exists. Santa Claus is meant to be a bearded jolly elf who is thousands of years old who lives at the North Pole and delivers toys to children all around the world with the help of his flying reindeer.



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Let's return to the analogy with Santa. We can distinguish three different views here. First, there is the belief that Santa exists. Second, there is Santa-skepticism: the belief that nothing exists with any of the properties ascribed to Santa. Third, there is quasi-Santa-ism: the view that something lives at the North Pole with some of the properties traditionally ascribed to Santa, but not all.

Suppose that you are a Santa-skeptic. But suppose now that you encountered a surprisingly convincing argument for the existence of an ancient jolly elf living at the North Pole who has in fact been delivering toys all around the world for centuries.



Would it be reasonably for you to respond to the argument by saying:  
“OK, I now have to admit that Santa-skepticism is false. But I still don’t  
think that it’s any more likely that Santa exists. You haven’t, after all,  
shown me that the elf is bearded, or that he has flying reindeer!”

It is at least arguable that this would not be very reasonable. Surely the discovery of a surprising being with some of the Santa properties at least raises the probability that Santa exists.

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12. If there is an  $n$ -ary existential first order formula  $\phi(x_1, \dots, x_n)$  such that  $\phi(x_1, \dots, x_n) \in \Sigma_1^1$  and  $\phi(x_1, \dots, x_n) \in \Sigma_1^1$  then  $\phi(x_1, \dots, x_n) \in \Sigma_1^1$ .

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The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the research and the need for a new approach. It then presents a detailed description of the methodology used in the study. The results of the study are then presented, followed by a discussion of the implications of the findings. The paper concludes with a summary of the main points and a list of references.

The research was conducted in a laboratory setting. The participants were all male, aged between 20 and 30 years. They were all students at the University of X. The study was approved by the ethics committee of the university.

The participants were divided into two groups. The first group was the control group, and the second group was the experimental group. The control group was given a standard test, and the experimental group was given a modified test.

The results of the study showed that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group. This suggests that the modified test is more effective than the standard test.

The implications of the findings are that the modified test should be used in future studies. This will help to improve the accuracy of the results and provide a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

The main points of the study are that the modified test is more effective than the standard test, and that the experimental group performed significantly better than the control group. The references are listed at the end of the paper.

causal chain.

1. If something were the cause

or  $(iii)$  have a first cause.

of itself, it would be prior

5. At least one thing has a

4. There are no finite

6. Every causal chain must be



its self . (1,2)

3. Nothing is the cause of

8: If there is a first cause,

(i)  $\text{circilair;}$  (ii)  $\text{infinites;}$

Q. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

(3, 4, 5, 6)



C. Good exists. (7, 8)



theinGdexistis.

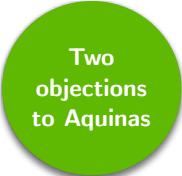
2. Nothing is prior to itself.

7. There is a first case:

to its side.







Two  
objections  
to Aquinas



the kalām  
argument



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

particles described?

ground that there can't be an uncaused cause, like the explosion of



first case, then

Goodixists.

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.

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.

Might 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 and quite a first class. 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

some reason for rejecting the above hypothesis.

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

# 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 into motion - and, further, every subsequent event has been an effect of this event.




Our first topic is the question of whether God exists.







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



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

arguments against simple atheism. Whether they attempt to

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

we win! return.

first argument we find in the reading from Thomas Aquinas.

Let's turn then to our first argument for the existence of God: the

**Aquinas'  
first cause  
argument**





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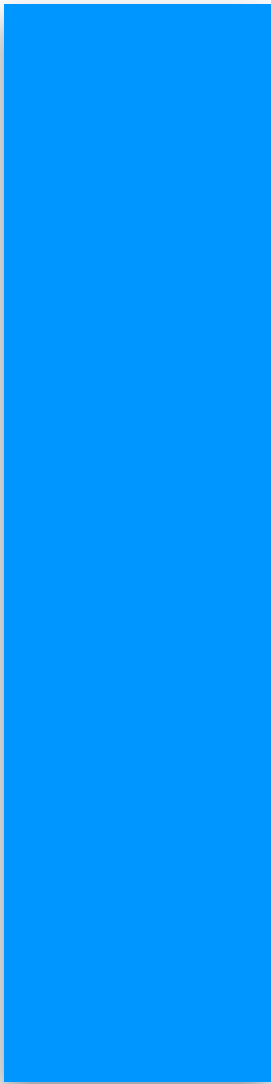


# SIMPLE THEISM

SIMPLE

ATHEISM

# QUASI- THEISM











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