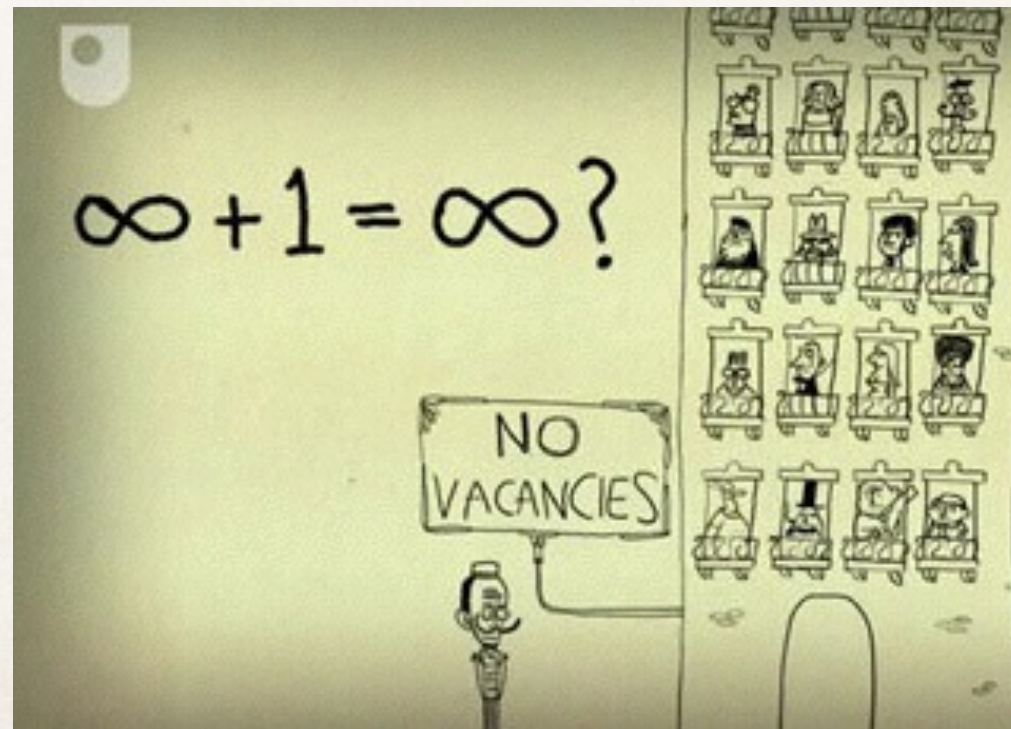*The Cosmological Argument*

Marcello Di Bello

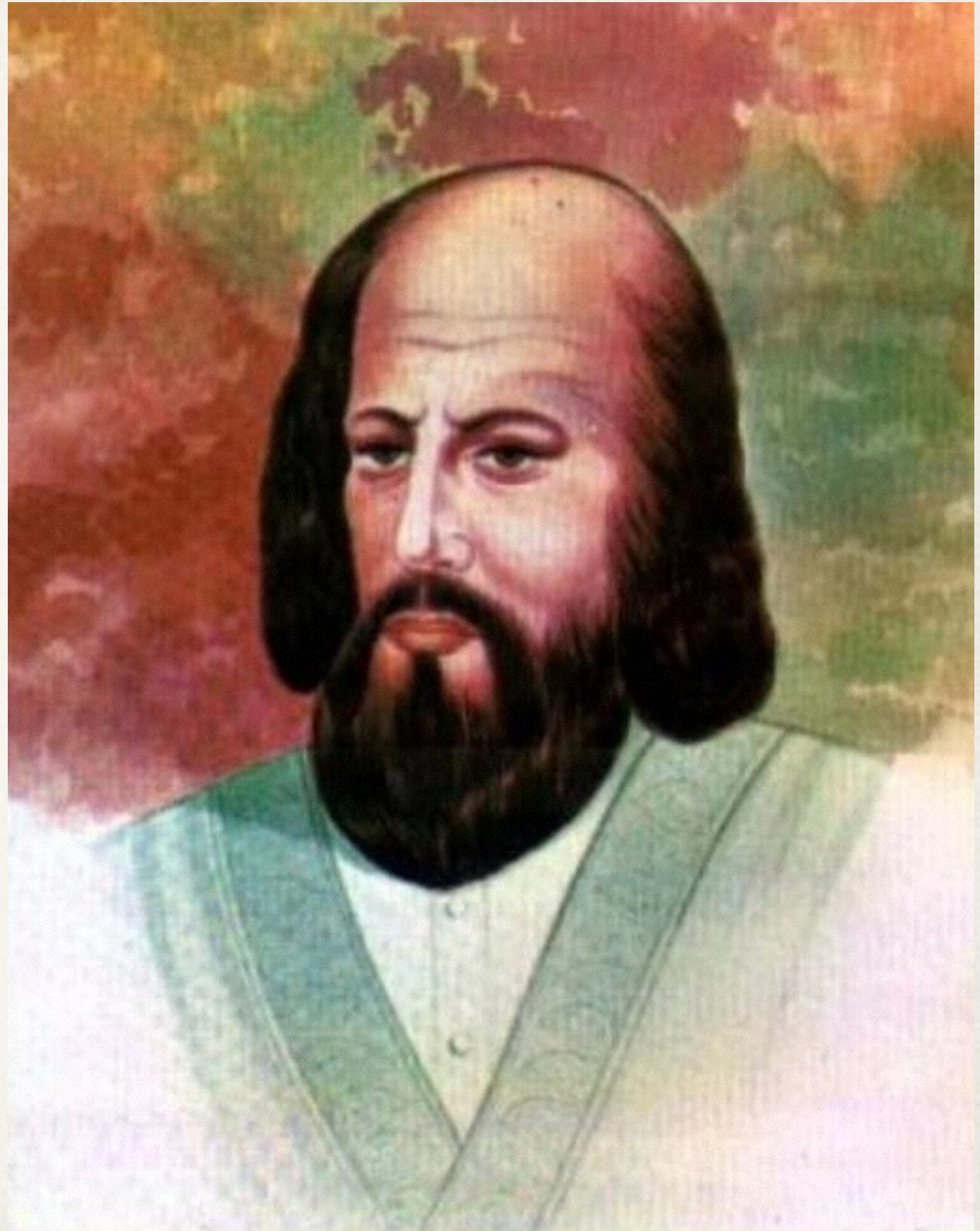*Lehman College CUNY*

PHI 171 - Fall 2015

The Counterintuitive Notion of Infinity

The Cosmological Argument

Al-Ghazali (1022—1111)

Al-Ghazali's Argument

1. Everything that has a beginning of its existence must have a cause of its existence.

2. **The universe has a beginning of its existence.**

3. So, the universe must have a cause if its existence.

4. If the universe has a cause of its existence, its cause must be God.

5. So, God must exist.

St. Thomas of Aquinas (1225—1274)

"To those who have faith no explanation is necessary. To those without faith, no explanation is possible."

Aquinas "First Way"

1. Some things are undergoing change in the world.

2. Anything that is undergoing change must have a cause of its change.

3. Such a cause, if it is itself undergoing change, must have a cause for its change as well.

4. But this cannot go on forever, otherwise there would be no first cause and no change at all.

5. So, there must be a first cause of change, where the first cause is unchanged and not itself caused by something else.
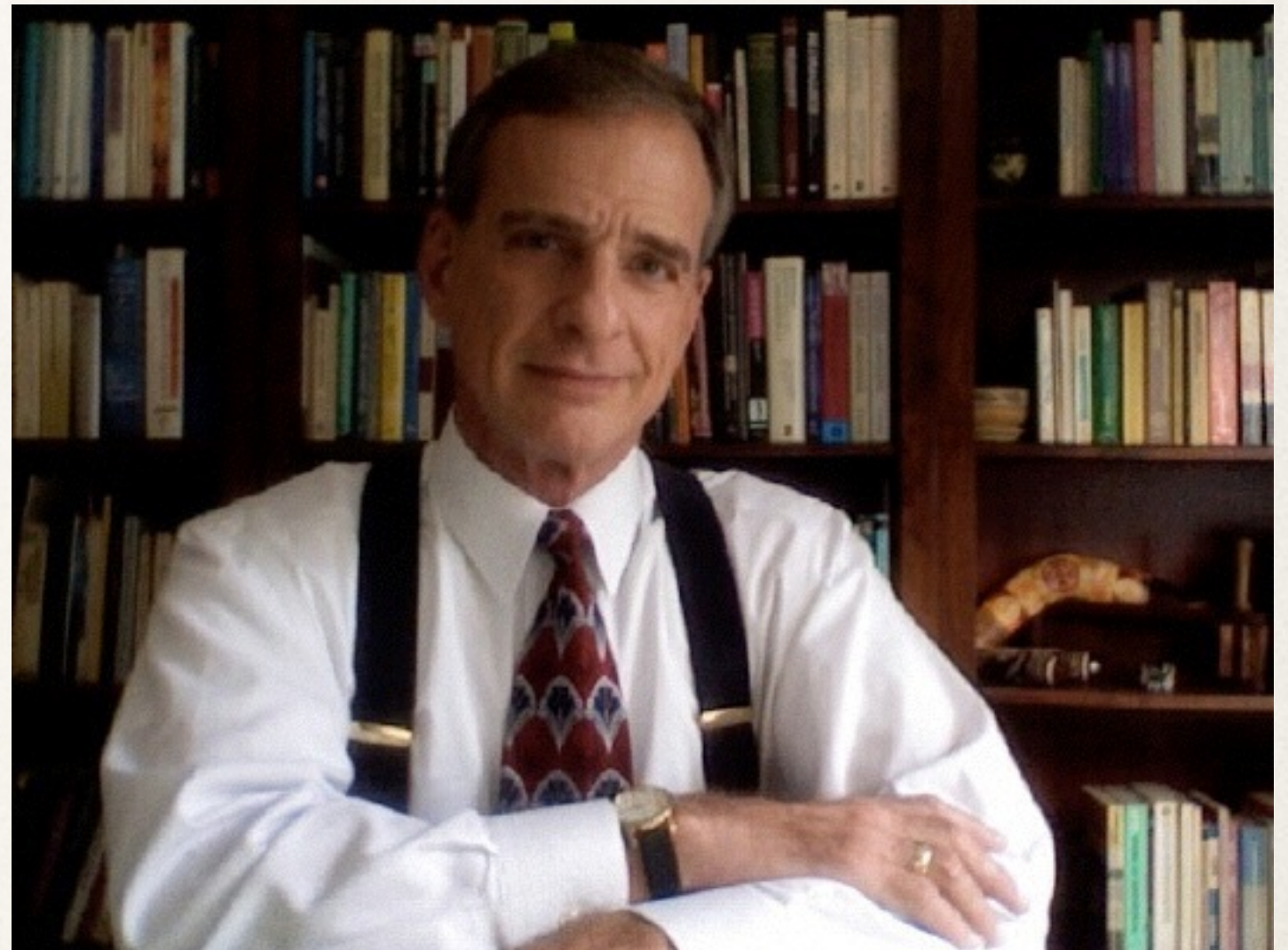
6. That first cause we call God.

Key Ideas in the Argument

Everything that undergoes change must have a cause

There cannot be an infinite regress of causes

But Why Cannot There Be an Infinite Regress of Causes?

William Lane Craig on Why There Cannot Be an Infinite Regress of Causes

watch the video below
up to minute 3:25

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeKavDdRVIg

Craig's Argument Against an Infinite Regress of Causes

1. An infinite regress of causes is impossible **because** there cannot be an infinite number of past events.

2. There cannot be an infinite number of past events **because** physical infinity is contradictory.

3. Physical infinity is contradictory **because** if you subtract infinity from infinity you can get both a <u>finite</u> number of things as well as an <u>infinite</u> number of things.

Craig on Why "Physical Infinity" Is Contradictory

First, suppose there are an infinite number of past events, each numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.

Next, subtract an <u>infinite</u> number of events from the given infinite number of events.

Option 1: Subtract the even numbered events. *Result*: The remaining events are still infinite (i.e. all the odd events).

Option 2: Subtract the events greater than 100. *Result*: the remaining events are finite (i.e. the events up to 100).

*Craig here relies on the mathematical fact that the **even numbers** are **infinite** and **the numbers greater than 100** are also **infinite**.*

Infinity *minus* infinity equals infinity.

Infinity *minus* infinity equals "finity".
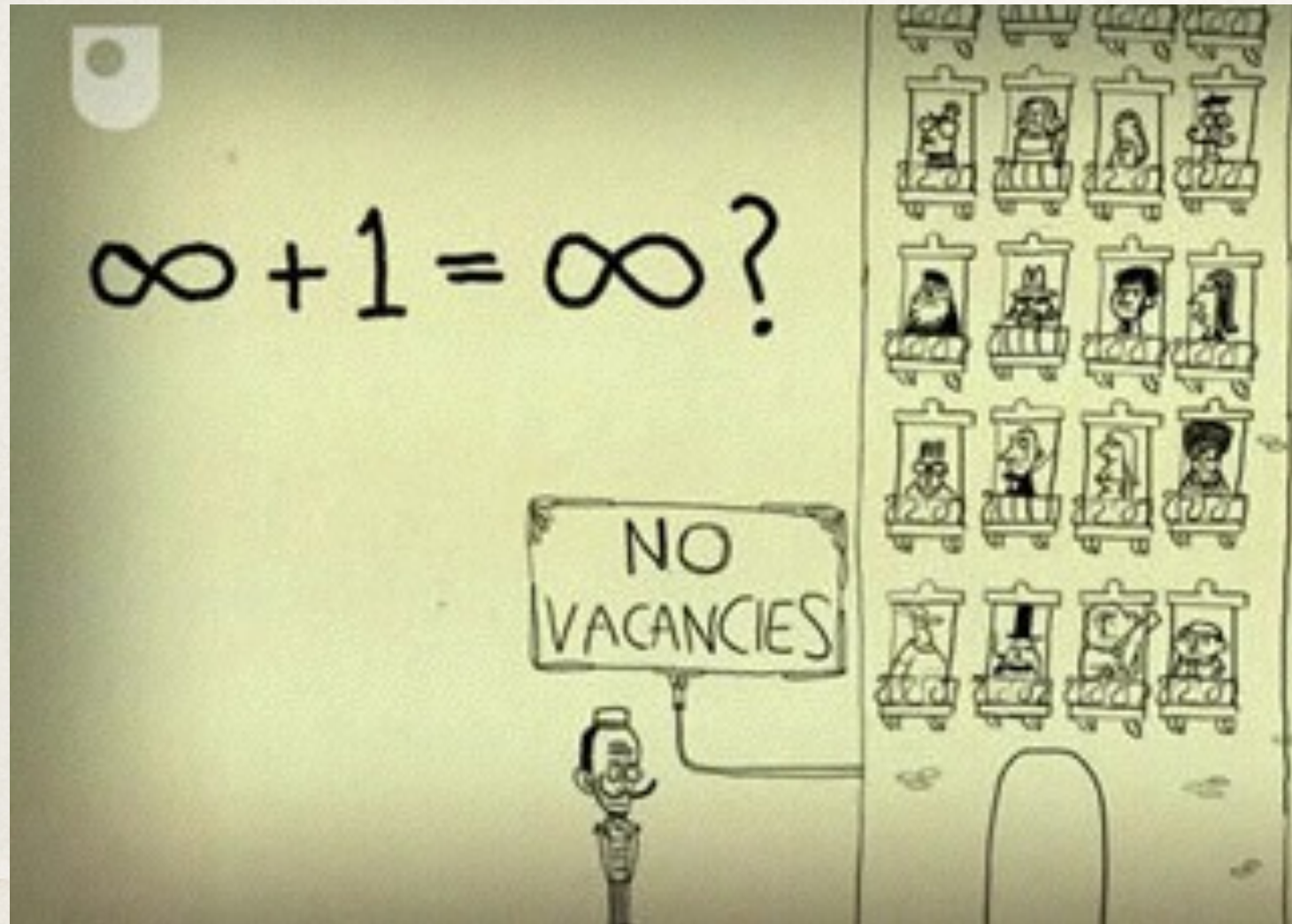
That's contradictory!

But all Craig's argument seems to show is that "infinity" is something counterintuitive

His argument does not seem to show that "physical infinity" is flat out contradictory

I'll let you decide for yourself

Another Way to Look at the Counterintuitive Nature of Infinity

Hilbert's Infinite Hotel

www.youtube.com/watch?v=faQBrAQ8714