The Existence of God

The Kalam Cosmological Argument

Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus, Southern Evangelical Seminary

Past President, International Society of Christian Apologetics
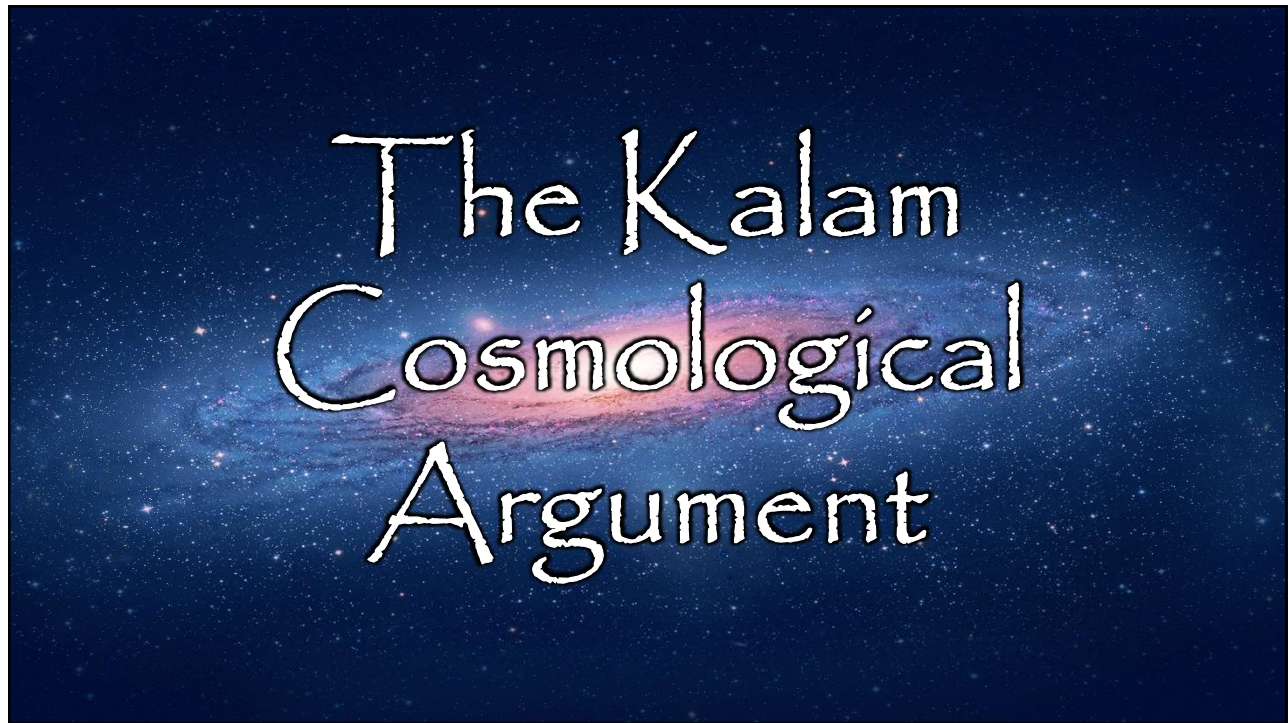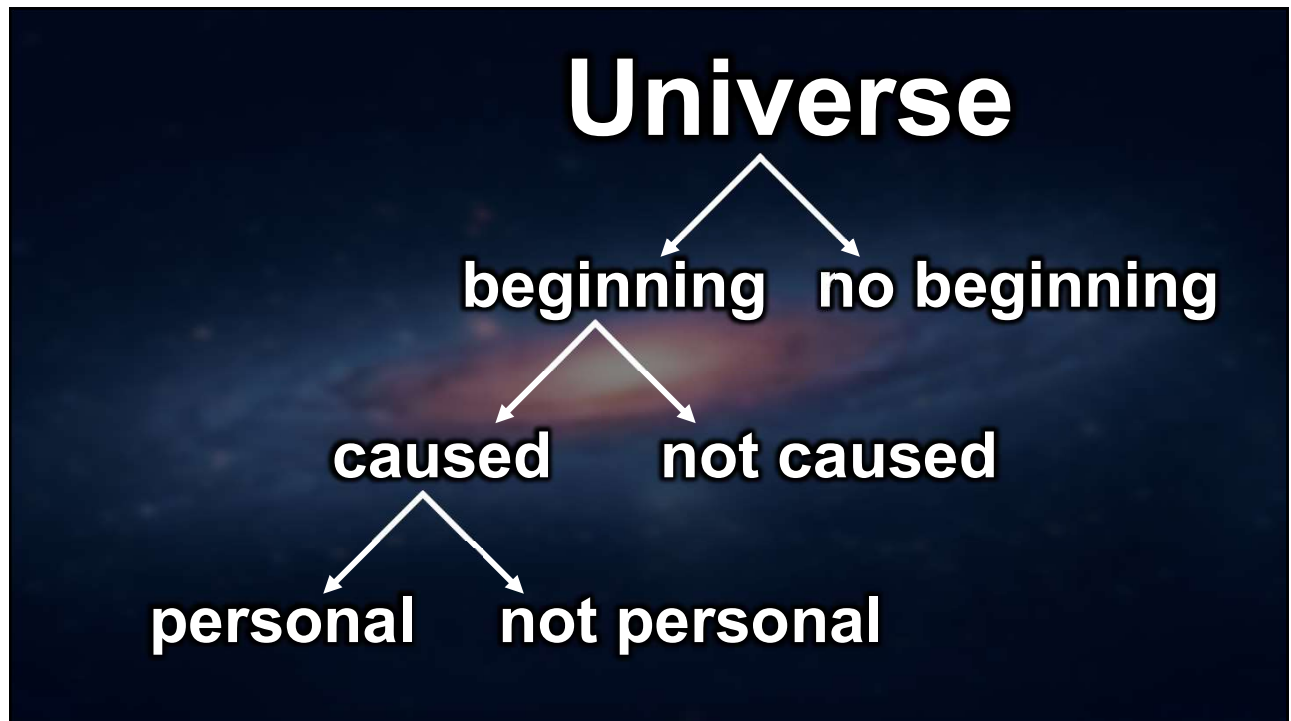
1

The Kalam Cosmological Argument

2

1

The Kalam Cosmological Argument

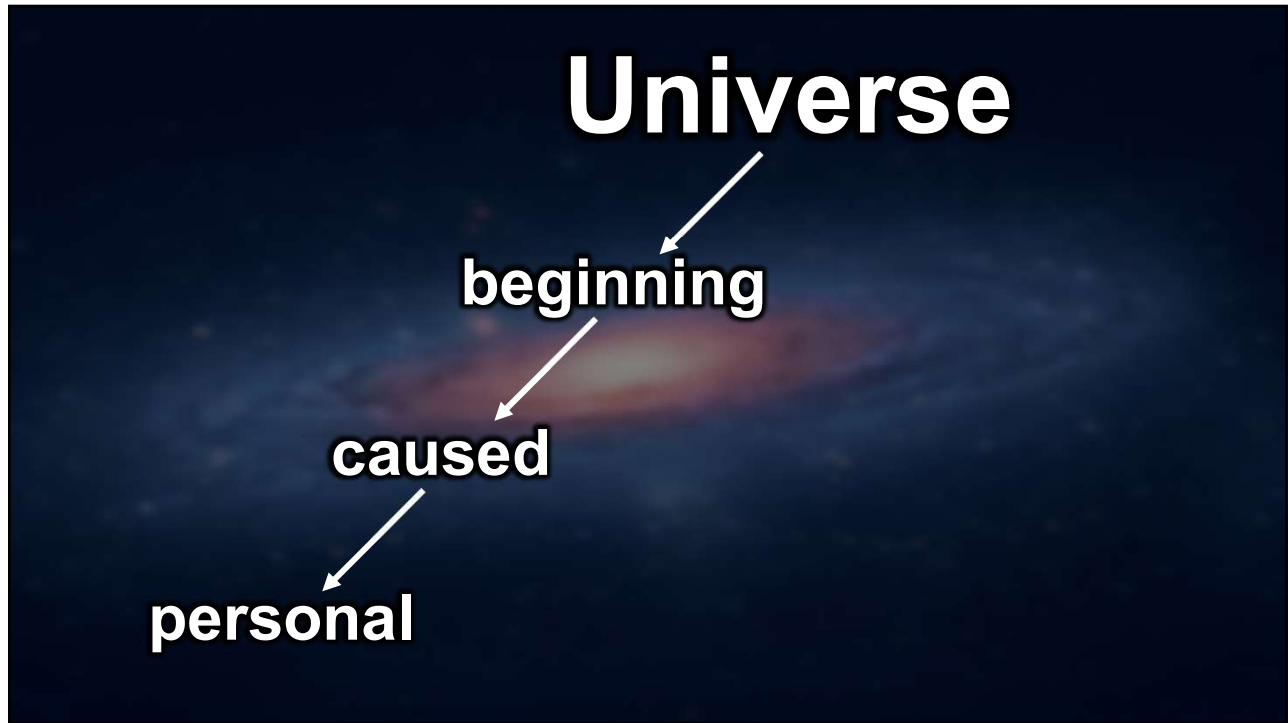the universe's coming-into-existence

the universe's current existing

3

Universe

beginning   no beginning

caused   not caused

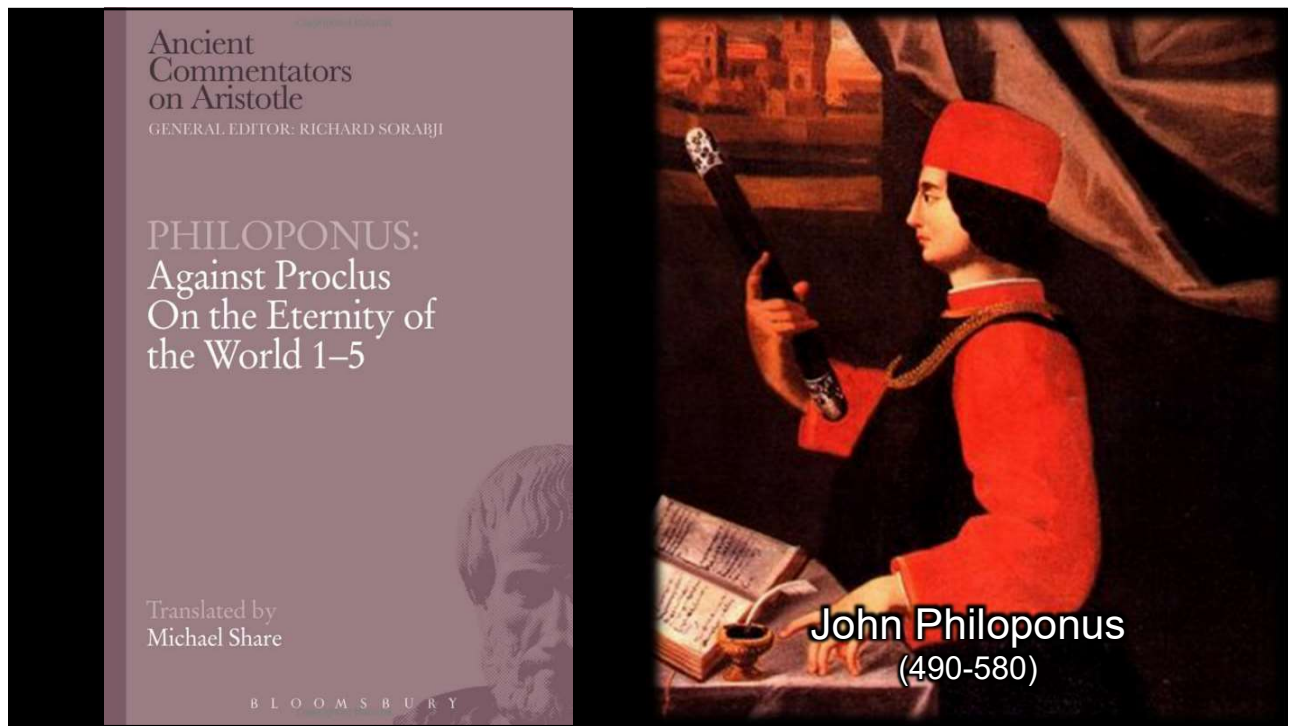personal   not personal
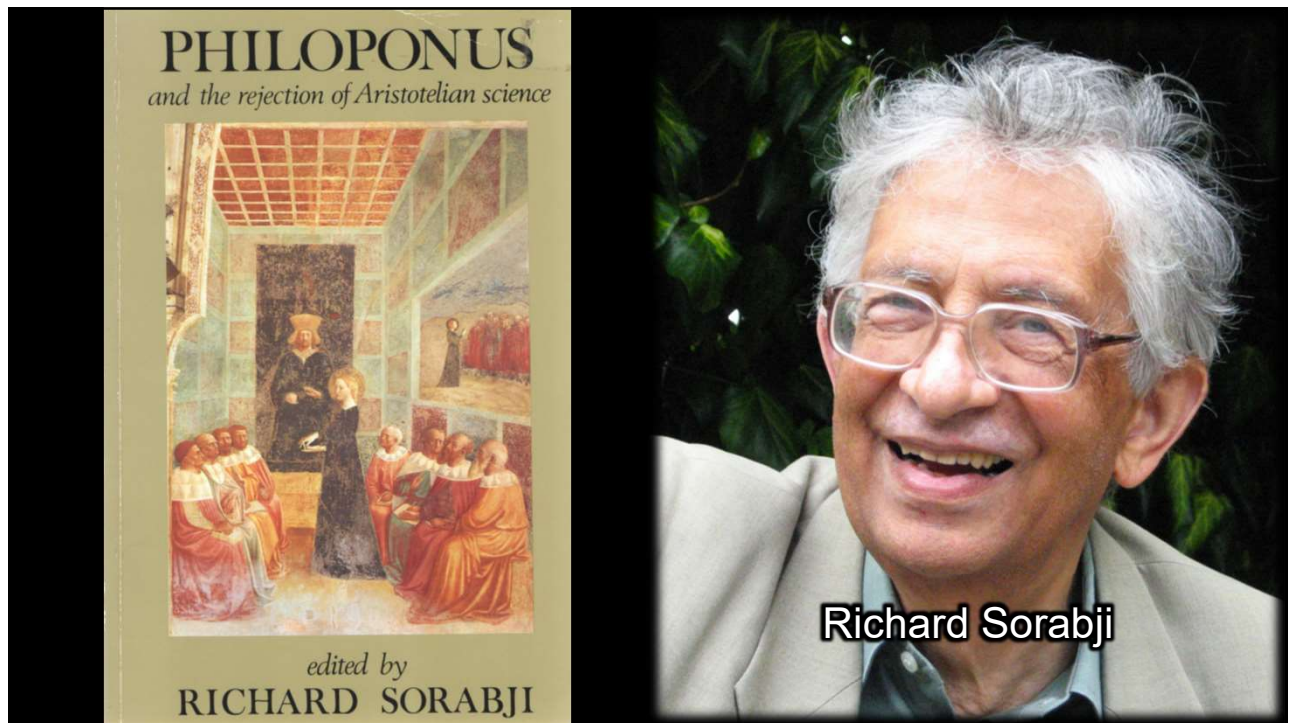
4

Universe

beginning

caused

personal

5

The earliest defense of a Kalam type of argument is by John Philoponus in his work Against Proclus' On the Eternity of the World [de Aeternitate Mundi contra Proclum].
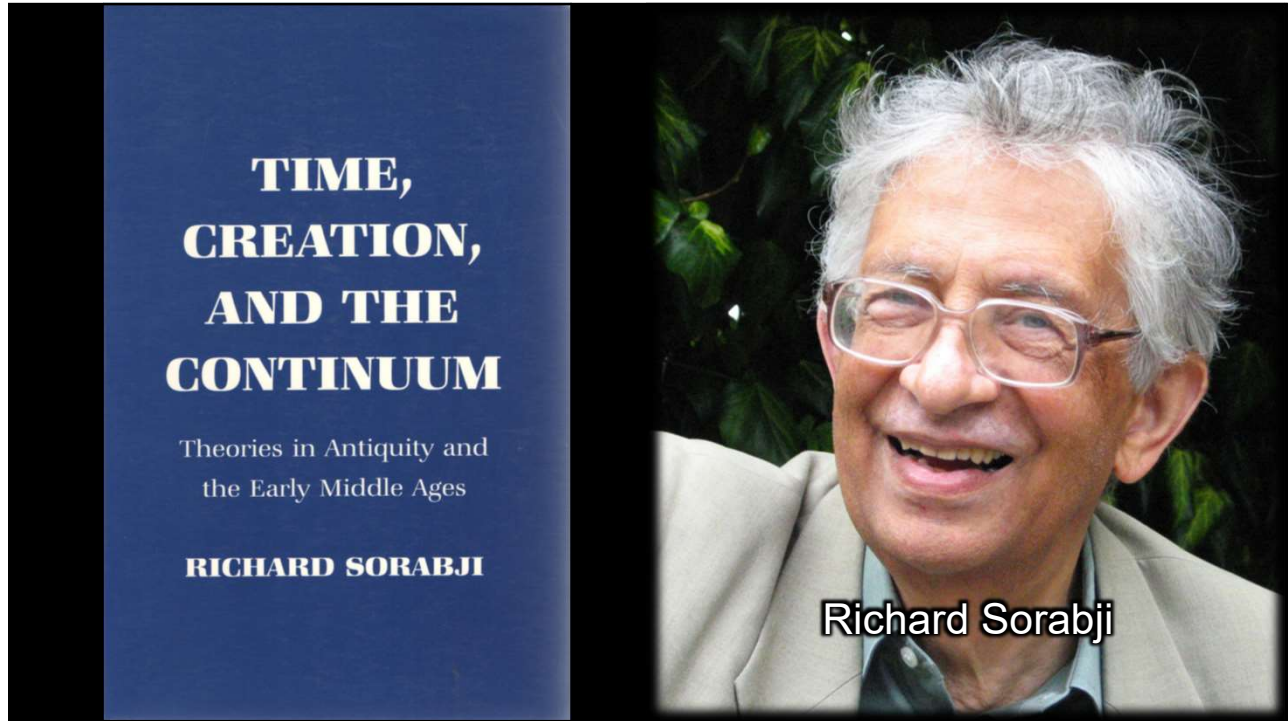
John Philoponus
(490-580)

6

3

Ancient
Commentators
on Aristotle
GENERAL EDITOR: RICHARD SORABJI

PHILOPONUS:
Against Proclus
On the Eternity of
the World 1–5

Translated by
Michael Share

BLOOMSBURY

John Philoponus
(490-580)

7

PHILOPONUS
and the rejection of Aristotelian science

edited by
RICHARD SORABJI

Richard Sorabji

8

4

Richard Sorabji

9

10

11

12

The Kalam Cosmological Argument was championed in Medieval Arabic Philosophy by:

13

al-Kindi
(801-873)

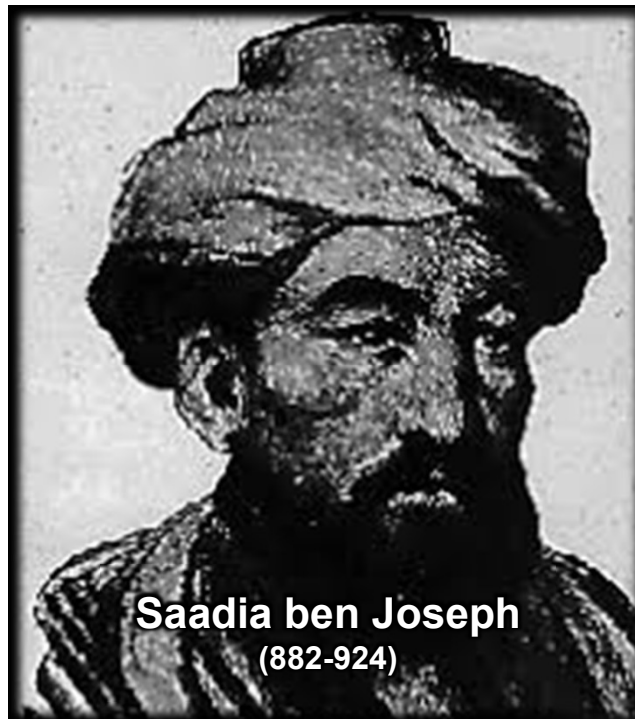*Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi in his work On First Philosophy.*
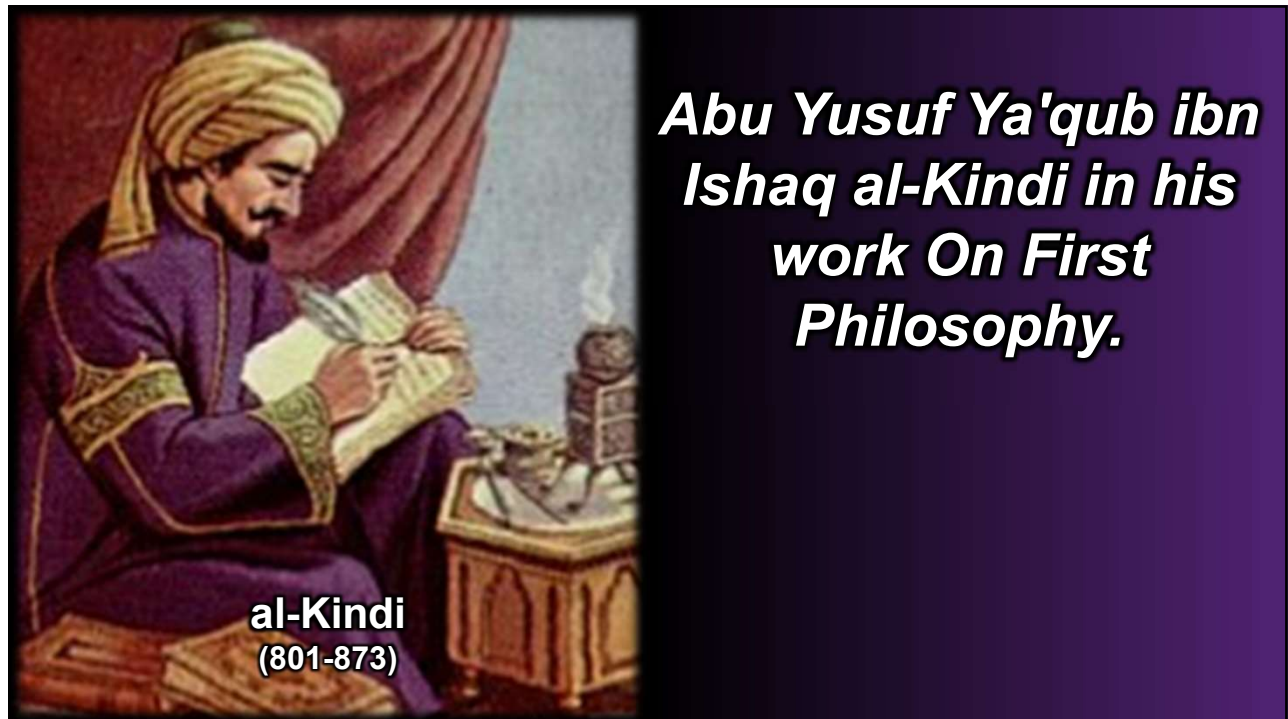
14

Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Ta'us Ahmad al-Tusi al-Shafi'i, generally known as al-Ghazali, in his work *Incoherence of the Philosophers*.

al-Ghazali
(1058-1111)

15

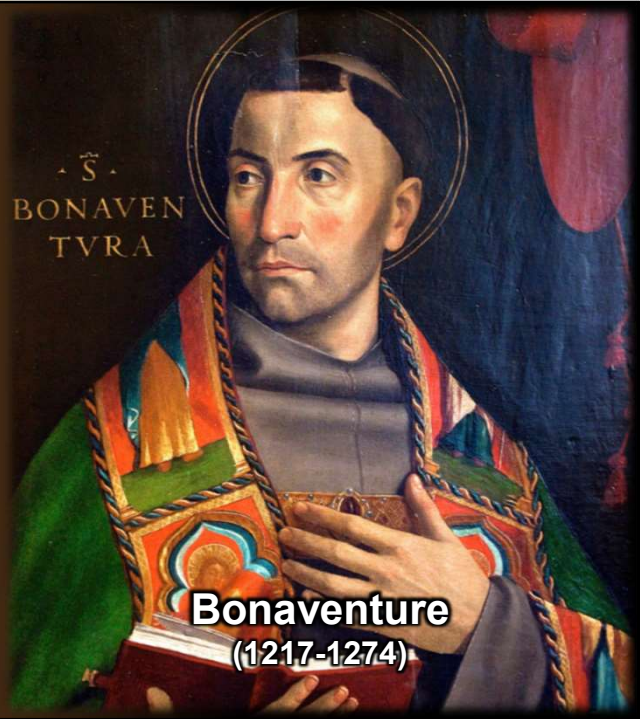It was championed in Medieval Jewish Philosophy most notably by Saadia ben Joseph (Saadia Gaon) in his work *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*.

Saadia ben Joseph
(882-924)

16

It was championed in Medieval Christian Philosophy most notably by Bonaventure (John of Fidanza) in his *Commentary on the Sentences.*
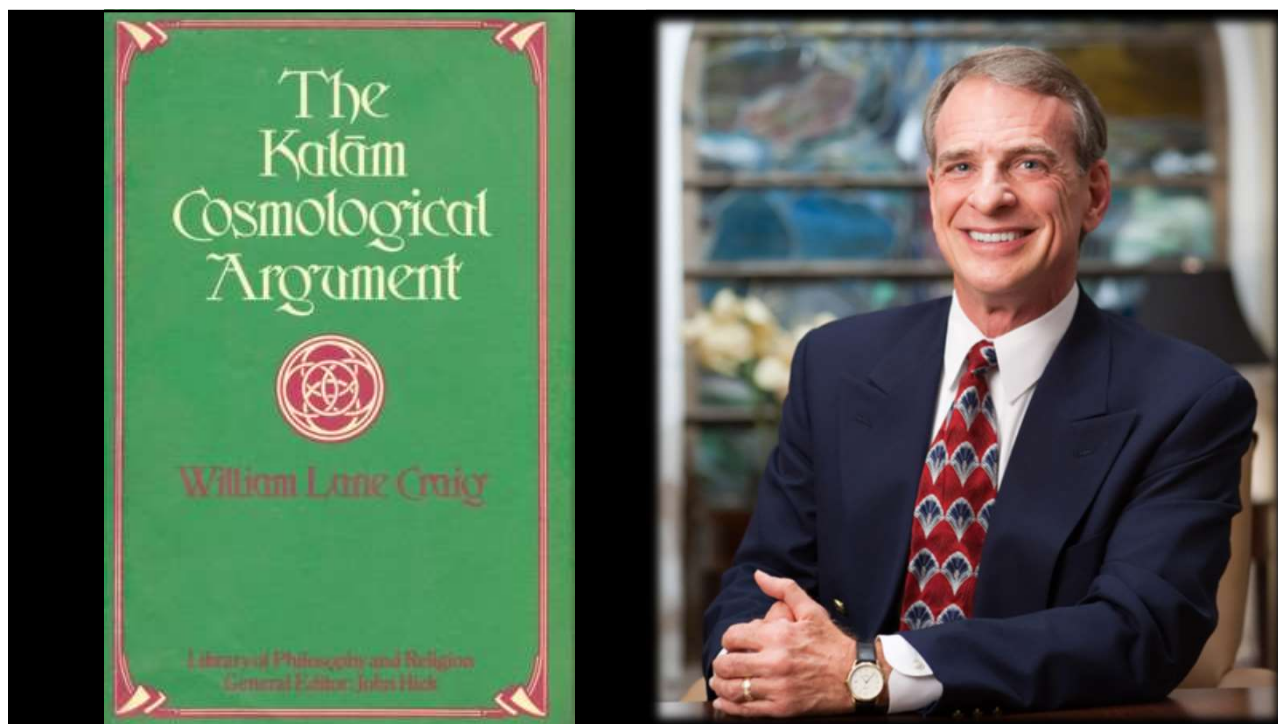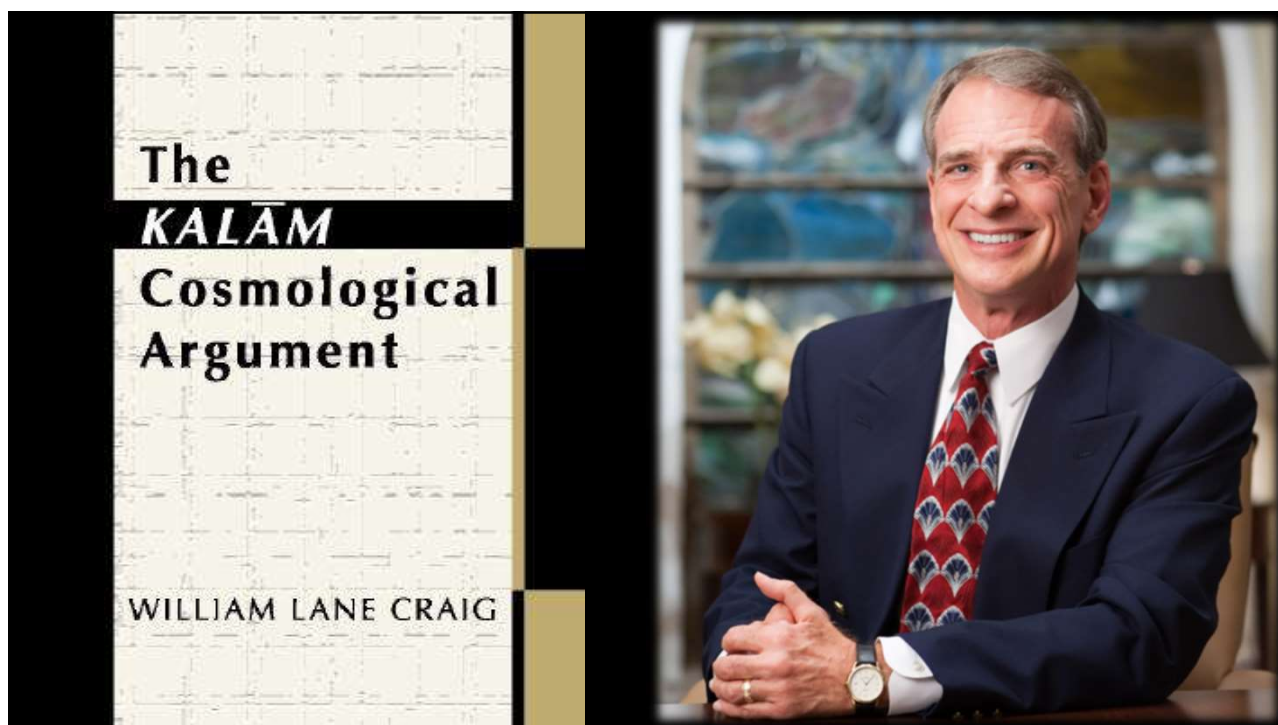
Bonaventure
(1217-1274)

17

The most notable contemporary defender of the argument is William Lane Craig in his work The Kalam Cosmological Argument.

18

19

20

Premise 1: The Universe began to exist.

Premise 2: Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence.

Conclusion: Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.

21

The argument is valid, which means that if the premises are true, then the conclusion is necessarily true.
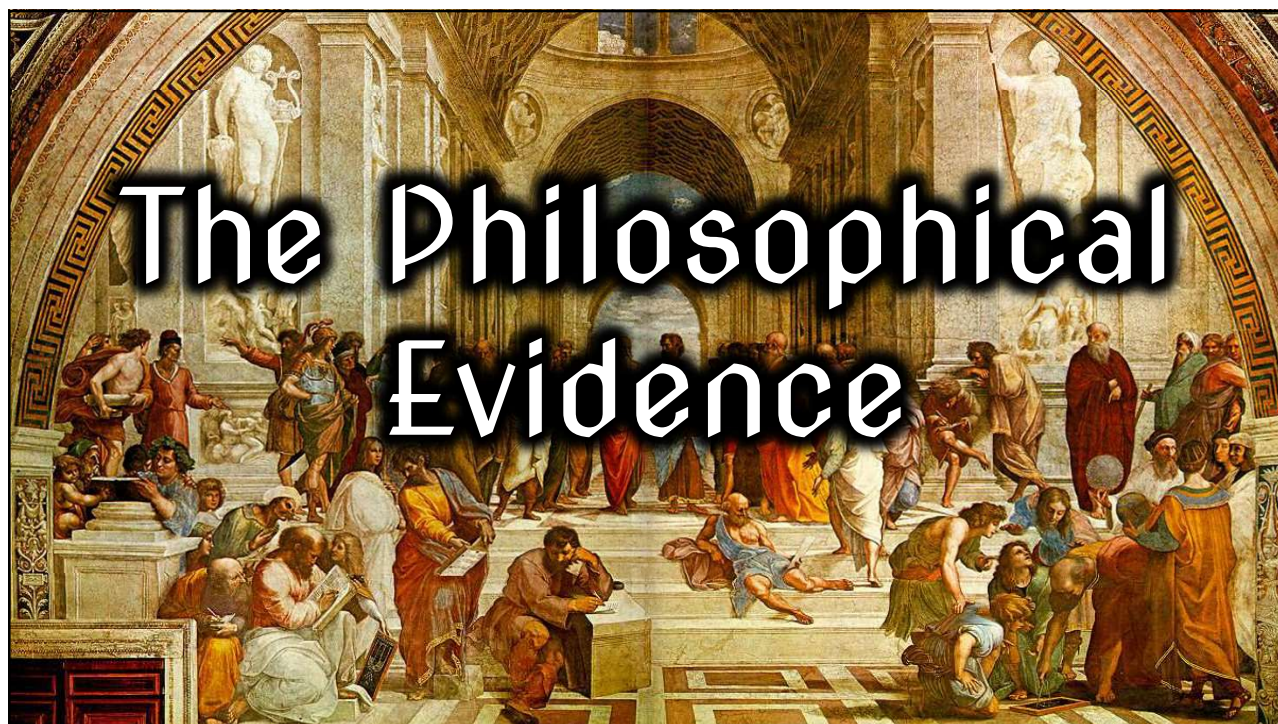
22

In order to defend the
truth of the conclusion,
one must give evidence
for the truth of each
premise.

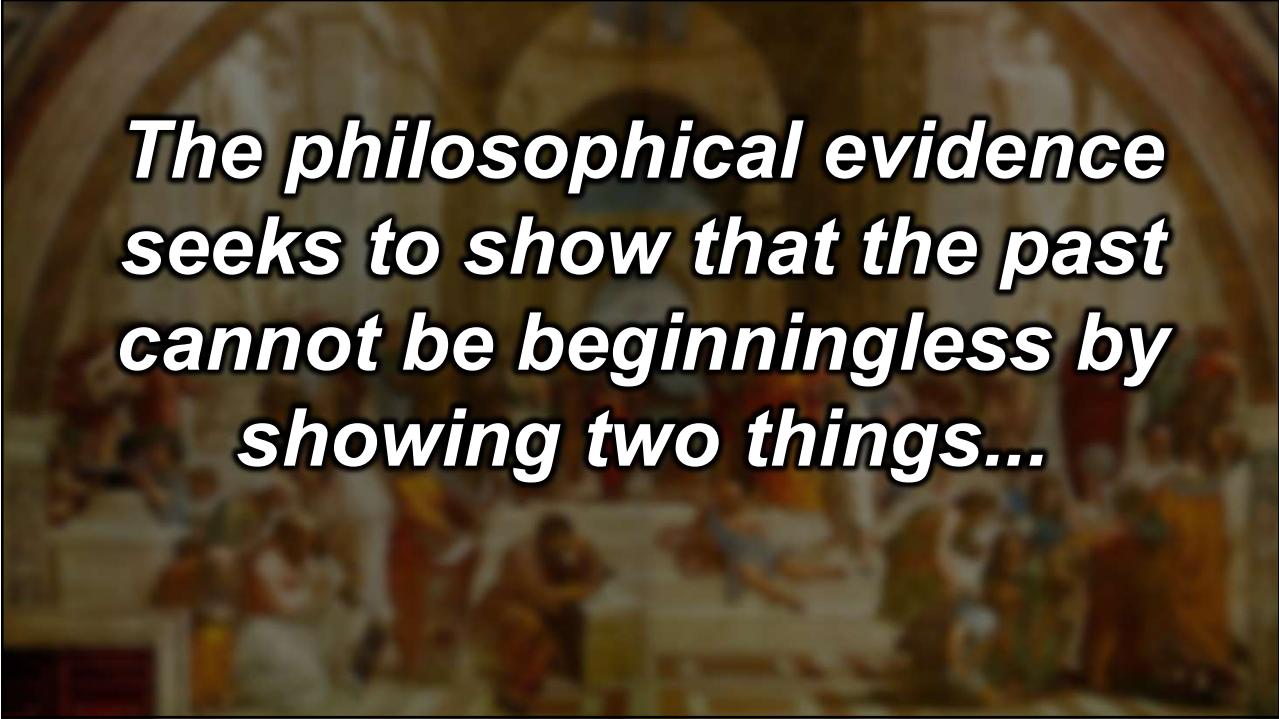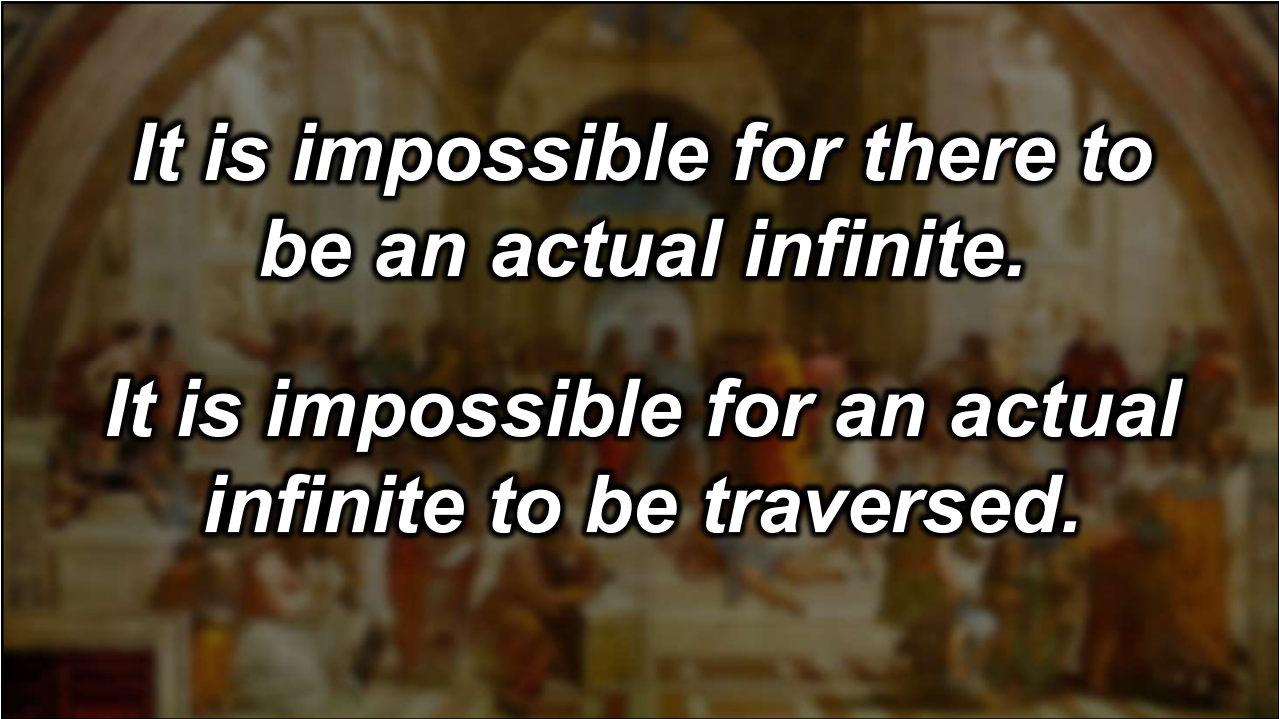Premise 1: The Universe began to exist.

The Philosophical Evidence

25

If the universe did not have a beginning, then the past up until now would be actually infinitely long.

26

The philosophical evidence seeks to show that the past cannot be beginningless by showing two things...

It is impossible for there to be an actual infinite.

It is impossible for an actual infinite to be traversed.

First Argument for Premise 1

29

---

1. If the temporal past had no beginning, then the temporal past up to the present moment would constitute an actual infinite.
2. It is impossible for there to be an actual infinite.
∴ The temporal past must have had beginning.

30

Second Argument for Premise 1

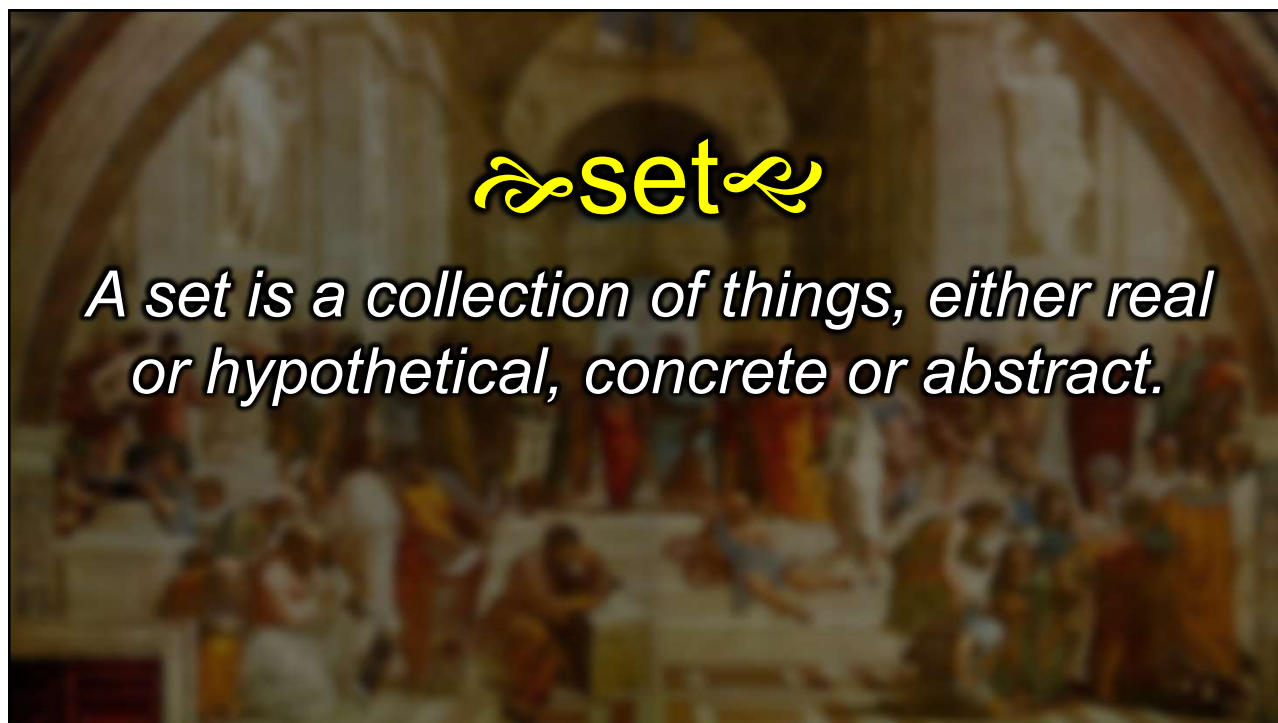1. If the temporal past had no beginning, then, up to the present moment, an actual infinite has been traversed.
2. It is impossible for an actual infinite to be traversed.
∴ The temporal past must have had beginning.

DEFINING SOME TERMS

NEXT FEW SLIDES ↗

❧set❧

A set is a collection of things, either real or hypothetical, concrete or abstract.

❧set☙

For our purposes, there are two types of sets: finite and infinite.

35

❧finite set☙

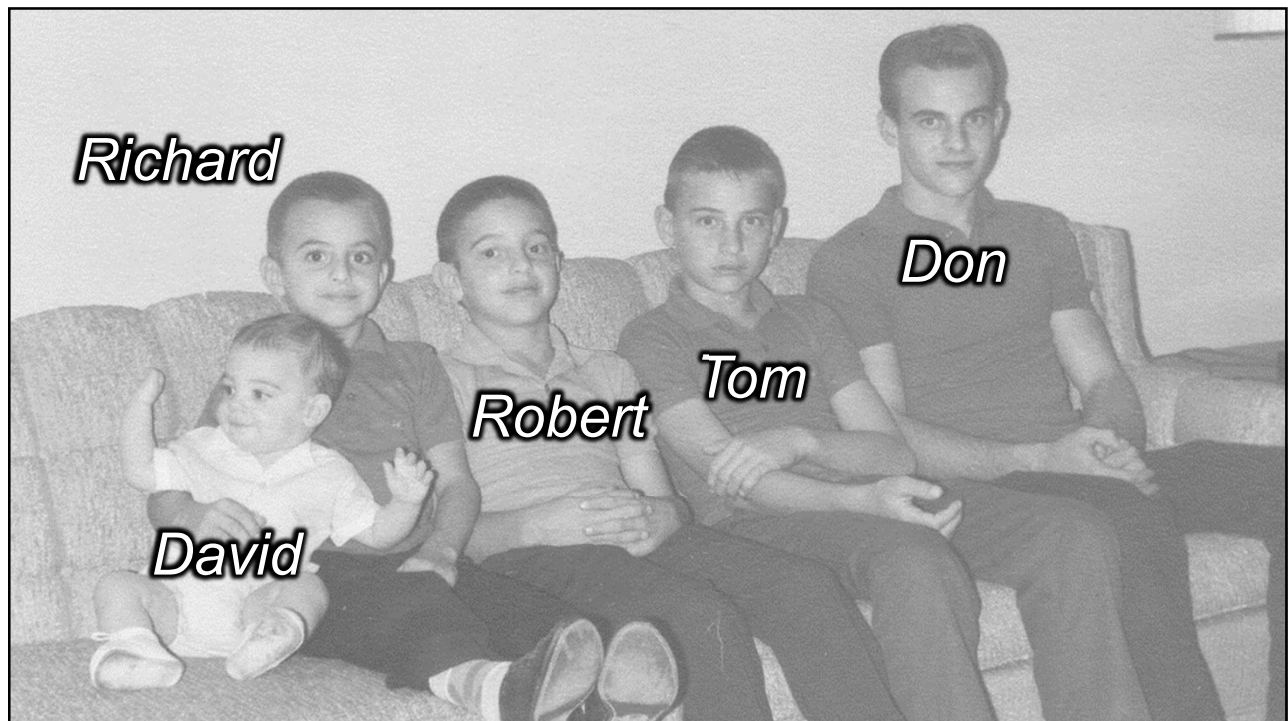*A finite set is a set that contains a finite number of members.*

36

finite set

An example of a finite set would be the set of all children of Berton and Hilda Howe.
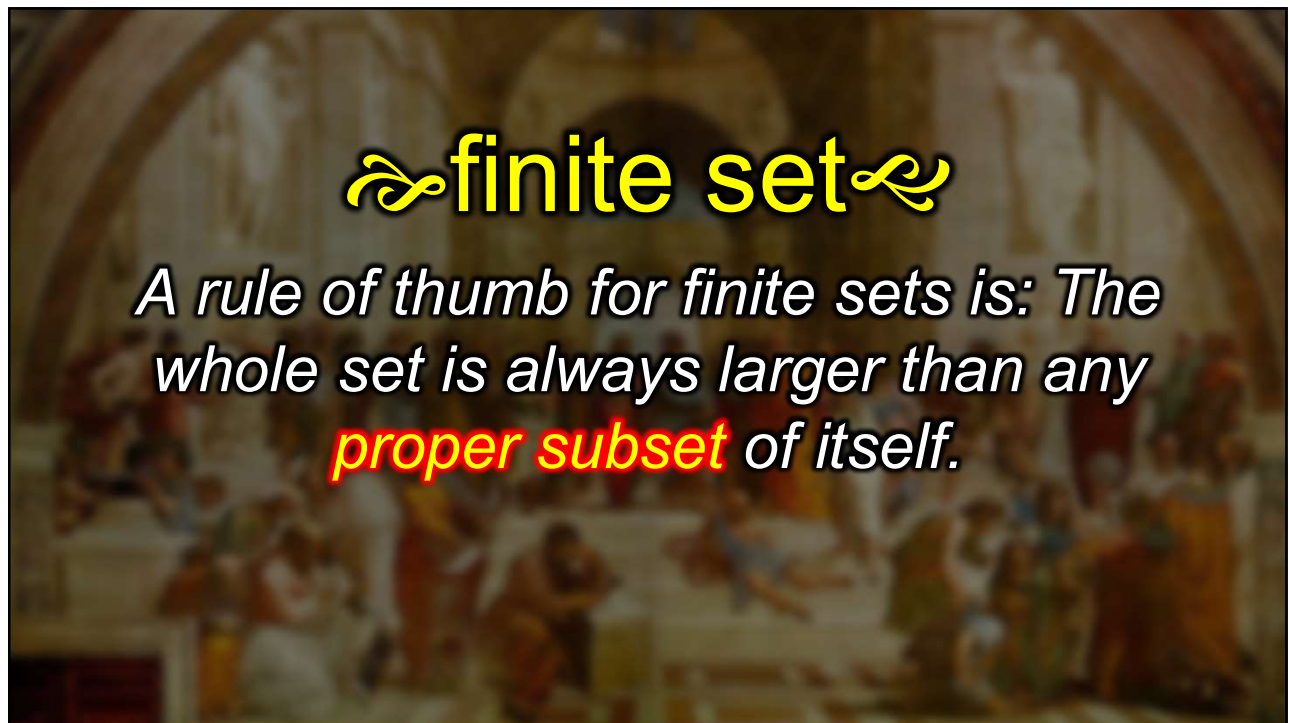
{Don, Tom, Robert, Richard, David}

37

Richard

Don

Tom

Robert

David

38

☙finite set❧

A rule of thumb for finite sets is: The whole set is always larger than any proper subset of itself.

❧proper subset☙

*All members of the proper subset
are members of the set.*

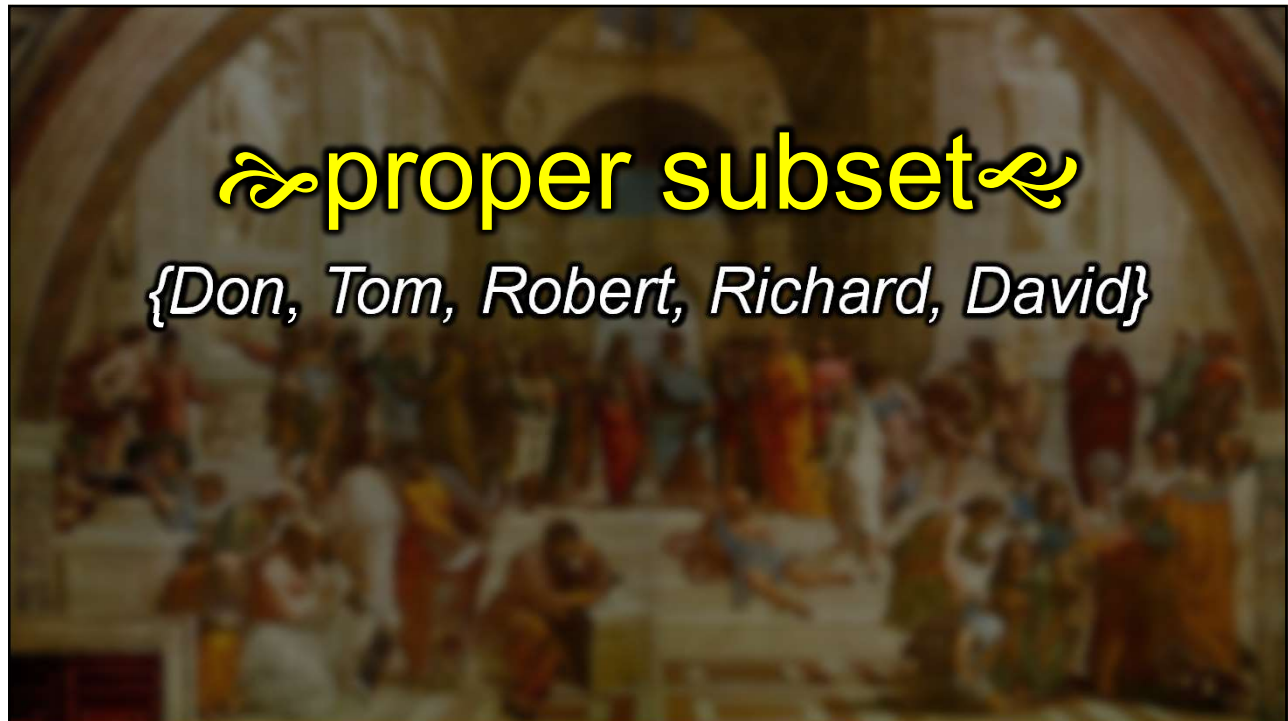*There are members of the set that are
not members of the proper subset.*
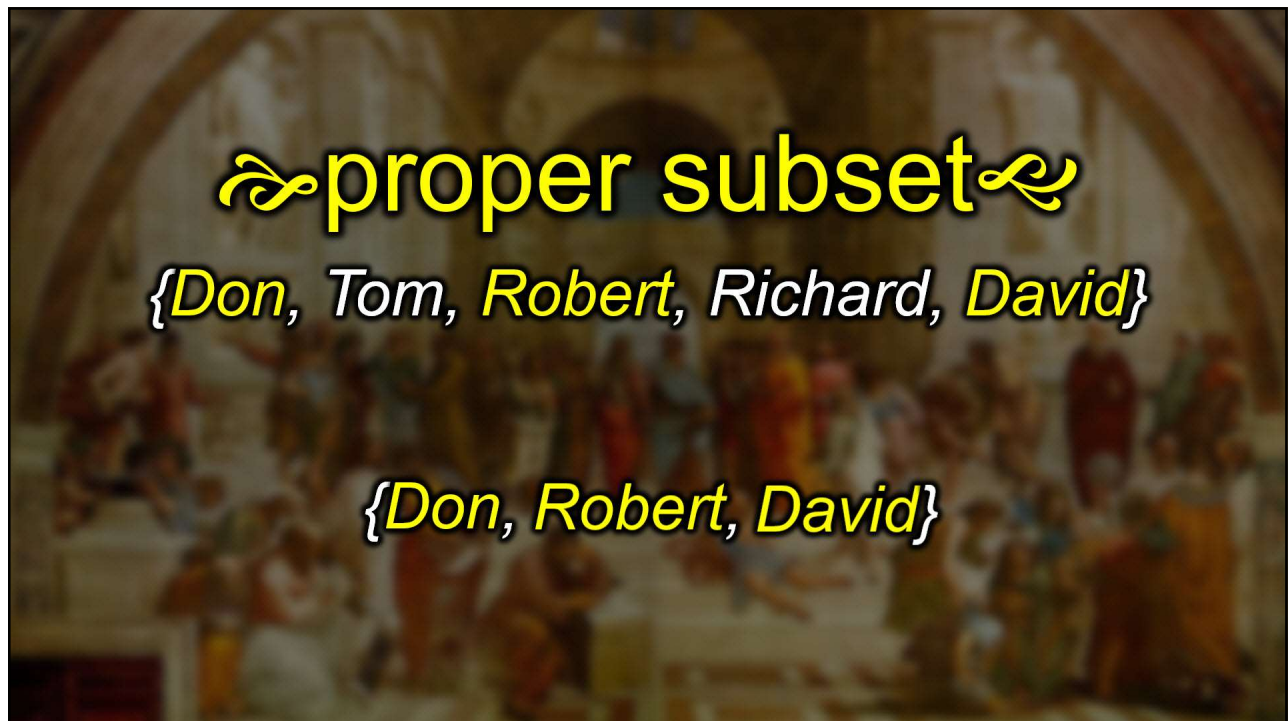
41

❧proper subset☙

*For example, take the set of all the
children of Berton and Hilda Howe.*

42

❧proper subset❧

{Don, Tom, Robert, Richard, David}

43

❧proper subset❧

{Don, Tom, Robert, Richard, David}

{Don, Robert, David}

44

☙proper subset☙
{Don, Tom, Robert, Richard, David}

{Don, Robert, David}

45

☙proper subset☙
{Don, Tom, Robert, Richard, Daniel}

46

✣proper subset✣

{Don, Tom, Robert, Richard, David}

{Don, Robert, Daniel}

47

✣infinite set✣

A infinite set is a set that contains an infinite number of members.

48

❧infinite set☙

There are two kinds of infinite sets: a potential infinite set and an actual infinite set.

49

❧potential infinite set☙

A potential infinite set is a set whose members are increasing without limit, but the number of which is always finite.

50

ﻬpotential infinite setﻬ

{1 + 1 = 2 + 1 = 3 + 1 = 4 + 1 = 5 +1 = 6 + 1 = 7 + 1 = 8 +1 = 9 . . . }

51

ﻬpotential infinite setﻬ

{1 + 1 = 2 + 1 = 3 + 1 = 4 + 1 = 5 +1 = 6 + 1 = 7 + 1 = 8 +1 = 9 . . . + 1 ≠ ∞}

52

☙actual infinite set❧

An actual infinite set is a set that contains an actual infinite number of members, as, for example, the set of all whole numbers greater than zero
{1, 2, 3, ...}

53

German mathematician Georg Cantor defined an infinite set as "a set in which a part is equivalent to the whole. This means that it can be put in a one-to-one correspondence with proper subset of itself."

[George Cantor, *Contributions to the Founding of the Theory of Transfinite Numbers*, trans. with an Introduction by Philip E. B. Jourdain (New York: Dover Publications, 1915), pp. 55-6]
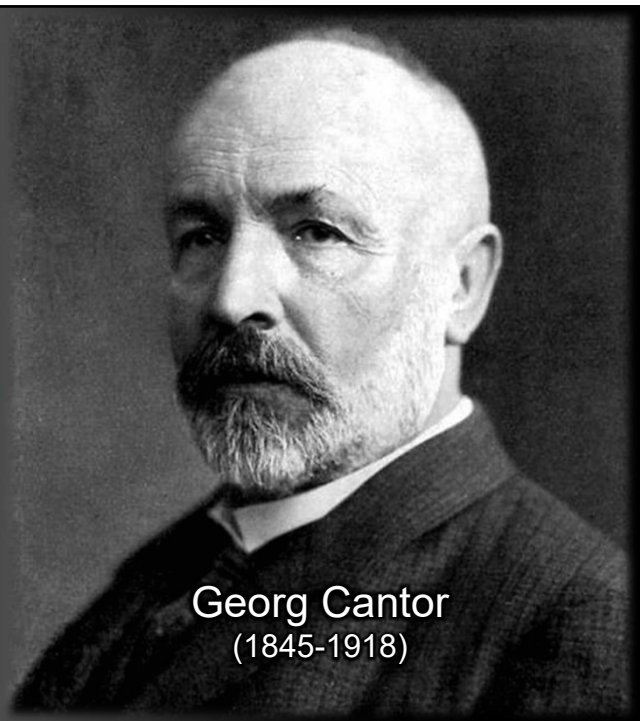
Georg Cantor
(1845-1918)

54

❧one-to-one correspondence☙

Two sets can be shown to be equivalent if their members can be put in a one-to-one correspondence with each other.

❧one-to-one correspondence☙

For example, the set of all odd whole numbers greater than zero can be put into a one-to-one correspondence with the set of all even whole numbers greater than zero.

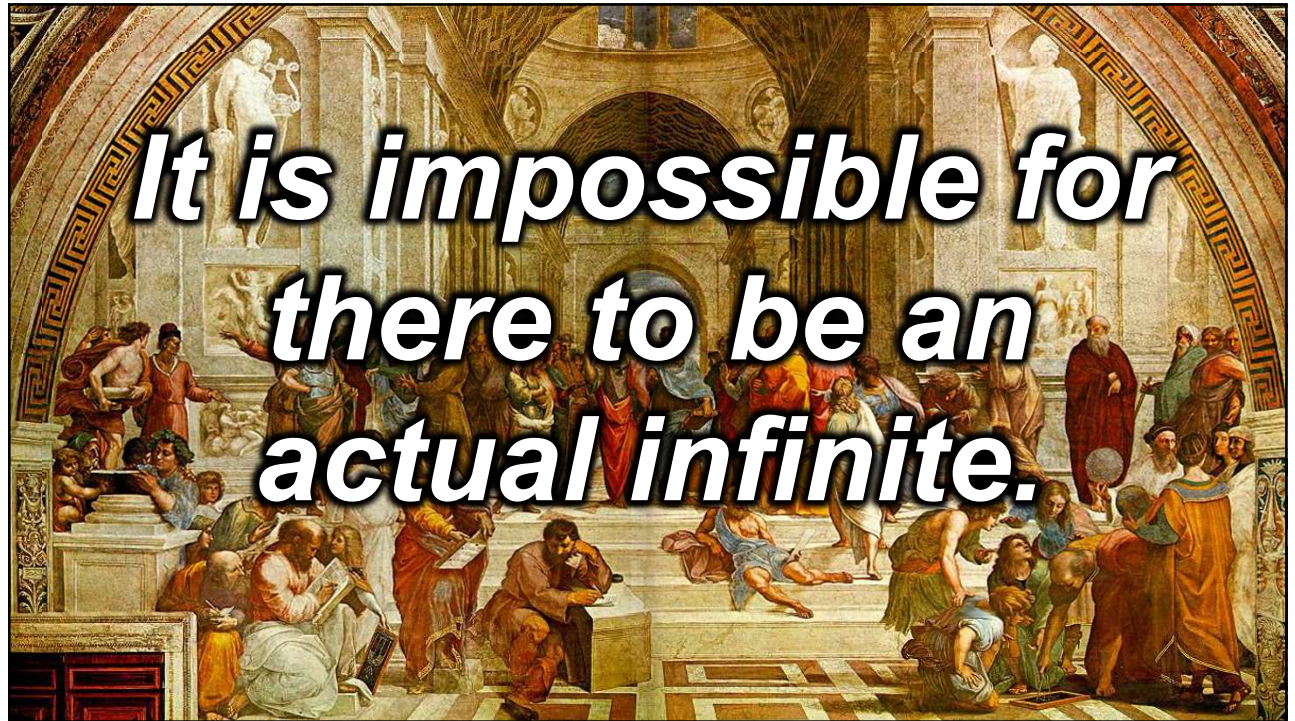∻one-to-one correspondence∾

1, 3, 5, 7, … ∞

2, 4, 6, 8, … ∞

This shows that the two sets are equivalent.

57

It is impossible for there to be an actual infinite.

58

reductio ad absurdum argument

lit., "reduce to the absurd"

✧one-to-one correspondence✧

1, 3, 5, 7, … ⟶ ∞

2, 4, 6, 8, … ⟶ ∞

This shows that the two sets are equivalent.

one-to-one correspondence

1, 3, 5, 7, ... ⟶ ∞
1, 2, 3, 4, ... ⟶ ∞

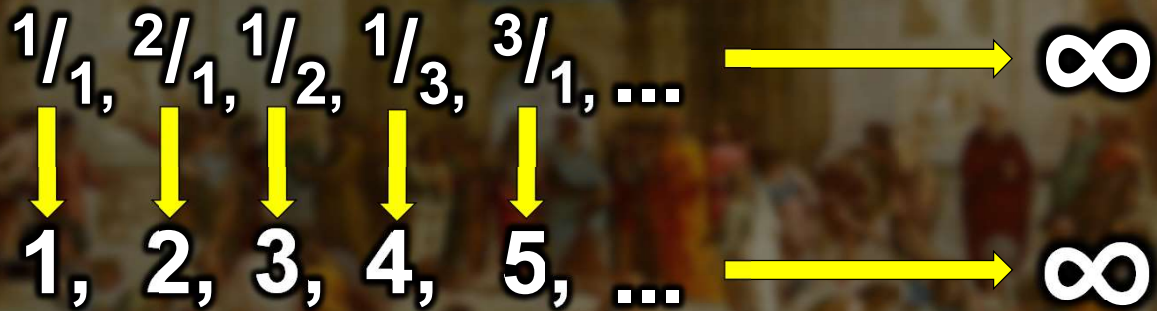*This shows that the two sets are equivalent.*

61

	1	2	3	4	5
1	$\frac{1}{1}$	$\frac{2}{1}$	$\frac{3}{1}$	$\frac{4}{1}$	$\frac{5}{1}$
2	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{2}{2}$	$\frac{3}{2}$	$\frac{4}{2}$	$\frac{5}{2}$
3	$\frac{1}{3}$	$\frac{2}{3}$	$\frac{3}{3}$	$\frac{4}{3}$	$\frac{5}{3}$
4	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{2}{4}$	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{4}{4}$	$\frac{5}{4}$
5	$\frac{1}{5}$	$\frac{2}{5}$	$\frac{3}{5}$	$\frac{4}{5}$	$\frac{5}{5}$

62

∾one-to-one correspondence↝

$^1/_1, \ ^2/_1, \ ^1/_2, \ ^1/_3, \ ^3/_1, \ ...$ ⟶ ∞
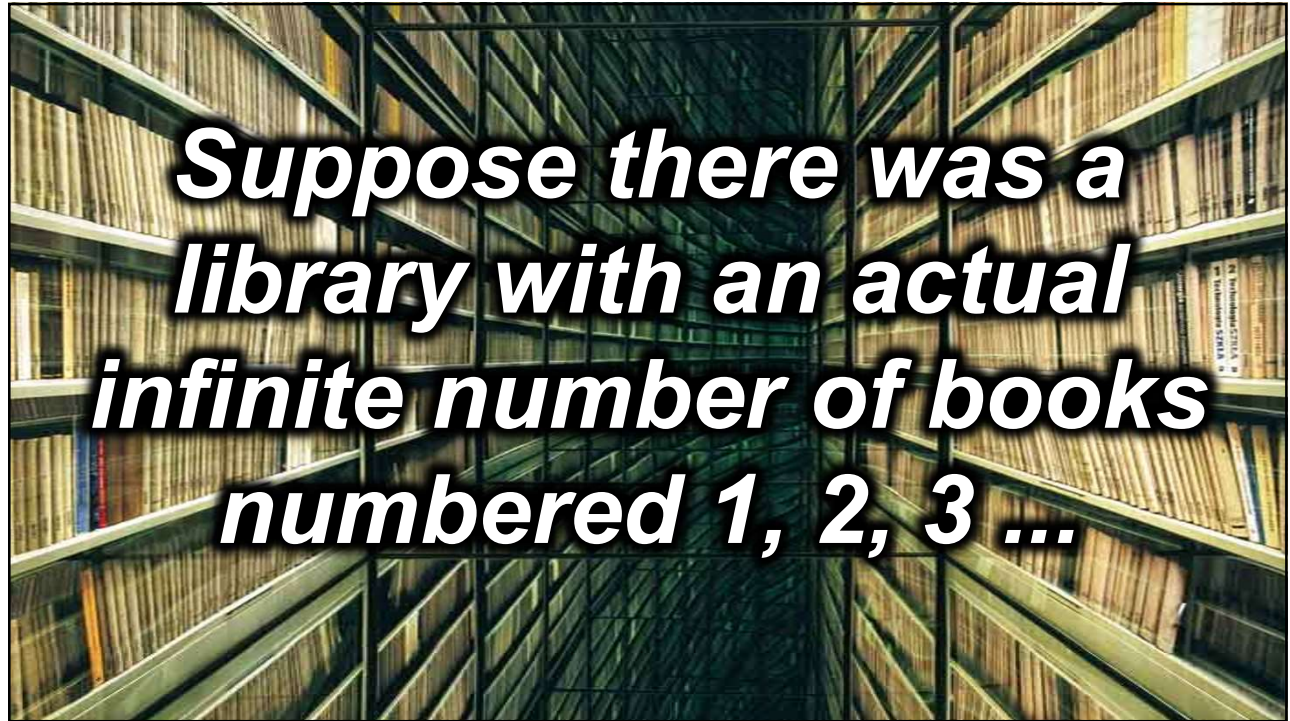
1,   2,   3,   4,   5,   ... ⟶ ∞
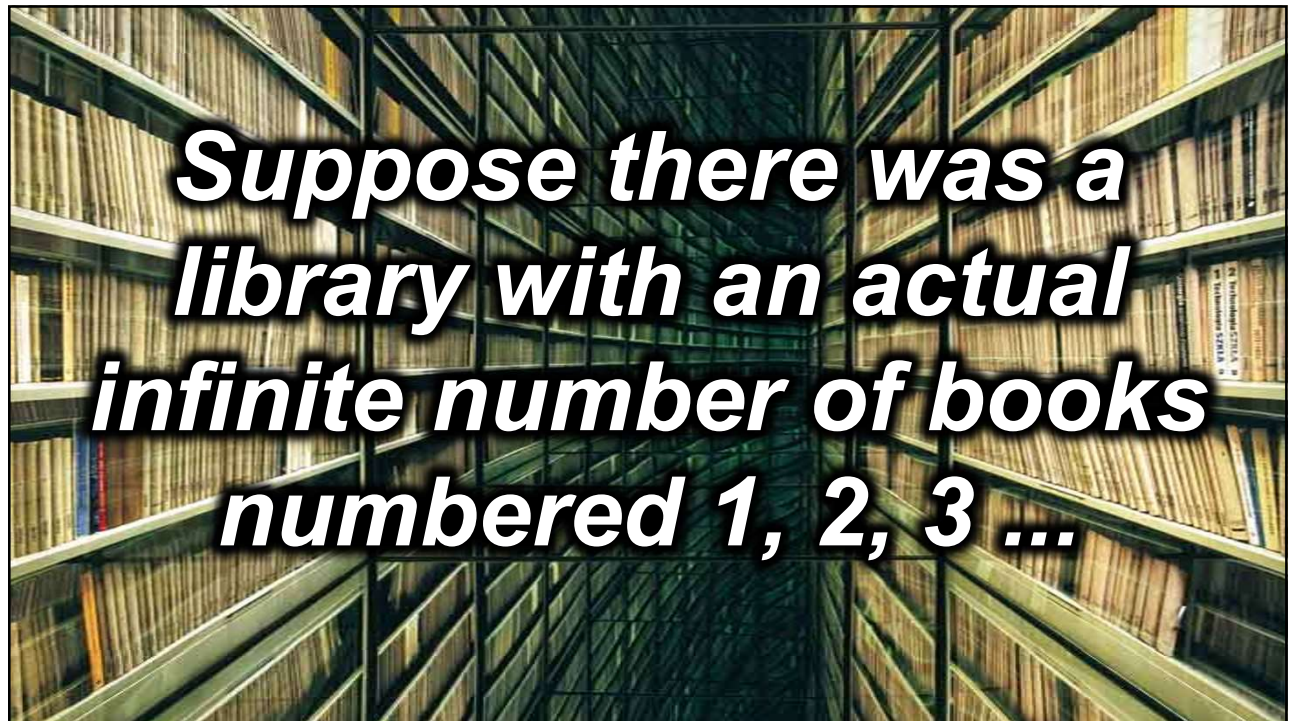
This shows that the two sets are equivalent.

63

Since all this follows from the definition of an actual infinite, consider the implications for something concrete.
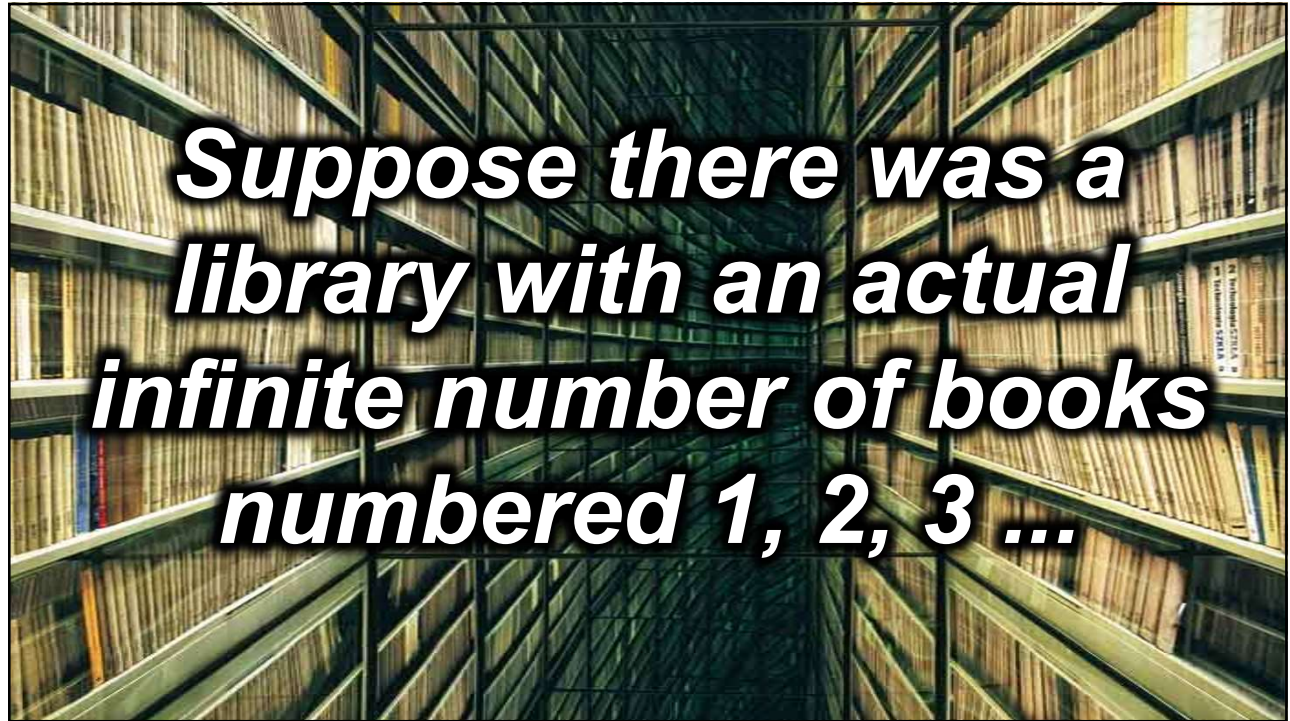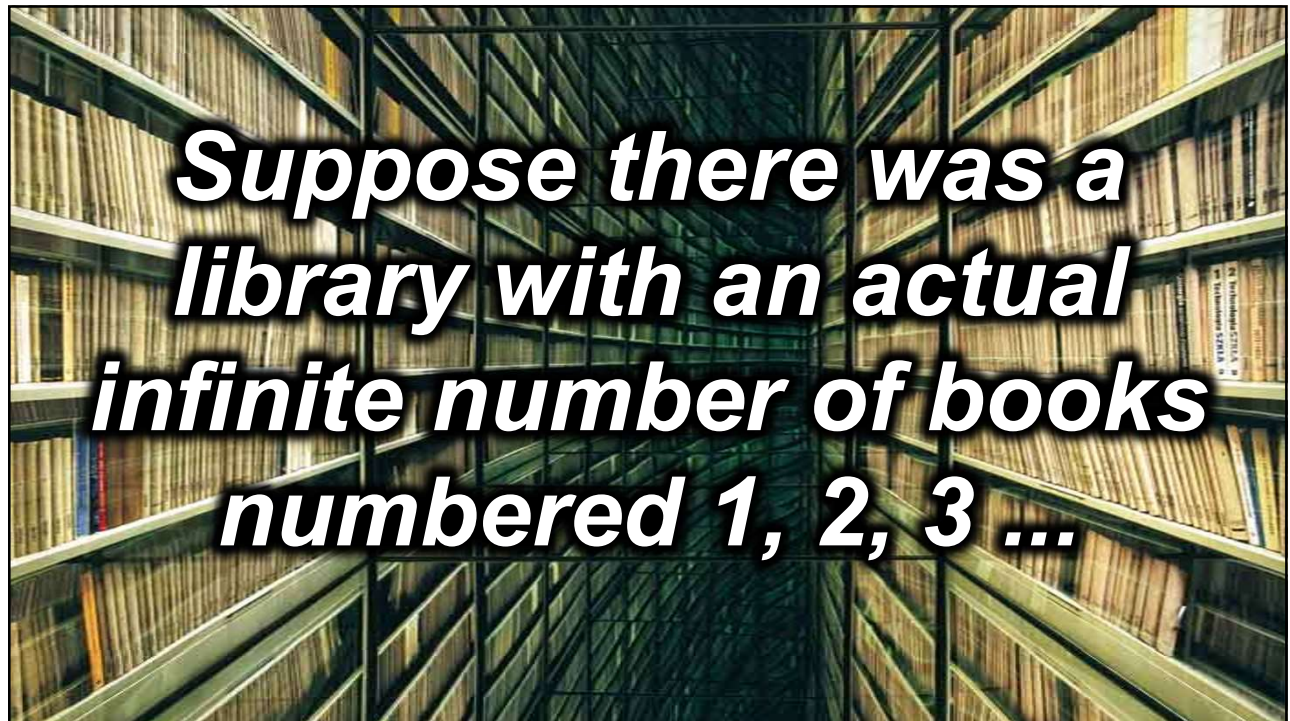
64

Suppose there was a library with an actual infinite number of books numbered 1, 2, 3 ...

65

Suppose there was a library with an actual infinite number of books numbered 1, 2, 3 ...

66

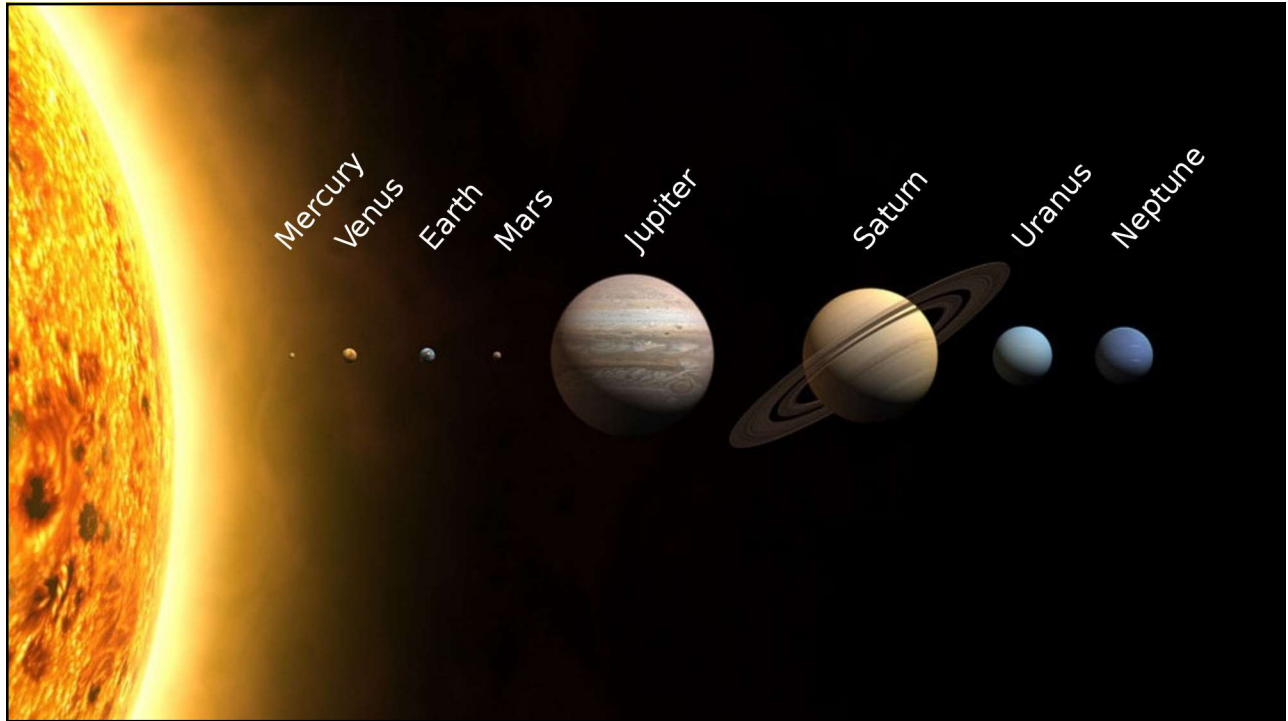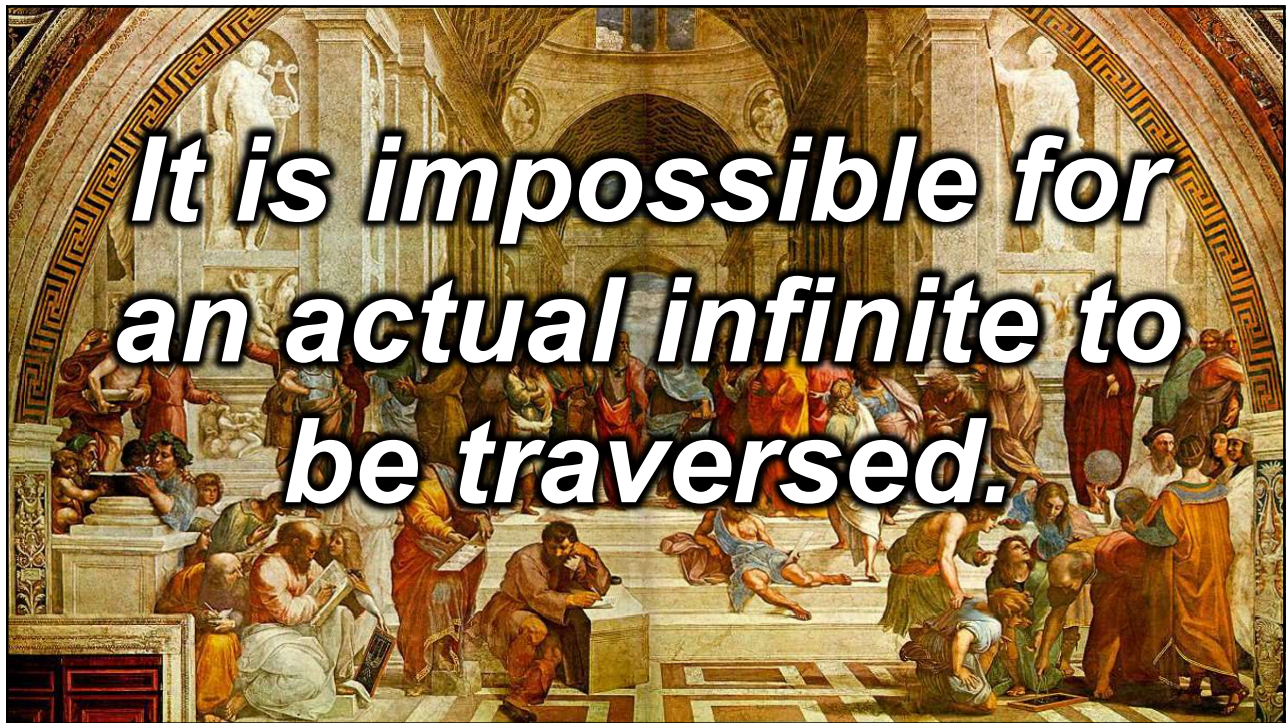*Suppose there was a library with an actual infinite number of books numbered 1, 2, 3 ...*

67

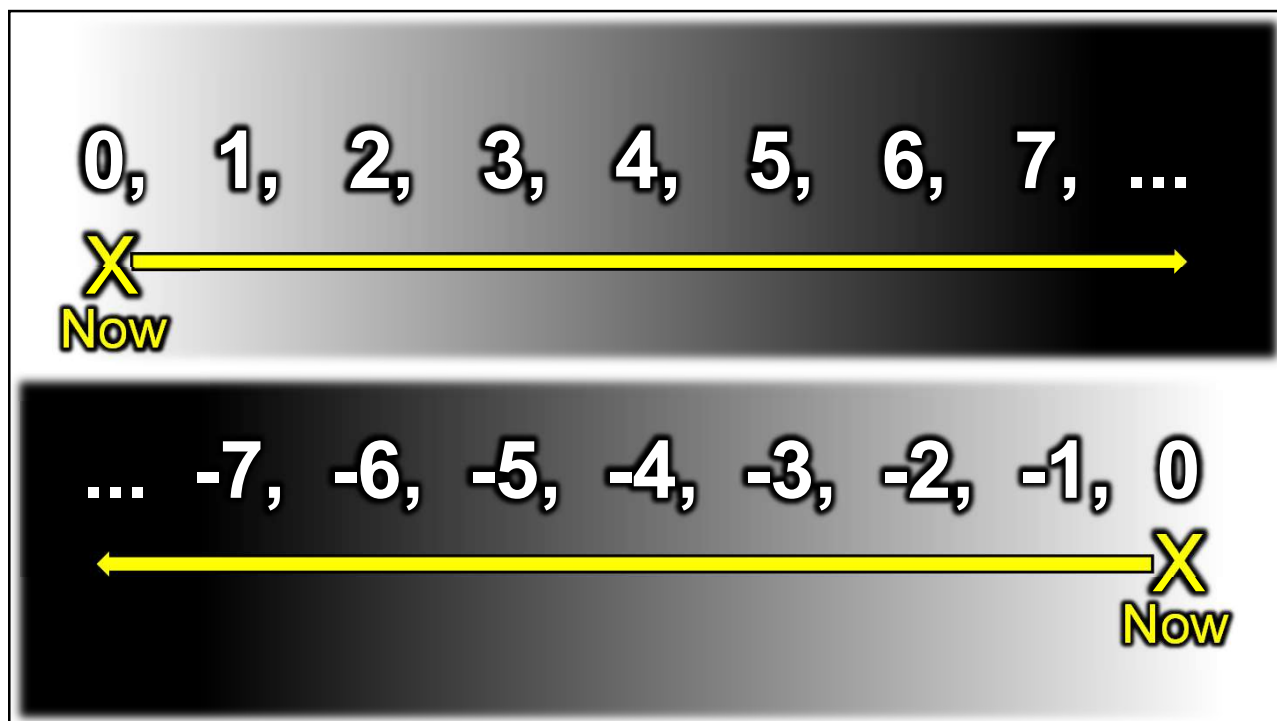*Suppose there was a library with an actual infinite number of books numbered 1, 2, 3 ...*

68

69

It is impossible for an actual infinite to be traversed.

70

0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, ...

X
Now

... -7, -6, -5, -4, -3, -2, -1, 0

X
Now

71

Zeno's Paradoxes

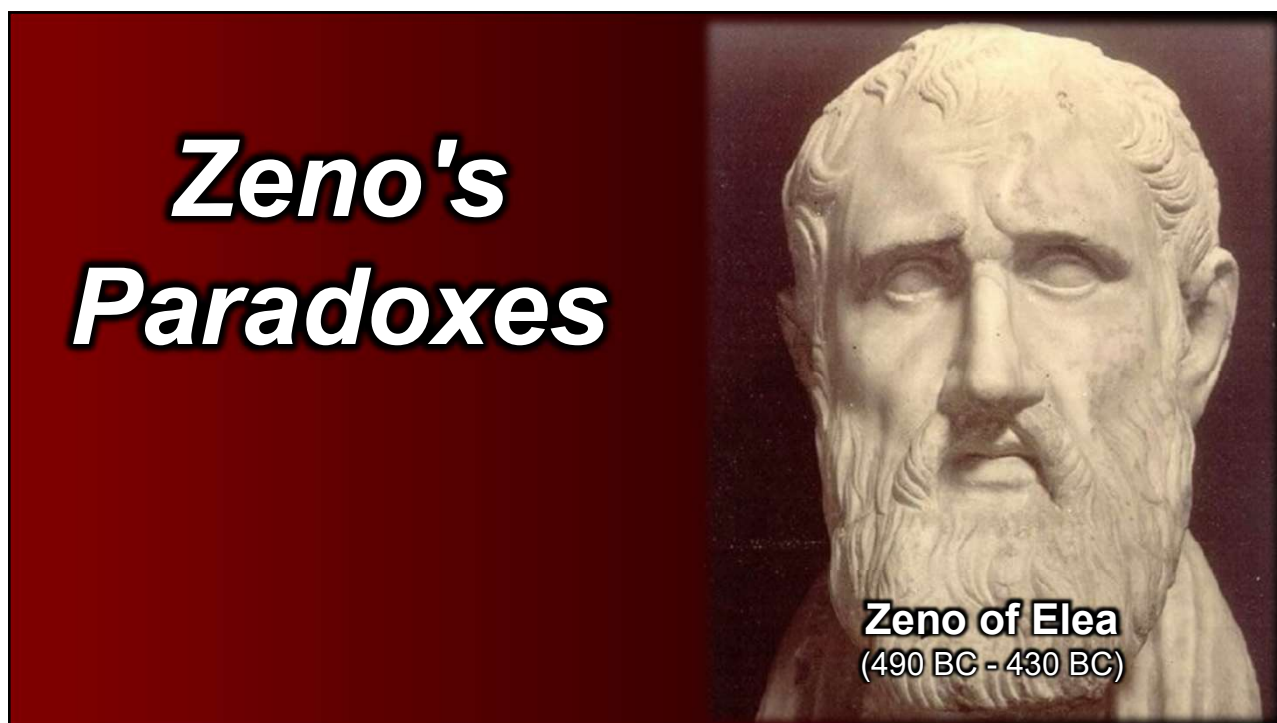**Zeno of Elea**
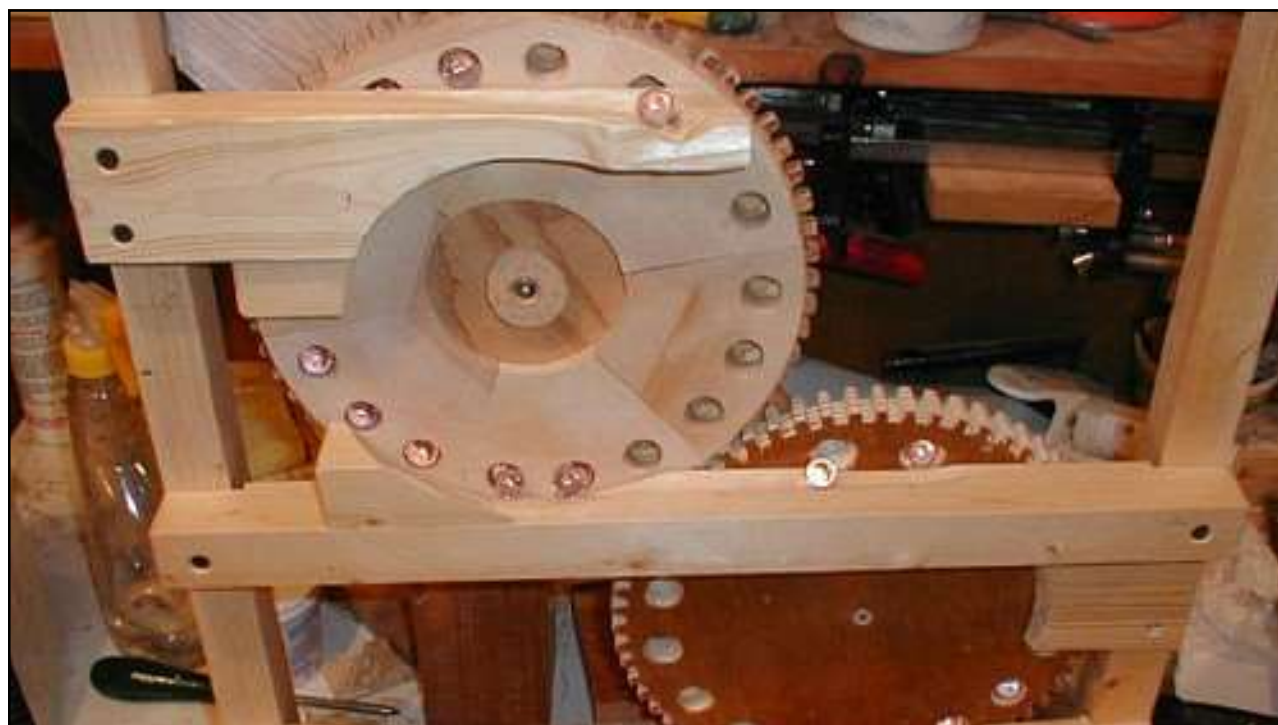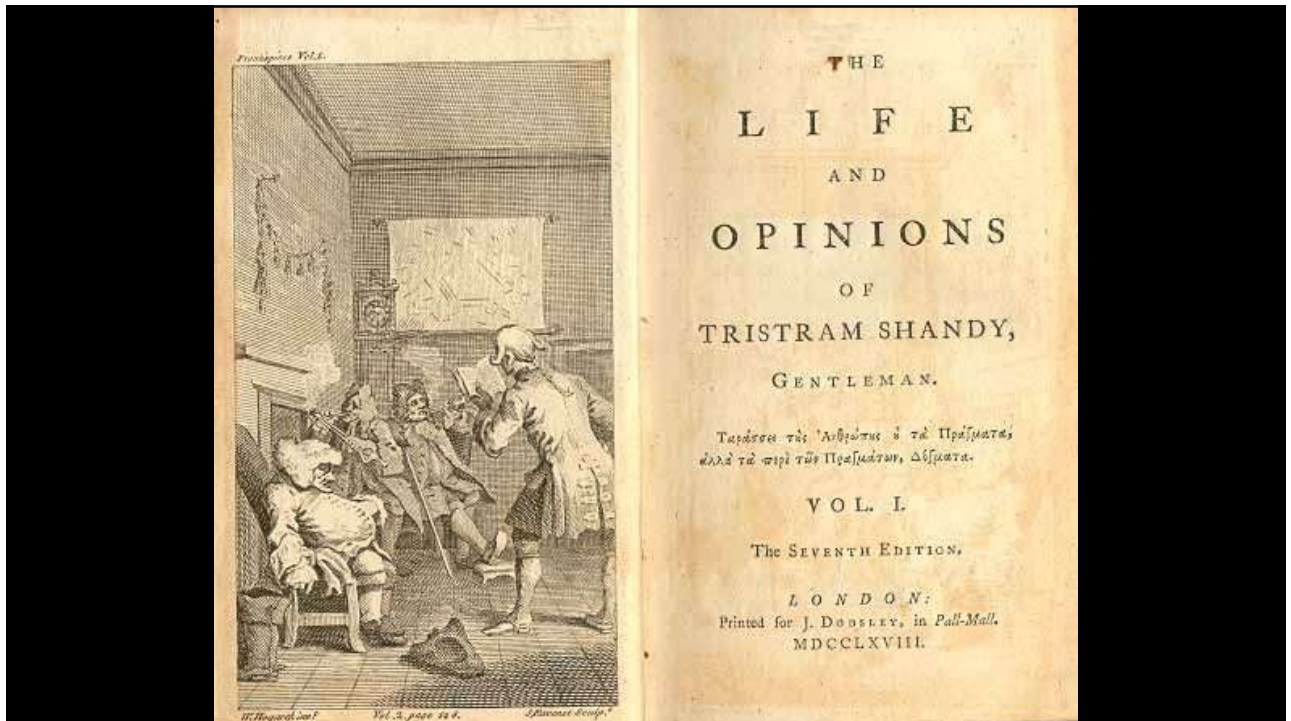(490 BC - 430 BC)

72

Super Tasks and Infinity Machines

73

74

75

76
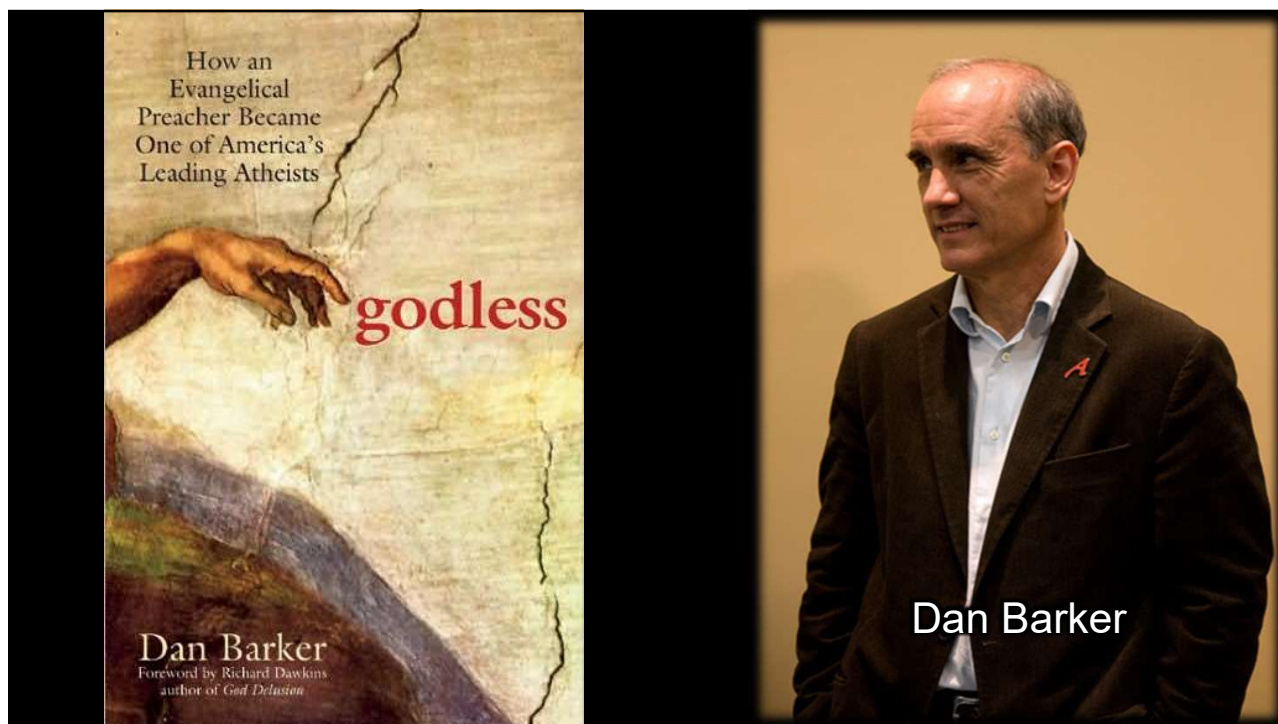
Premise 2: Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence.

Astonishingly, many contemporary atheists completely miss this premise in the argument.

How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists

godless

Dan Barker

Foreword by Richard Dawkins
author of *God Delusion*

Dan Barker

79

"*Everything had a cause, and every cause is the effect of a previous cause. Something must have started it all. God ... is the eternal first cause ... the creator and sustainer of the universe.*"
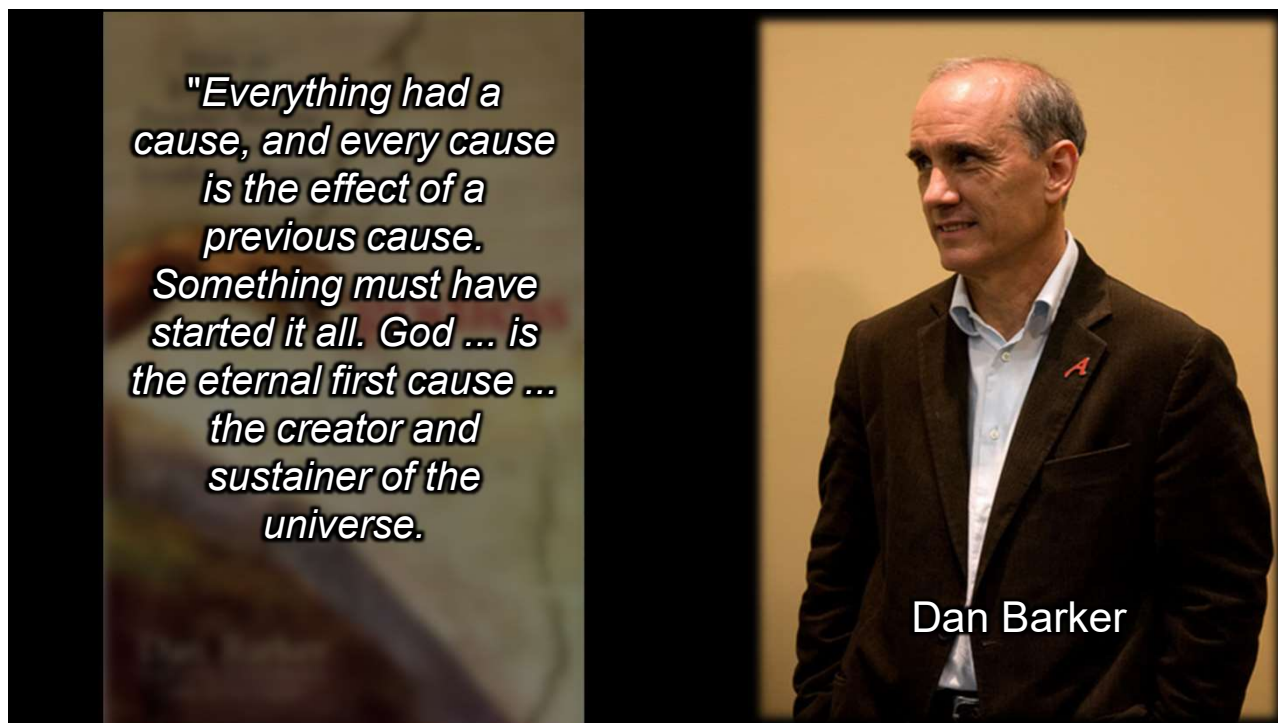
Dan Barker

80

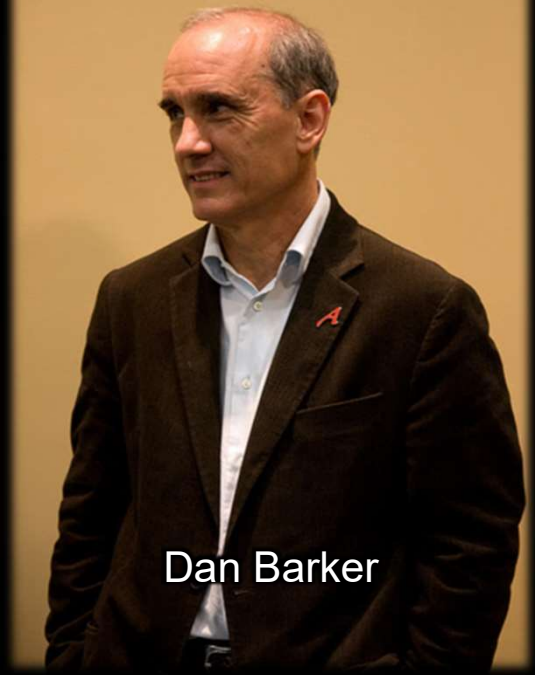"*The major premise of this argument '*everything had a cause*,' is contradicted by the conclusion that 'God did not have a cause.' You can't have it both ways. If everything had to have a cause, then there could not be a first cause.*"

[Dan Barker, *Godless: How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists* (Berkeley: Ulysses Press, 2008), 113-114]
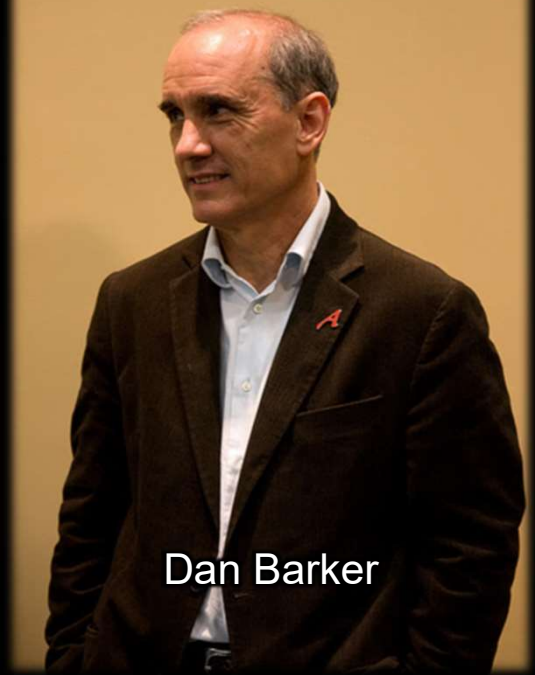
Dan Barker

81

"*The old cosmological argument claimed that since *everything has a cause*, there must be a first cause, an 'unmoved first mover.' Today no theistic philosophers defend that primitive line because if everything needs a cause, so does God.*"
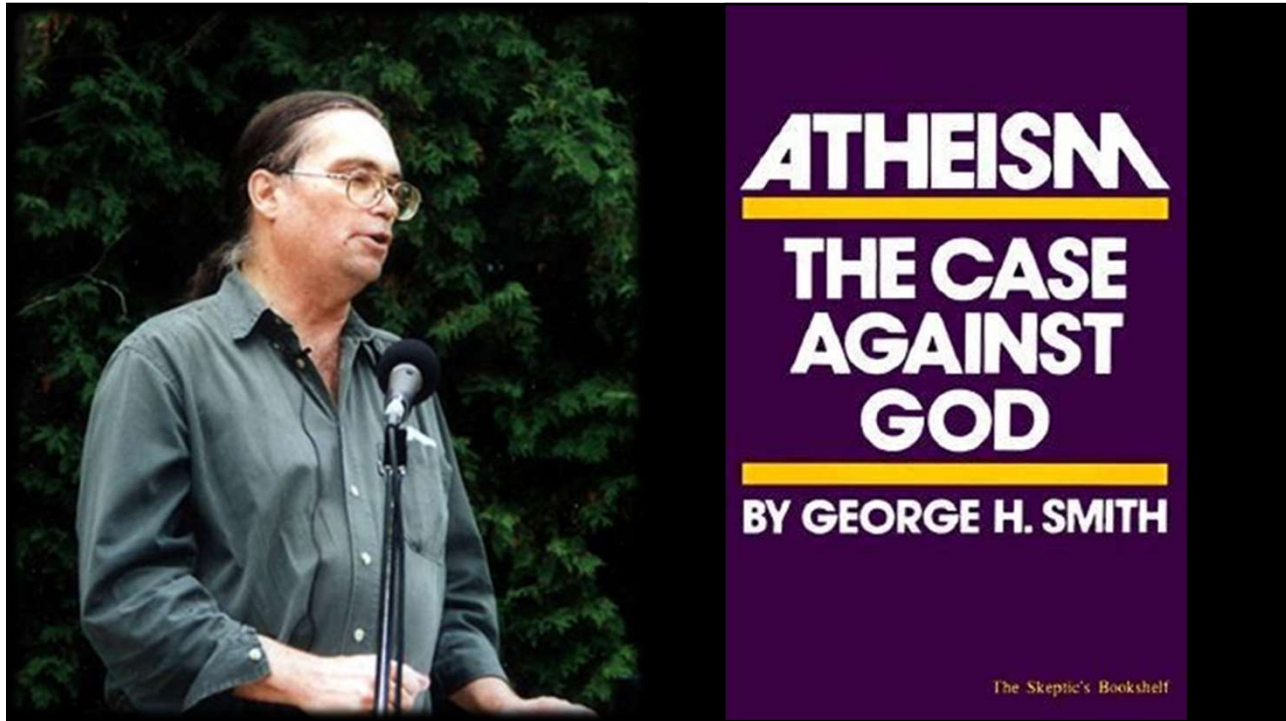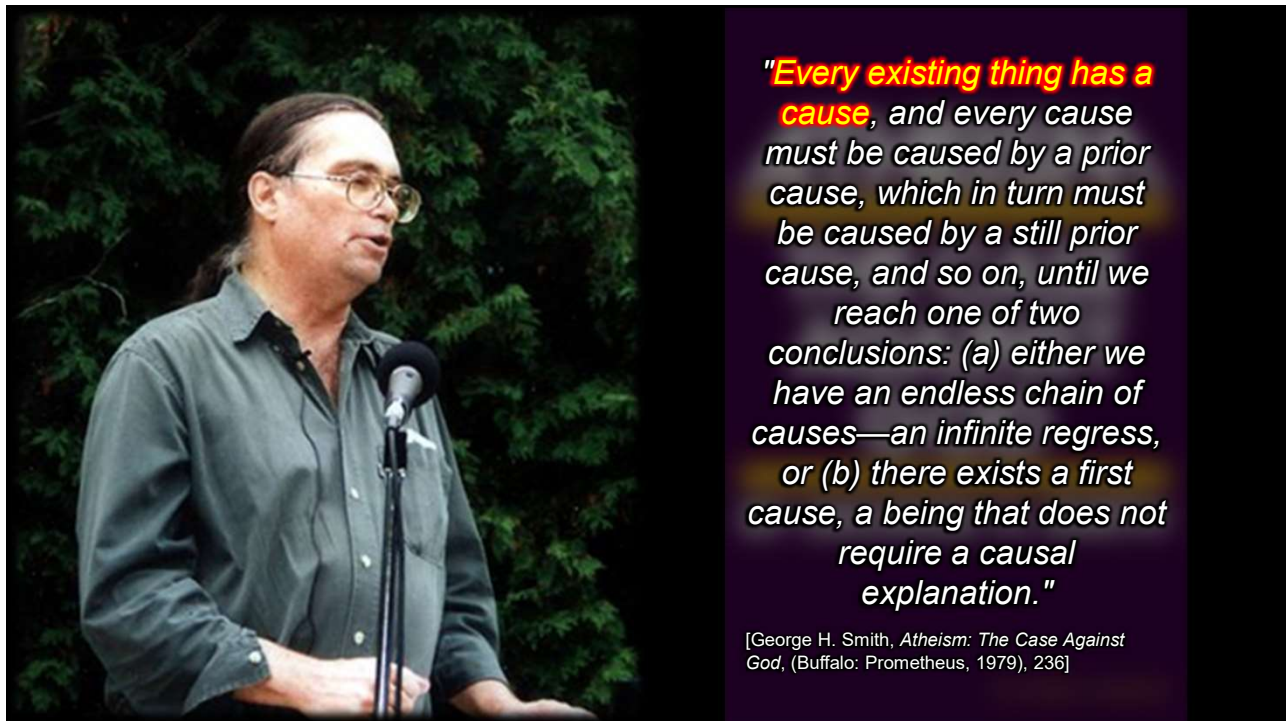
[Dan Barker, *Godless*, 130]

Dan Barker

82

83

"*Every existing thing has a cause*, and every cause must be caused by a prior cause, which in turn must be caused by a still prior cause, and so on, until we reach one of two conclusions: (a) either we have an endless chain of causes—an infinite regress, or (b) there exists a first cause, a being that does not require a causal explanation."

[George H. Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God*, (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1979), 236]

84

"*Everything that exists has a cause; space and time exist; space and time must, therefore, have been caused by something that stands outside of space and time, and the only thing that transcends space and time, and yet retains the power to create, is God.*"

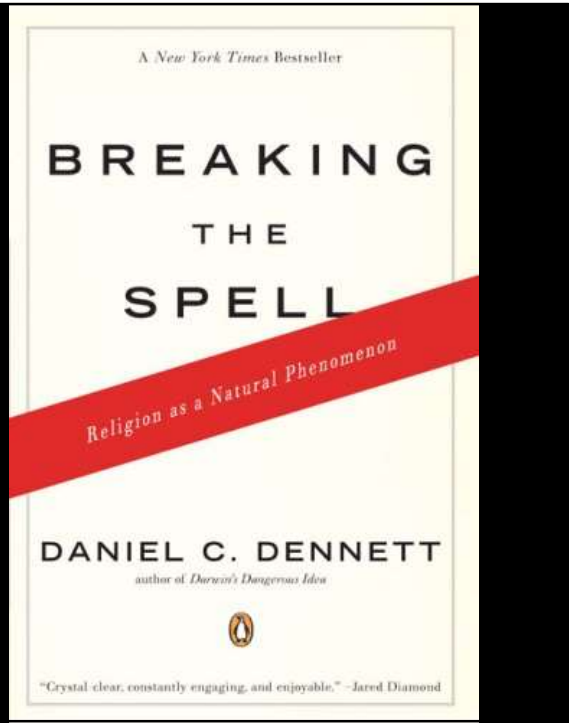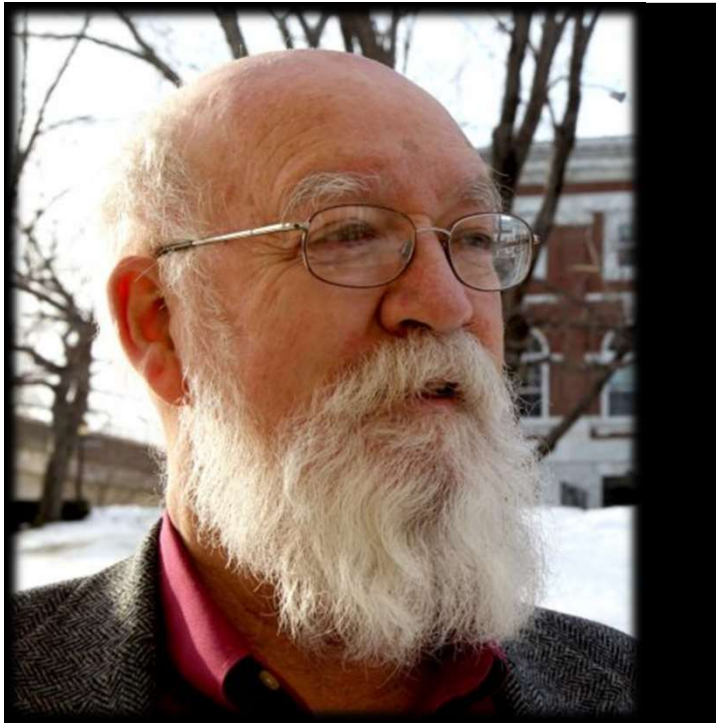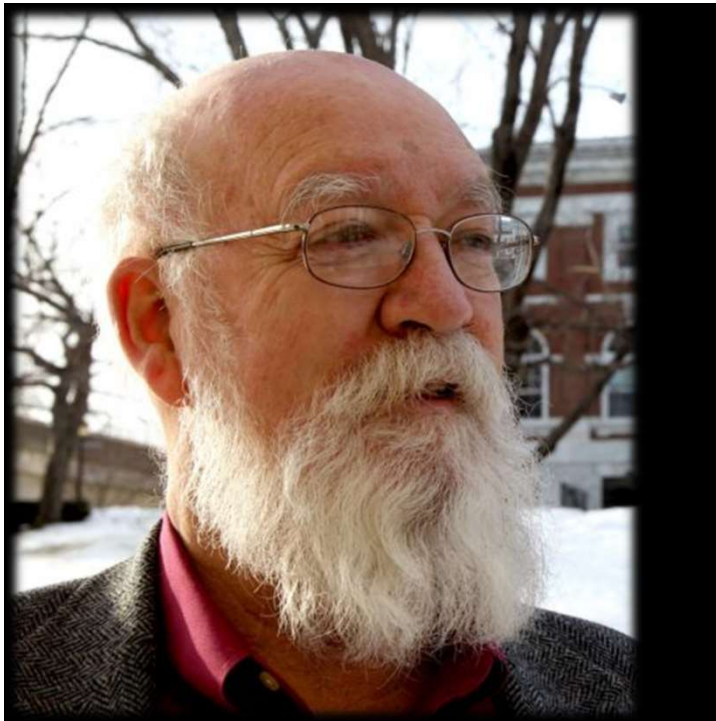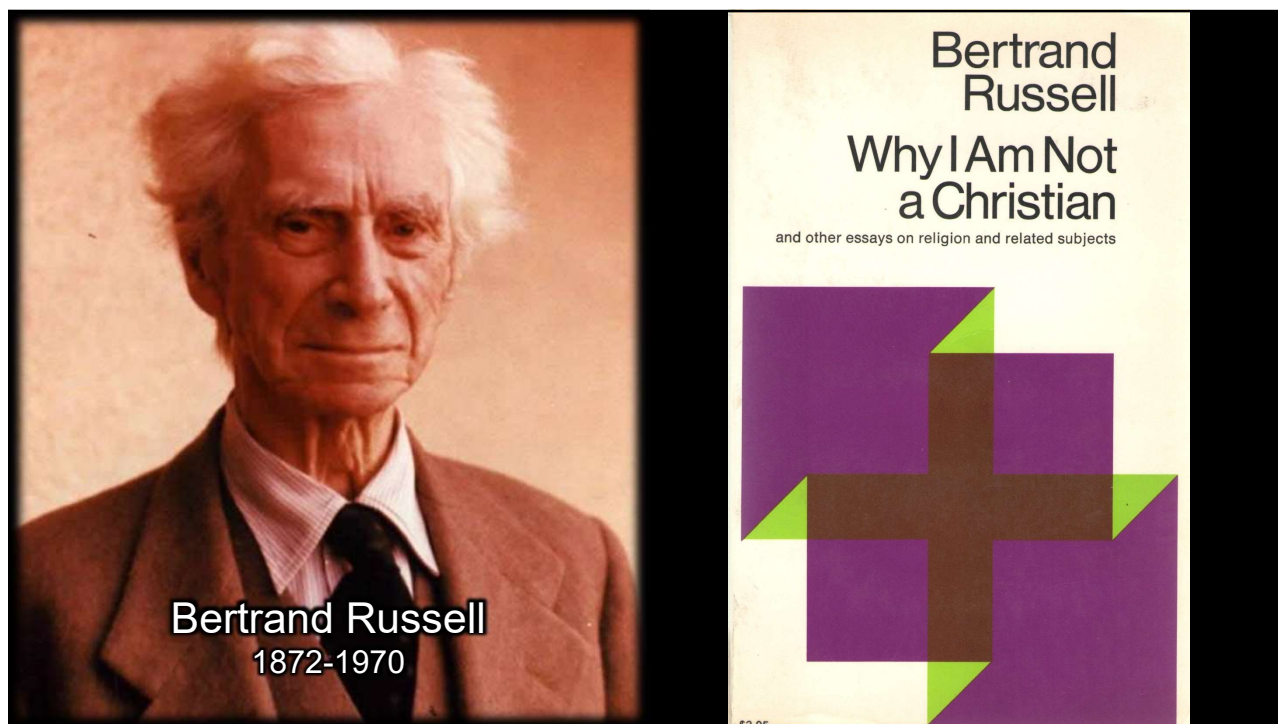[Sam Harris, *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 72]

87

"The Cosmological Argument, which in its simplest form states that since everything must have a cause the universe must have a cause—namely, God—doesn't stay simple for long."
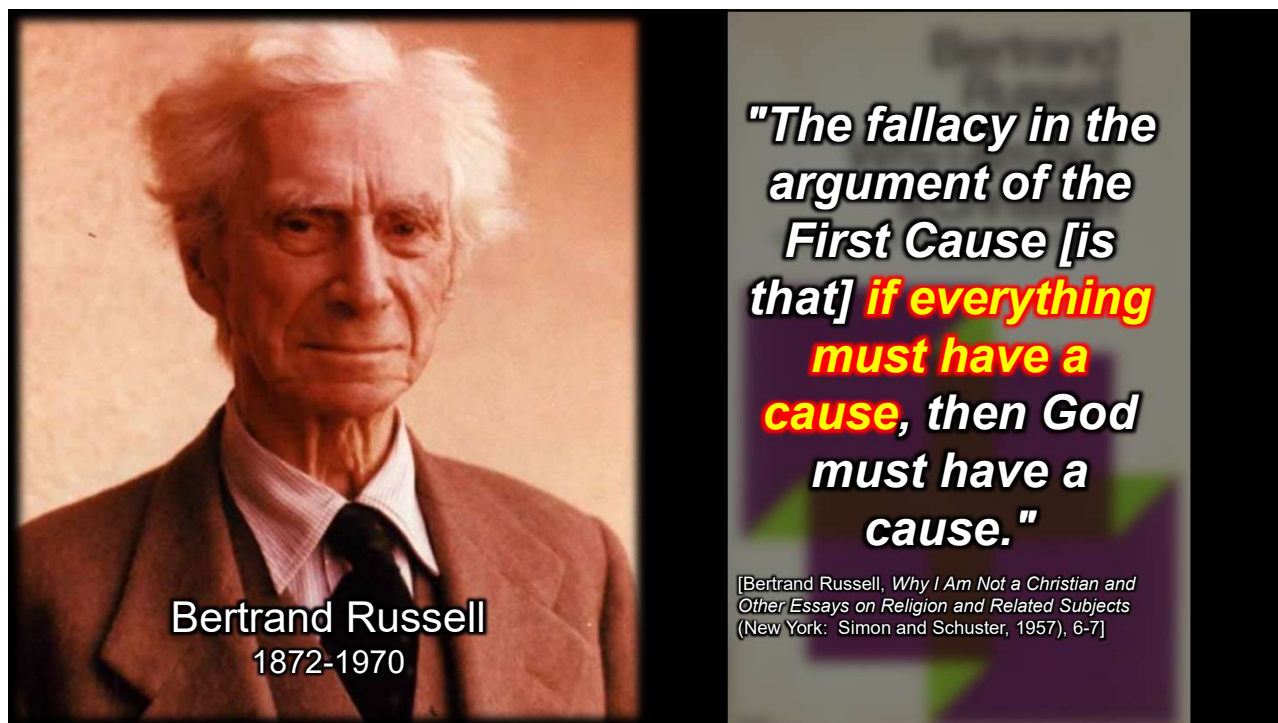
[Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 242]

88

89

Bertrand Russell
1872-1970

Bertrand Russell

Why I Am Not a Christian

and other essays on religion and related subjects

$2.95

90

Bertrand Russell
1872-1970

"The fallacy in the argument of the First Cause [is that] if everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause."

[Bertrand Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), 6-7]
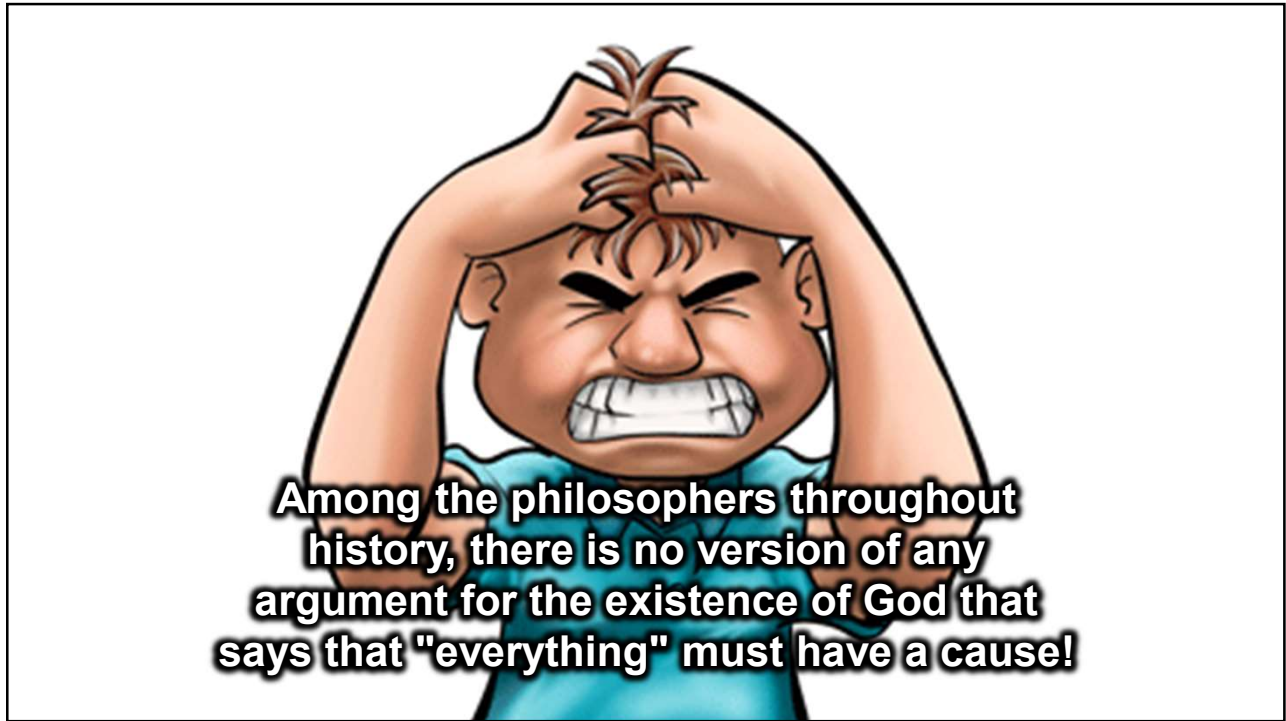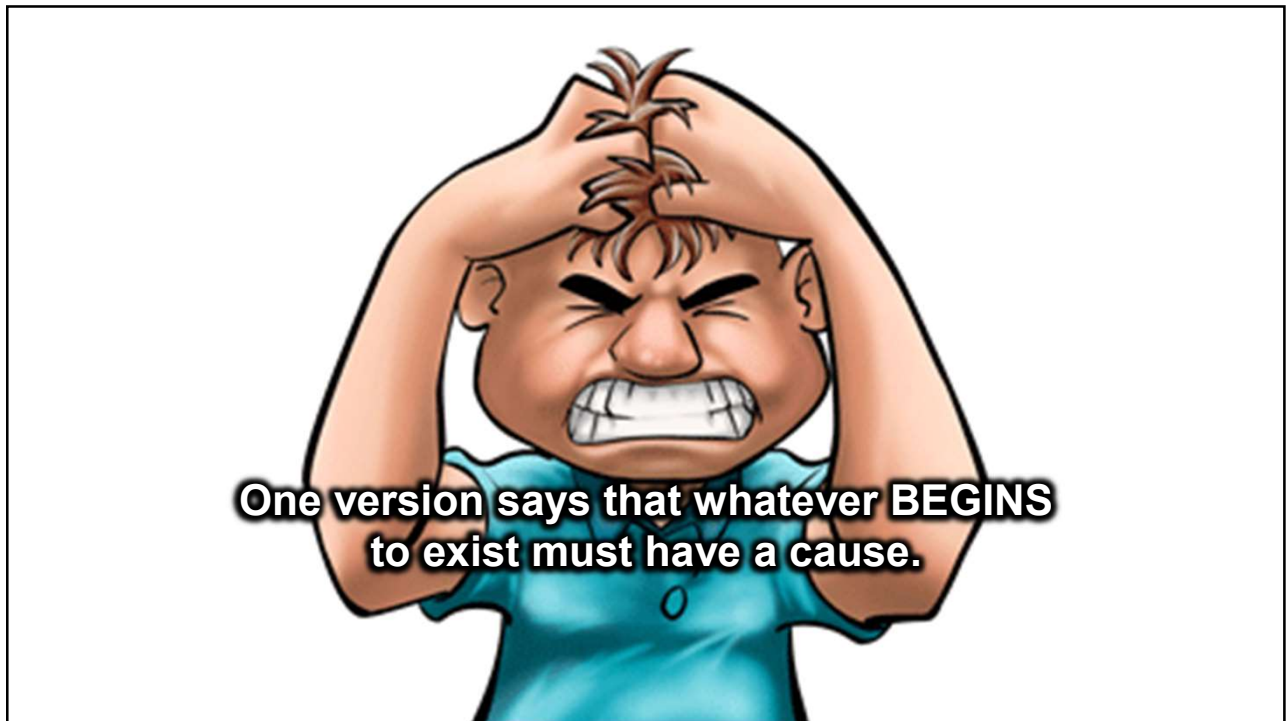
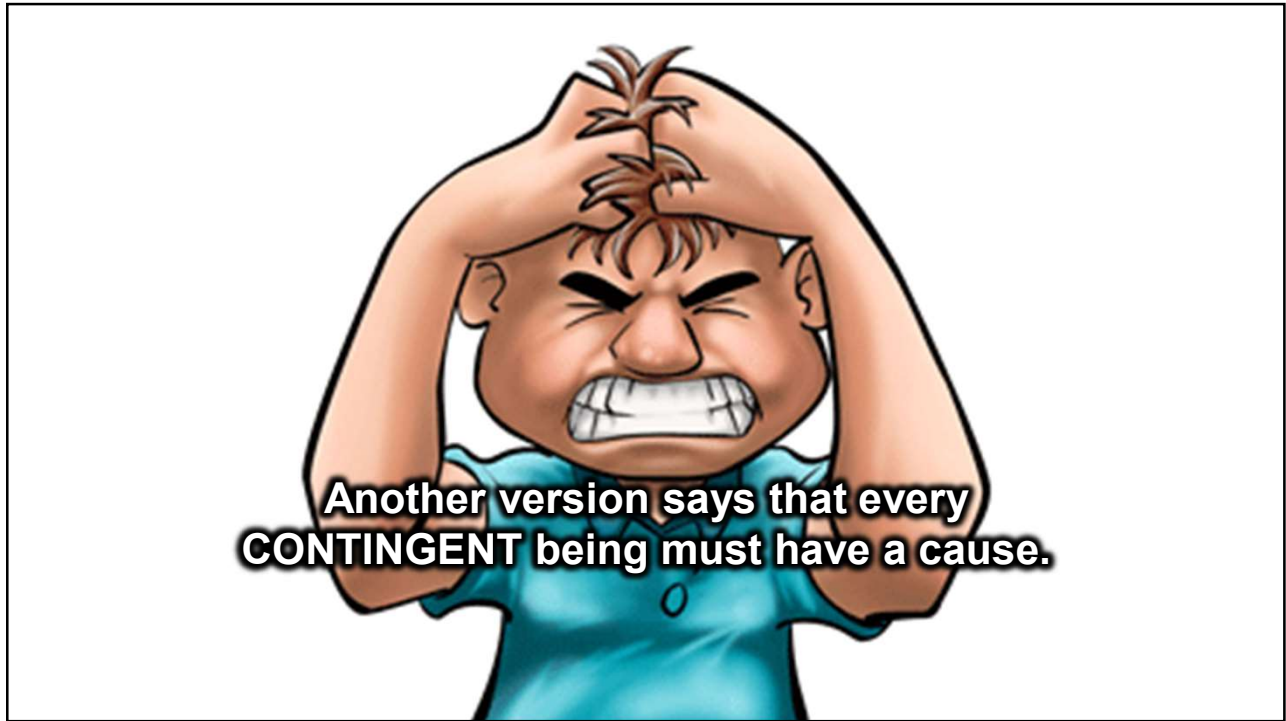91
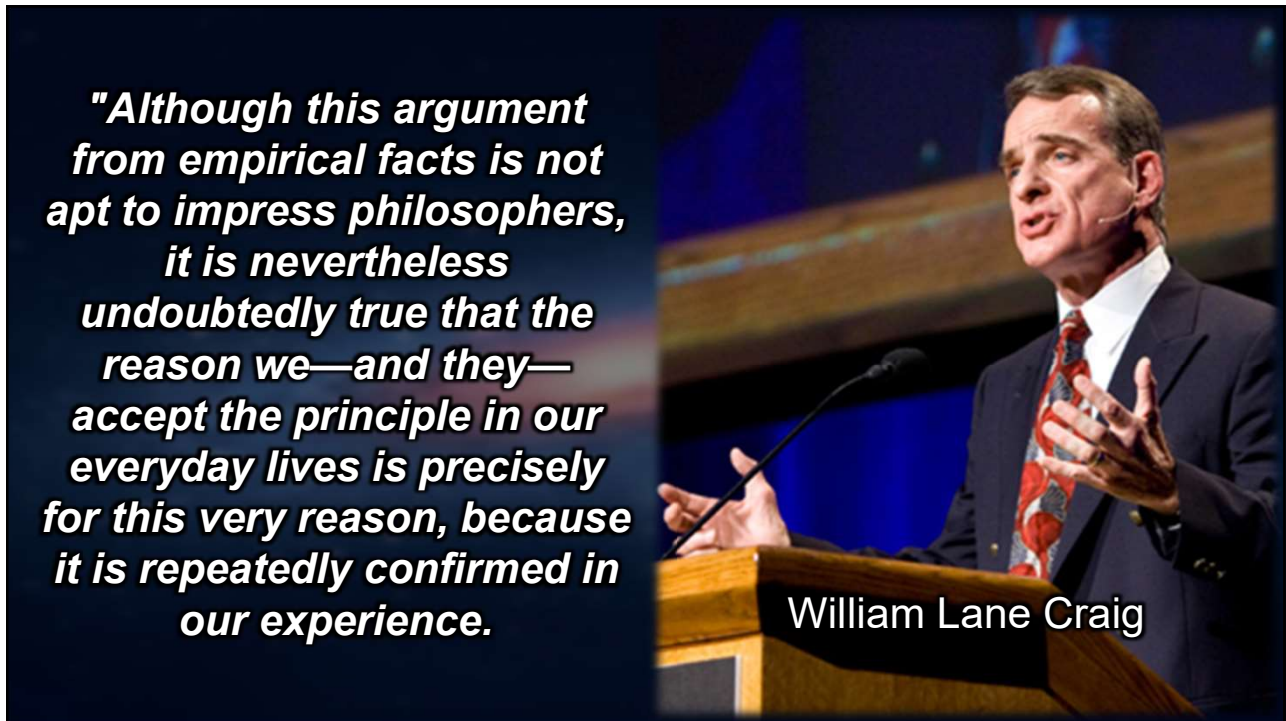

92

Another version says that every CONTINGENT being must have a cause.

93

"Although this argument from empirical facts is not apt to impress philosophers, it is nevertheless undoubtedly true that the reason we—and they—accept the principle in our everyday lives is precisely for this very reason, because it is repeatedly confirmed in our experience.

William Lane Craig

94

"*Constantly verified and never falsified, the causal proposition may be taken as an empirical generalization enjoying the strongest support experience affords.*"

[William Lane Craig, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument* (London: The Macmillian Press, LTD, 1979), 145.]

William Lane Craig

95

Conclusion: Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.

96

❧Three Alternatives❧

The Universe is uncaused.

Response

This is impossible since everything that has a beginning needs a cause.

The Universe is self-caused.

Response

This is impossible since to be self-caused is a contradiction.

The Universe is caused.

Response

This is the only reasonable option.

Objections

101

OBJECTION

How Can God Be Eternal if the Universe Cannot?

102

Does the Cause of the Universe Still Exist?
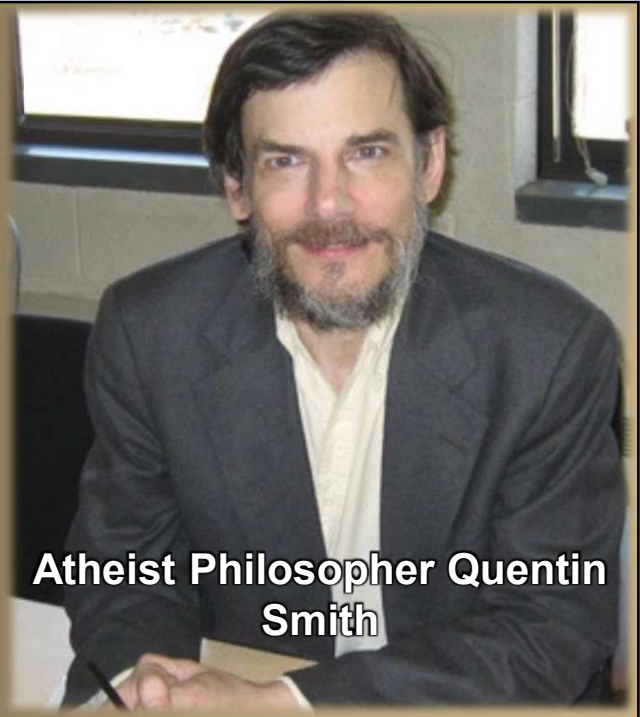
103

Is the Cause of the Universe a personal God?

104

It belongs analytically to the concept of the cosmological singularity that it is not the effect of prior physical events. … This effectively rules out the idea that the singularity is an effect of some prior natural process.

[Quentin Smith, "The Uncaused Beginning of the Universe," in William Land Craig and Quentin Smith, *Theism, Atheism and Big Bang Cosmology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 120]

Atheist Philosopher Quentin Smith

105

OBJECTION

Is there more than one God?

106

Is the Cause of the Universe Good or Evil?

107