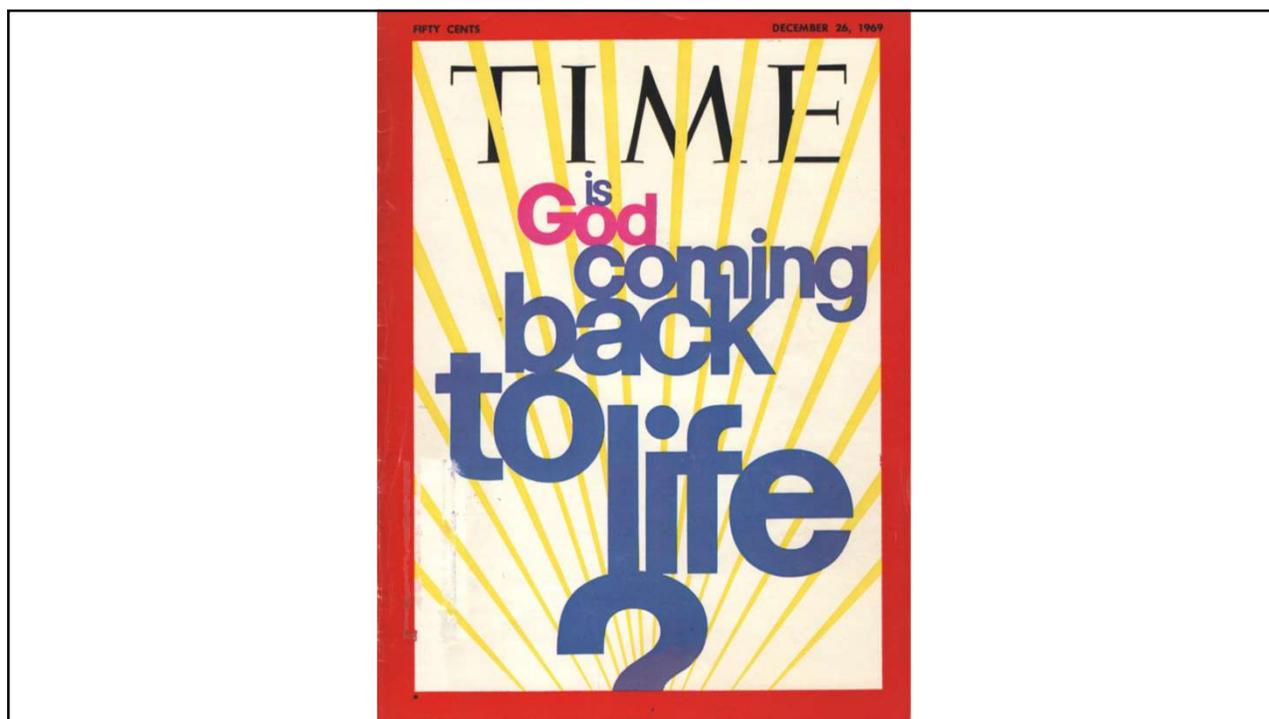


# Aquinas on the Existence of God

## The Essence / Existence Distinction as an Argument for God

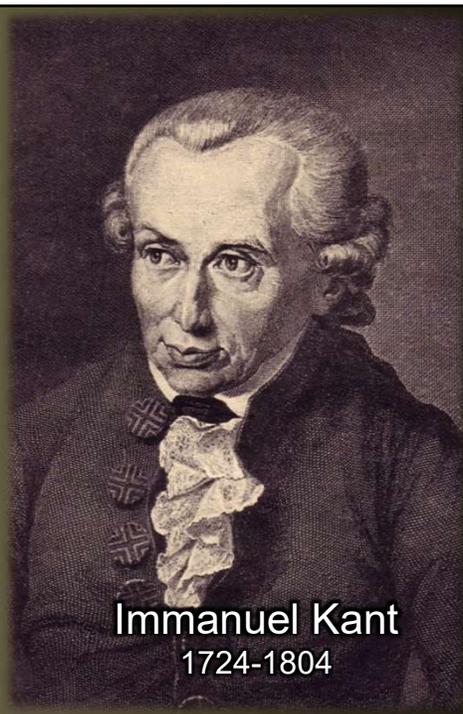
**Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.**  
*Professor Emeritus, Southern Evangelical Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA*  
*Past President, International Society of Christian Apologetics*





***"Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me."***

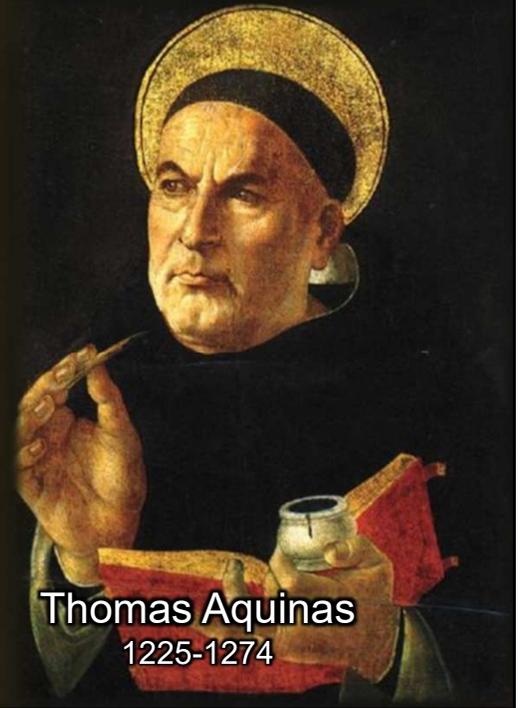
[*Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1956), 166]



**Immanuel Kant**  
1724-1804

***"Beginning with sensible things, our intellect is led to the point of knowing about God that He exists, and other such characteristics that must be attributed to the First Principle."***

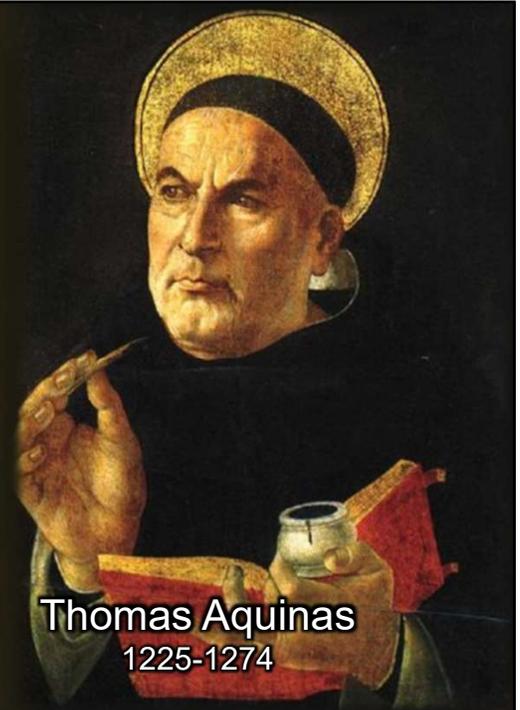
[*Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 3, §3, trans. Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975, 64)]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

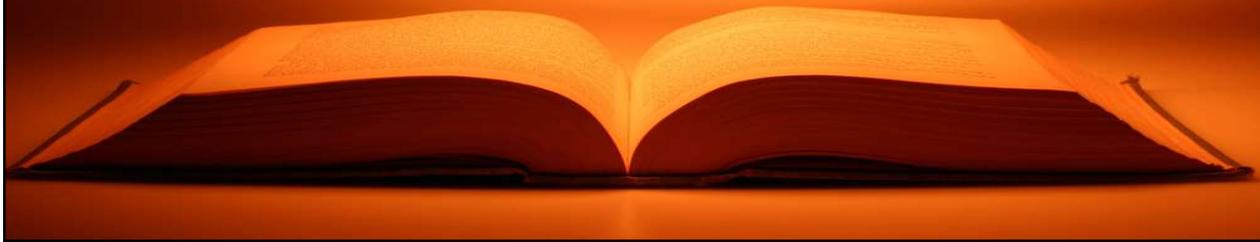
***"From every effect the existence of its proper cause can be demonstrated, so long as its effects are better known to us; because since every effect depends upon its cause, if the effect exists, the cause must pre-exist. Hence the existence of God ... can be demonstrated from those of His effects which are known to us.."***

[*Summa Theologica*, I, Q2, Art. 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1948), 12]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

# The Bible's Testimony to the Existence of God



***The heavens declare the glory of God;  
and the firmament shows His  
handiwork. Day unto day utters speech,  
and night unto night reveals knowledge.  
There is no speech nor language where  
their voice is not heard. Their line has  
gone out through all the earth, and their  
words to the end of the world.***

Psalm 19:1

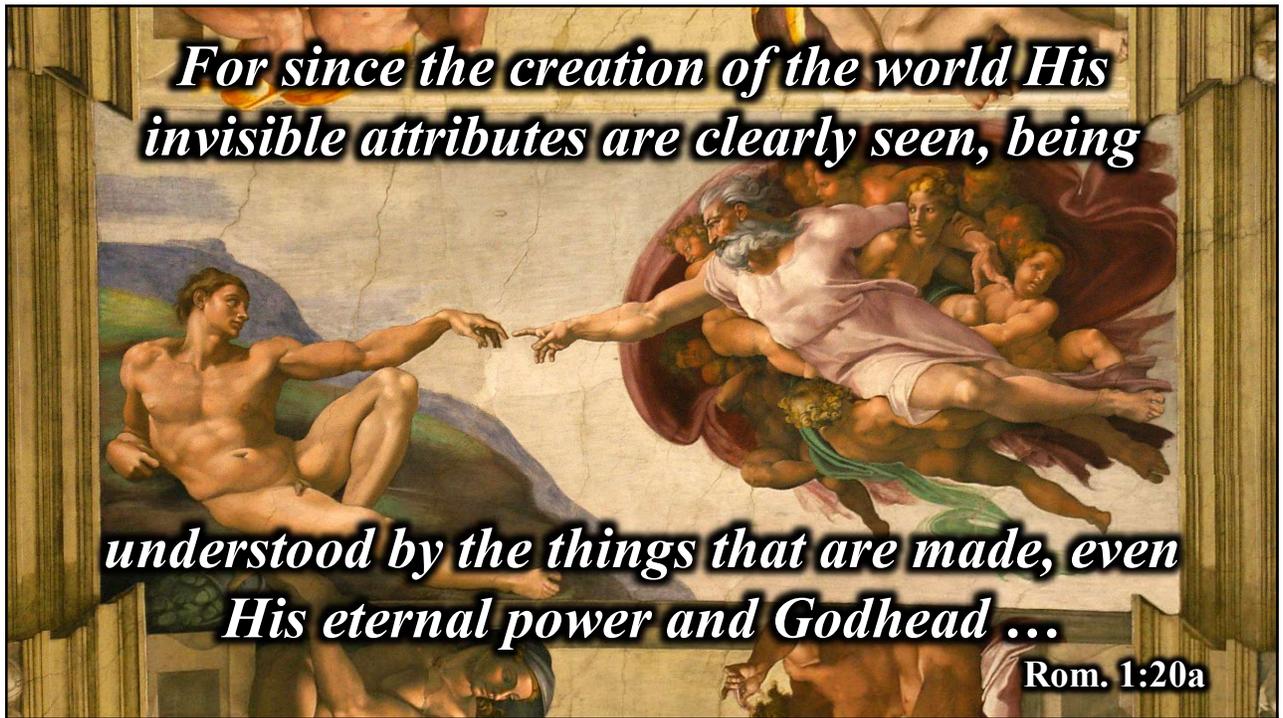
***The heavens declare  
His righteousness,  
And all the peoples  
see His glory.***

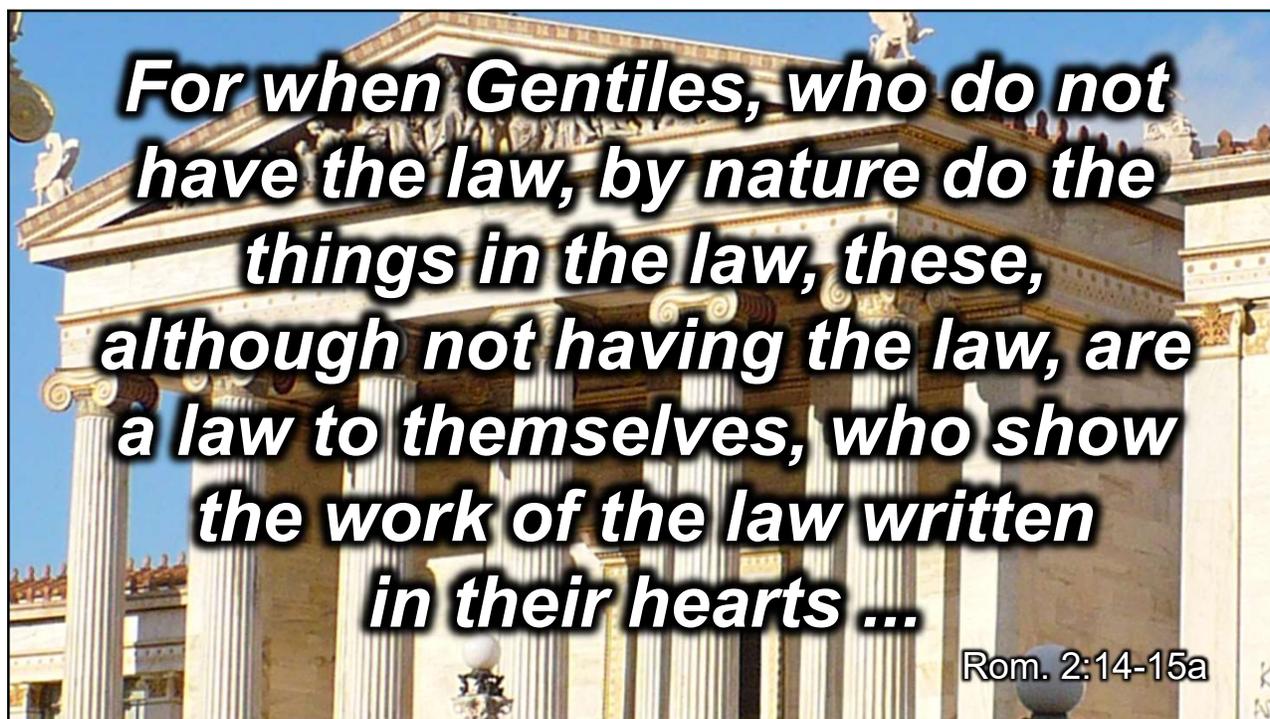
Psalm 97:6

***For since the creation of the world His  
invisible attributes are clearly seen, being***

***understood by the things that are made, even  
His eternal power and Godhead ...***

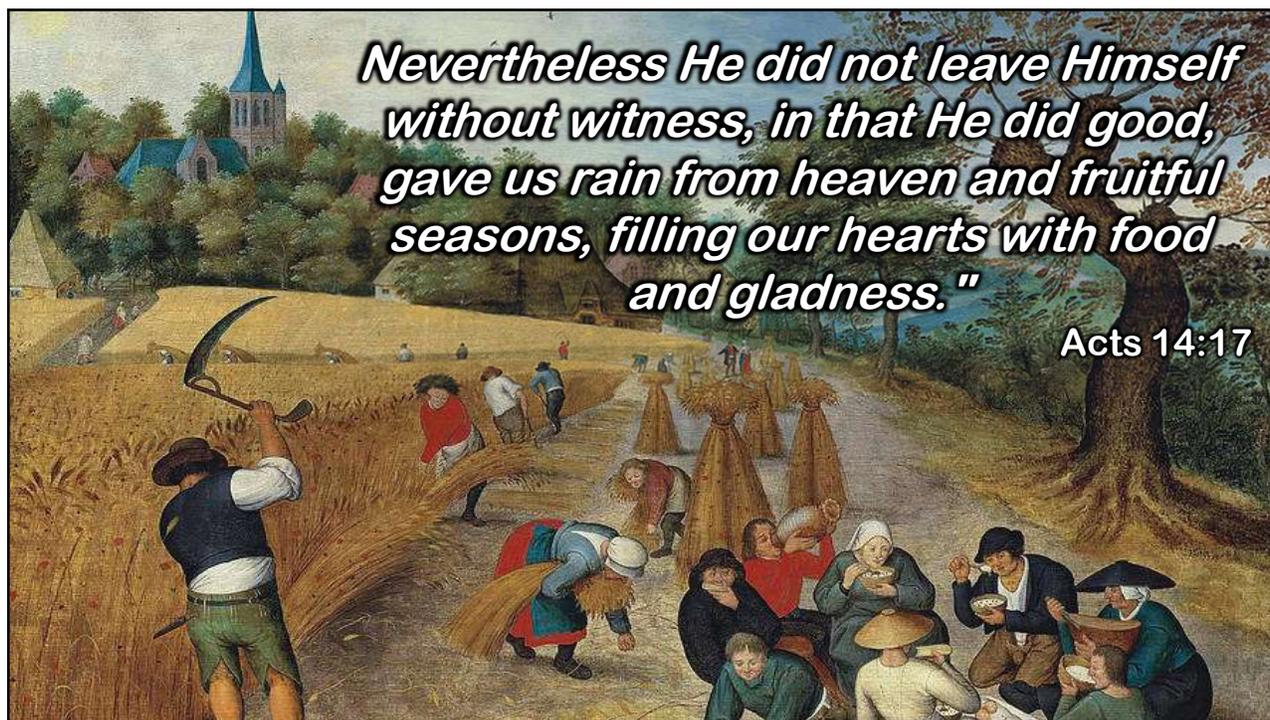
Rom. 1:20a





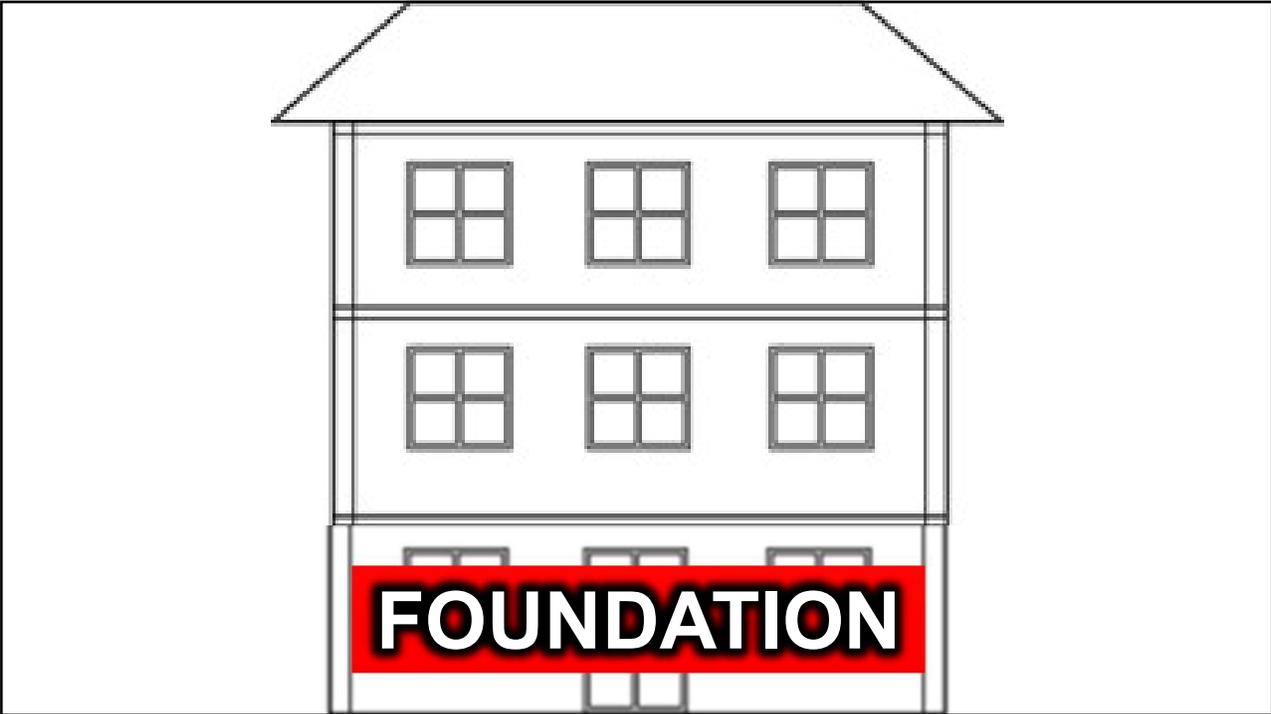
***For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts ...***

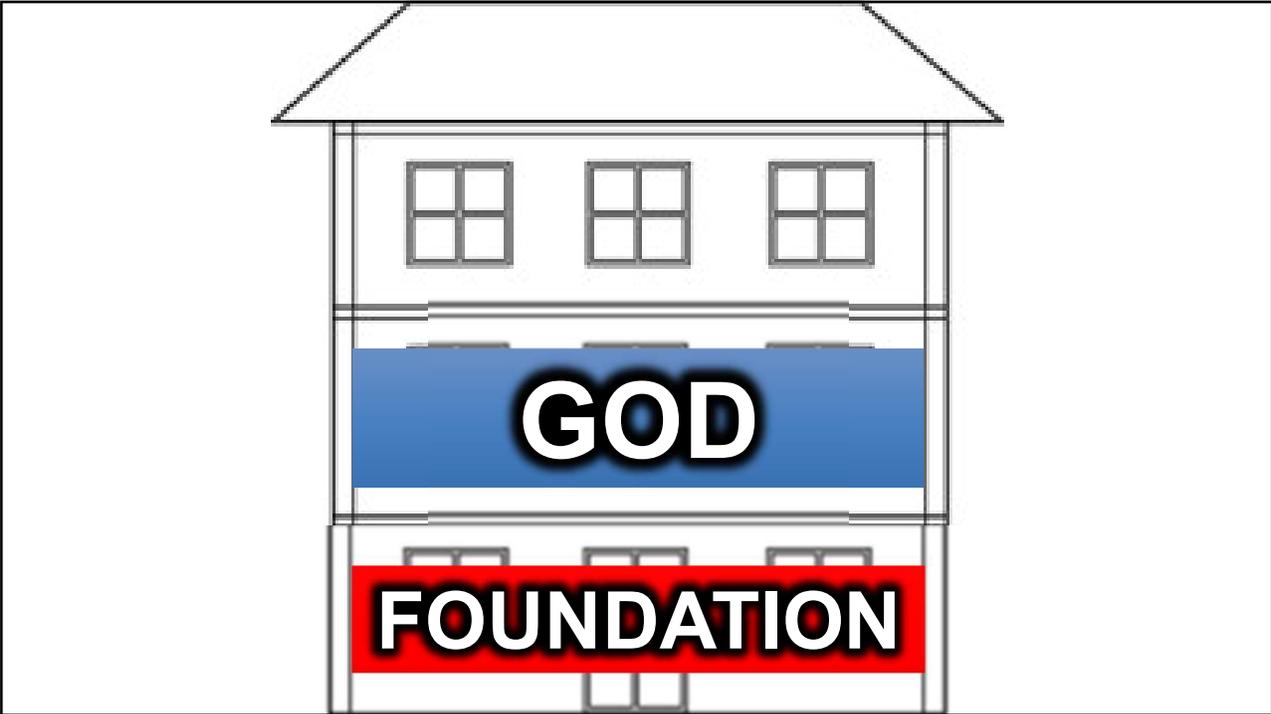
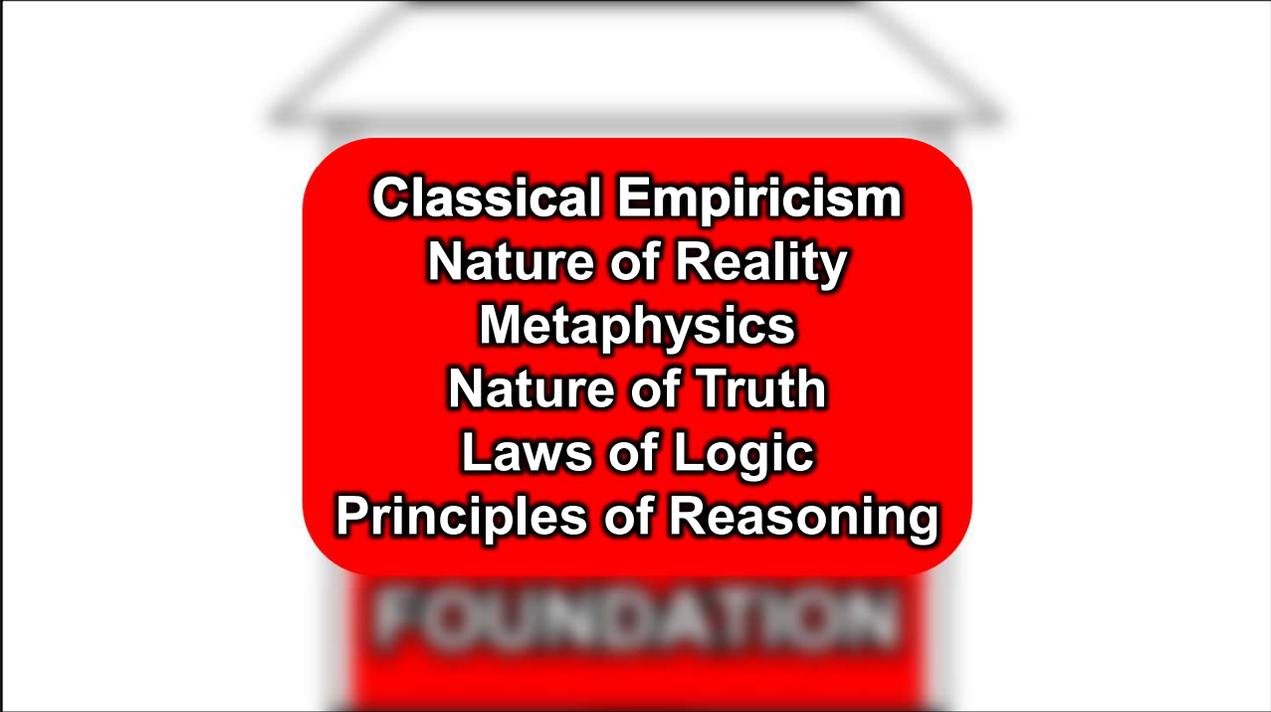
Rom. 2:14-15a

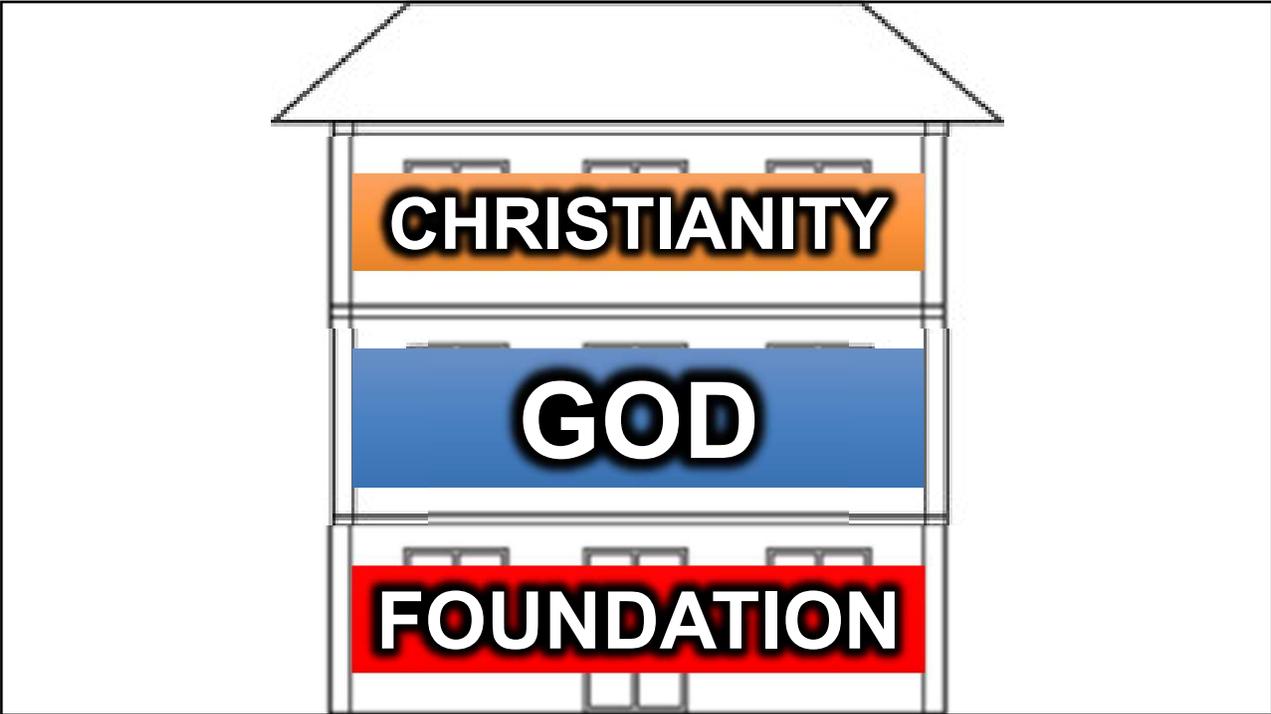
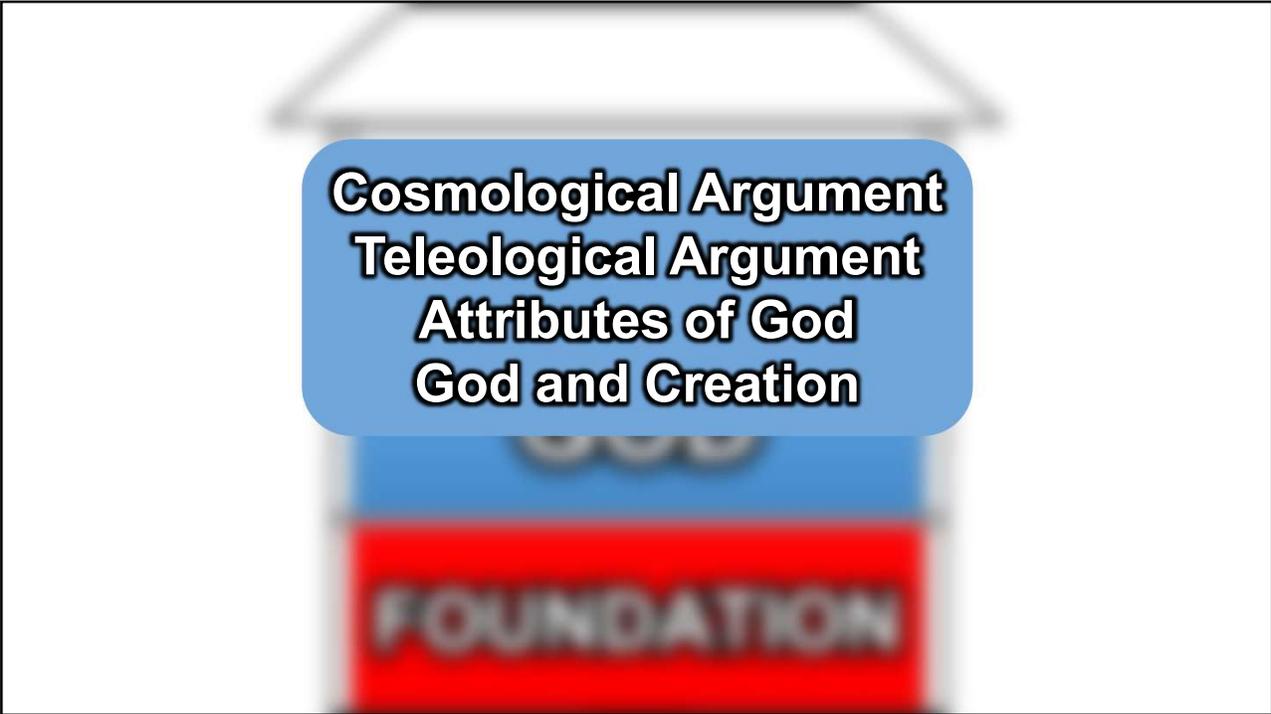


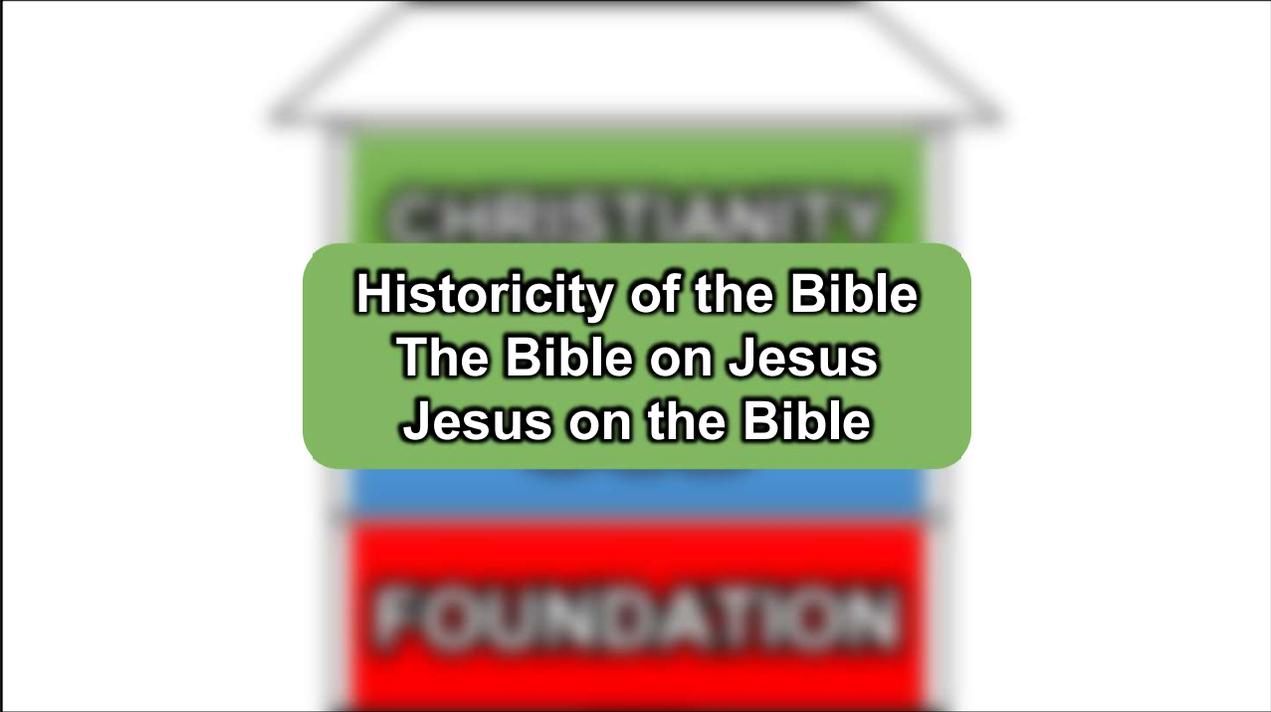
***Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."***

Acts 14:17

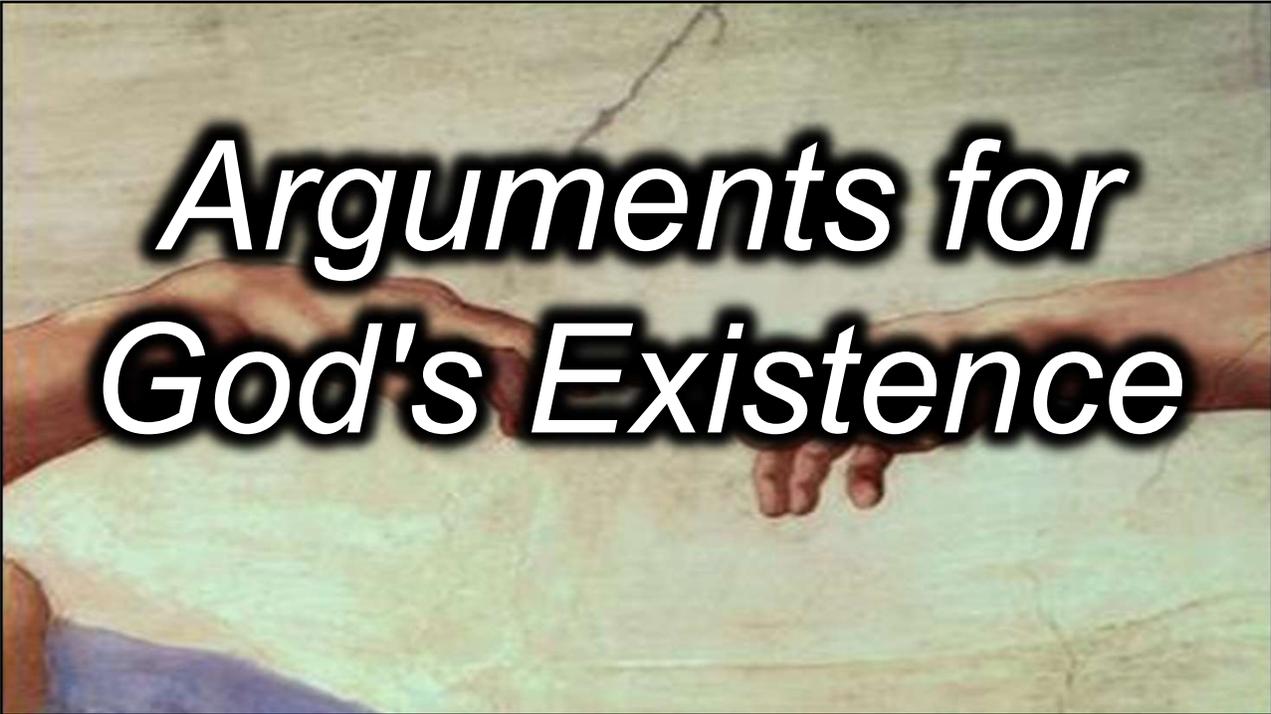




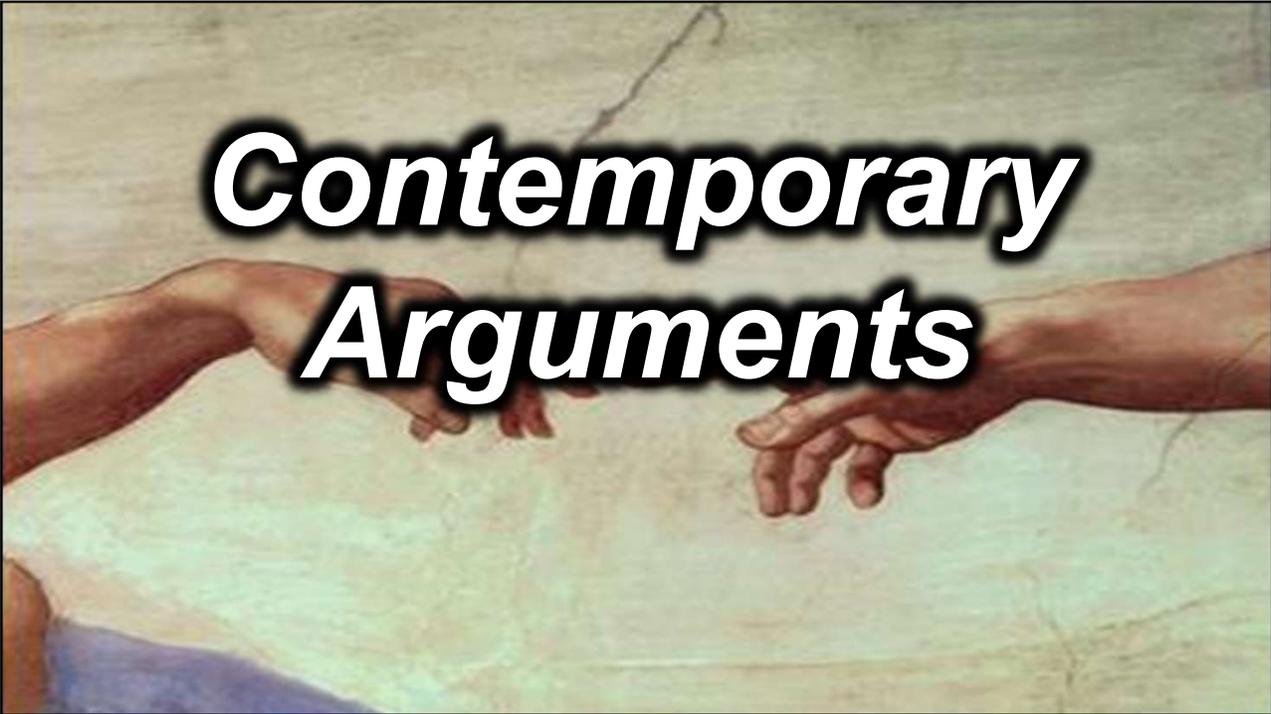




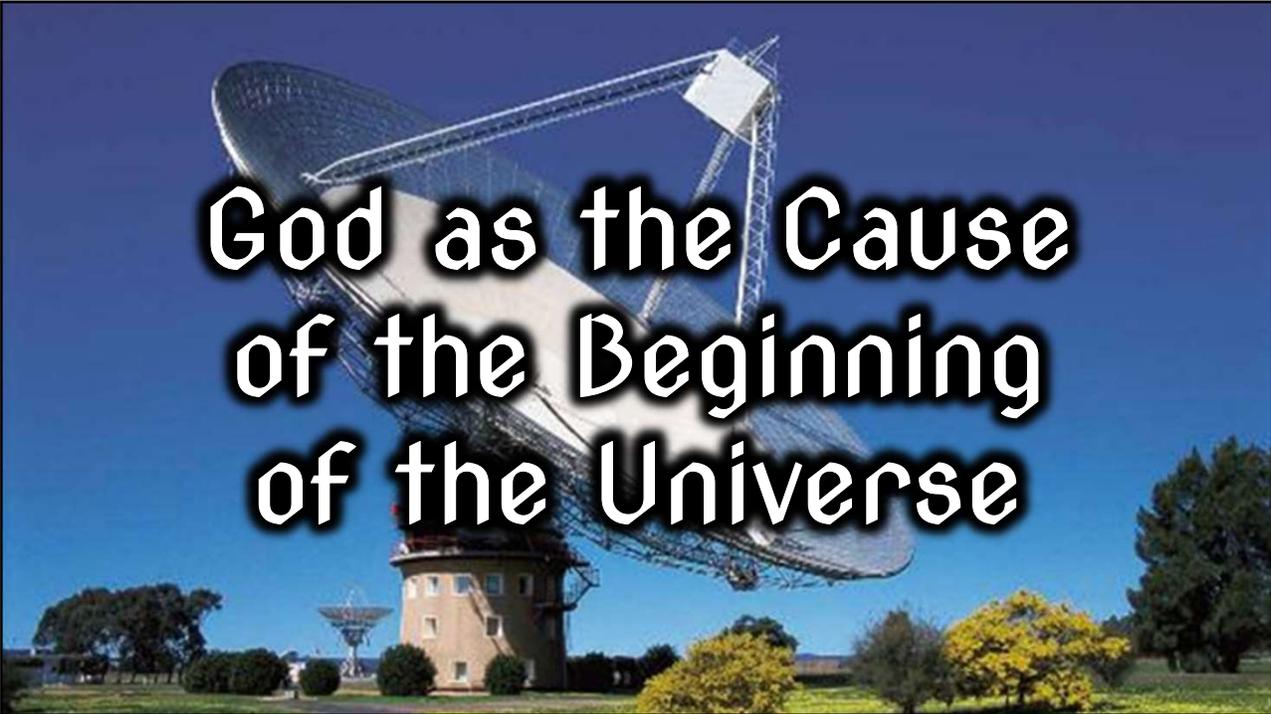
**Historicity of the Bible  
The Bible on Jesus  
Jesus on the Bible**



***Arguments for  
God's Existence***



***Contemporary  
Arguments***



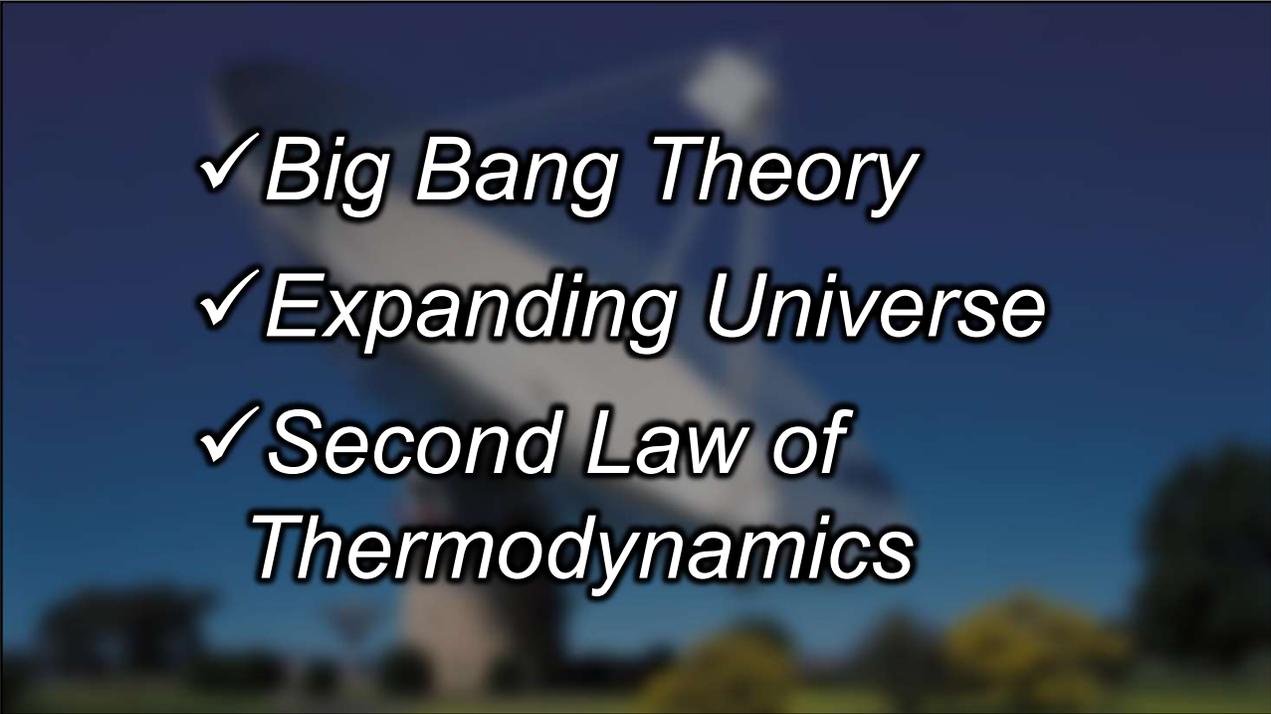
**God as the Cause  
of the Beginning  
of the Universe**

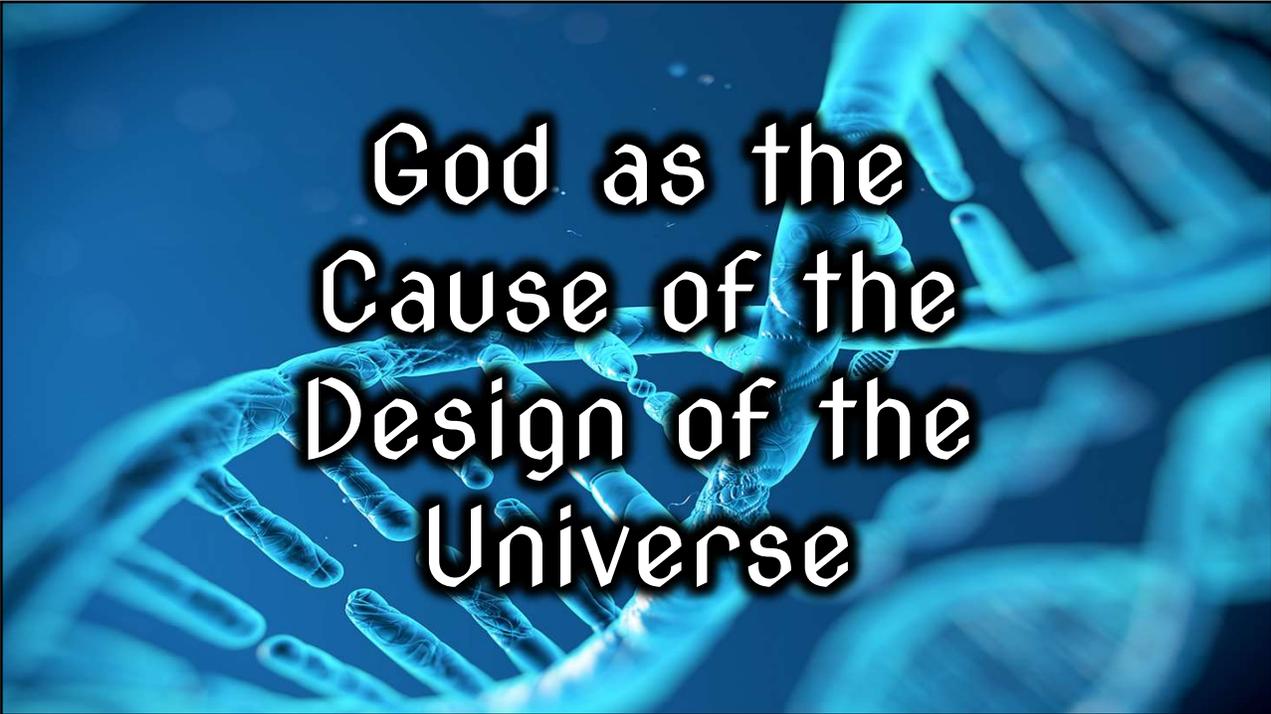
**1. *The Universe began to exist.***

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

***Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.***

**The Scientific  
Evidence for the  
Beginning  
of the Universe**

- 
- ✓ *Big Bang Theory*
  - ✓ *Expanding Universe*
  - ✓ *Second Law of Thermodynamics*



**God as the  
Cause of the  
Design of the  
Universe**

# The Scientific Evidence for the Design in the Universe

## Extrinsic Design of the Universe as a Whole

- ❖ *Design as fine tuning for life*
- ❖ *Design as the origin of life*

## Intrinsic Design of Living Systems

- ❖ *Design as information*
- ❖ *Design as irreducible complexity*
- ❖ *Design as knowledge of reality*



## ∞ Strengths ∞

- *These arguments appeal to the common sense notion that something can only begin to exist by being caused to exist.*
- *These arguments appeal to the common sense notion that anything that exhibits sufficient evidence of design is likely caused by an intelligence.*

## ∞ Strengths ∞

- *They often appeal to data from contemporary science (with all of science's social, etc., clout).*
- *They generally avoid trafficking in the technicalities of academic philosophy which are less familiar than the general categories of the sciences.*

## ∞ Weaknesses ∞

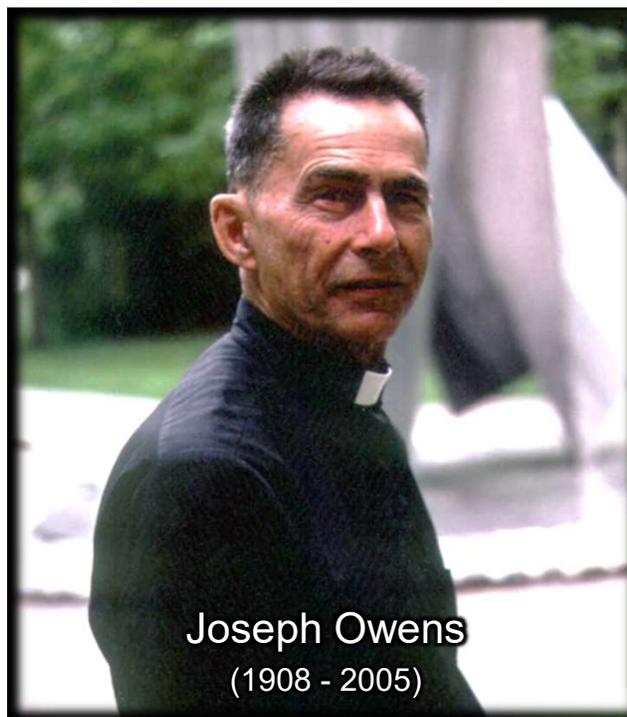
- *These arguments do not demonstrate that the cause of the universe still exists.*
- *These arguments do not demonstrate that the cause of the universe is God (i.e., that the cause has the attributes of classical theism).*

## *∞ My Weaknesses ∞*

- *Certain aspects of the science are disputed by some.*
- *Such disputes invariably get technical and, thus, are beyond the knowledge of the non-scientist.*

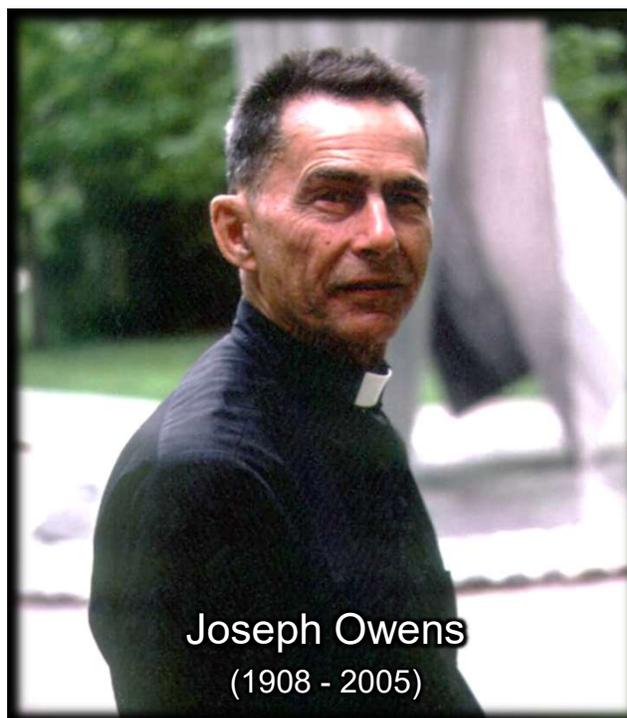
## *∞ My Weaknesses ∞*

- *Certain aspects of the science are disputed by some.*
- *Such disputes invariably get technical and, thus, are beyond the knowledge of the non-scientist like me.*



Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

**"Other arguments may vividly suggest the existence of God, press it home eloquently to human consideration, and for most people provide much greater spiritual and religious aid than difficult metaphysical demonstrations."**

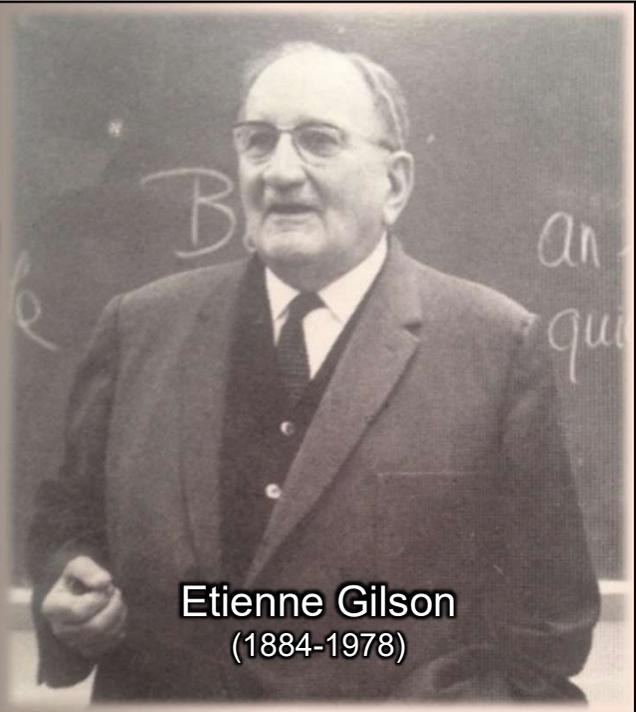


Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

**"But on the philosophical level these arguments are open to rebuttal and refutation, for they are not philosophically cogent."**

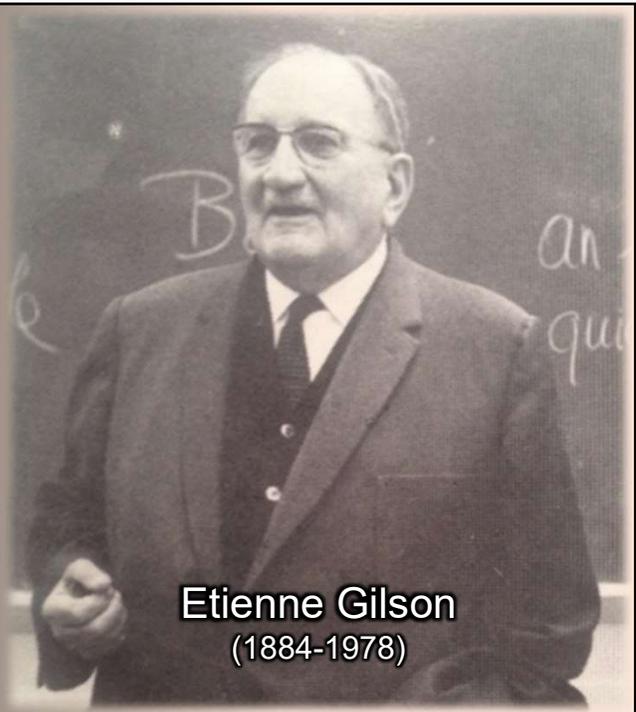
[Joseph Owens, "Aquinas and the Five Ways," *Monist* 58 (Jan. 1974): 16-35. (p. 33)]

**Gilson was concerned about "the liberty which [physicists and biologists] grant themselves of philosophizing ... and presenting their philosophy as if it were a matter of their science. ..."**



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

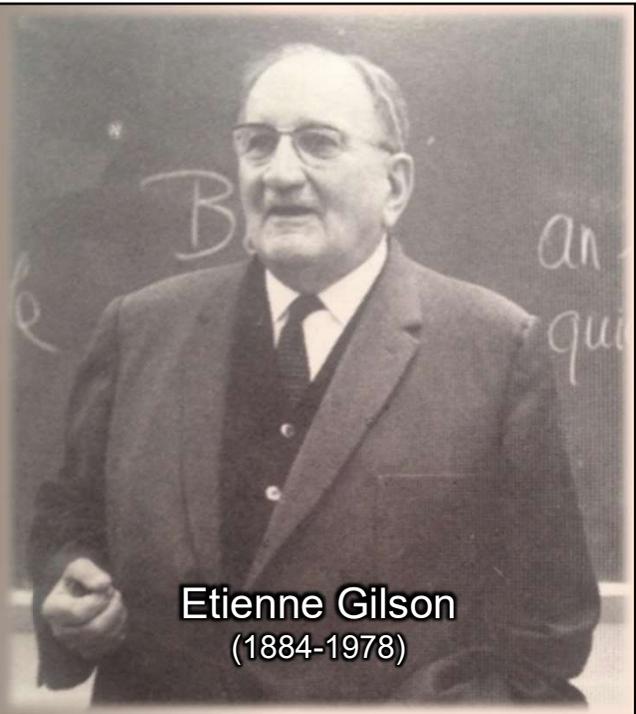
**"It does not bother them if the philosophy thus bandied about under the name of science often consists in a denial of the validity of philosophical position as accepted by those whose *metier* is philosophy. ..."**



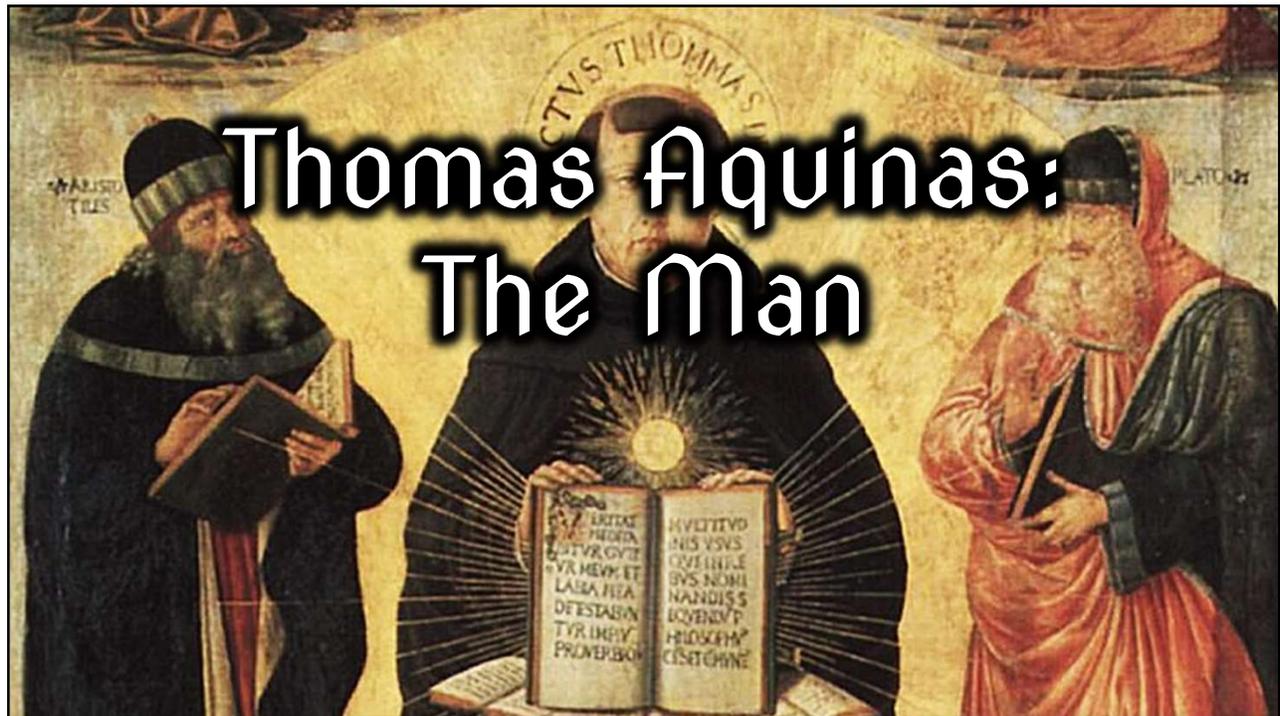
**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

**"Holding reasonably that is necessary to have learned a science in order to be authorized to speak about it, he does not for an instant doubt that it is a matter of indifference who may be authorized to speak of philosophy, provided only that he knows some other discipline."**

[Etienne Gilson, *Linguistics and Philosophy: An Essay on the Philosophical Constants of Language* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), xvii]



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

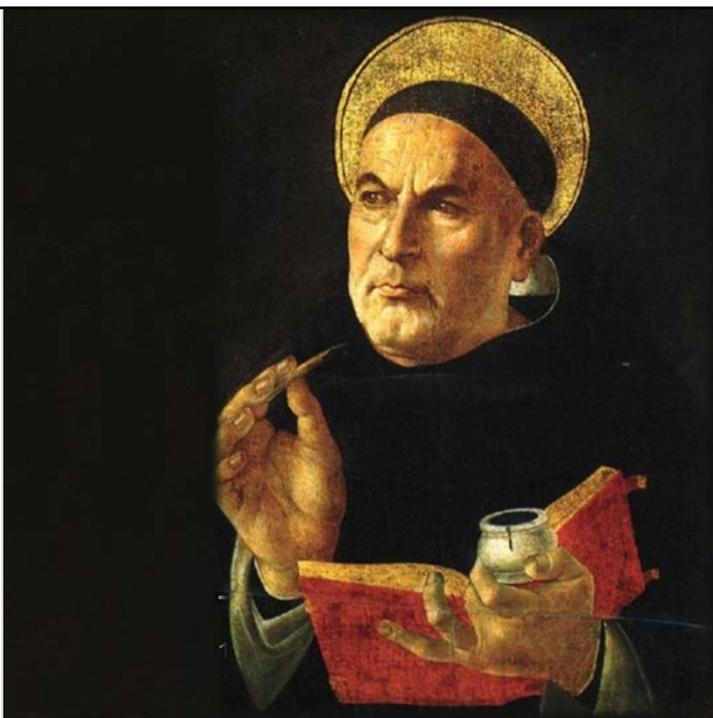
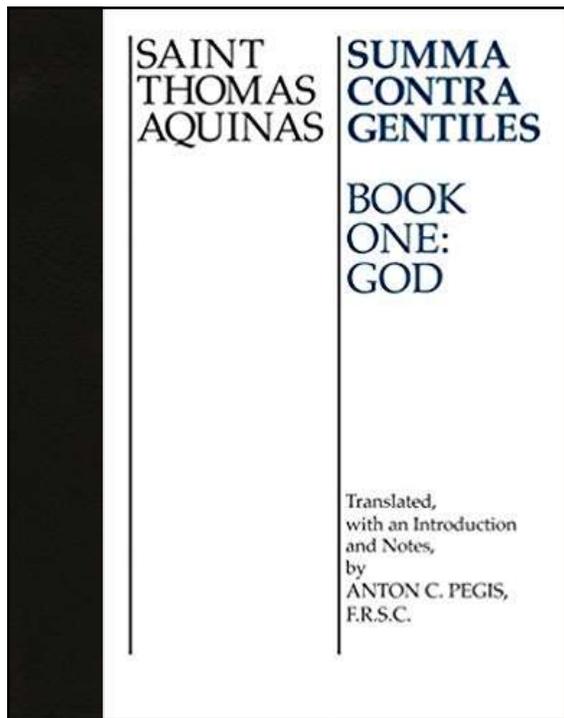
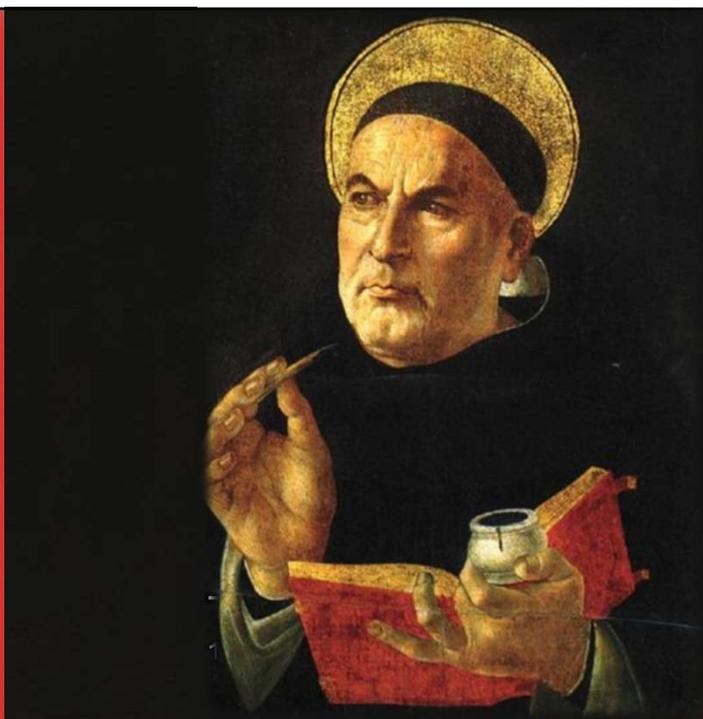
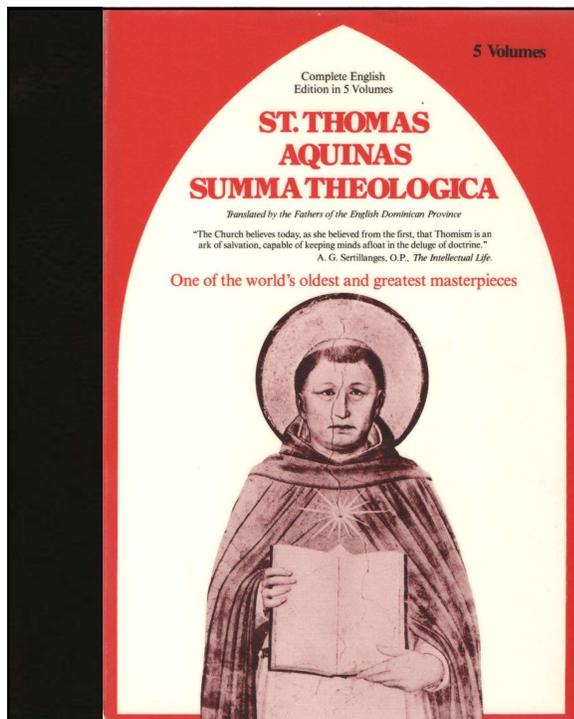


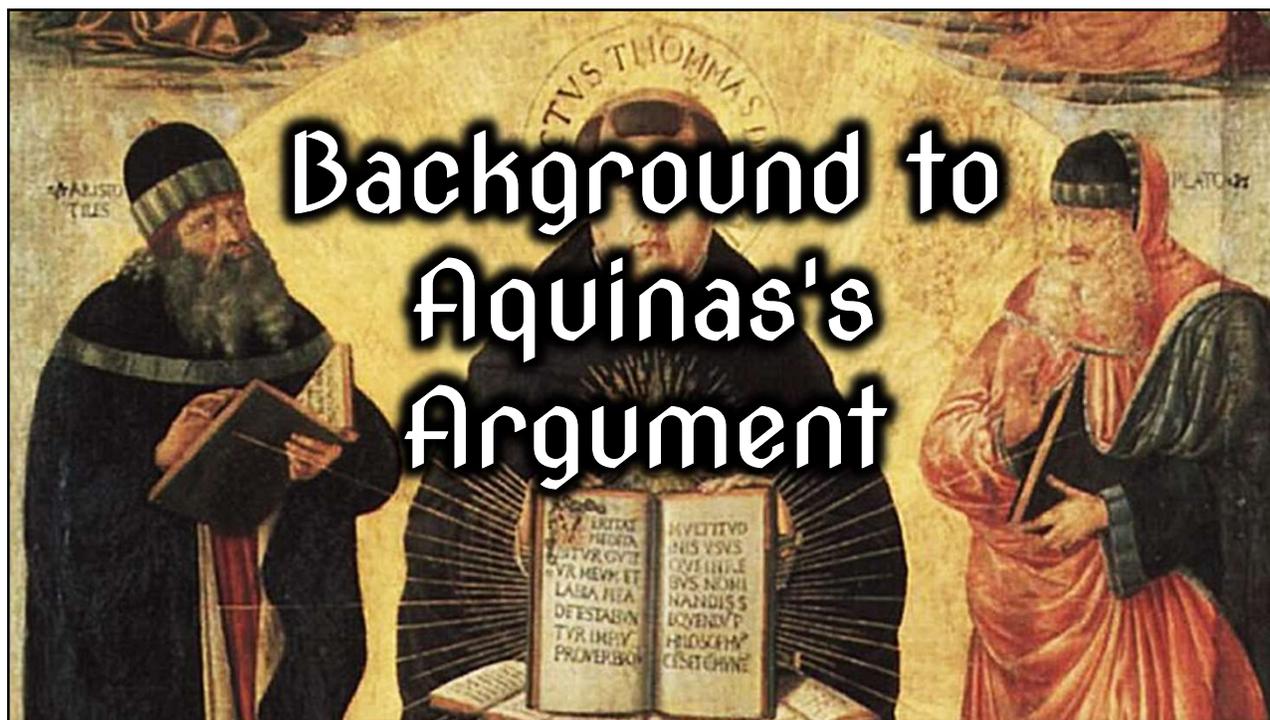
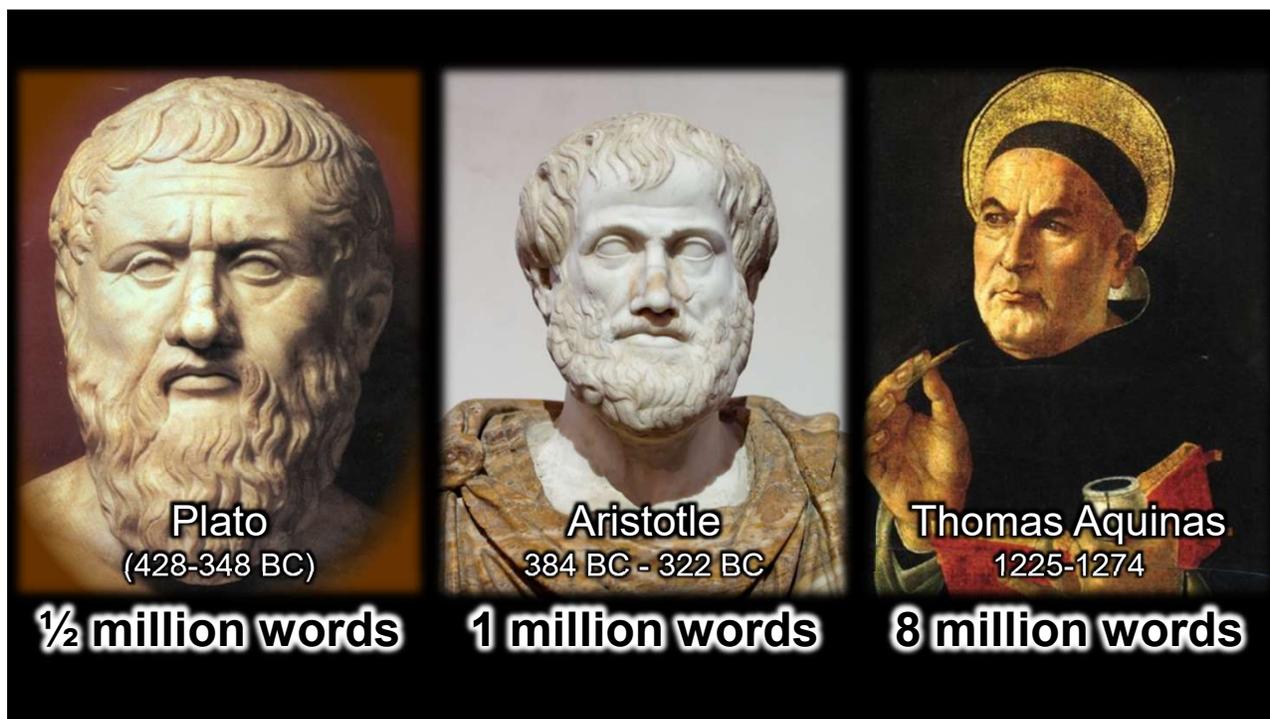
# Thomas Aquinas: The Man

***Thomas Aquinas was a  
13<sup>th</sup> Century Dominican  
theologian.***

❖ *born 1224/5 in Roccasecca, Italy*







**There are two great  
philosophical traditions  
in Western thought that  
have endured since the  
ancient Greeks.**



**There are two great philosophical/theological traditions in Christian thought that have tracked these two Greek philosophical traditions.**



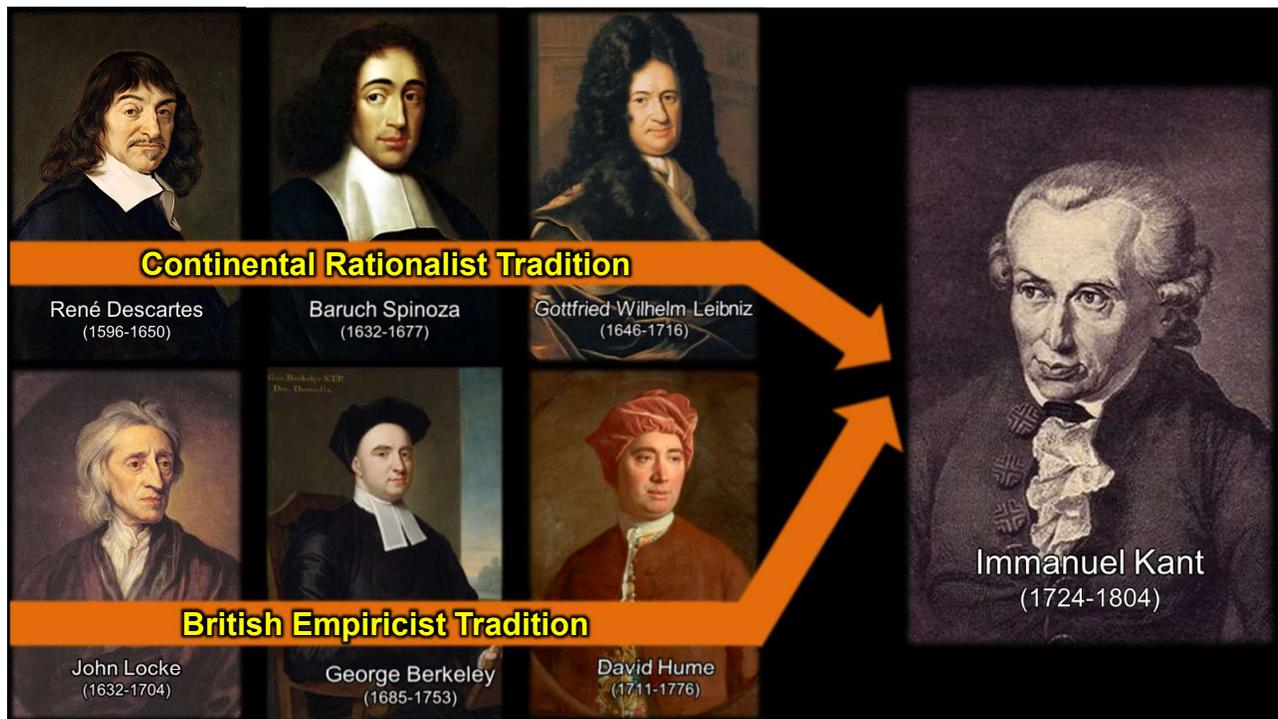
**Augustine**

(354-430)

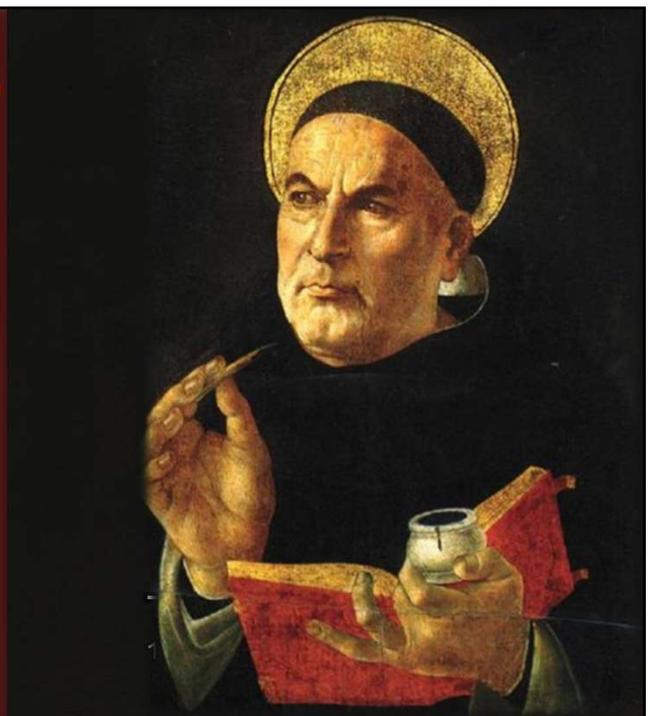
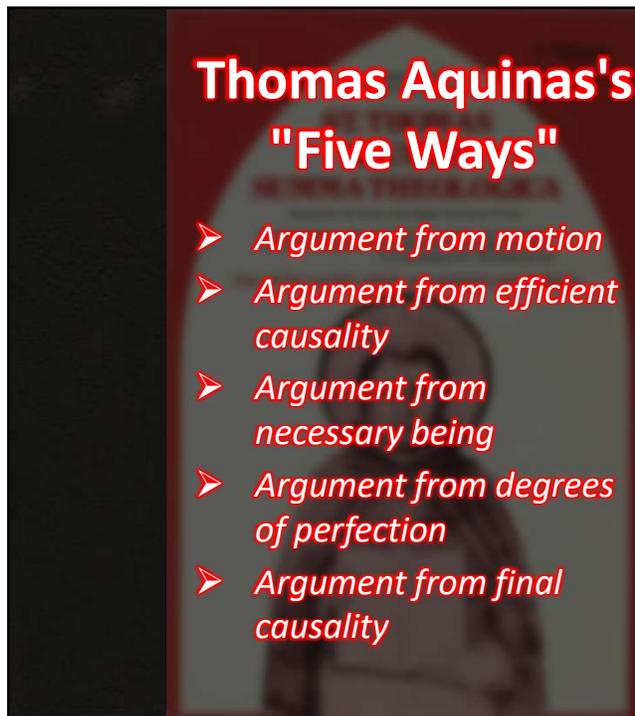
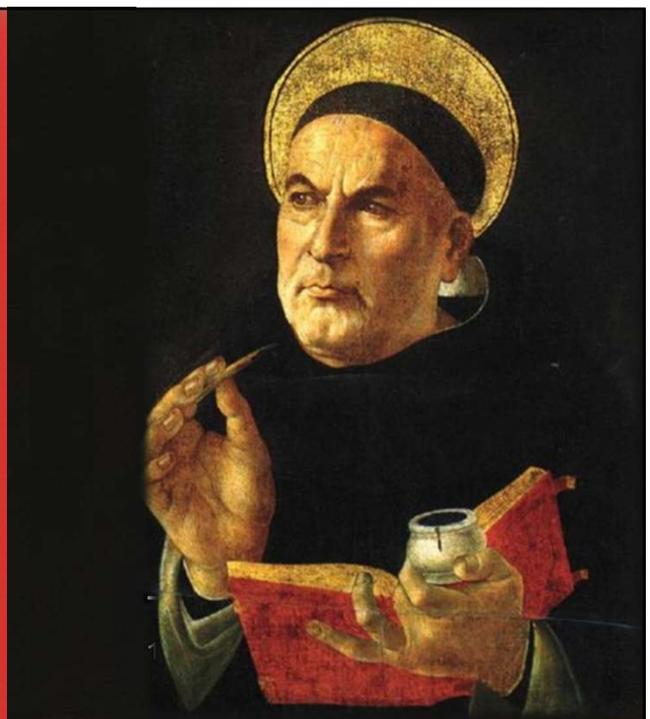
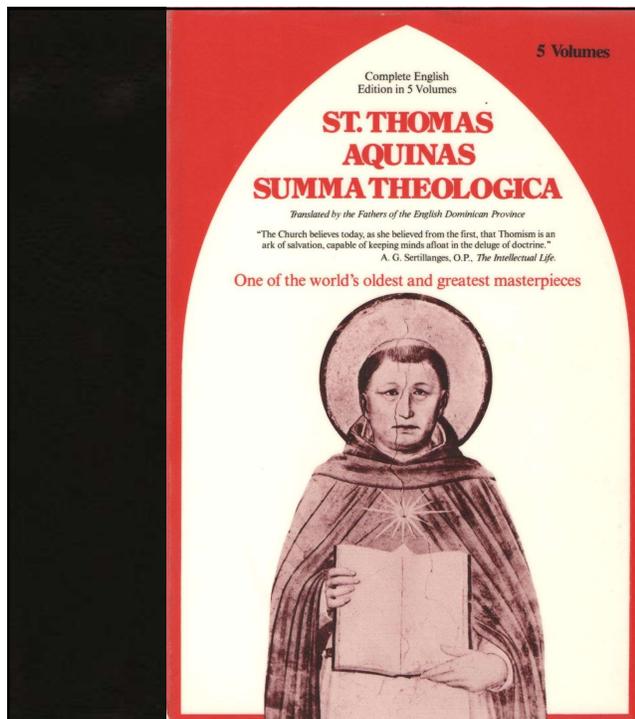
**Aquinas**

(1225-1274)



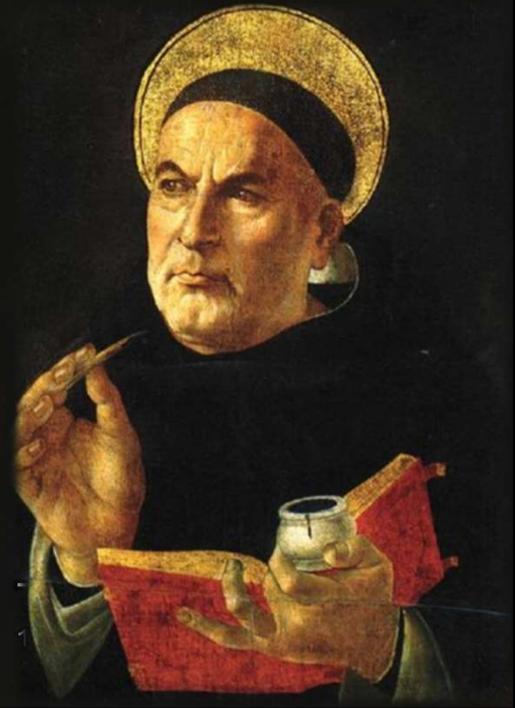


**Exploring the contours of how these traditions have answered certain basic questions about the nature of reality and our knowledge of it, will enable us to position many questions and concerns we have as Christians.**



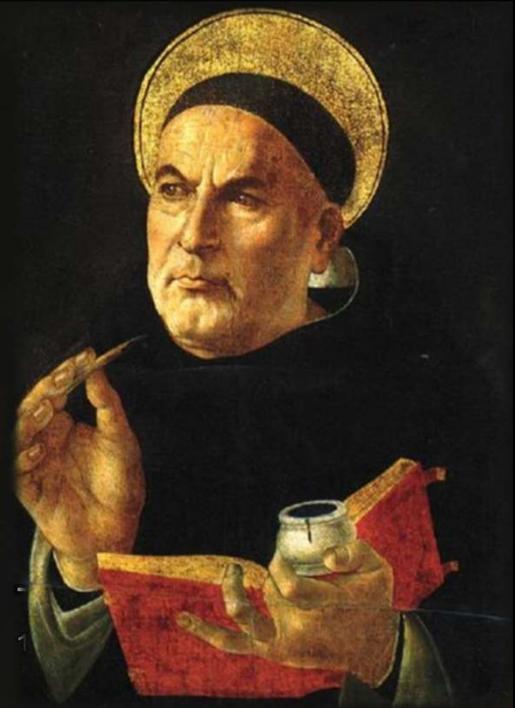
## Thomas Aquinas's "Five Ways"

- *Argument from motion*
- *Argument from efficient causality*
- *Argument from necessary being*
- *Argument from degrees of perfection*
- *Argument from final causality*



## Thomas Aquinas's "Five Ways"

- *Argument from motion*
- *Argument from efficient causality*
- *Argument from **necessary being***
- *Argument from degrees of perfection*
- *Argument from final causality*

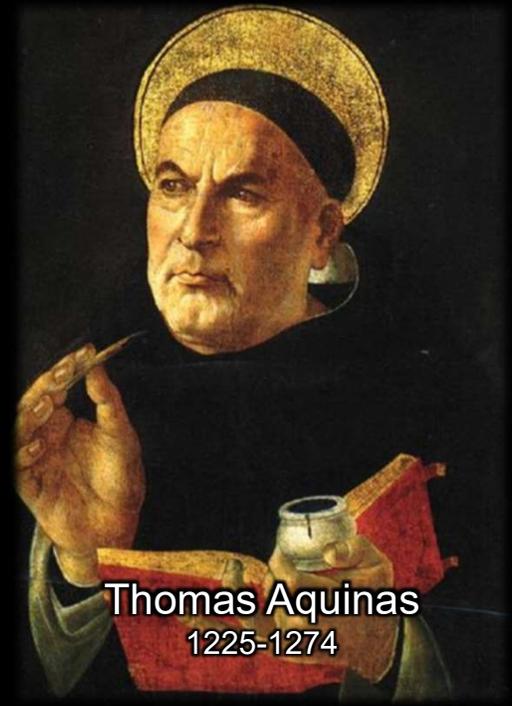


SAINT  
THOMAS  
AQUINAS

SUMMA  
CONTRA  
GENTILES

BOOK  
ONE:  
GOD

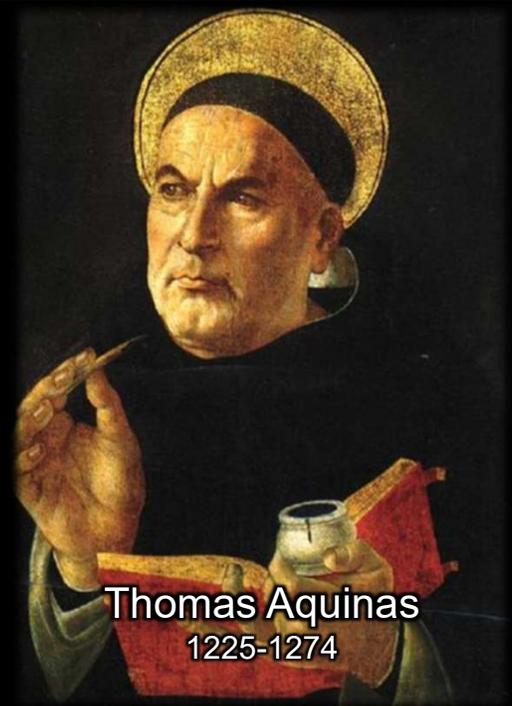
Translated,  
with an Introduction  
and Notes,  
by  
ANTON C. PEGIS,  
F.R.S.C.



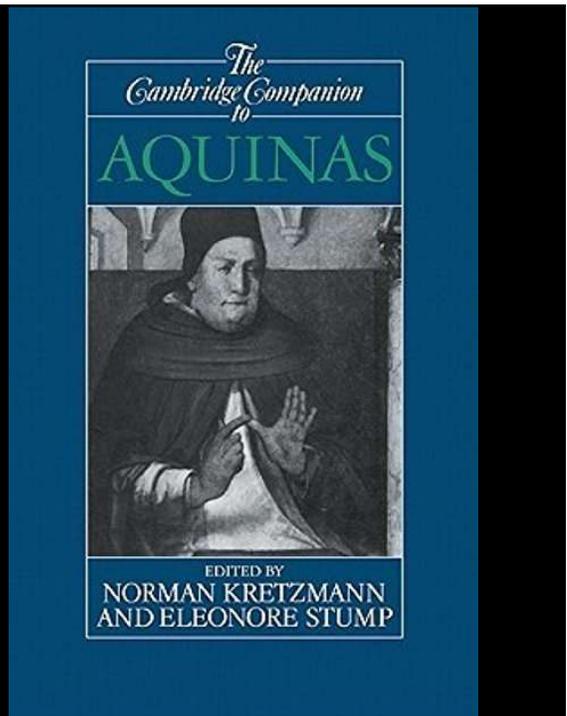
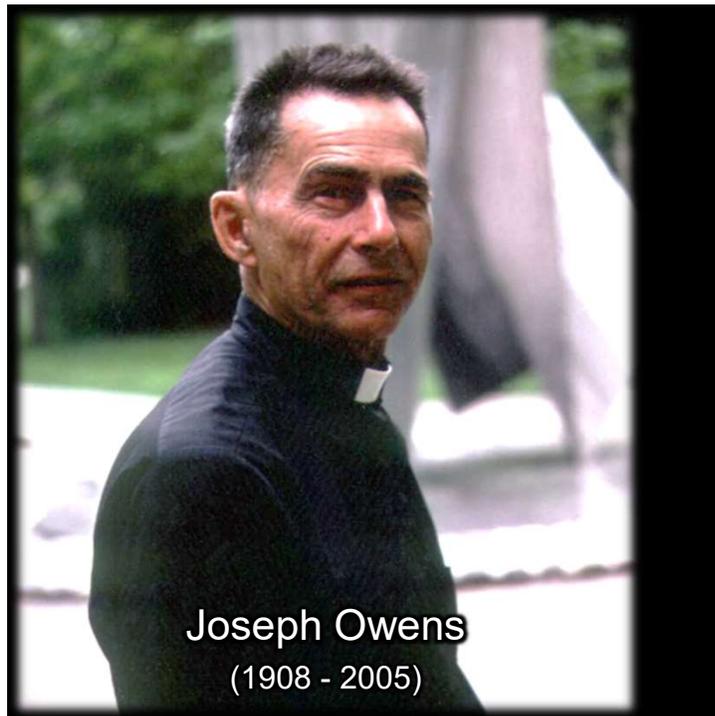
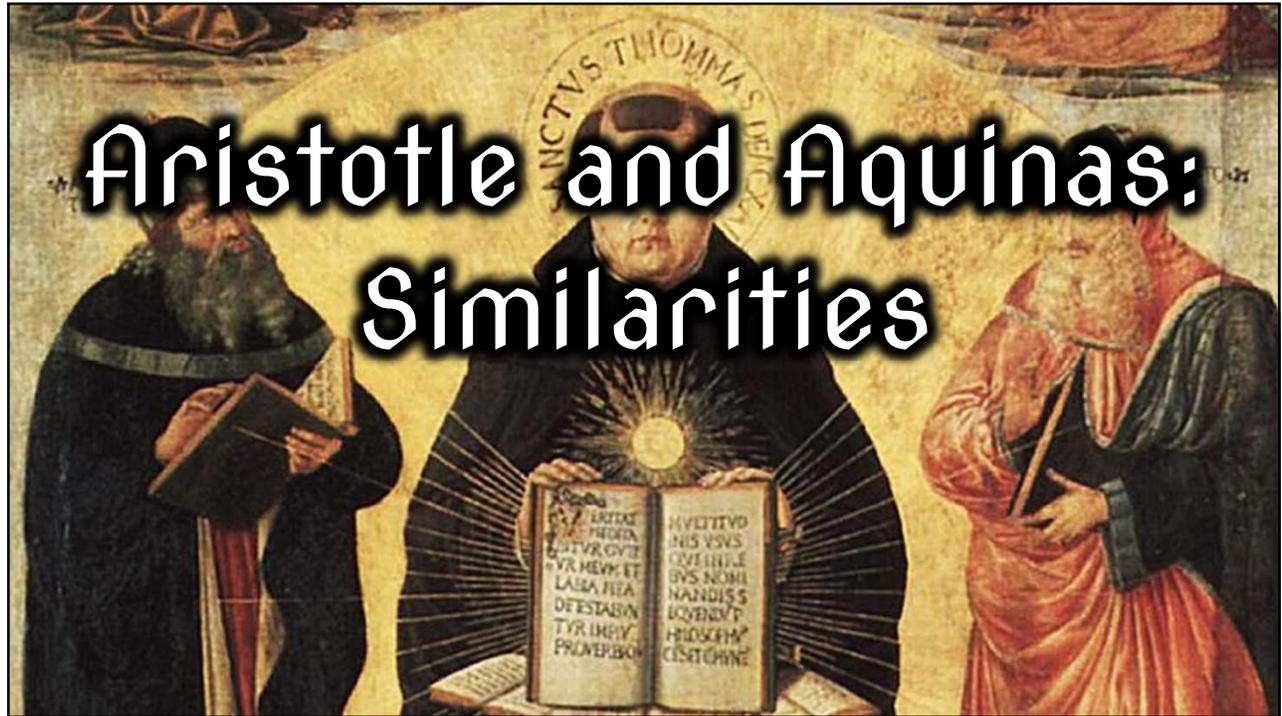
Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

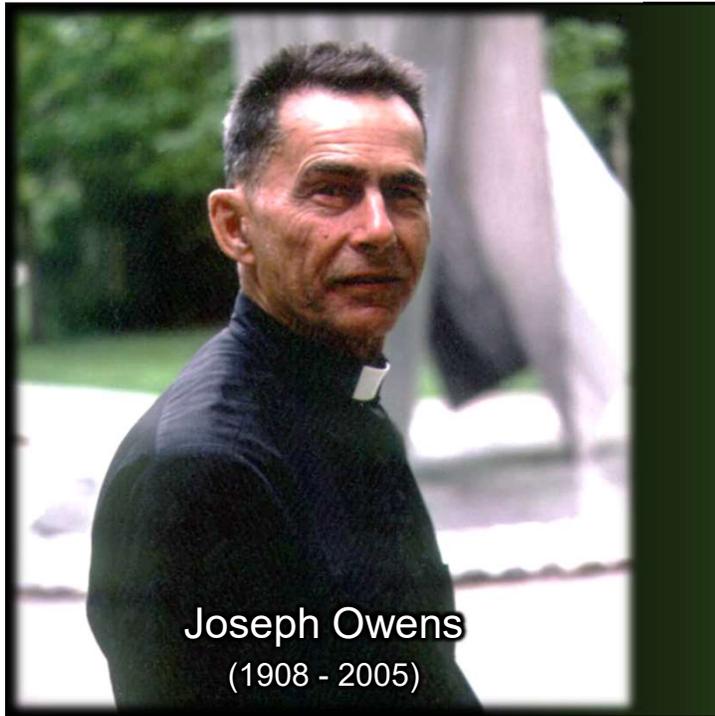
Thomas Aquinas  
On being and  
essence

Translated by  
Armand Maurer



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274





Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

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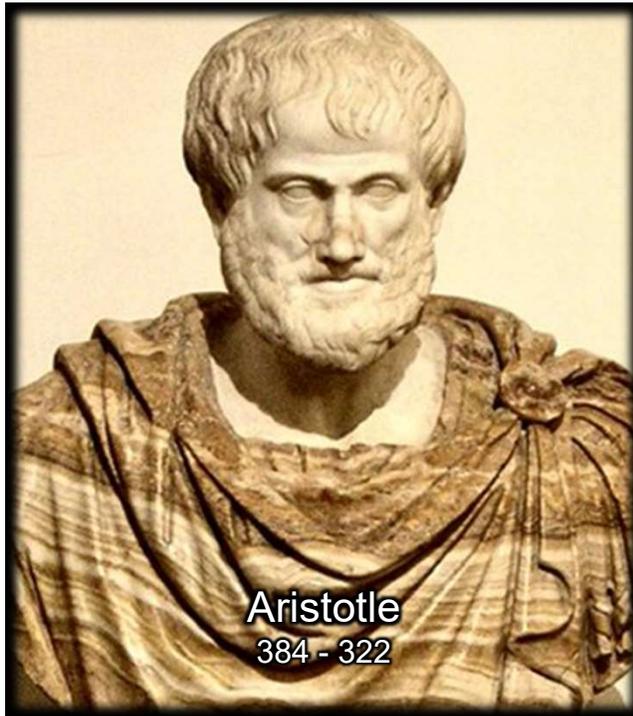
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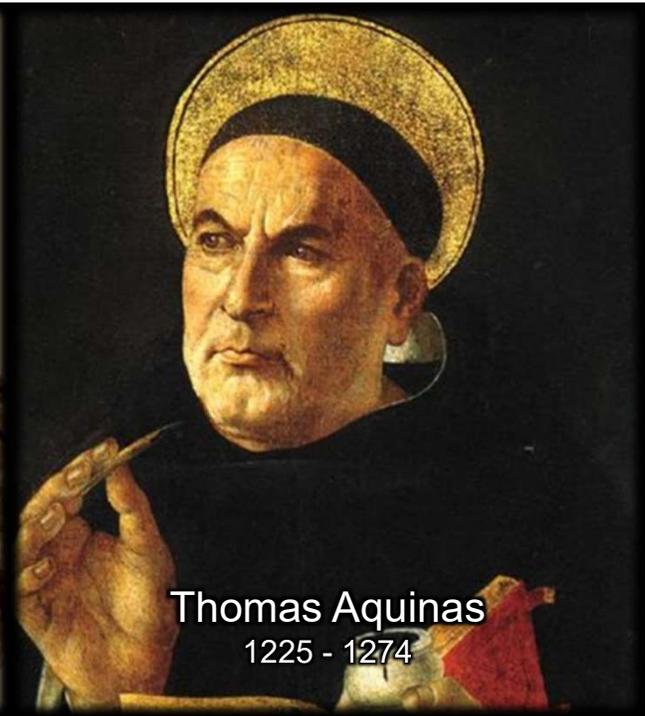
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v



Aristotle  
384 - 322



Thomas Aquinas  
1225 - 1274

## **Both Reason in Terms of:**

**formal and material logic**

**actuality and potentiality**

**material, formal, efficient,  
and final causes**

**the division of the sciences into the  
theoretical, the practical,  
and the productive**

## **Both Distinguish:**

**the material from the immaterial**

**sensation from intellection**

**the temporal from the eternal**

**the body from the soul**

## Both:

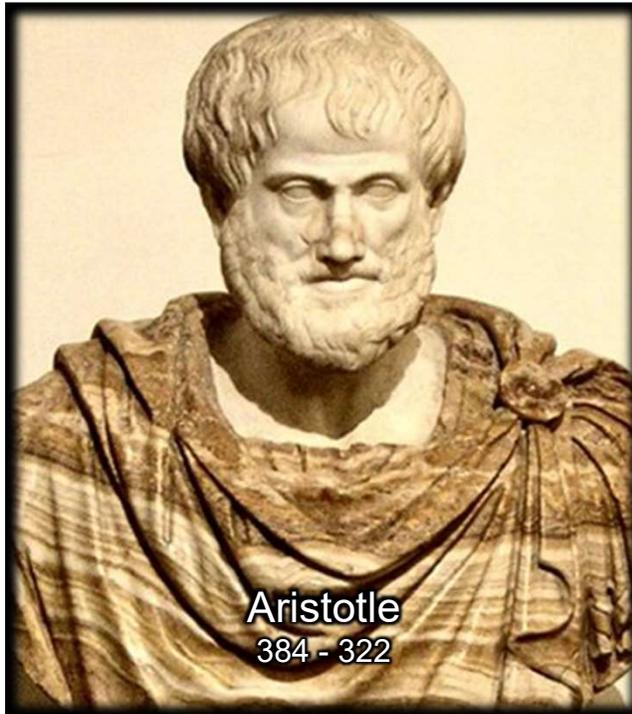
regard intellectual contemplation as the supreme goal of human striving

look upon free choice as the source of moral action

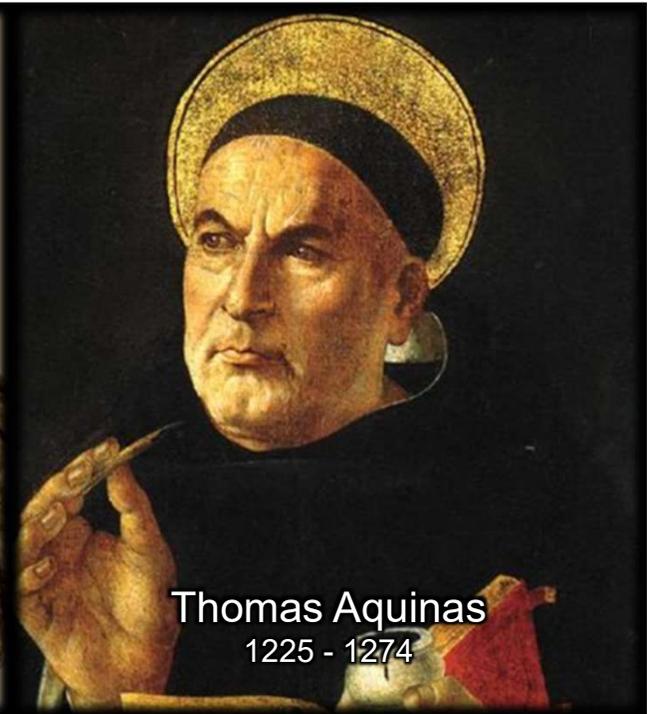
ground all naturally attainable human knowledge on external sensible things, instead of on sensations, ideas, or language

look upon cognition as a way of being in which knower and thing known are one and the same in the actuality of the cognition



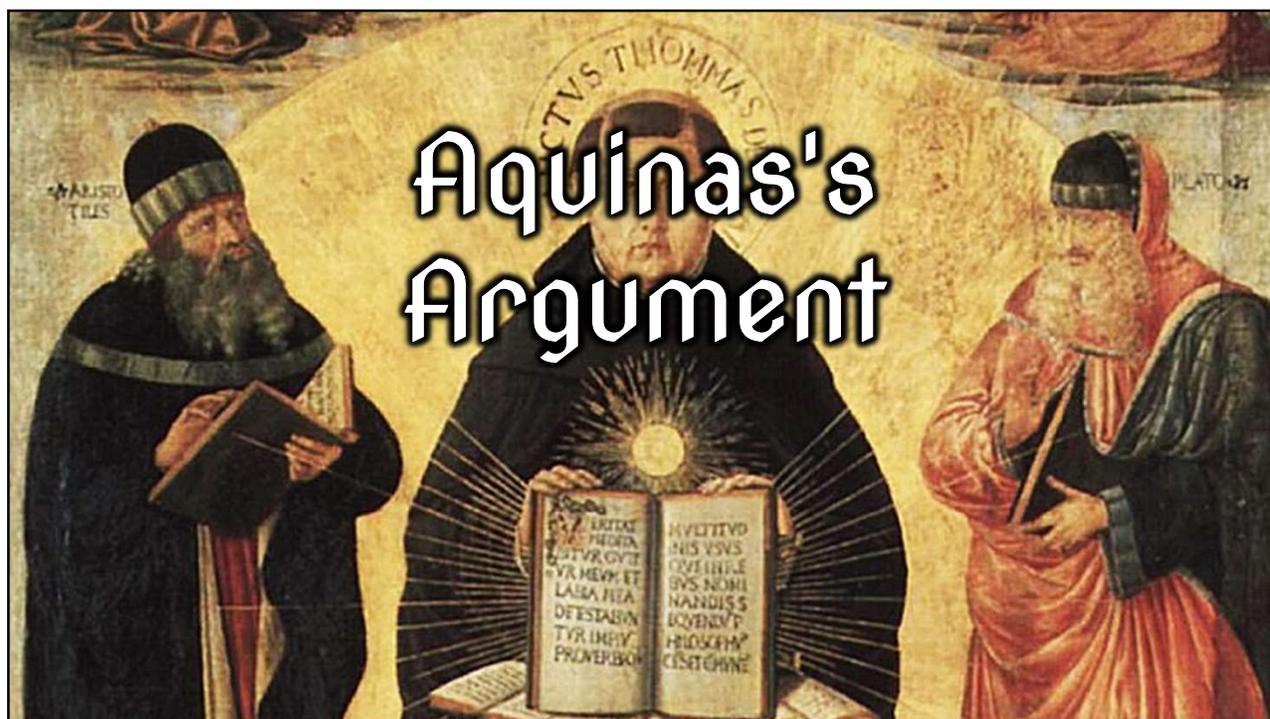


Aristotle  
384 - 322

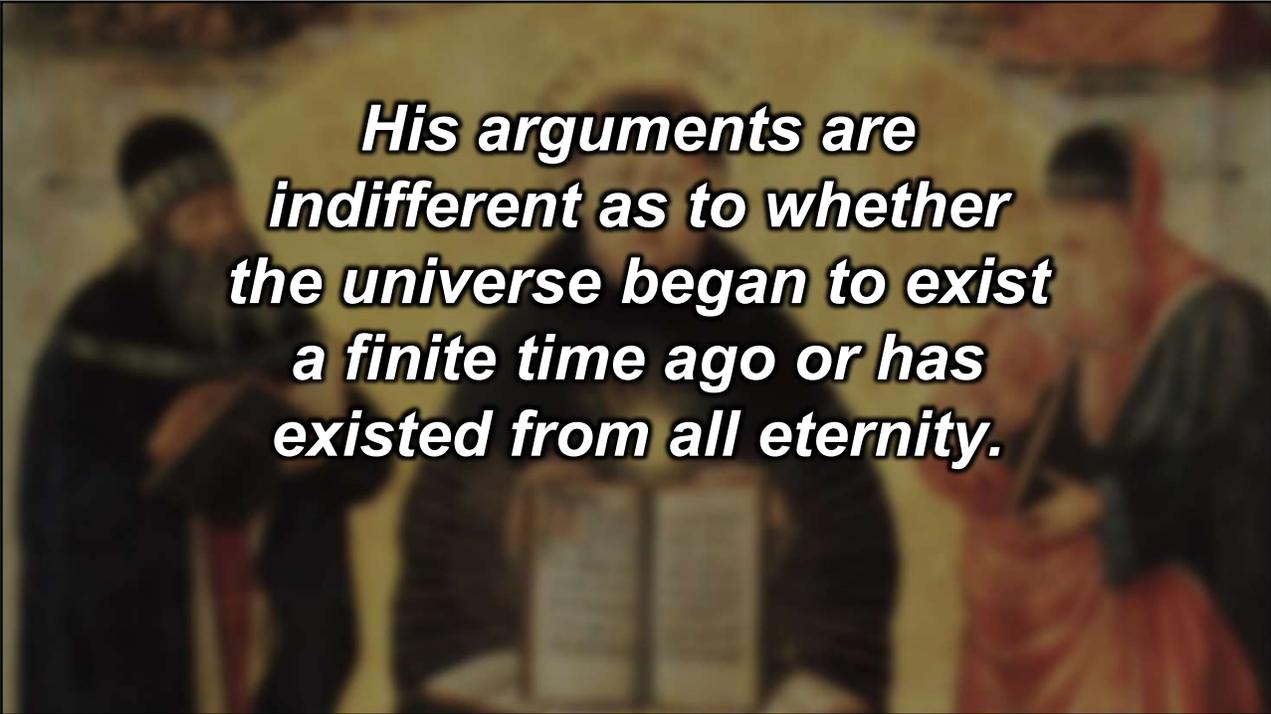


Thomas Aquinas  
1225 - 1274

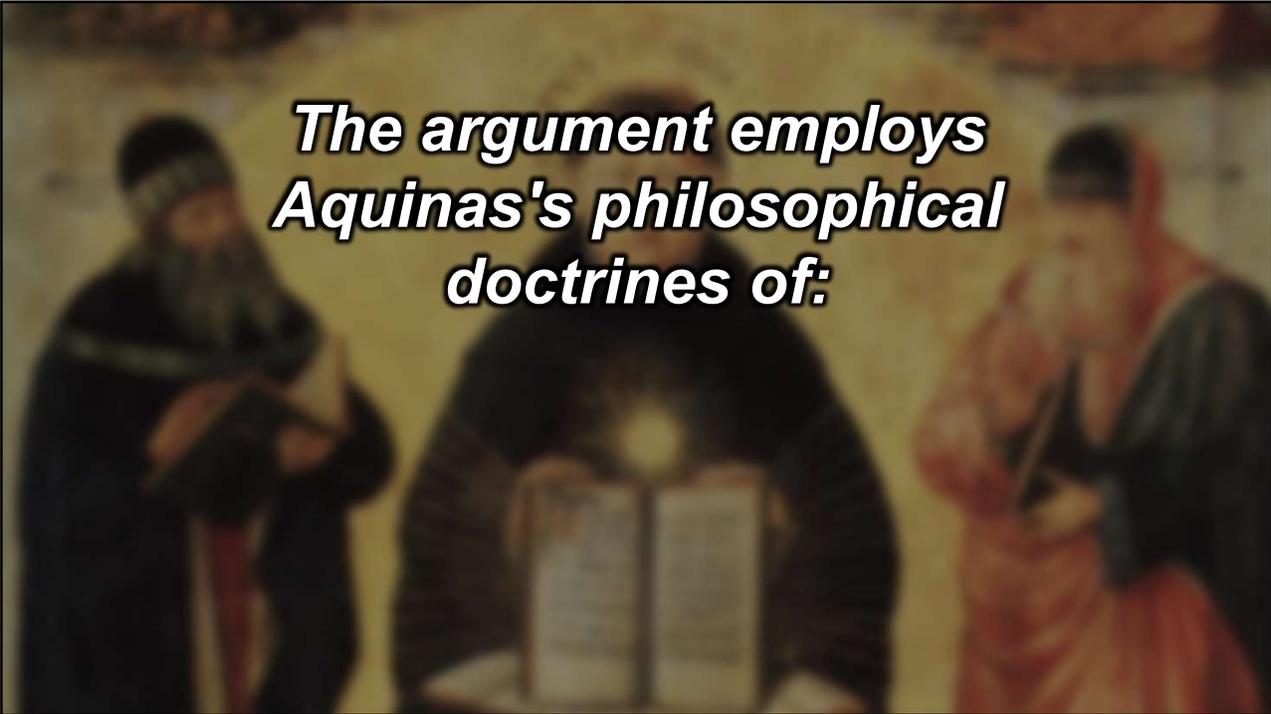
no metaphysical category of existence as such (only a logical distinction)	existence is the actuality of all actualities and the perfection of all perfections
highest element in metaphysics is Form	highest element in metaphysics is existence
for every being, to be is to be a Form	existence is distinct from essence in sensible creatures
existence and essence are known through the same intellectual act	existence and essence are known by different intellectual acts
no connection between ultimate reality in metaphysics and ultimate reality in religion	Ultimate category in metaphysics is being; God is infinite being itself ( <i>ipsum esse subsistens</i> )



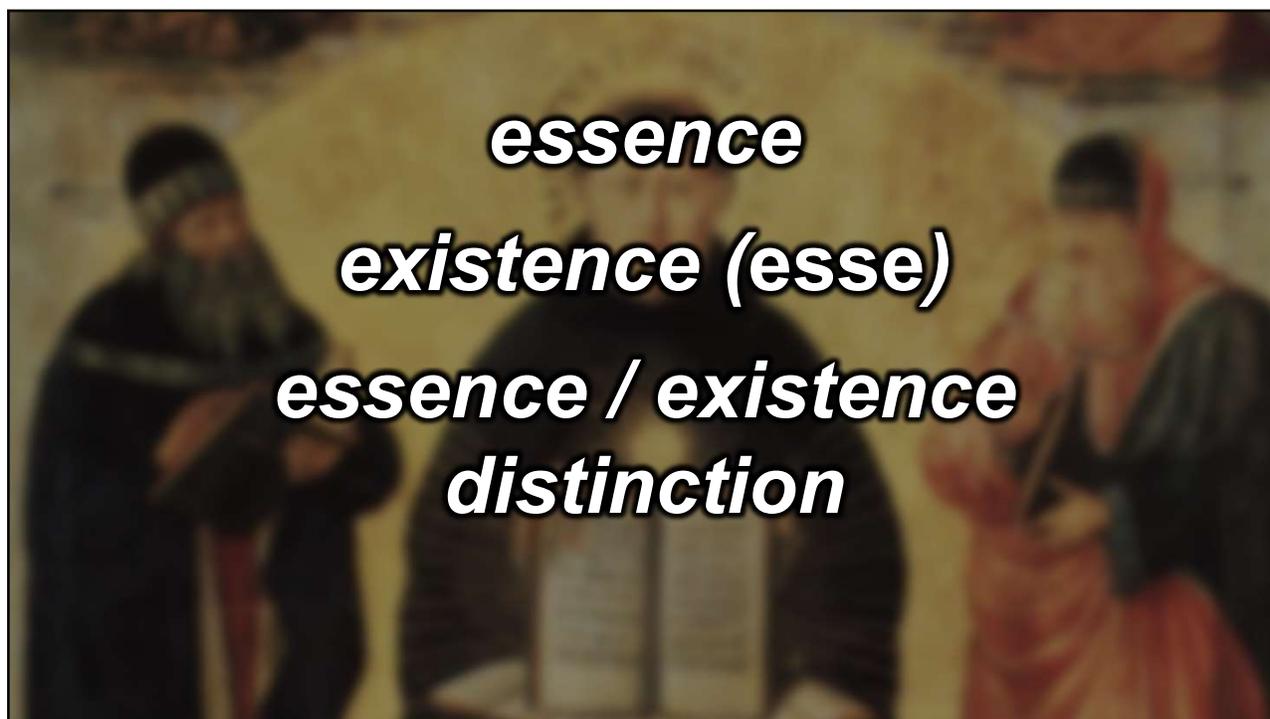
*All of Aquinas's arguments demonstrate, not that there is a cause of the universe's **beginning to exist**, but that there is a cause of the universe's **current existing**.*



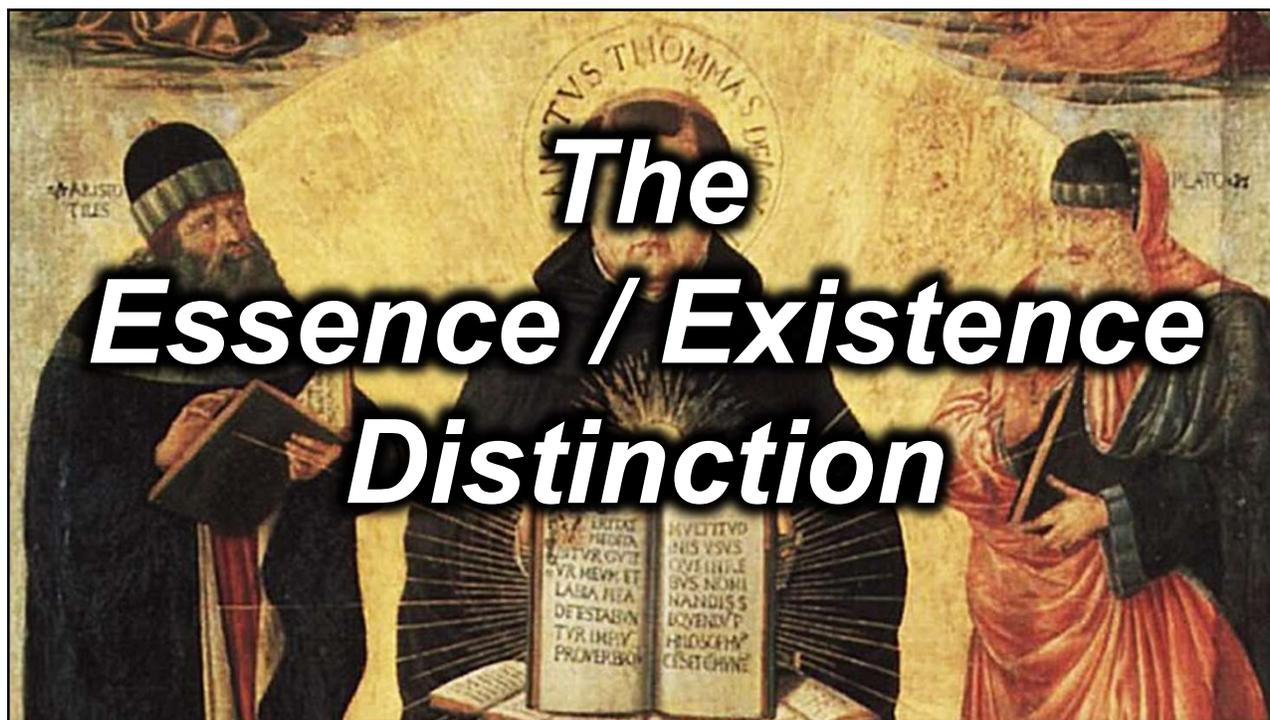
***His arguments are indifferent as to whether the universe began to exist a finite time ago or has existed from all eternity.***



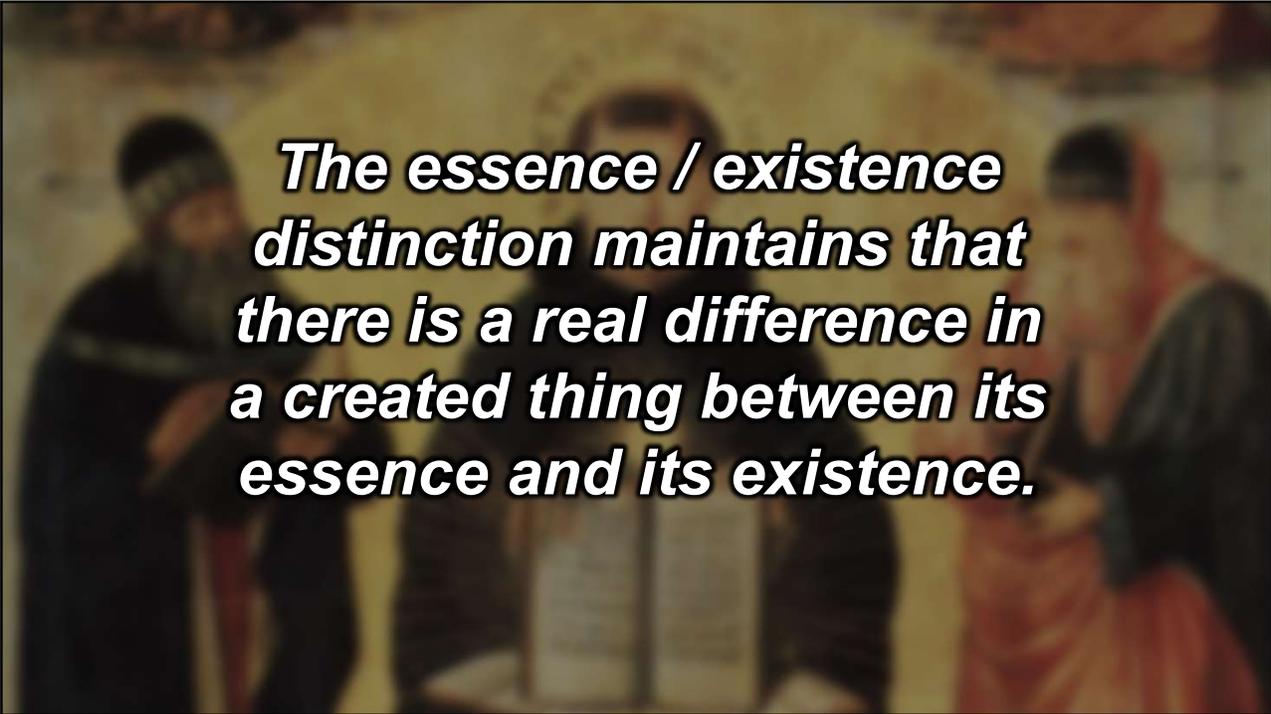
***The argument employs Aquinas's philosophical doctrines of:***



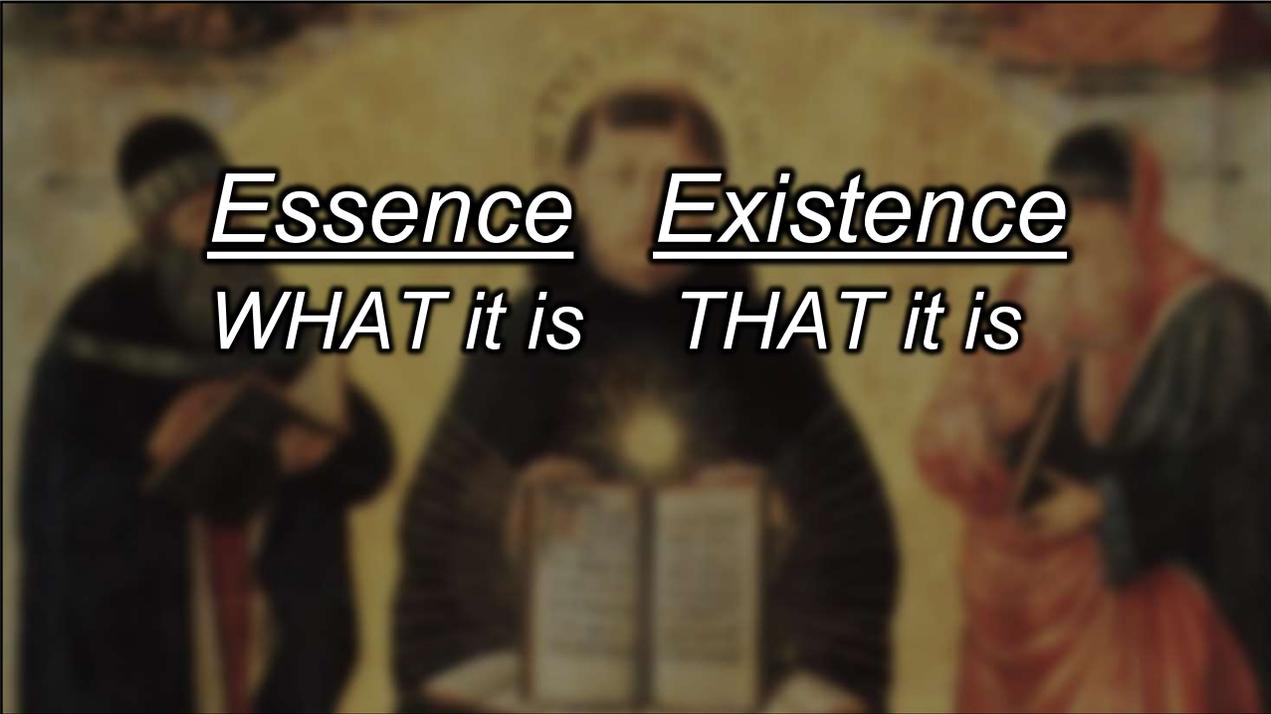
**essence**  
**existence (esse)**  
**essence / existence**  
**distinction**



**The**  
**Essence / Existence**  
**Distinction**



***The essence / existence distinction maintains that there is a real difference in a created thing between its essence and its existence.***



**Essence      Existence**  
***WHAT it is      THAT it is***

# "What-ness"

*with respect to a thing's operations:*

*Nature*

*with respect to a thing's matter:*

*Form*

*with respect to a thing's accidents:*

*Substance*

*with respect to a thing's intellect:*

*Quiddity*

*with respect to a thing's existence:*

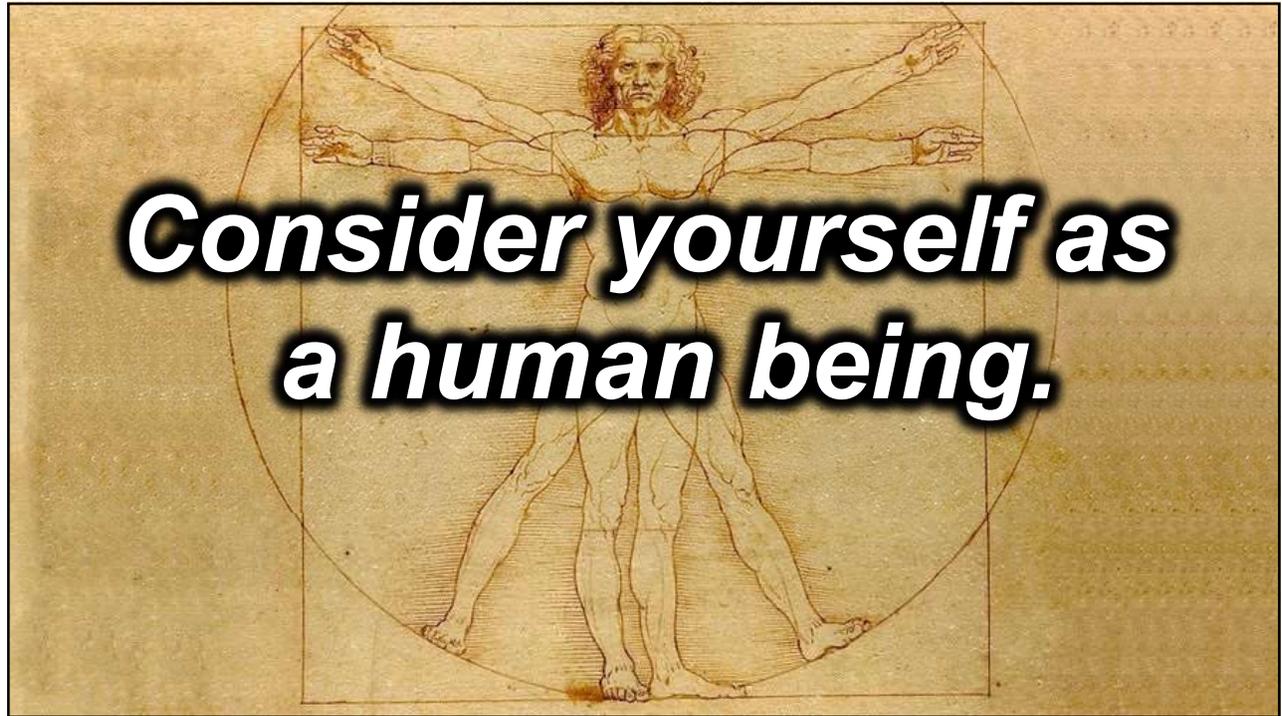
*Essence*

**"Everything that is in the genus of substance is composite with a real composition, because whatever is in the category of substance is subsistent in its own existence, and its own act of existing must be distinct from the thing itself; otherwise it could not be distinct in existence from the other things with which it agrees in the formal character of its quiddity; for such agreement is required in all things that are directly in a category. Consequently everything that is directly in the category of substance is composed at least of the act of being and the subject of being."**

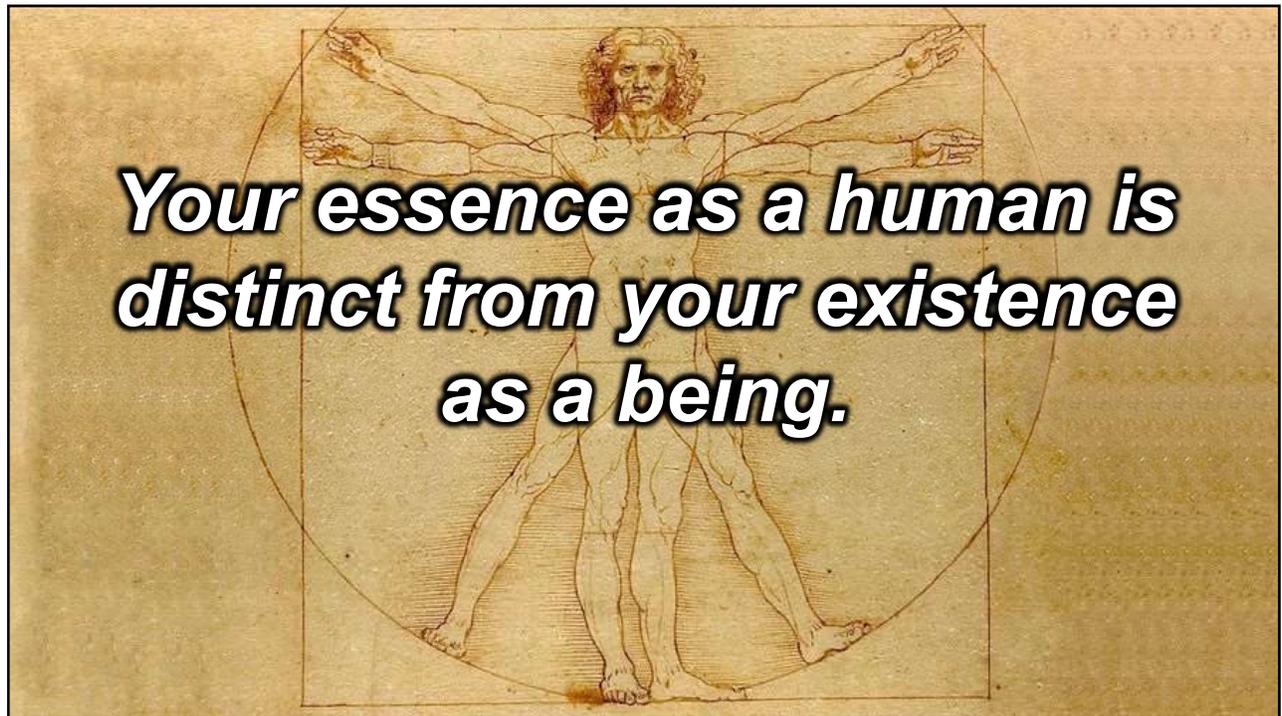
[*On Truth (De Veritate)* XXVII, 1, ad. 8, trans. Robert W. Schmidt (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), v. 3, pp. 311-312]



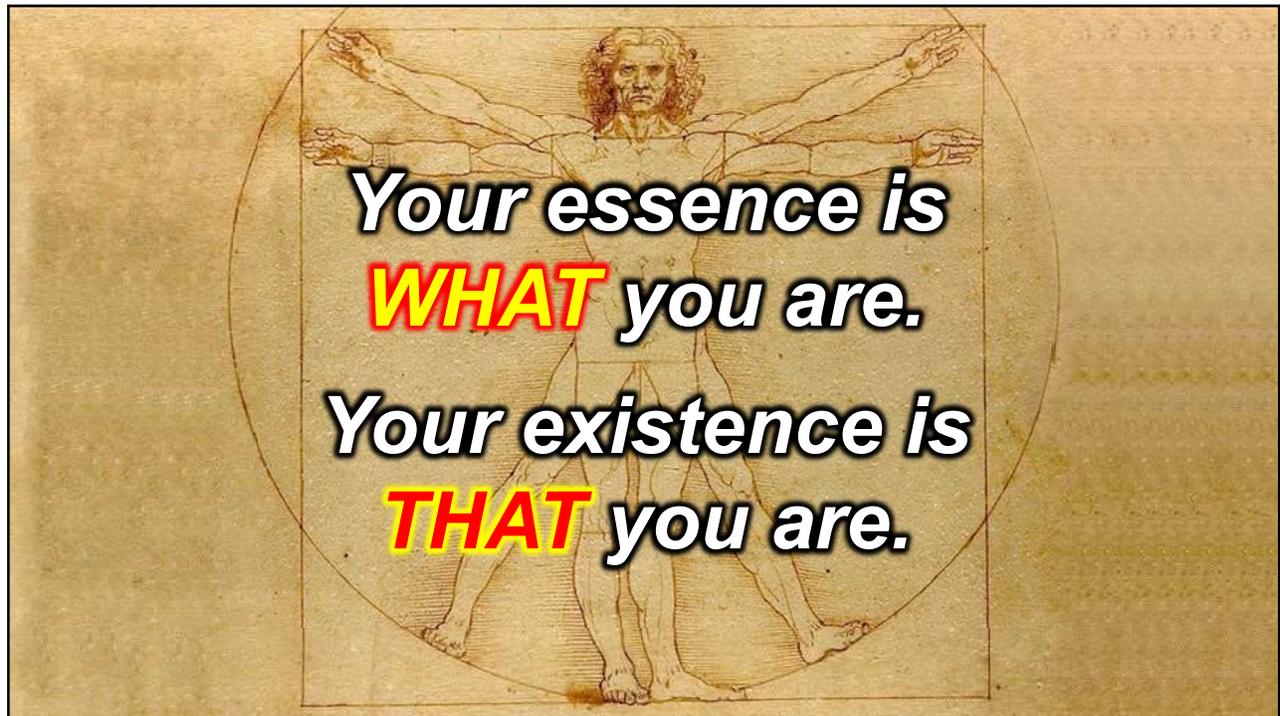
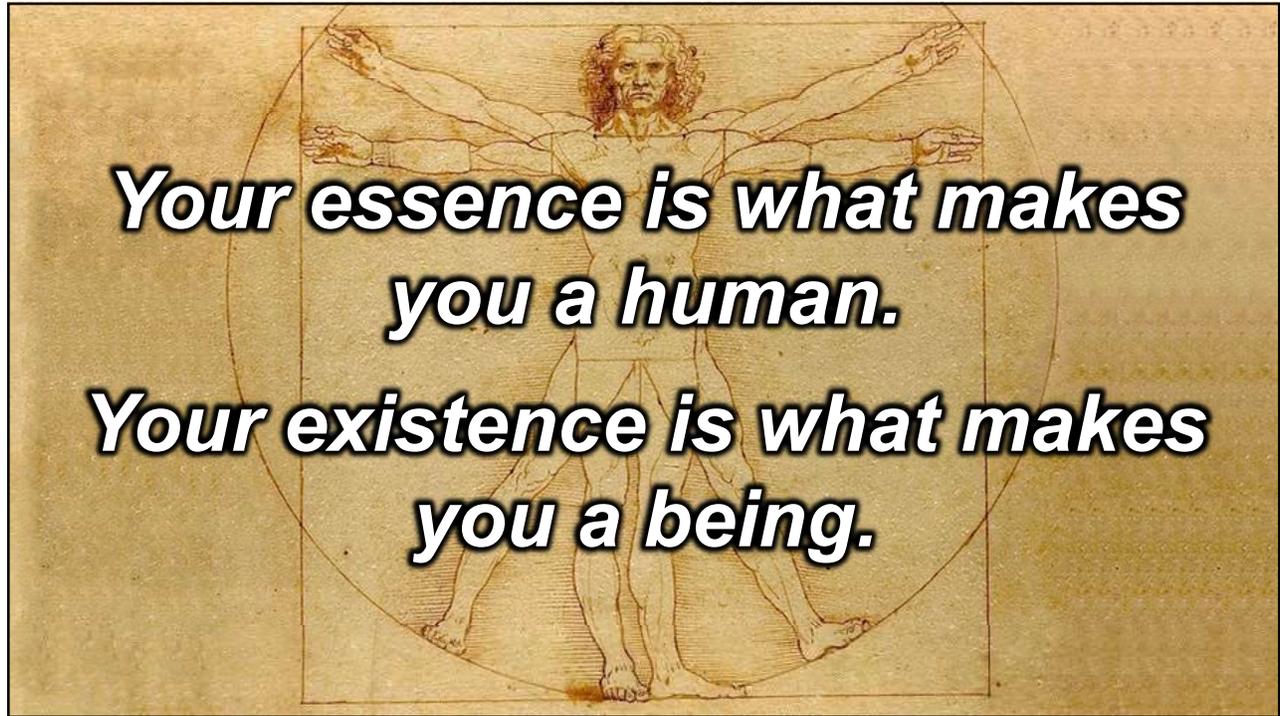
**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

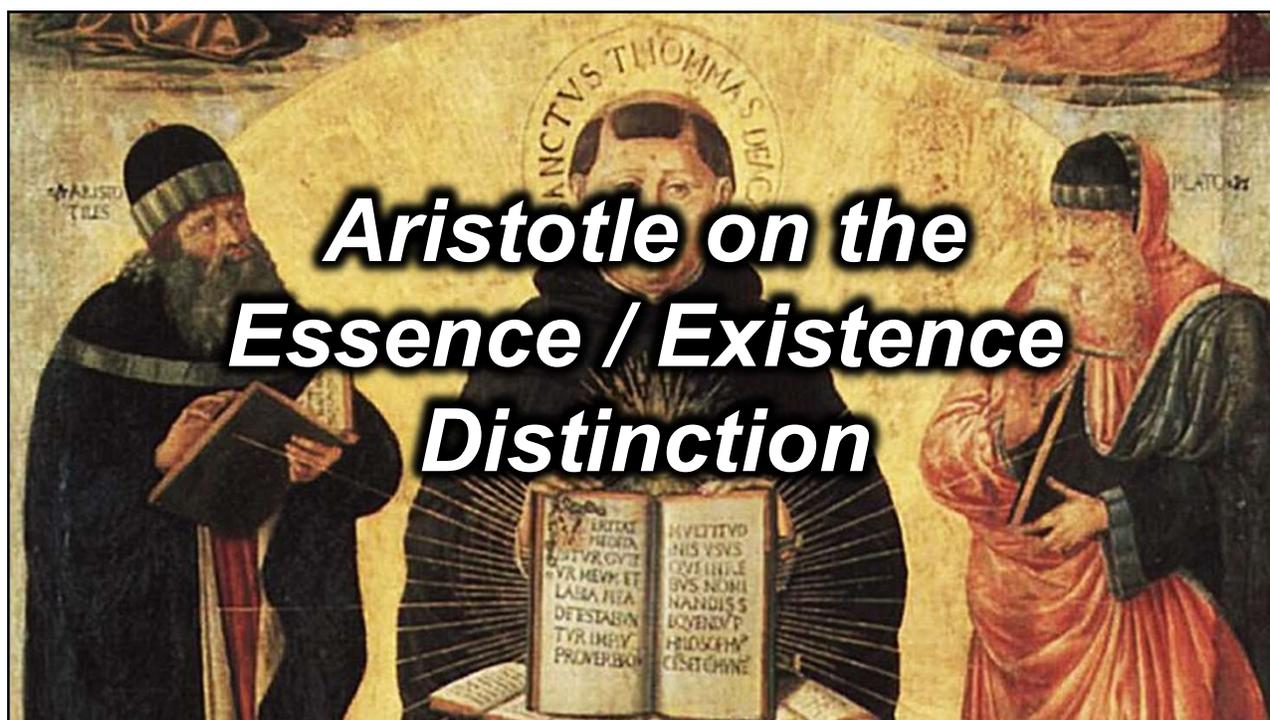
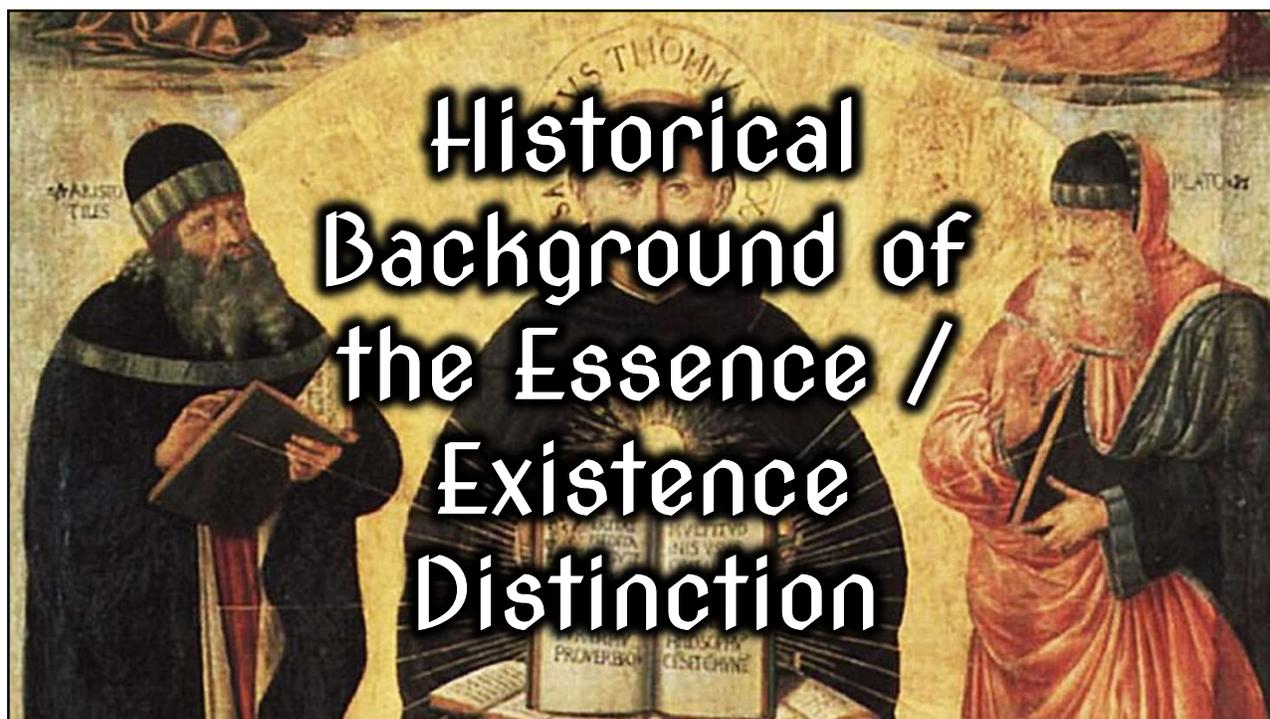


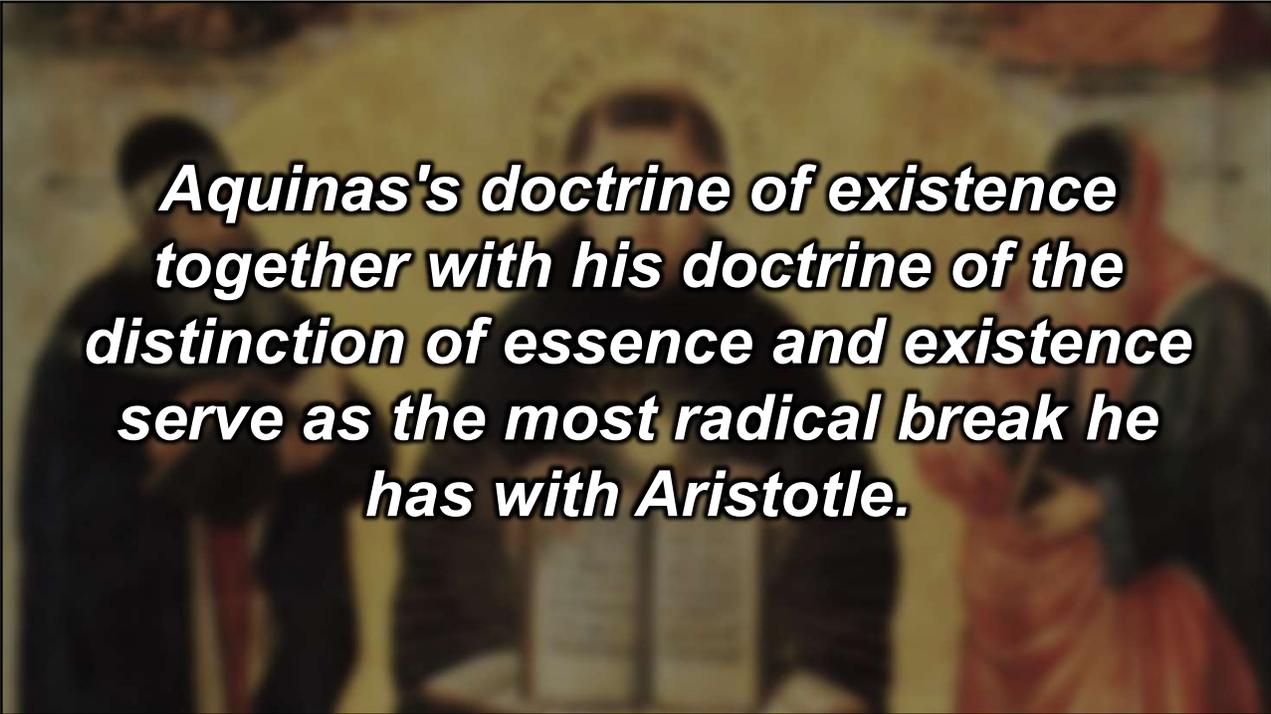
***Consider yourself as  
a human being.***



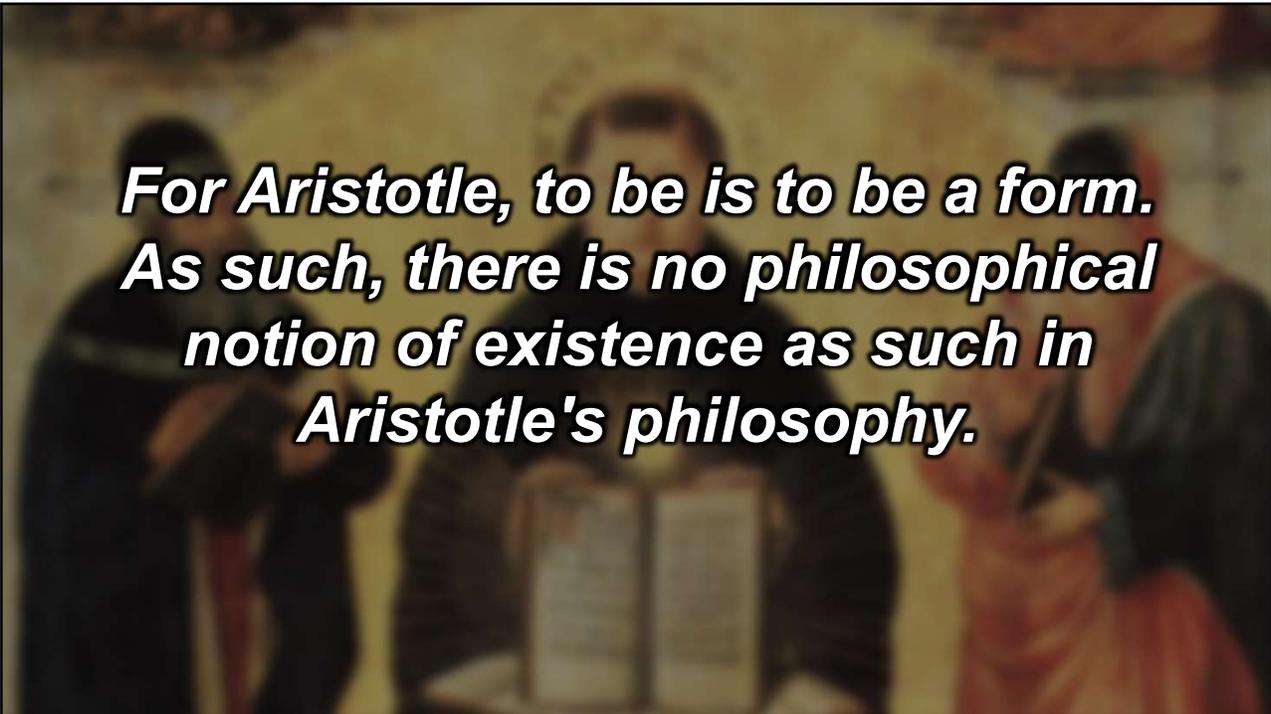
***Your essence as a human is  
distinct from your existence  
as a being.***



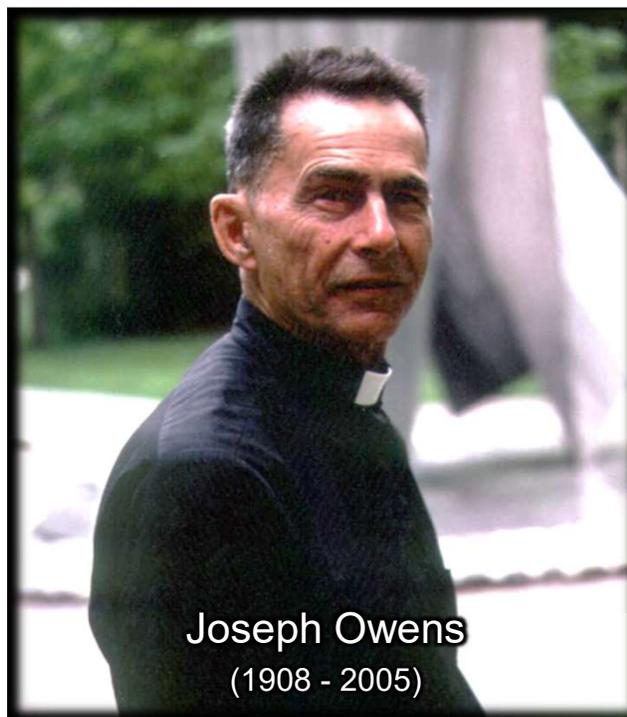




***Aquinas's doctrine of existence together with his doctrine of the distinction of essence and existence serve as the most radical break he has with Aristotle.***



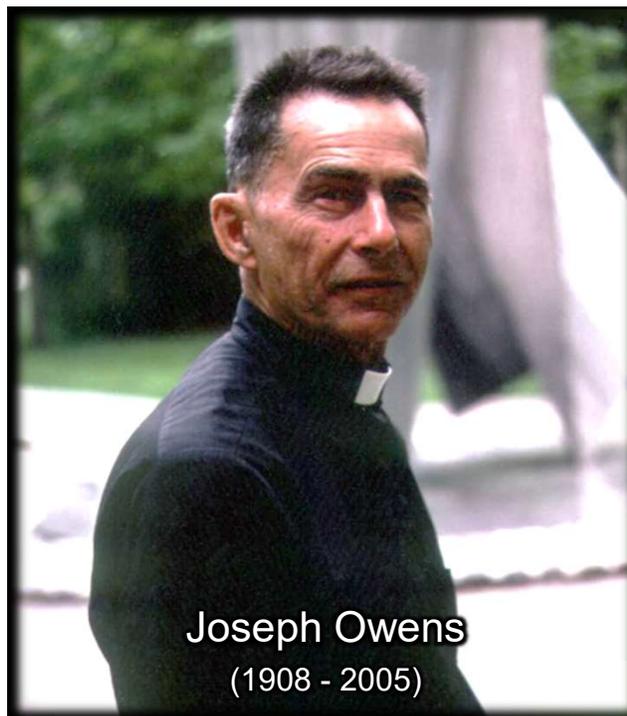
***For Aristotle, to be is to be a form. As such, there is no philosophical notion of existence as such in Aristotle's philosophy.***



Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

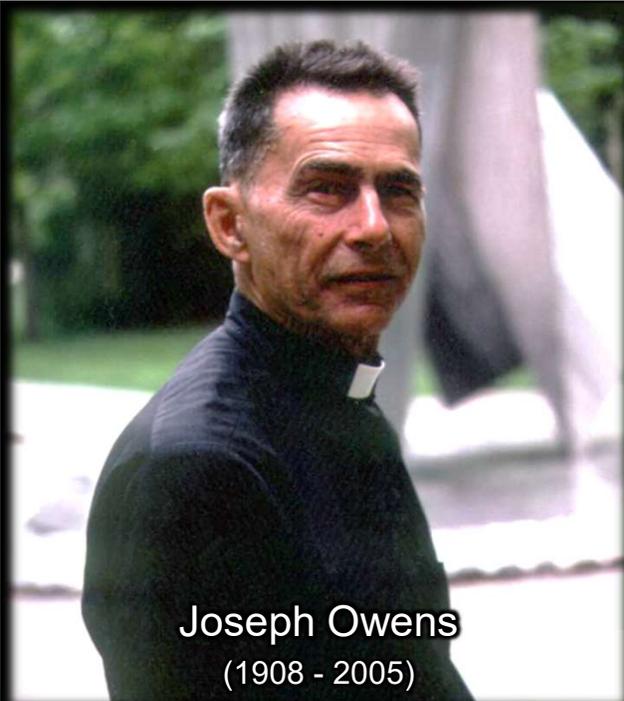
**"For Aristotle, to be actualized meant to acquire form. For Aquinas, it meant to be brought into existence, since for him existence is the actuality of every form or nature."**

["Aquinas and the Five Ways," *Monist* 58 (January 1974): 21]



Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

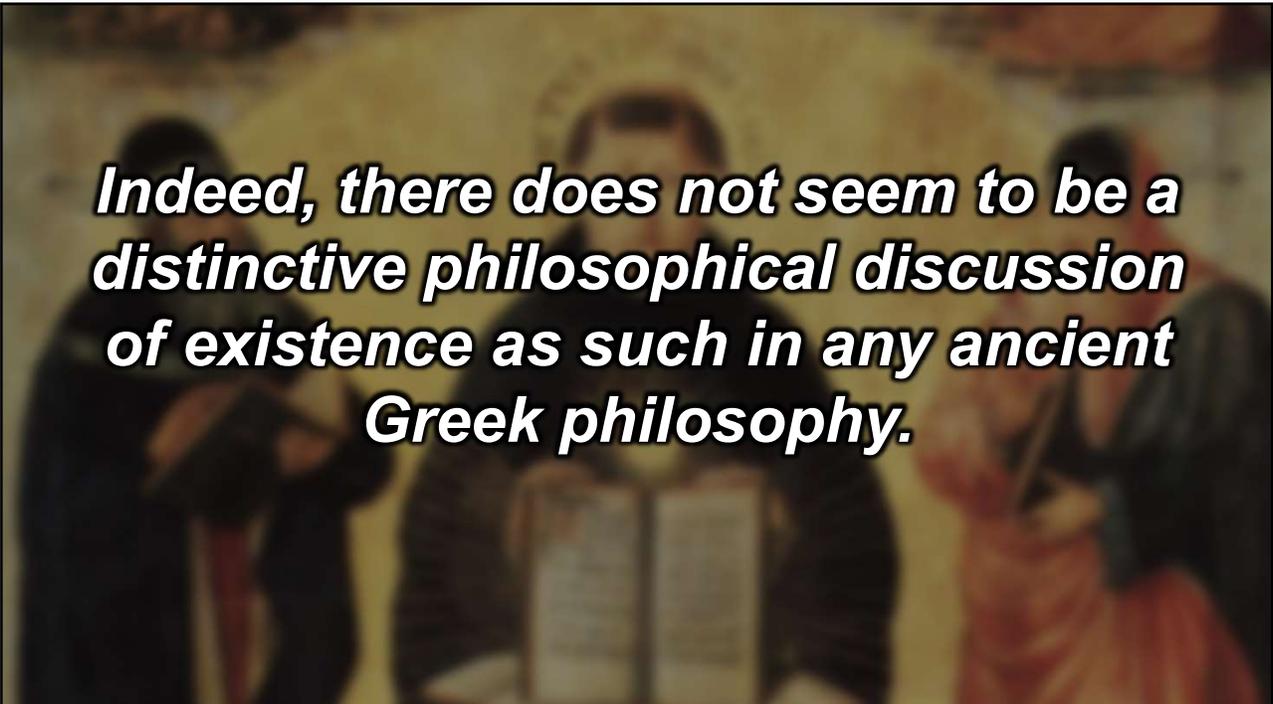
**"From the viewpoint of the much later distinction between essence and the act of existing, this treatment must mean that Aristotle is leaving the act of existing, entirely outside the scope of his philosophy."**

A portrait of Joseph Owens, a man with short dark hair, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera.

**Joseph Owens**  
(1908 - 2005)

**"The act of existing must be wholly escaping his *scientific* consideration. All necessary and definite connections between things can be reduced to **essence.**"**

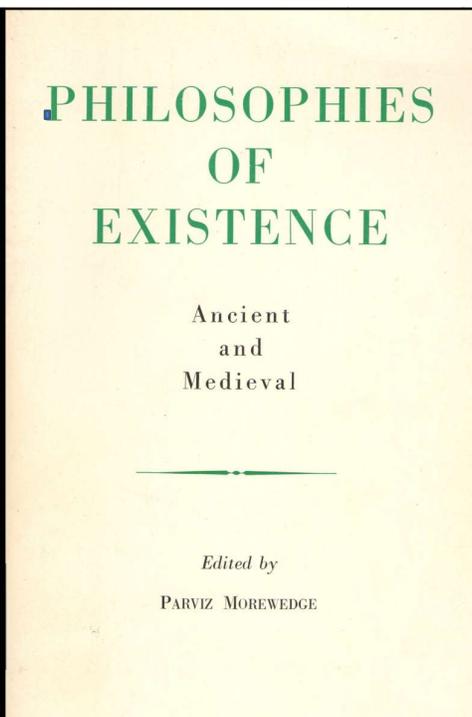
[Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics: A Study in the Greek Background of Mediaeval Thought*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies), 309 emphasis in original]

A blurred background image showing several people in a room, possibly a classroom or lecture hall. One person in the center is holding a book or a tablet.

***Indeed, there does not seem to be a distinctive philosophical discussion of existence as such in any ancient Greek philosophy.***



Parviz Morewedge



Charles H. Kahn

Author of "Why Existence Did Not Emerge as a Distinct Concept in Greek Philosophy"



Parviz Morewedge

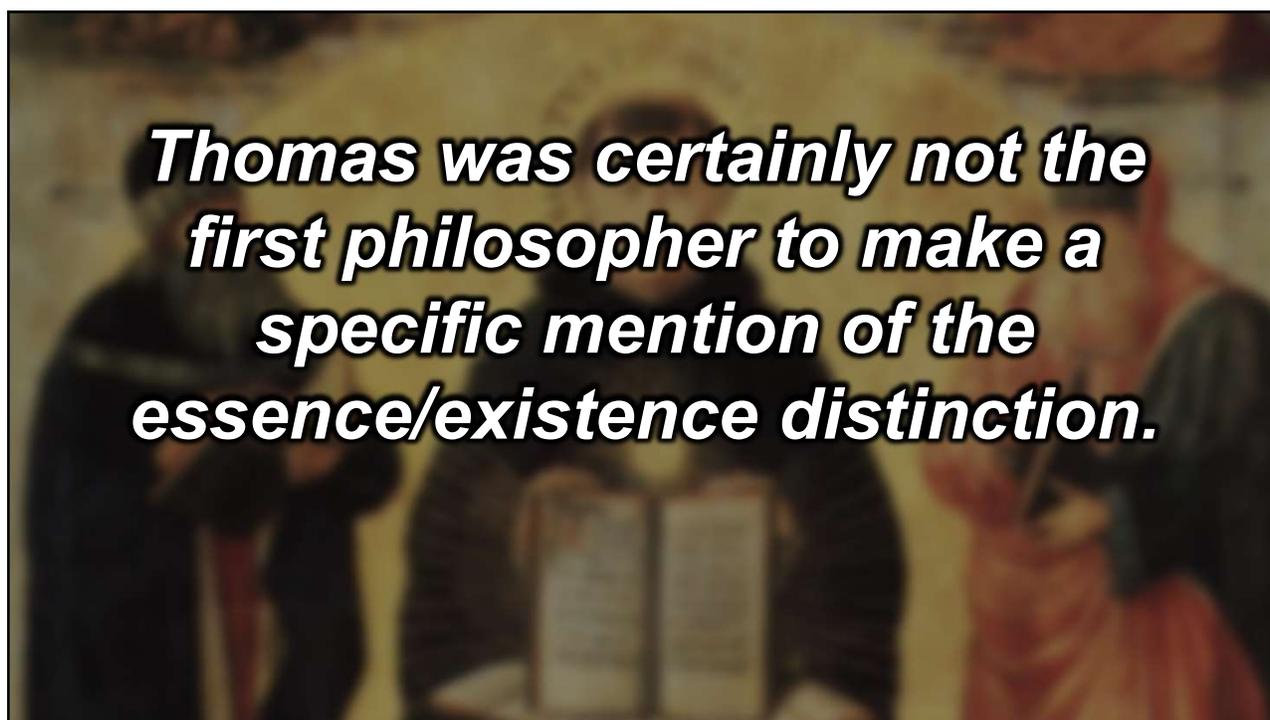
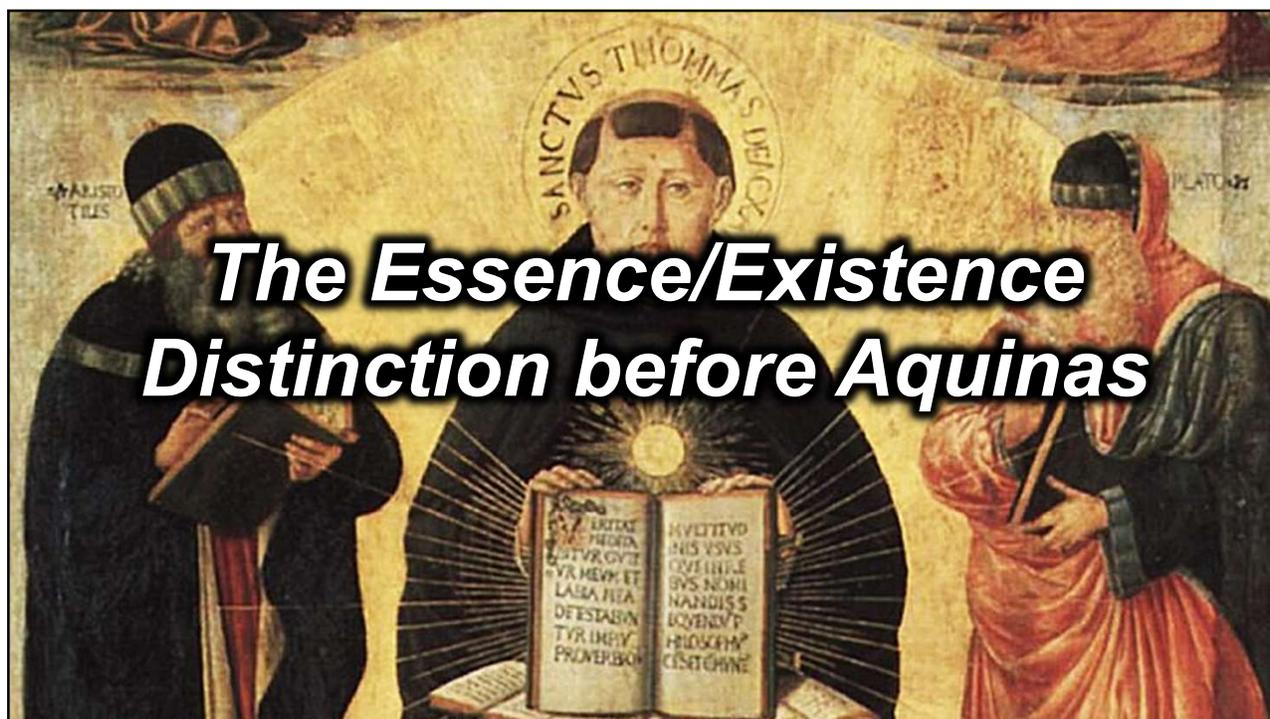
"The upshot is that, although we can recognize at least three different kinds of existential questions discussed by Aristotle, Aristotle himself neither distinguishes these questions from one another nor brings them together under any common head or topic which might be set in contrast to other themes in his general discussion of Being."

[Charles H. Kahn, "Why Existence Does Not Emerge as a Distinct Concept in Greek Philosophy," in *Philosophies of Existence: Ancient and Medieval*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 10]

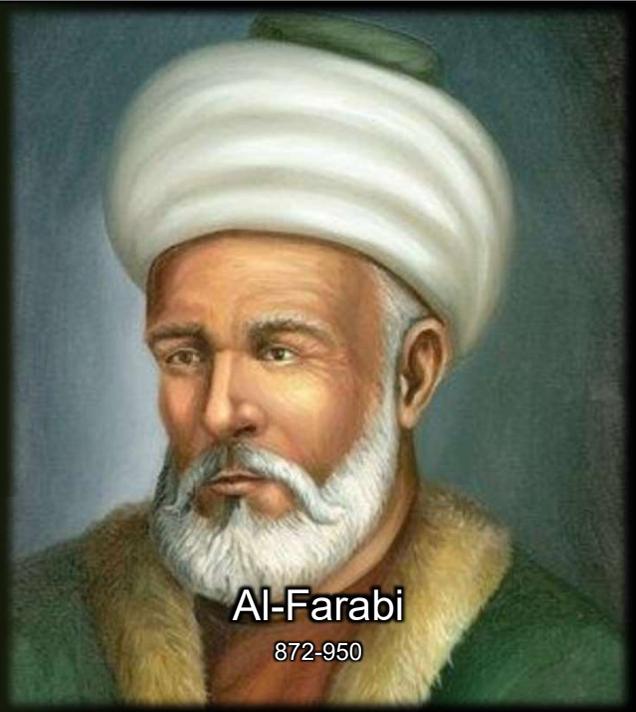


Charles H. Kahn

Author of "Why Existence Did Not Emerge as a Distinct Concept in Greek Philosophy"

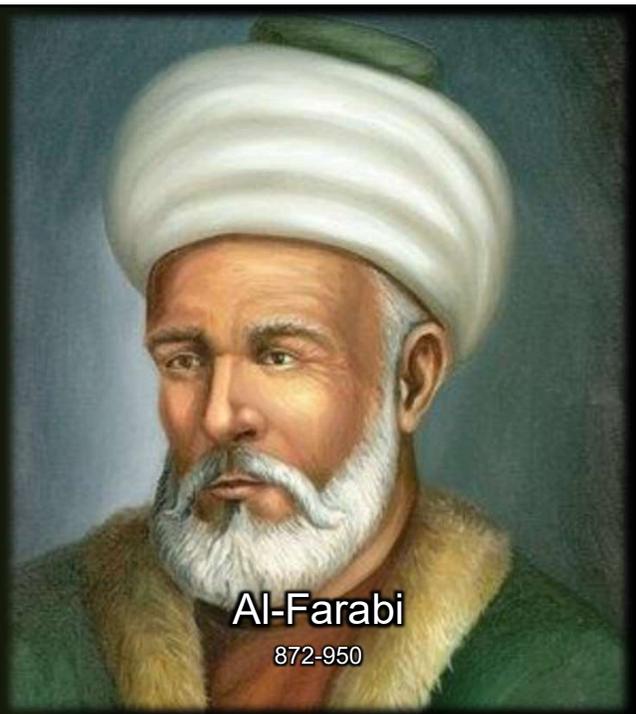


***There is an earlier mention of it is by the tenth century Arabic philosopher Al-Farabi.***

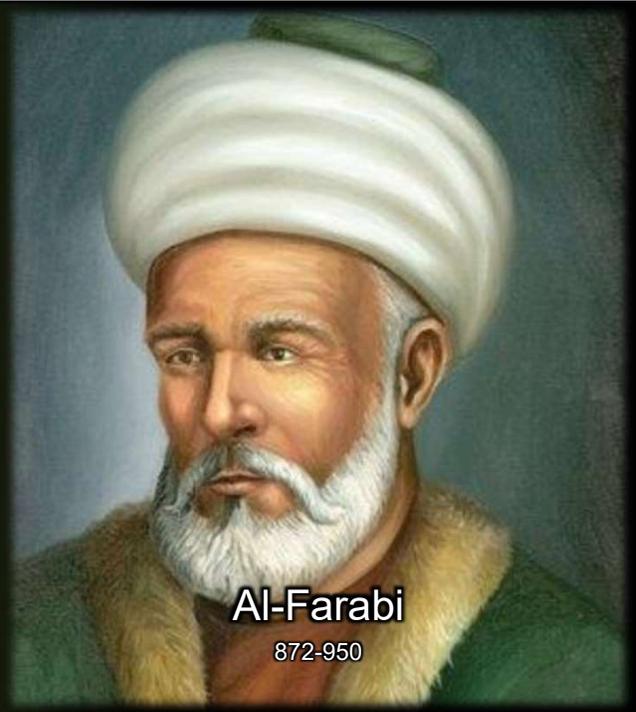


***"We admit that essence and existence are distinct in existing things. The essence is not the existence, and it does not come under its comprehension."***

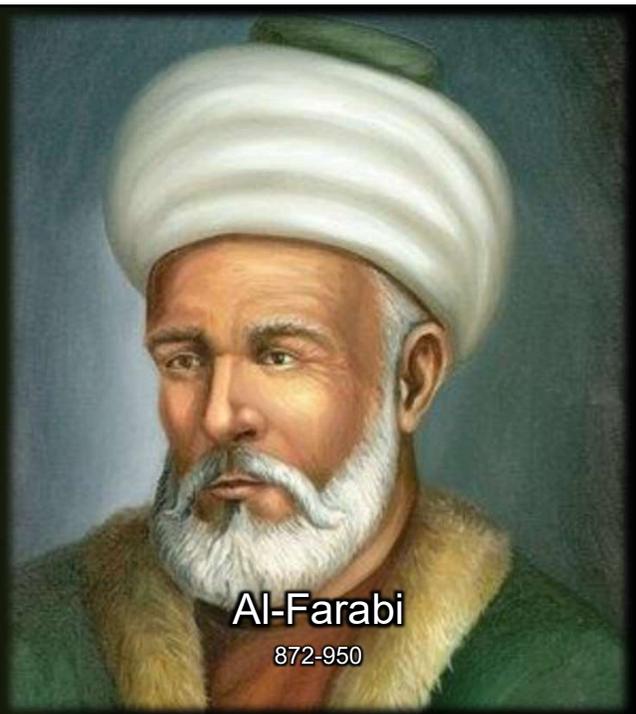
[This is a tertiary quote. Djemil Saliba quotes Alfarabi in his *Etude sur la métaphysique*, pp. 84-85. Saliba is quoted by Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955, reprinted 1972), 186]



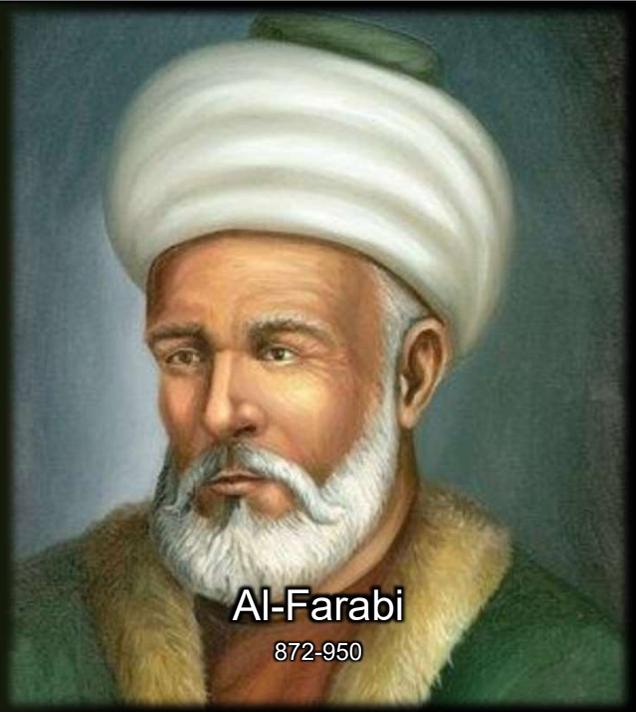
***"If the essence of man implied his existence, to conceive his essence would also be to conceive his existence, and it would be enough to know what a man is, in order to know that man exists, so that every representation would entail an affirmation.***



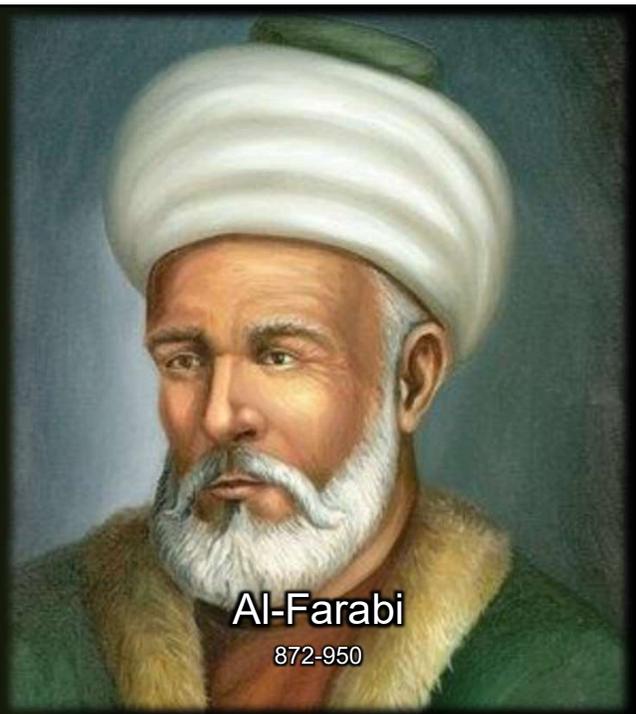
***"But the same token, existence is not included in the essence of things; otherwise it could become one of their constitutive characters,***



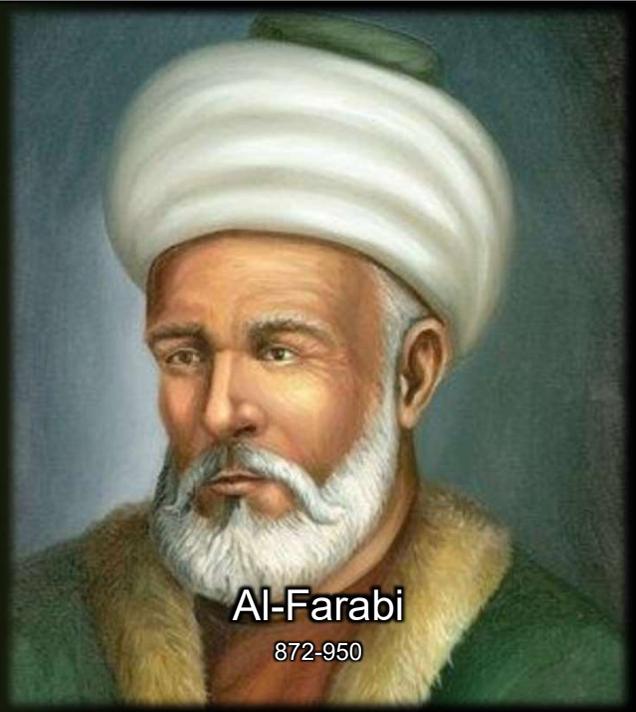
***"and the representation of what essence is would remain incomplete without the representation of its existence. And what is more, it would be impossible for us to separate them by the imagination.***



***"If man's existence coincided with his corporeal and animal nature, there would be nobody who, having an exact idea of what man is, and knowing is corporeal and animal nature,***

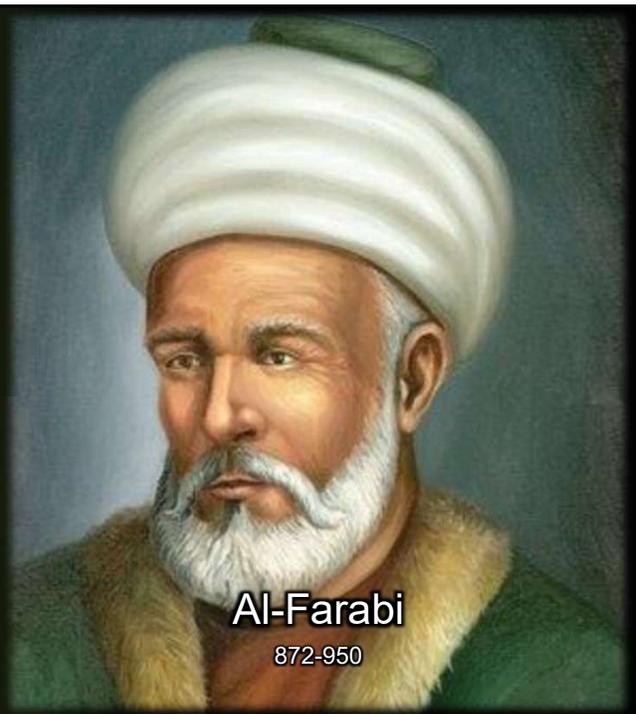


**"could question man's existence. But that is not the way it is, and we doubt the existence of things until we have direct perception of them through the senses, or mediate perception through a proof.**

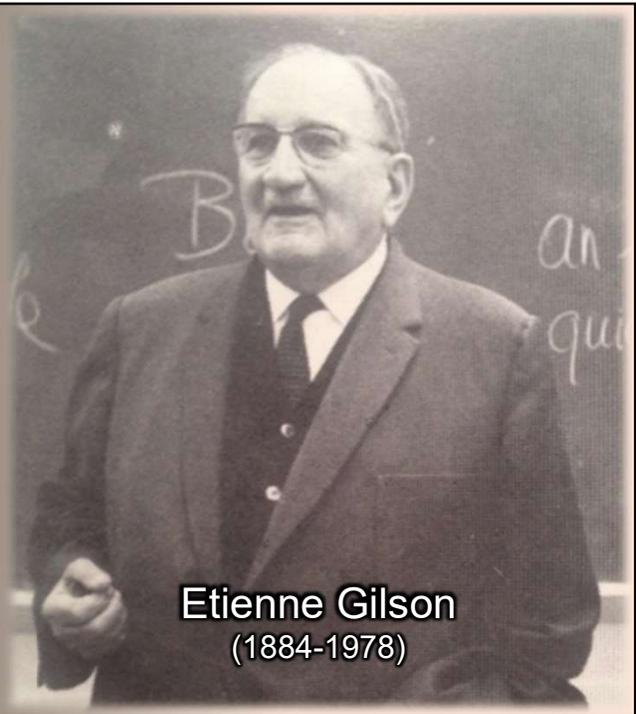


**"If Thus existence is not a constitutive character, it is only an accessory accident."**

[This is a tertiary quote. Djemil Saliba quotes Alfarabi in his *Etude sur la métaphysique*, pp. 84-85. Saliba is quoted by Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955, reprinted 1972), 186]

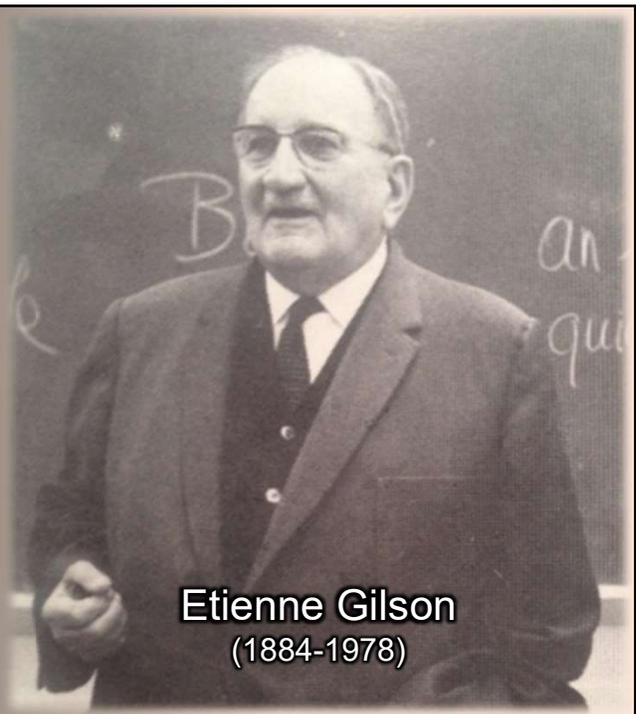


***"In order not to confuse this important metaphysical move [in Alfarabi] with later ones, it should be noted that the primacy of essence dominates the whole argumentation. Not for an instant is there any doubt that existence is a predicate of essence, and because it is not essentially included in it, it is considered an 'accident.'***



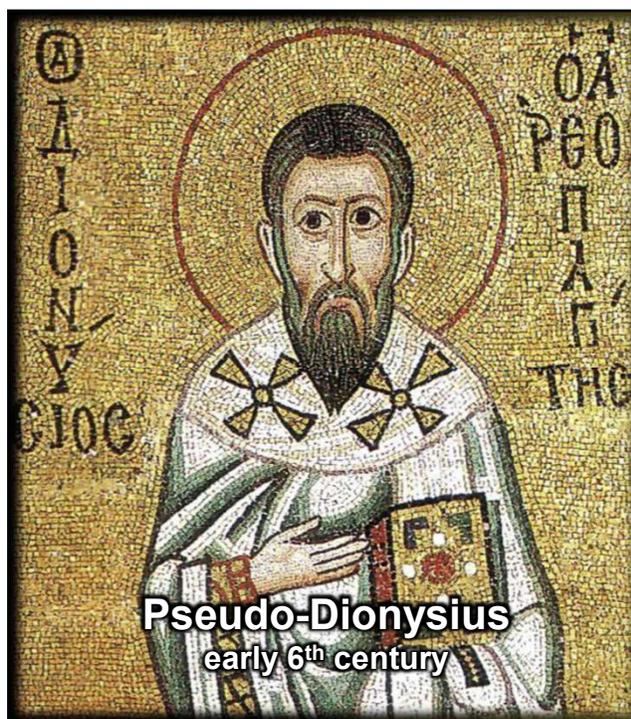
**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

***"We are still far away from the Thomistic position, which will deny both that existence is included in essence and that it is accidental to it. With Thomas Aquinas, existence will become the 'act' of essence, and therefore the act of being; we are not there, but we are on the way to it.***



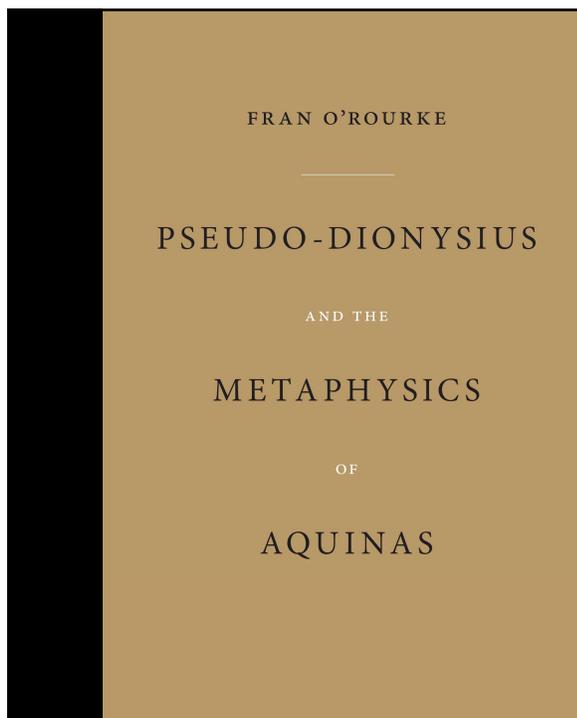
**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

[Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 186]

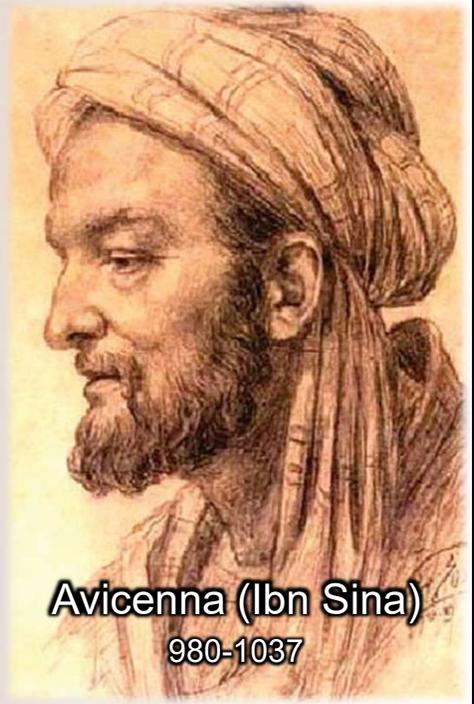


**Pseudo-Dionysius**  
early 6<sup>th</sup> century

***Further, certain aspects of Aquinas's developed notion of existence was inspired by the earlier thinker Pseudo-Dionysius.***

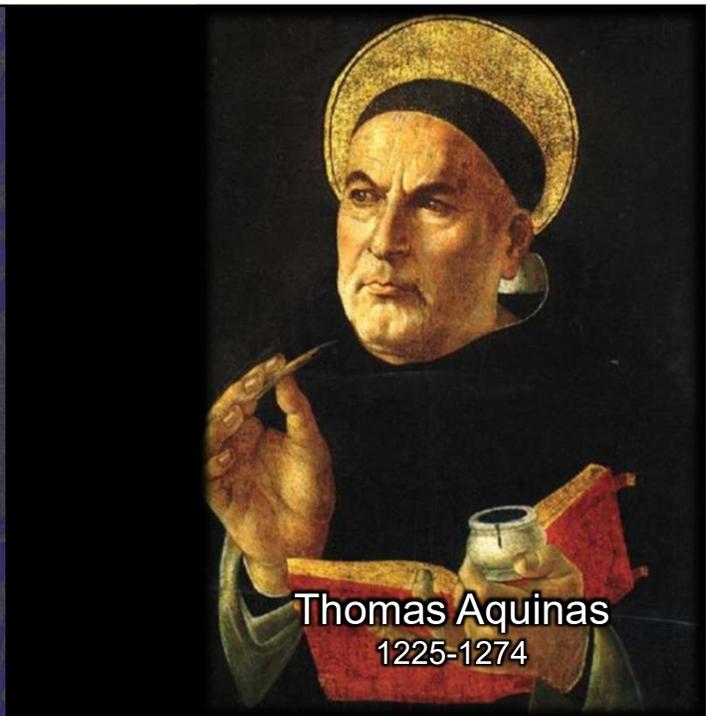
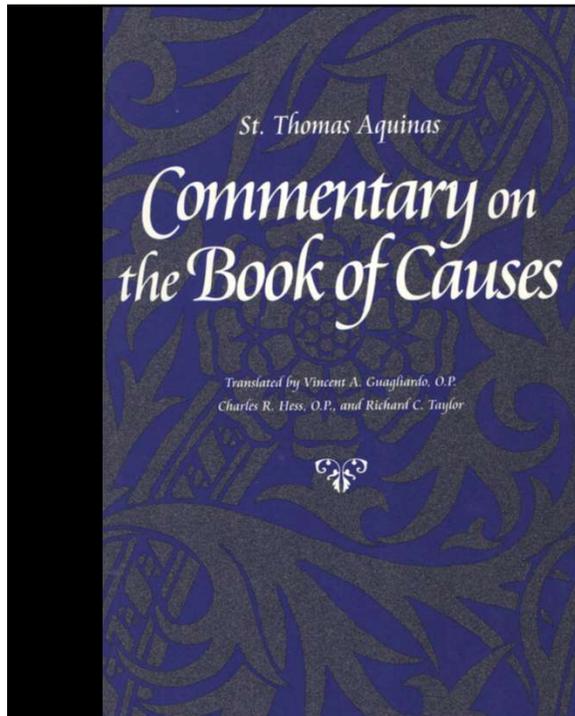


***Probably the biggest influence that suggested the essence/existence distinction was Avicenna, though Aquinas will significantly change the meanings of the terms.***



Avicenna (Ibn Sina)  
980-1037

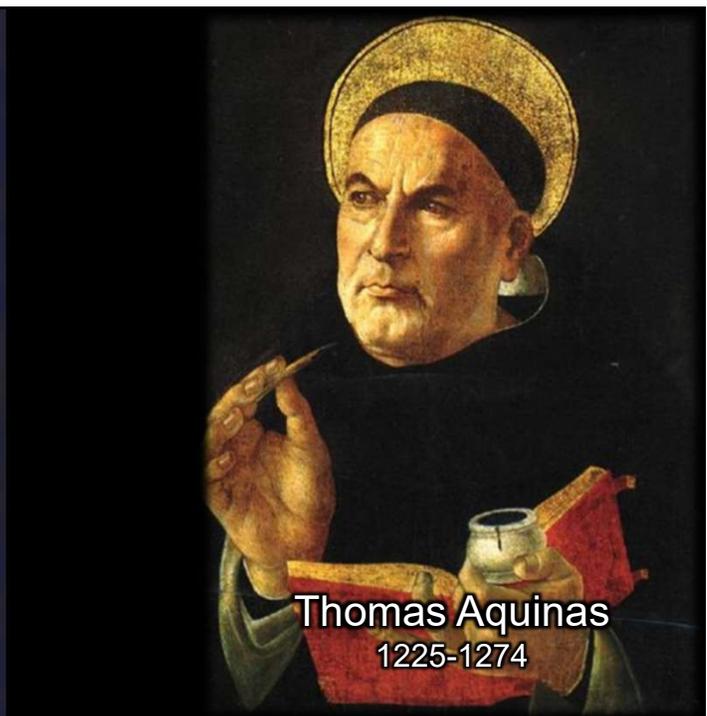
***The language of the distinction between form and being (essence and existence) is also found in the Liber de Causis (Book of Causes, dated late 1000s to early 1100s) and was accommodated by Aquinas for his own purposes.***



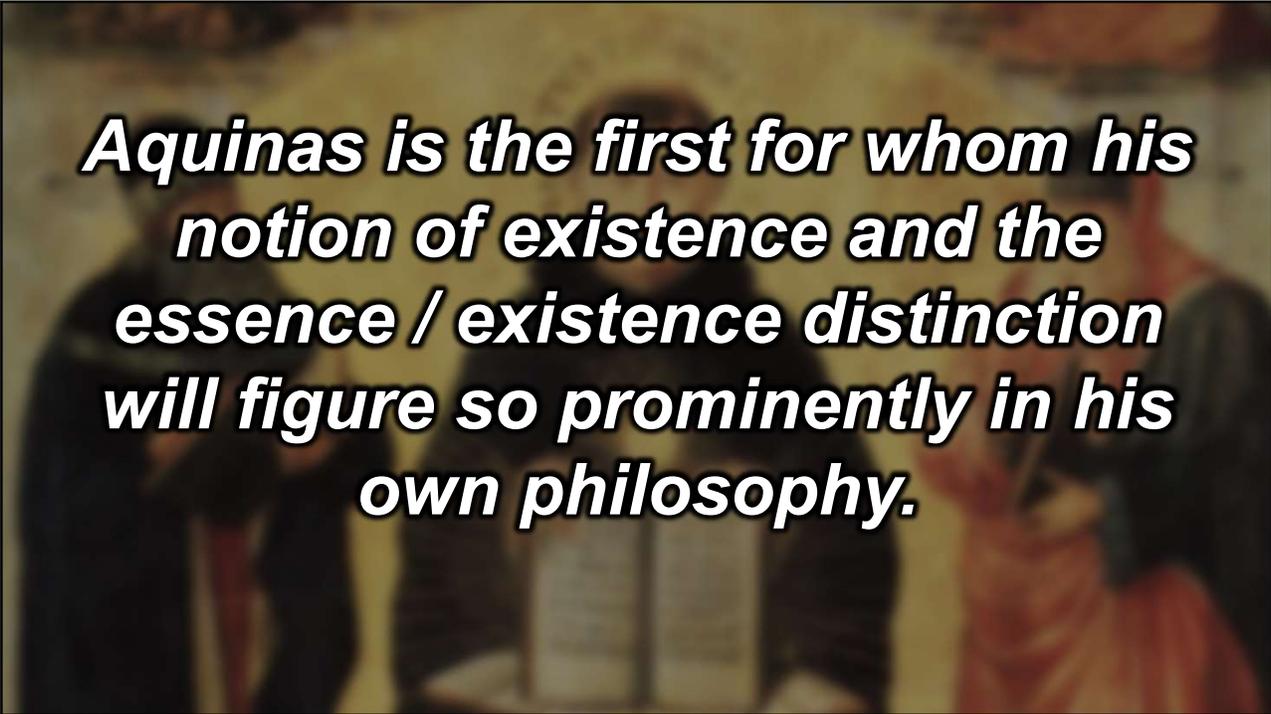
Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

"According to the truth of the matter, the first cause is above being inasmuch as it is itself infinite 'to be' [esse]. 'Being' [ens], however, is called that which finitely participates 'to be,' and it is this which is proportioned to our intellect, whose object is some 'that which is,' [quod quid est]. ... Hence our intellect can grasp only that which has a quiddity participating 'to be.' But the quiddity of God is 'to be' itself."

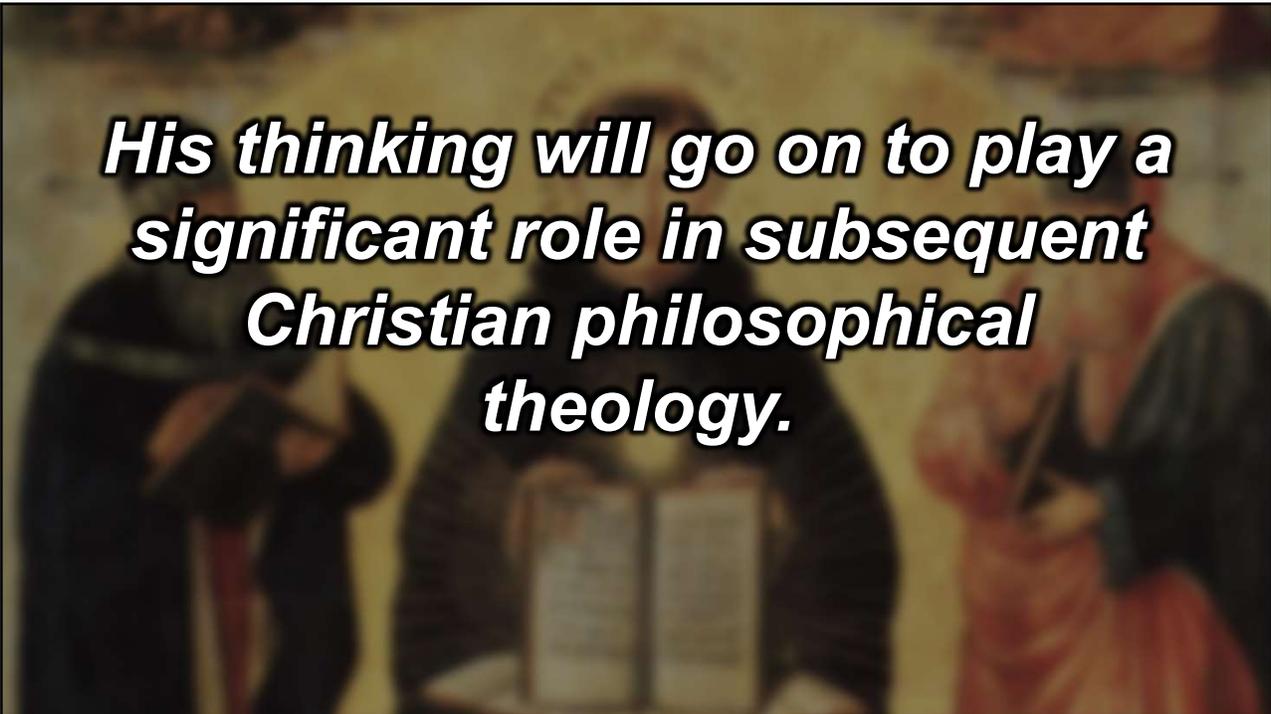
[Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, trans. Vincent A. Guagliardo, Charles R. Hess, and Richard C. Taylor (Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 51-52]



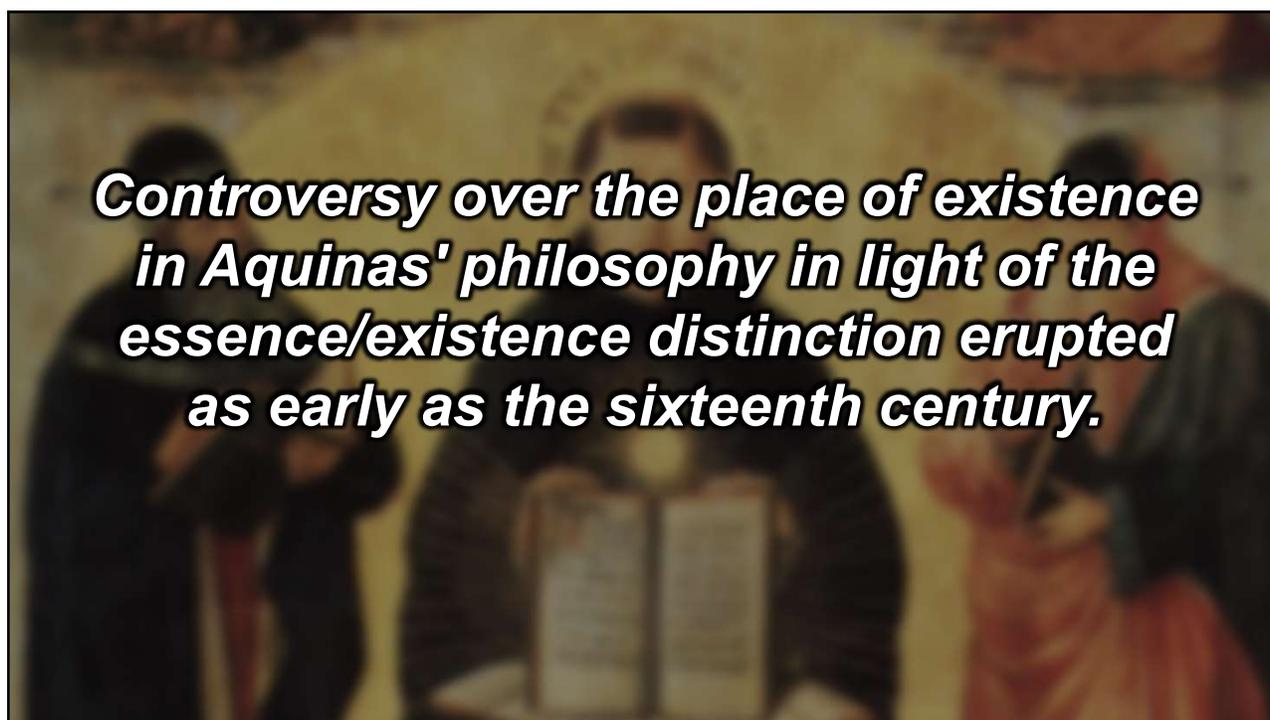
Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274



***Aquinas is the first for whom his notion of existence and the essence / existence distinction will figure so prominently in his own philosophy.***



***His thinking will go on to play a significant role in subsequent Christian philosophical theology.***

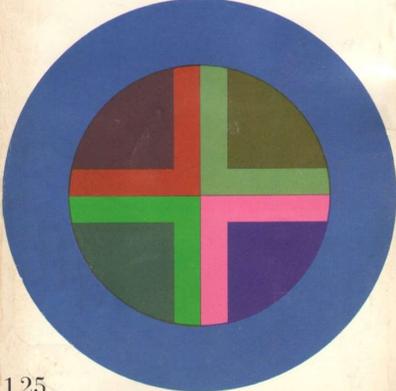


***The 16th Century Thomist philosopher Dominic Báñez (in his *The Primacy of Existence in Thomas Aquinas*) defended the notion that in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, existence is the primary metaphysical notion.***

logos

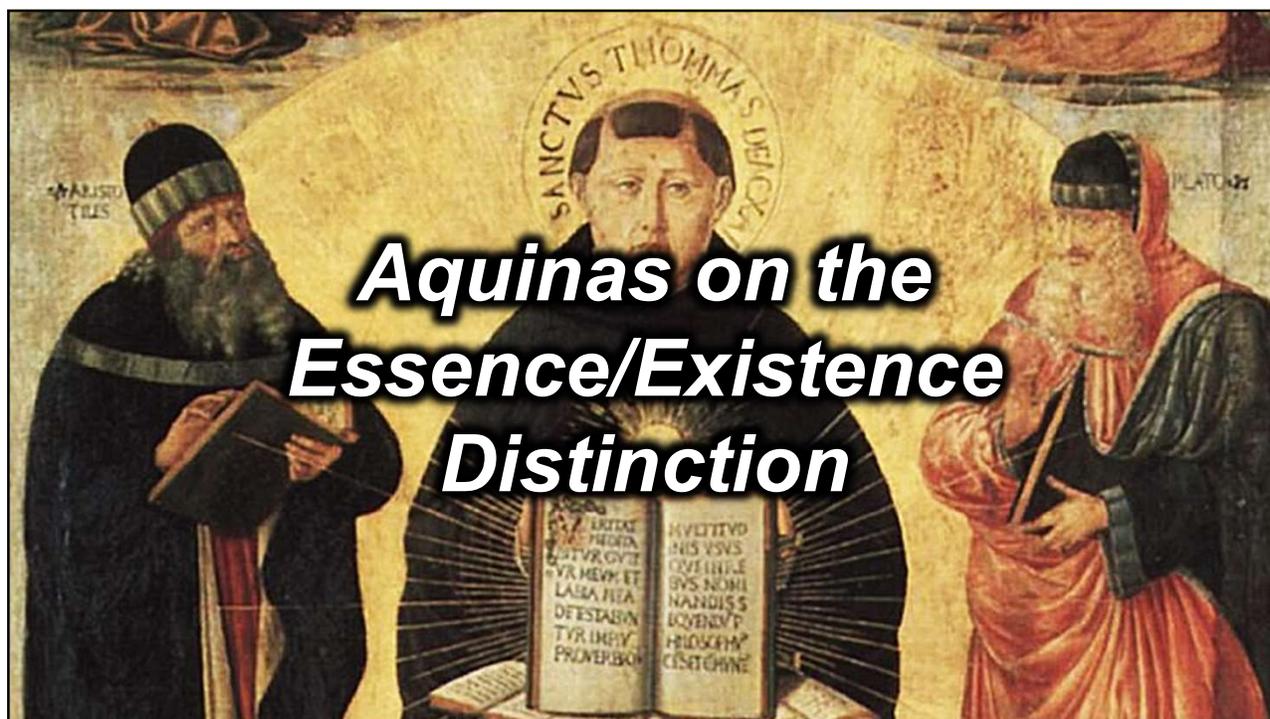
**The Primacy of Existence in Thomas Aquinas**

Dominic Banez



1.25





**Aquinas lays out his understanding of the essence / existence distinction in his *On Being and Essence*.**

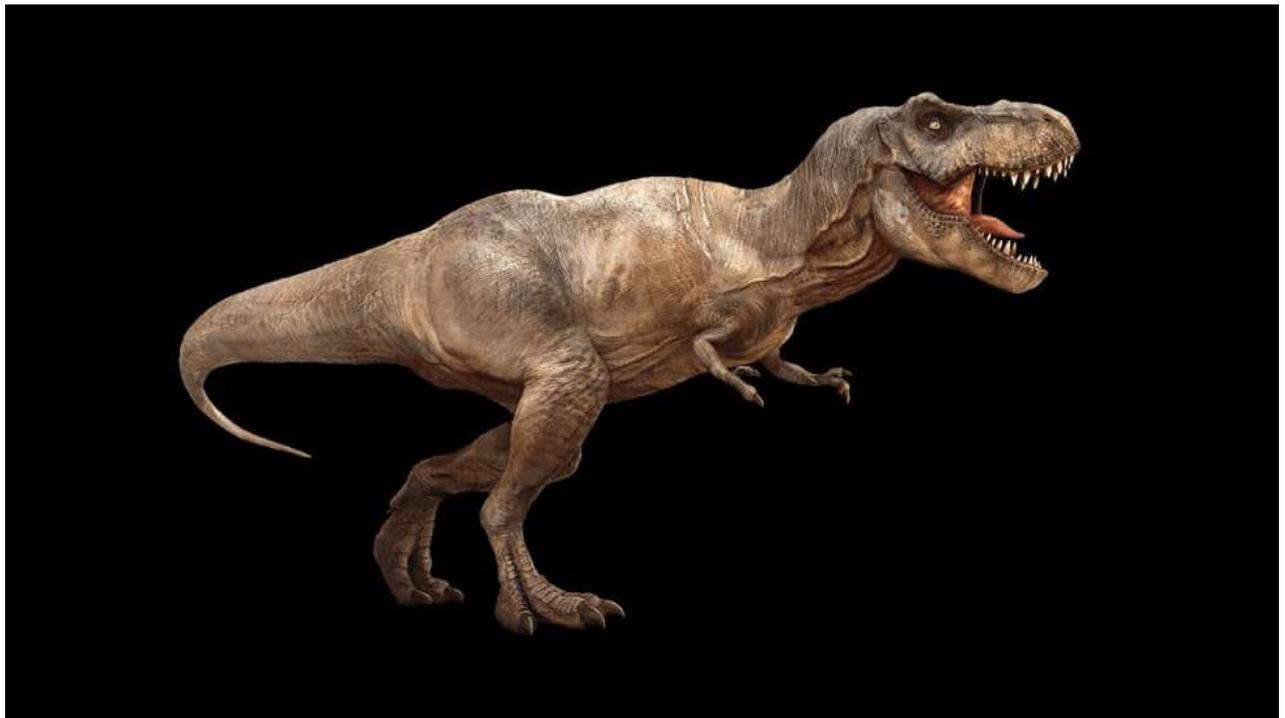
Thomas Aquinas  
On being and  
essence

Translated by  
Armand Maurer

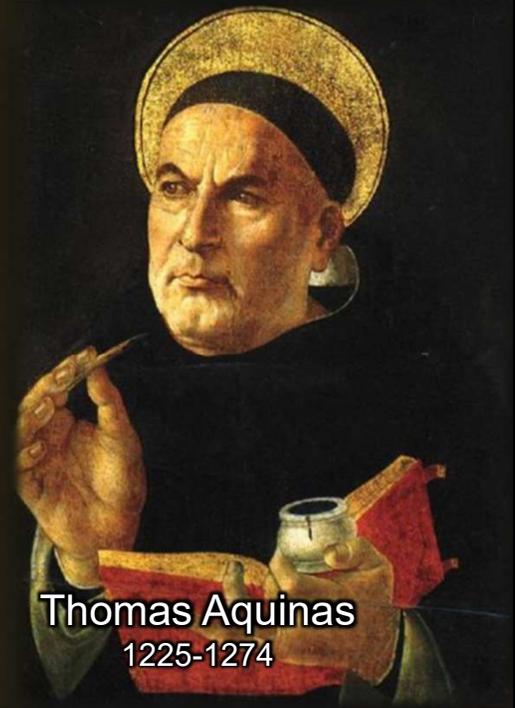


*That essence and existence are distinct in sensible objects is evident from the fact that one can understand the essence of a thing without knowing whether it exists.*





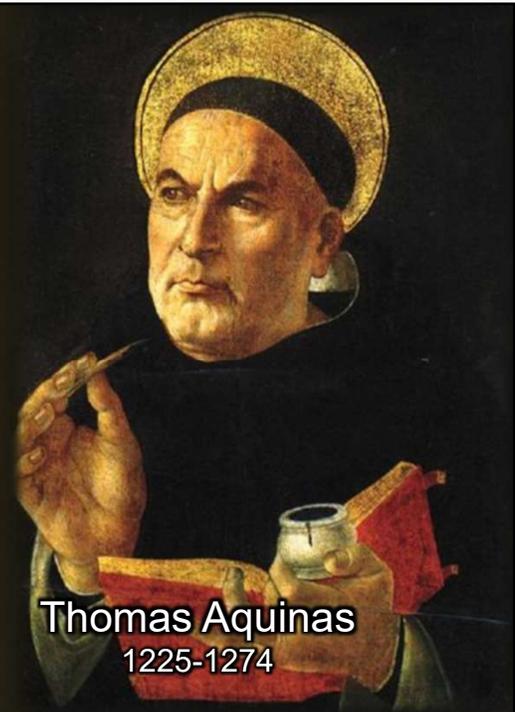
***"Now, every essence ...  
can be understood  
without knowing anything  
about its being. I can  
know, for instance, what a  
man or a phoenix is and  
still be ignorant whether it  
has being in reality.***



**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

***"From this it is clear that  
being is other than  
essence ... unless  
perhaps there is a reality  
whose quiddity [essence]  
is its being."***

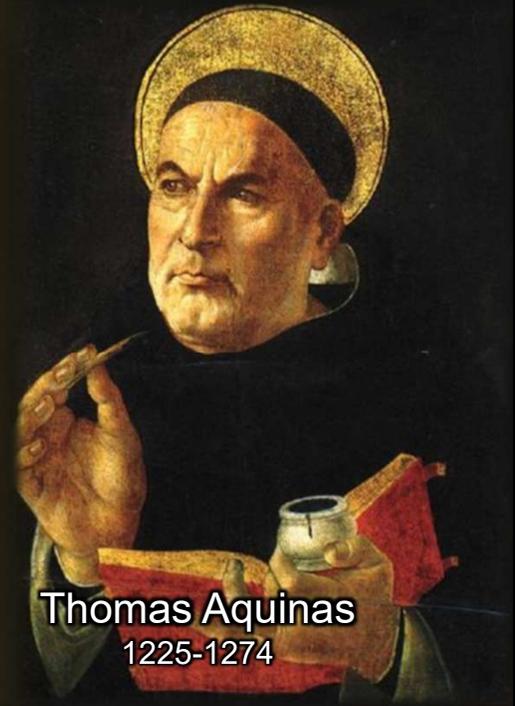
[*On Being and Essence*, IV, §6, trans. Armand Maurer, (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), 55]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

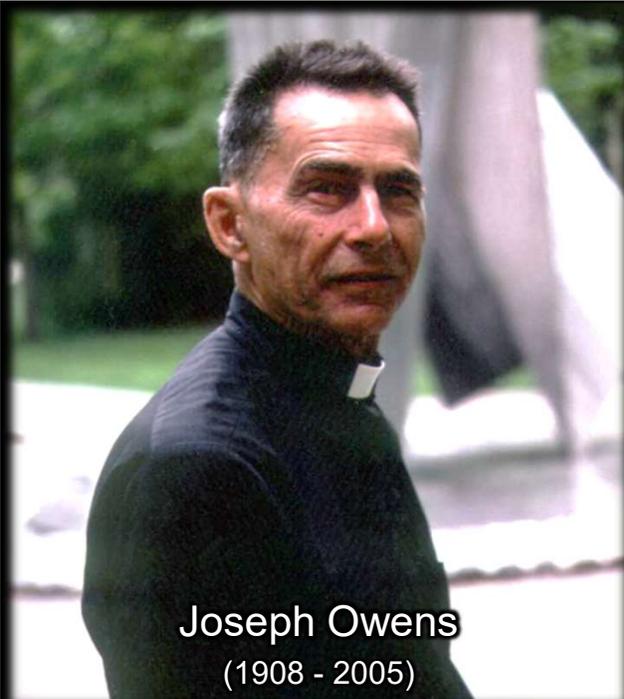
**"Everything that is in the genus of substance is composite with a real composition, because whatever is in the category of substance is subsistent in its own existence, and its own act of existing must be distinct from the thing itself; otherwise it could not be distinct in existence from the other things with which it agrees in the formal character of its quiddity; for such agreement is required in all things that are directly in a category. Consequently everything that is directly in the category of substance is composed at least of the act of being and the subject of being."**

[*On Truth (De Veritate)* XXVII, 1, ad. 8, trans. Robert W. Schmidt (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), v. 3, pp. 311-312]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

***Aquinas's doctrines of existence together with the essence / existence distinction constitute a metaphysical innovation whose significance is virtually inestimable.***

A portrait of Joseph Owens, a man with short dark hair, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera.

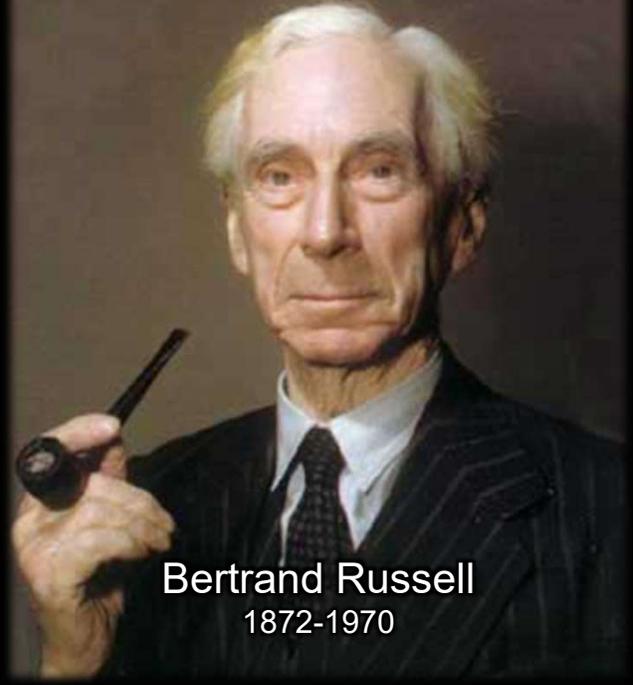
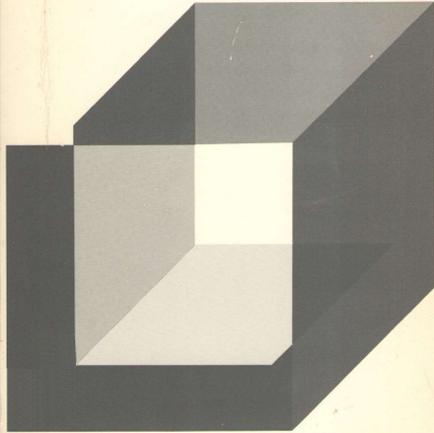
**Joseph Owens**  
(1908 - 2005)

***"The real distinction between essence and existence could be regarded in neothomistic circles as the fundamental truth of Christian philosophy, which pervaded the whole of Thomistic metaphysics."***

[Joseph Owens, "Aristotle and Aquinas," in Norman Kretzman and Eleonore Stump, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 39]

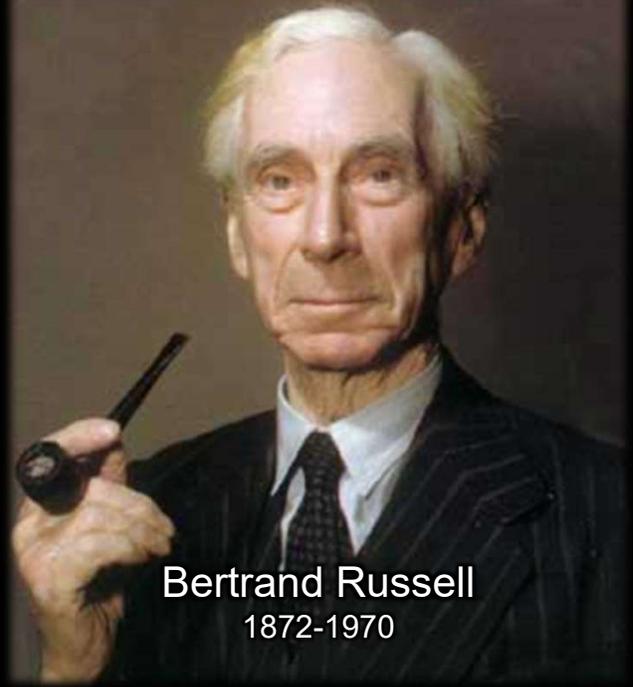
***These doctrines are what enable Aquinas to turn the pagan philosophy of Aristotle into the Christian philosophy that Thomism is, particularly regarding the existence and attributes of God and the doctrine of creation.***

Bertrand  
Russell  
A History of  
Western  
Philosophy



Bertrand Russell  
1872-1970

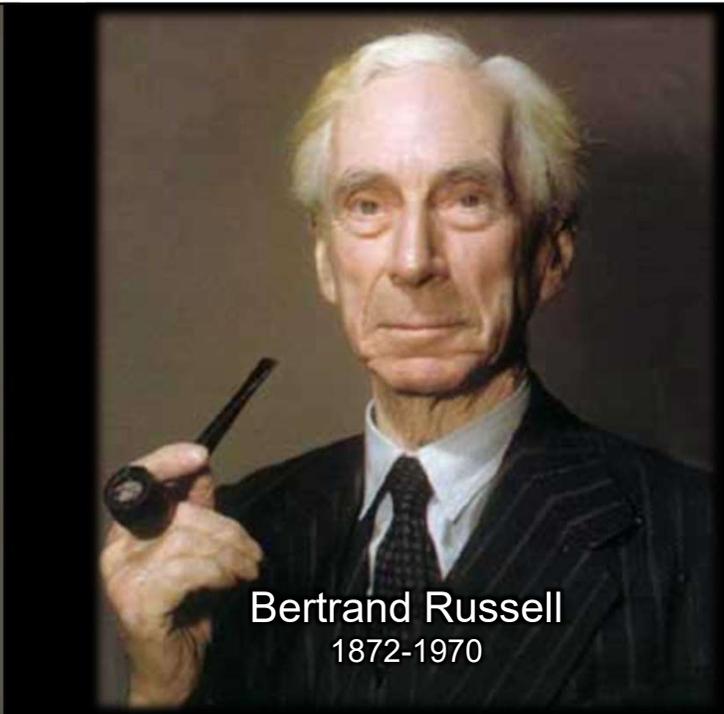
"The contentions that God's essence and existence are one and the same, that God is His own goodness, His own power, and so on, suggest a confusion, found in Plato, but supposed to have been avoided by Aristotle, between the manner of being of particulars and the manner of being of universals.



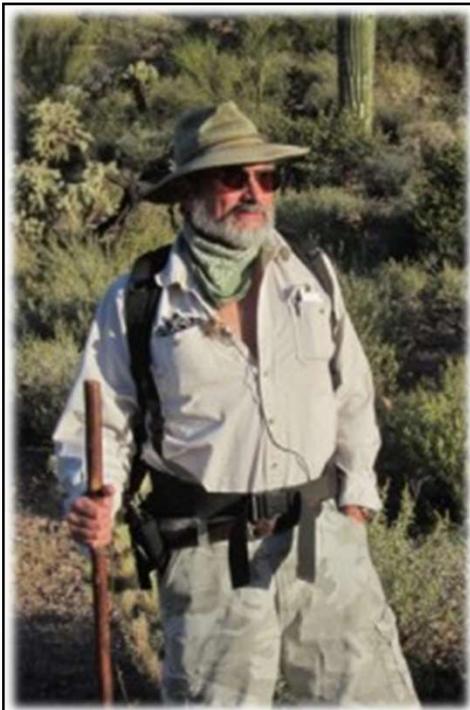
Bertrand Russell  
1872-1970

God's essence is, one must suppose, of the nature of universals, while His existence is not. It is not easy to state this difficulty satisfactorily, since it occurs within a logic that can no longer be accepted. But it points clearly to some kind of syntactical confusion, without which much of the argumentation about God would lose its plausibility."

[Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), 462]



Bertrand Russell  
1872-1970



#### A CRITIQUE OF THE QUANTIFICATIONAL ACCOUNT OF EXISTENCE

William F. Vallicella

University of Dayton

Dayton, Ohio

A CRITICISM OFTEN brought against philosophers who raise questions about Being or existence charges that these philosophers have simply been misled by the surface grammar of existence statements into thinking that "exists" and its cognates are logical<sup>1</sup> predicates, and thus into thinking that there must be some mysterious property or quasi-property called "Being"<sup>2</sup> to which this putative predicate refers, and into which it would make sense to inquire. According to Bertrand Russell,

... there is a vast amount of philosophy that rests upon the notion that existence, is, so to speak, a property that you can attribute to things, and that the things that exist have the property of existence and the things that do not exist do not. That is rubbish ...<sup>3</sup>

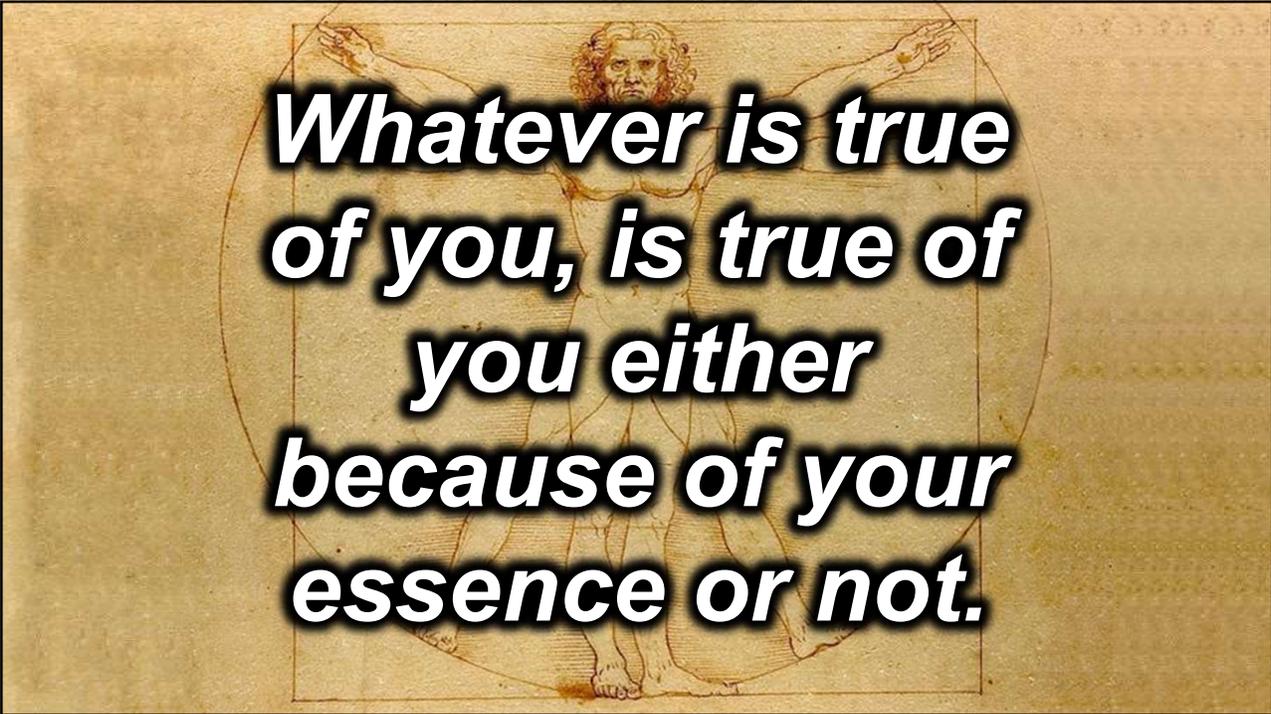
In a somewhat more restrained tone, Rudolf Carnap agrees that "Most metaphysicians since antiquity have allowed themselves to be seduced into pseudostatements by the verbal, and therewith the predicative form of the word 'to be,' e.g., 'I am,'

<sup>1</sup> "Logical" as opposed to "grammatical." Note that Kant uses "logical" in the sense of "grammatical." For Kant it is self-evident that "exists" is a logical predicate; the only question is whether it is a "real" or "determining" predicate. (See *Critique of Pure Reason* A598 B626.) In recent discussions, it is taken as self-evident that "exists" is a grammatical predicate; the only question is whether it is also a logical predicate.

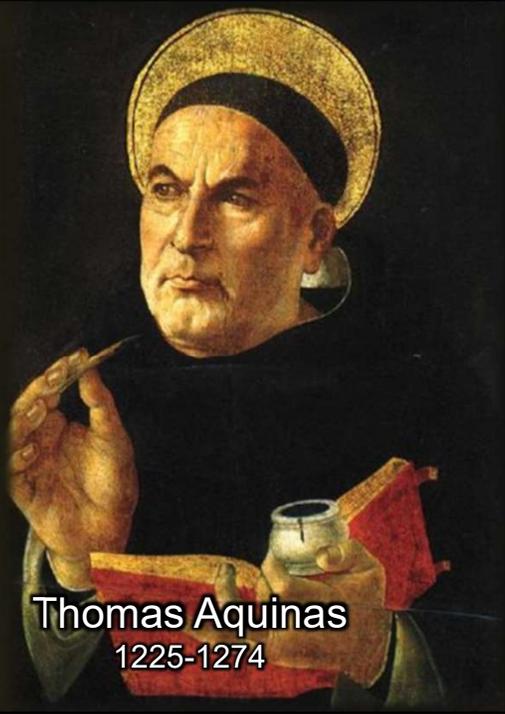
<sup>2</sup> I capitalize the initial letter of "Being," not out of misplaced piety, but in order to mark the distinction between Being and being. Lower case "being" can be used to refer collectively or distributively to the totality of beings. Upper case "Being" refers, however, not to beings collectively or distributively, but to that which constitutes beings as beings, the "property" which they all have "in common."

<sup>3</sup> *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* in *Logic and Knowledge*, ed. Robert C. Marsh (New York: C. D. Van Nostrand, 1956), 189.



The background of the top slide is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man. The figure of the man is centered, with his arms and legs extended to touch the boundaries of a square and a circle. The text is overlaid on the figure.

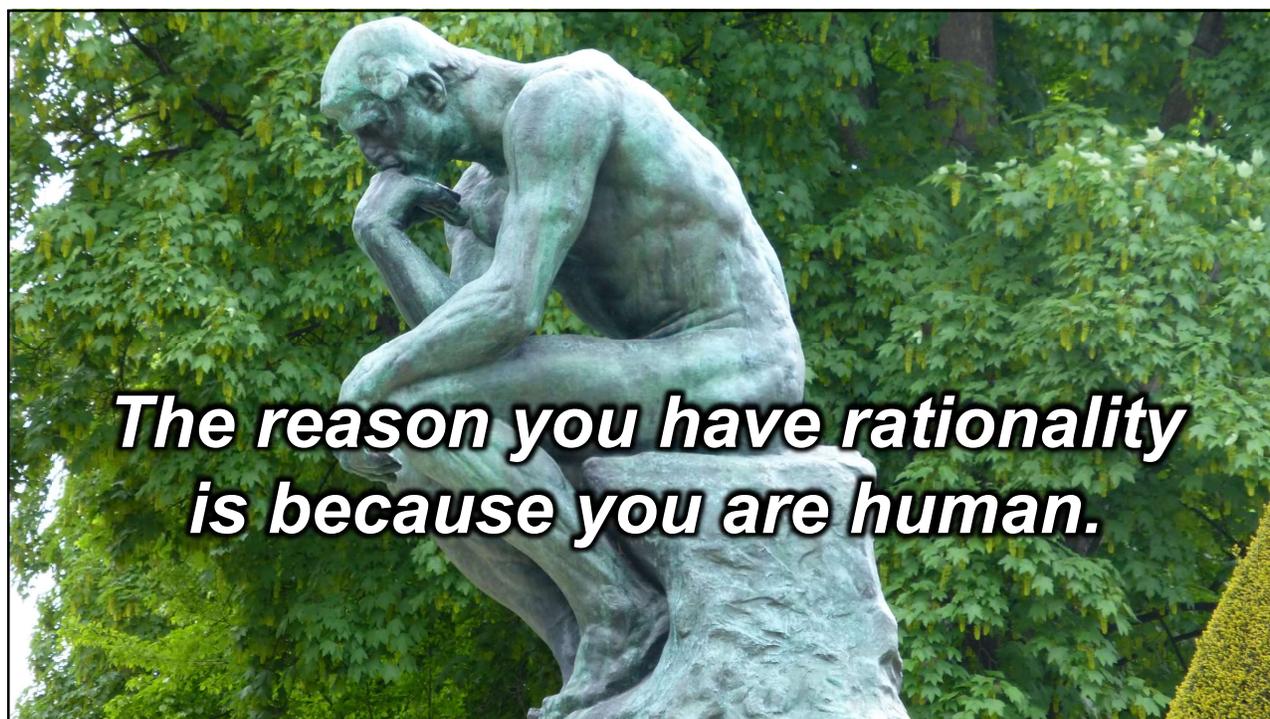
***Whatever is true  
of you, is true of  
you either  
because of your  
essence or not.***

The background of the bottom slide is a portrait of Thomas Aquinas. He is depicted from the chest up, wearing a black habit with a gold halo. He is holding a quill pen in his right hand and a book in his left. The text is overlaid on the left side of the portrait.

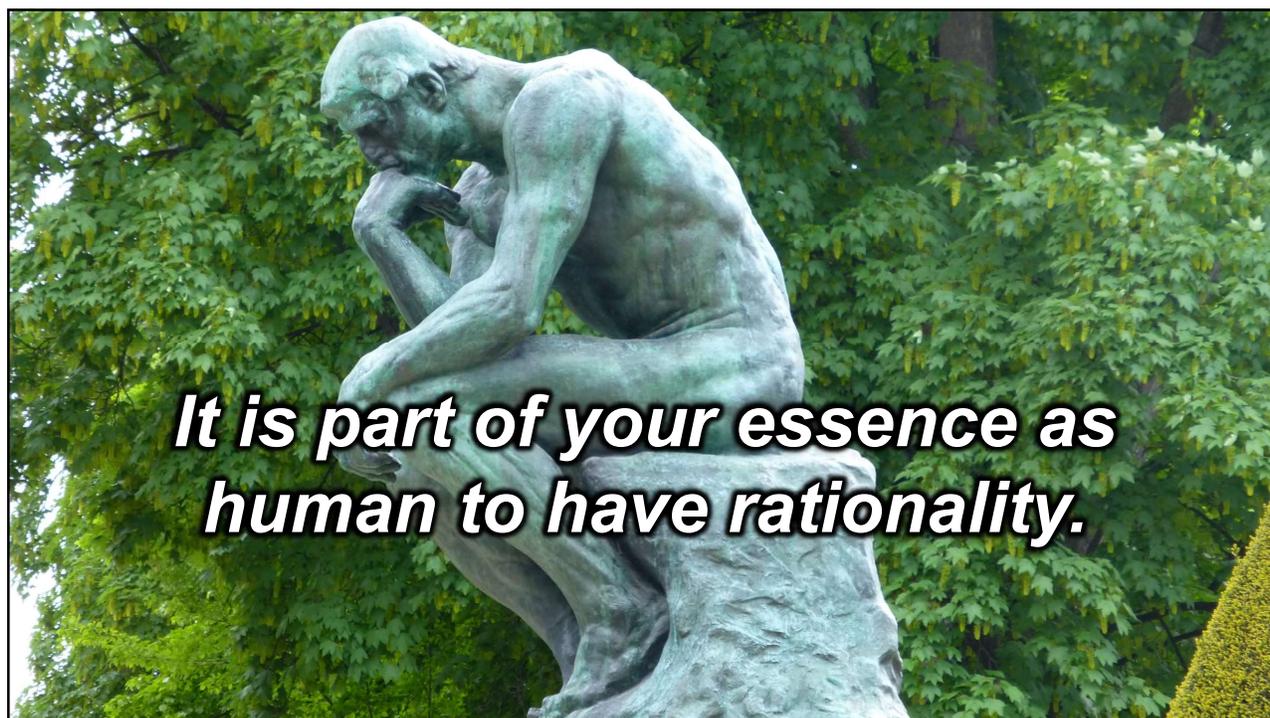
***"Whatever belongs  
to a thing is either  
caused by the  
principles of its  
nature ... or comes  
to it from an  
extrinsic principle."***

[*On Being and Essence*, IV, §7, trans. Maurer, 56-57]

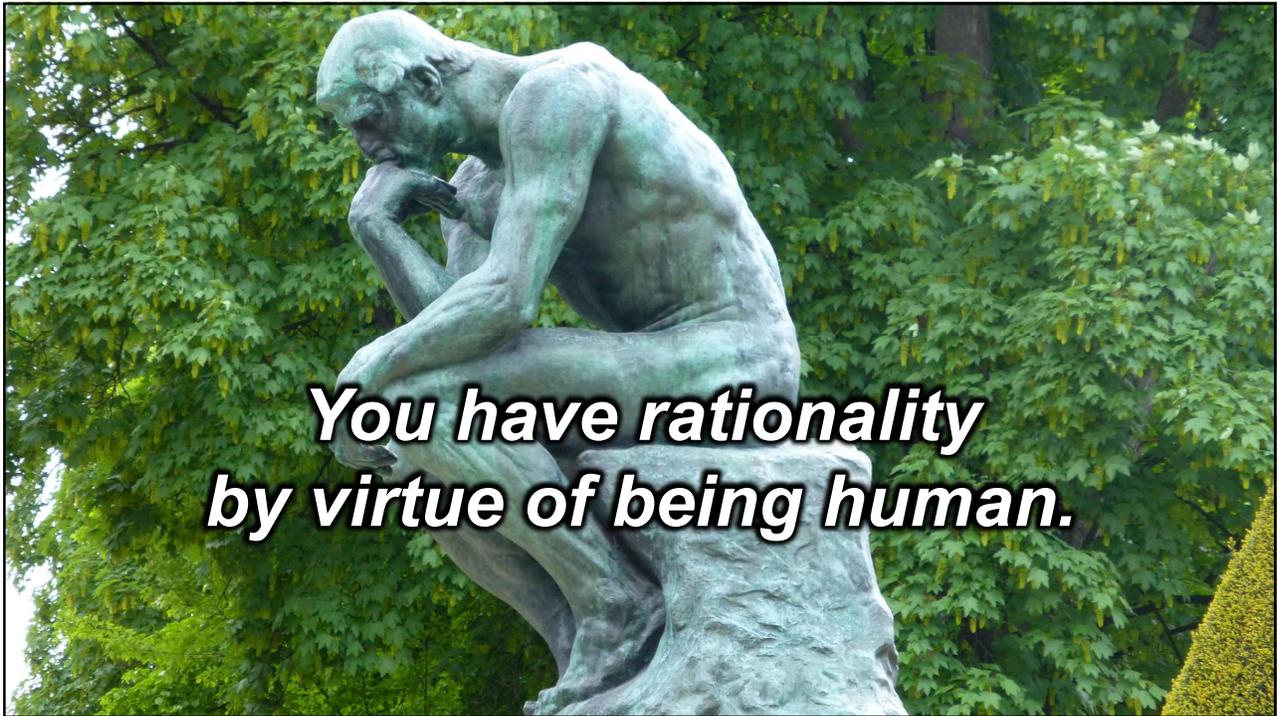
Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274



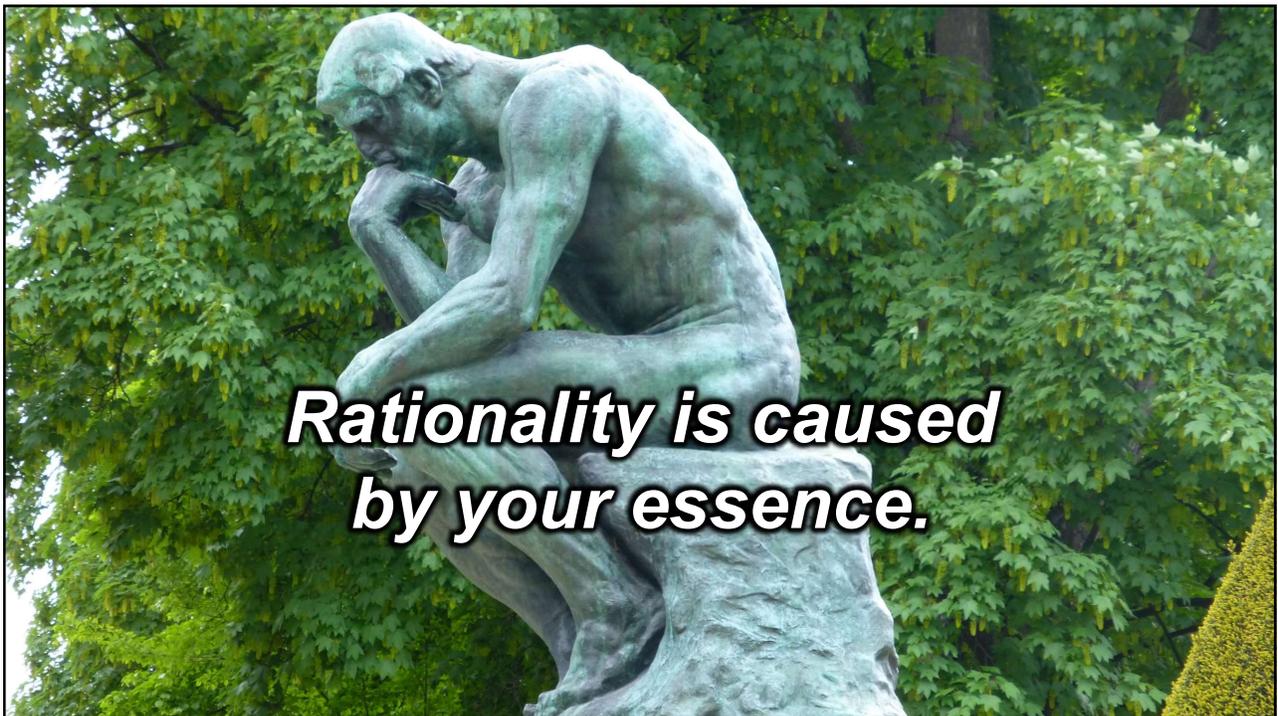
***The reason you have rationality  
is because you are human.***



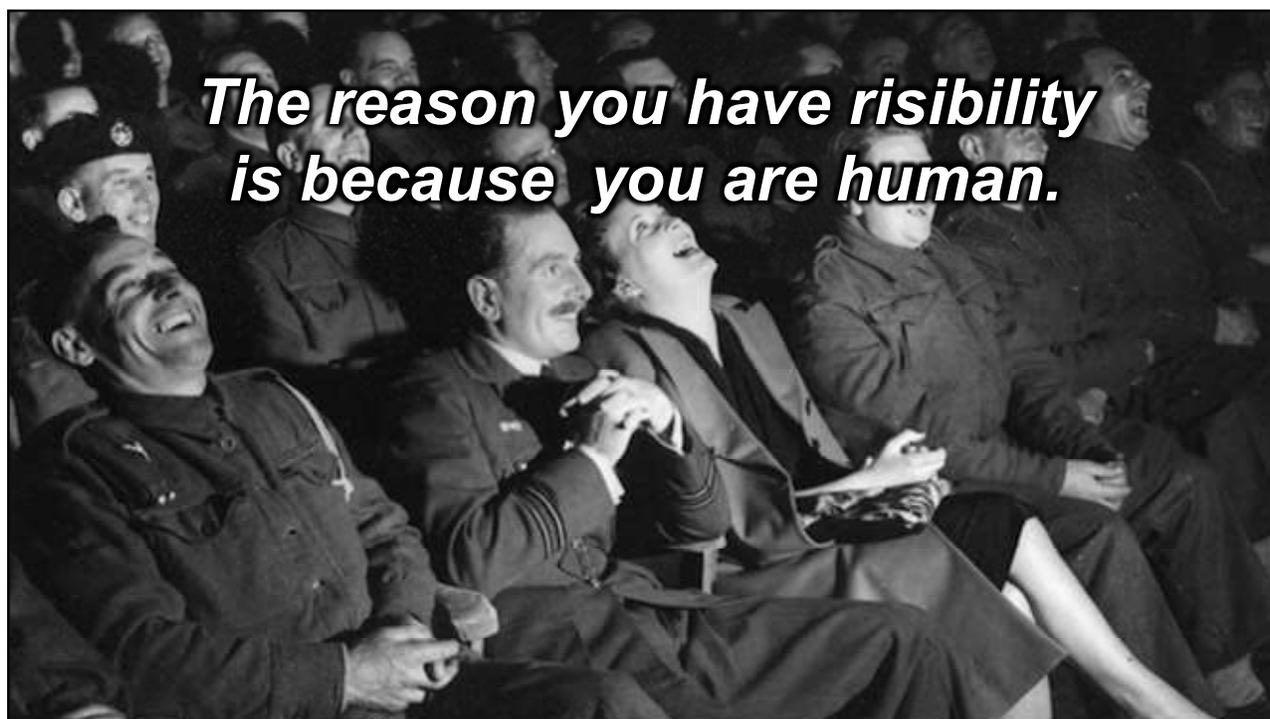
***It is part of your essence as  
human to have rationality.***

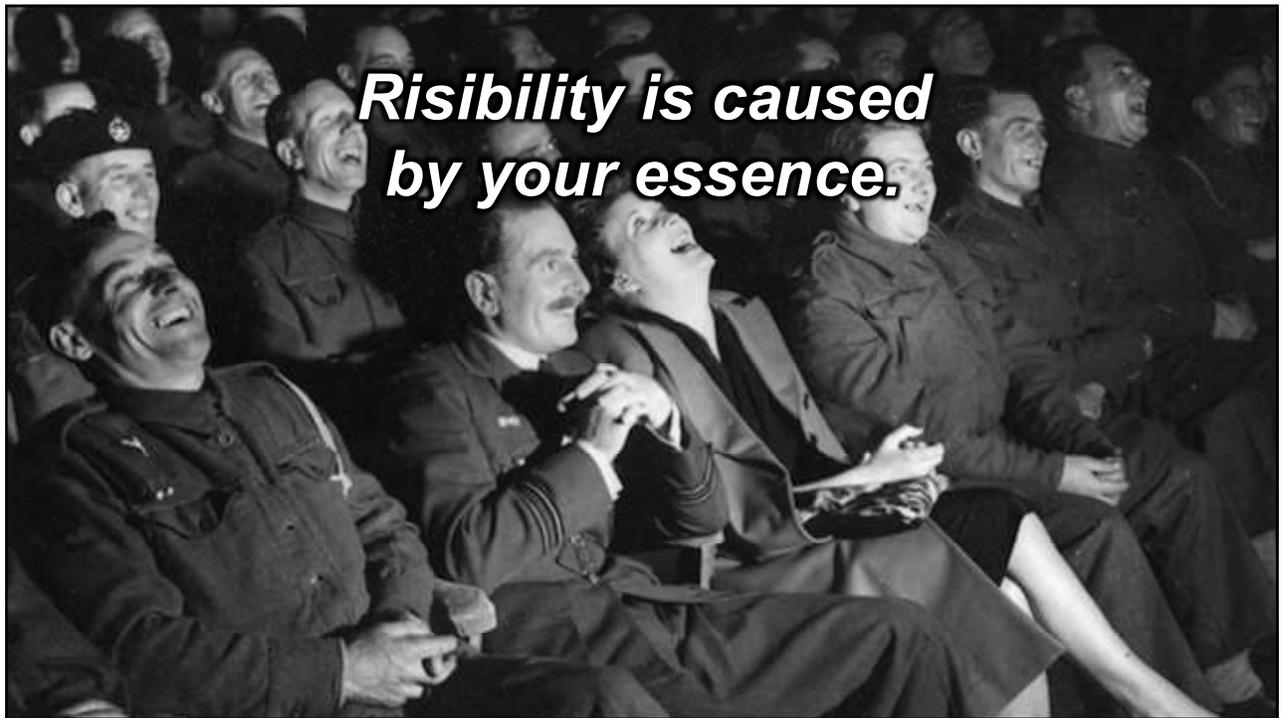
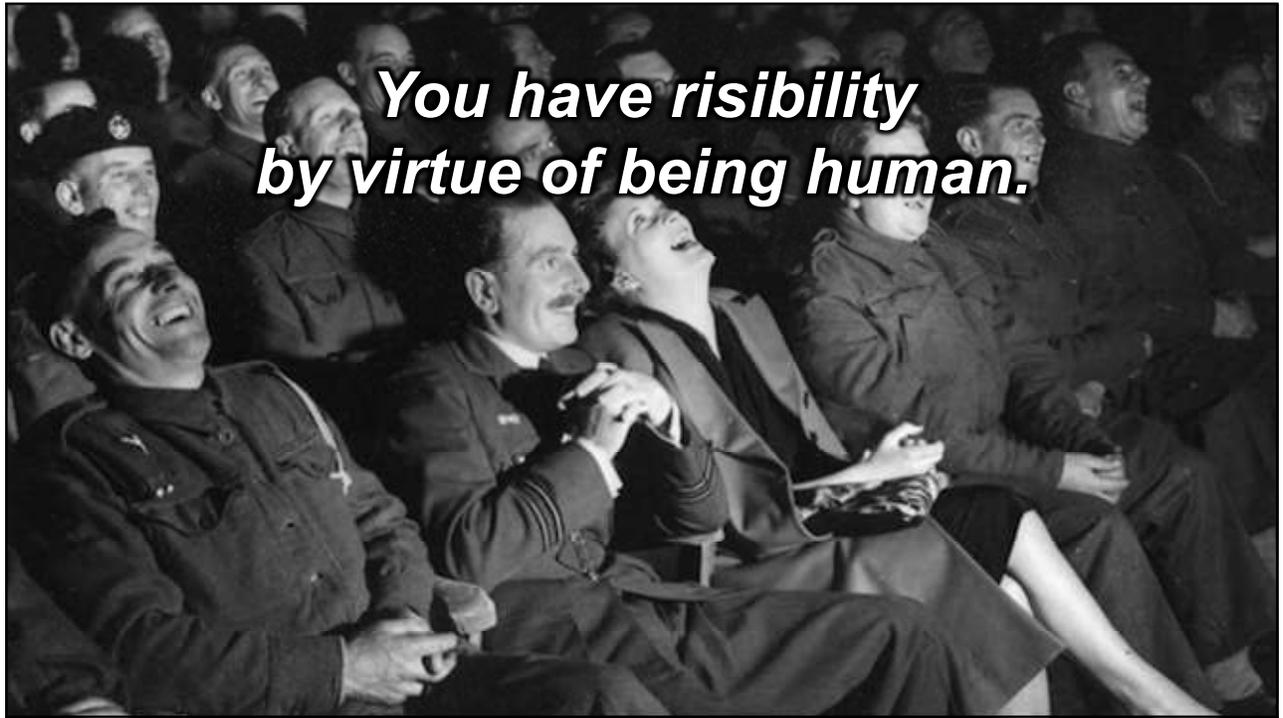


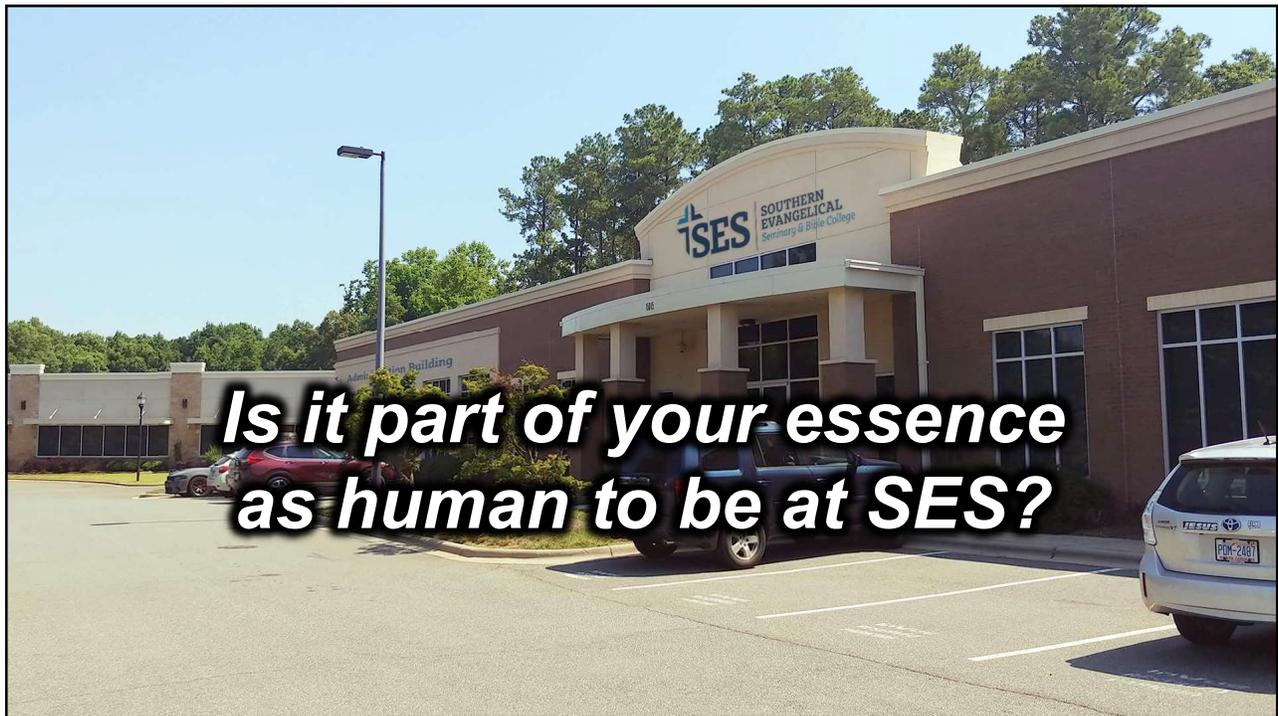
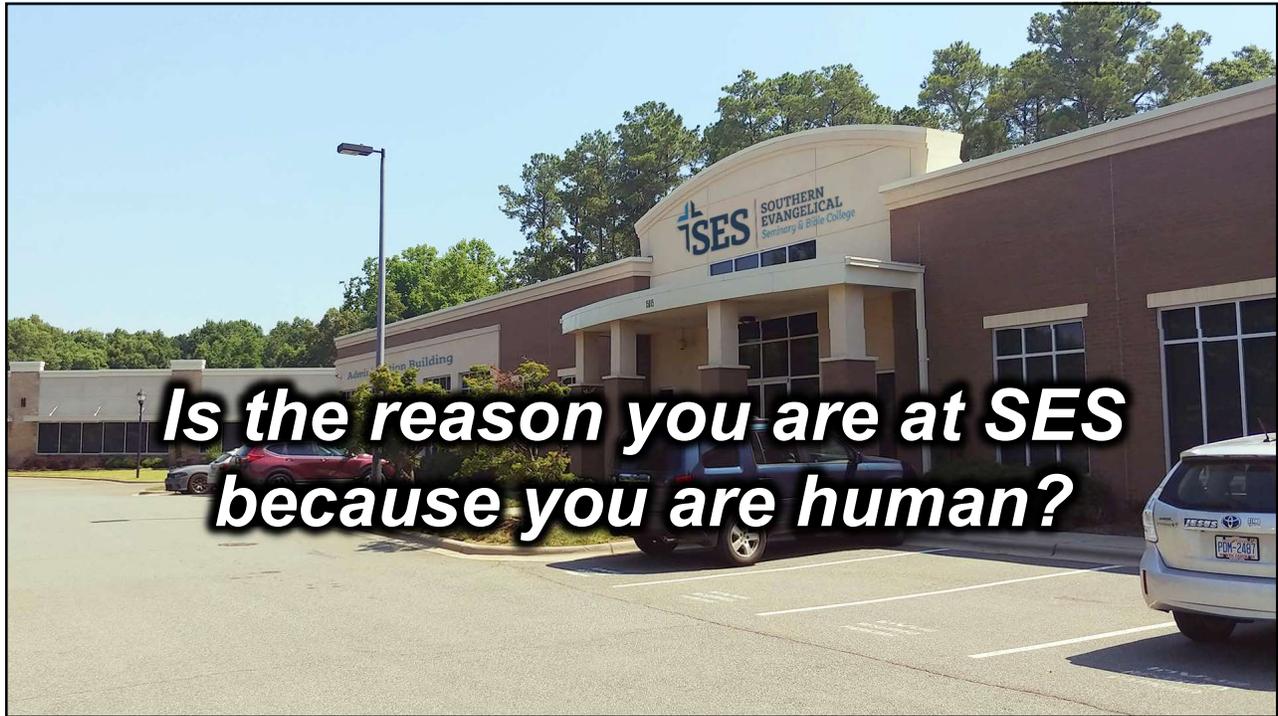
***You have rationality  
by virtue of being human.***

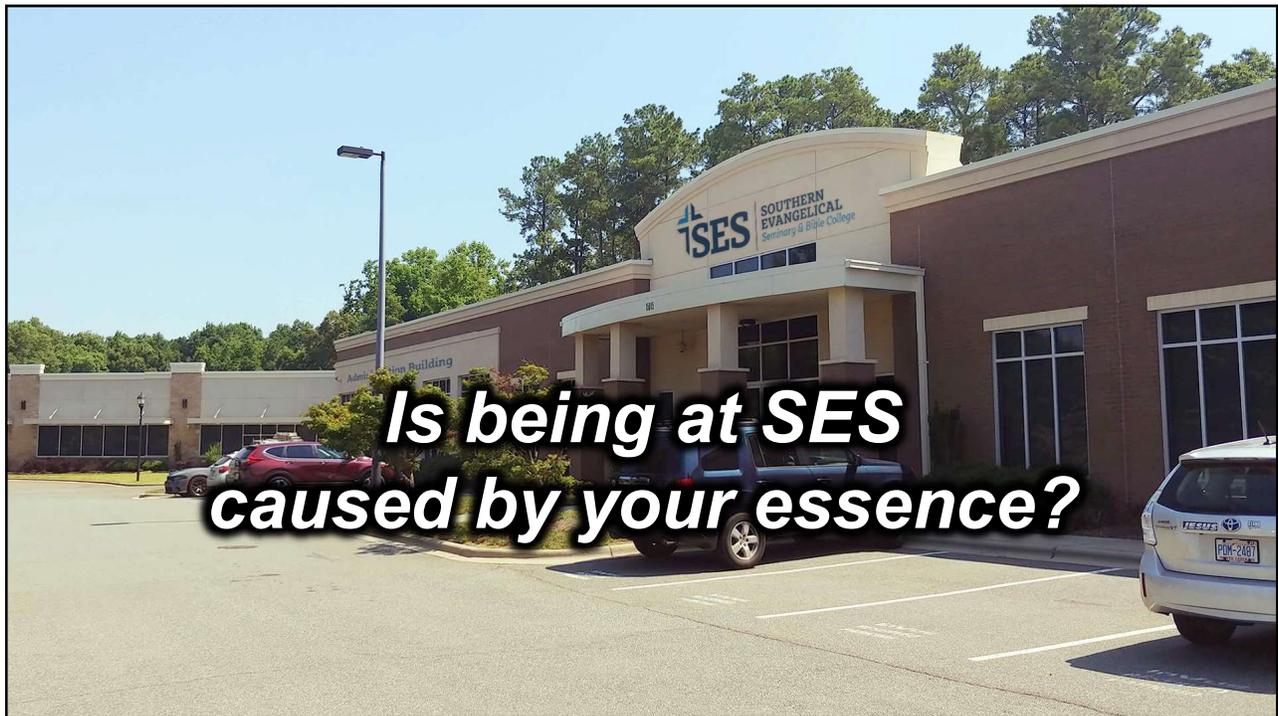
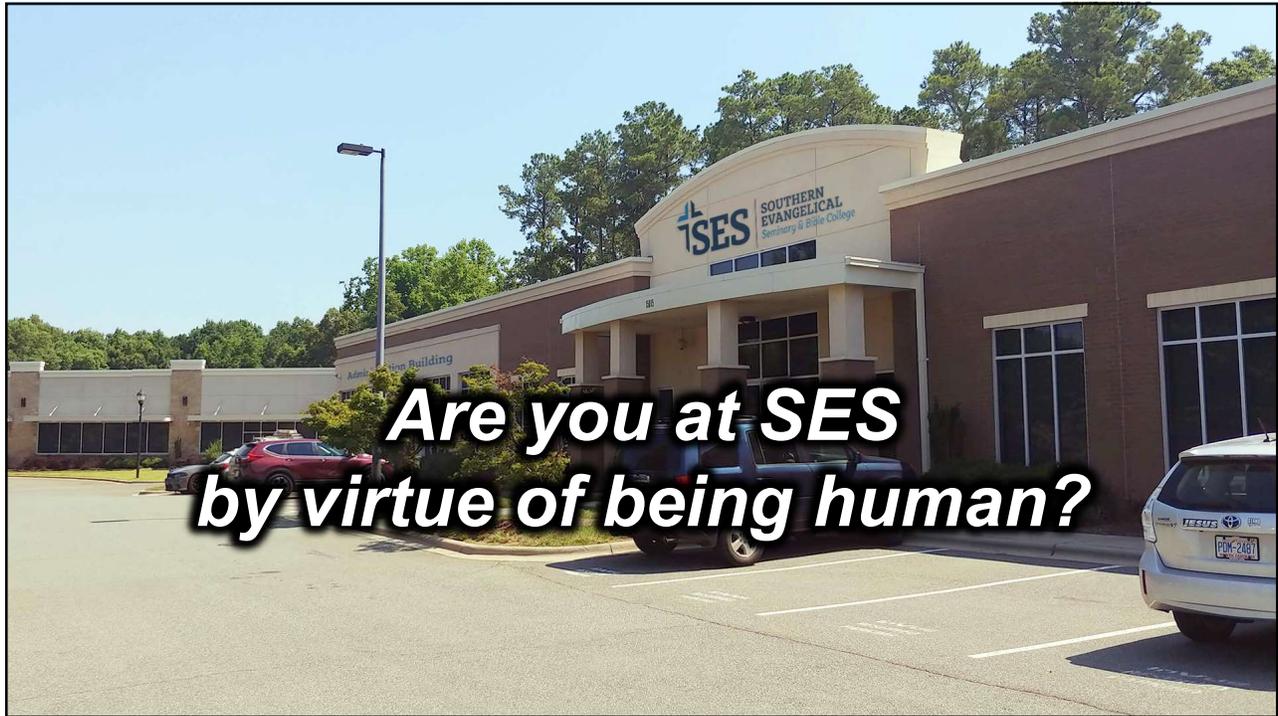


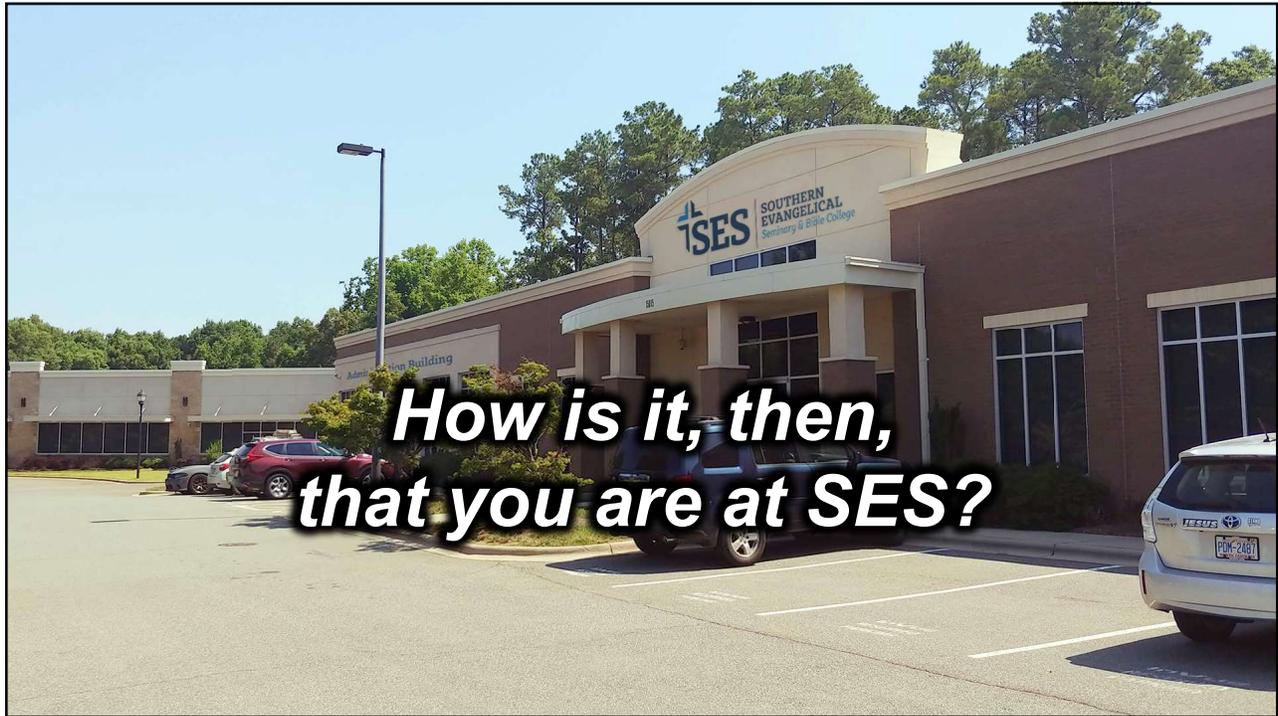
***Rationality is caused  
by your essence.***



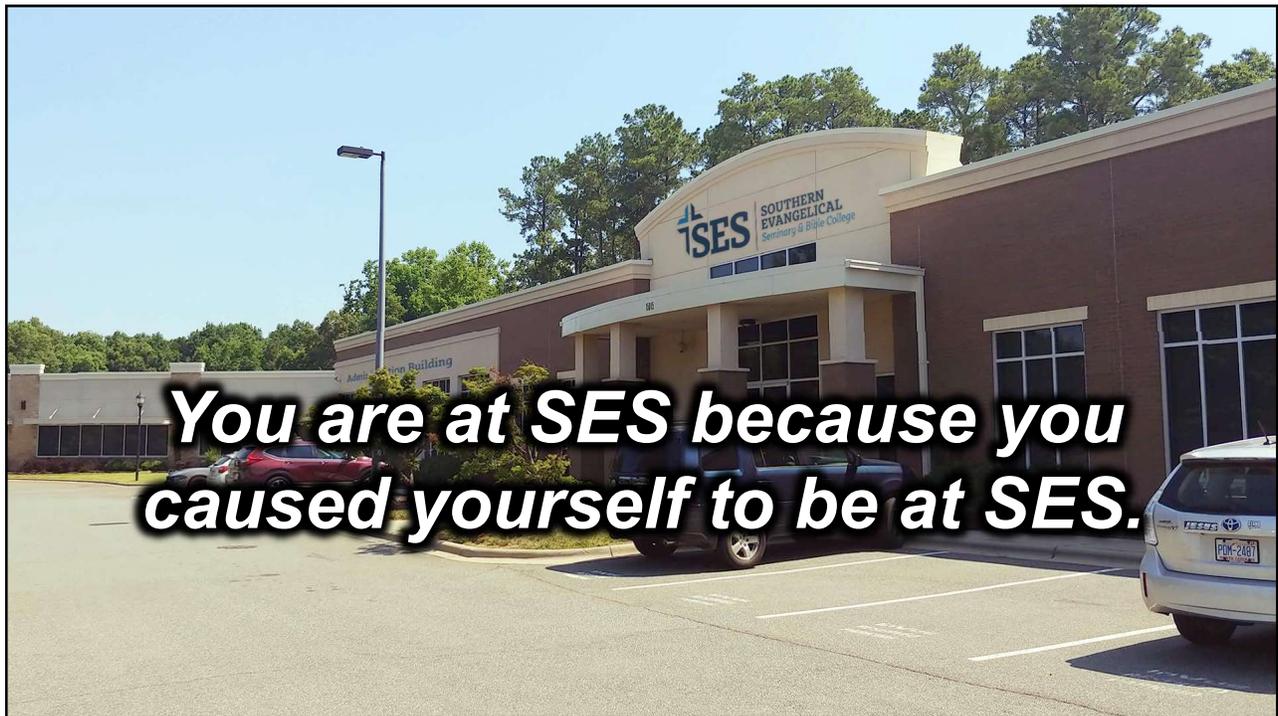




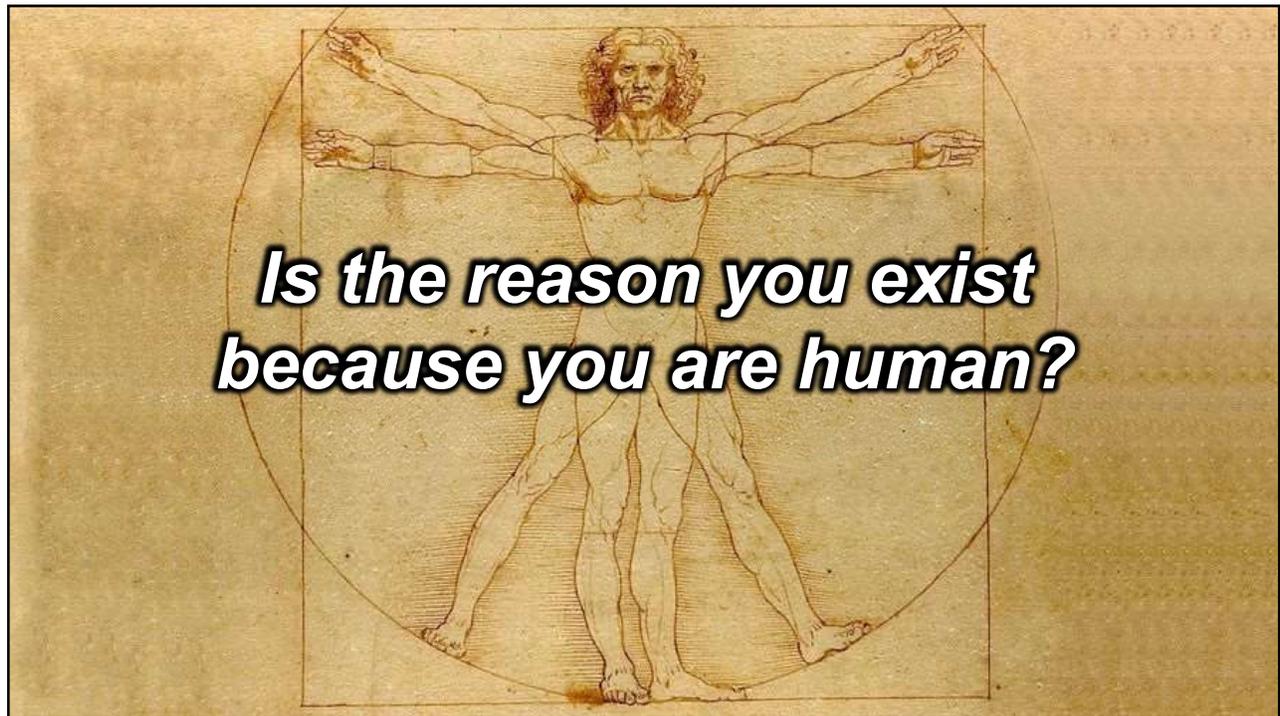
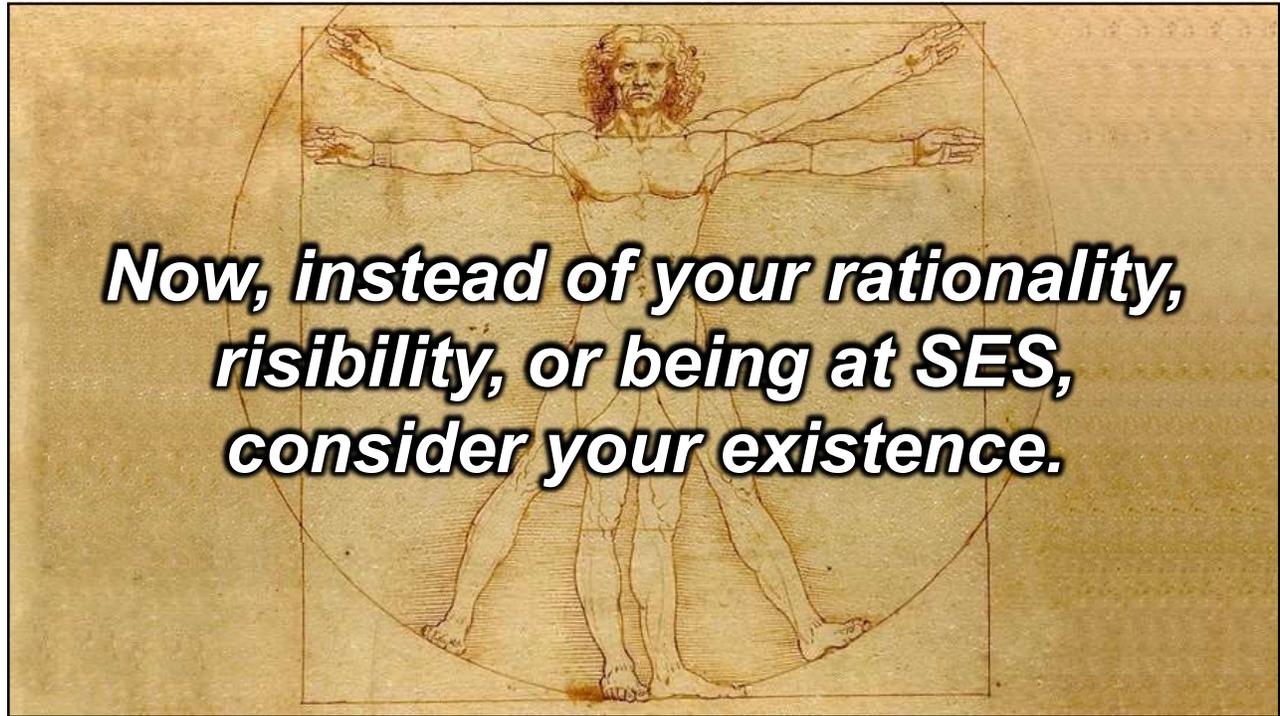


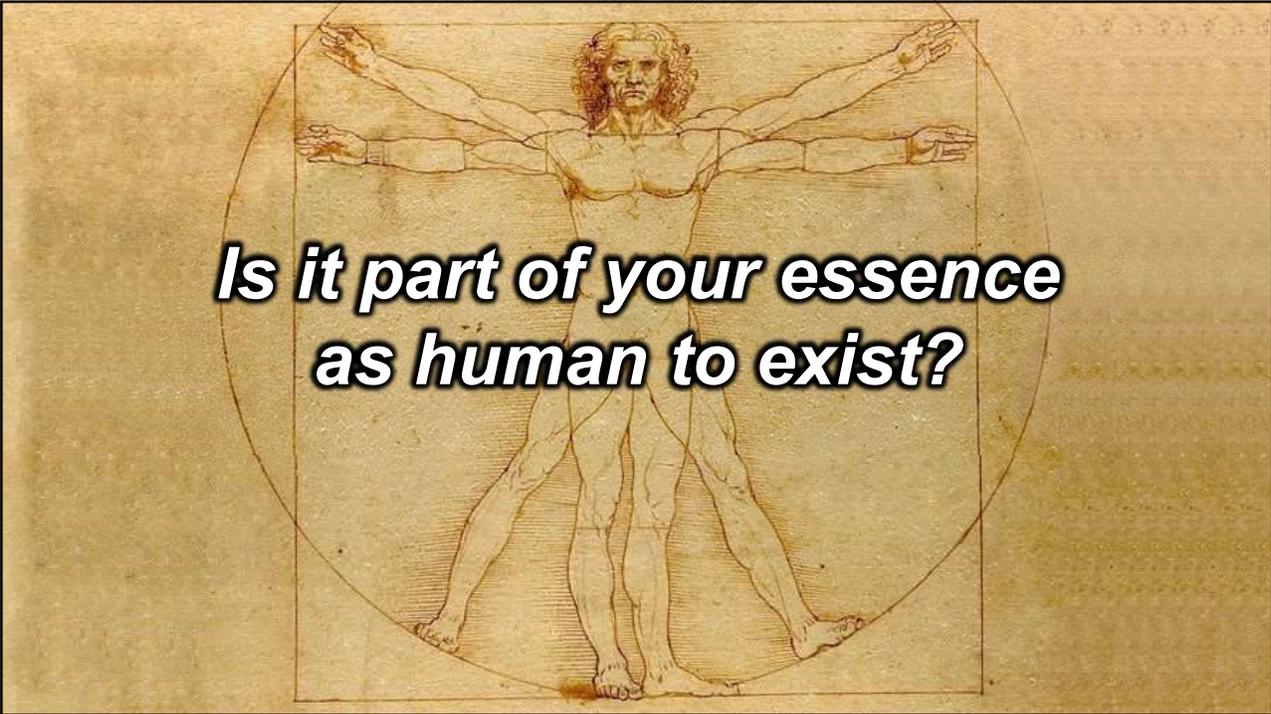


***How is it, then,  
that you are at SES?***

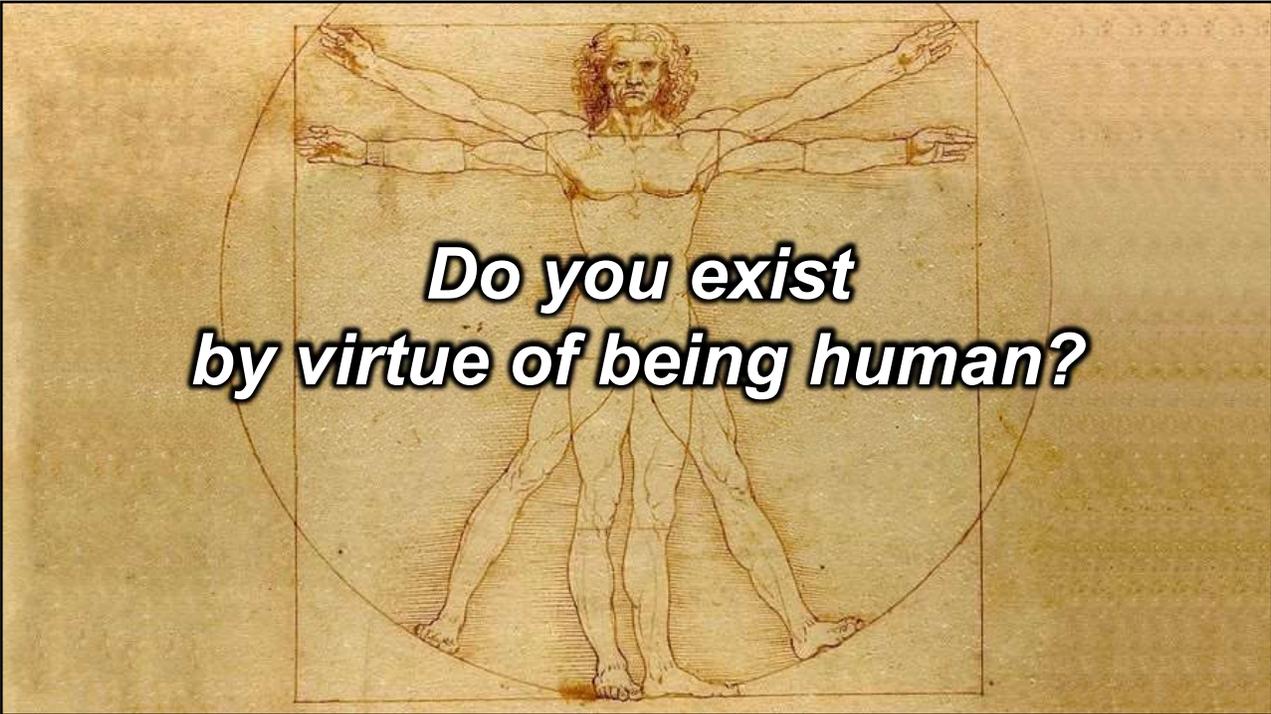


***You are at SES because you  
caused yourself to be at SES.***

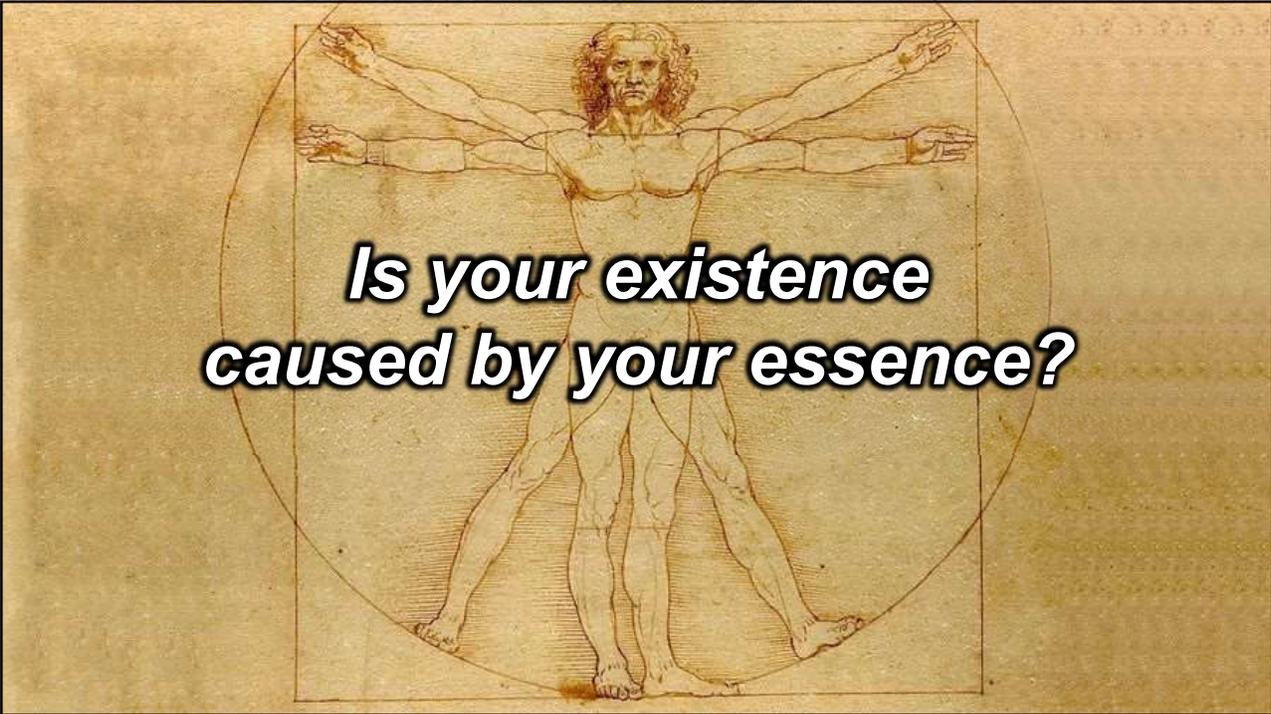




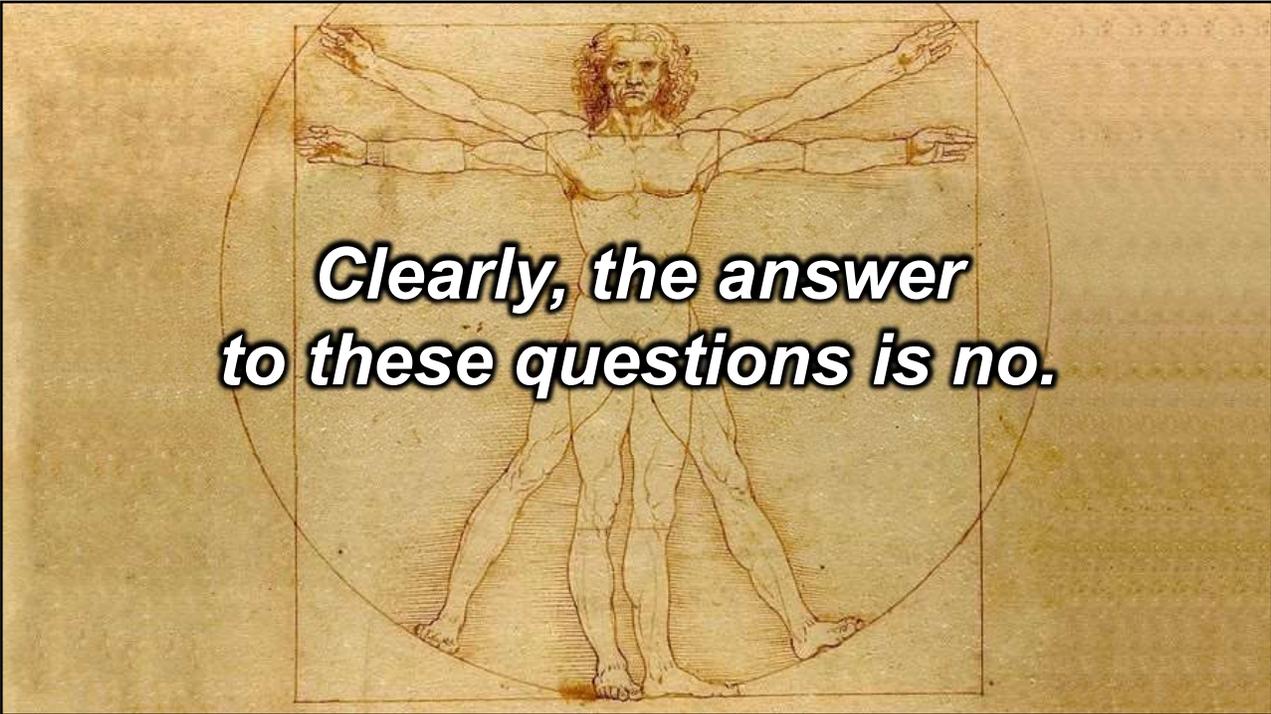
***Is it part of your essence  
as human to exist?***



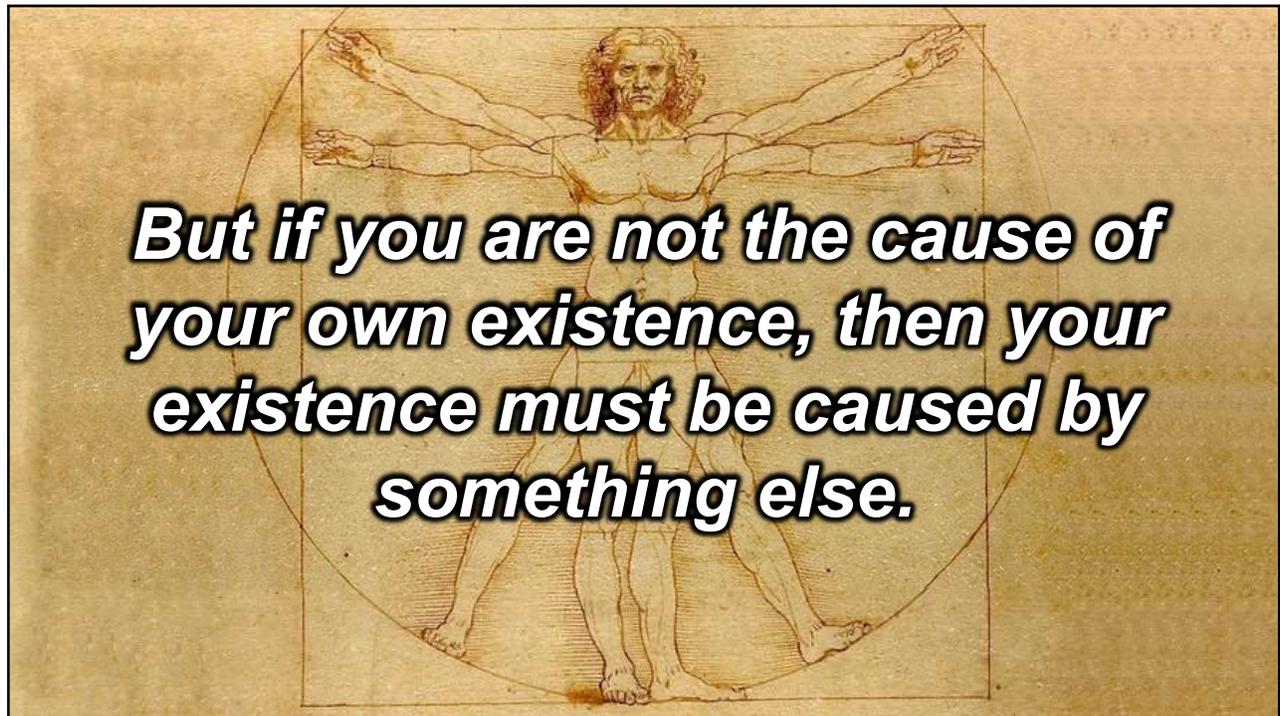
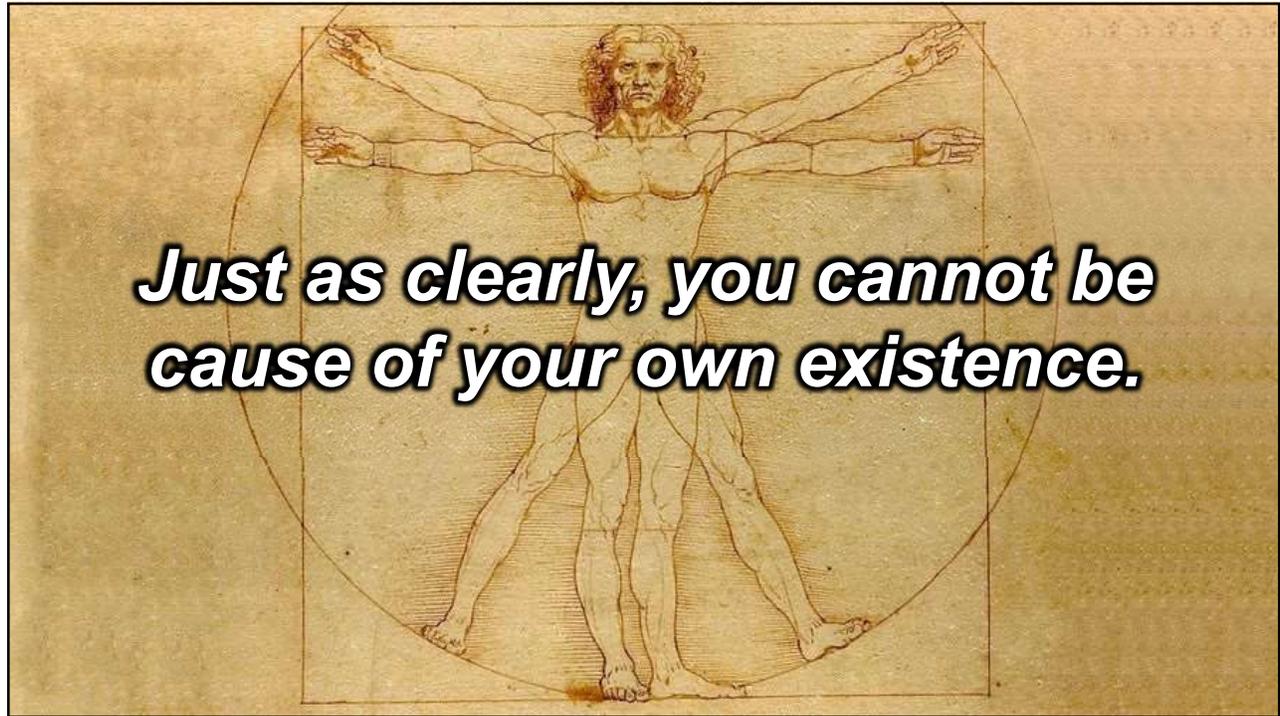
***Do you exist  
by virtue of being human?***



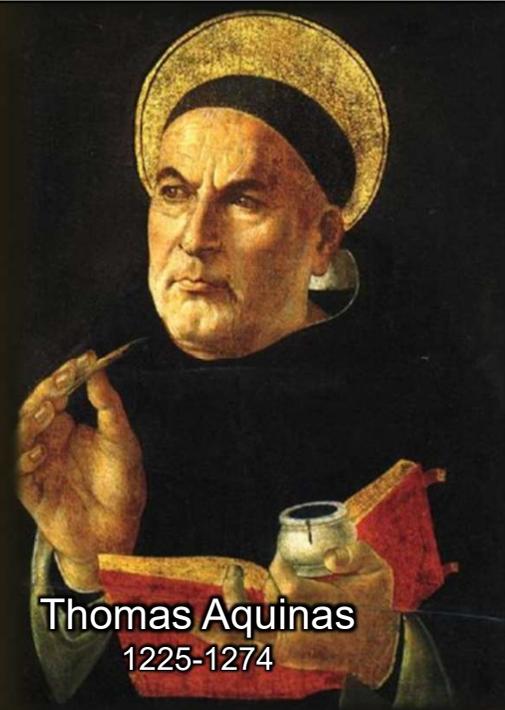
***Is your existence  
caused by your essence?***



***Clearly, the answer  
to these questions is no.***



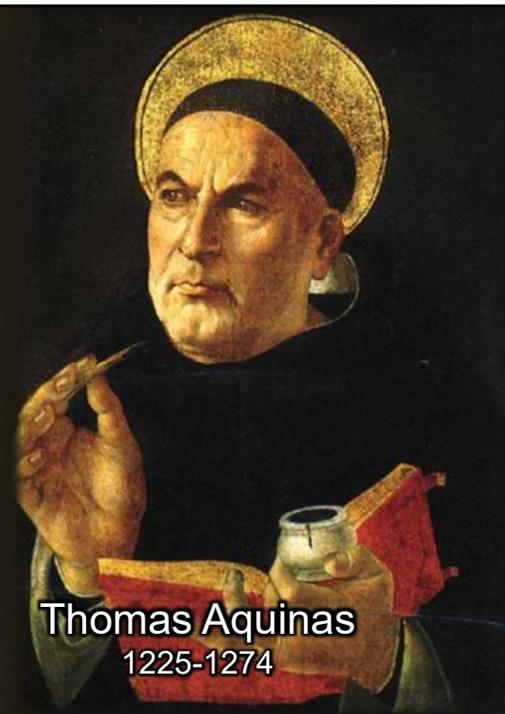
***"Now being itself cannot be caused by the form ... of a thing (by 'caused' I mean by an efficient cause), because that thing would then be its own cause and it would bring itself into being, which is impossible."***



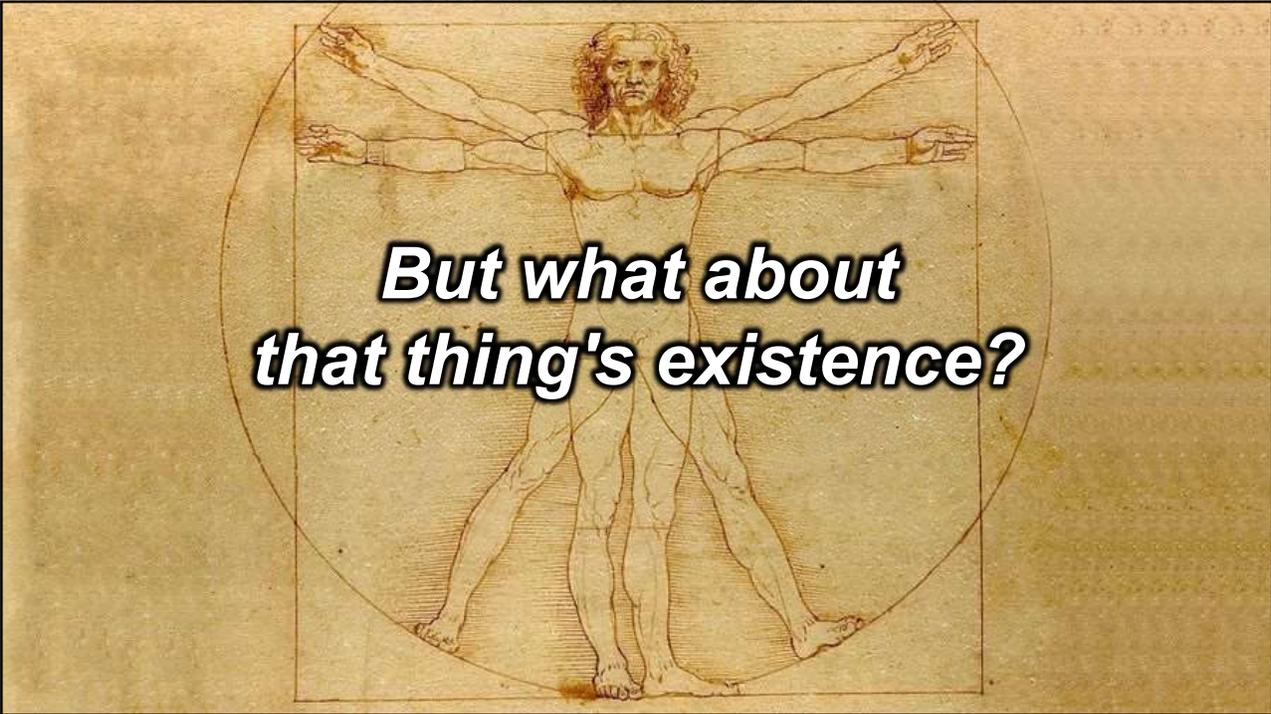
Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

***"It follows that everything whose being is distinct from its nature must have being from another."***

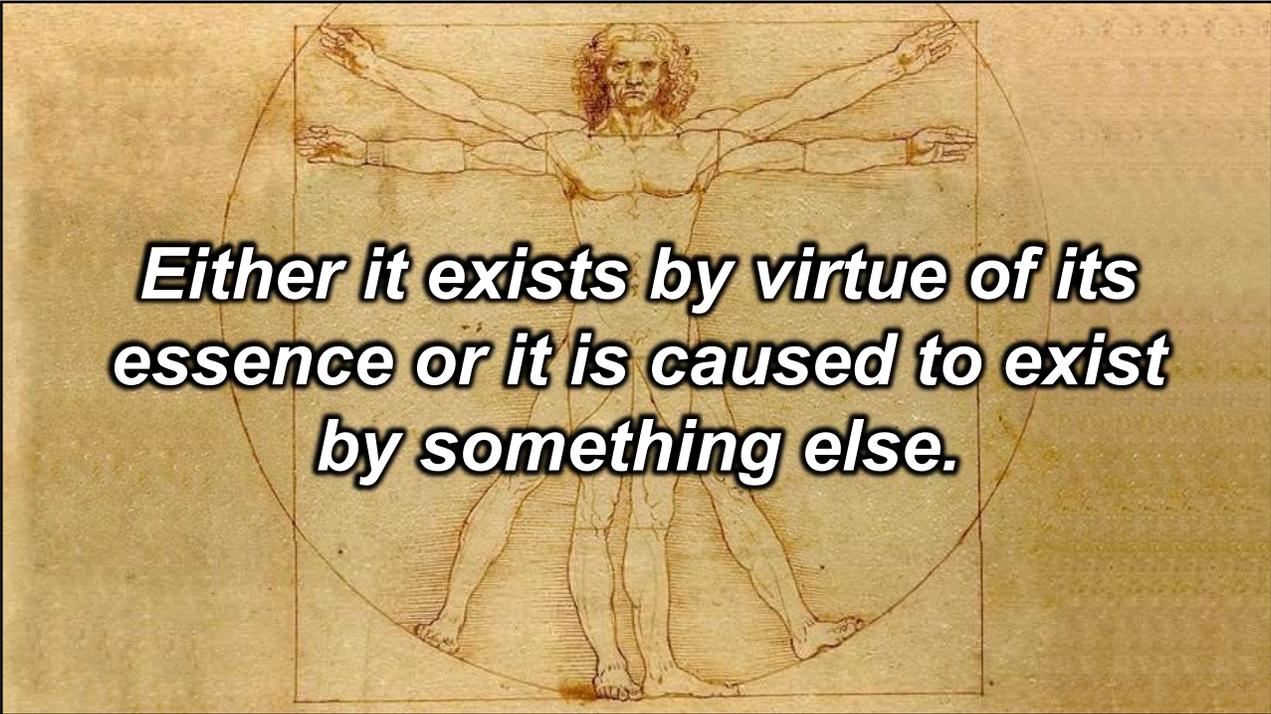
[*On Being and Essence*, IV, §7, trans. Maurer, 56-57]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274



***But what about  
that thing's existence?***



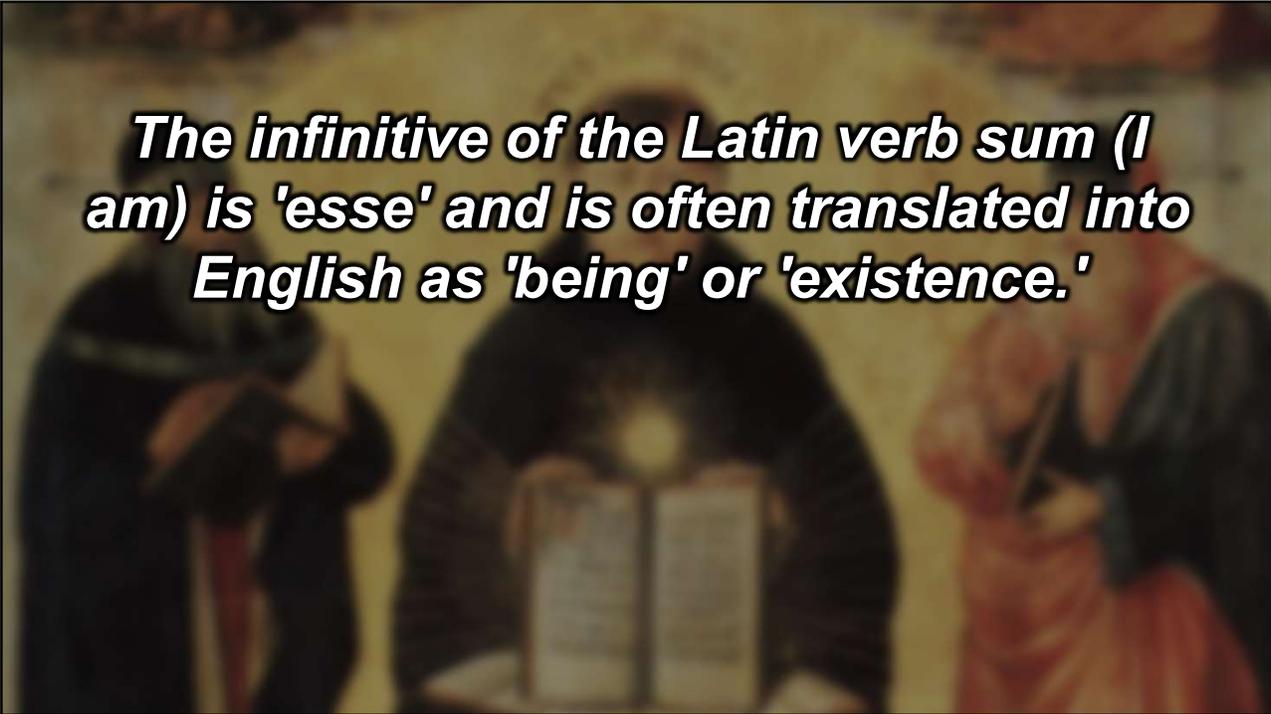
***Either it exists by virtue of its  
essence or it is caused to exist  
by something else.***

*Can this go on to infinity?*

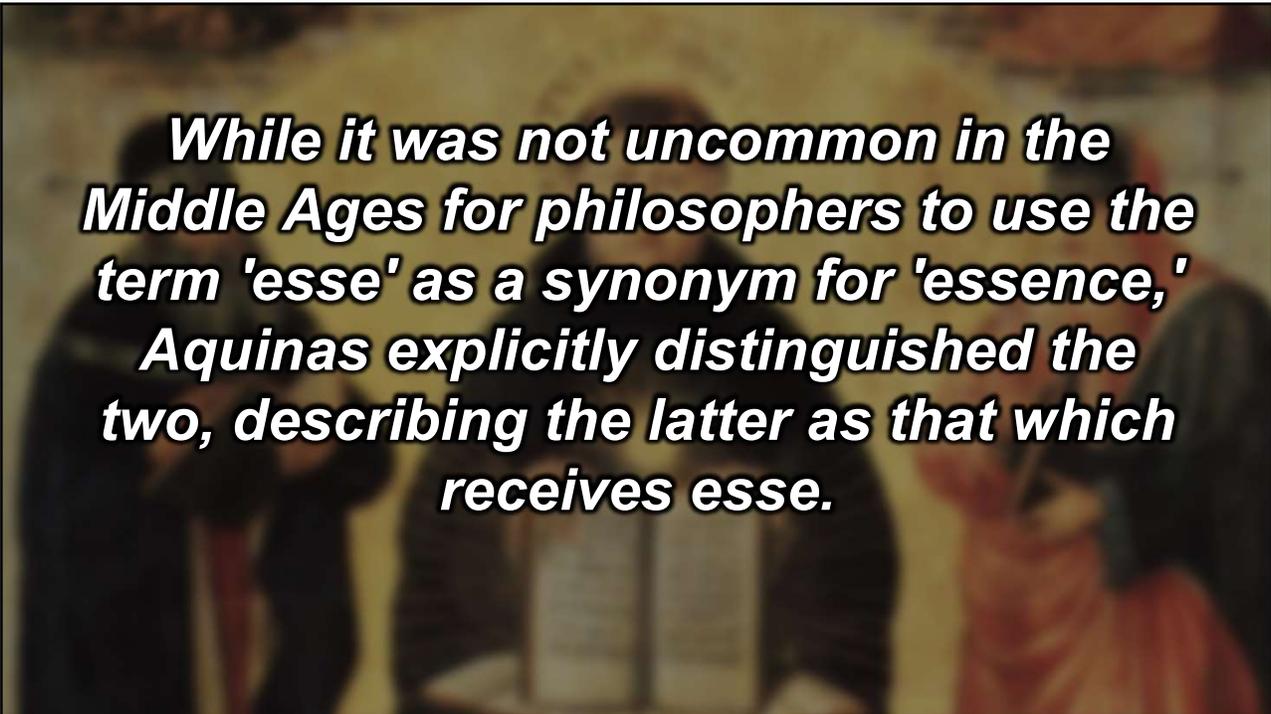


*Some Comments  
on Existence ...*

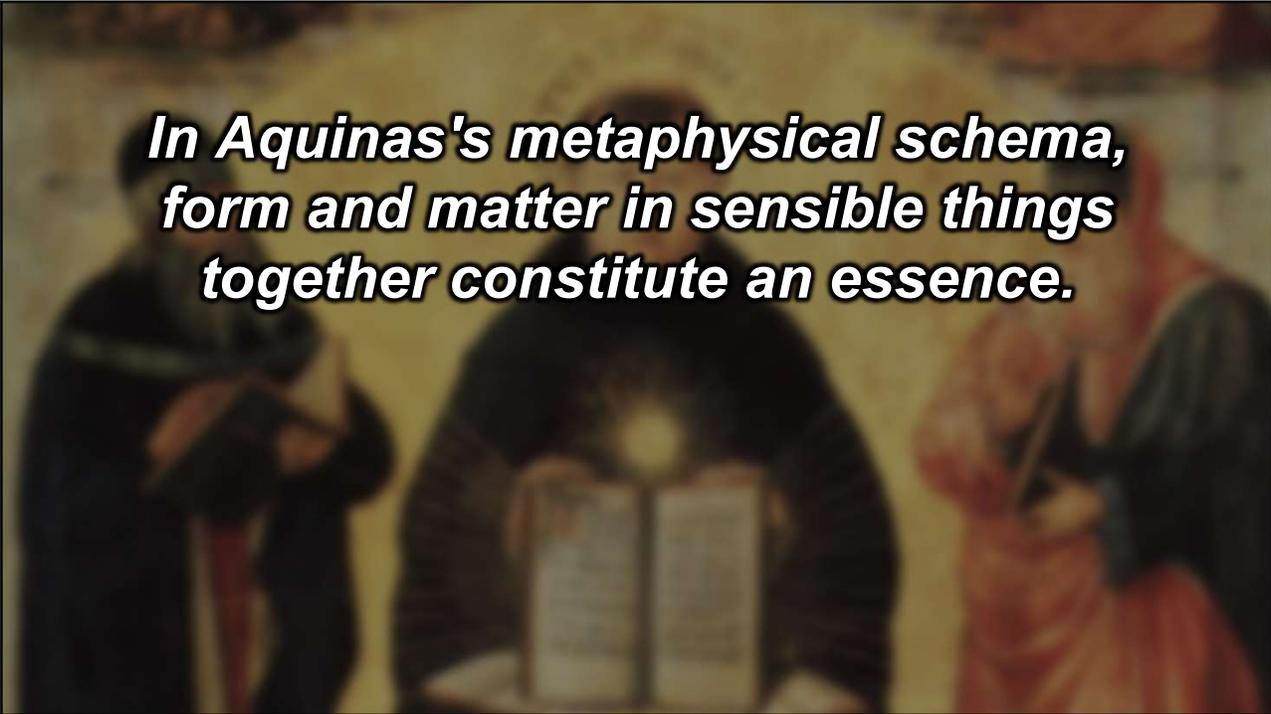




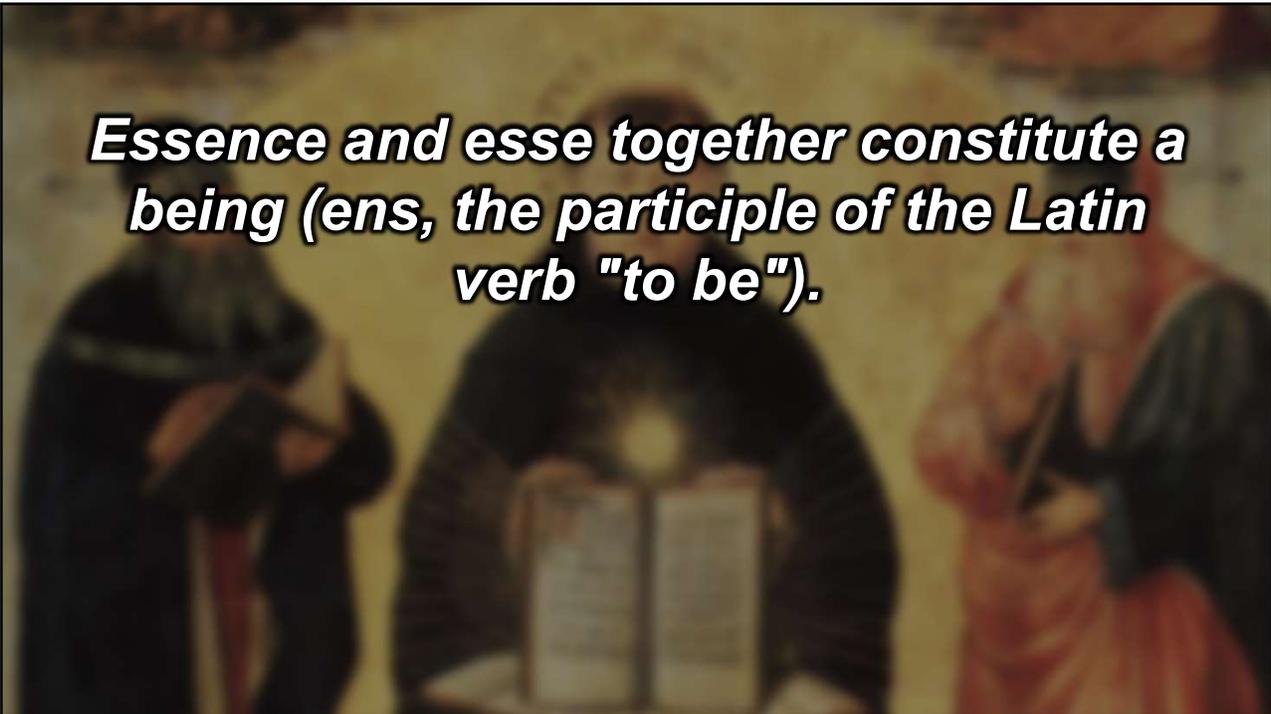
***The infinitive of the Latin verb sum (I am) is 'esse' and is often translated into English as 'being' or 'existence.'***



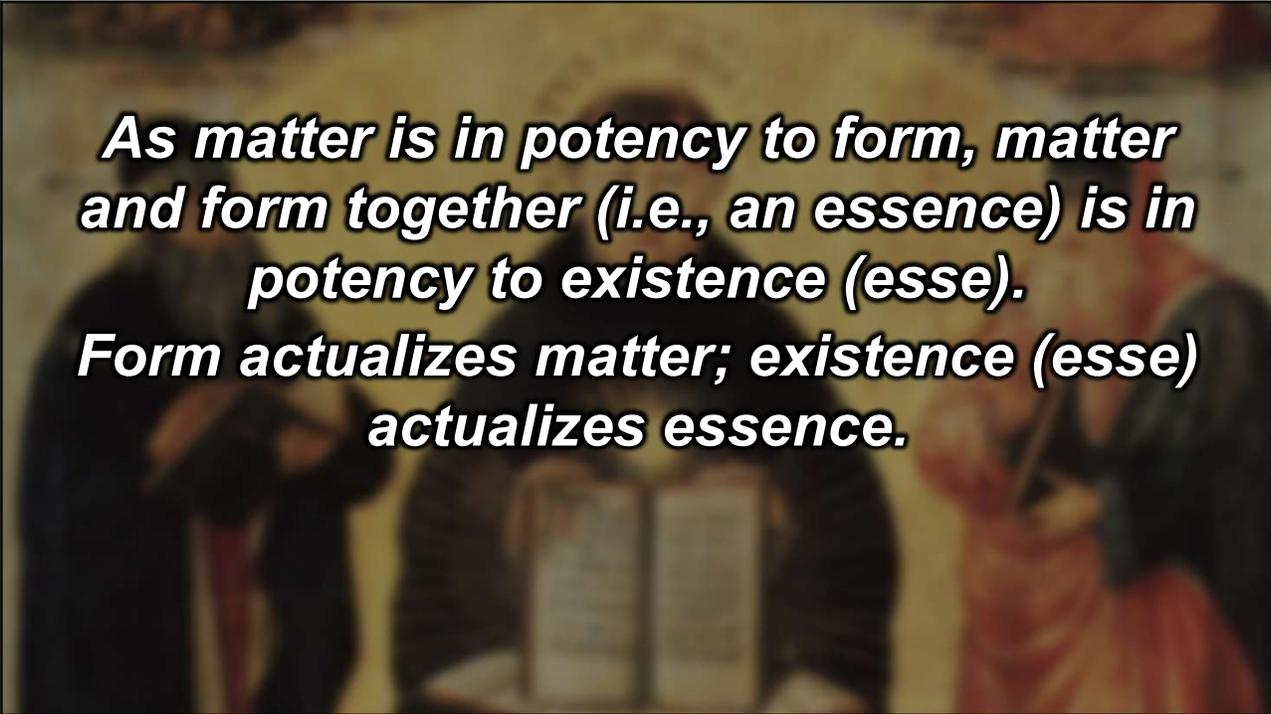
***While it was not uncommon in the Middle Ages for philosophers to use the term 'esse' as a synonym for 'essence,' Aquinas explicitly distinguished the two, describing the latter as that which receives esse.***



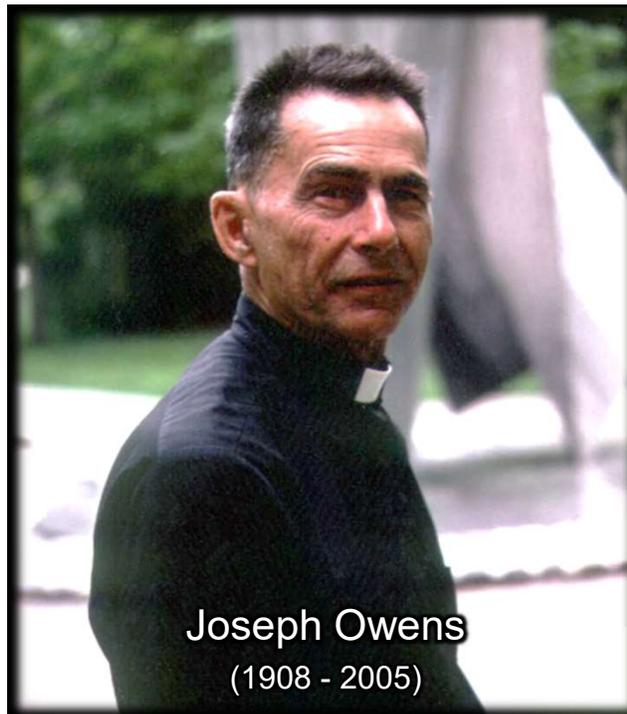
***In Aquinas's metaphysical schema,  
form and matter in sensible things  
together constitute an essence.***



***Essence and esse together constitute a  
being (ens, the participle of the Latin  
verb "to be").***



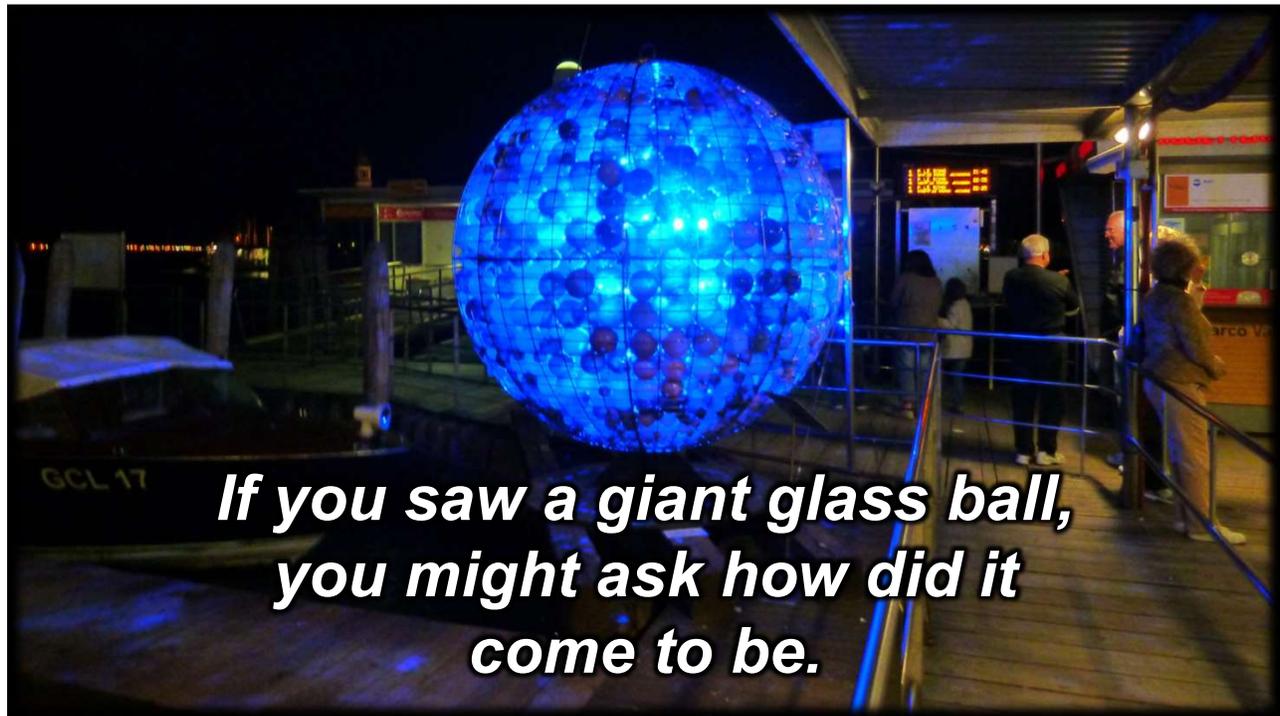
***As matter is in potency to form, matter and form together (i.e., an essence) is in potency to existence (esse).  
Form actualizes matter; existence (esse) actualizes essence.***



**Joseph Owens**  
(1908 - 2005)

**"When existence is considered in relation to the thing it makes exist, it may be regarded as actualizing the thing and, accordingly, it appears as the actuality that gives the thing existence."**

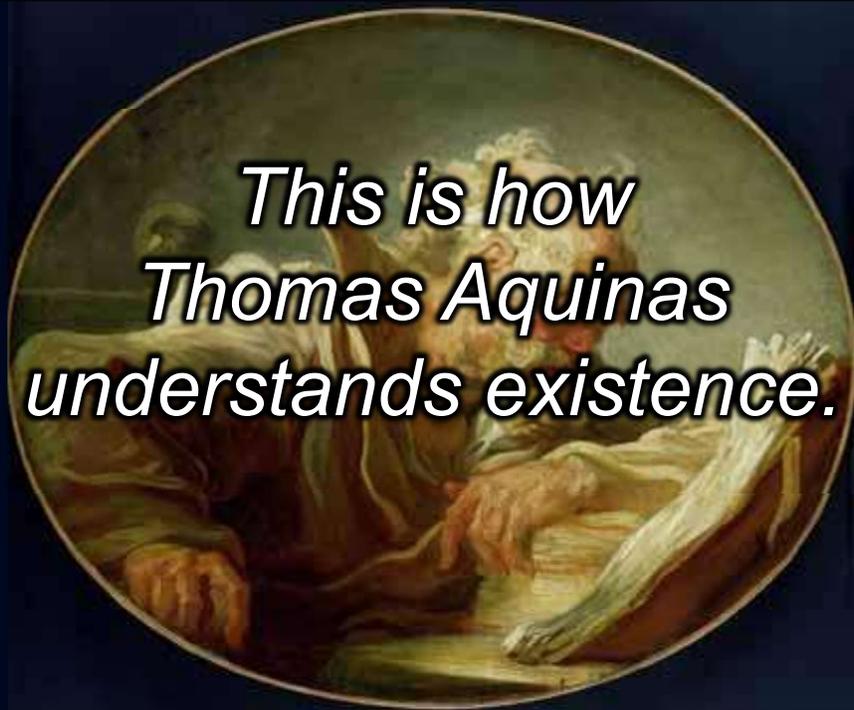
[Joseph Owens, *An Interpretation of Existence* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1968), 51]

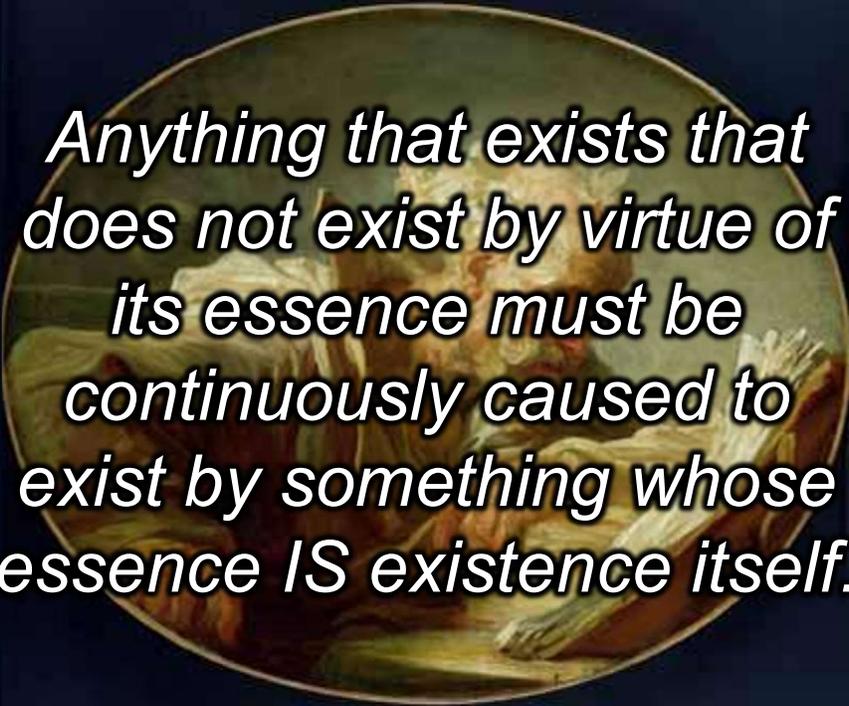


***Rather, you would ask what is causing  
the music to be right now.***



***This is how  
Thomas Aquinas  
understands existence.***

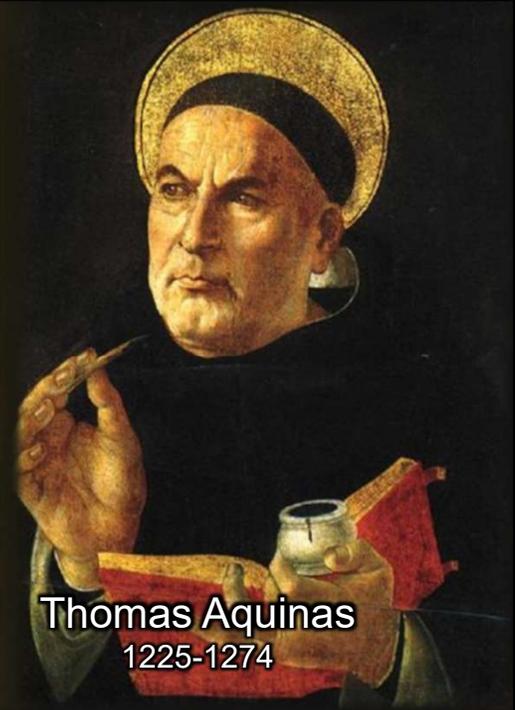




*Anything that exists that does not exist by virtue of its essence must be continuously caused to exist by something whose essence IS existence itself.*

**"Now since God is very being by His own essence, created being must be His proper effect ... Now God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being..."**

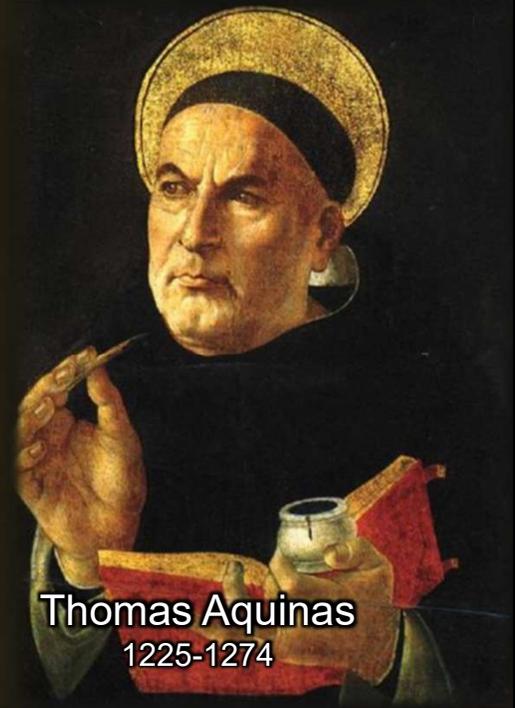
[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q. 46, ii, ad 7]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

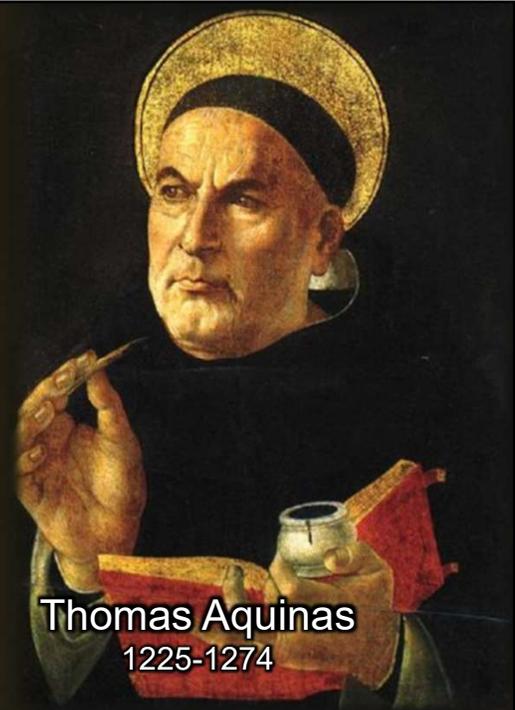
**"As the production of a thing into existence depends on the will of God, so likewise it depends on His will that things should be preserved; for He does not preserve them otherwise than by ever giving them existence; hence if He took away His action from them, all things would be reduced to nothing."**

[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q. 9, ii]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

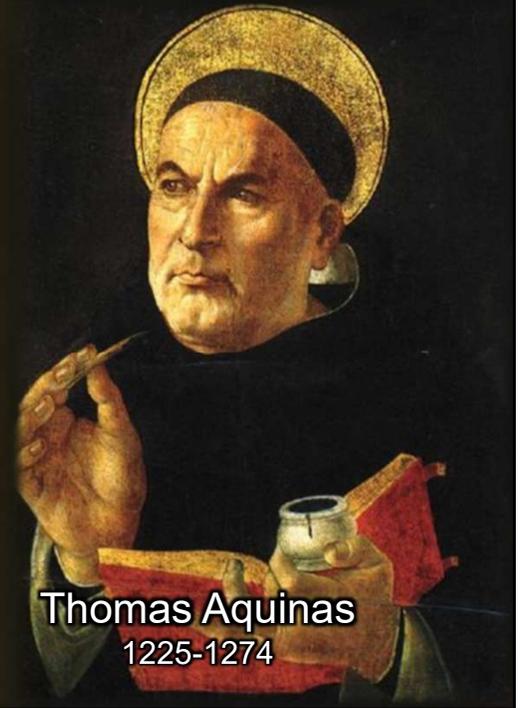
***"Now there is a being that is its own being: and this follows from the fact that there must needs be a being that is pure act and wherein there is no composition."***



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

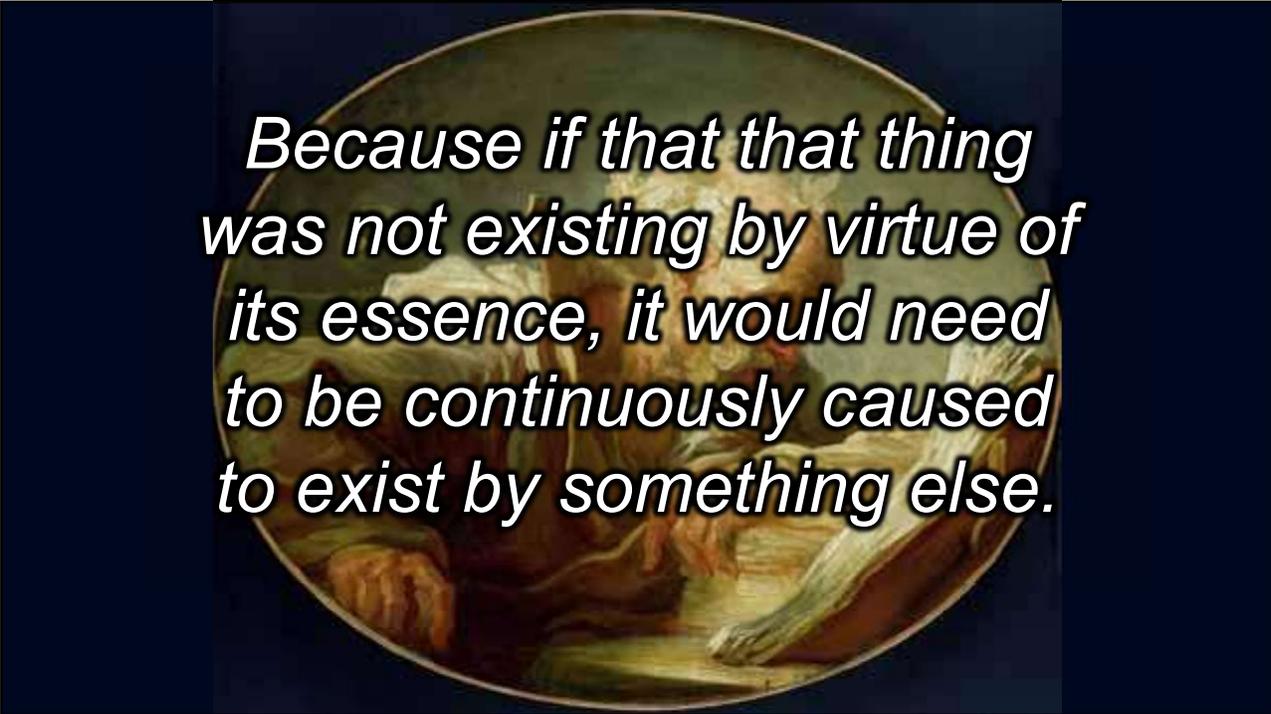
***"Hence from that one being  
all other beings that are not  
their own being, but have  
being by participation,  
must needs proceed."***

[On the Power of God, *quæstiones disputatæ de potential dei*, Bk. I, Q. 3, art. 5,  
c, trans. English Dominican Fathers (Eugene: Wipf & Stock2004), 110.]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

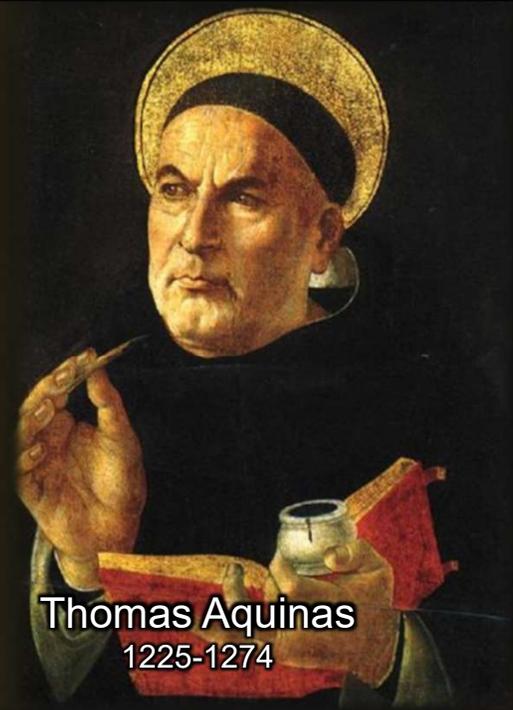




*Because if that that thing  
was not existing by virtue of  
its essence, it would need  
to be continuously caused  
to exist by something else.*

**"... There must be a reality that  
is the cause of being for all  
other things, because it is pure  
being. If this were not so, we  
would go on to infinity in  
causes, for everything that is  
not pure being has a cause of  
its being, as has been said."**

On Being and Essence, IV, §7, trans. Maurer, 56-57



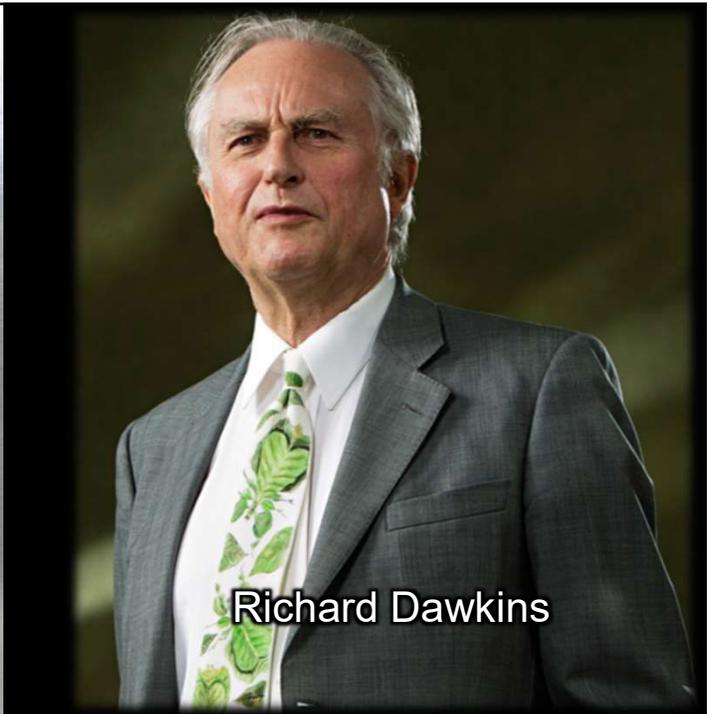
**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

*Can this go on to infinity?*



The **GOD** Delusion

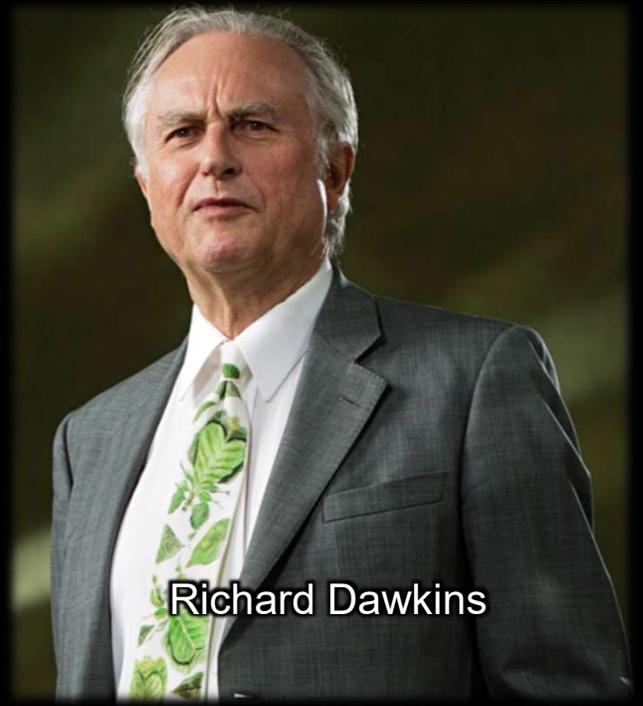
Richard  
Dawkins



Richard Dawkins

*"Thomas Aquinas's Proofs: The Uncaused Cause. Nothing is caused by itself. Every effect has a prior cause, and again we are pushed back into regress. This has to be terminated by a first cause, which we call God."*

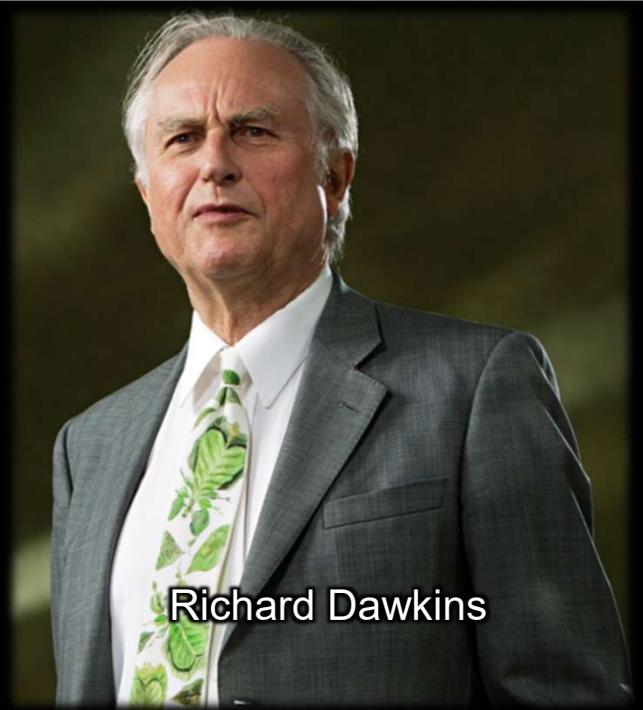
[Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 77]



Richard Dawkins

*"All three of these arguments [by Aquinas] rely upon the idea of a regress and invoke God to terminate it. They make the entirely unwarranted assumption that God himself is immune to the regress."*

[Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 77]

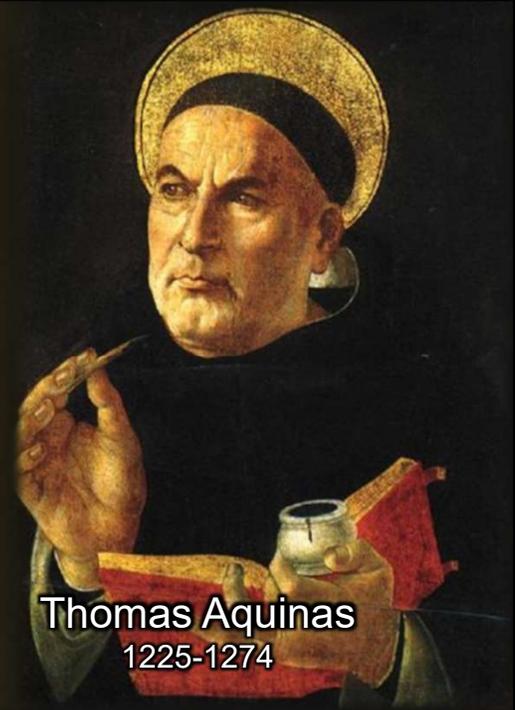


Richard Dawkins

While it is true that Aquinas uses the expression "this cannot go on to infinity" in his famous arguments for God's existence ...

∞ First Way ∞

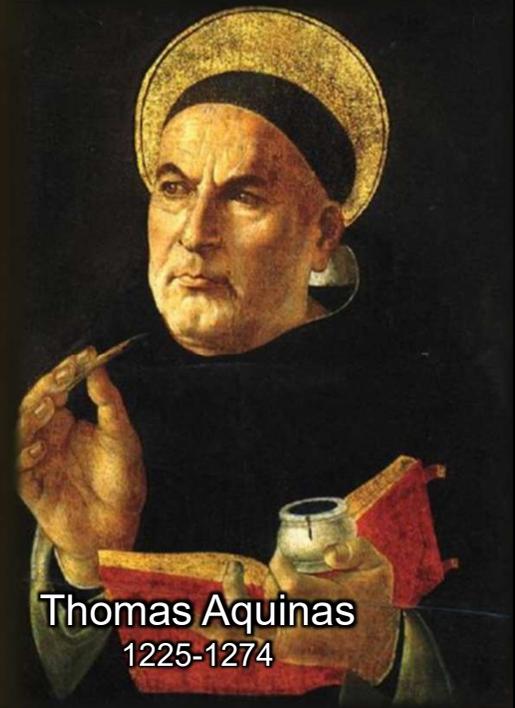
"If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. **But this cannot go on to infinity**, because then there would be no first mover ..."



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

☞ Second Way ☞

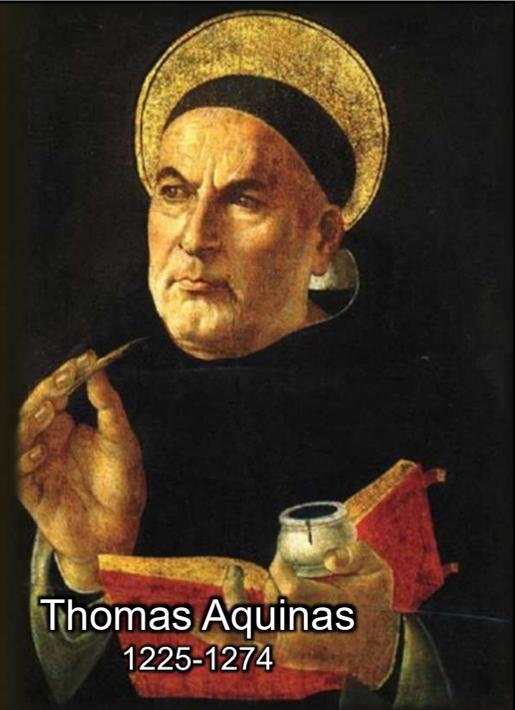
"Now in efficient causes, **it is not possible to go on to infinity**, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause."



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

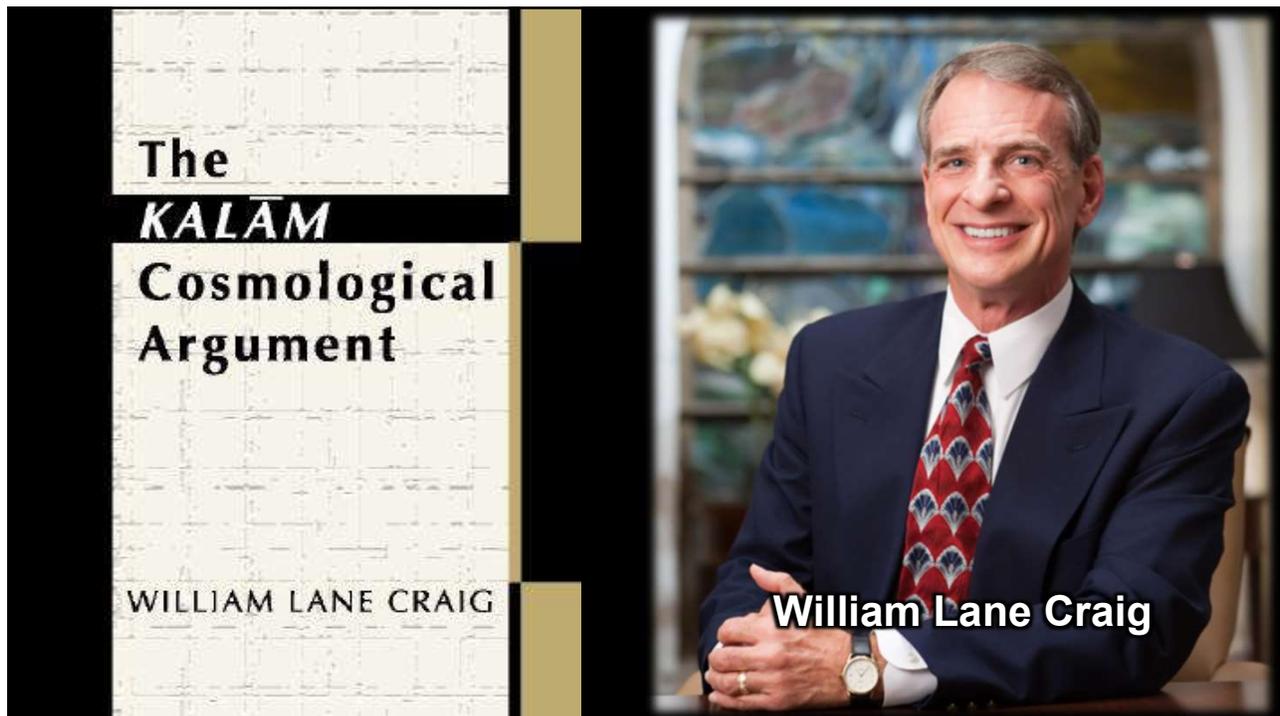
☞ Third Way ☞

"But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now **it is impossible to go on to infinity** in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes."



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

**... Dawkins is mistaken in assuming that Aquinas is making an infinite regress argument like the Kalam Cosmological Argument.**



**William Lane Craig**

The

***KALĀM***

Cosmological  
Argument

WILLIAM LANE CRAIG

**The Universe began to exist.**

**Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence.**

**Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.**

**But this is not at all what Aquinas is arguing when he is denying the possibility of an infinite regress.**

**Dawkins is not alone in his mistaken assumption that Aquinas is arguing for the impossibility of an infinite regress in the Kalam sense.**

The  
***KALAM***  
Cosmological  
Argument

WILLIAM LANE CRAIG

**The Universe began to exist.  
Whatever begins to exist has a cause of its existence.**  

---

**Therefore, the universe has a cause of its existence.**

**Not: If (since) there cannot be an infinite regress, there must be a first cause. There cannot be an infinite regress. Therefore, there is a first cause.**

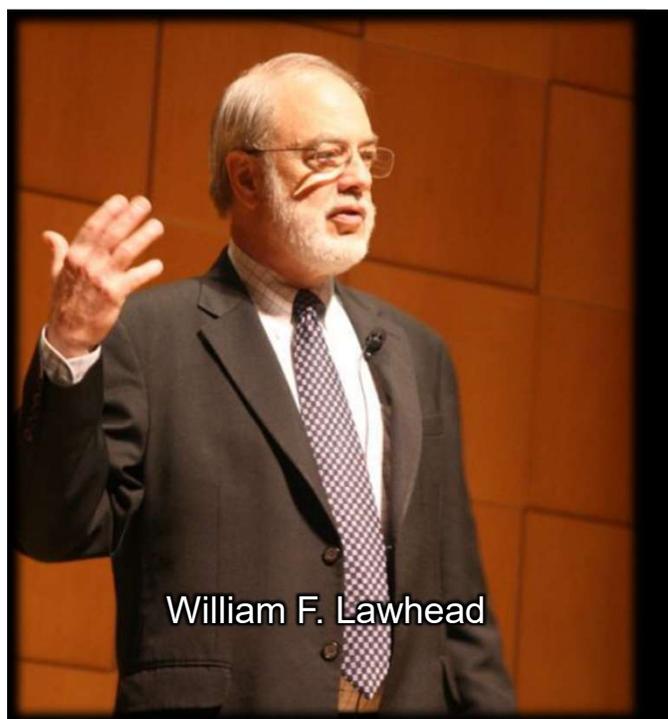
$$1. \sim IR \supset F$$

$$2. \sim IR / \therefore F$$

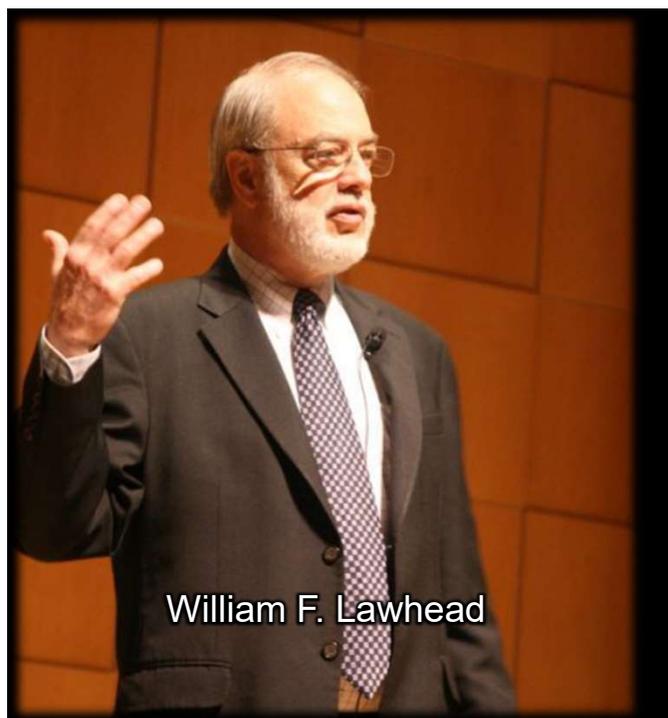
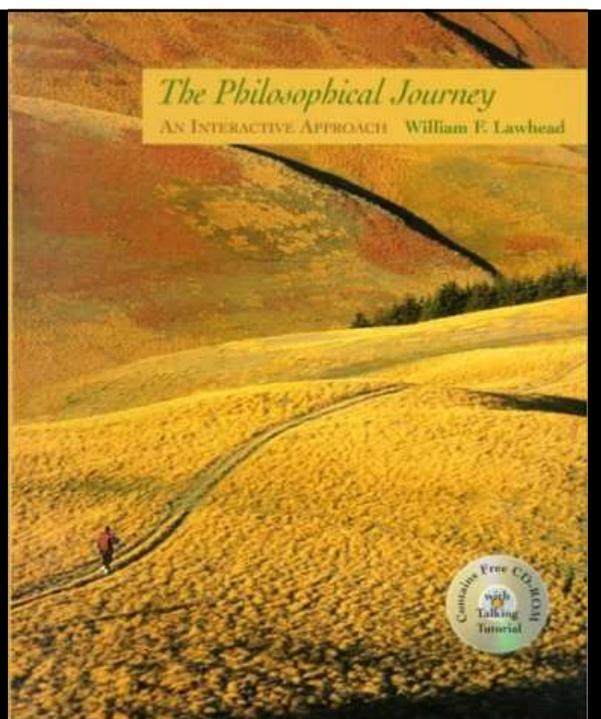
**Rather: If (since) there is a first cause, there cannot be an infinite regress. There is a first cause. Therefore, there cannot be an infinite regress.**

$$1. IR \supset \sim F$$

$$2. F / \therefore \sim IR$$



William F. Lawhead



William F. Lawhead

***"Critics have had the most problems with the third premise of Aquinas's [second way] argument. Why can't there be an infinite series of causes? Isn't the series of whole numbers an infinite series?"***

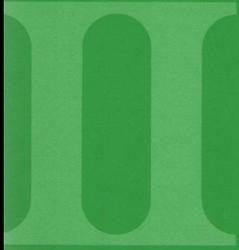
[William F. Lawhead, *The Philosophical Journey: An Interactive Approach*, 2 ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003): 321.]

A History of Western Philosophy

## The Medieval Mind

SECOND EDITION

W. T. JONES



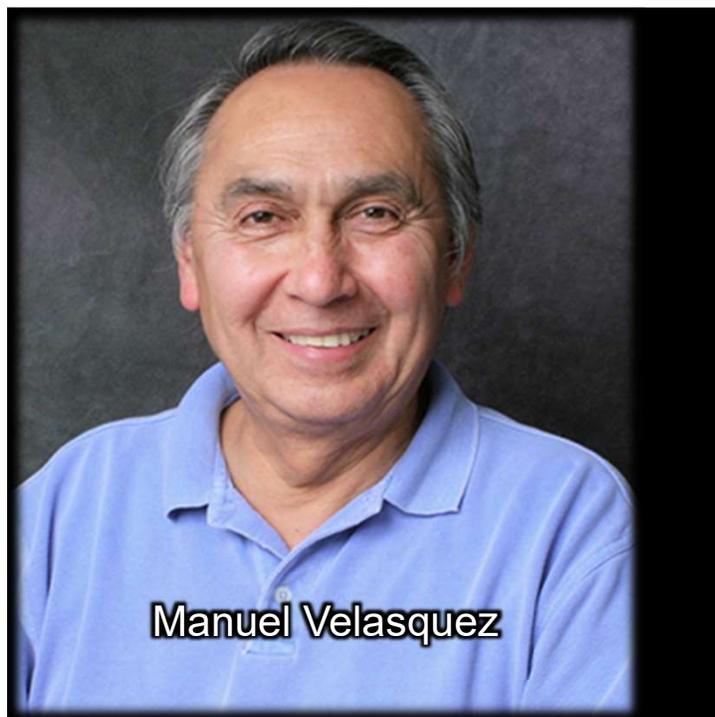
W. T. Jones  
(1910-1993)

***"The question, however, is whether such an infinite series of motions (or causes) is conceivable. Thomas, of course, denied that it is. In reply, the series of positive integers—1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and so on—could be cited. It is clear that this series does not have a last term ... Similarly, it could be said that before any time  $t$ , however remote in the past, there was an earlier time  $t - 1$ , in which motion was occurring. If there is no greatest positive integer, why need there be any first motion?"***

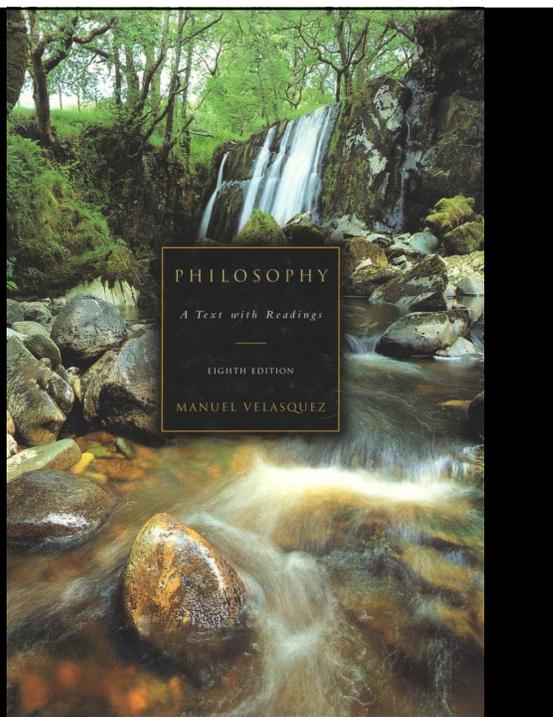
[W. T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy: The Medieval Mind* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1969): 219]



W. T. Jones  
(1910-1993)

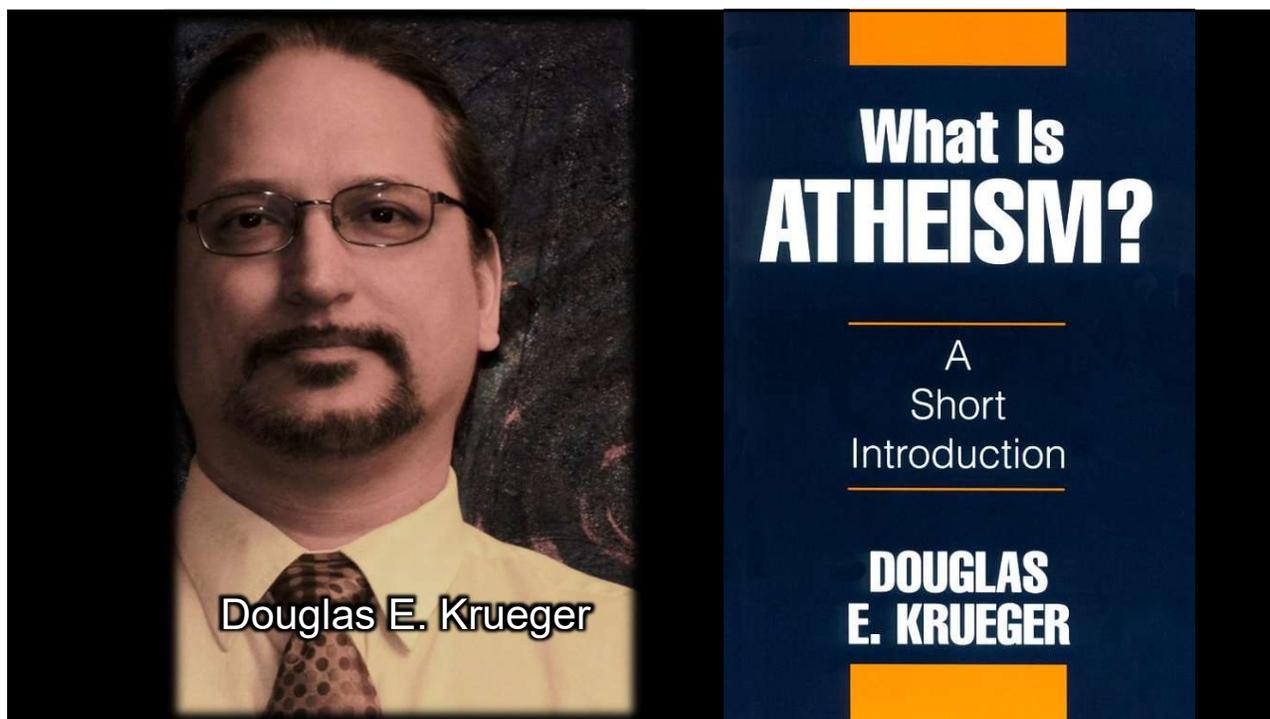


Manuel Velasquez



***"Philosophers have raised two key objections to this [Thomistic] cosmological argument. The first concerns its contention that there can be no infinite regress in the causal sequences of the universe. But why not? Isn't it possible that the universe has simply existed forever and that things in it have simply been moving forever?"***

[Manuel Velasquez, *Philosophy: A Text with Readings*, 8 ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002): 286, emphasis added]

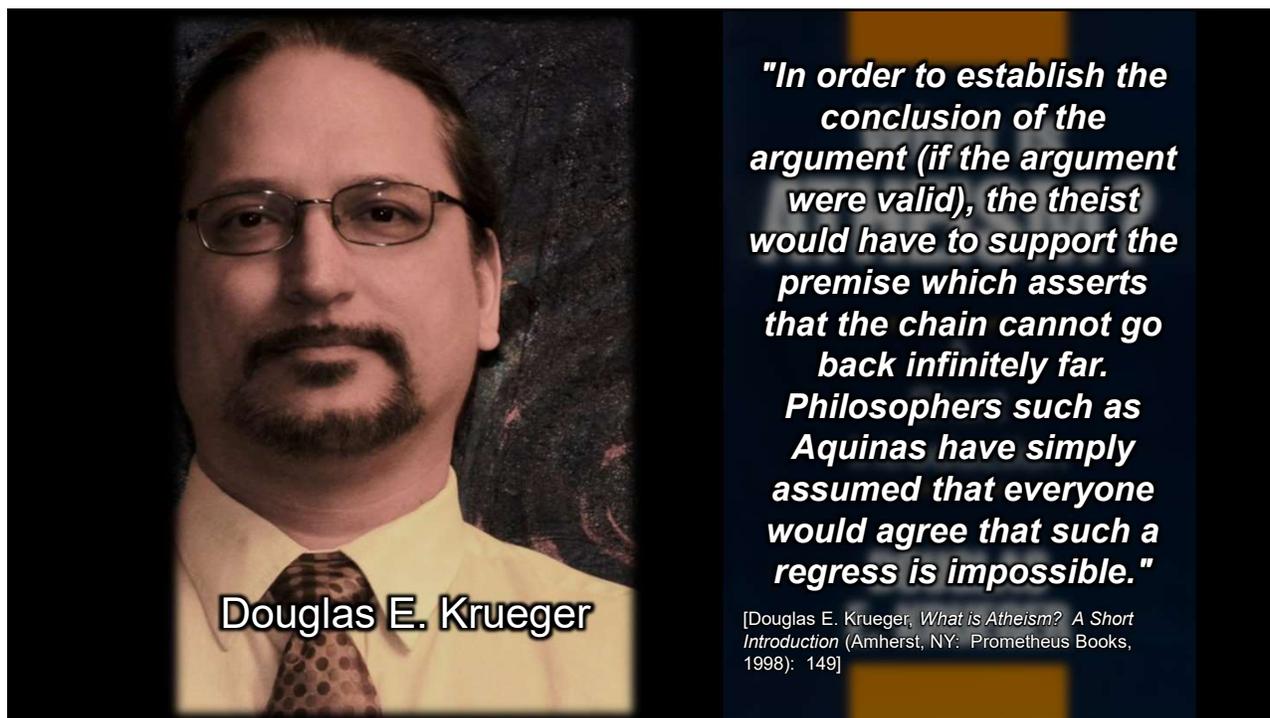


Douglas E. Krueger

# What Is ATHEISM?

A  
Short  
Introduction

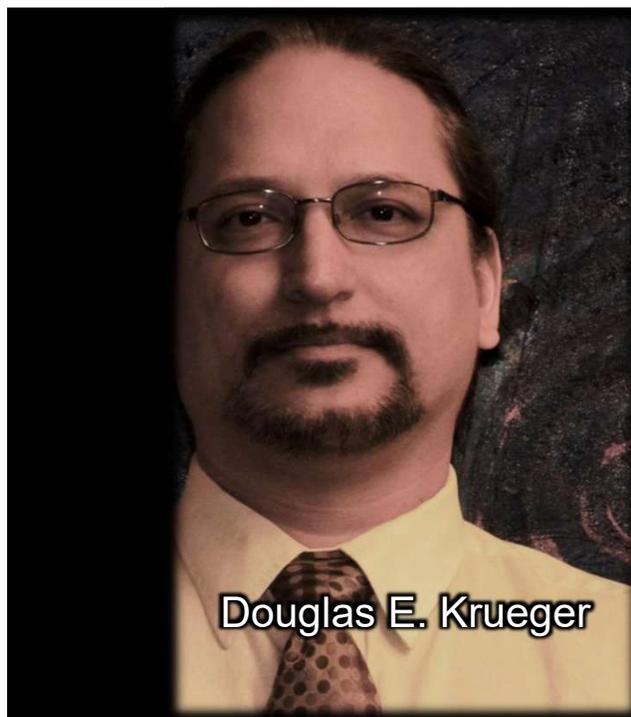
**DOUGLAS  
E. KRUEGER**



Douglas E. Krueger

***"In order to establish the conclusion of the argument (if the argument were valid), the theist would have to support the premise which asserts that the chain cannot go back infinitely far. Philosophers such as Aquinas have simply assumed that everyone would agree that such a regress is impossible."***

[Douglas E. Krueger, *What is Atheism? A Short Introduction* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998): 149]

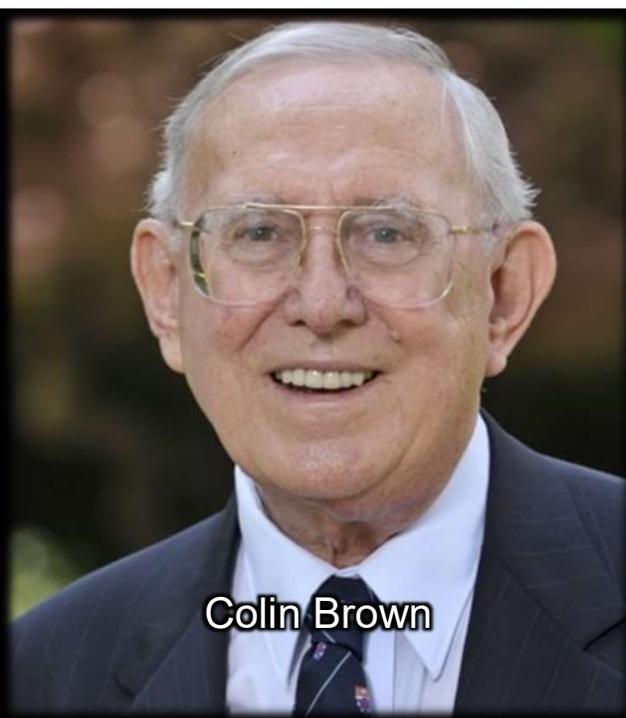
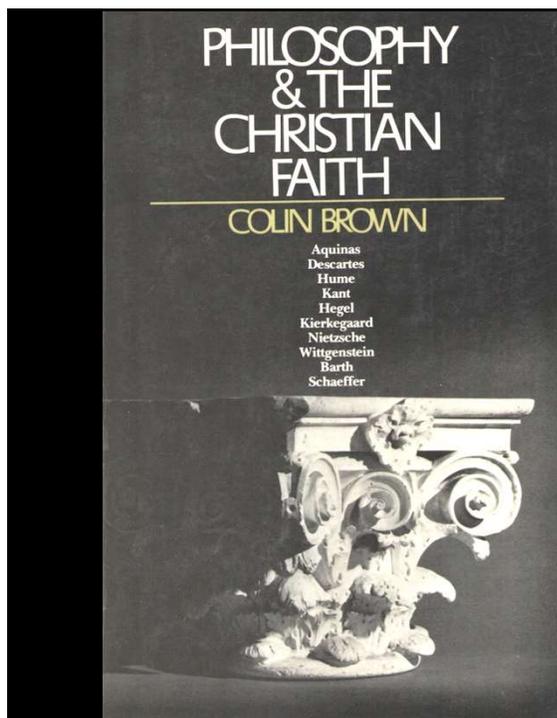


Douglas E. Krueger

*"In order to establish the conclusion of the argument (if the argument were valid), the theist would have to support the premise which asserts that the chain cannot go back infinitely far.*

***Philosophers such as Aquinas have simply assumed that everyone would agree that such a regress is impossible."***

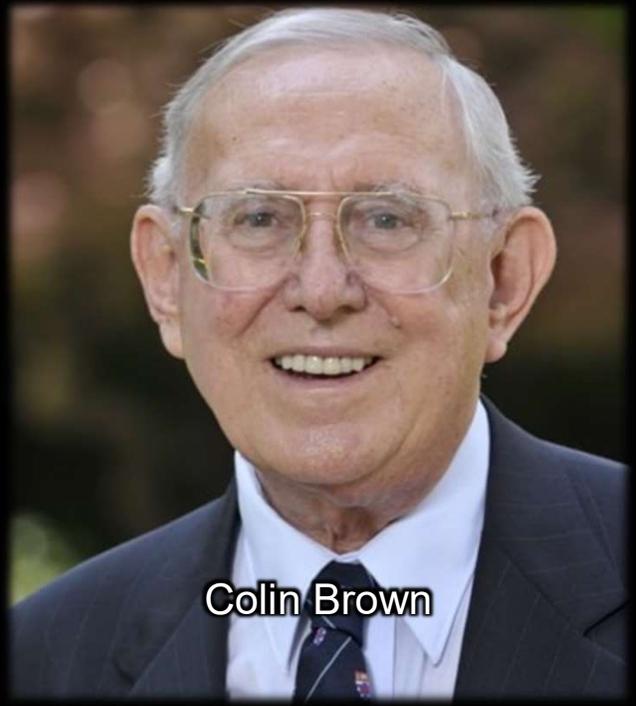
[Douglas E. Krueger, *What is Atheism? A Short Introduction* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998): 149]



Colin Brown

***"Aquinas believed that one could argue back from the things that we observe in the world to a prime mover, a first cause or a great designer behind it. In each case the drift of the argument follows the same basic pattern. Every event must have a cause. Nothing causes (or, for that matter, moves or designs) itself. If we press far enough back, we must acknowledge some first cause, prime mover or great designer of all things."***

[Colin Brown, *Philosophy and the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968): 26-27, emphasis added]



Colin Brown

Atheism Non-Human Creation  
 Humanity Image of God Desire  
 Alienation Jesus Christ Mediator  
 Atonement Christology Holy Spirit  
 Church Ministry Sacraments  
 Return of Christ Resurrection  
 Last Judgement Eternity  
 God Method Truth Personhood  
 Trinity Holy Love Grace World  
 Atheism Non-Human Creation

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

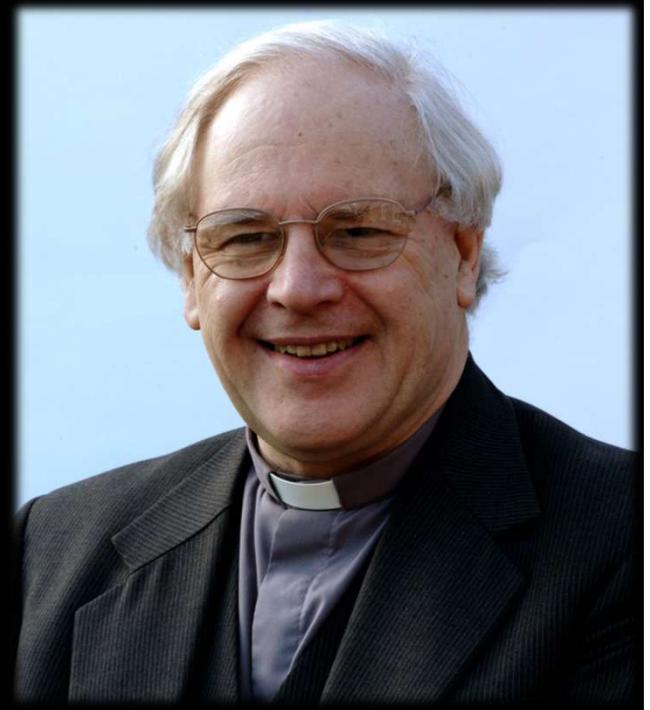
Anthony C. Thiselton

God Method Truth Personhood  
 Trinity Holy Love Grace World  
 Atheism Non-Human Creation  
 Humanity Image of God Desire



***"Other thinkers in theistic religions have held this position. The Islamic philosophers al-Kindi (c. 813-c. 871) and al-Ghazali (c. 1058-1111) believed that the infinite chain of caused causes is impossible, as Aristotle and Aquinas did. This is sometimes called the kalam tradition of Islam."***

[Anthony C. Thiselton, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 64-65, emphasis in original]

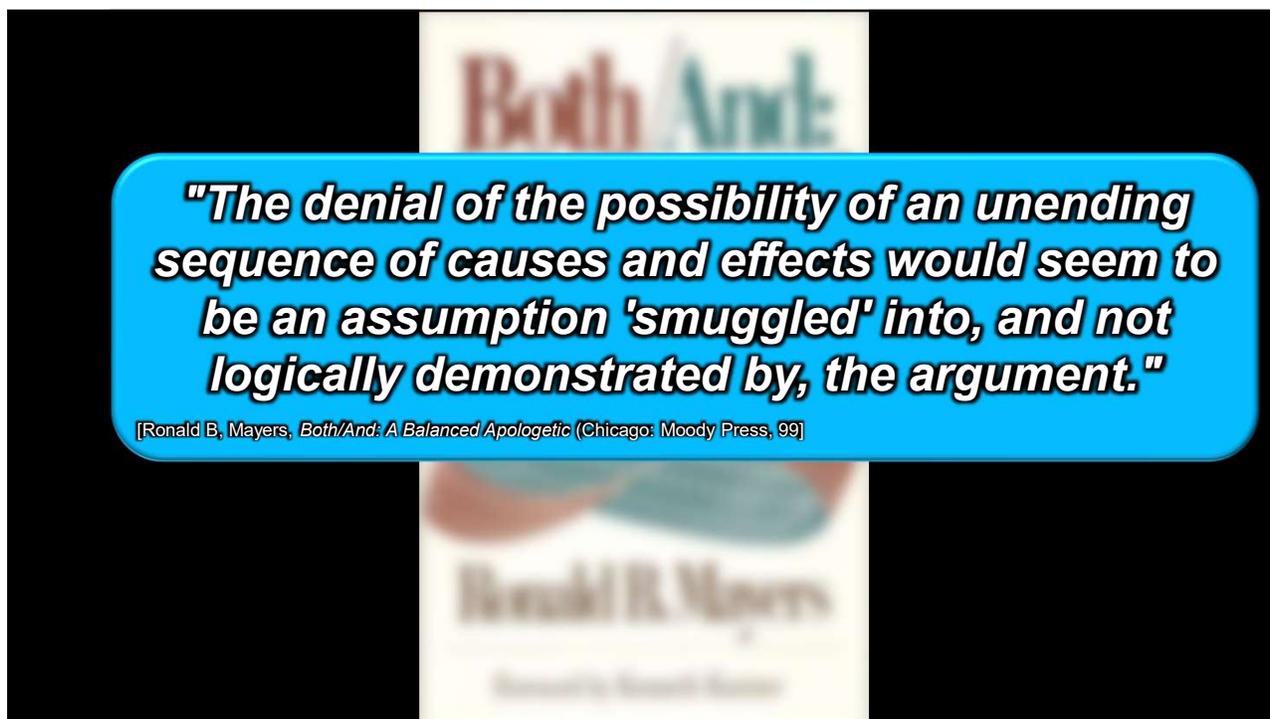


# Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic



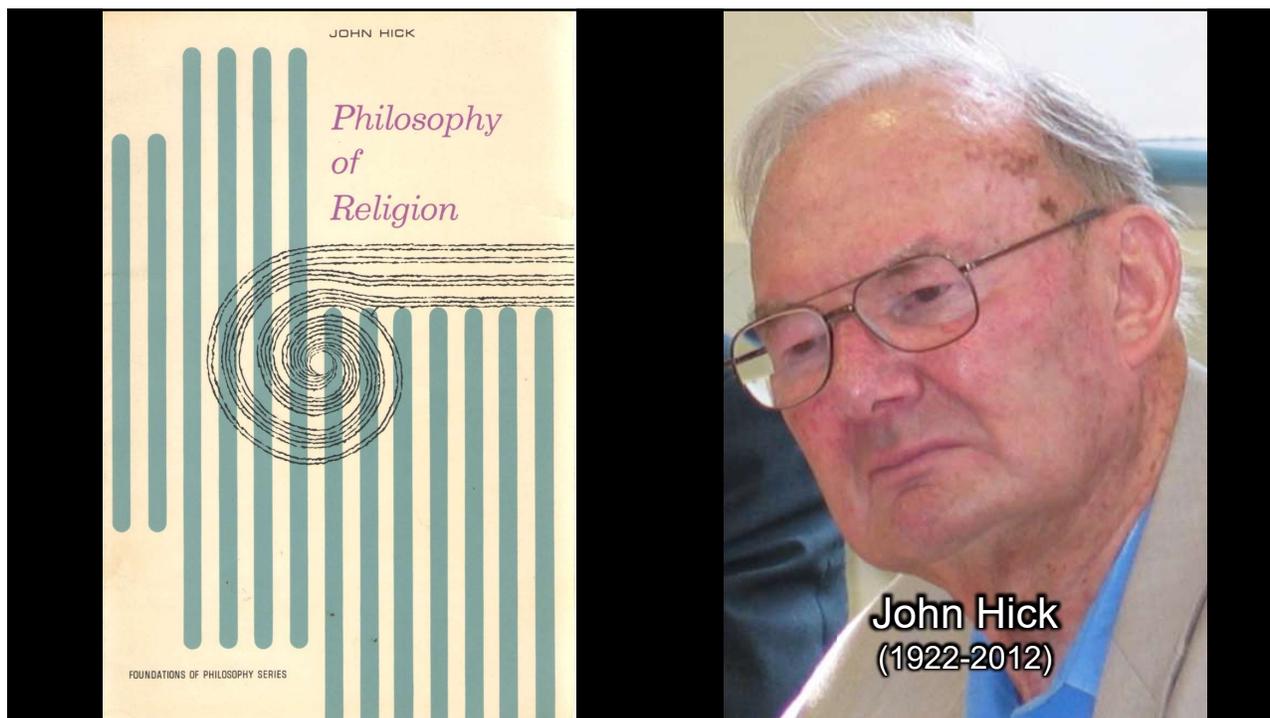
Ronald B. Mayers

Foreword by Kenneth Kantzer



***"The denial of the possibility of an unending sequence of causes and effects would seem to be an assumption 'smuggled' into, and not logically demonstrated by, the argument."***

[Ronald B. Mayers, *Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic* (Chicago: Moody Press, 99)]



**John Hick**  
(1922-2012)

***[Aquinas'] second proof, known as the first cause argument is presented as follows: everything that happens has a cause, and this cause in turn has a cause and so on in a series which must either be infinite or have its starting point in a first cause.***

***Aquinas excludes the possibility of an infinite regress of causes, and so concludes that there must be a first cause, which we call God.***

[John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, Prentice-Hall Foundations of Philosophy Series, eds. Elizabeth and Monroe Beardsley (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 20]



**John Hick  
(1922-2012)**

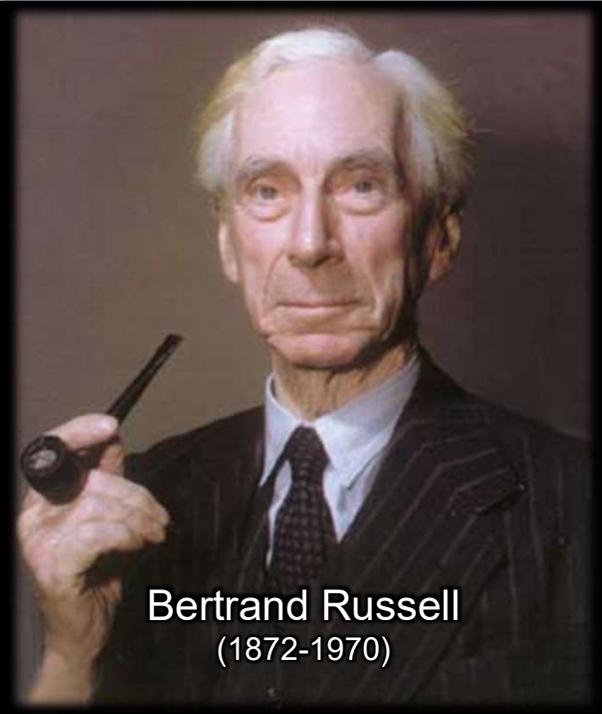
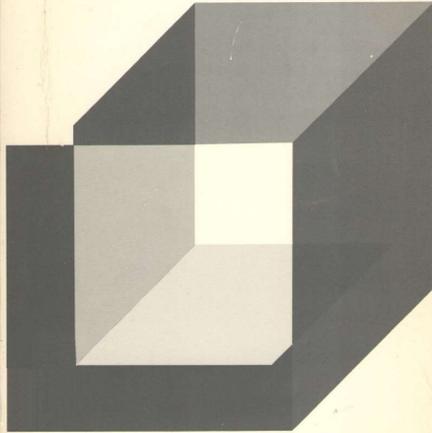
***"The weakness of the [Second Way] argument as Aquinas states it lies in the difficulty (which he himself elsewhere acknowledges) of excluding as impossible an endless regress of events requiring no beginning."***

[Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 21]



**John Hick  
(1922-2012)**

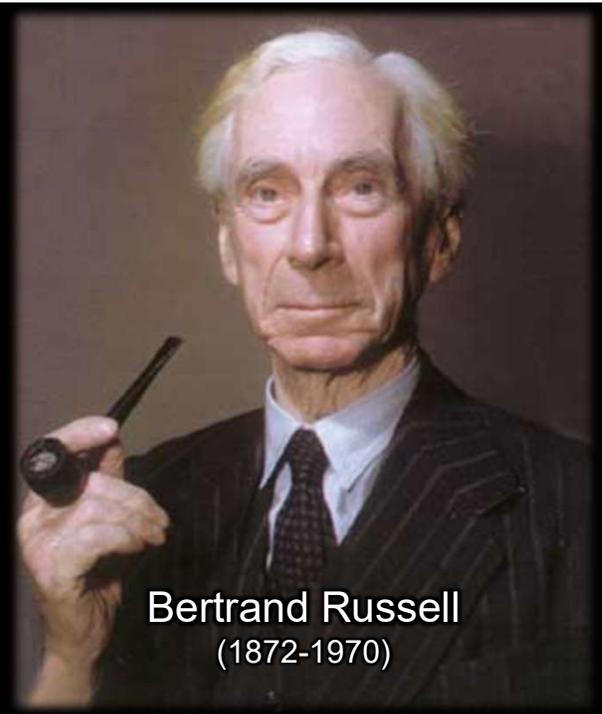
Bertrand  
Russell  
A History of  
Western  
Philosophy



Bertrand Russell  
(1872-1970)

***"In the Summa  
Theologiae, five  
proofs of God's  
existence are given.  
... The Argument of  
the First Cause ...  
depends upon the  
impossibility of an  
infinite regress."***

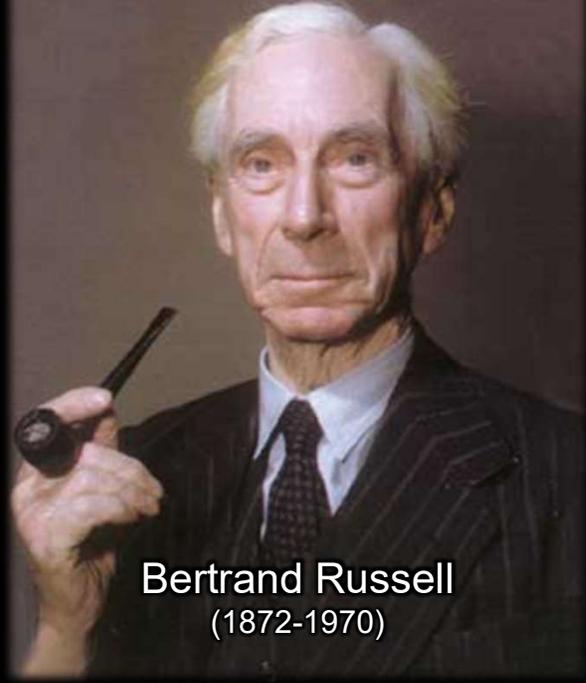
[Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972): 455. See also his *Why I Am Not a Christian and Other Essays on Religion and Related Subjects* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957): 6-7.]



Bertrand Russell  
(1872-1970)

***"Take again the arguments professing to prove the existence of God. All of these, except the one from teleology in lifeless things, depend upon the supposed impossibility of a series having no first term. Every mathematician know that there is no such impossibility; the series of negative integers ending with minus one is an instance to the contrary."***

[Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972): 462]



**Bertrand Russell**  
(1872-1970)

***It is my contention that all of these are misunderstanding Aquinas and that Aquinas is not making a Kalam type of argument.***

*To understand Aquinas's argument here, it is necessary to understand the distinction between two types of infinite series.*

***infinitum per accidens***  
**(accidental infinite)**

**VS.**

***infinitum per se***  
**(per se infinite)**

TWO NOTIONS OF THE INFINITE IN  
THOMAS AQUINAS' *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*  
I, QUESTIONS 2 AND 46

Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

Near the beginning of his *Summa Theologiae*, the thirteenth century Dominican monk, Thomas Aquinas, claims that "the existence of God can be proved in five ways."<sup>1</sup> These arguments are regularly referred to as his *Five Ways* and are for many perhaps the most familiar reading from Thomas. Of particular interest for my purposes are the first three of these *Five Ways* in which Thomas clearly denies the possibility of "going on to infinity."<sup>2</sup> I have discovered that a number of

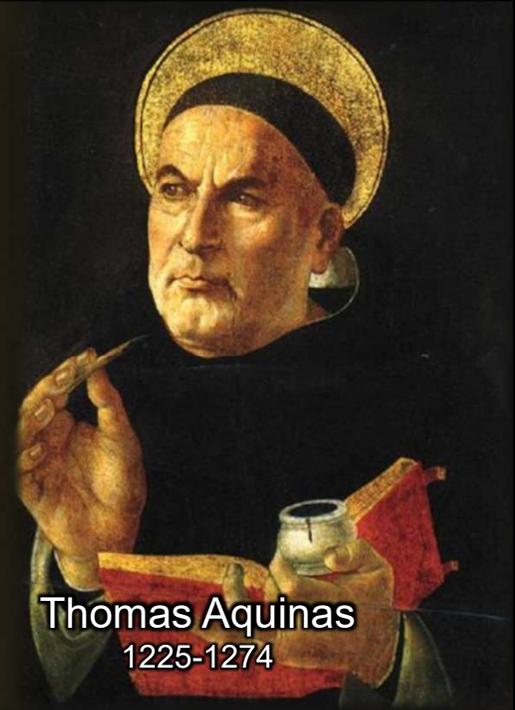
1. *Deum esse quinque viis probari potest*. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 2.  
3. All English translations are from *Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Washington, MD: Christian Classics, 1981). Thomas acknowledges that certain of these arguments are not completely original with him. They are found for example in Aristotle's *Physics* VII, 1 241<sup>a</sup>24 and *Metaphysics* XII, 7 1022<sup>a</sup>23. Though the *Five Ways* are Thomas' most famous arguments for God's existence, certain ones of them are expanded with greater detail in other of his works, including his *Summa Contra Gentiles* I, 13.

2. *procedere per procedendum in infinitum*

Richard G. Howe is Professor of Apologetics at Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, NC.

**"In efficient causes it is impossible to proceed to infinity *per se* — thus, there cannot be an infinite number of causes that are *per se* required for a certain effect. ... But it is not impossible to proceed to infinity *accidentally* as regards efficient causes ..."**

[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q, 46, ii, ad 7]



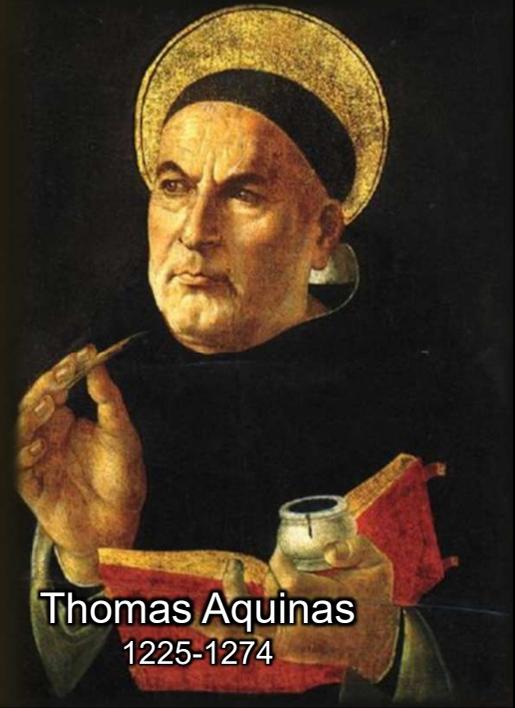
Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

***infinitum per accidens***  
**(accidental infinite)**



**"It is accidental to this particular man as generator to be generated by another man; for he generates as a man, and not as the son of another man."**

[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q, 46, ii, ad 7]

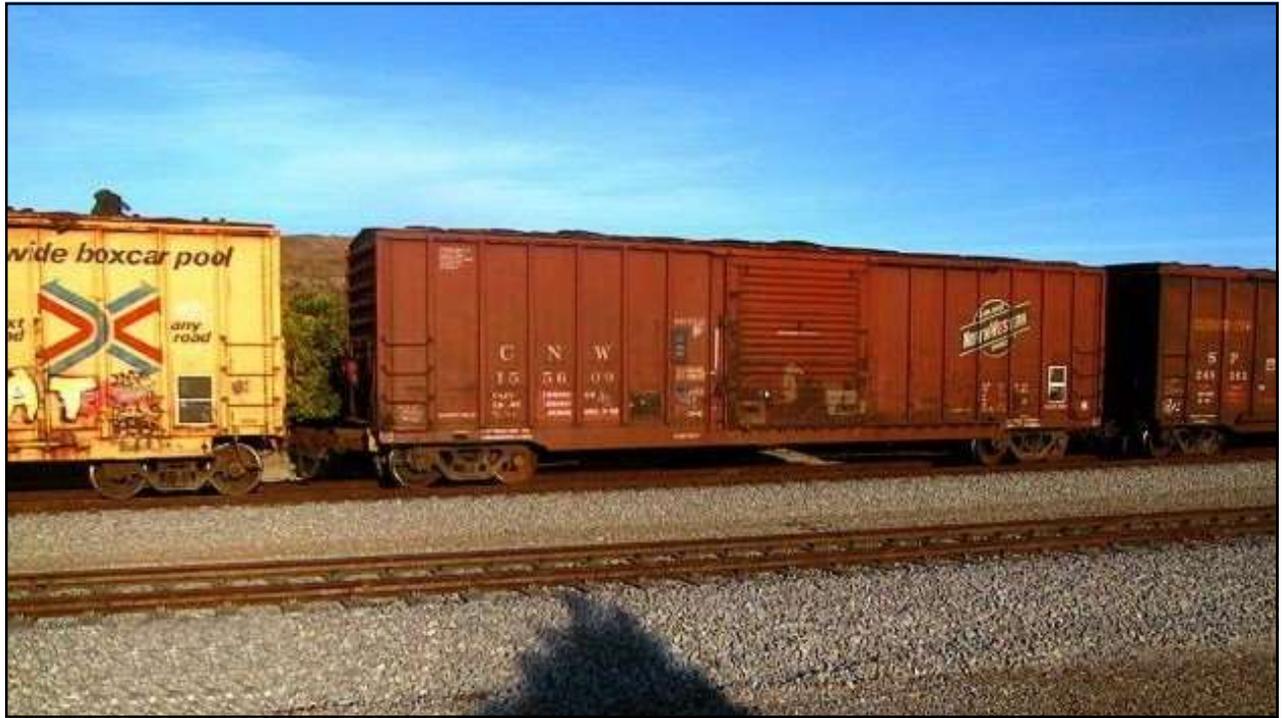


Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274



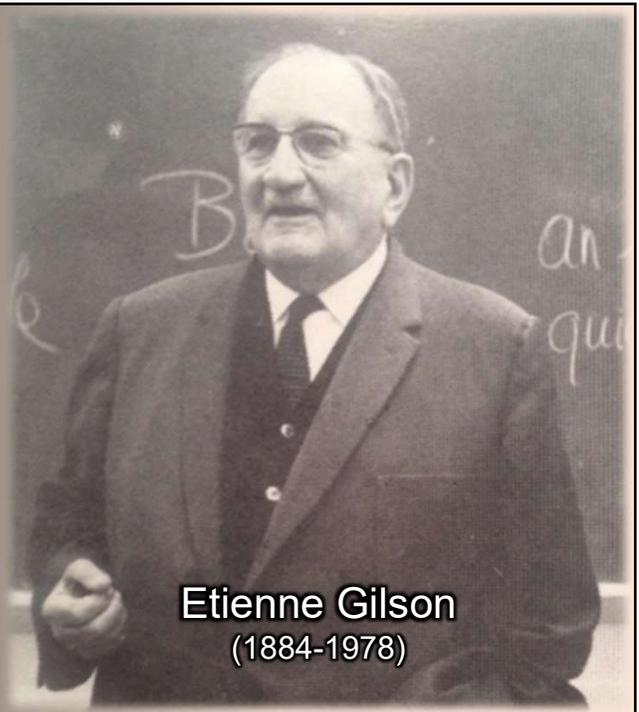
***infinitum per se***  
***(per se infinite)***





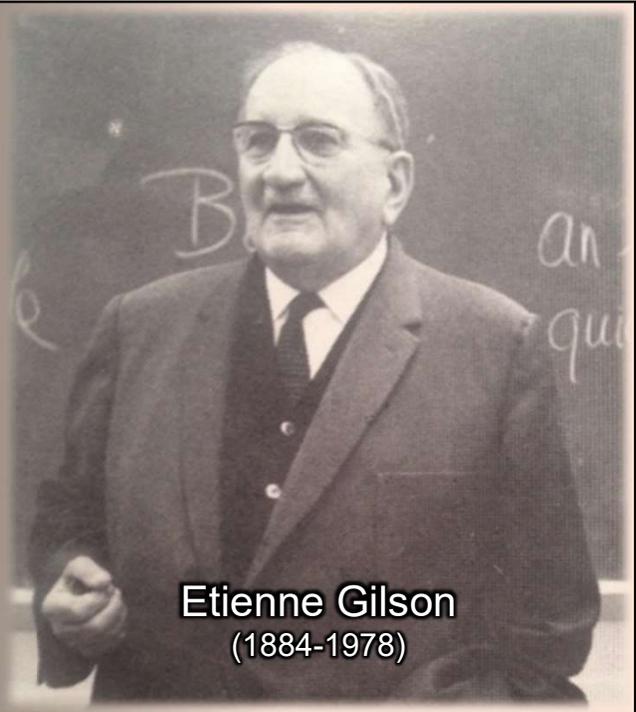


**"The proof in no way considers movement as a present reality the existence of which requires an efficient cause in the past, which is God.**



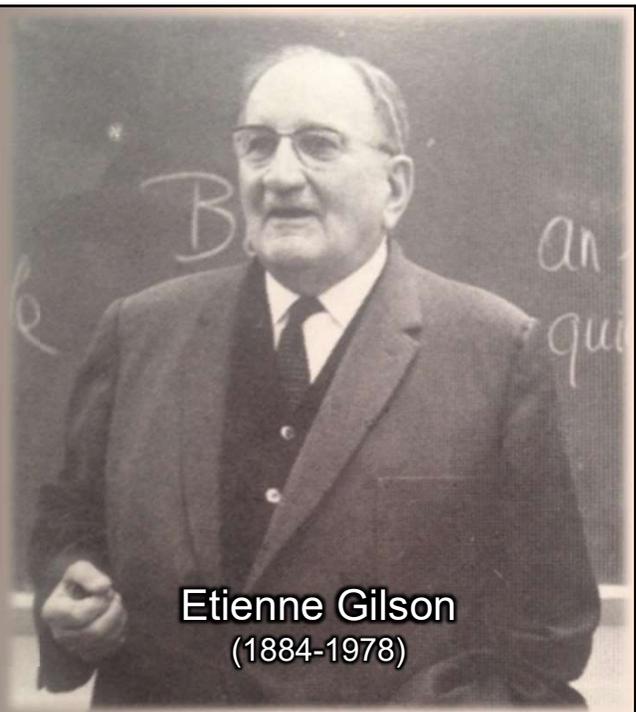
**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

**"It aims simply at establishing that in the universe as actually given, movement, as actually given, would be unintelligible without a first Mover communicating it to all things.**



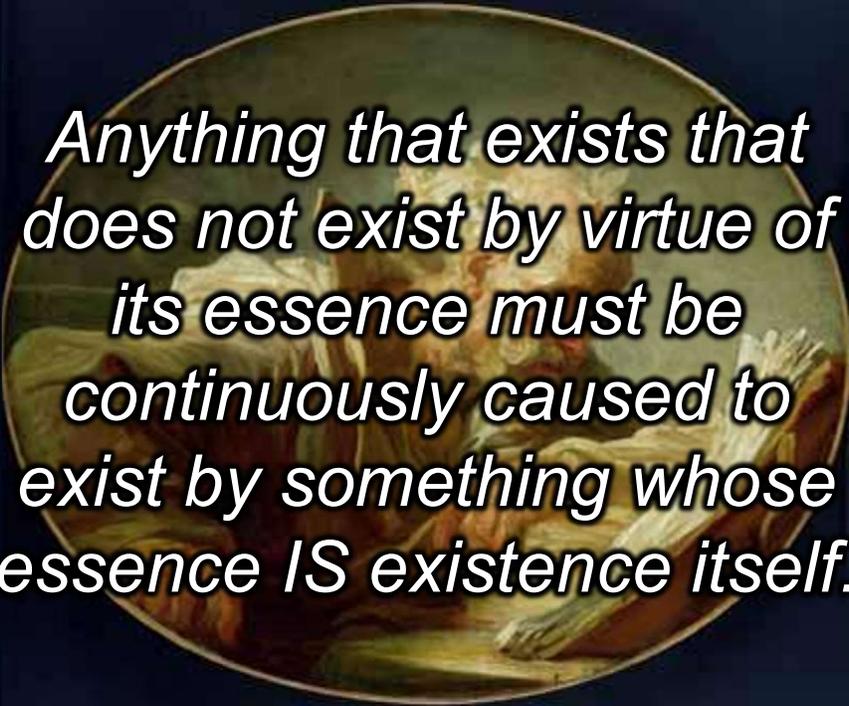
**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

**"In other words the impossibility of an infinite regress must not be taken as an infinite regress in time, but as applying to the present consideration of the universe."**



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

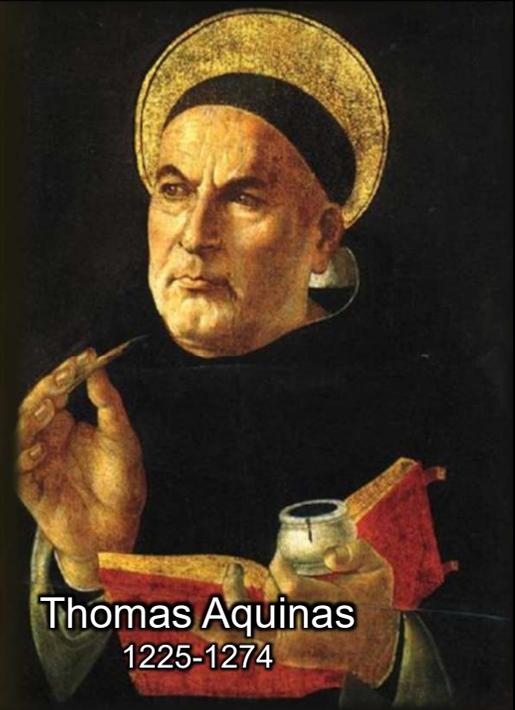
[The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. Edward Bullough (New York: Dorset Press, n.d.), p. 76]



*Anything that exists that does not exist by virtue of its essence must be continuously caused to exist by something whose essence IS existence itself.*

**"Now since God is very being by His own essence, created being must be His proper effect ... Now God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being..."**

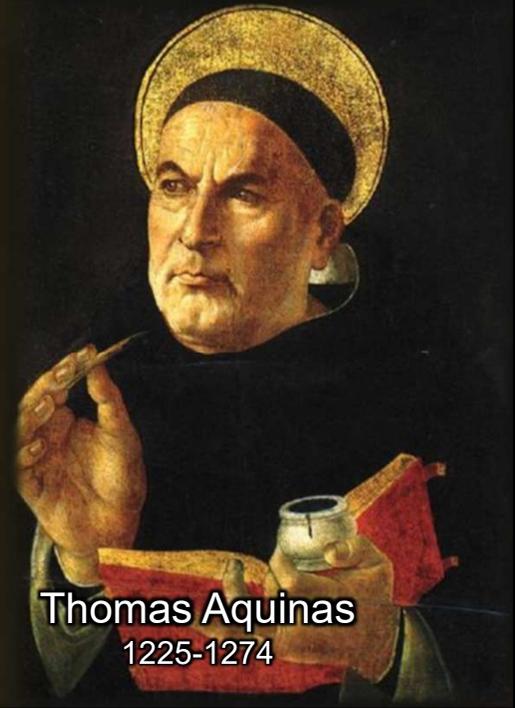
[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q, 46, ii, ad 7]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

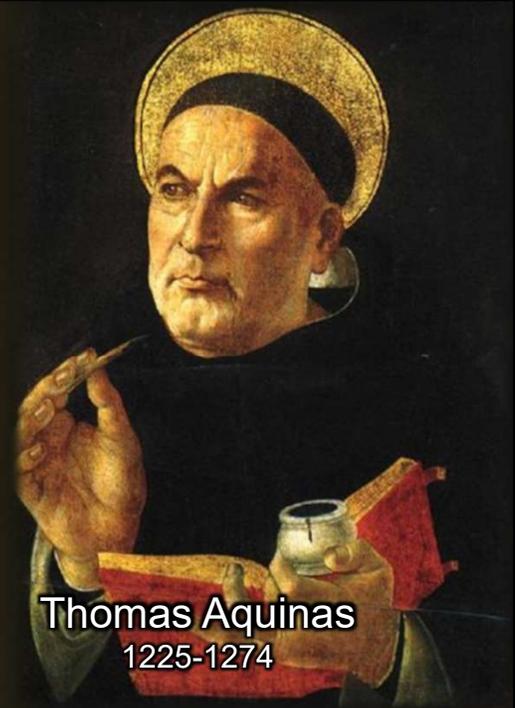
**"As the production of a thing into existence depends on the will of God, so likewise it depends on His will that things should be preserved; for He does not preserve them otherwise than by ever giving them existence; hence if He took away His action from them, all things would be reduced to nothing."**

[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q. 9, ii]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

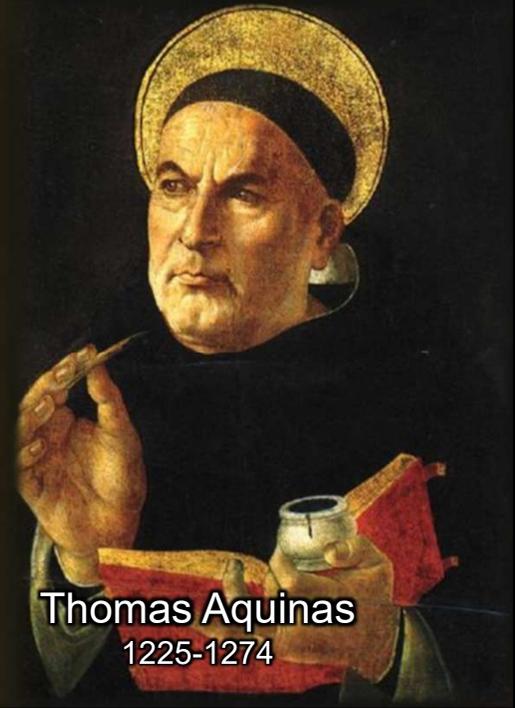
***"Now there is a being that is its own being: and this follows from the fact that there must needs be a being that is pure act and wherein there is no composition."***



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

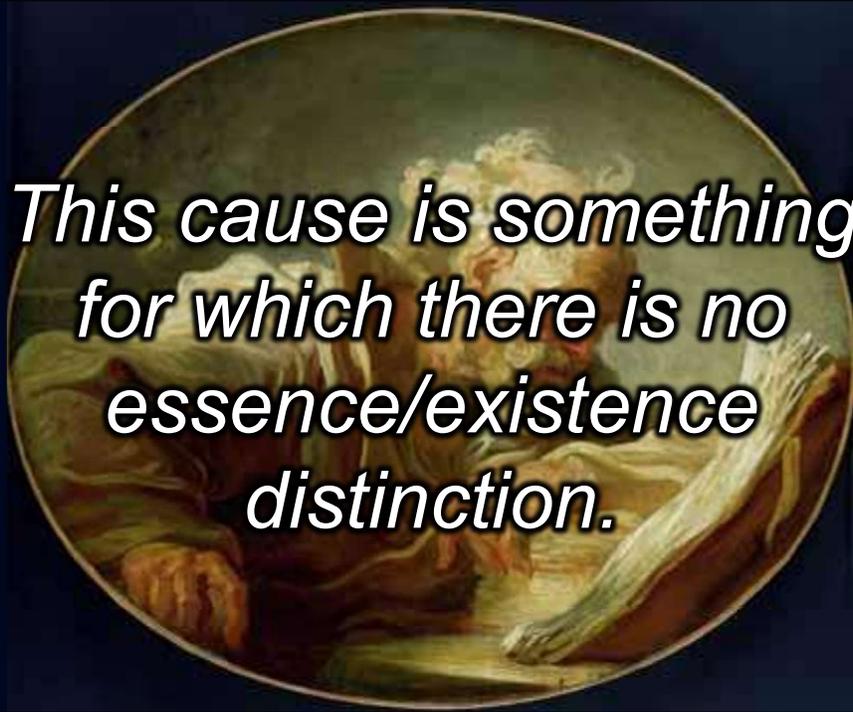
***"Hence from that one being  
all other beings that are not  
their own being, but have  
being by participation,  
must needs proceed."***

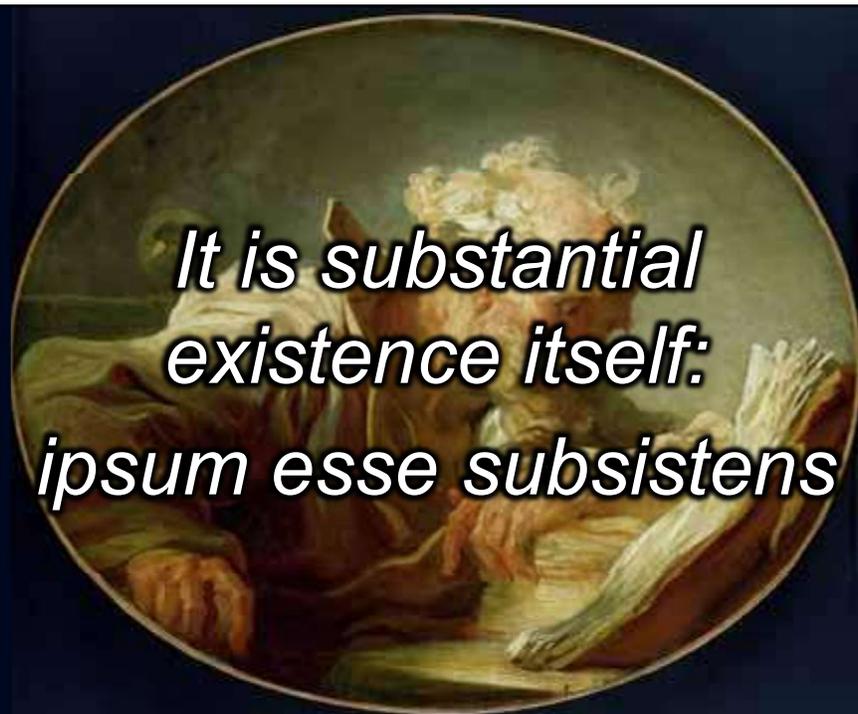
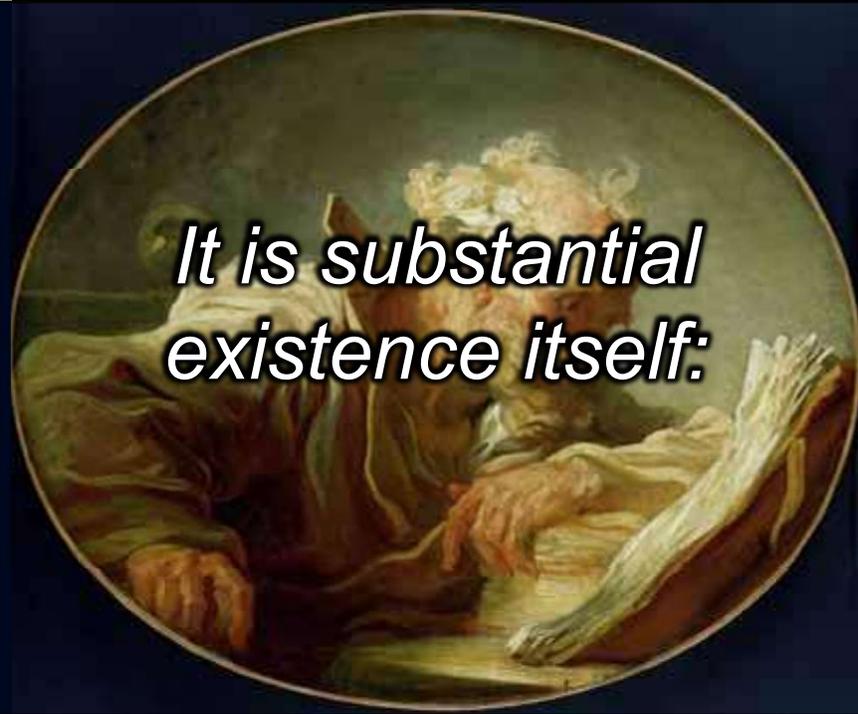
[On the Power of God, *quæstiones disputatæ de potential dei*, Bk. I, Q. 3, art. 5,  
c, trans. English Dominican Fathers (Eugene: Wipf & Stock2004), 110.]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

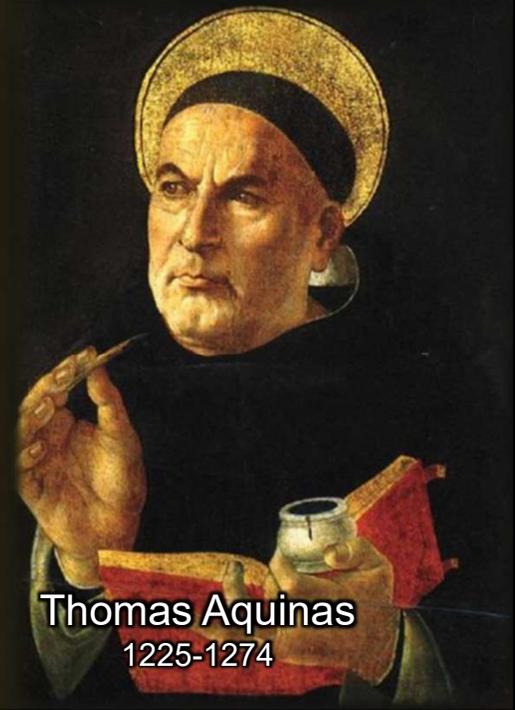
***This cause is something  
for which there is no  
essence/existence  
distinction.***





**"To God alone does it belong to be His own subsistent being. ... for no creature is its own existence, forasmuch as its existence is participated."**

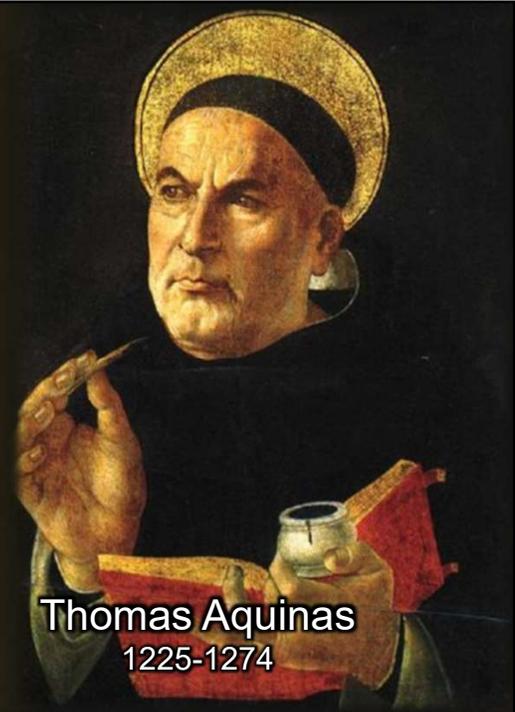
[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q 12, art. iv]



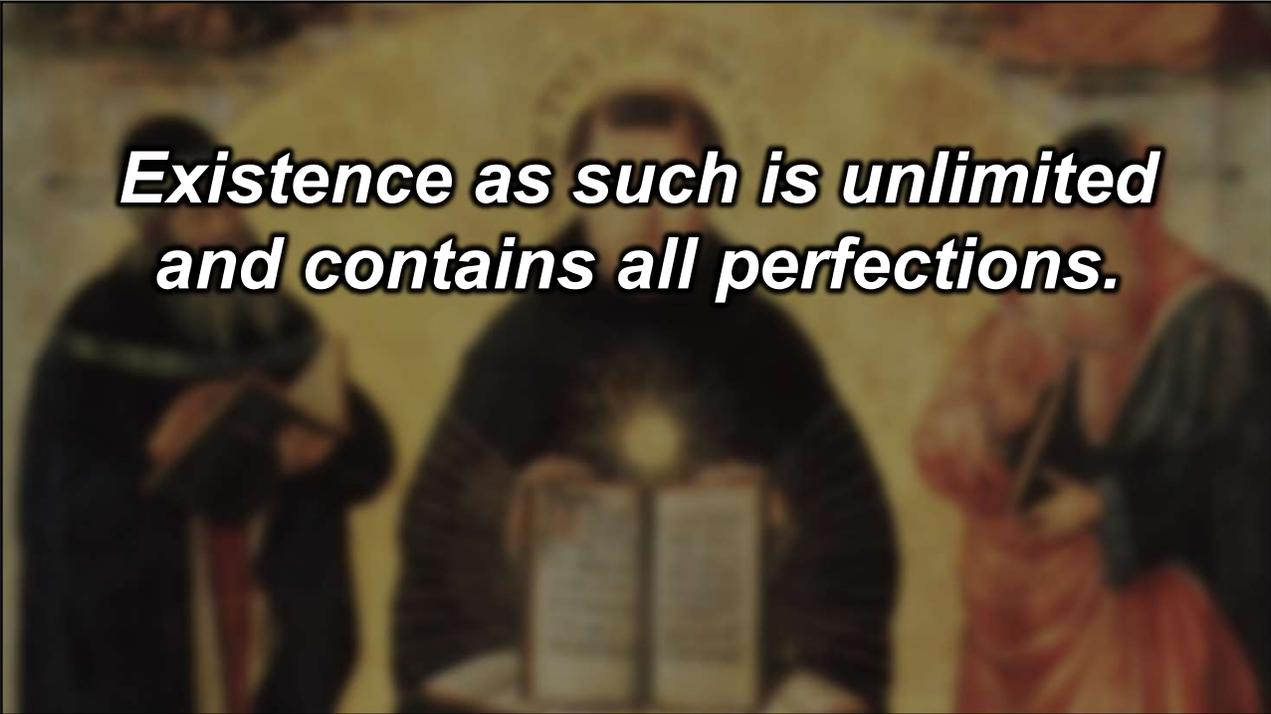
Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

**"Everything that is not pure being has a cause of its being .... It is evident, then, ... that it holds its being from the first being, which is being in all its purity; and this is the first cause, God."**

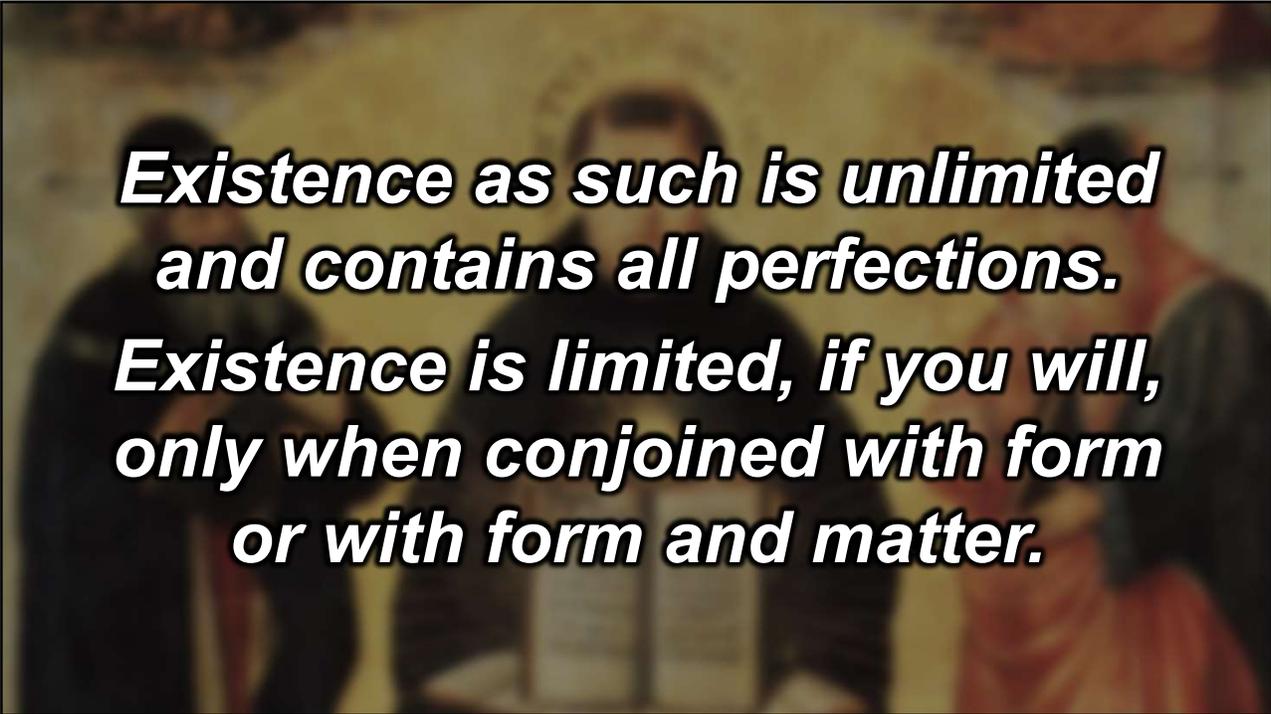
[*On Being and Essence*, IV, §7, trans. Maurer, 56-57]



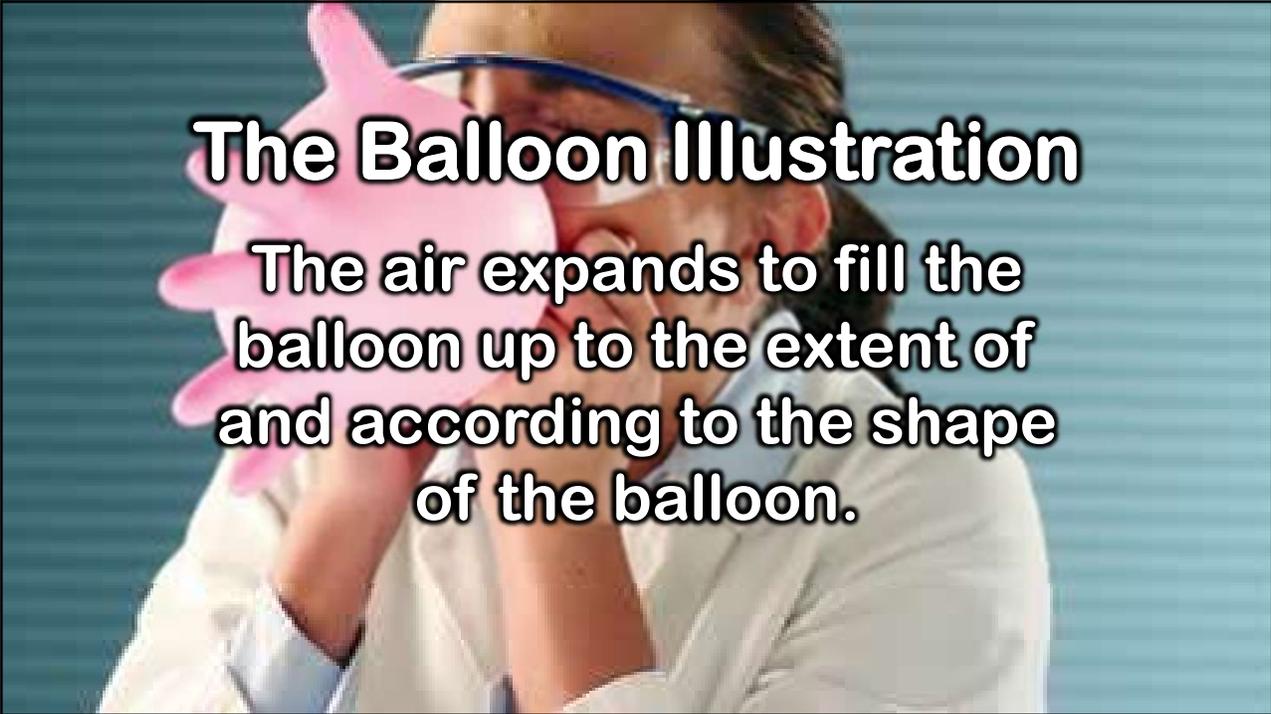
Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274



***Existence as such is unlimited  
and contains all perfections.***

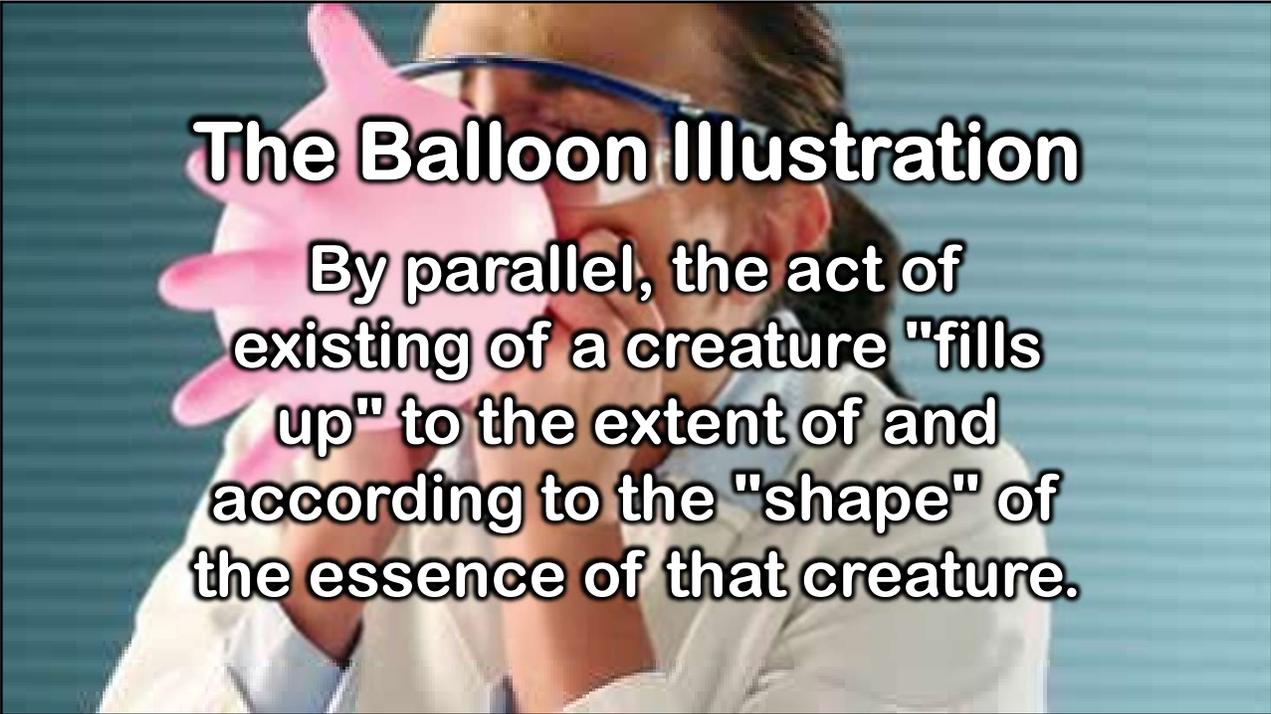


***Existence as such is unlimited  
and contains all perfections.  
Existence is limited, if you will,  
only when conjoined with form  
or with form and matter.***



## **The Balloon Illustration**

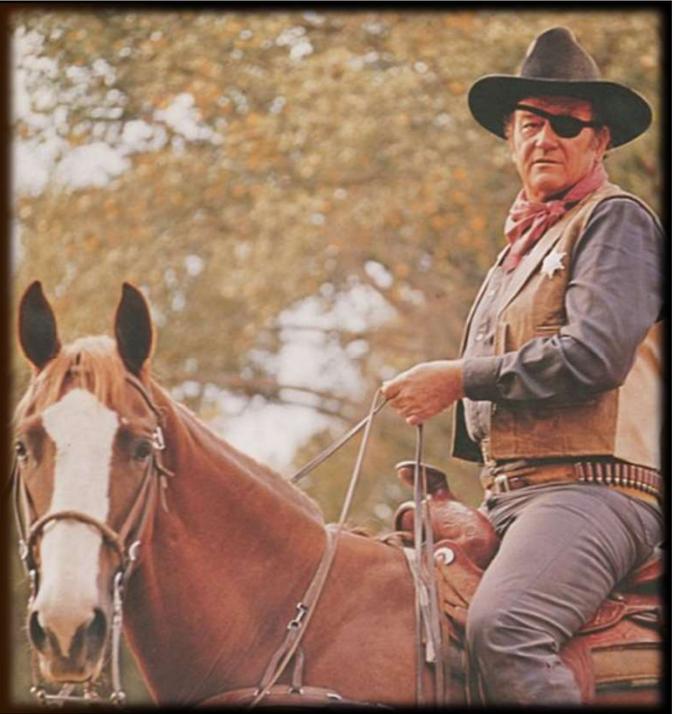
**The air expands to fill the balloon up to the extent of and according to the shape of the balloon.**



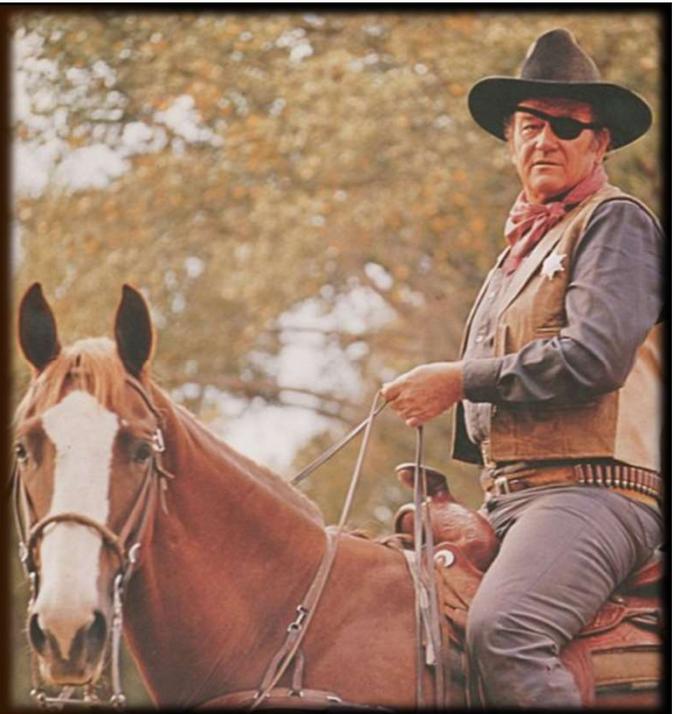
## **The Balloon Illustration**

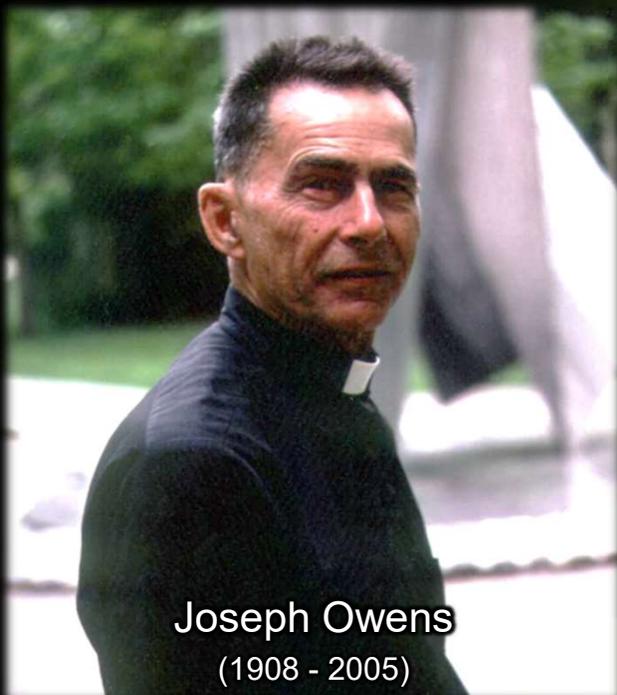
**By parallel, the act of existing of a creature "fills up" to the extent of and according to the "shape" of the essence of that creature.**

**A horse contains  
all the perfections  
of existence up to  
the extent of and  
according to the  
limitations of the  
essence of horse.**



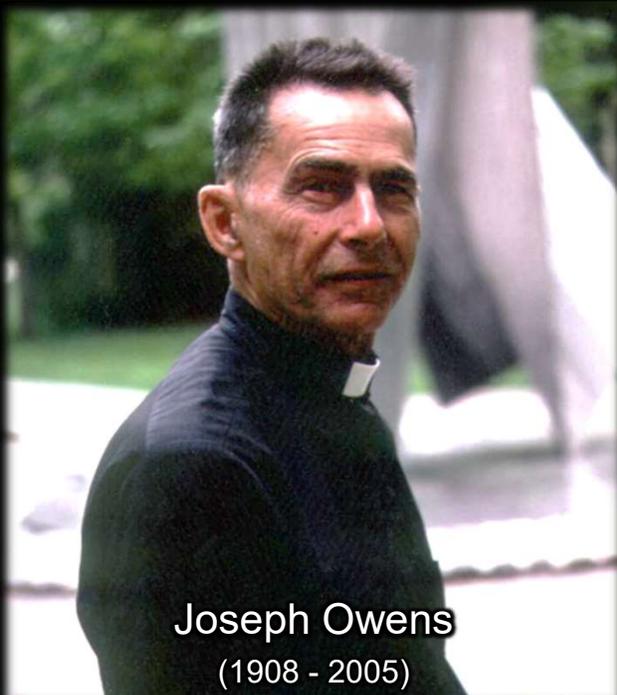
**A human contains  
all the perfections  
of existence up to  
the extent of and  
according to the  
limitations of the  
essence of  
human.**



A portrait of Joseph Owens, a man with short dark hair, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is blurred, showing green foliage and a white structure.

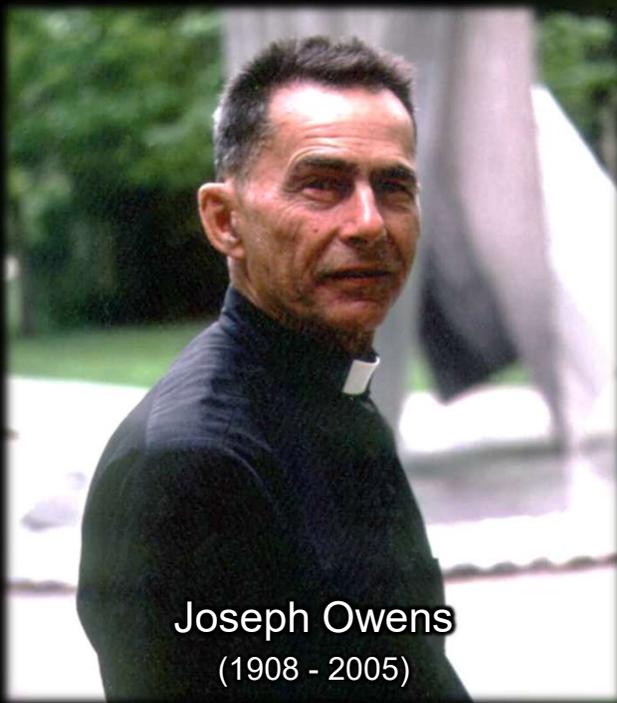
***"An alternate word for actuality in this respect is "perfection" (entelecheia). It was used by Aristotle along with actuality to designate the formal elements in the things.***

Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

A portrait of Joseph Owens, a man with short dark hair, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is blurred, showing green foliage and a white structure.

***"These perfected the material element in the sense of filling its potentiality and completing the thing.***

Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)



**Joseph Owens**  
(1908 - 2005)

***"Since existence is required to complete the thing and all the formal elements and activities, it may be aptly called the perfection of all perfections."***

[An Interpretation of Existence (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1968), 52-53]

**perfection**  
(entelecheia, ἐντελέχεια)

en, ἐν = in

+

telos, τέλος = end, goal

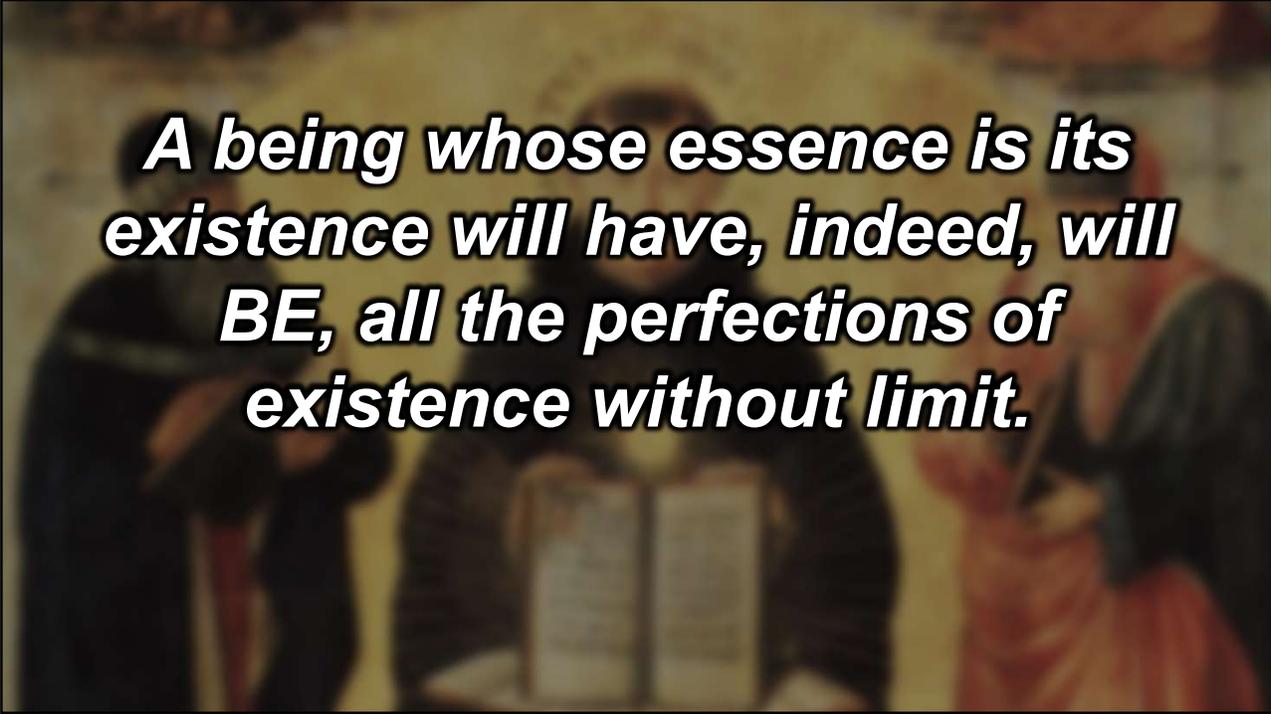
+

echein, ἔχειν = to have

# **perfection**

(entelecheia, ἐντελέχεια)

***to have the end or goal in***



***A being whose essence is its  
existence will have, indeed, will  
BE, all the perfections of  
existence without limit.***

***Since in God there is no essence/existence distinction, then all the perfections of being exist in God because God's being is not conjoined with (and, thus, not limited by) form.***

**"God is absolute form, or rather absolute being"**

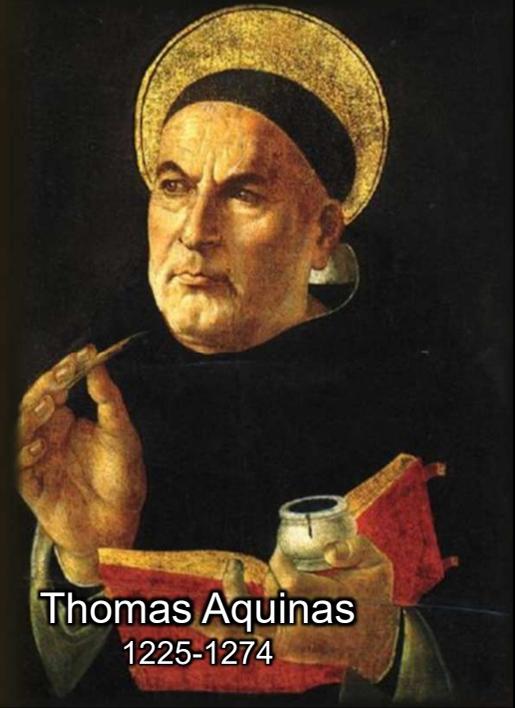
(Deus sit ipsa forma, vel potius ipsum esse). *Summa Theologiae*, I, 3, 2 and I, 3, 7.



**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

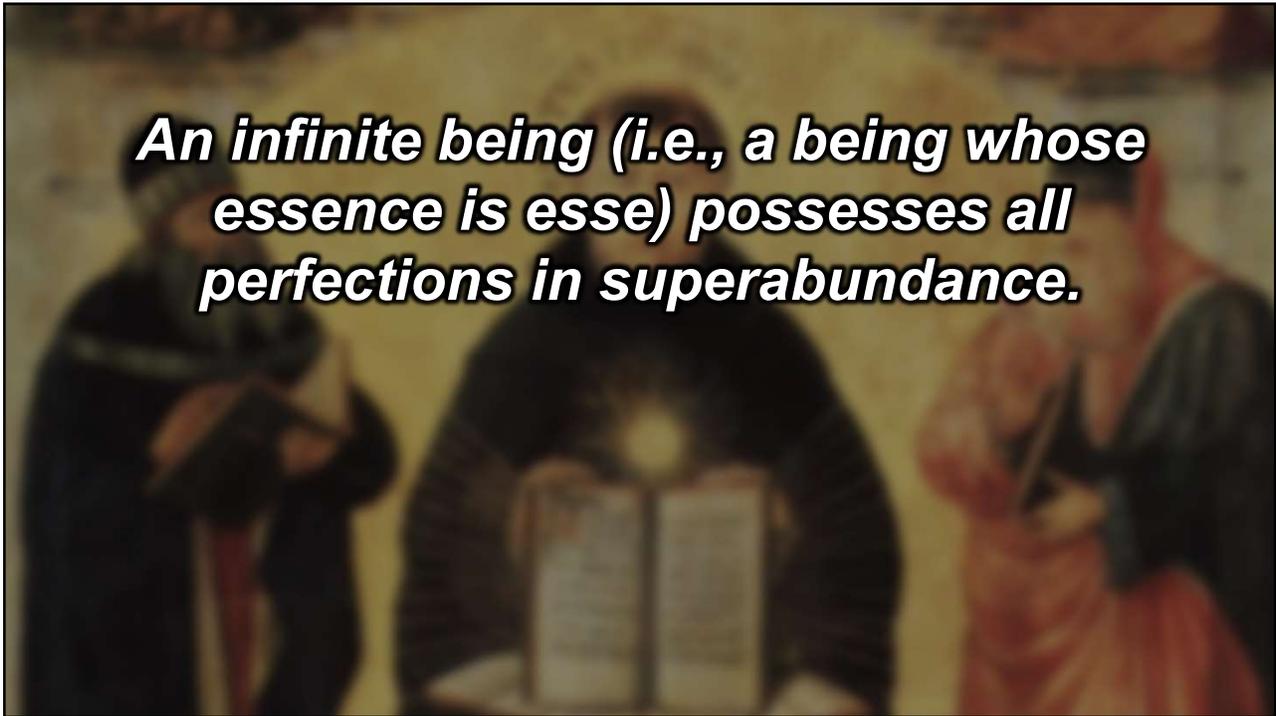
**"God is supremely being,  
inasmuch as His being is  
not determined by any  
nature to which it is  
adjoined; since He is being  
itself, subsistent,  
absolutely undetermined."**

[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q 11, art. 4]



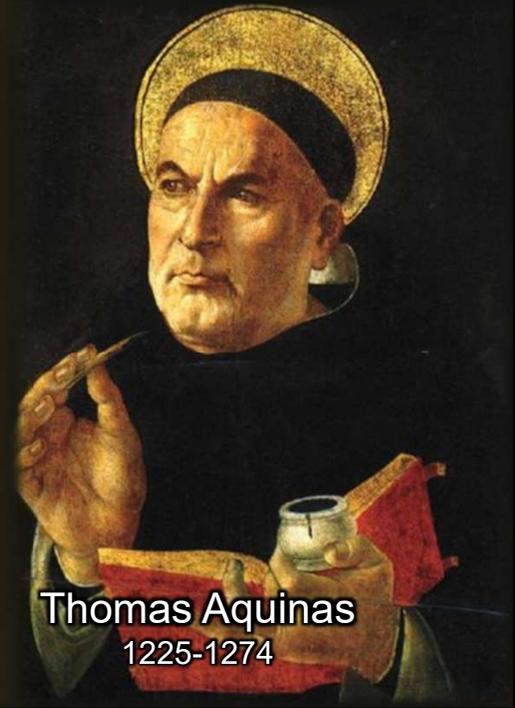
Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

***An infinite being (i.e., a being whose  
essence is esse) possesses all  
perfections in superabundance.***



***"... the perfections following from God to creatures ... pre-exist in God unitedly and simply, whereas in creatures they are received, divided and multiplied."***

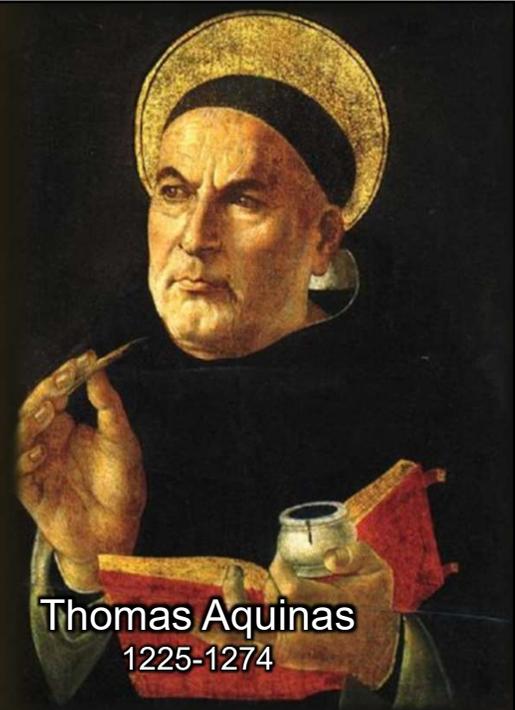
[*Summa Theologiae*, I, 13, 4]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

***"Wherefore it is clear that being as we understand it here is the actuality of all acts, and therefore the perfection of all perfections."***

[*On the Power of God*, VII, 2, ad. 9, trans. English Dominican Fathers (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2004), v. III, p. 12]



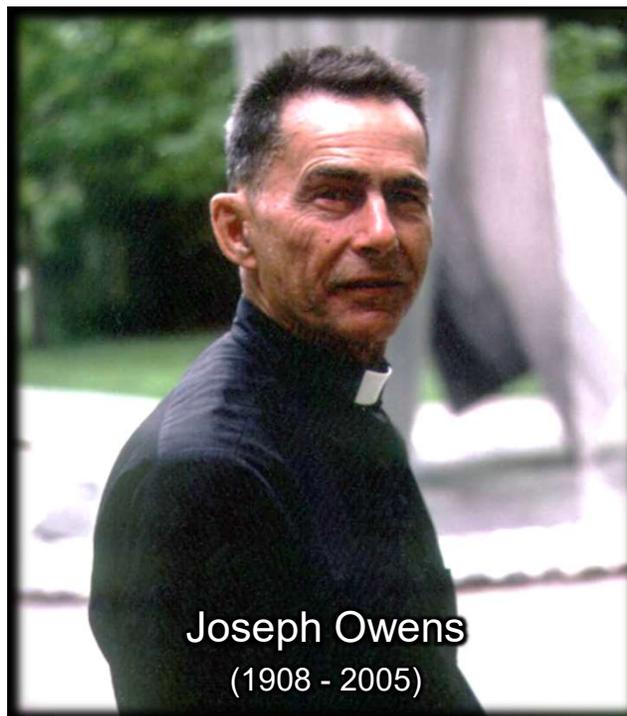
Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

***"All perfections existing  
in creatures divided and  
multiplied, pre-exist in  
God unitedly."***

[*Summa Theologiae*, I, 13, 5]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274



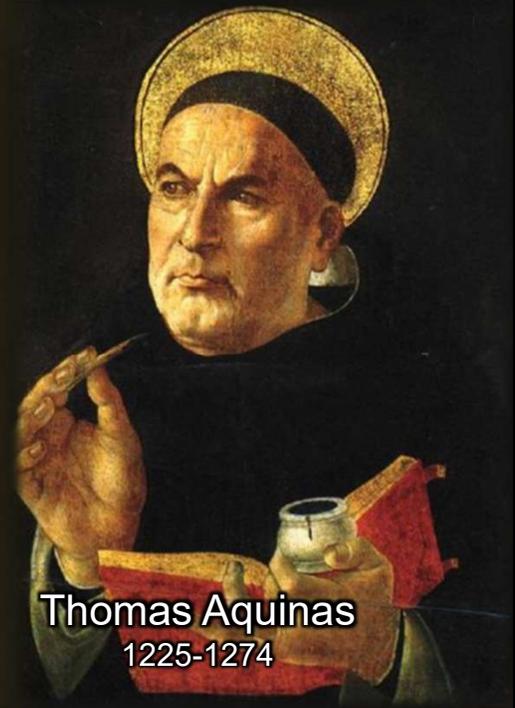
Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

***"Being is conceptualized  
technically as an act or  
perfection of a subject. ...  
It expresses the act or  
perfection that makes a  
thing be."***

[*An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985), 59]

***"Nothing of the  
perfection of being can  
be wanting to Him who is  
subsisting being itself."***

[*Summa Theologiae*, I, 4, 2, ad. 3]

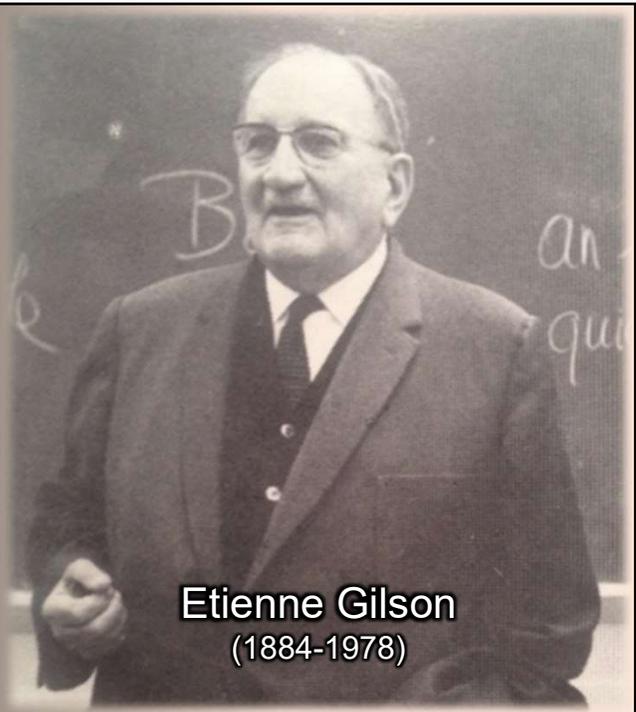


Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

***This is the philosophical  
grounding for all the  
classical attributes of God.***

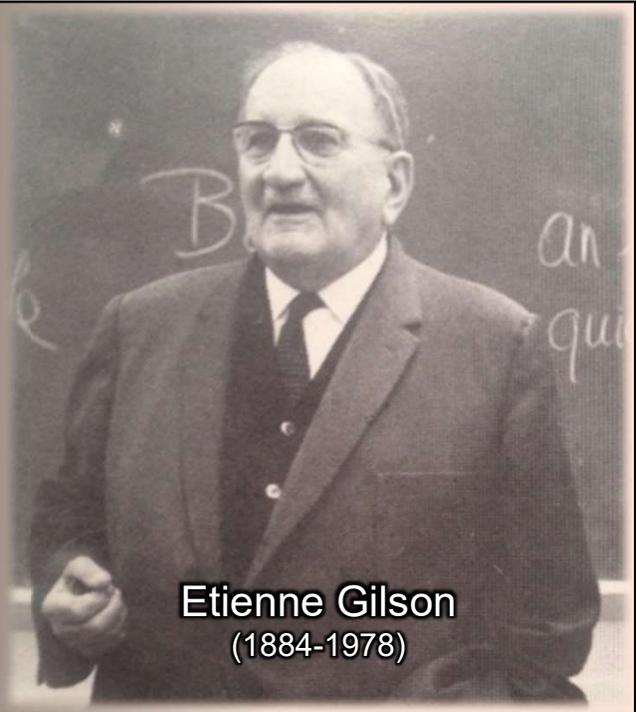
***Marrying the metaphysics of Aristotle with the innovations of esse and the essence / existence distinction, Aquinas was able to demonstrate the existence and attributes of a God that Aristotle's philosophy could never foresee.***

**"Thomism was not the upshot of a better understanding of Aristotle. It did not come out of Aristotelianism by way of evolution, but of revolution.**



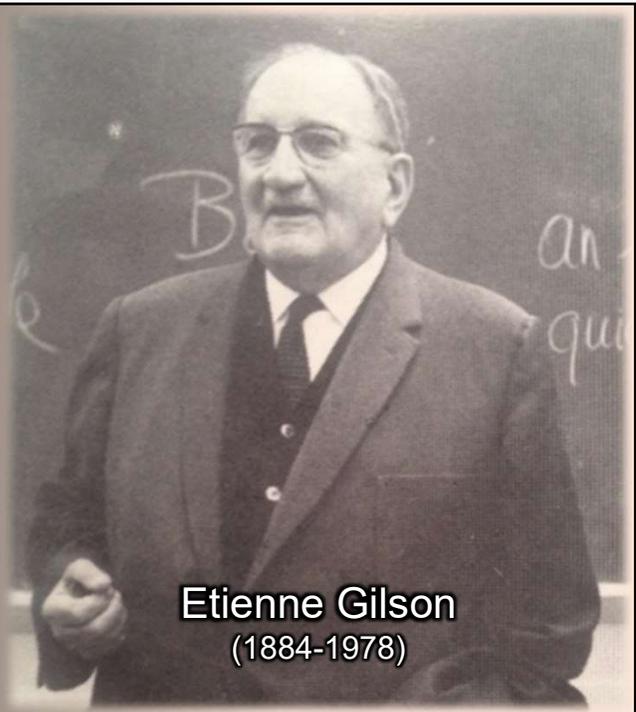
**Etienne Gilson  
(1884-1978)**

"Thomas uses the language of Aristotle everywhere to make the Philosopher say that **there is only one God, the pure Act of Being, Creator of the world, infinite and omnipotent, a providence for all that which is, intimately present to every one of his creatures, especially to men, every one of whom is endowed with a personally immortal soul naturally able to survive the death of its body.**



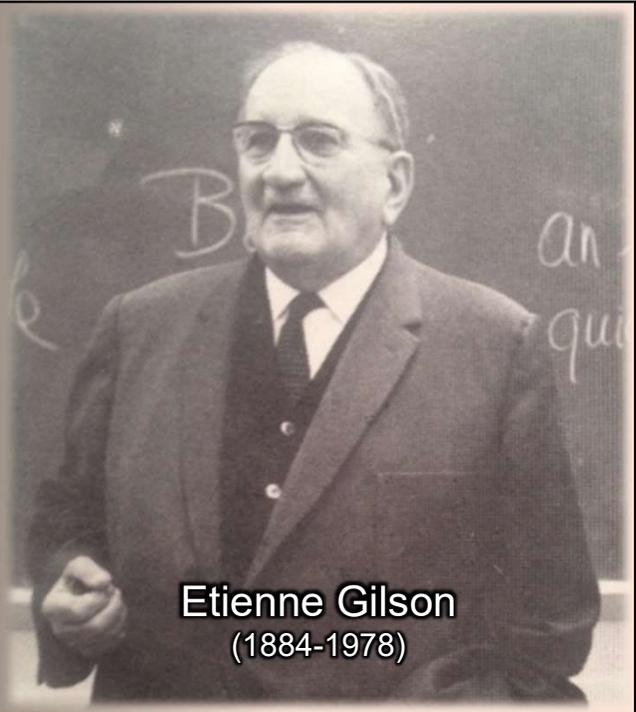
Etienne Gilson  
(1884-1978)

"The best way to make Aristotle say so many things he never said was not to show that, had he understood himself better than he did, he would have said them. For indeed Aristotle seems to have understood himself pretty well.



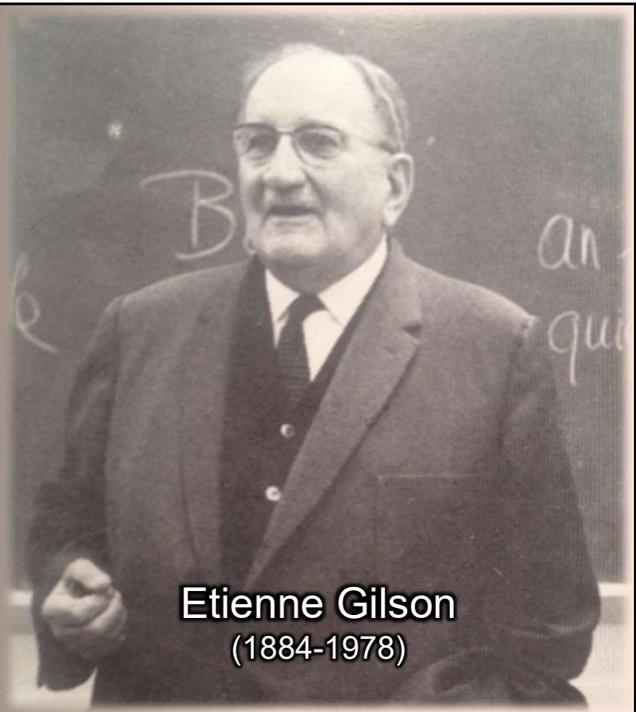
Etienne Gilson  
(1884-1978)

**"He has said what he had to say, given the meaning which he himself attributed to the principles of his own philosophy. Even the dialectical acumen of Saint Thomas Aquinas could not have extracted from the principles of Aristotle more than what they could possibly yield.**



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

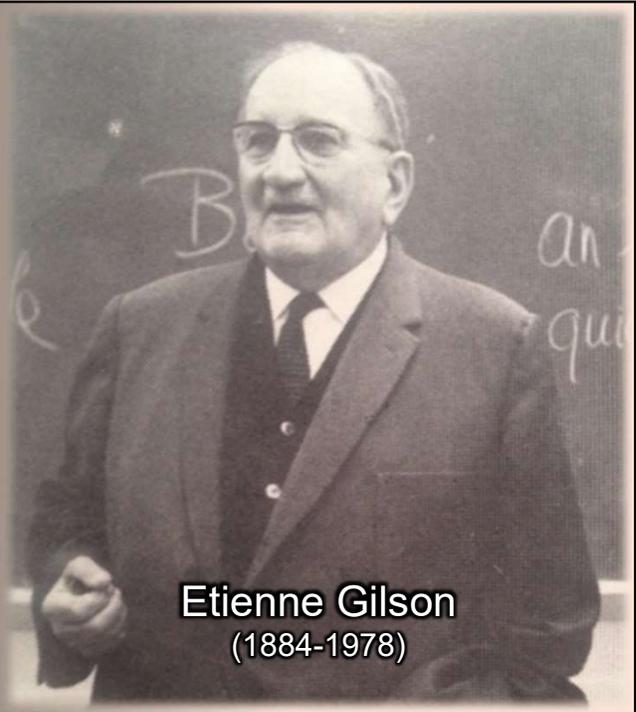
**"The true reason why his conclusions were different from those of Aristotle was that his own principles themselves were different. ...**



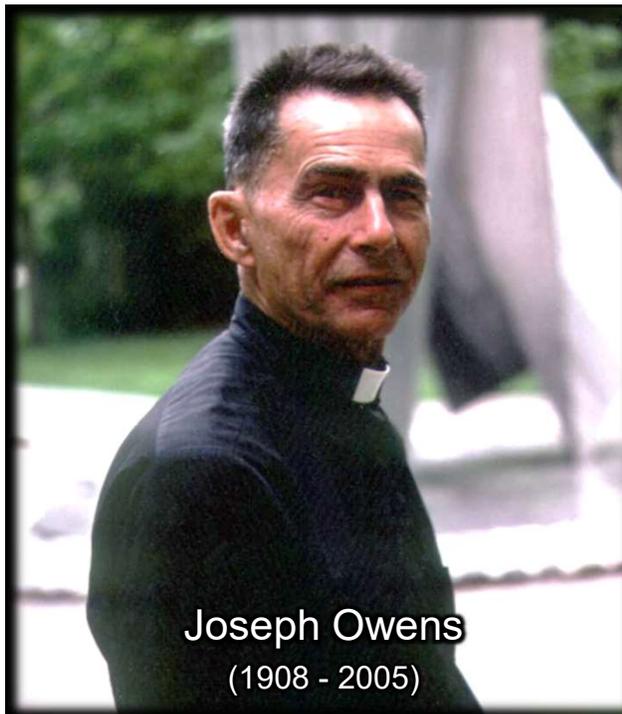
**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

**"In order to metamorphose the doctrine of Aristotle, Thomas has ascribed a new meaning to the principles of Aristotle. As a philosophy, Thomism is essentially a metaphysics. It is a revolution in the history of the metaphysical interpretation of the first principle, which is "being."**

[Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy*, 365]



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)



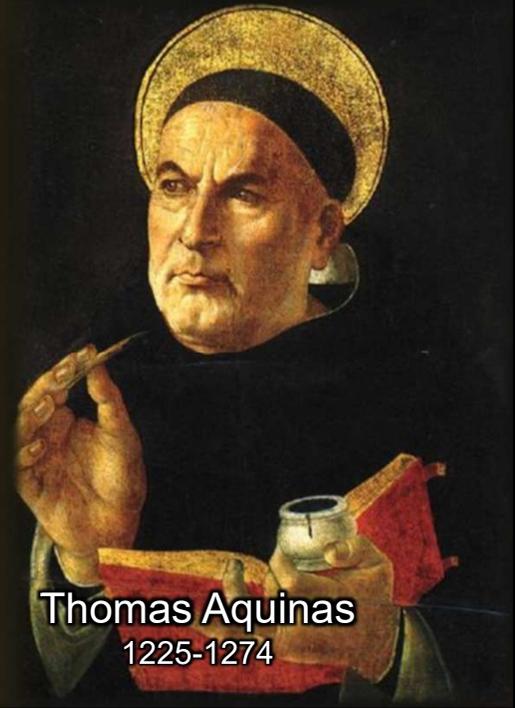
**Joseph Owens**  
(1908 - 2005)

**"The argument, then, remained the same in structure and procedure when used by Aristotle to reach a multiplicity of celestial souls and finite separate substances, and when used by Aquinas to prove the existence of the unique and infinite God. But the respective assessments of actuality cause radical difference in the result of the demonstration."**

[Joseph Owens, "Aquinas and the Five Ways," *The Monist* 58 (January 1974): 22]

***"All men  
know this to  
be God."***

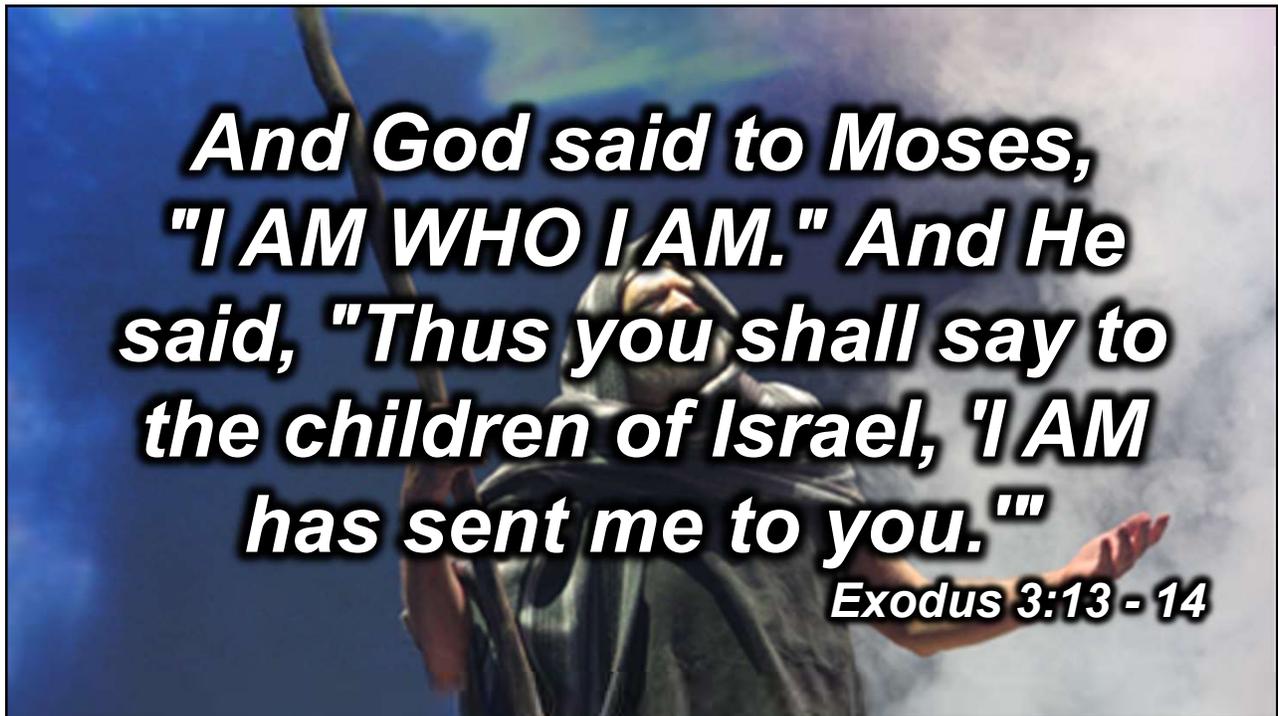
[Summa Theologiae I, 2, 3]

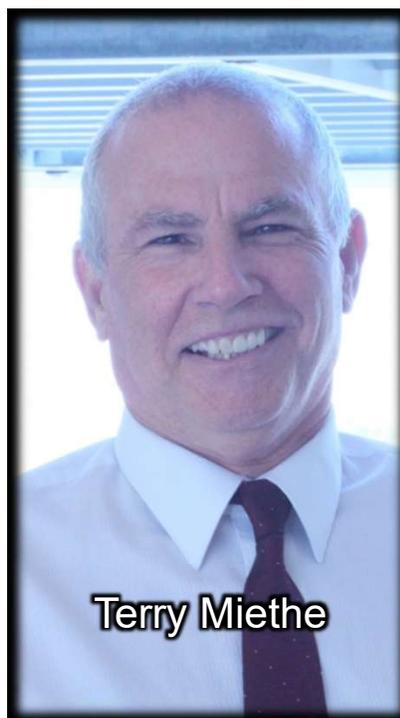


**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

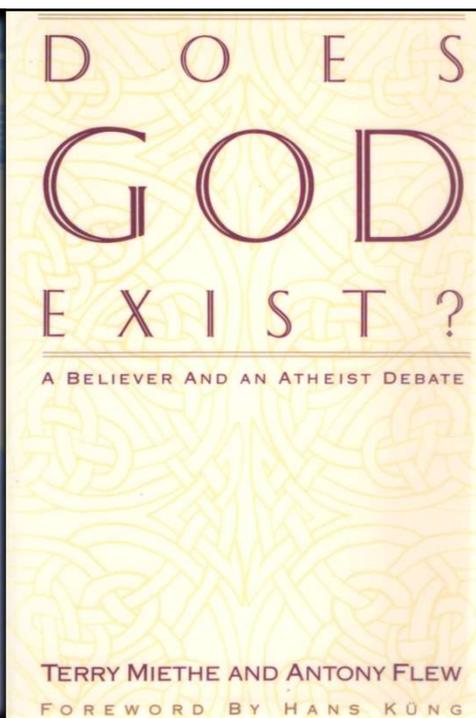
***And God said to Moses,  
"I AM WHO I AM." And He  
said, "Thus you shall say to  
the children of Israel, 'I AM  
has sent me to you.'"***

***Exodus 3:13 - 14***

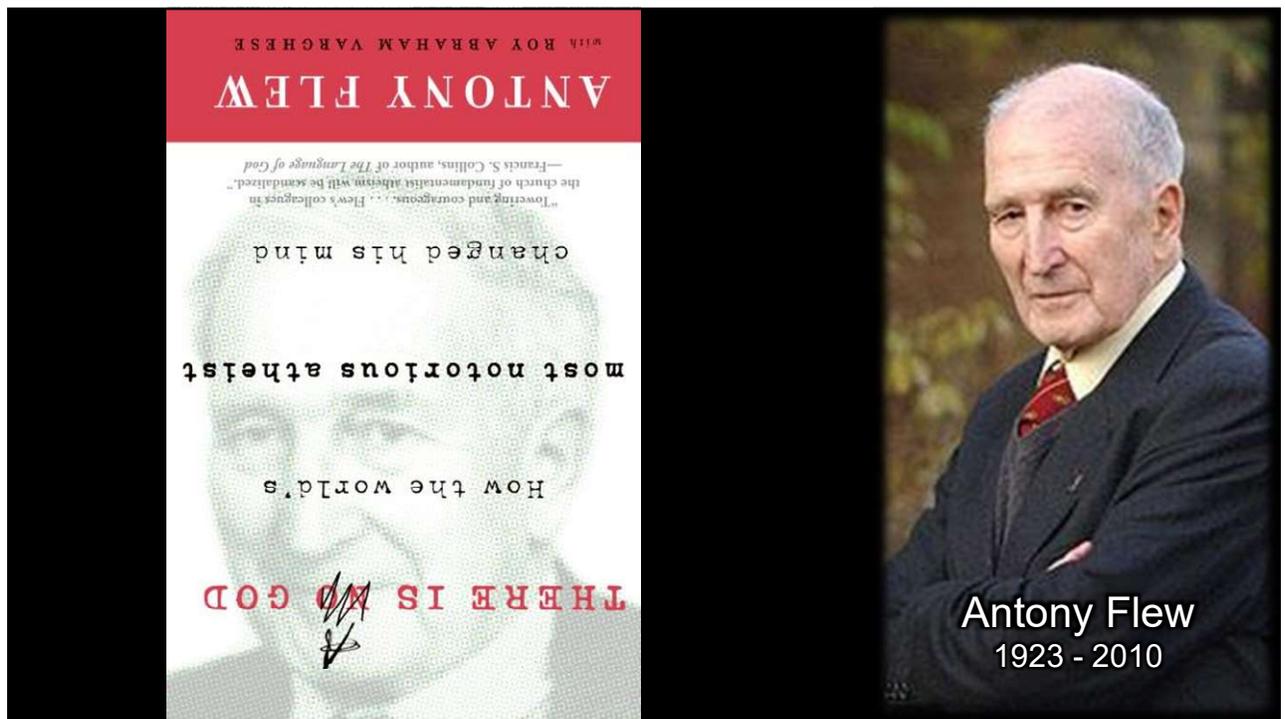


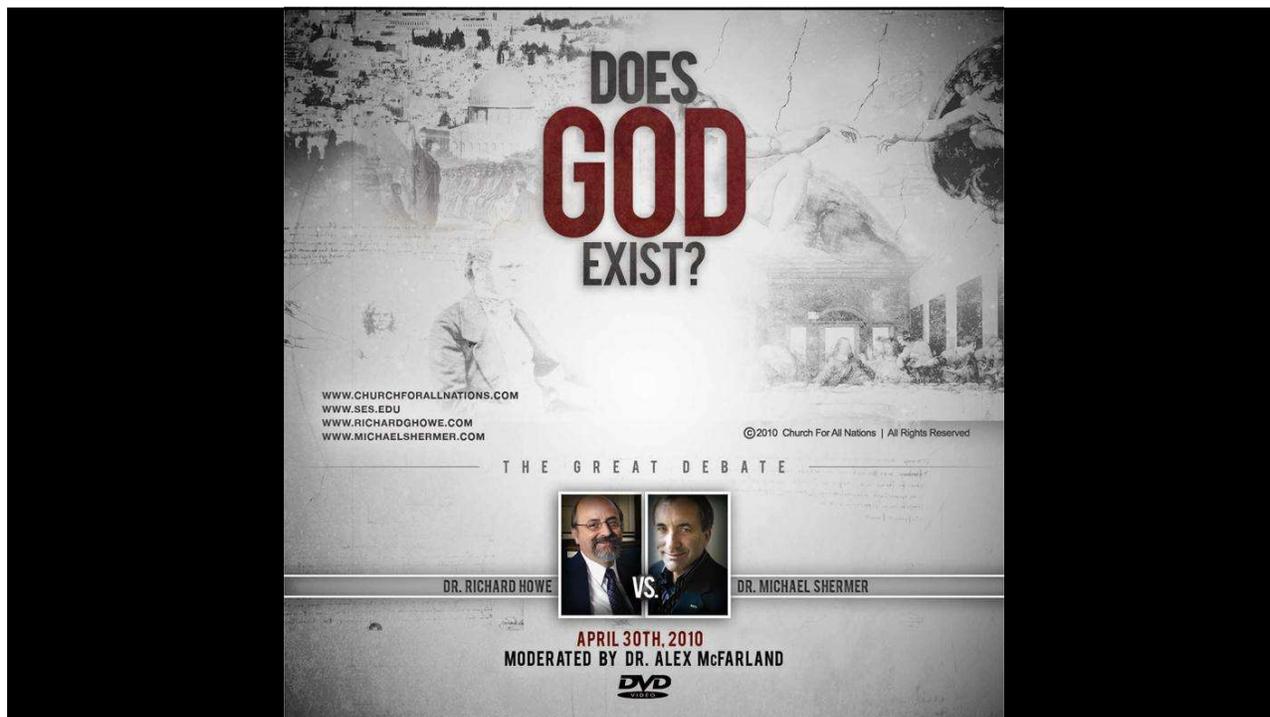


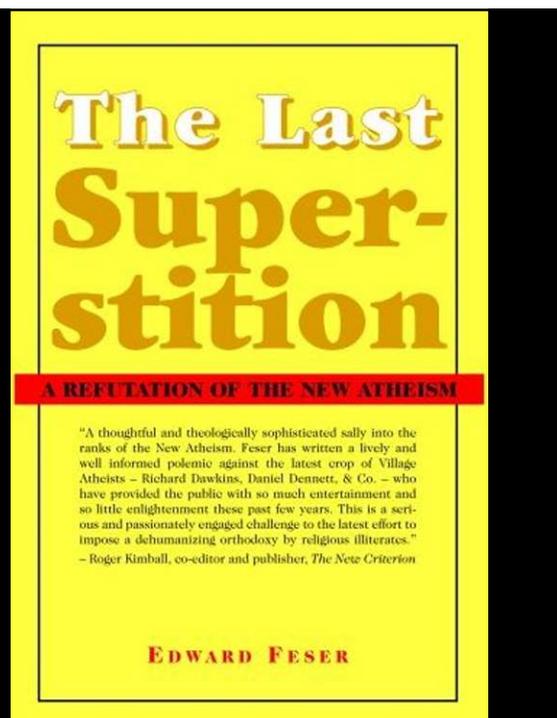
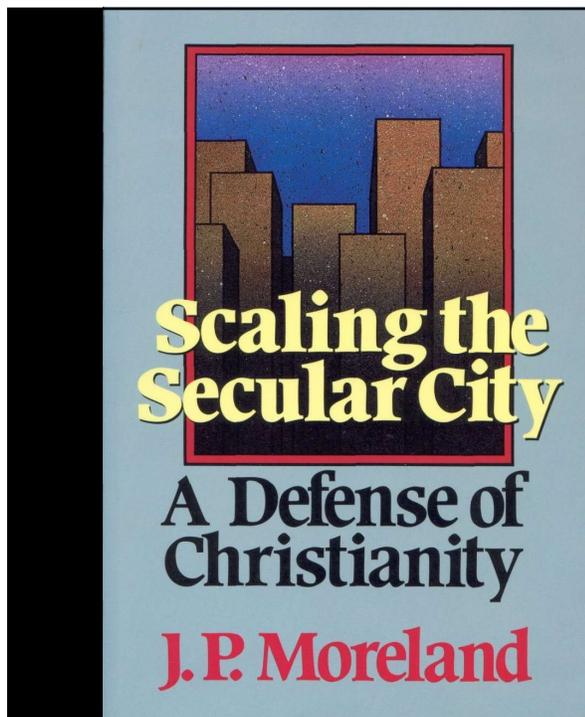
Terry Miethe

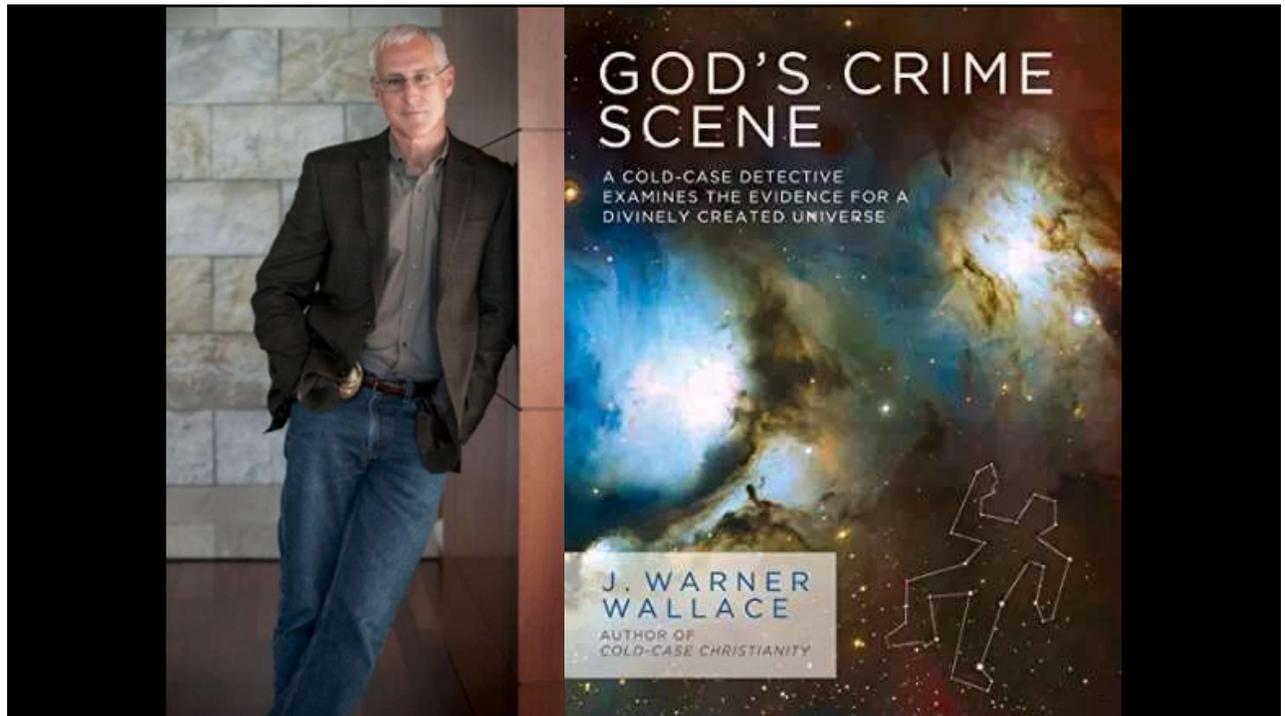
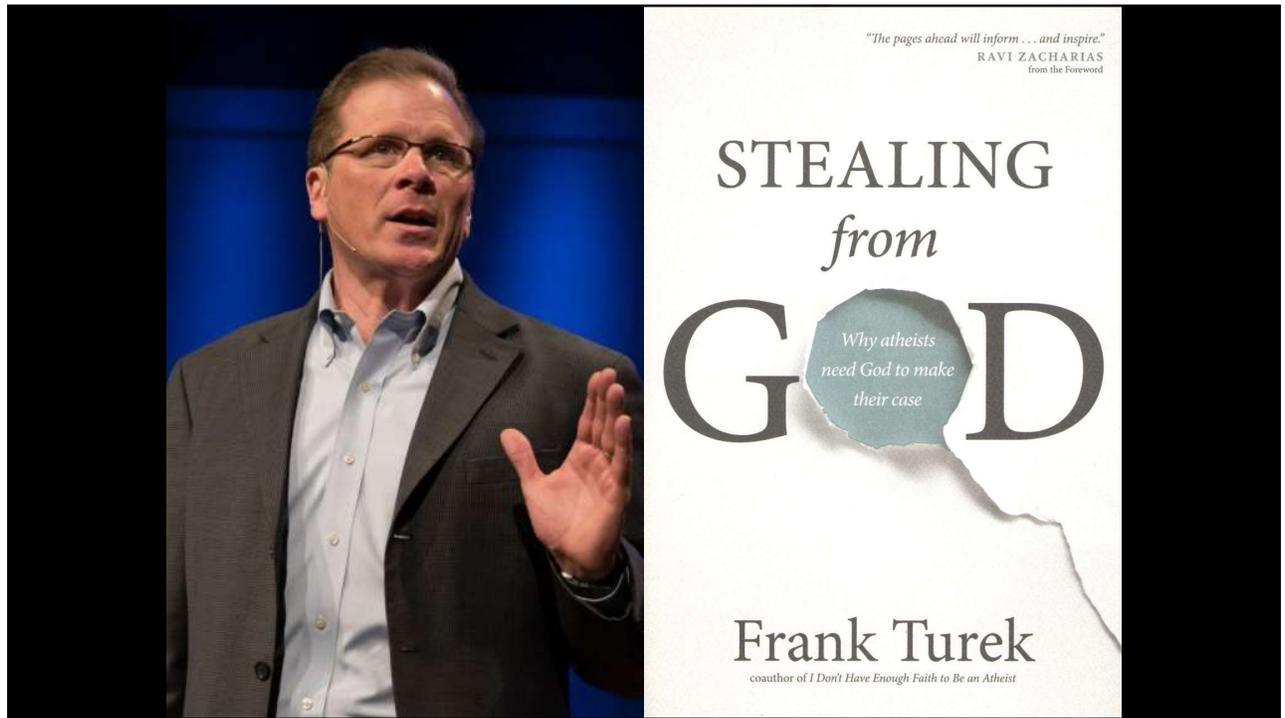


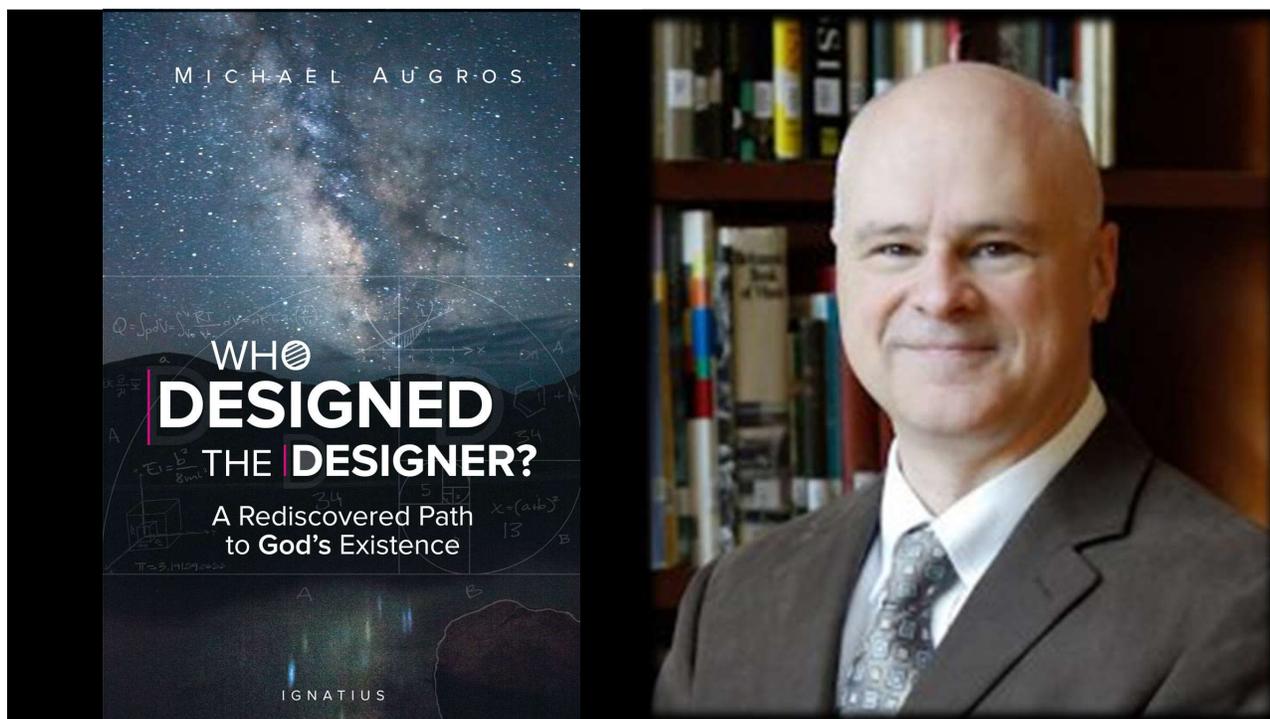
Antony Flew  
1923 - 2010

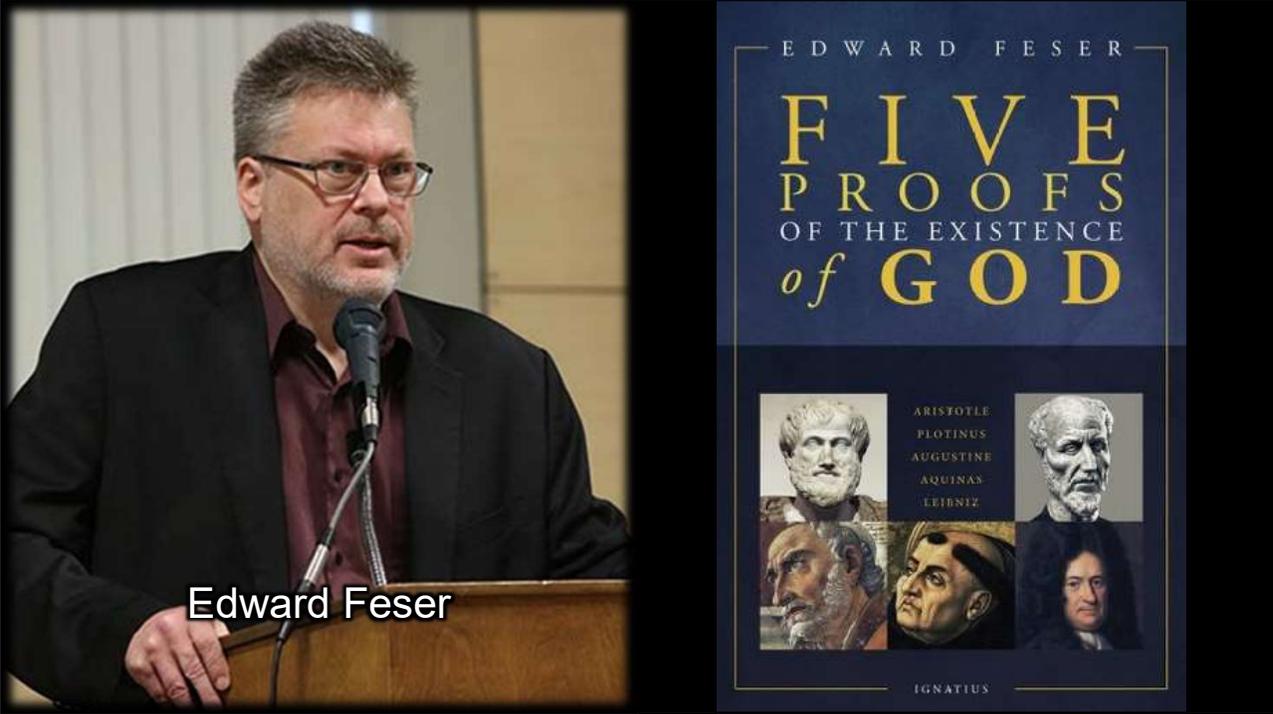
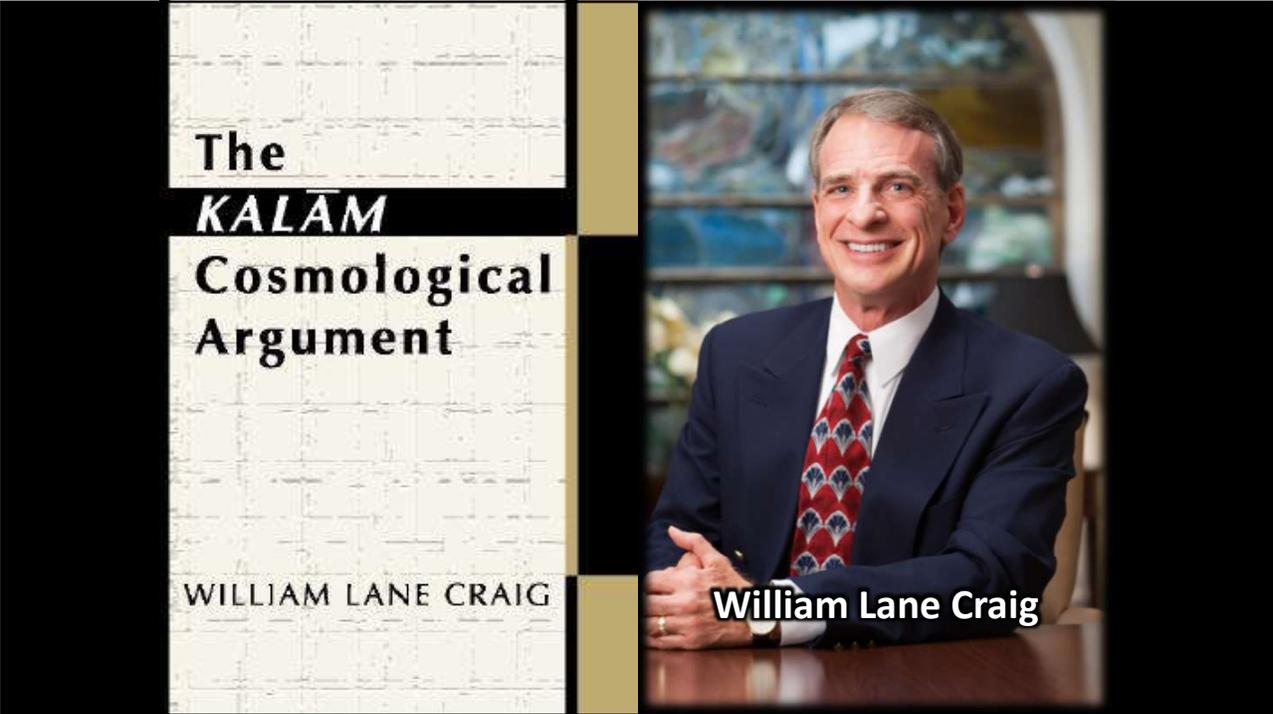


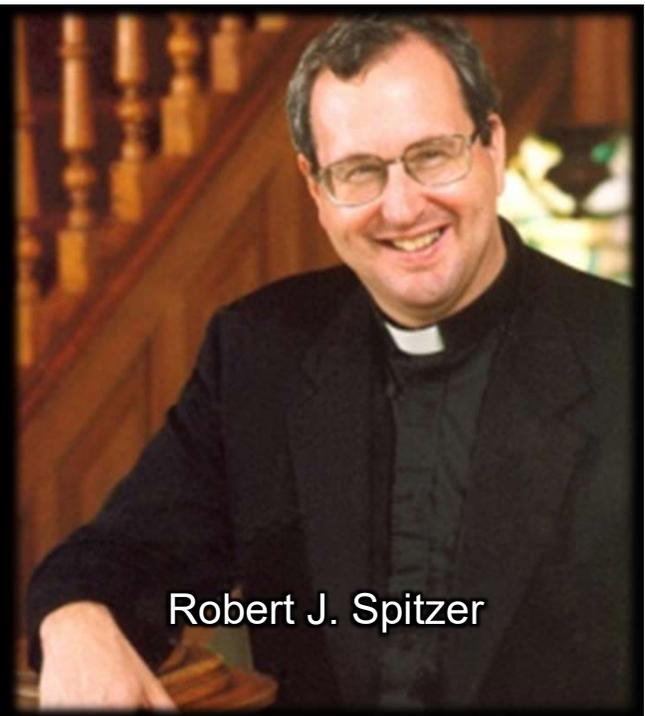
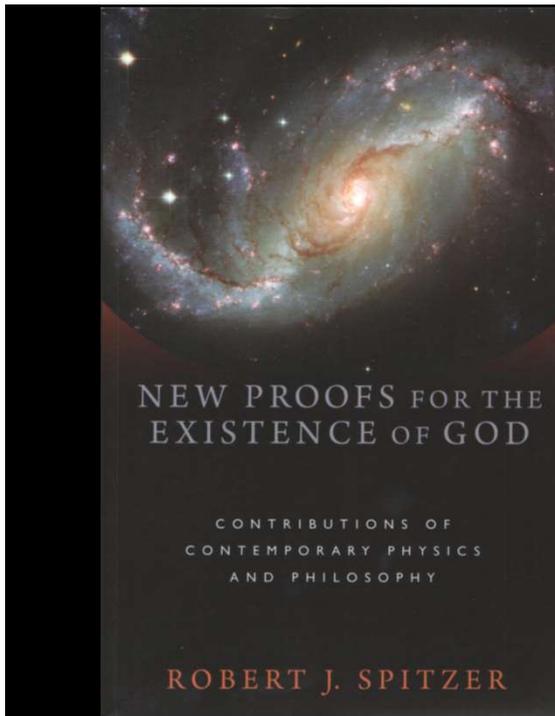
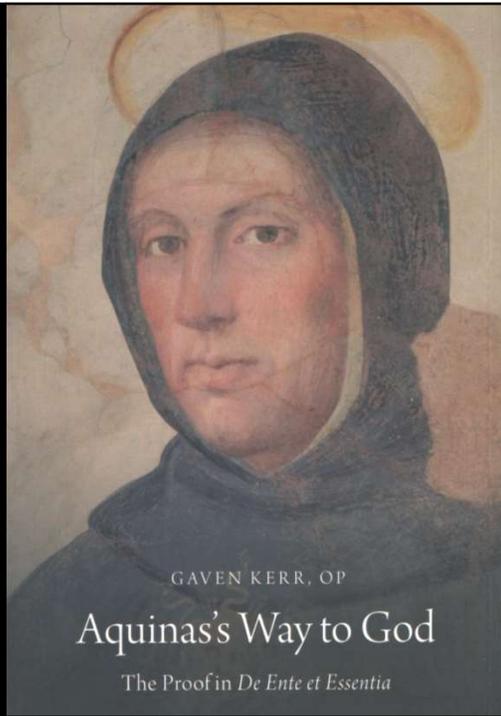












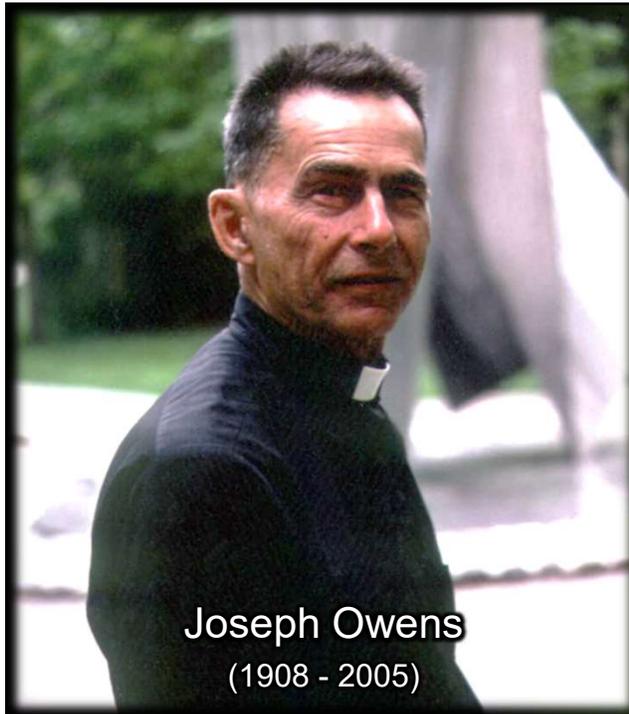


JAMES E. DOLEZAL



# ALL THAT IS IN GOD

*Evangelical Theology and the Challenge of Classical Christian Theism*



Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)



## st. thomas aquinas on the existence of god

the collected papers of joseph owens

EDITED BY  
JOHN R. CATAN

