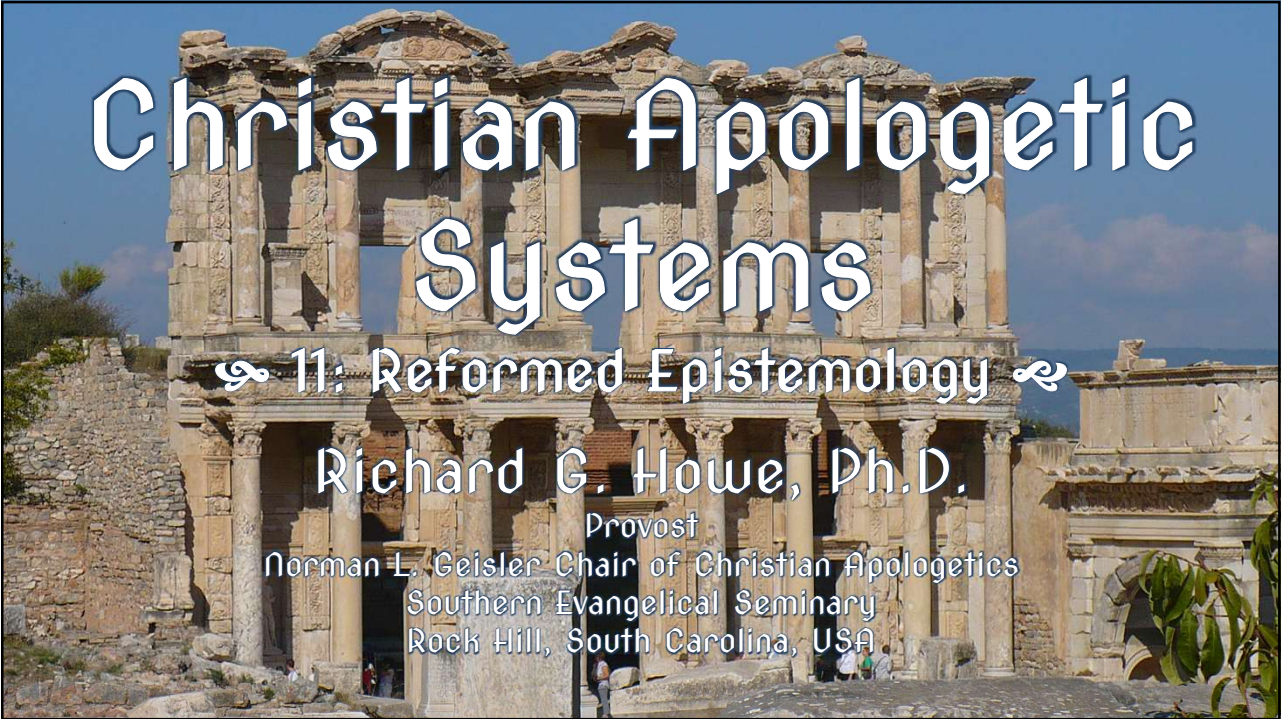




Christian Apologetic Systems

11: Reformed Epistemology

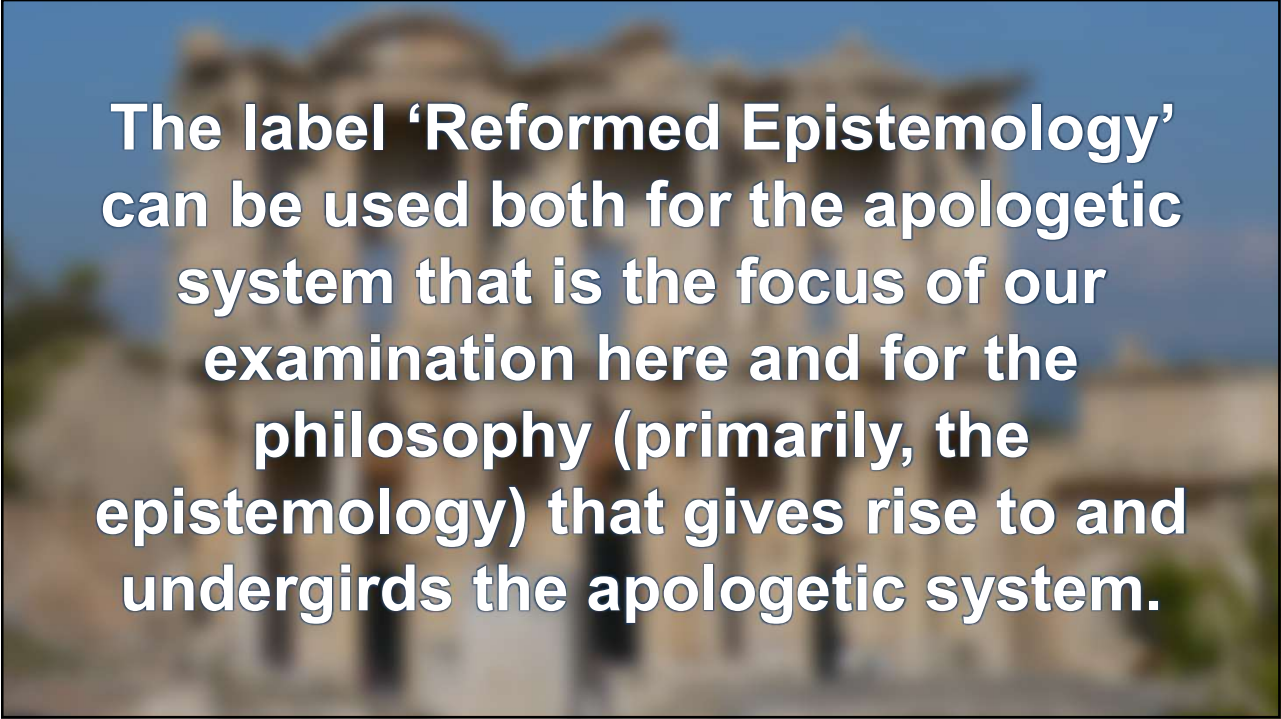
Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

Provost

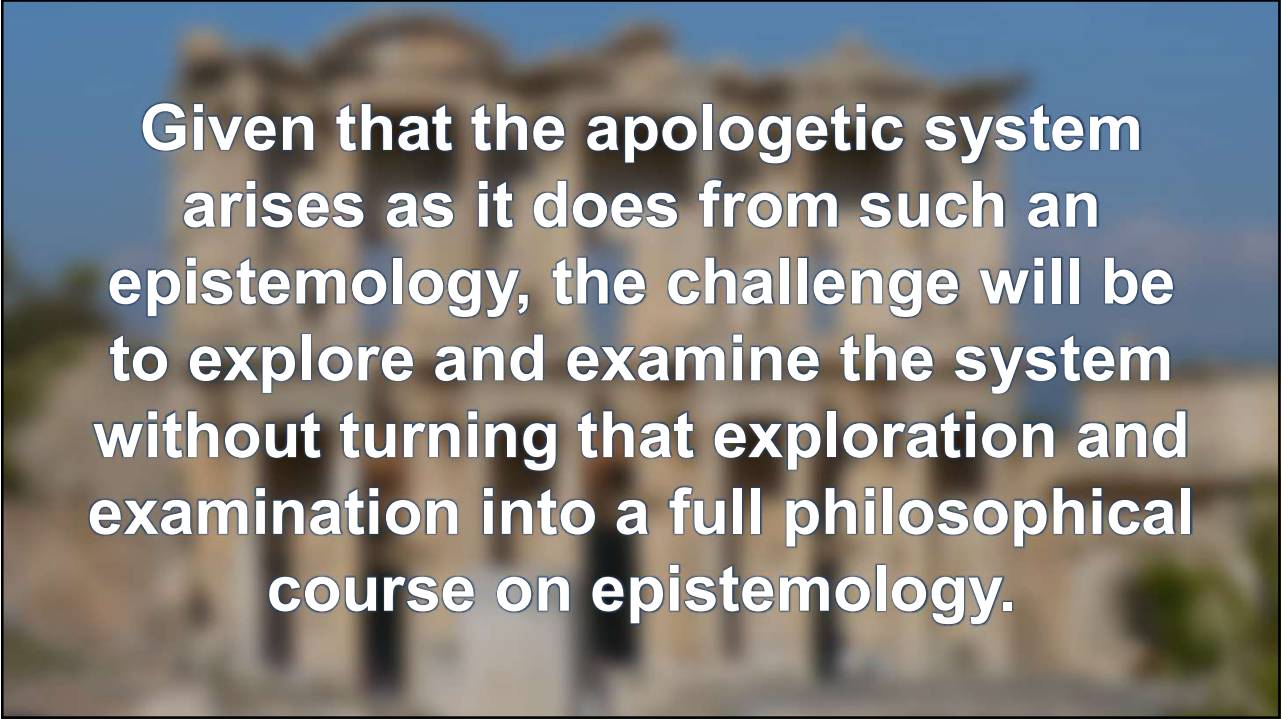
Norman L. Geisler Chair of Christian Apologetics
Southern Evangelical Seminary
Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA



About the Label 'Reformed Epistemology'



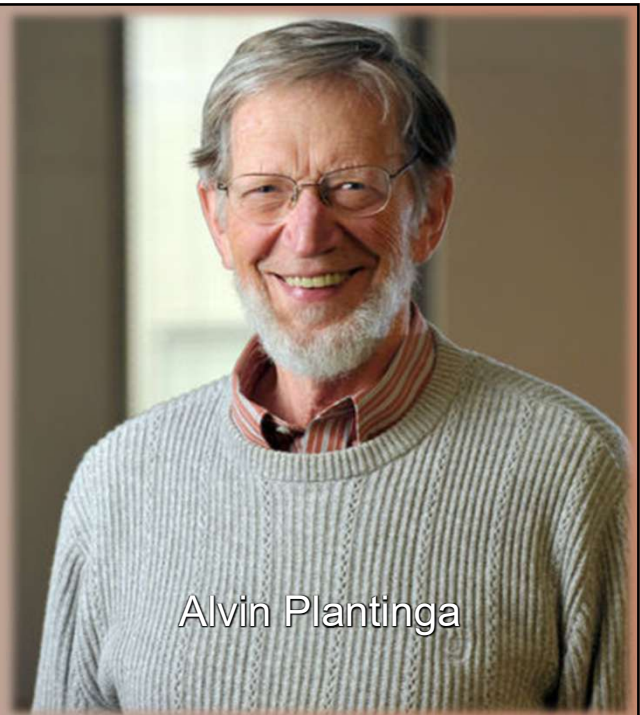
The label 'Reformed Epistemology' can be used both for the apologetic system that is the focus of our examination here and for the philosophy (primarily, the epistemology) that gives rise to and undergirds the apologetic system.



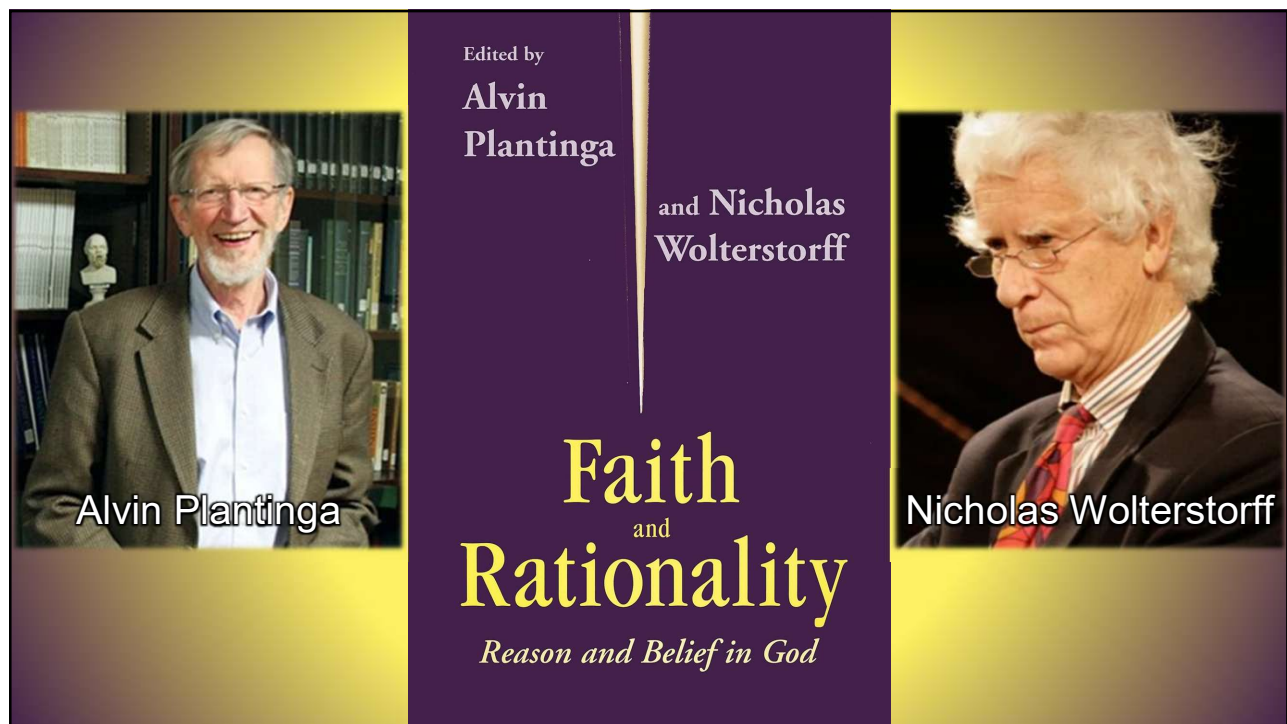
Given that the apologetic system arises as it does from such an epistemology, the challenge will be to explore and examine the system without turning that exploration and examination into a full philosophical course on epistemology.

Main Proponent of Reformed Epistemology

*Reformed Epistemology
is an apologetic method
built upon the
philosophy (primarily
the epistemology) of
Christian philosopher
Alvin Plantinga together
with Nicholas
Wolterstorff and others.*



Alvin Plantinga

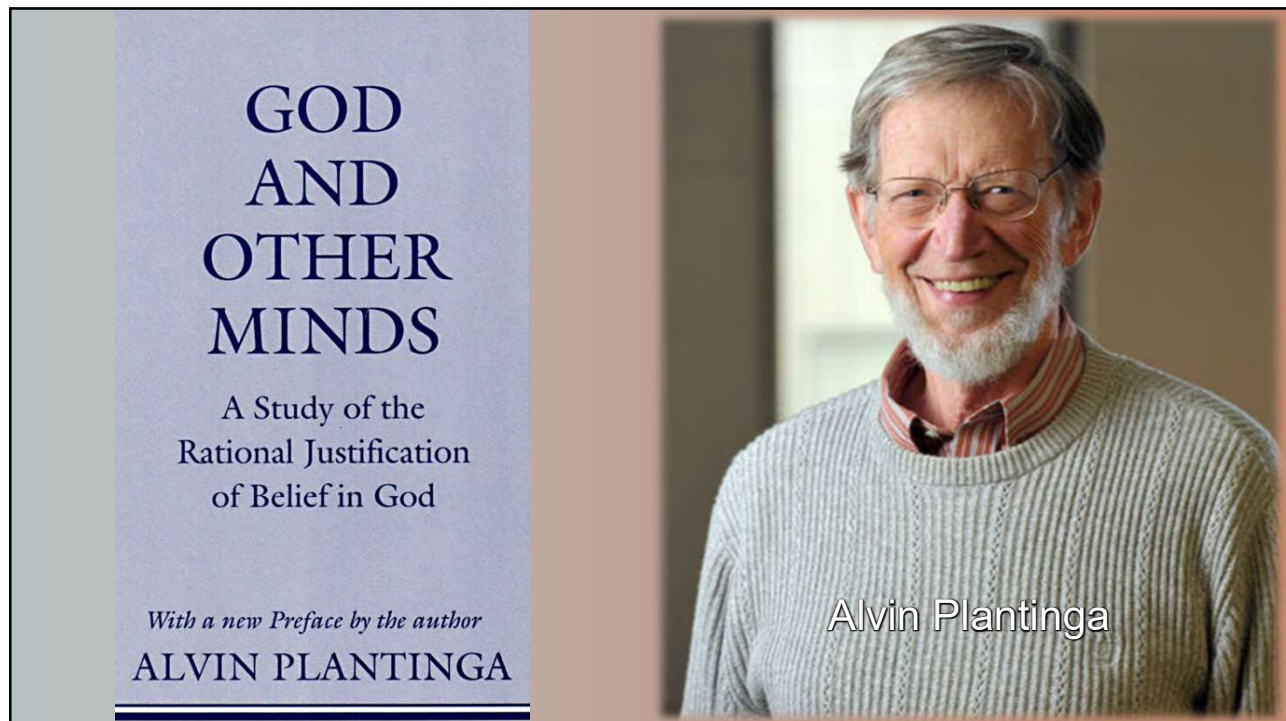
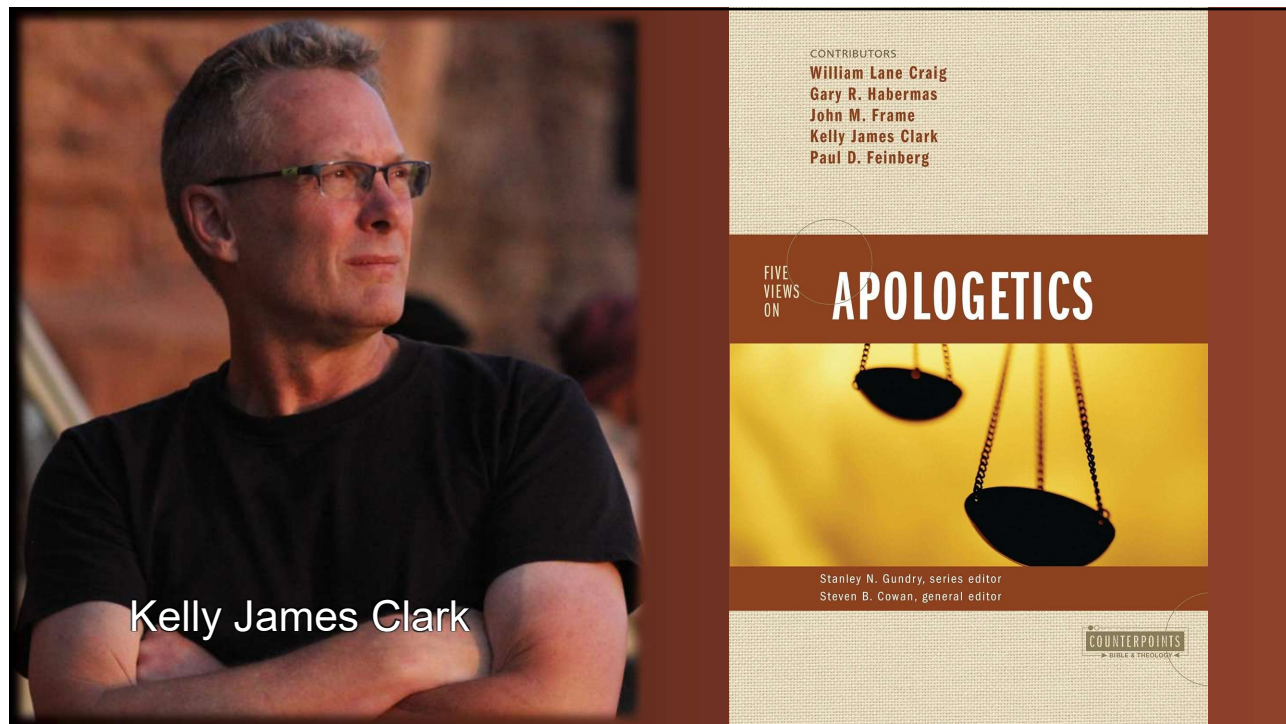


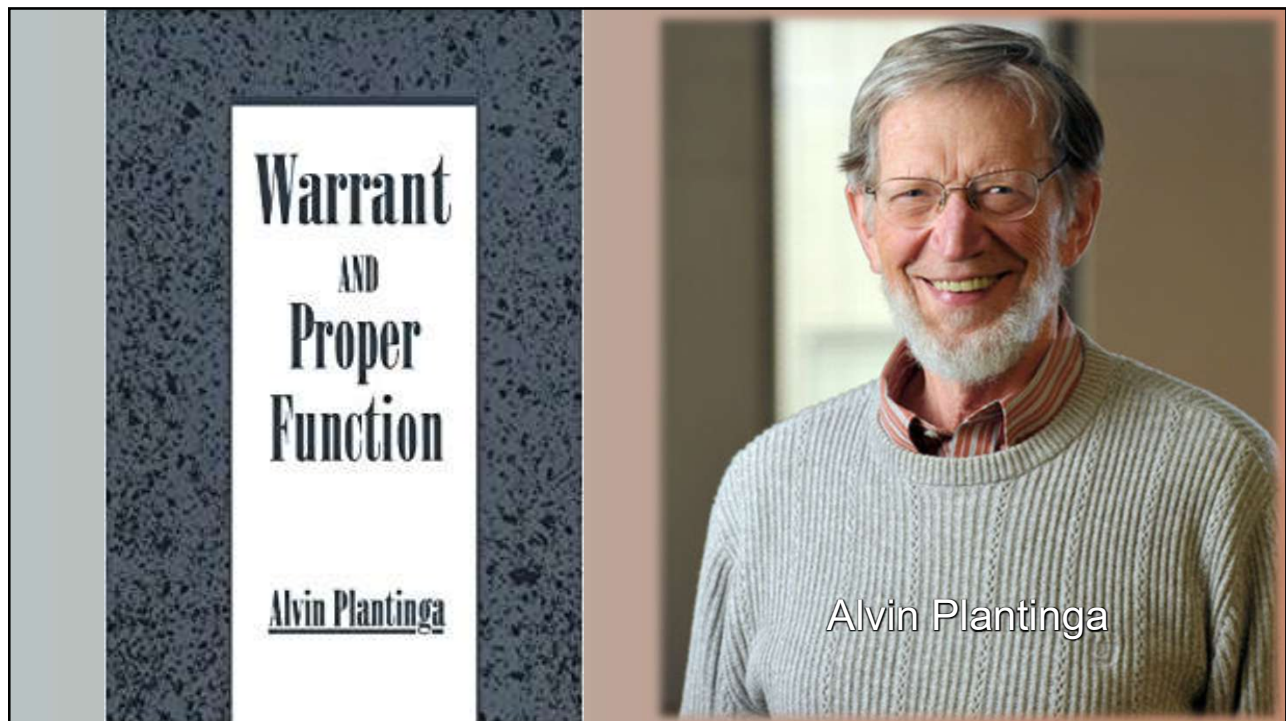
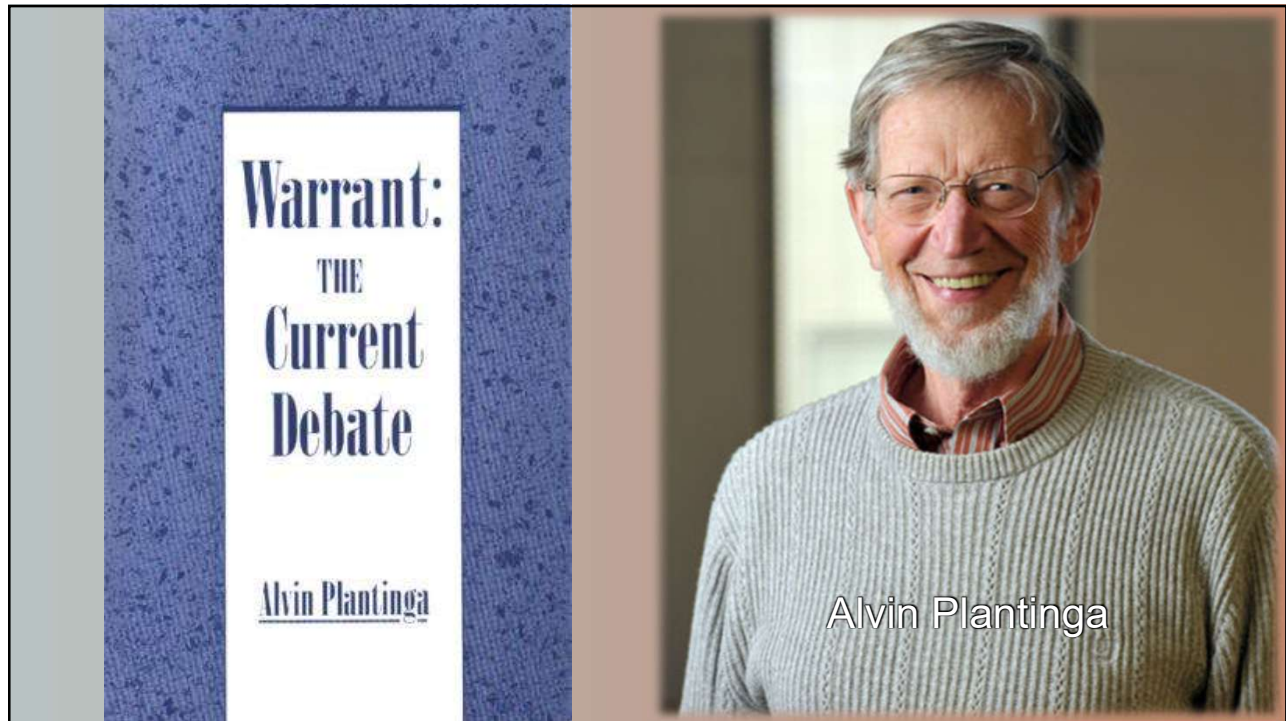


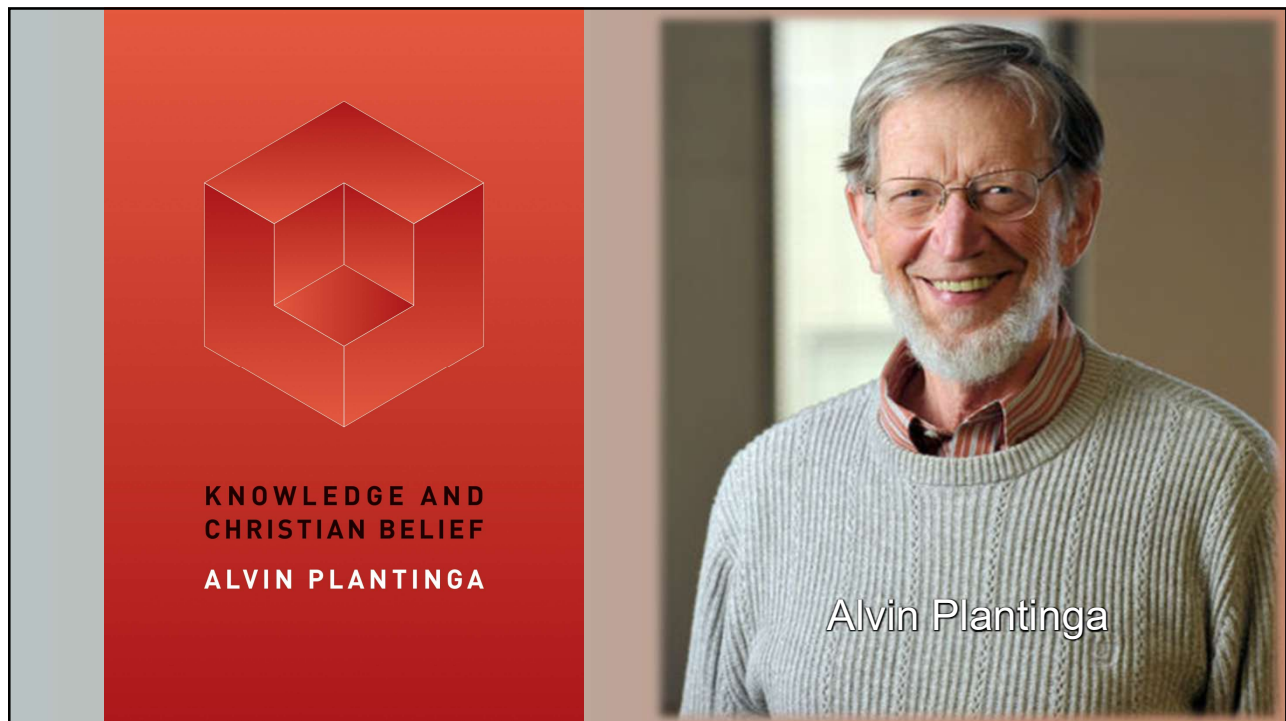
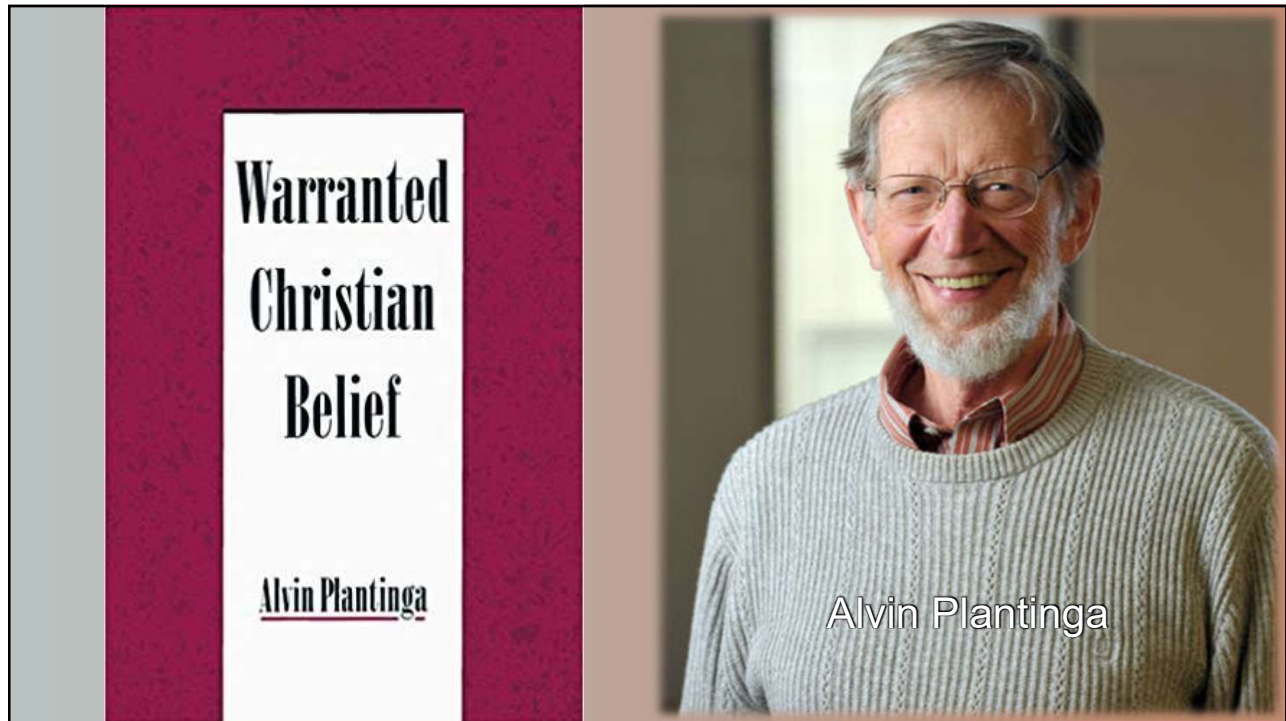
William Alston
(1921-2009)

George Mavrodes
(1926-2019)

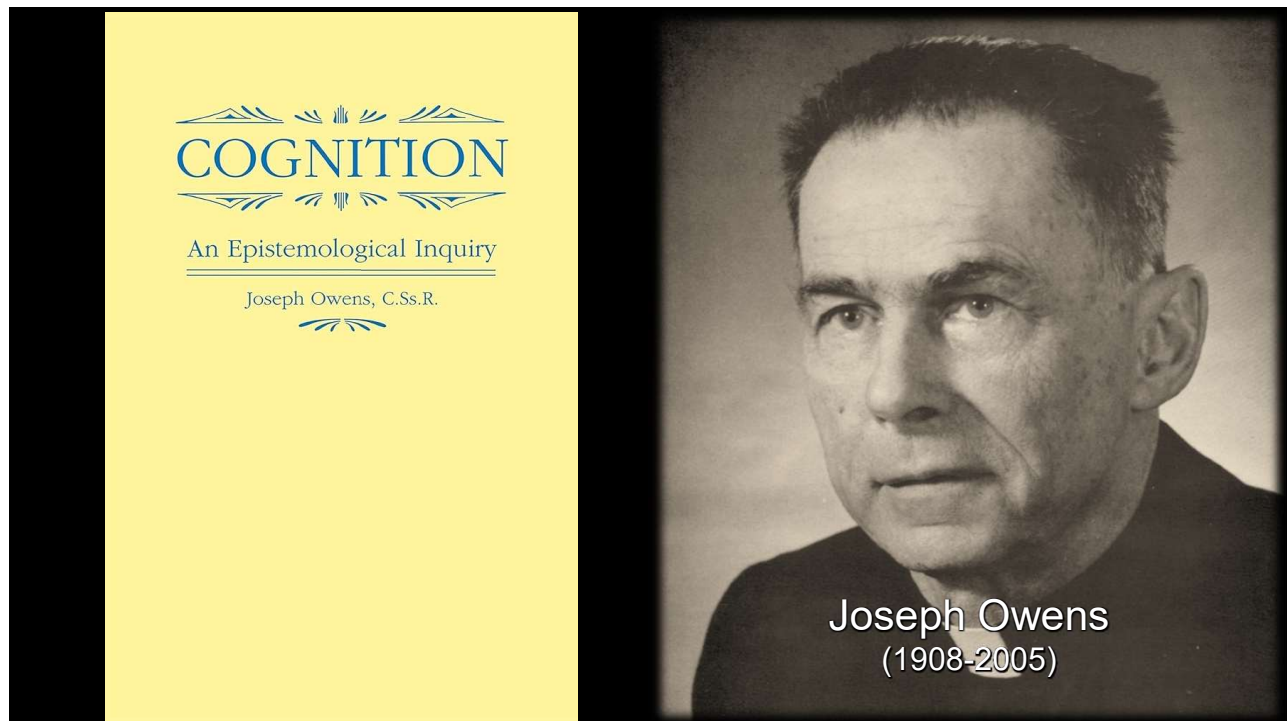
Select Works of Reformed Epistemology





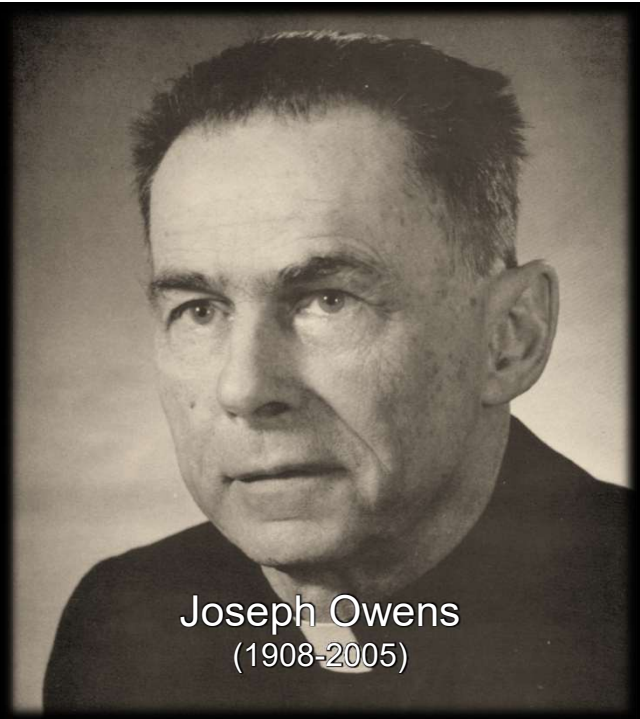


It is interesting and perhaps relevant to note that, while questions of knowledge go back to the ancient Greeks, as a distinct subject of inquiry (sometimes to the point of being nearly isolated as a subject of inquiry) epistemology is a relatively recent category in philosophy.



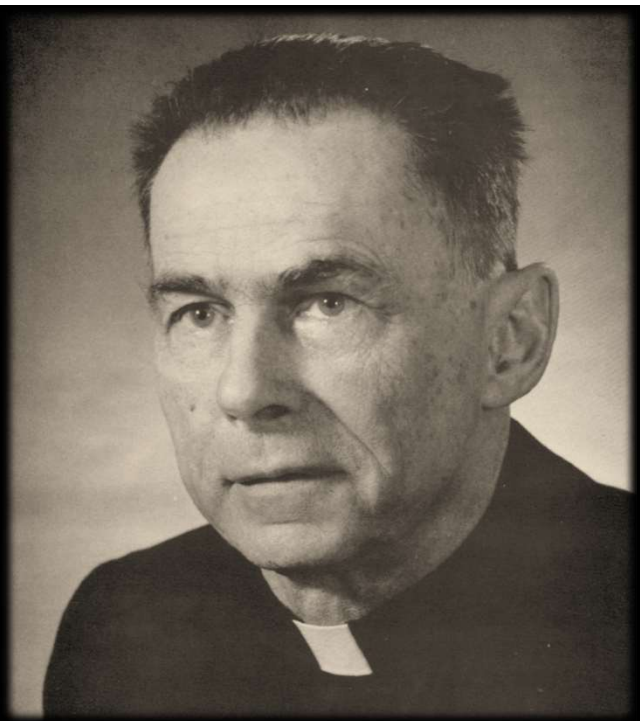
“In clear fact, the need for a special philosophical discipline called epistemology went unrecognized through many long centuries of western thought. Epistemology would seem to have arisen because of new trends in modern times that were meant to improve drastically on earlier models.”

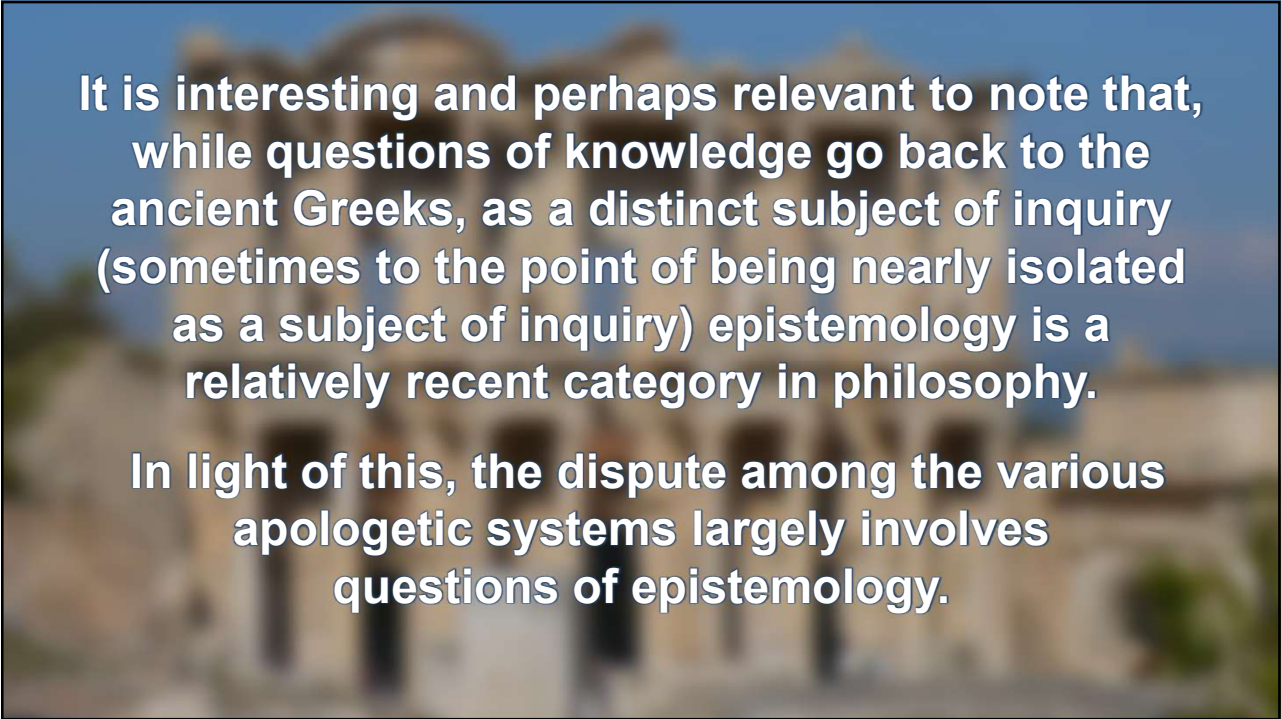
[Joseph Owens, *Cognition: A Epistemological Inquiry* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies / University of St. Thomas, 1992), 11]



Joseph Owens
(1908-2005)

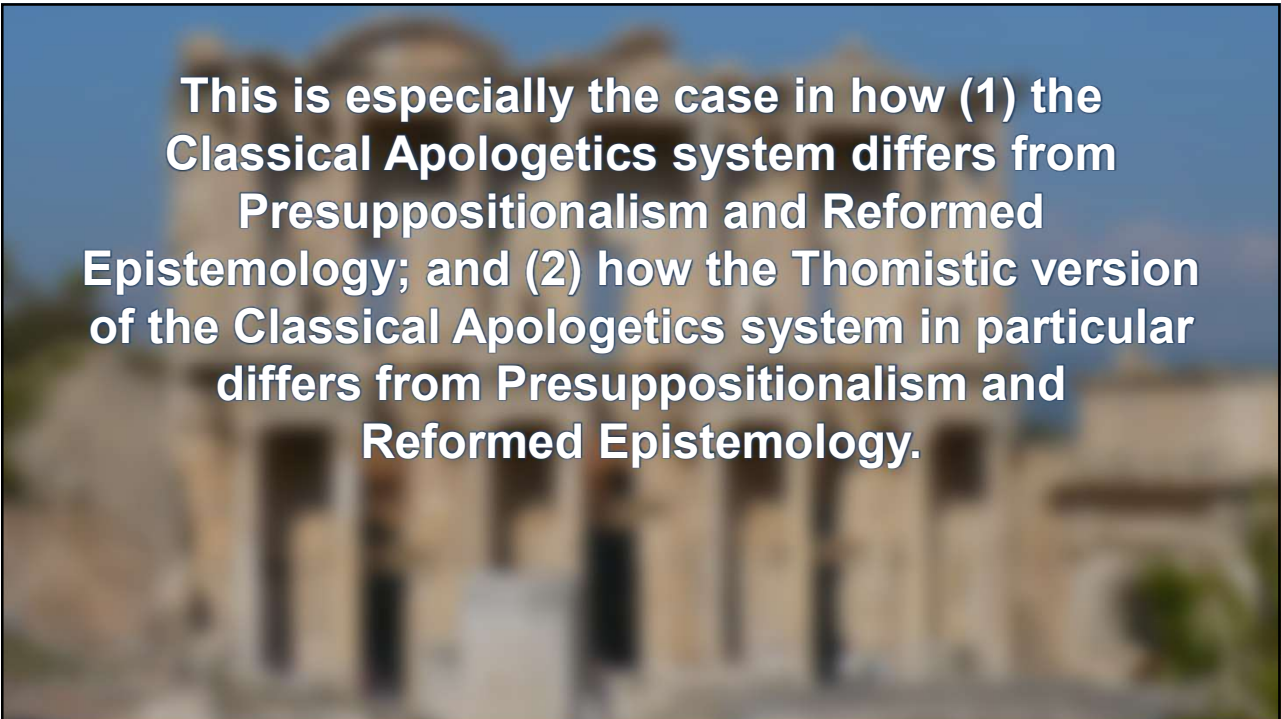
Remember, for reasons that take us beyond the scope of this course, within the next few centuries after the Reformation, Protestantism began to drift away from Classical Realism (including Thomism) much more than Catholicism such that, today, Thomistic philosophy is largely confined to Catholic Christianity.





It is interesting and perhaps relevant to note that, while questions of knowledge go back to the ancient Greeks, as a distinct subject of inquiry (sometimes to the point of being nearly isolated as a subject of inquiry) epistemology is a relatively recent category in philosophy.

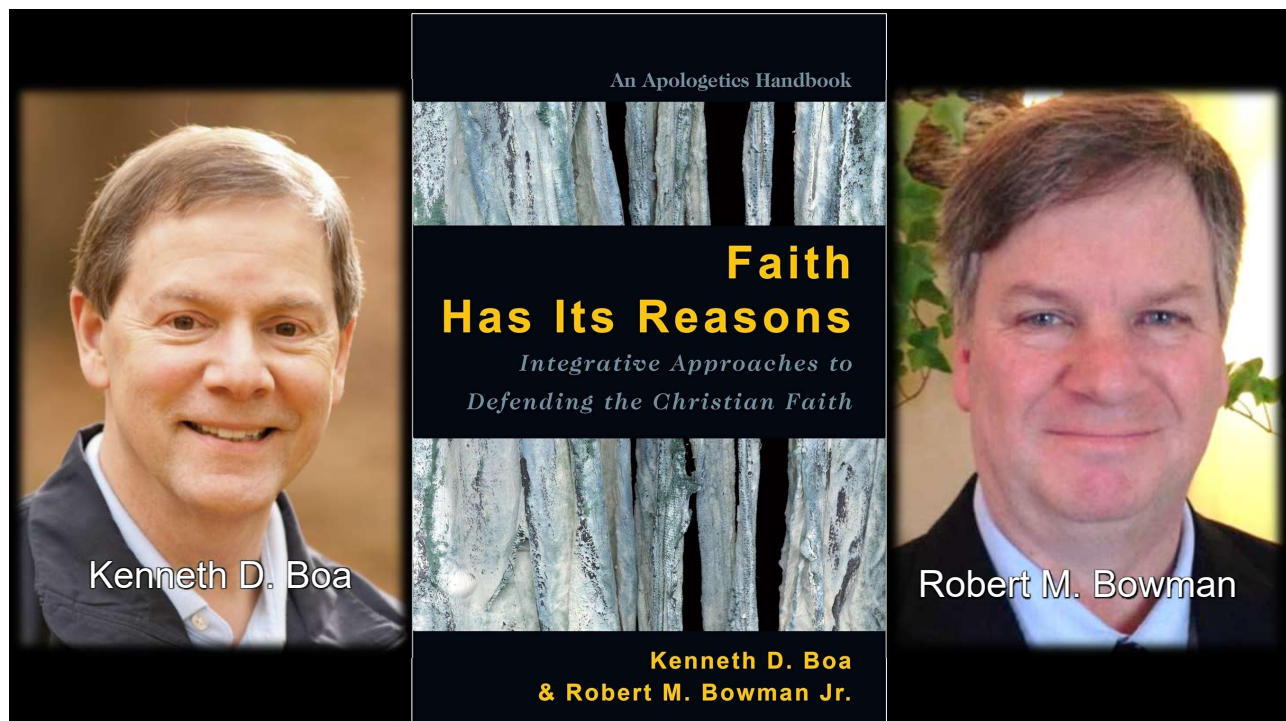
In light of this, the dispute among the various apologetic systems largely involves questions of epistemology.

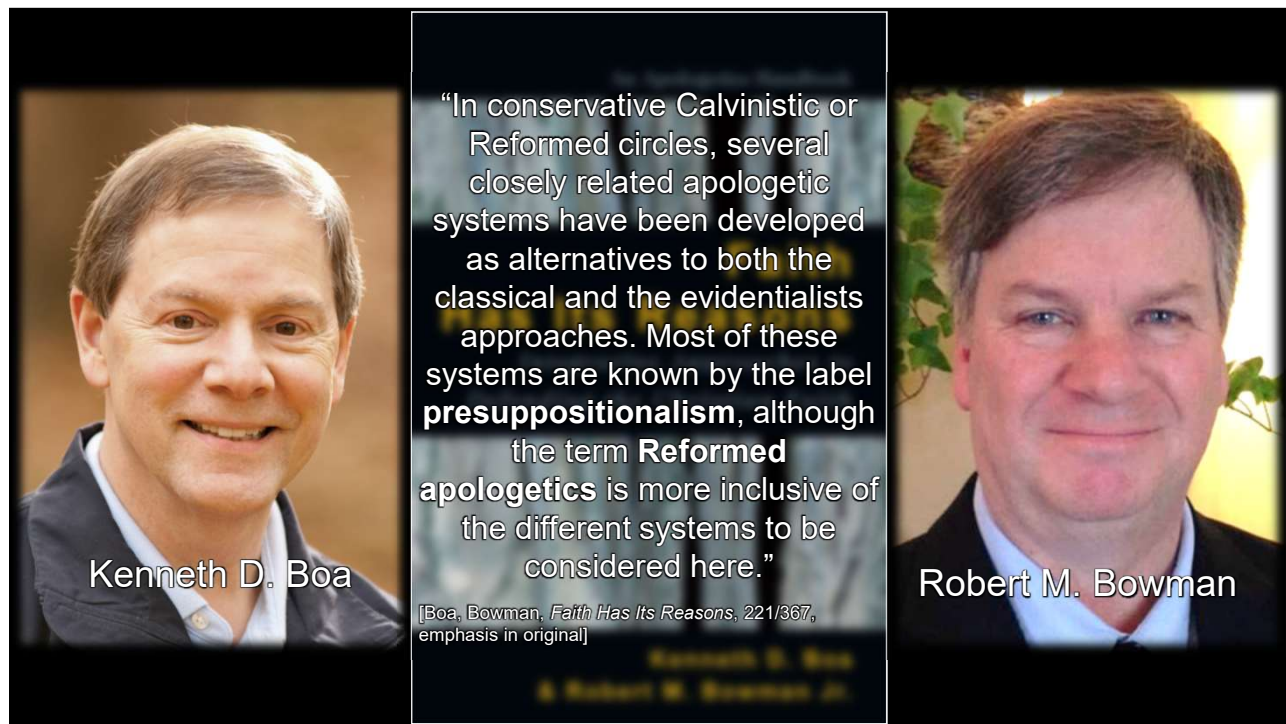


This is especially the case in how (1) the Classical Apologetics system differs from Presuppositionalism and Reformed Epistemology; and (2) how the Thomistic version of the Classical Apologetics system in particular differs from Presuppositionalism and Reformed Epistemology.

Regarding the first, it is perhaps understandable that Boa and Bowman treat both Presuppositionalism and Reformed Epistemology in the same “Part Four” of their text.

Boa and Bowman list Cornelius Van Til and Alvin Plantinga as examples of systems that emphasize revelation and label them both as “Reformed Apologetics” in as much as their origins trace back to John Calvin.





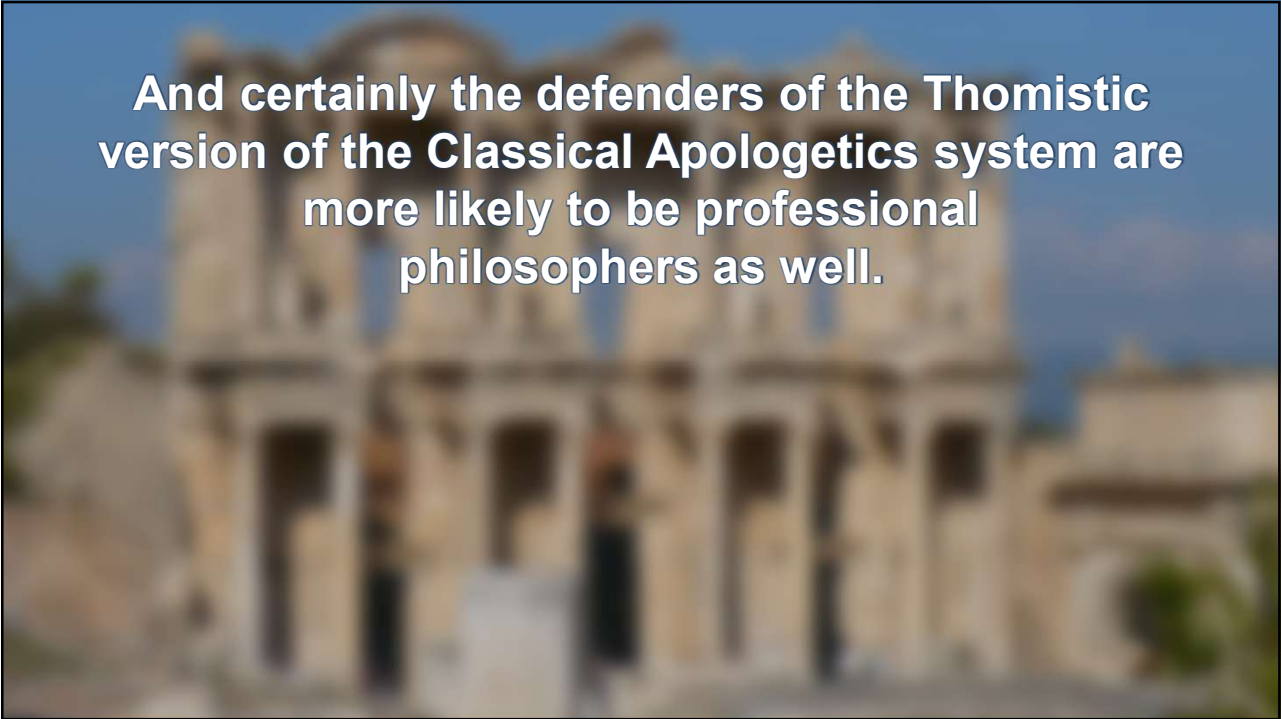
To be sure, Boa and Bowman recognize some differences in that they describe the systems that they treat in Part Four as “different systems.”

It remains to be seen, however, whether the differences between Presuppositionalism and Reformed Epistemology warrant (no pun intended) a separate treatment as Morley does in his text and as does Steven Cowan in the text he edited, *Five Views on Apologetics*.

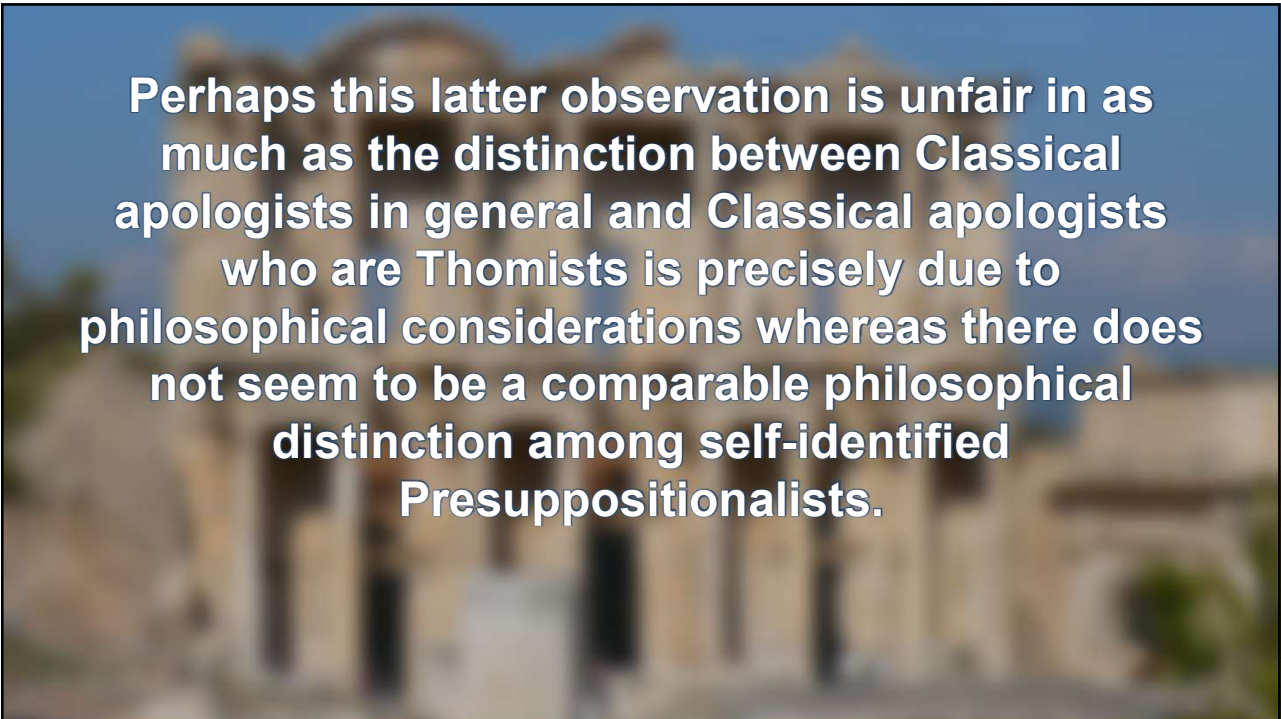
To the degree that one might emphasize the Calvinist origins of both, one might tend to see them as variations on a spectrum.

To the degree that one might emphasize the differences between Van Til's transcendental method (together with Van Til's qualified, if not eccentric, definition of 'fact') vs. Plantinga's "proper functioning," then one will undoubtedly regard them as two separate apologetic systems.

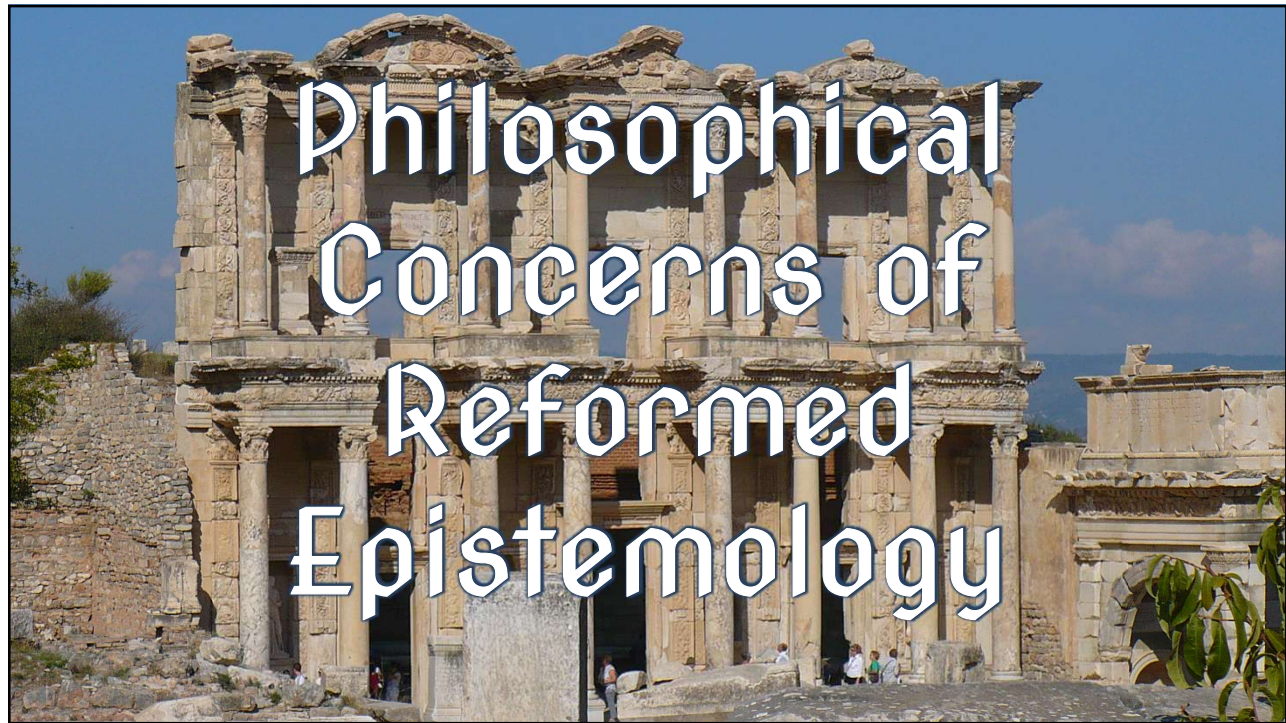
Regarding the second, some may consider the critique from the Thomistic version of Classical Apologetics to be much more philosophically acute in as much as one finds the defenders of Reformed Epistemology are more often professional philosophers than what one finds in the defense of Van Til's Presuppositionalism.



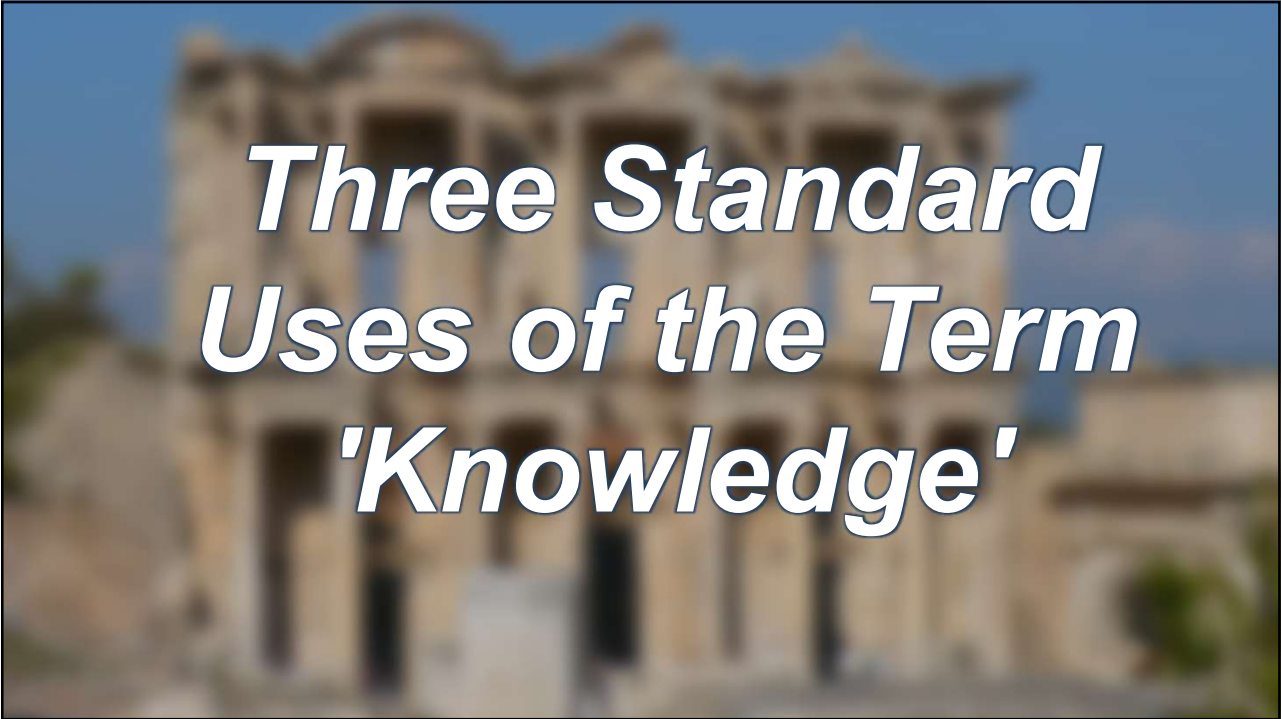
And certainly the defenders of the Thomistic version of the Classical Apologetics system are more likely to be professional philosophers as well.



Perhaps this latter observation is unfair in as much as the distinction between Classical apologists in general and Classical apologists who are Thomists is precisely due to philosophical considerations whereas there does not seem to be a comparable philosophical distinction among self-identified Presuppositionalists.



To a great extent, contemporary analytic philosophy has concerned itself with the criteria of knowledge and what constitutes rational justification.



Three Standard Uses of the Term 'Knowledge'

∞ knowledge as acquaintance ∞

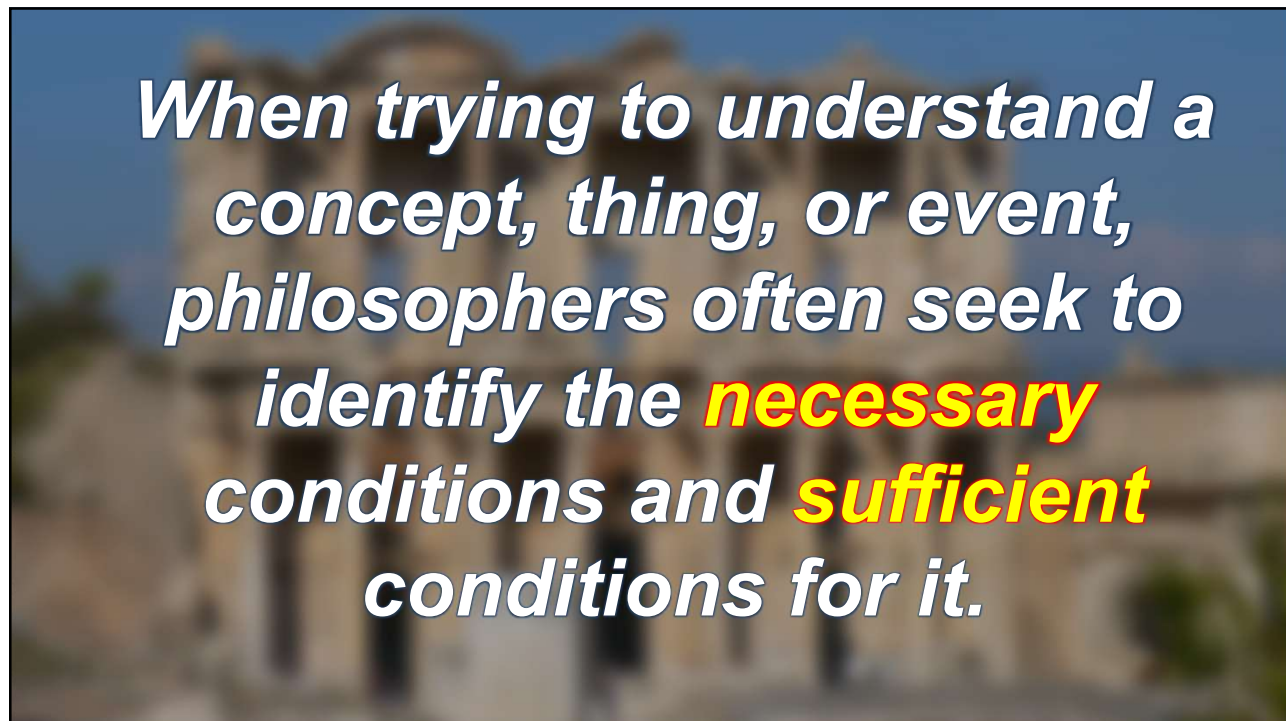
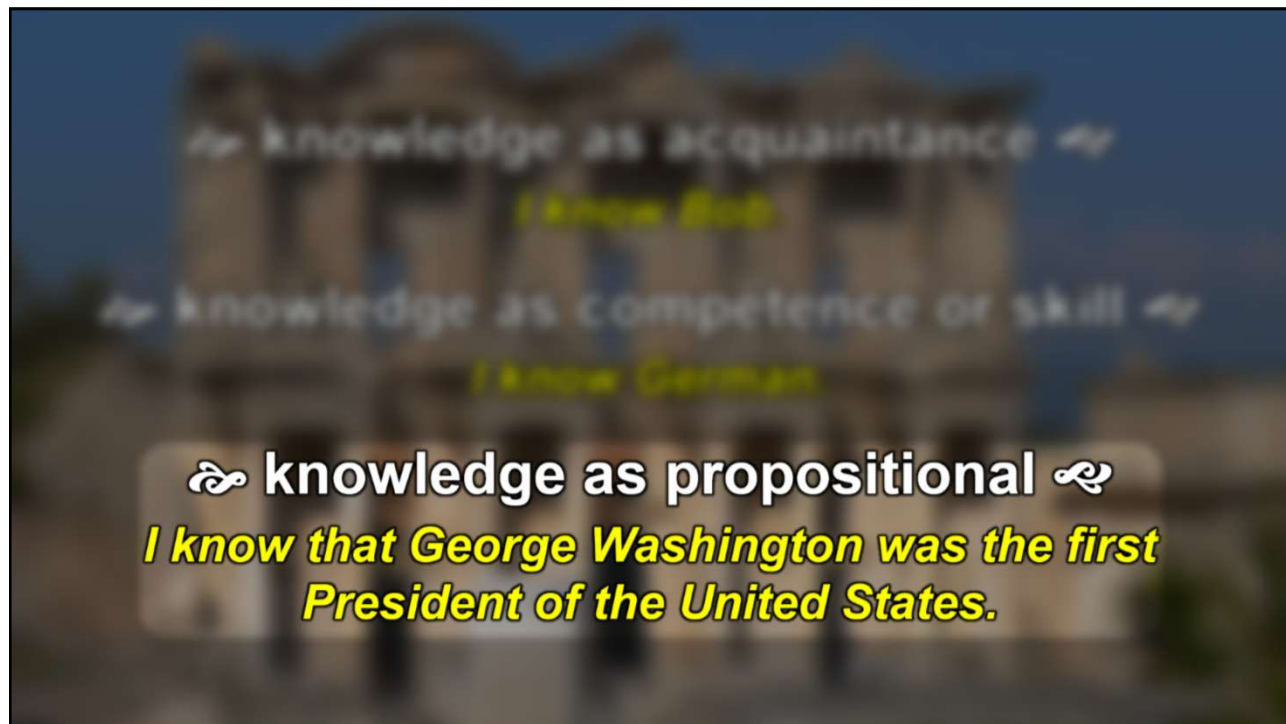
I know Bob.

∞ knowledge as competence or skill ∞

I know German.

∞ knowledge as propositional ∞

*I know that George Washington was the first
President of the United States.*



Necessary and Sufficient Conditions

Necessary conditions for X are those things in whose absence X cannot be or occur.

For example, oxygen is necessary for fire. If the oxygen is absent, fire cannot occur.

Necessary and Sufficient Conditions

Sufficient conditions for X are those things in whose presence X must be or occur.

Note that while oxygen is a necessary condition for fire, it is not sufficient.

Oxygen can be present and there still not be fire.

Necessary and Sufficient Conditions

Note also that that a sufficient condition is not necessarily a causal relationship.

For example, being pregnant is a sufficient condition for a mammal being female, but it is not the cause of the mammal being female.

Philosophers have asked what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge.

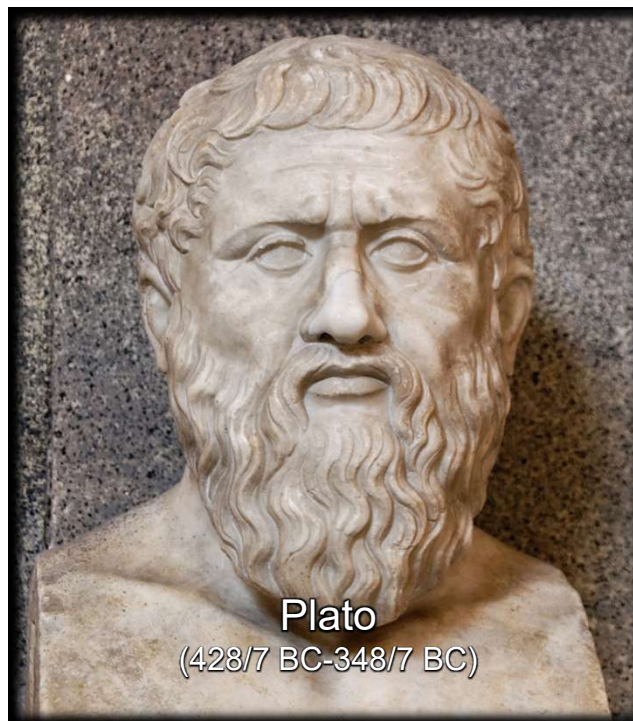
The Tri-partite Theory of Knowledge

justified, true, belief

Broadly considered, contemporary epistemology regards these three as the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge.

1. I believe X.
2. I am justified in (have good reasons for) believing X.
3. X is the case (i.e., it is true that X).

***You find such analysis of knowledge
as old as Plato.***



Plato
(428/7 BC-348/7 BC)

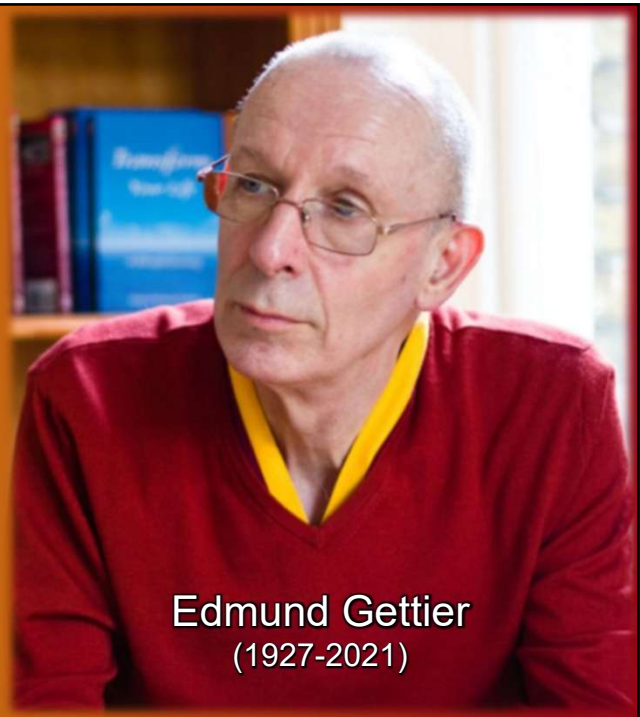
***Theaetetus: I have heard
someone make the distinction. ...
He said that true belief with the
addition of an account [λόγος
logos] was knowledge, while
belief without an account was
outside its range. Where no
account could be given of a
thing, it was not 'knowable'—that
was the word he used—where it
could, it was knowable."***

[Plato, *Theaetetus*, 201 8c-d, trans. Benjamin Jowett in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds. *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 908]

*You find such analysis of knowledge
as old as Plato.*

*Nevertheless, this view was delt quite
a blow in the 1960s.*

*Though the tri-partite
theory (or definition) of
knowledge has gained
widespread favor, it
was seriously
challenged by Edmund
Gettier in his "Is
Justified True Belief
Knowledge?"*



Edmund Gettier
(1927-2021)

ANALYSIS 23.6 JUNE 1963

IS JUSTIFIED TRUE BELIEF KNOWLEDGE?

By EDMUND L. GETTIER

VARIOUS attempts have been made in recent years to state necessary and sufficient conditions for someone's knowing a given proposition. The attempts have often been such that they can be stated in a form similar to the following:¹

(a) S knows that P IFF (i) P is true,
(ii) S believes that P, and
(iii) S is justified in believing that P.

For example, Chisholm has held that the following gives the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge:²

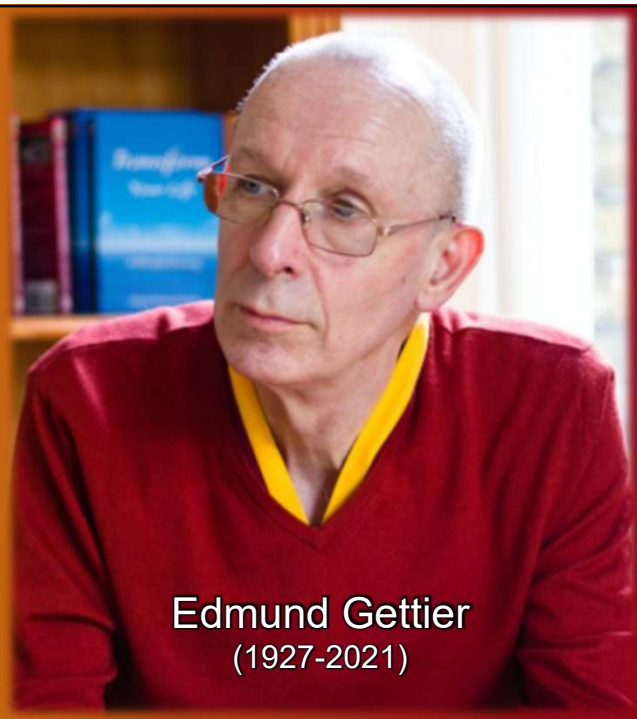
(b) S knows that P IFF (i) S accepts P,
(ii) S has adequate evidence for P, and
(iii) P is true.

Ayer has stated the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge as follows:³

(c) S knows that P IFF (i) P is true,
(ii) S is sure that P is true, and
(iii) S has the right to be sure that P is true.

I shall argue that (a) is false in that the conditions stated therein do not constitute a *sufficient* condition for the truth of the proposition that S knows that P. The same argument will show that (b) and (c) fail if 'has adequate evidence for' or 'has the right to be sure that' is substituted for 'is justified in believing that' throughout.

I shall begin by noting two points. First, in that sense of 'justified' in which S's being justified in believing P is a necessary condition of S's knowing that P, it is possible for a person to be justified in believing a proposition that is in fact false. Secondly, for any proposition P, if S is justified in believing P, and P entails Q, and S deduces Q from P and accepts Q as a result of this deduction, then S is justified in believing Q. Keeping these two points in mind, I shall now present two cases

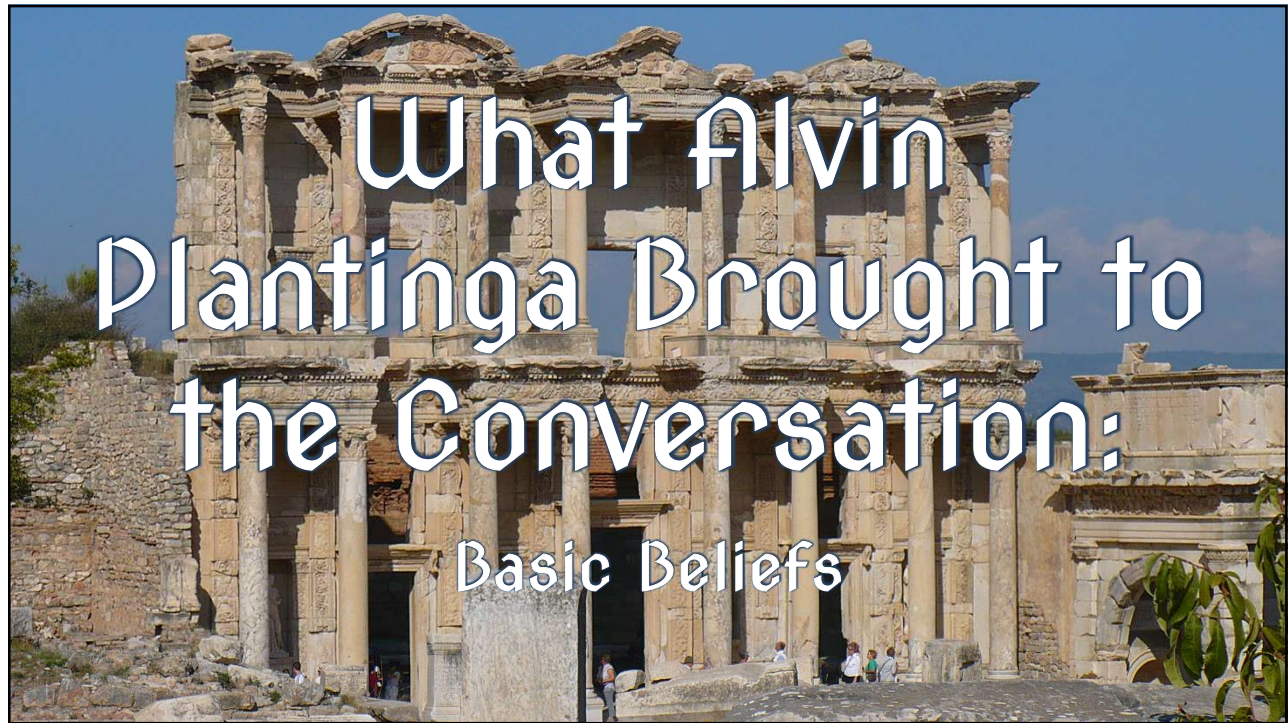


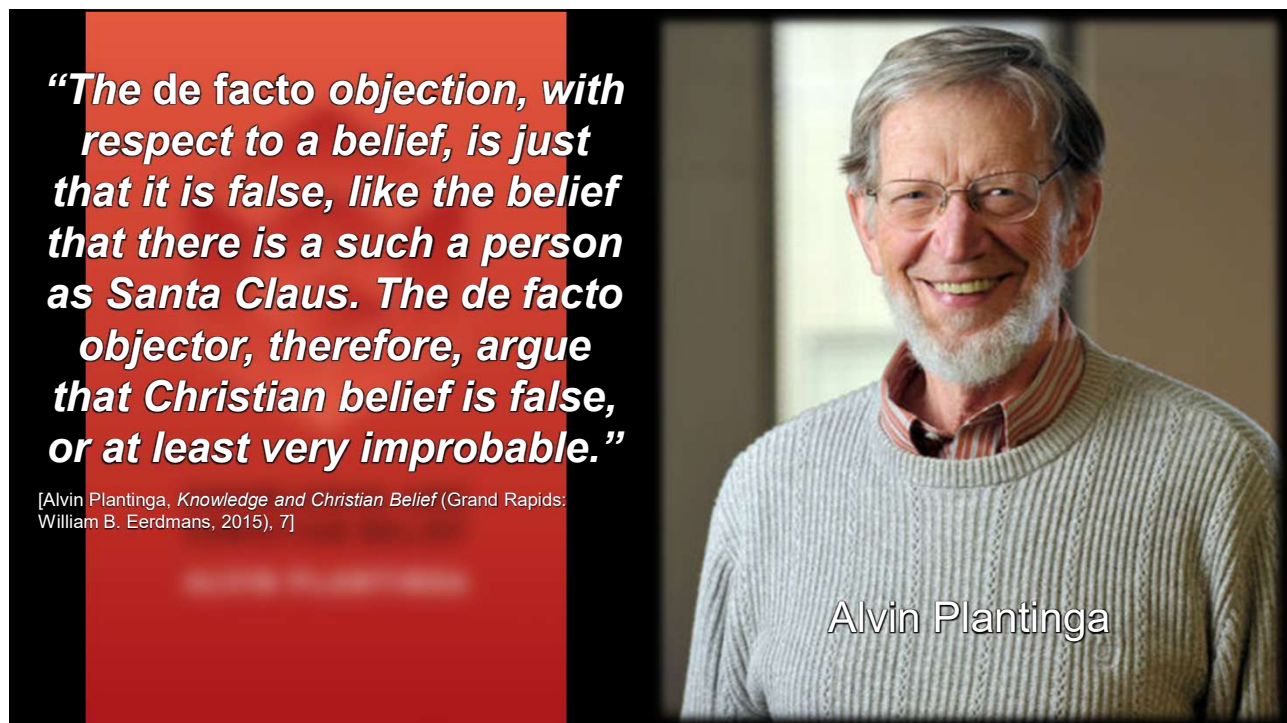
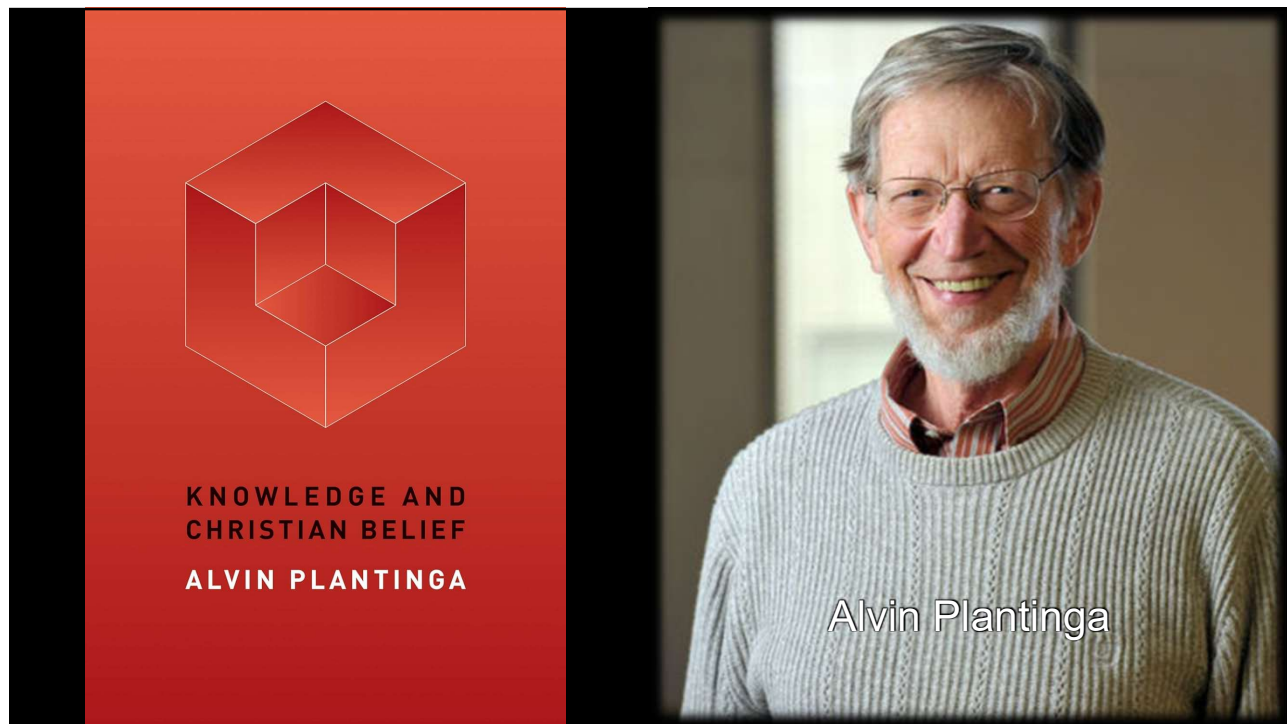
Edmund Gettier
(1927-2021)

***You find such analysis of knowledge
as old as Plato.***

***Nevertheless, this view was delt quite
a blow in the 1960s.***

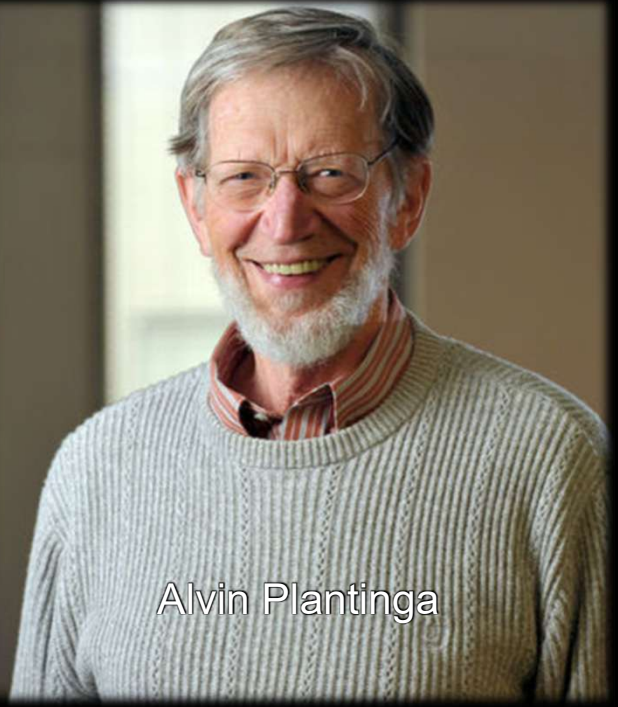
***Still today, you will find in the
literature philosophers treating
“Gettier” problems.***





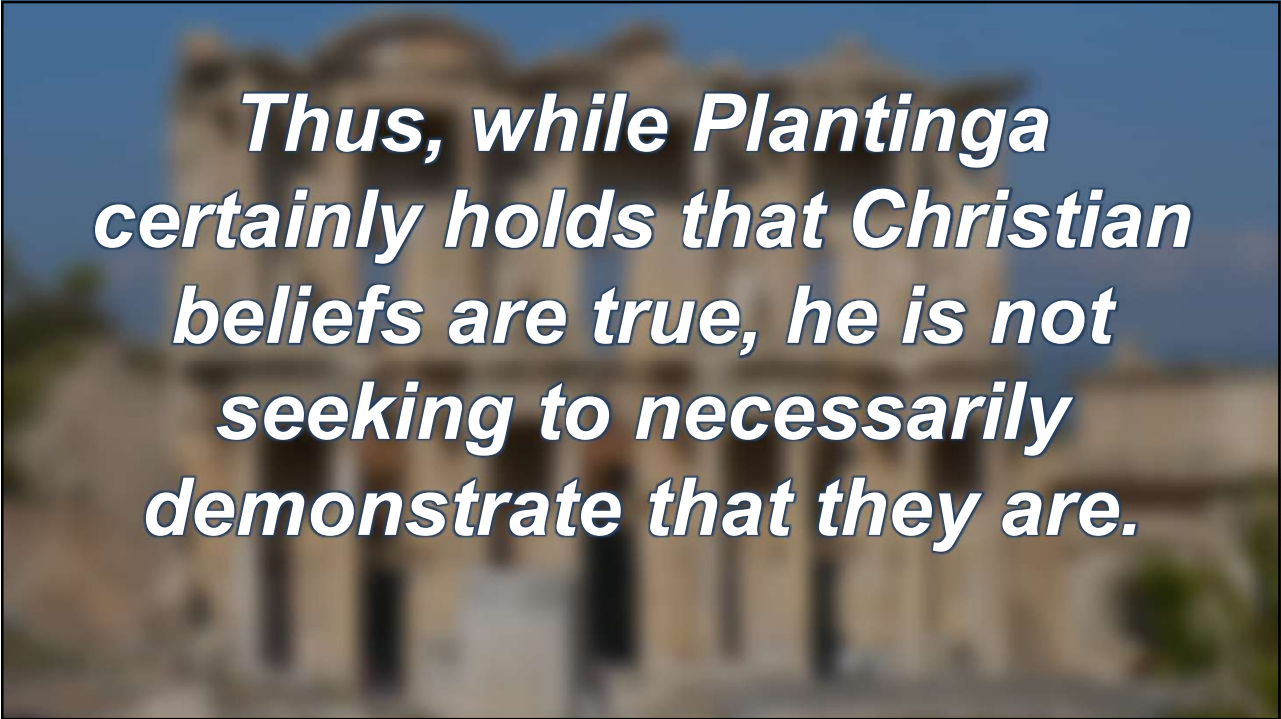
“The de jure objection ... is the claim that Christian belief is irrational or unjustified or perhaps immoral; more exactly, it the person who embraces Christian belief who is alleged to be irrational or unjustified or in some other way deserving disapprobation.”

[Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 8]

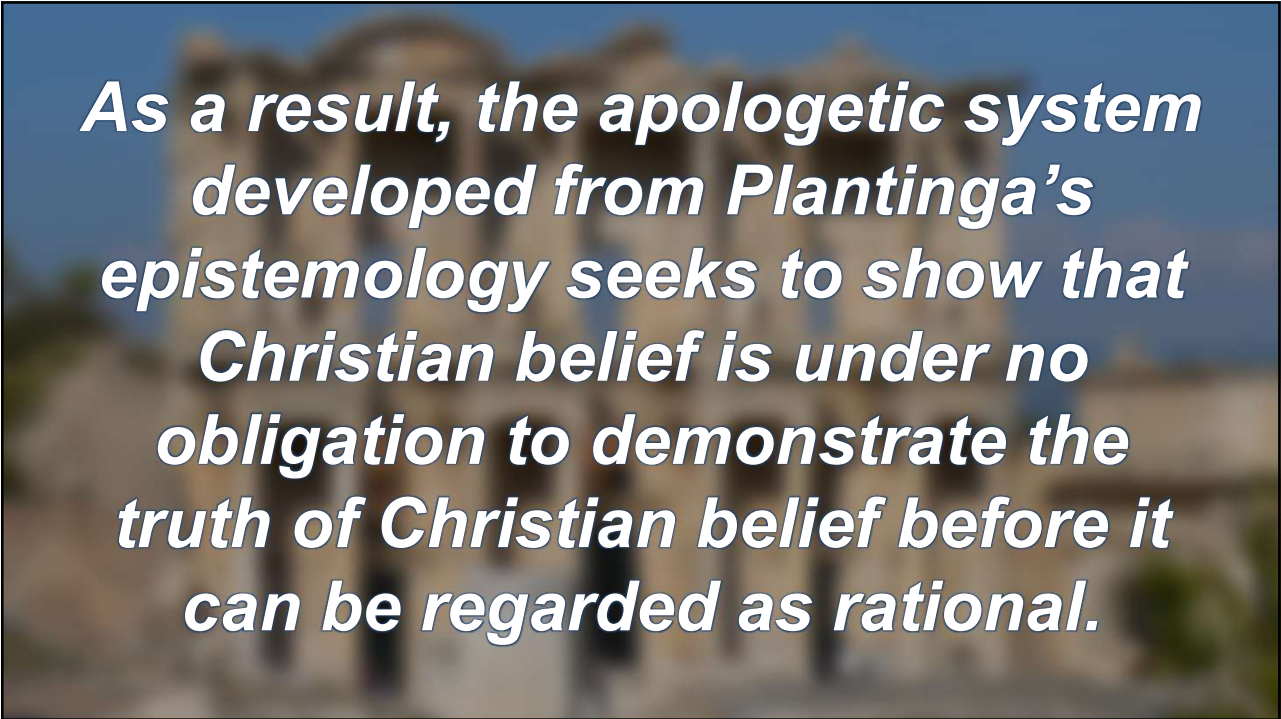


Alvin Plantinga

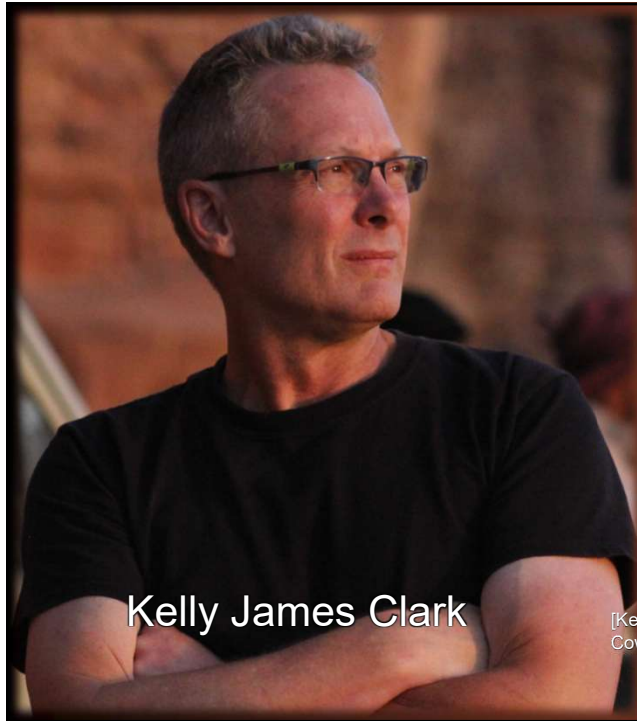
Plantinga’s epistemology seeks to examine the de jure type of objections and give an answer to them.



Thus, while Plantinga certainly holds that Christian beliefs are true, he is not seeking to necessarily demonstrate that they are.



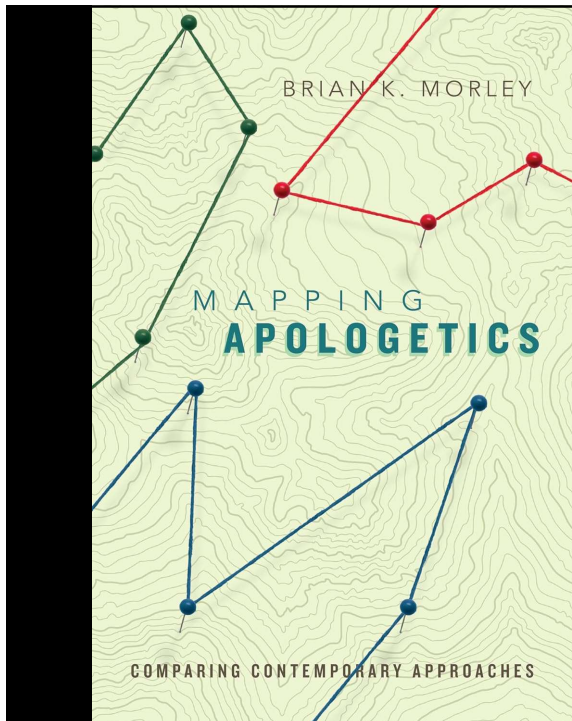
As a result, the apologetic system developed from Plantinga's epistemology seeks to show that Christian belief is under no obligation to demonstrate the truth of Christian belief before it can be regarded as rational.



Kelly James Clark

"It is the position of Reformed epistemology (likely the position that Calvin held) that belief in God, like belief in other persons, does not require the support of evidence or argument in order for it to be rational."

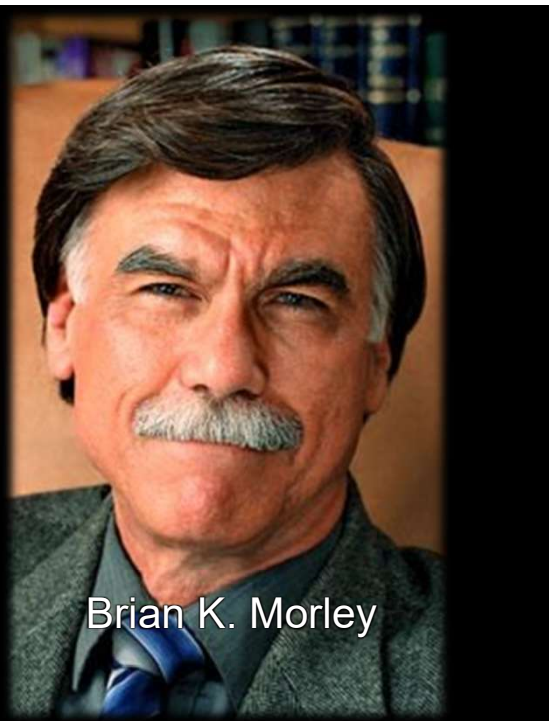
[Kelly James Clark, "Reformed Epistemology Apologetics," in Steven B. Cowan, ed. *Five Views on Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 267]



BRIAN K. MORLEY

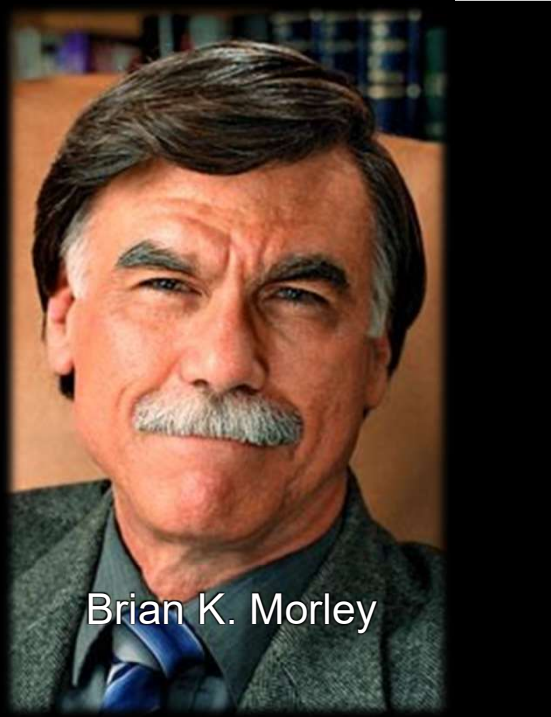
MAPPING
APOLOGETICS

COMPARING CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES



Brian K. Morley

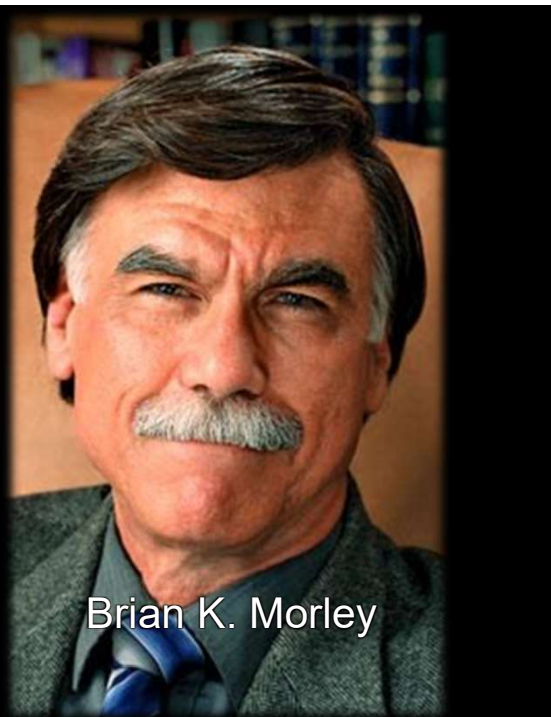
"Rather than accept the evidentialist's requirements by attempting to construct a traditional argument for Christianity, Plantinga challenge the entire notion of traditional proof as the primary basis for belief. He pointed out that there are plenty of beliefs that we deem rationally acceptable even though we have little evidence for them. ..."



Brian K. Morley

"If it is rationally acceptable to believe those things without evidence, why can't it be rationally acceptable to believe in God or Christianity without evidence? ... The attempt to set up requirements for rationality that rule out belief in God are very likely to also rule out beliefs even the objector wants to retain."

[Brian K. Morley, *Mapping Apologetics: Comparing Contemporary Approaches*, (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 121)]

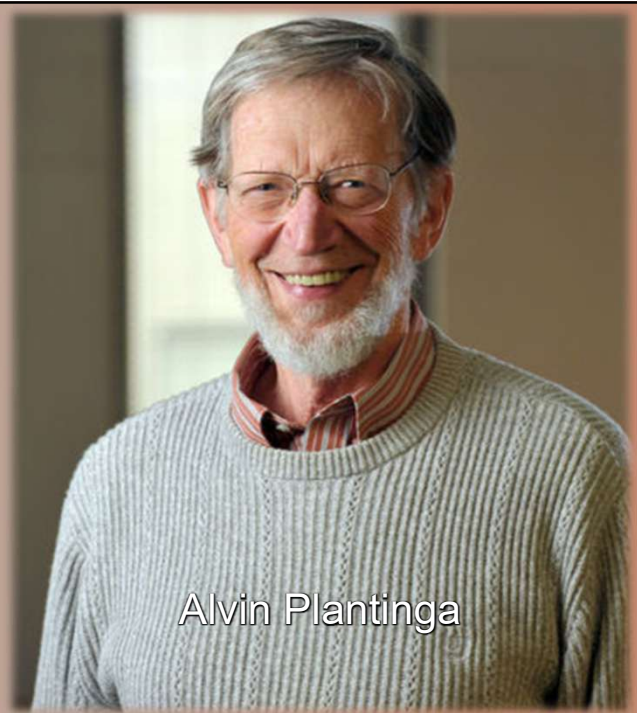


Brian K. Morley

Plantinga's Challenge to "Classical" Foundationalism

*"Classical **foundationalism** ... is a picture or total way of looking at faith, knowledge, justified belief, rationality, and allied topics. ... According to the foundationalist some propositions are properly basic and some are not; those that are not are rationally accepted only on the basis of evidence, where the evidence must trace back, ultimately, to what is properly basic."*

[Alvin Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Rational?" in C. F. DeLaney, ed. *Rationality and Religious Belief* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979) as cited in Louis P. Pojman, *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1987), 455]



Alvin Plantinga

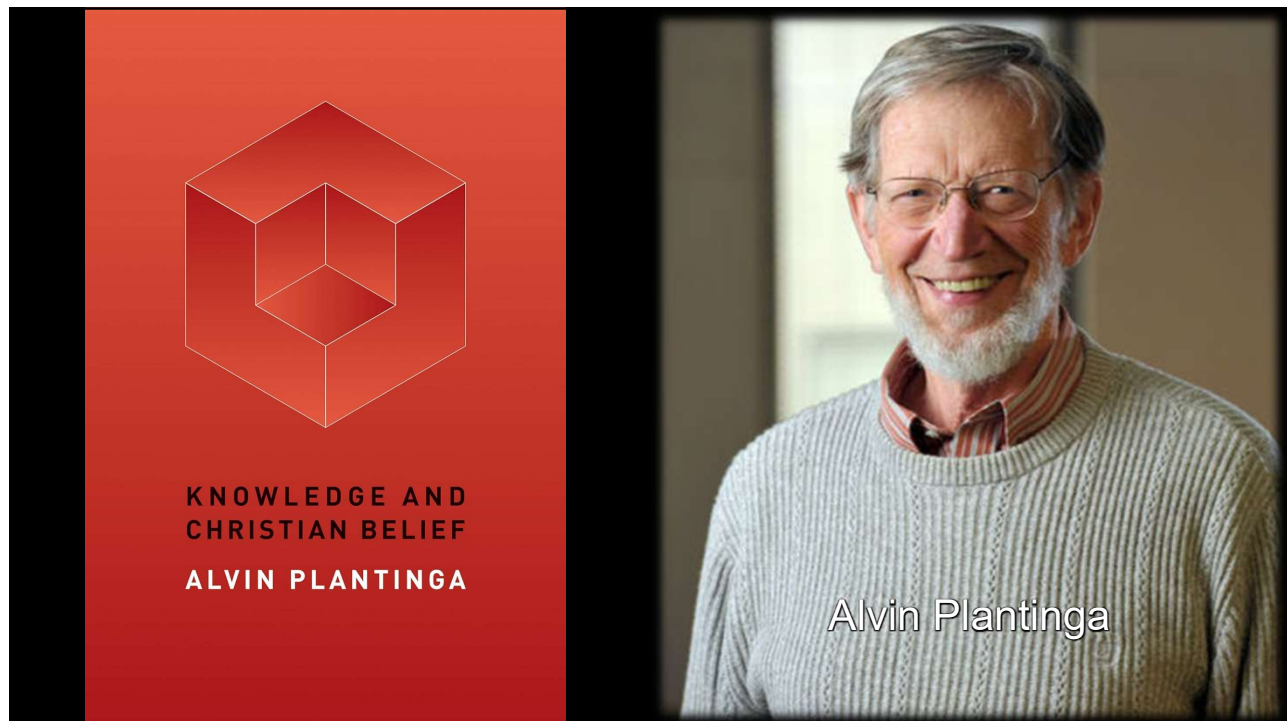
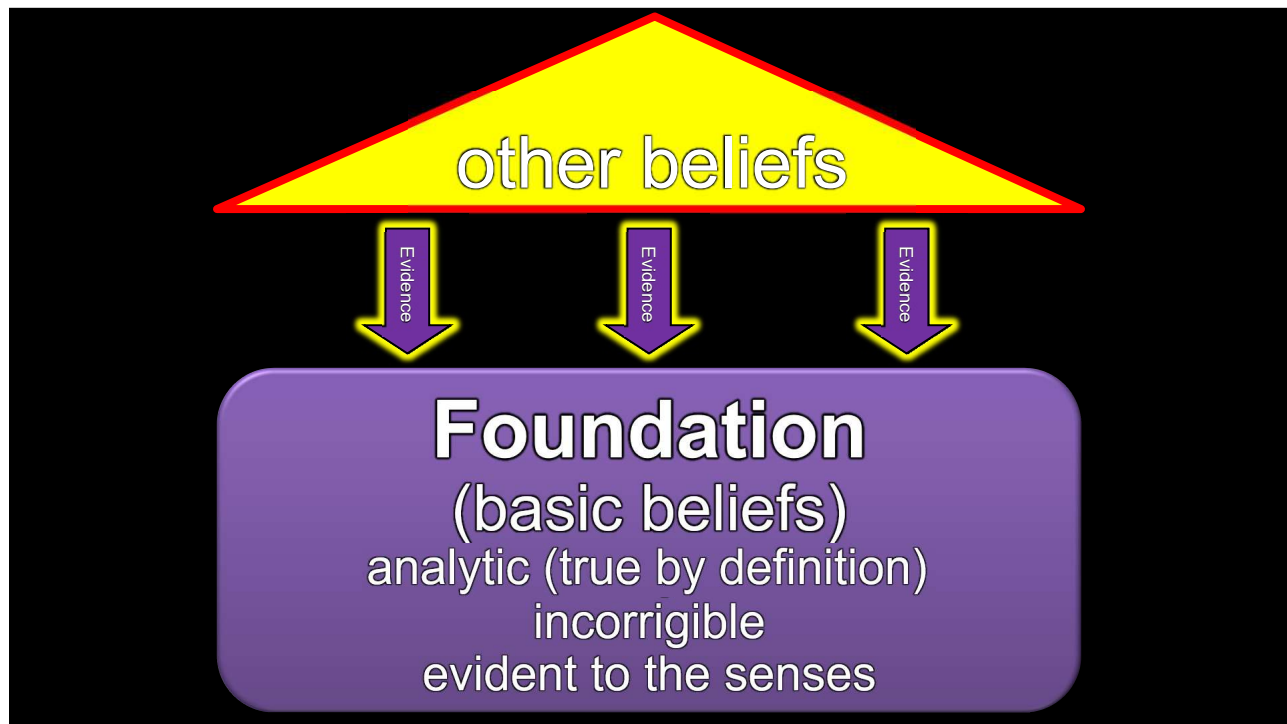
Foundation
(basic beliefs)
analytic
incorrigible
evident to the senses

Foundation
(basic beliefs)
analytic
incorrigible
evident to the senses

Analytic statements are statements that are true by definition, like "All bachelors are unmarried."

Incorrigible beliefs are beliefs that cannot be corrected because they are impossible to be mistaken, like "I believe I have a headache."

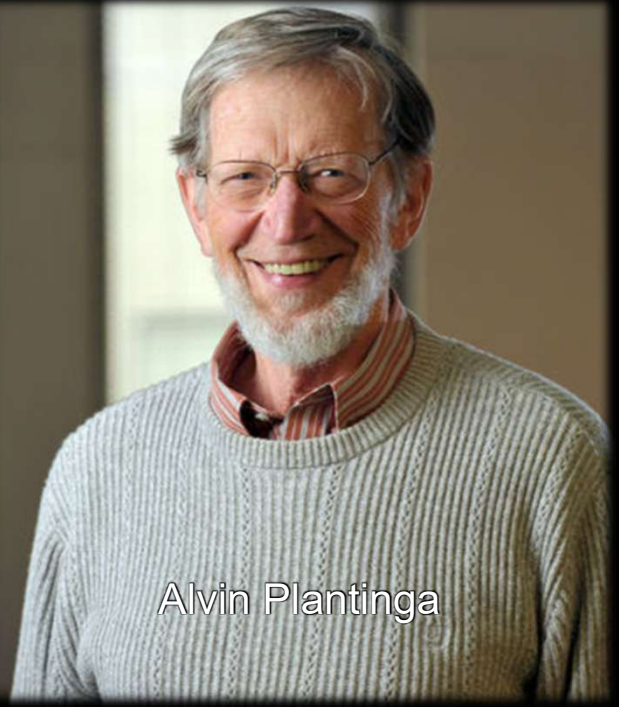
Evident to the senses are beliefs that arise from sensory experience, like "I believe the sky is blue" when said by a sighted person looking at the sky on a cloudless, sunny day.



Alvin Plantinga

"According to classical foundationalism (hereafter CF), you are within your epistemic rights in believing a proposition only if you believe it on the evidential basis of propositions that are self-evident or incorrigible."

[Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 15]



Alvin Plantinga

"According to classical foundationalism (hereafter CF), you are within your epistemic rights in believing a proposition only if you believe it on the evidential basis of propositions that are self-evident or incorrigible."

[Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 15]

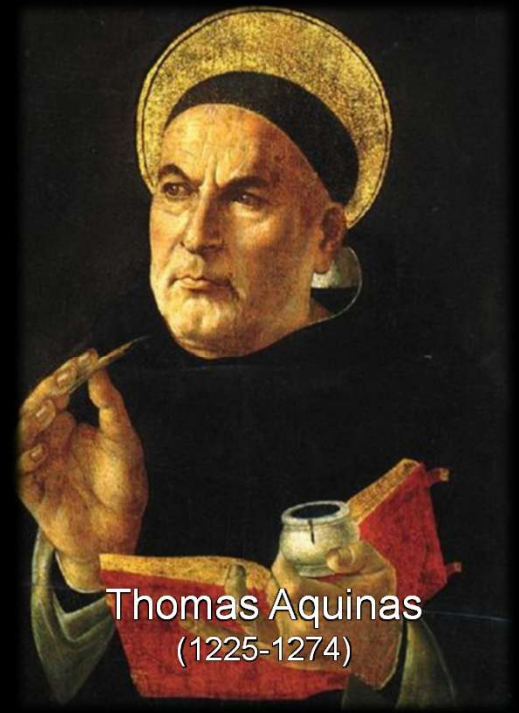
Self-evident propositions are those that are seen to be true by virtue of understanding the meanings of the terms in the proposition.

Analytic propositions are self-evident.

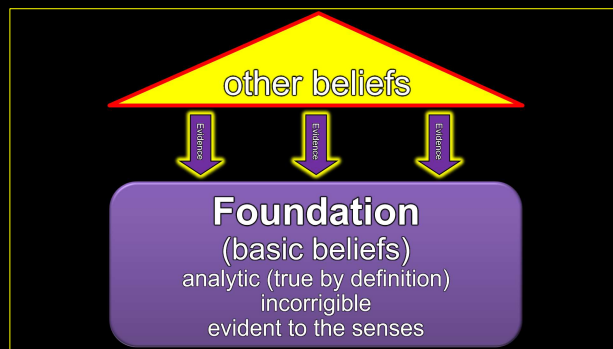
For example, it is self-evident to anyone who knows what 'whole' means that the whole is greater than its parts.

"Those things which are self-evident ... are known as soon as the terms are known, as is said in the Posterior Analytics."

[Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, 10, art. 12, trans. James V. McGlynn, vol. II, p. 67, in *Truth* (3 vols), vol. 1 trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952); vol. 2 trans. James V. McGlynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953); vol. 3 trans. Robert W. Schmidt (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1954). The three volumes were reprinted as *Truth* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994)]



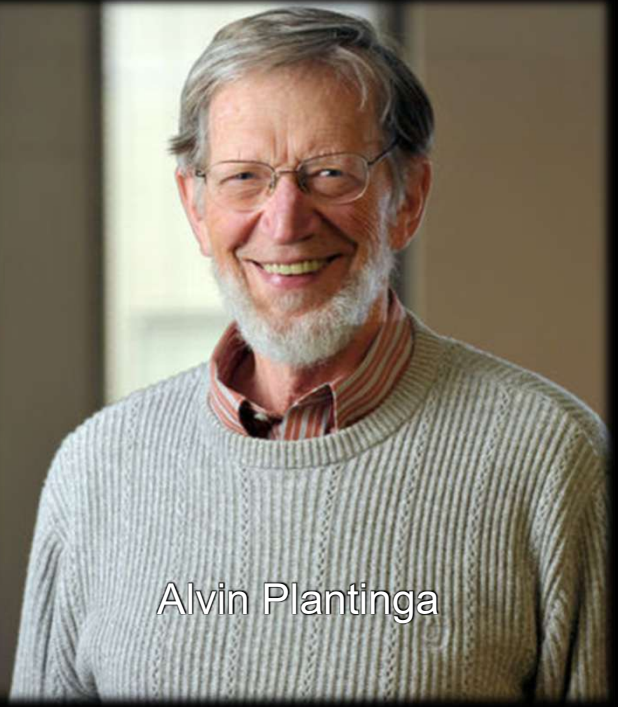
Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)



Plantinga asks "Is the definition of 'rational' itself rational?"

- ❖ *Is this definition a basic belief?*
- ❖ *If not, what evidence could count for this definition that would itself trace back to some basic belief?*

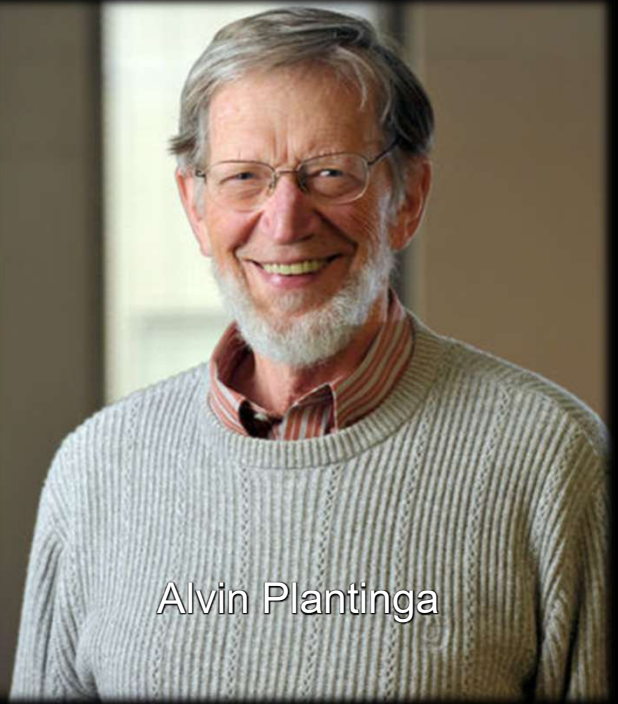
"If you believe a proposition for which there isn't any evidence from self-evident or incorrigible propositions, then you are unjustified and violating your epistemic duties."



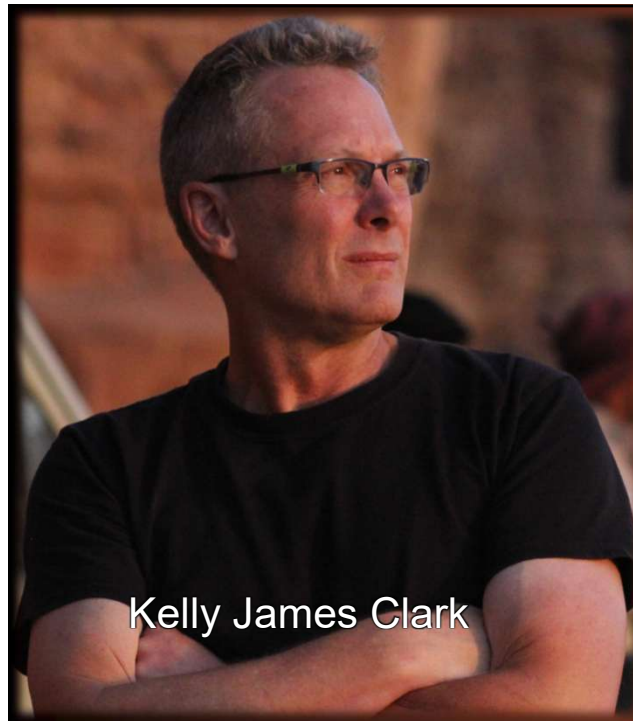
Alvin Plantinga

"But here's the problem: there don't seem to be any incorrigible or self-evident propositions that support CF itself."

[Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 15]



Alvin Plantinga



Kelly James Clark

"My Suppose-This and Suppose-That stories are intended to raise the problem of the relationship of our important beliefs to evidence (and counter-evidence) . Since the Enlightenment, there has been a demand to expose all of our beliefs to the searching criticism of reason. If a belief is unsupported by the evidence, it is irrational to believe it. It is the position of Reformed epistemology (likely the position that Calvin held) that belief in God, like belief in other persons, does not require the support of evidence or argument in order for it to be rational."

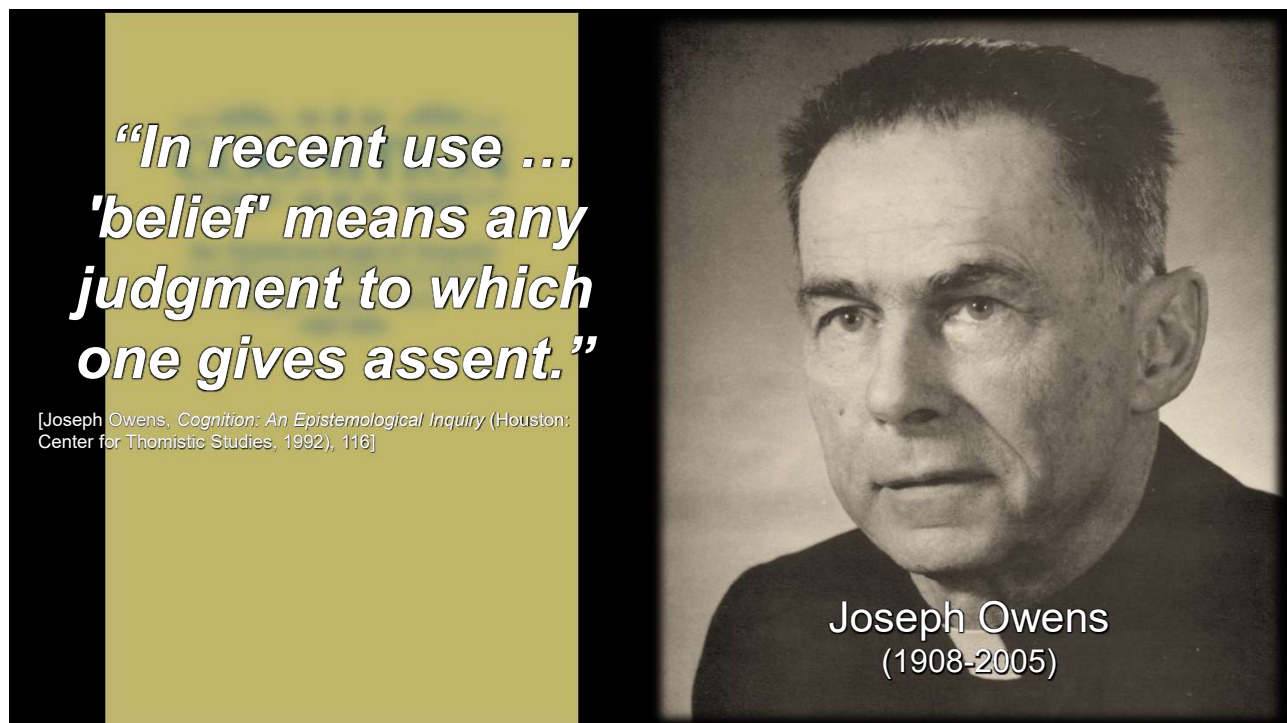
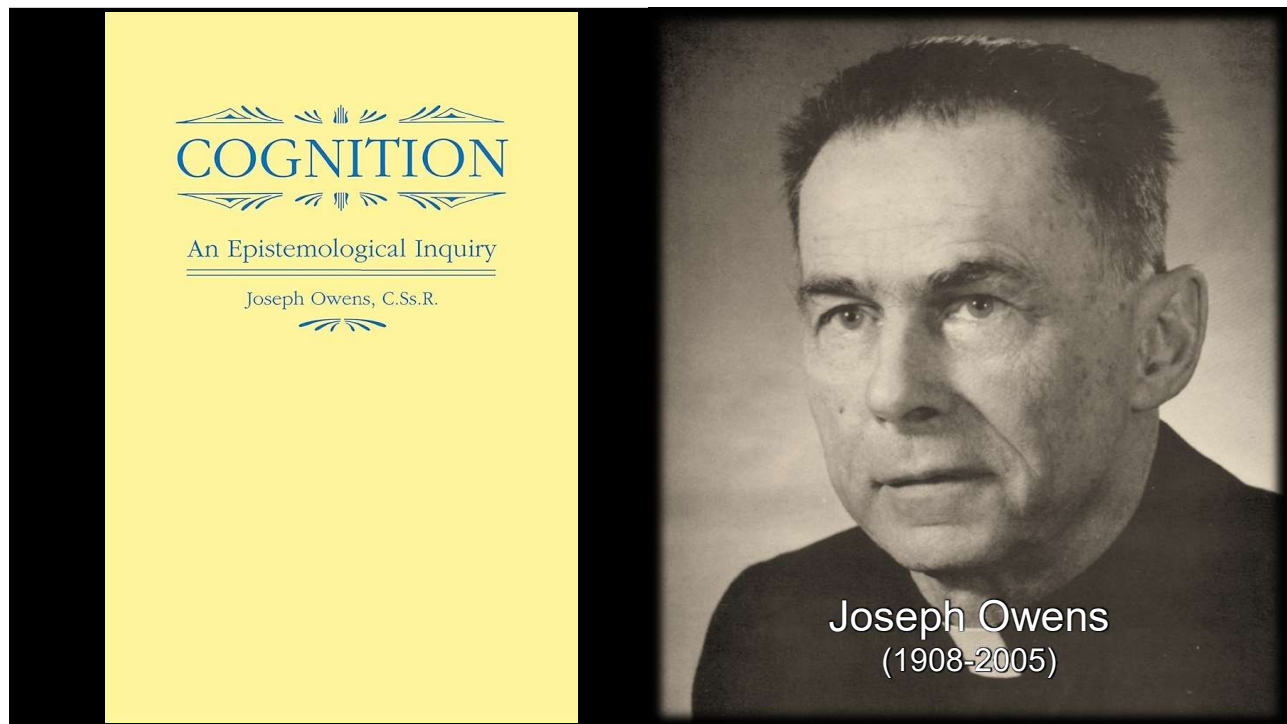
[Kelly James Clark, "Without Evidence or Argument: A Defense of Reformed Epistemology" (https://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/without_evidence_or_argument.pdf, accessed 11/17/25), p. 3. A shorter version was published as "Without Evidence or Argument" in Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau, eds. *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*, 15th ed., (Boston: Wadsworth, 2013), 138-142]

One problem with the contemporary epistemological conversation lies in the use of the term 'belief'.

Joseph Owens comments on the situation.

"My Suppose-This and Suppose-That stories are intended to raise the problem of the relationship of our important beliefs to evidence (and counter-evidence) . Since the Enlightenment, there has been a demand to expose all of our beliefs to the searching criticism of reason. If a belief is unsupported by the evidence, it is irrational to believe it. It is the position of Reformed epistemology (likely the position that Calvin held) that belief in God, like belief in other persons, does not require the support of evidence or argument in order for it to be rational."

[Kelly James Clark, "Without Evidence or Argument: A Defense of Reformed Epistemology" (https://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/without_evidence_or_argument.pdf, accessed 11/17/25), p. 3. A shorter version was published as "Without Evidence or Argument" in Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau, eds. *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*, 15th ed., (Boston: Wadsworth, 2013), 138-142]



This stands in contrast to the classical usage—tracking as it does the classical distinction between faith and reason—where ‘belief’ is that which is assented to on the basis of the words or testimony of someone else in distinction to what one assents to on the basis of one’s own cognition.

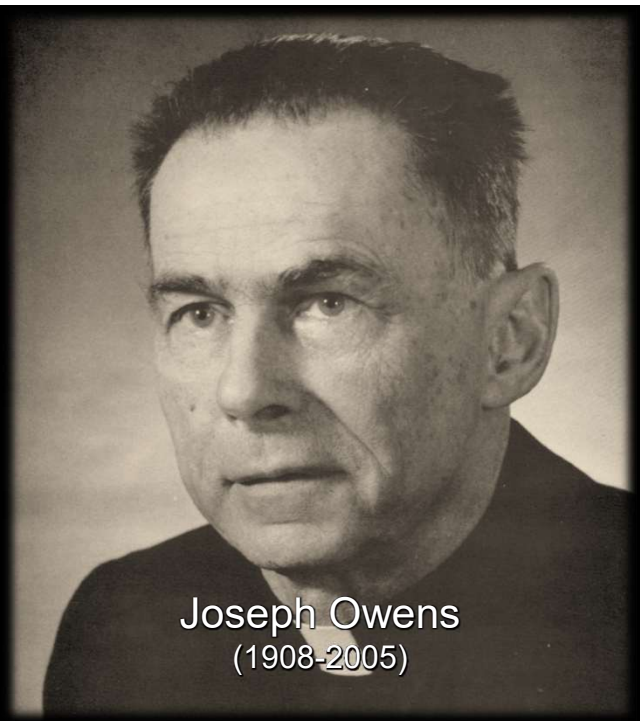
Owens goes on ...

“My Suppose-This and Suppose-That stories are intended to raise the problem of the relationship of our important beliefs to evidence (and counter-evidence) . Since the Enlightenment, there has been a demand to expose all of our beliefs to the searching criticism of reason. If a belief is unsupported by the evidence, it is irrational to believe it. It is the position of Reformed epistemology (likely the position that Calvin held) that belief in God, like belief in other persons, does not require the support of evidence or argument in order for it to be rational.”

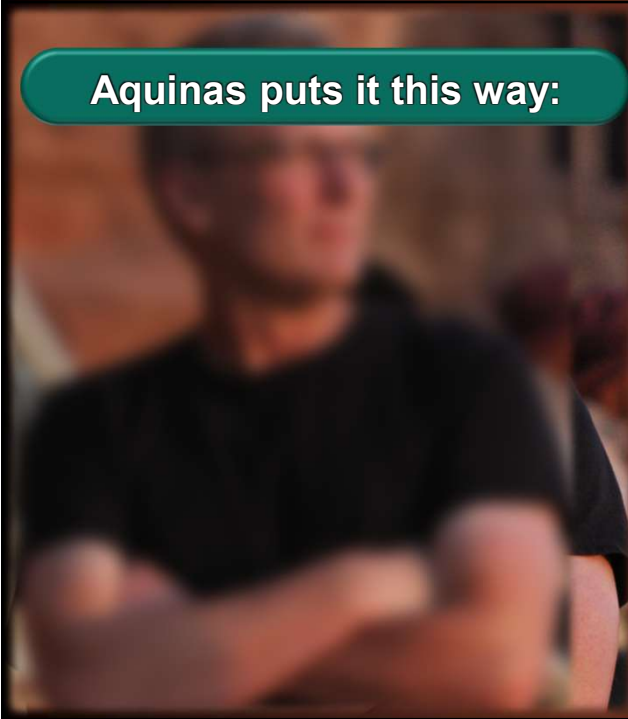
[Kelly James Clark, "Without Evidence or Argument: A Defense of Reformed Epistemology" (https://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/without_evidence_or_argument.pdf, accessed 11/17/25), p. 3. A shorter version was published as "Without Evidence or Argument" in Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau, eds. *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*, 15th ed., (Boston: Wadsworth, 2013), 138-142]

“The use of the term ‘belief’ for a tenet so acquired is common in ordinary language and has good sanction in philosophical tradition. However, since ‘belief’ in present philosophical parlance can mean any tenet whatsoever, a more precise word for the acceptance of a tenet through the mediation of someone else’s cognition might be ‘faith.’ ”

[Owens, *Cognition*, p. 280]



Joseph Owens
(1908-2005)



Aquinas puts it this way:

"My Suppose-This and Suppose-That stories are intended to raise the problem of the relationship of our important beliefs to evidence (and counter-evidence) . Since the Enlightenment, there has been a demand to expose all of our beliefs to the searching criticism of reason. If a belief is unsupported by the evidence, it is irrational to believe it. It is the position of Reformed epistemology (likely the position that Calvin held) that belief in God, like belief in other persons, does not require the support of evidence or argument in order for it to be rational."

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"One who believes [i.e., has faith] gives assent to things that are proposed to him by another person, and which he himself does not see."

[*Truth*, QXIV, Art. 9, reply, trans. James V. McGlynn (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 249-250]



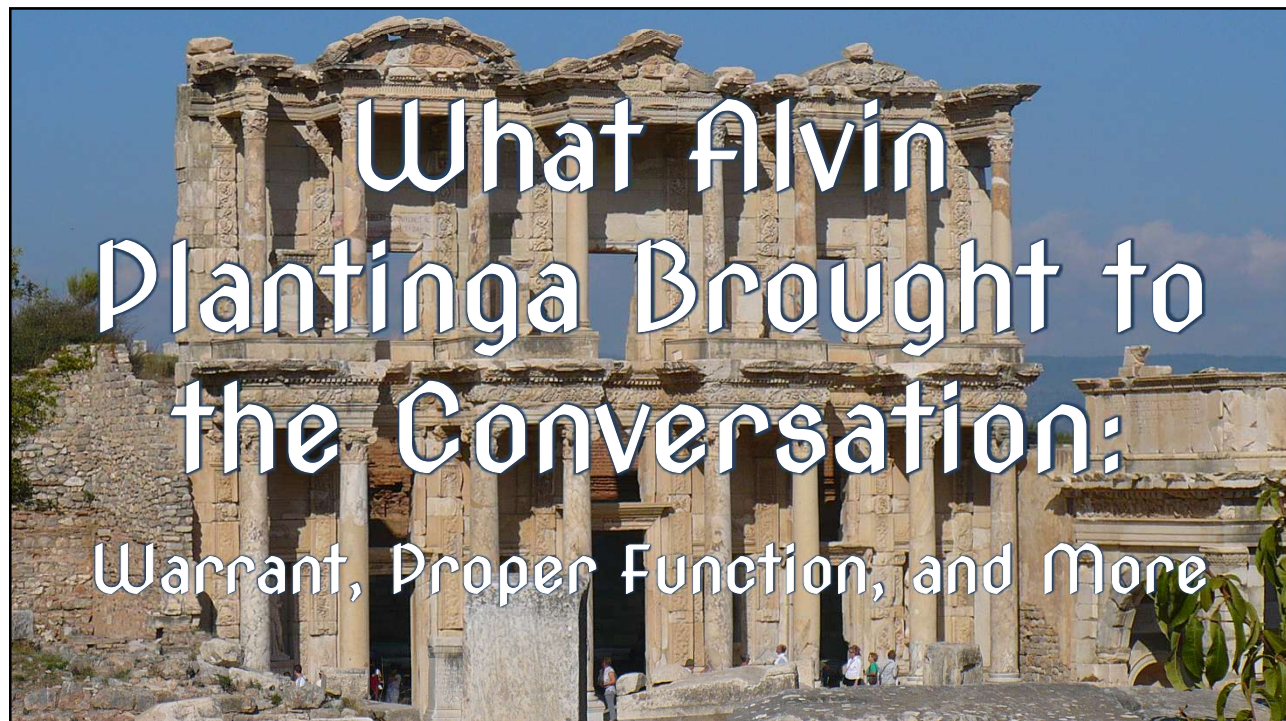
Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

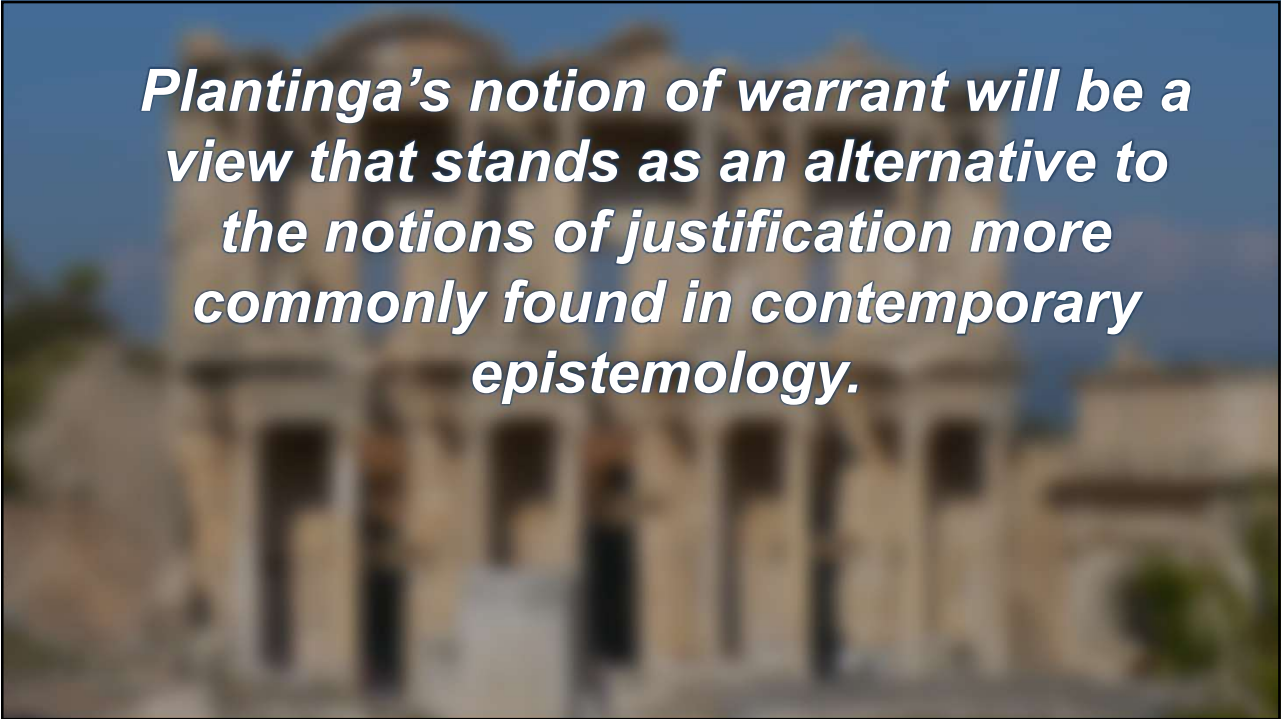
Reformed Epistemology makes the mistake of considering beliefs in relation to the presence or absence of evidence.

But if someone walks outside and sees a bright sun or feels the cold air, he immediately “knows” the sunshine and the cold air without there necessarily being any “beliefs” ABOUT the sunshine or cold air.

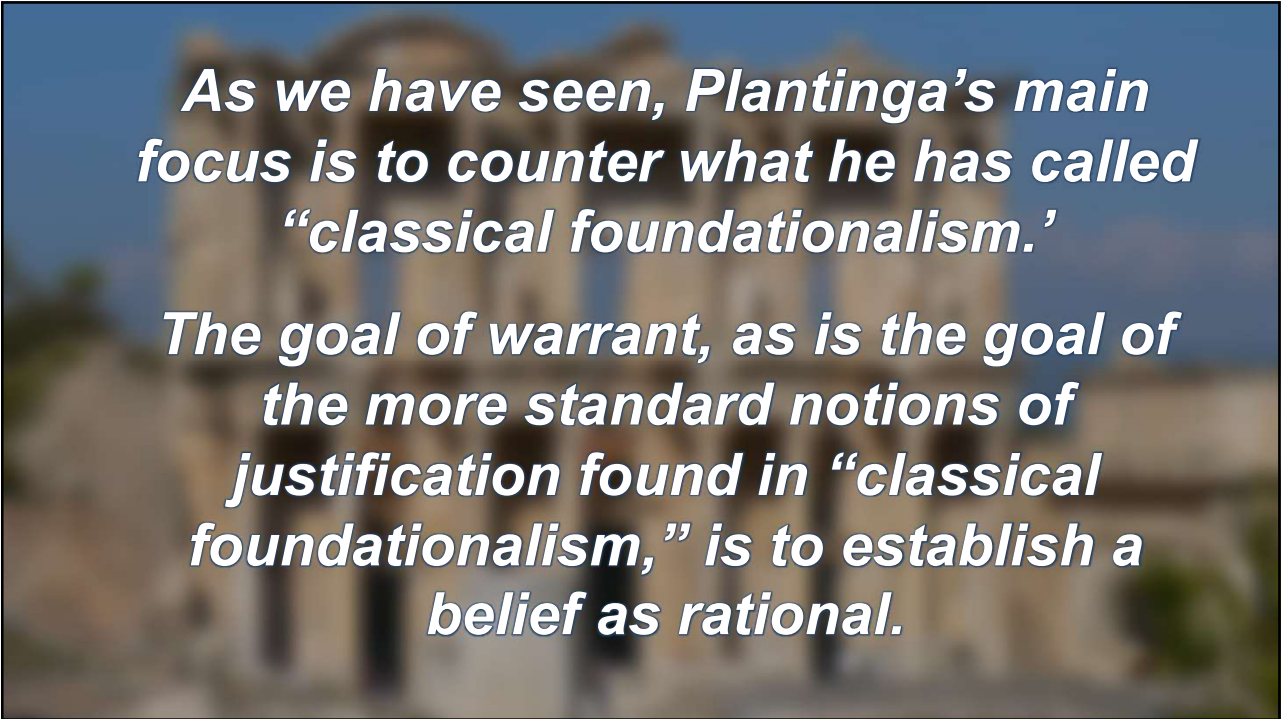
“My Suppose-This and Suppose-That stories are intended to raise the problem of the relationship of our important beliefs to evidence (and counter-evidence) . Since the Enlightenment, there has been a demand to expose all of our beliefs to the searching criticism of reason. If a belief is unsupported by the evidence, it is irrational to believe it. It is the position of Reformed epistemology (likely the position that Calvin held) that belief in God, like belief in other persons, does not require the support of evidence or argument in order for it to be rational.”

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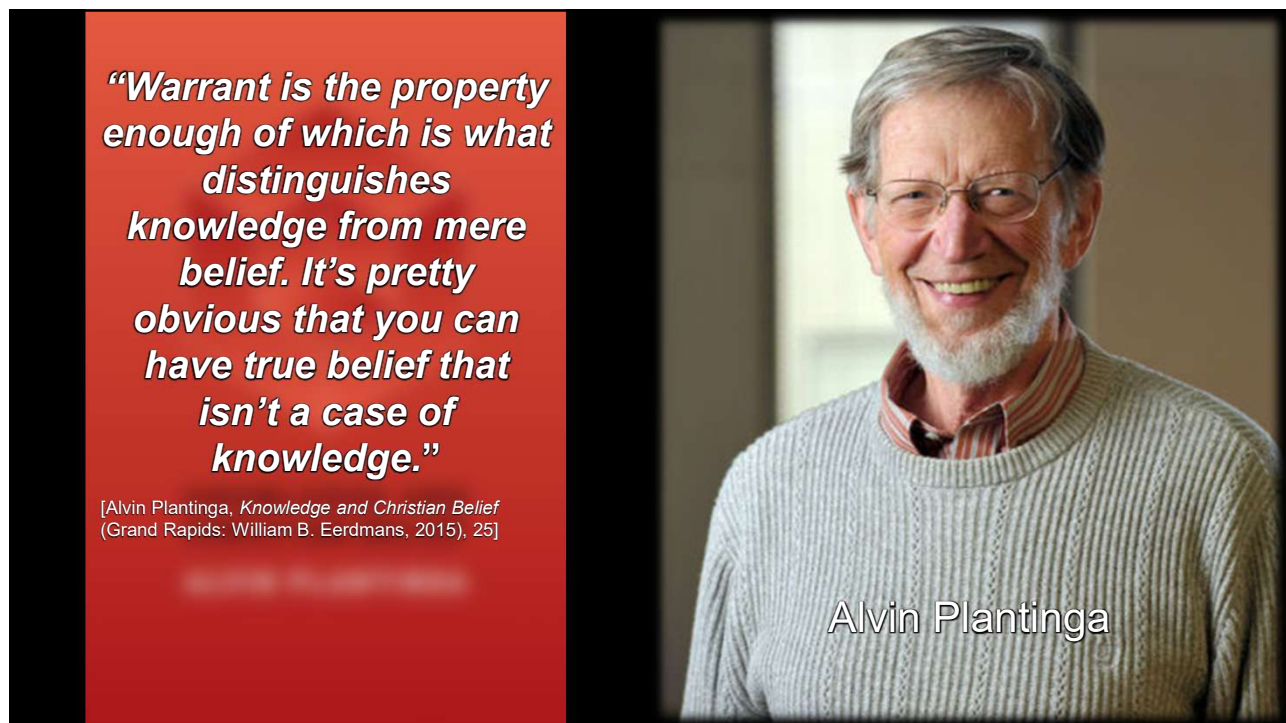
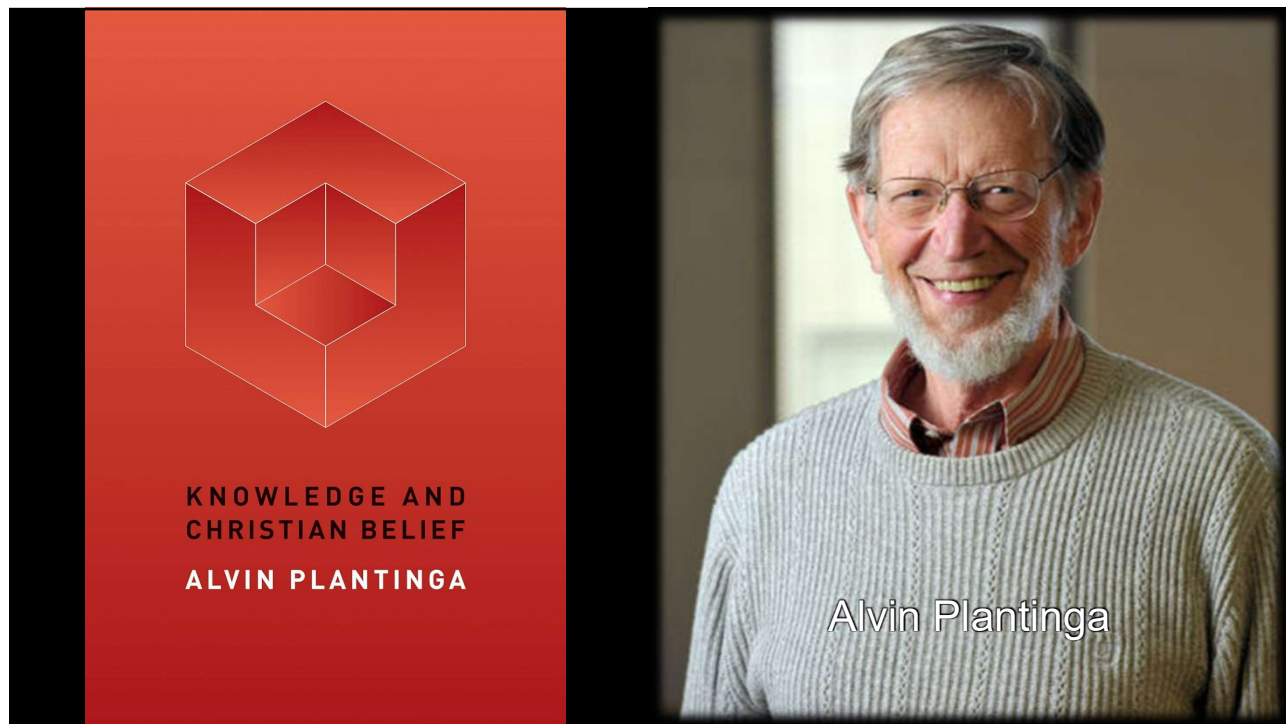


Plantinga's notion of warrant will be a view that stands as an alternative to the notions of justification more commonly found in contemporary epistemology.



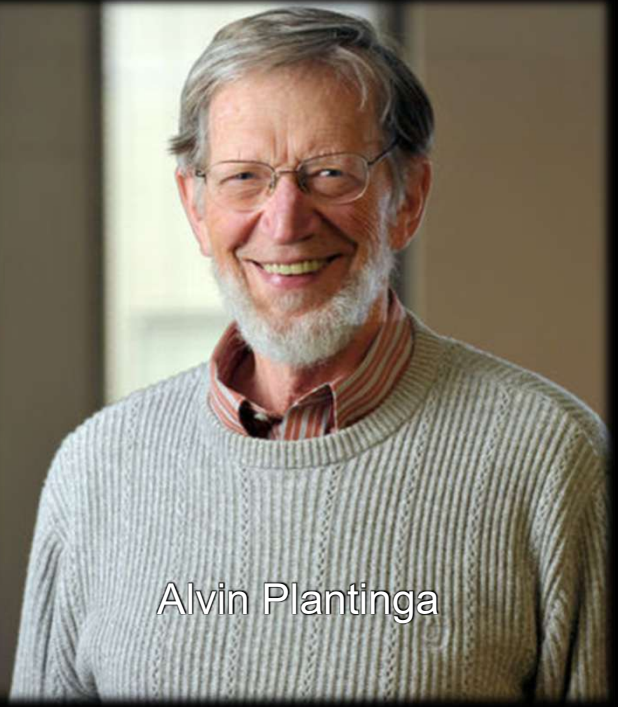
As we have seen, Plantinga's main focus is to counter what he has called "classical foundationalism."

The goal of warrant, as is the goal of the more standard notions of justification found in "classical foundationalism," is to establish a belief as rational.



“My suggestion begins with the idea that a belief has warrant only if it is produced by cognitive faculties that are functioning properly, subject to no disorder or dysfunction. The notion of proper function is fundamental to our central ways of thinking about knowledge.”

[Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 26, emphasis on original]



Alvin Plantinga

“Cognitive faculties ... will achieve their purpose only if functioning in an environment much like the one for which they were designed (by God or evolution).”

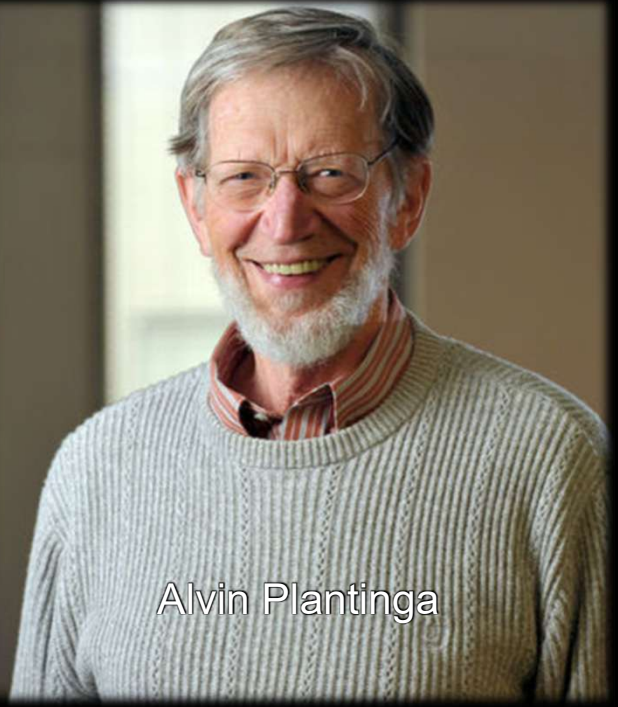
[Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 27]



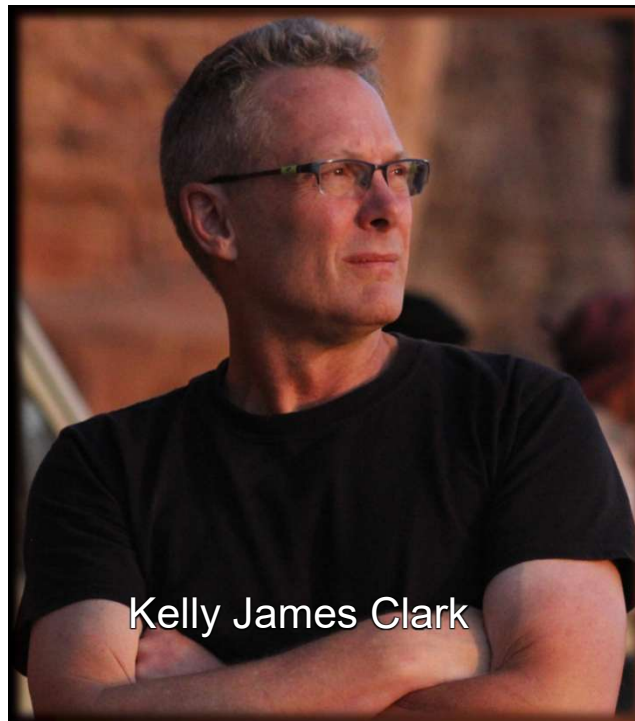
Alvin Plantinga

“But that is not enough. It is clearly possible that a belief be produced by cognitive faculties that are functioning properly in an environment for which they were designed, but nonetheless lack warrant. ... We must add that the belief in question is produced by cognitive faculties whose purpose is that of producing true belief.”

[Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 27-27, emphasis in original]



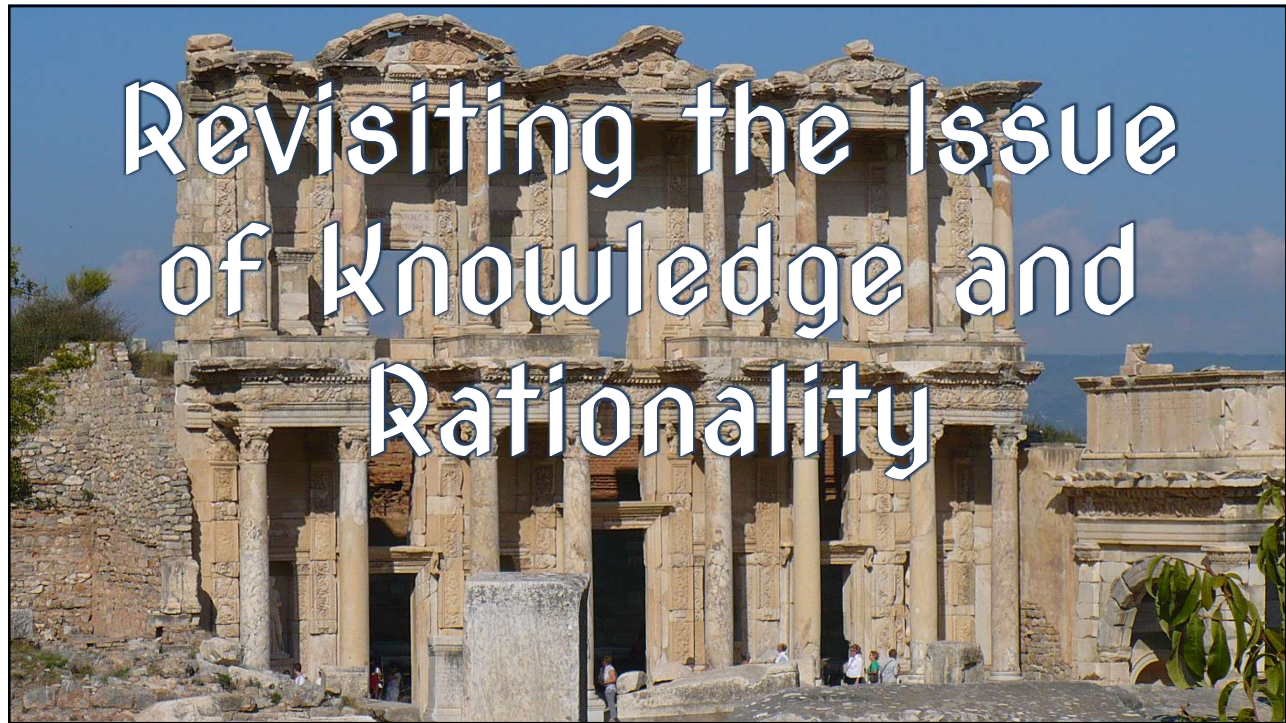
Alvin Plantinga



Kelly James Clark

“Note briefly the portions of Plantinga’s definition which are not within one’s immediate or direct purview -- whether or not one’s faculties are functioning properly, whether or not one’s faculties are designed by God, whether or not one’s faculties are designed for the production of true beliefs, whether or not one is using one’s faculties in the environment intended for their use We cannot acquire warrant, according to this theory, simply by attending to our beliefs. According to Plantinga, warranted belief or knowledge is not entirely up to us. It depends crucially upon whether or not conditions neither under our direct rational purview nor our conscious control are satisfied. ... Warrant, to be more precise, is not solely due to efforts on our part. ”

[Kelly James Clark, “Without Evidence or Argument,” 15]



∞ knowledge as acquaintance ∞
I know Bob.

∞ knowledge as competence or skill ∞
I know German.

∞ knowledge as propositional ∞
I know that George Washington was the first President of the United States.

~ knowledge as acquaintance ~

I know Bob.

~ knowledge as competence or skill ~

I know German.

~ knowledge as propositional ~

I know that George Washington was the first President of the United States.

What is missing?

What is missing is a realist notion of knowledge of “things” in reality.

These options here rule out in advance any grounding of knowledge (epistemology) in metaphysics.

As such, they disallow defining knowledge as the formal identity of knower and known.

~ knowledge as acquaintance ~

I know Bob.

~ knowledge as competence or skill ~

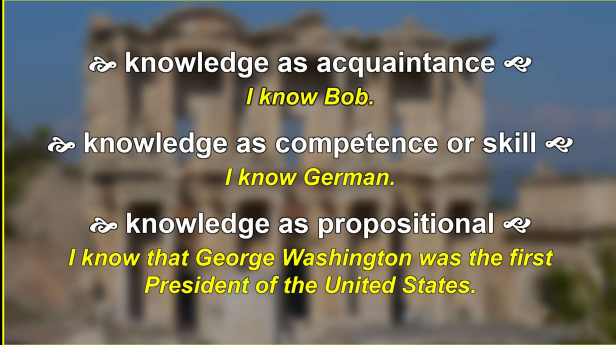
I know German.

~ knowledge as propositional ~

I know that George Washington was the first President of the United States.

What is missing?

Instead, taking knowledge as propositional to be the option that philosophy concerns itself with, philosophers erroneously seek to account for knowledge entirely within the categories of knowledge, which is to say, they seek to account for epistemology entirely with the categories of epistemology itself.



~ knowledge as acquaintance ~

I know Bob.

~ knowledge as competence or skill ~

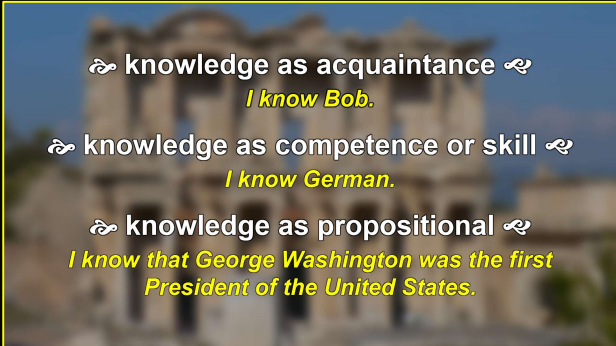
I know German.

~ knowledge as propositional ~

I know that George Washington was the first President of the United States.

What is missing?

This amounts to accounting for knowledge without reference to a reality external to the knowledge itself or external to the knower who has such knowledge.



~ knowledge as acquaintance ~

I know Bob.

~ knowledge as competence or skill ~

I know German.

~ knowledge as propositional ~

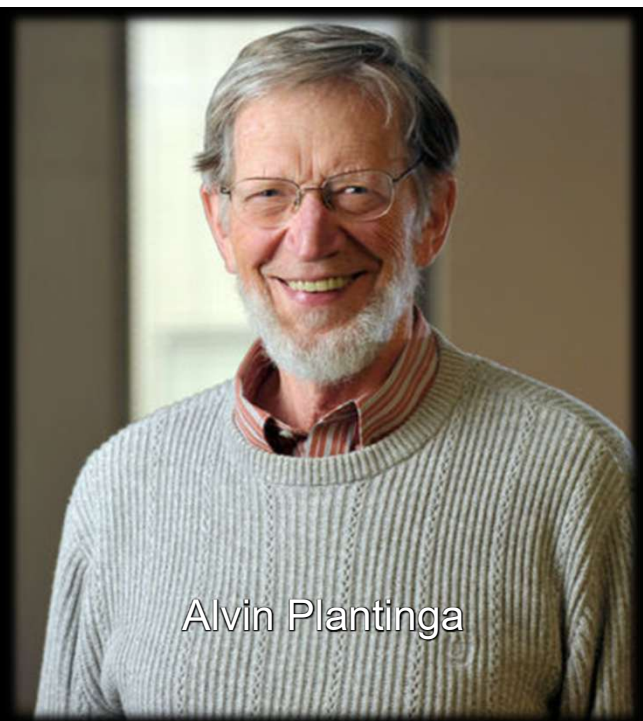
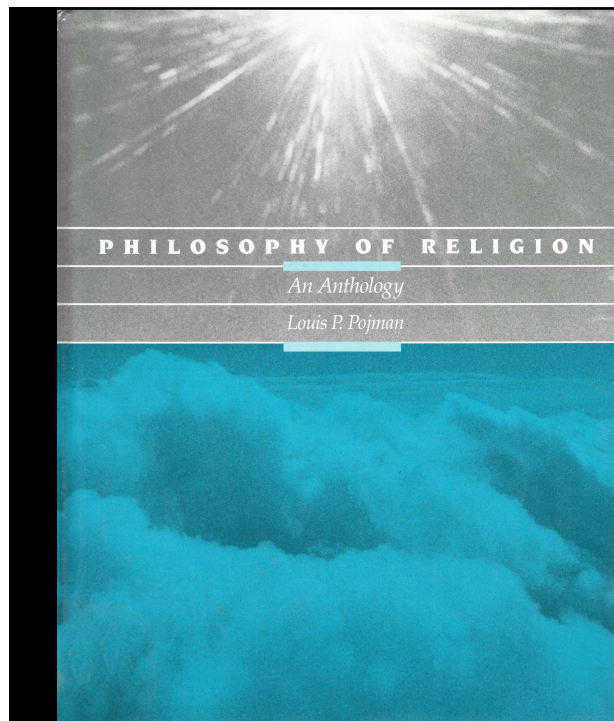
I know that George Washington was the first President of the United States.

In Summary

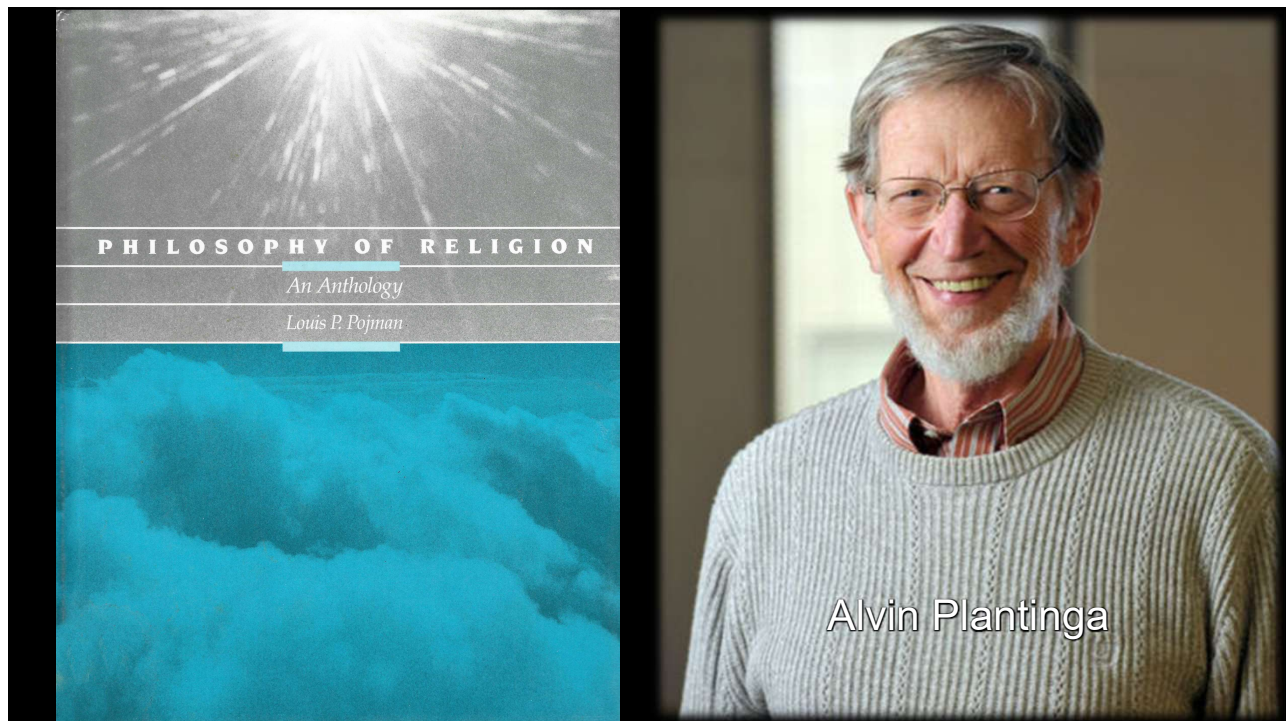
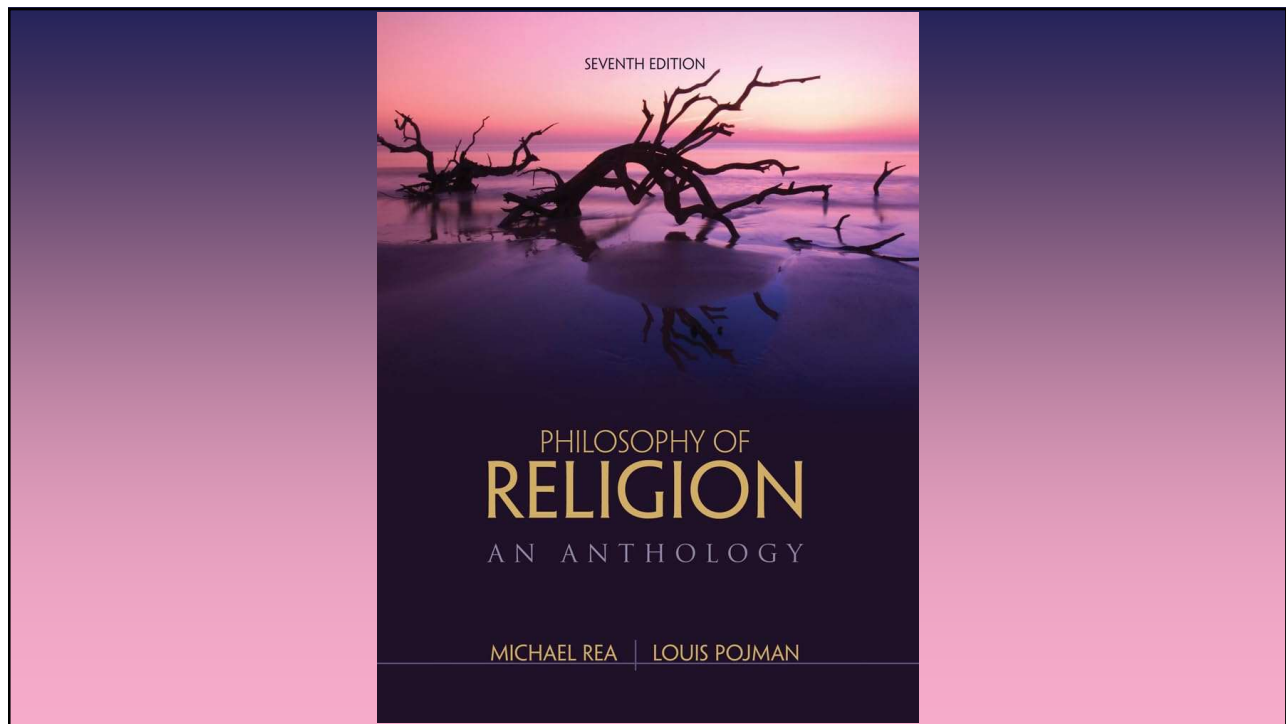
These options rule out in advance any grounding of epistemology in metaphysics.

As such, they disallow defining knowledge as the formal identity of knower and known.

Classical Empiricism vs. Classical Foundationalism

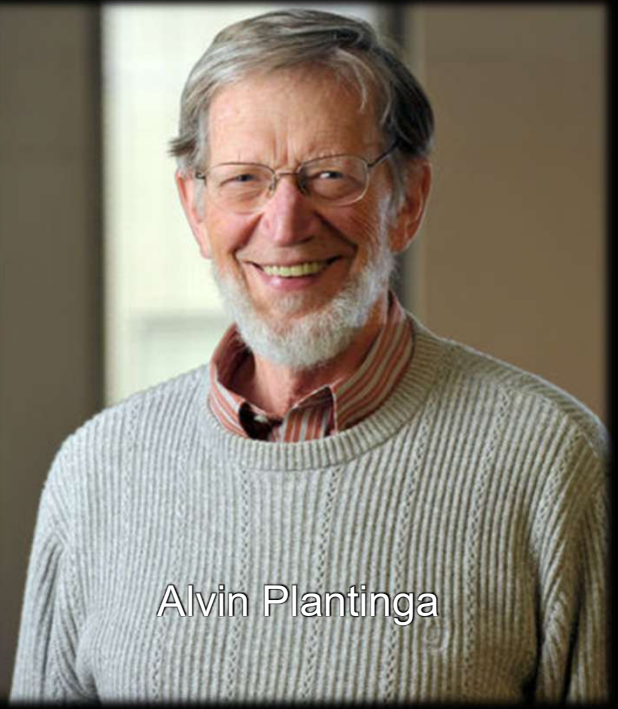


Alvin Plantinga



"[Both] Aquinas and the evidentialist objector [to theism] concur in holding that belief in God is rationally acceptable only if there is evidence for it. ...

We get a better understanding ... if we see them as accepting some version of **classical foundationalism**. ...



Alvin Plantinga

"According to the foundationalist some propositions are properly basic and some are not; those that are not are rationally accepted only on the basis of *evidence*, where the evidence must trace back, *ultimately*, to what is properly basic."

[Alvin Plantinga, "Religious Belief without Evidence," in Louis P. Pojman *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1987), 457]



Alvin Plantinga

"According to the foundationalist some propositions are properly basic and some are not; those that are not are rationally accepted only on the basis of *evidence*, where the evidence must trace back, *ultimately*, to what *is* properly basic."

[Alvin Plantinga, "Religious Belief without Evidence," in Louis P. Pojman *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1987), 457]

Given what we have seen so far, it is no wonder that Plantinga will opt out of what he calls "classical foundationalism" for a more nuanced epistemology which he calls "warrant."

"According to the foundationalist some propositions are properly basic and some are not; those that are not are rationally accepted only on the basis of *evidence*, where the evidence must trace back, *ultimately*, to what *is* properly basic."

[Alvin Plantinga, "Religious Belief without Evidence," in Louis P. Pojman *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1987), 457]

His model for rationality does not take into consideration the differences between the "classical foundationalism" Plantinga and others ascribe to Aquinas and Aquinas's own accounting of knowledge.

"According to the foundationalist some propositions are properly basic and some are not; those that are not are rationally accepted only on the basis of *evidence*, where the evidence must trace back, ***ultimately, to what is properly basic.***"

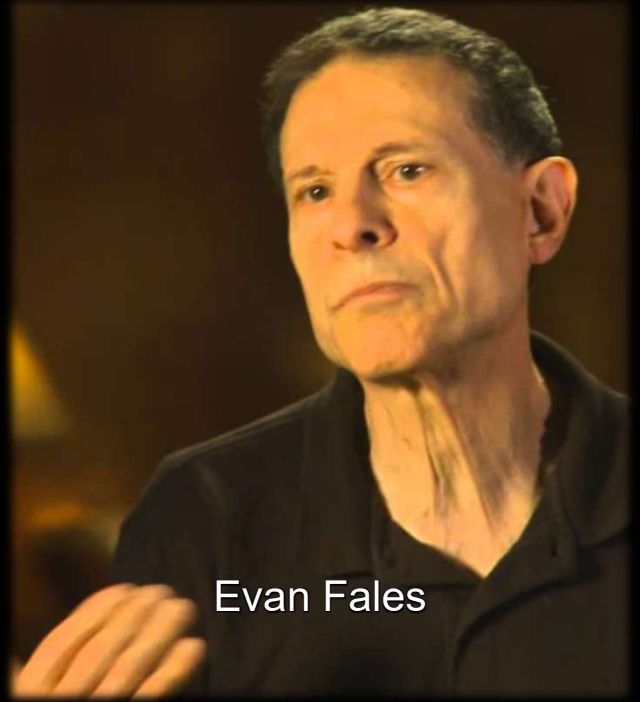
[Alvin Plantinga, "Religious Belief without Evidence," in Louis P. Pojman *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1987), 457]

Classical realism does not trace evidence "back ultimately to what is properly basic."

Instead, Aquinas will trace human knowledge back to sensible reality the knowledge of which is completed in the intellect.

*The
Cambridge Companion
to*
ATHEISM

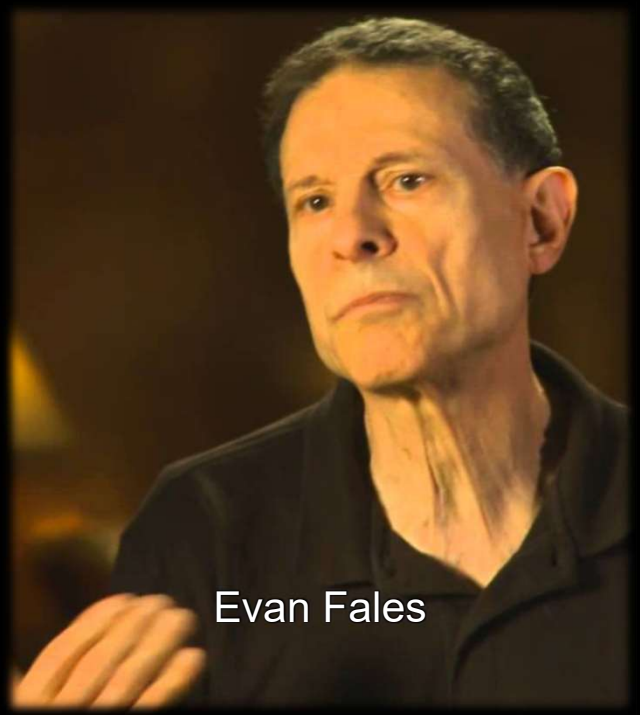
EDITED BY
MICHAEL MARTIN



Evan Fales

"In **classical foundationalism**, knowledge begins with propositions about subjective experience. Only these propositions, and propositions they support, are justifiably believed; only to these do we have cognitive **access**."

[Evan Fales, "Naturalism and Physicalism," in *Cambridge Companion*, p. 125]



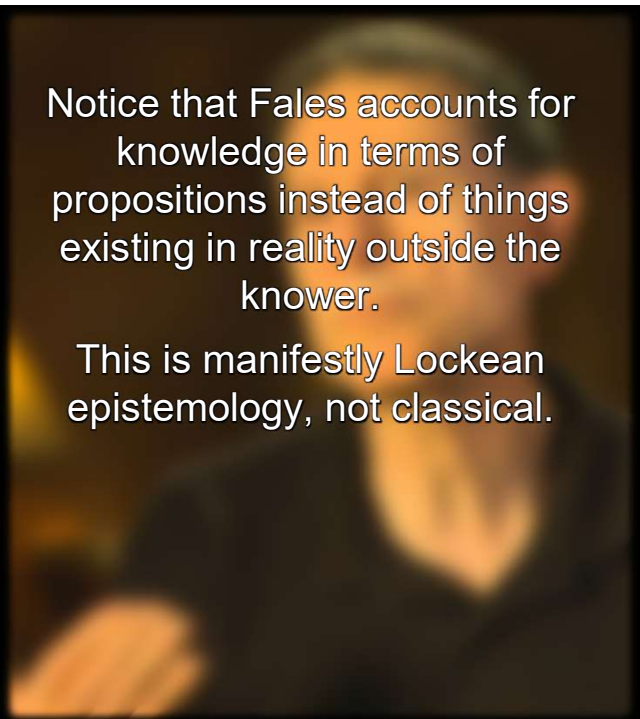
Evan Fales

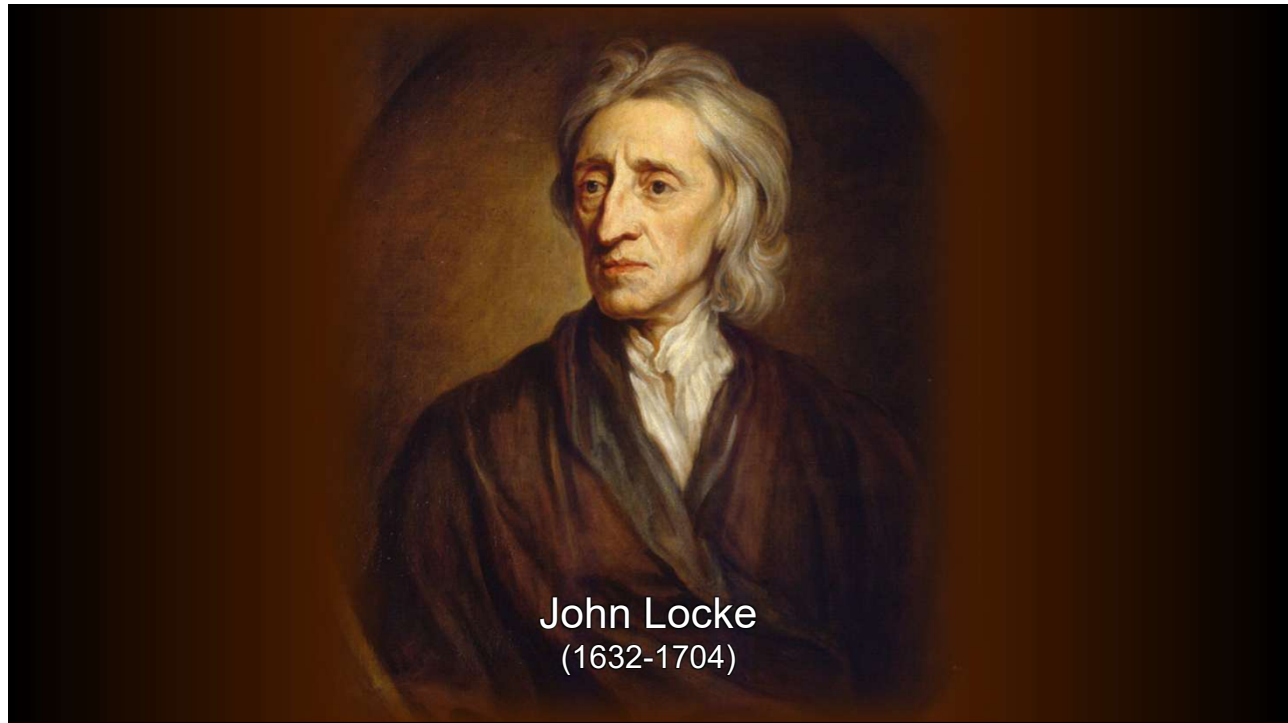
"In **classical foundationalism**, knowledge begins with propositions about subjective experience. Only these propositions, and propositions they support, are justifiably believed; only to these do we have cognitive **access**."

[Evan Fales, "Naturalism and Physicalism," in *Cambridge Companion*, p. 125]

Notice that Fales accounts for knowledge in terms of propositions instead of things existing in reality outside the knower.

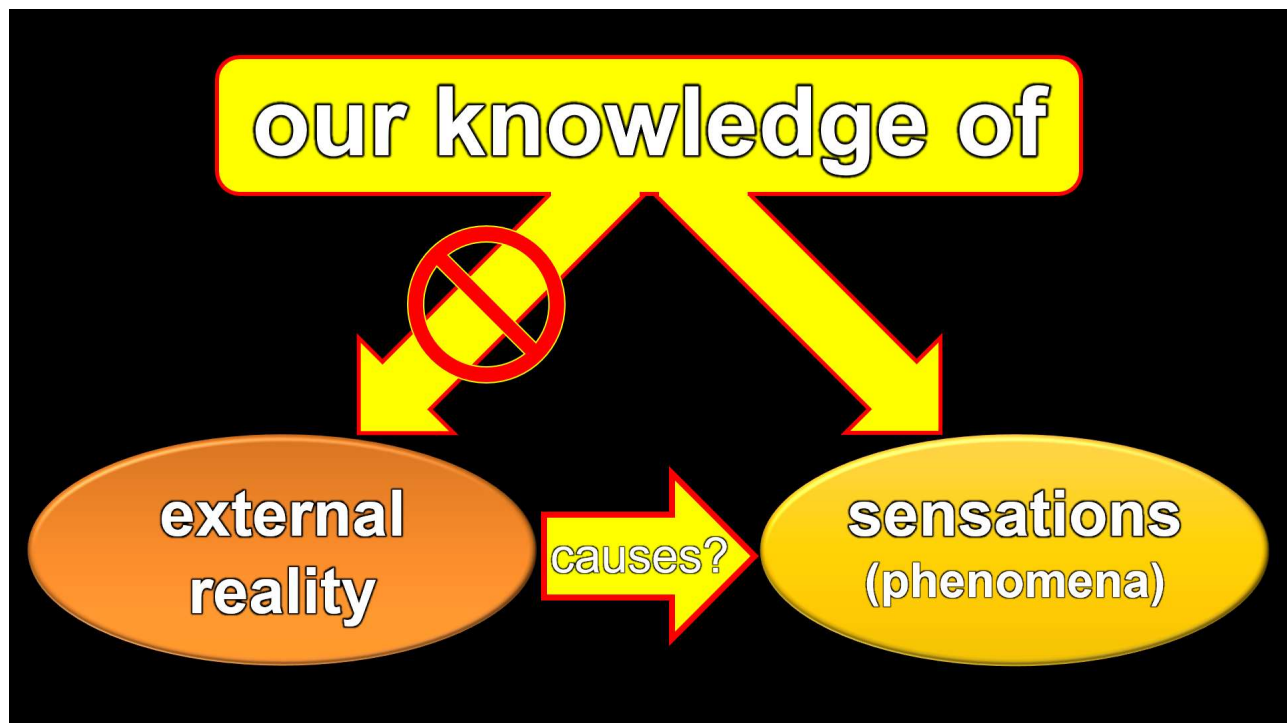
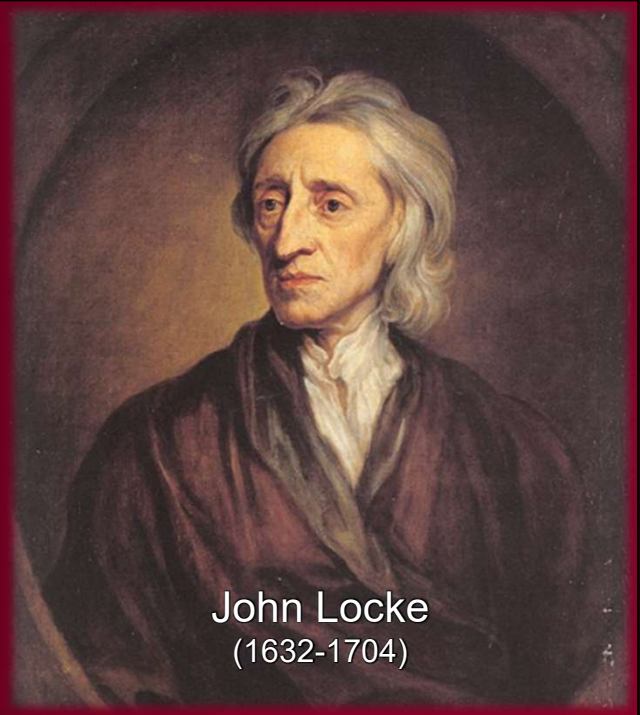
This is manifestly Lockean epistemology, not classical.



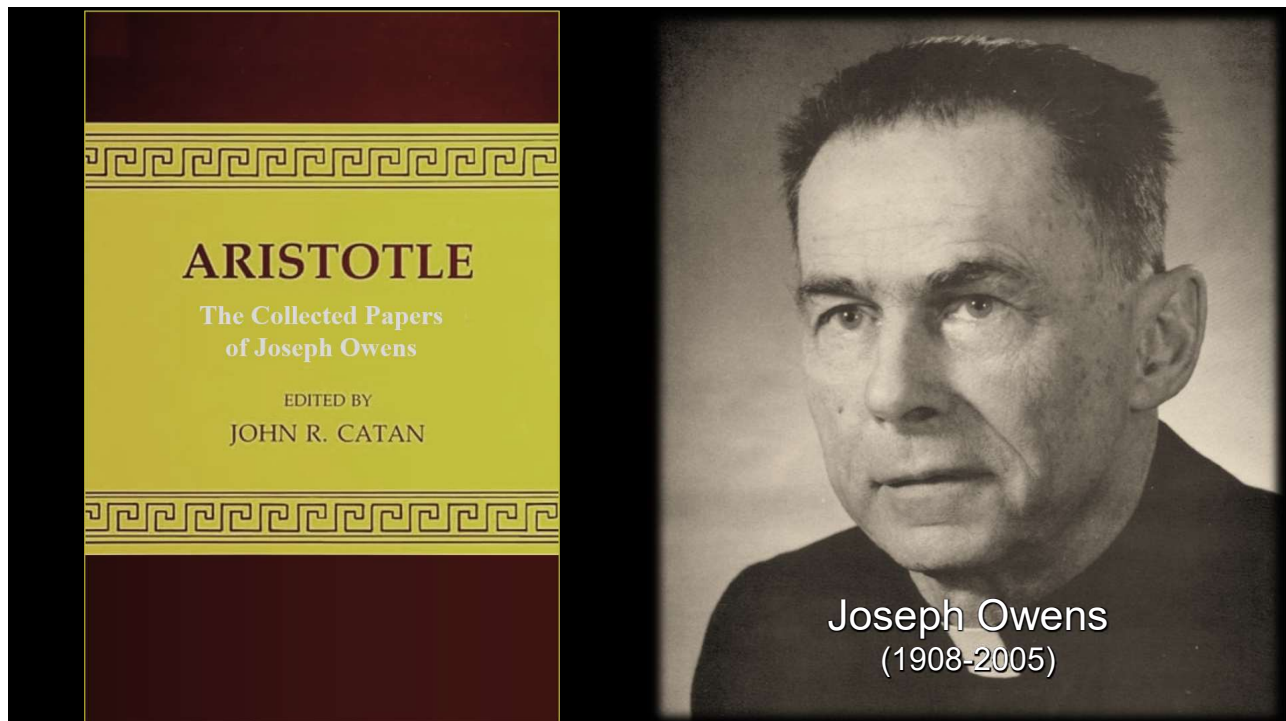


"Since the Mind, in all its Thought and Reasonings, hath **no other immediate Object** but its own Ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate, it is evident, that **our Knowledge is only conversant about them**. Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas. In this alone it consists."

[An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, IV, I, 1, §1-§2, ed. Peter H. Niddich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 525]

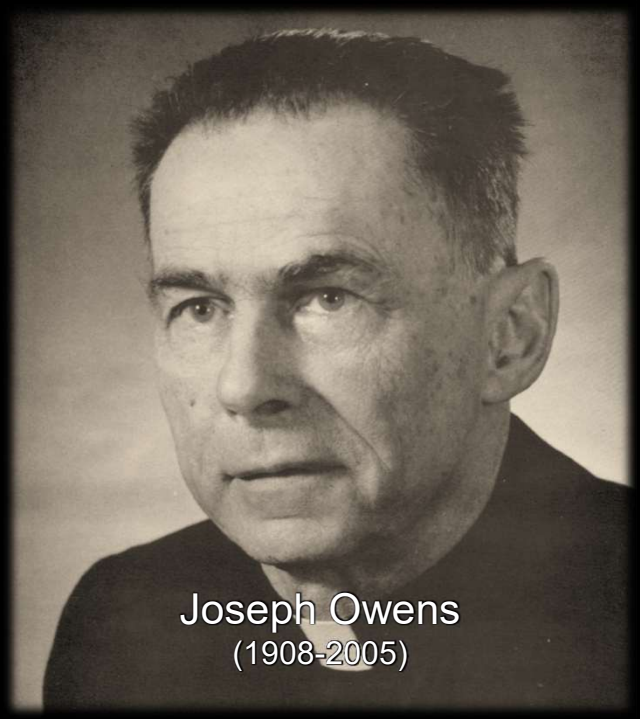




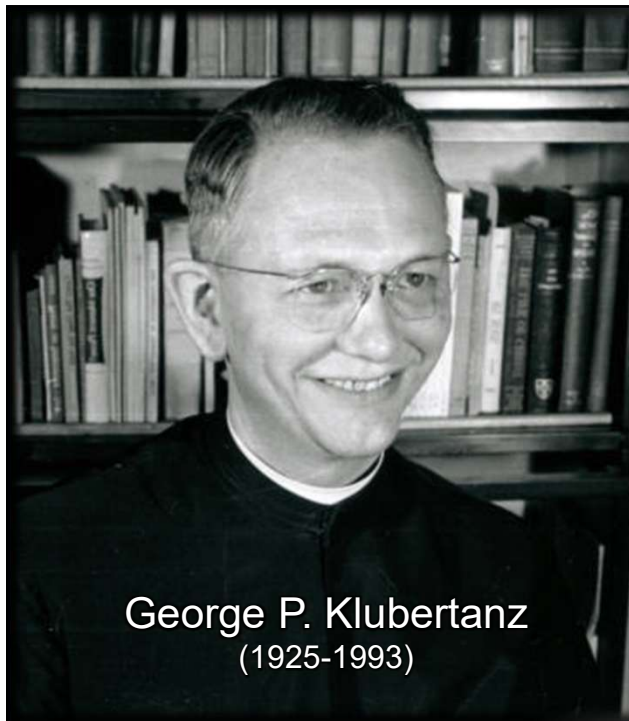


"In Aristotle the role of the received forms as real instruments is to determine the cognitive agent to a particular type of activity, a type in which the agent becomes and is cognitively the thing from which the form was received. The reception of the form is not immediately observable. It is only inferred through philosophical reasoning. What is immediately perceived or known is the thing itself."

["Aristotle—Cognition a Way of Being," in John R. Catan, ed. *Aristotle: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981): 78]



Joseph Owens
(1908-2005)



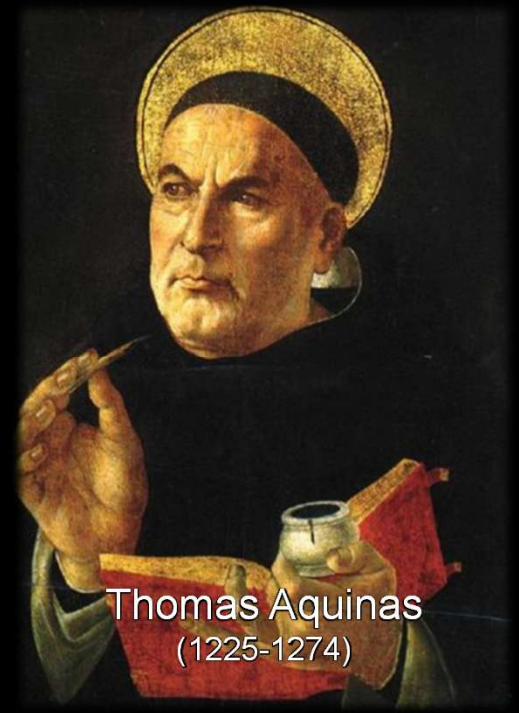
George P. Klubertanz
(1925-1993)

"Briefly, to know another is in some sense to be (and thus to have become) another, to take on the form of another. To be another, to possess another's form—though not a material, physical being and possession—is nevertheless real, for we actually have knowledge of various things."

[George P. Klubertanz, *The Philosophy of Human Nature* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953), 68.]

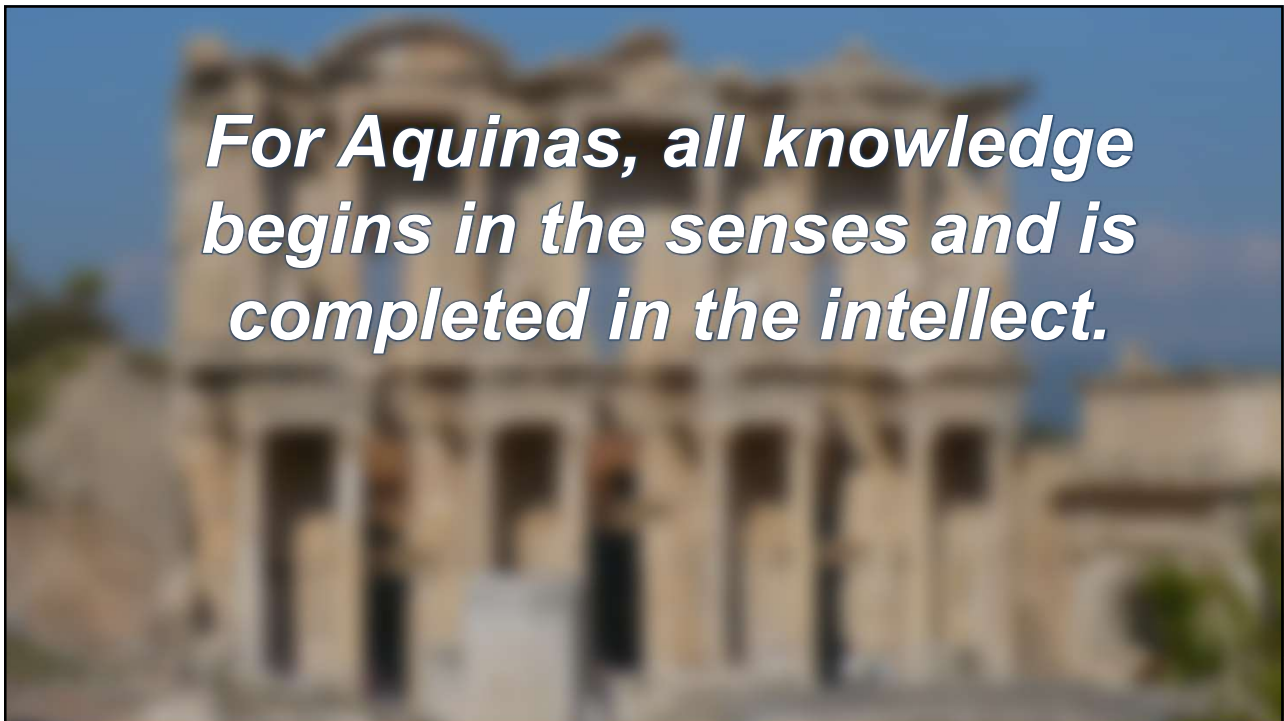
"Our soul, as long as we live in this life, has its being in corporeal matter; hence naturally it knows only what has a form in matter, or what can be known by such a form."

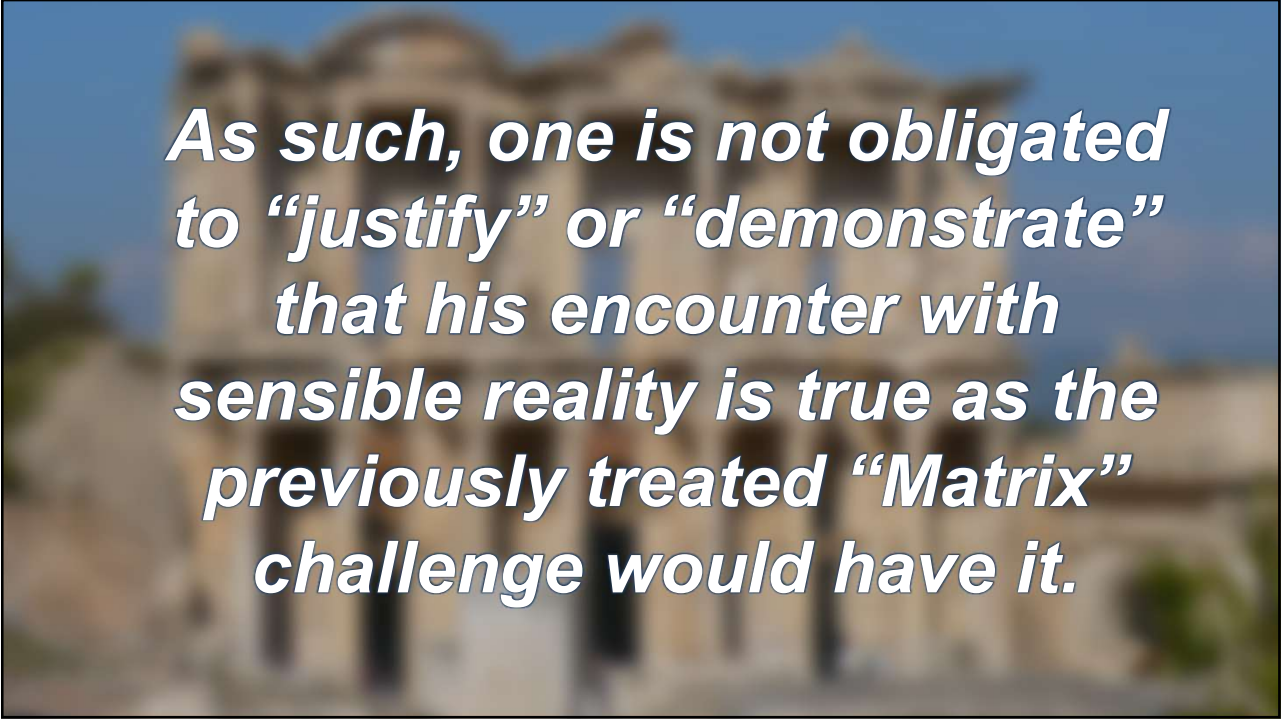
[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 12, art. 11, trans. Father of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics), p. 57]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

For Aquinas, all knowledge begins in the senses and is completed in the intellect.

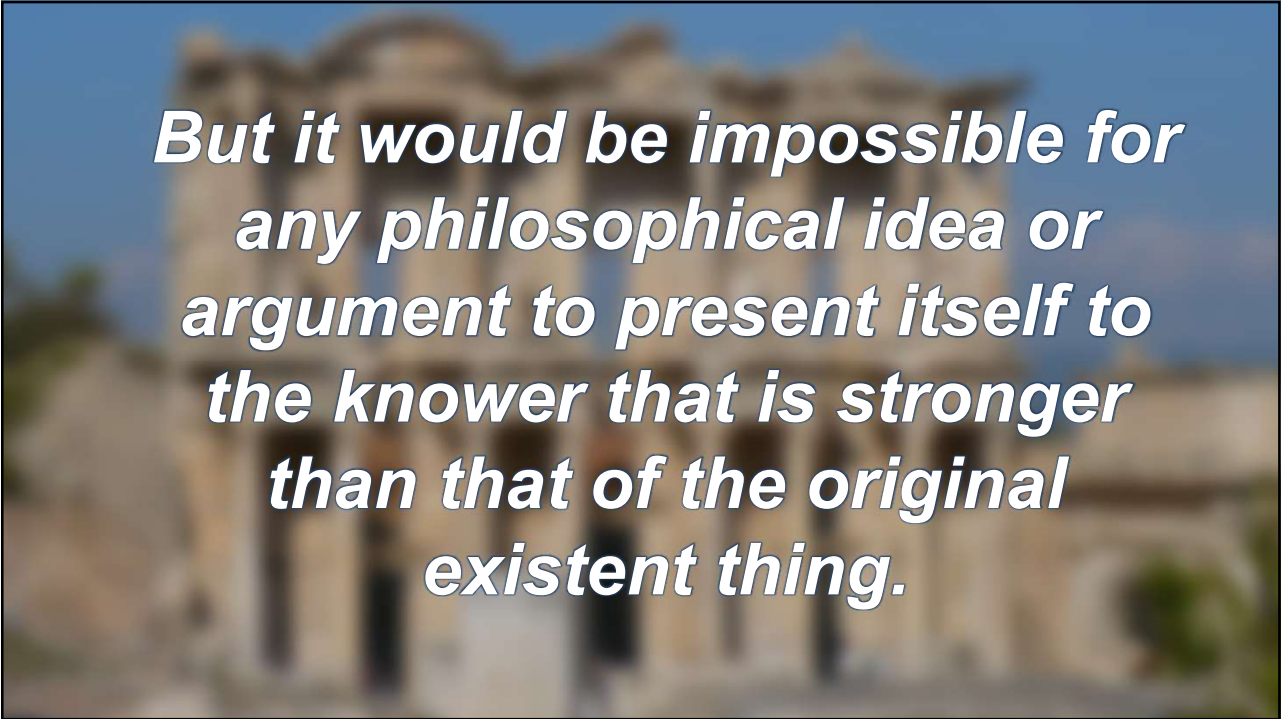




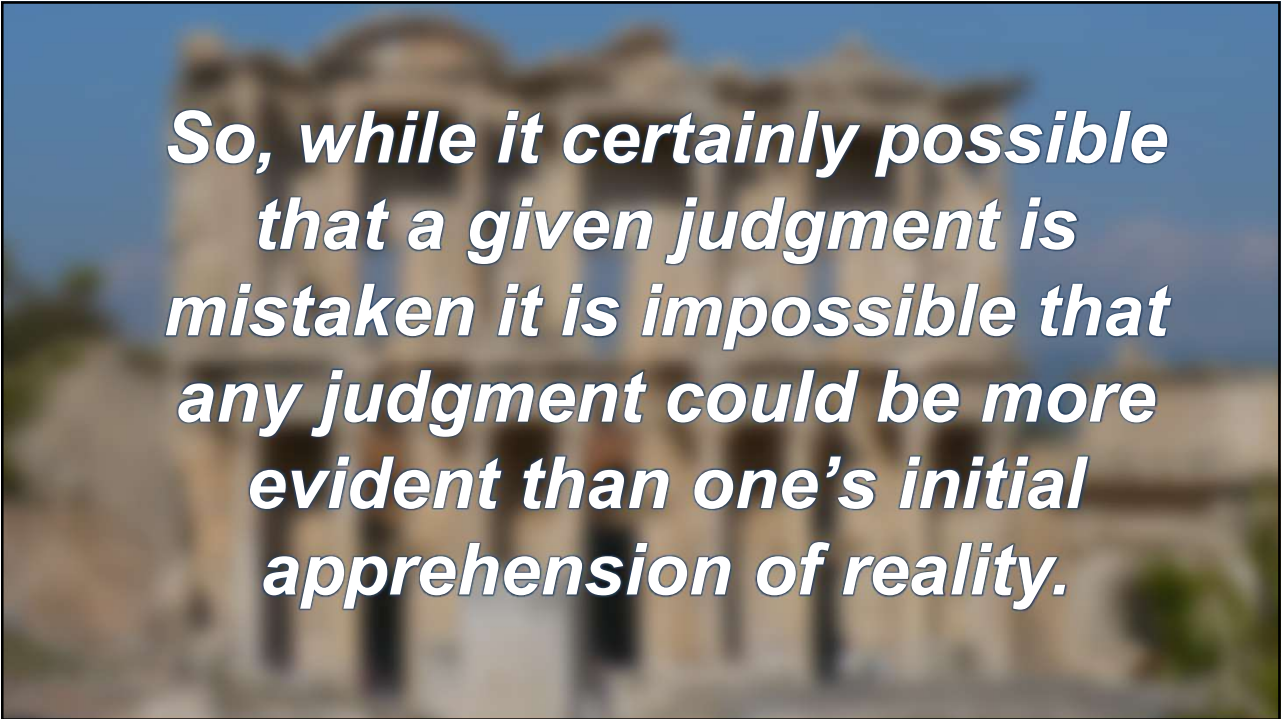
As such, one is not obligated to “justify” or “demonstrate” that his encounter with sensible reality is true as the previously treated “Matrix” challenge would have it.



An obligation might arise from the judgments made on the basis of that simple (initial) apprehension.



*But it would be impossible for
any philosophical idea or
argument to present itself to
the knower that is stronger
than that of the original
existent thing.*



*So, while it certainly possible
that a given judgment is
mistaken it is impossible that
any judgment could be more
evident than one's initial
apprehension of reality.*

