

The term 'metaphysics' comes from the Greek words:

meta (μετά): beyond, after

phusis (φύσις): origin, the course of nature (i.e., the physical world), kind, nature

It means "after the physics" or "beyond the physical."

Aristotle's work *Metaphysics* (lit., *ta meta to phusika* (τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά)) gave the name to the subject matter contained in the treatise:

- a. Either because this treatise came after his treatise titled *Physics*
- b. Or because the subject matter with which this treatise deals has to do with things that are beyond the physical

Note that just because something is characterized as "beyond the physical," does not mean that it is an immaterial substance. 'Metaphysical' is not the same as 'spiritual'.

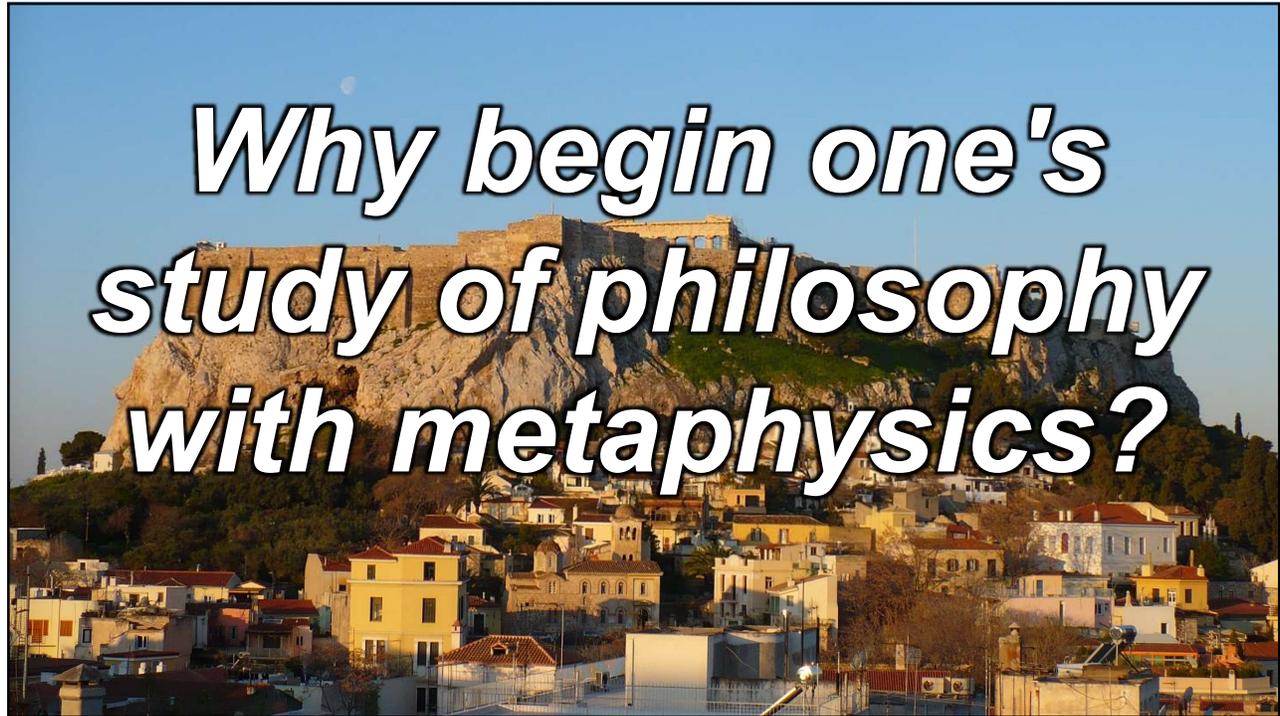
the physical

beyond

Generally, 'metaphysical' would refer to a particular aspect or "constituent" of a thing, whether that thing is a sensible object or an immaterial object (like an angel).

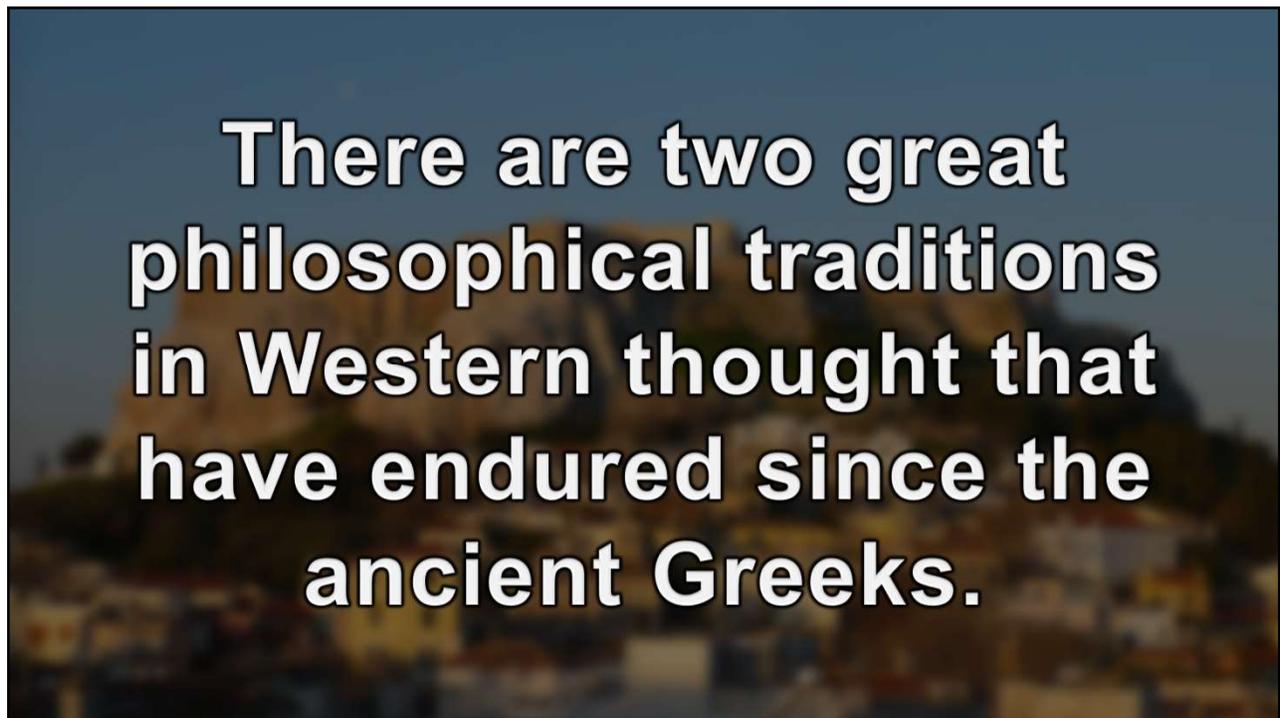
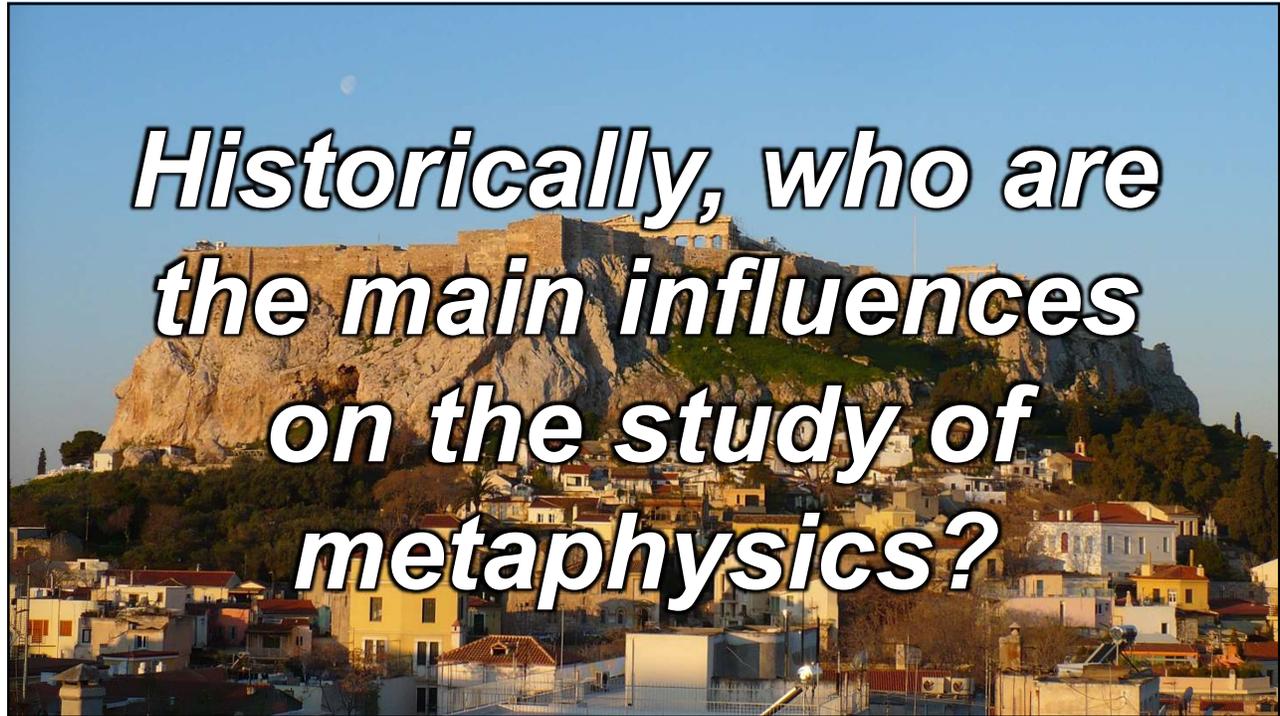
the physical

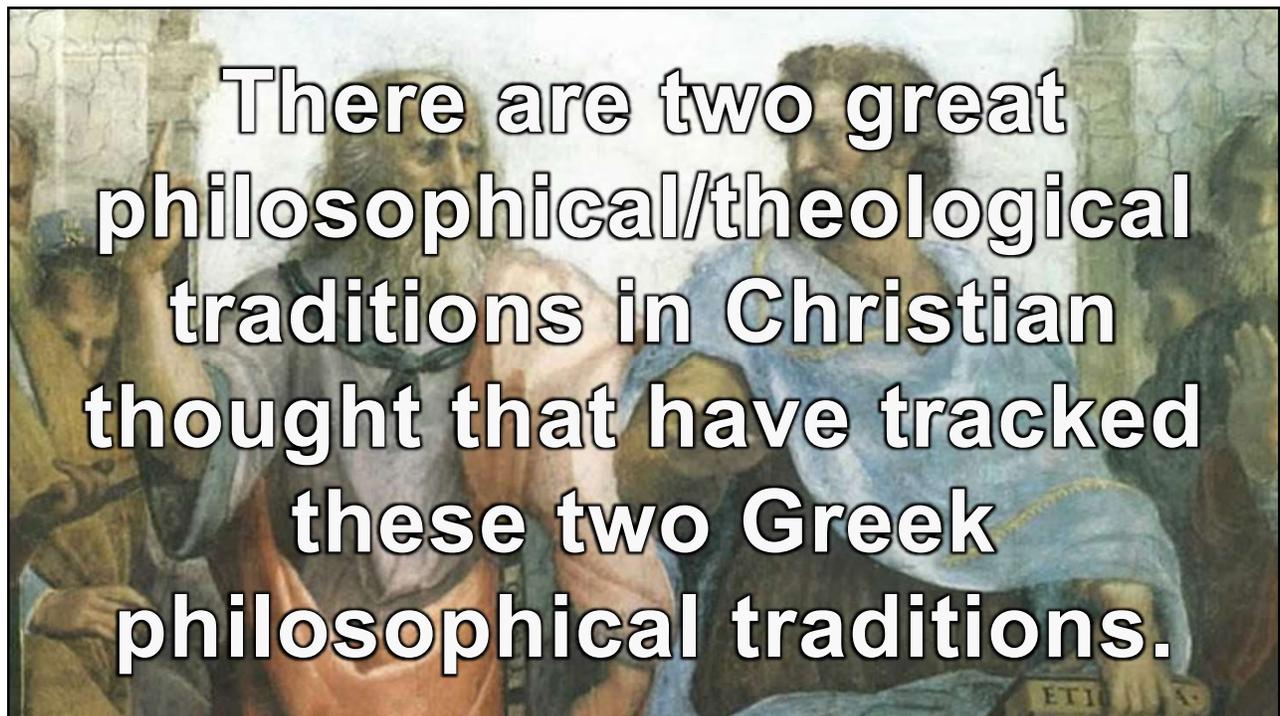
beyond



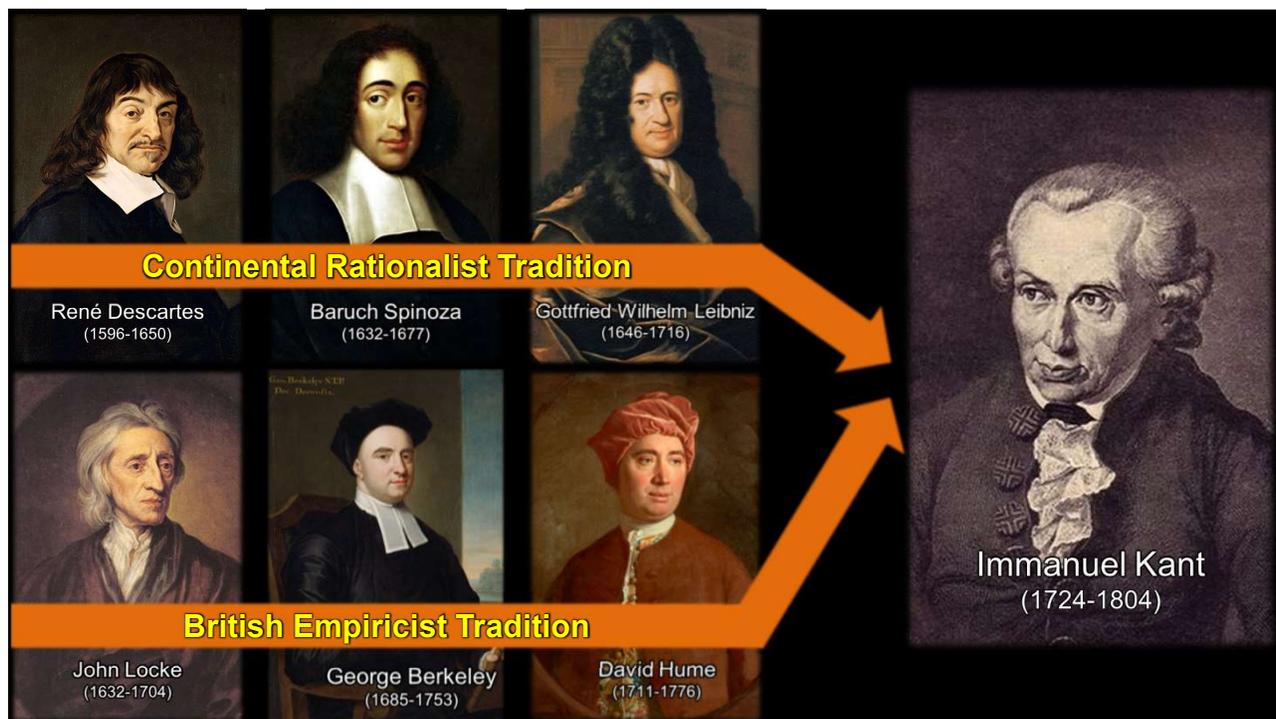
Historical reason: the first philosophers dealt with metaphysical issues

Philosophical reason: according to some, issues of reality (being) are more fundamental than issues of knowing









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



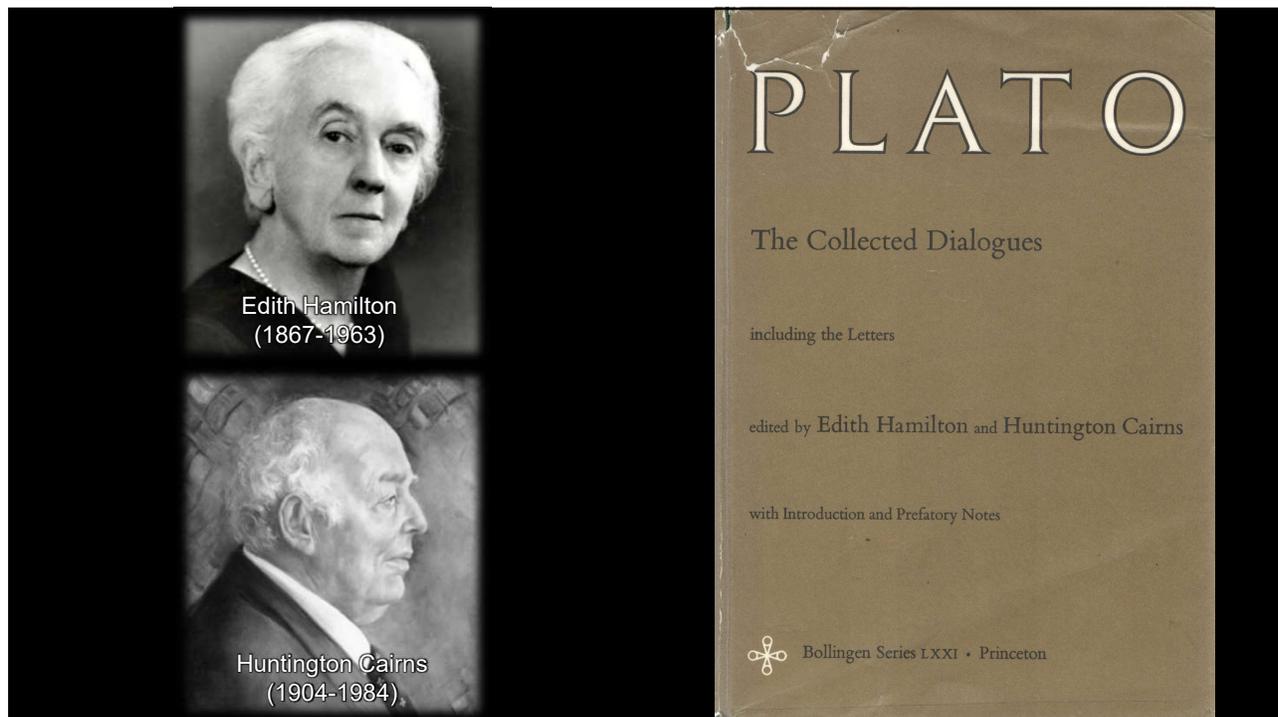
Plato is significant and stands out first among philosophers in the flow of Western philosophical thought because in him we have the first full-fledged philosophical system.

Reality
Knowledge
Ethics
Art
Politics



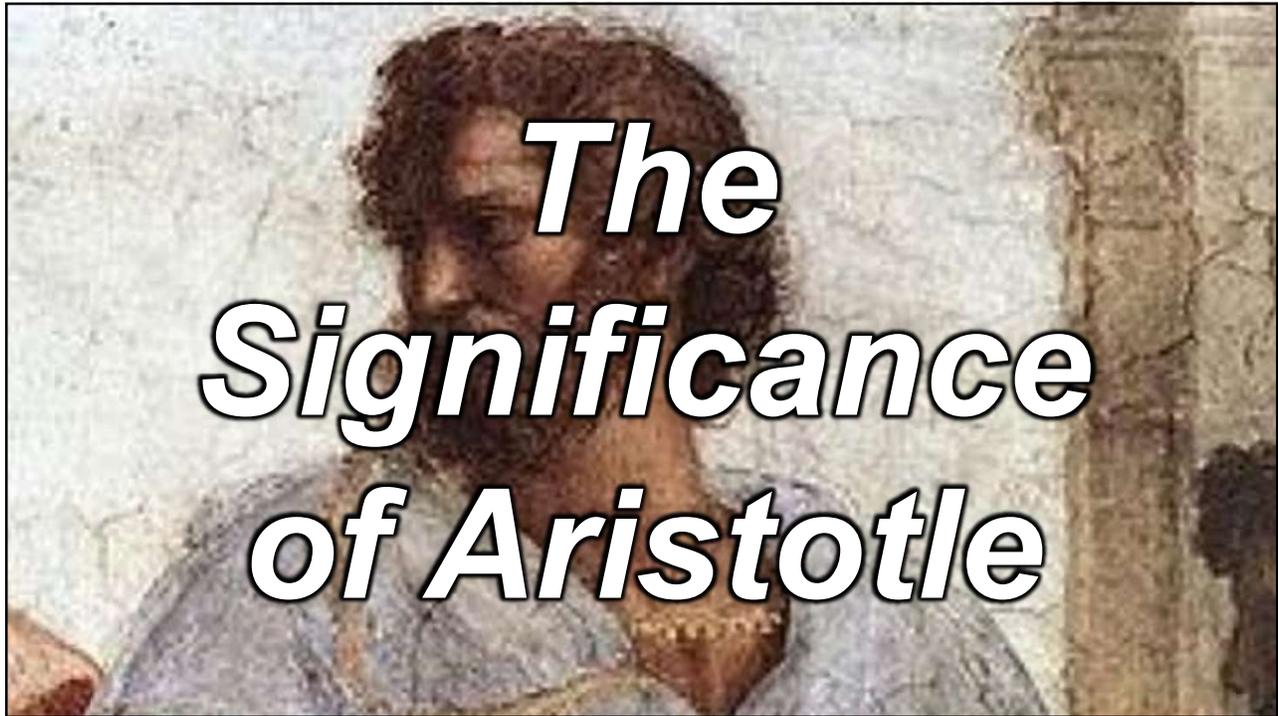
Plato wrote in "dialogues" written in the style of interaction between the various speakers (called interlocutors).

His earlier dialogues have Socrates as the main interlocutor.



One of Plato's concerns was trying to find the essence of things.

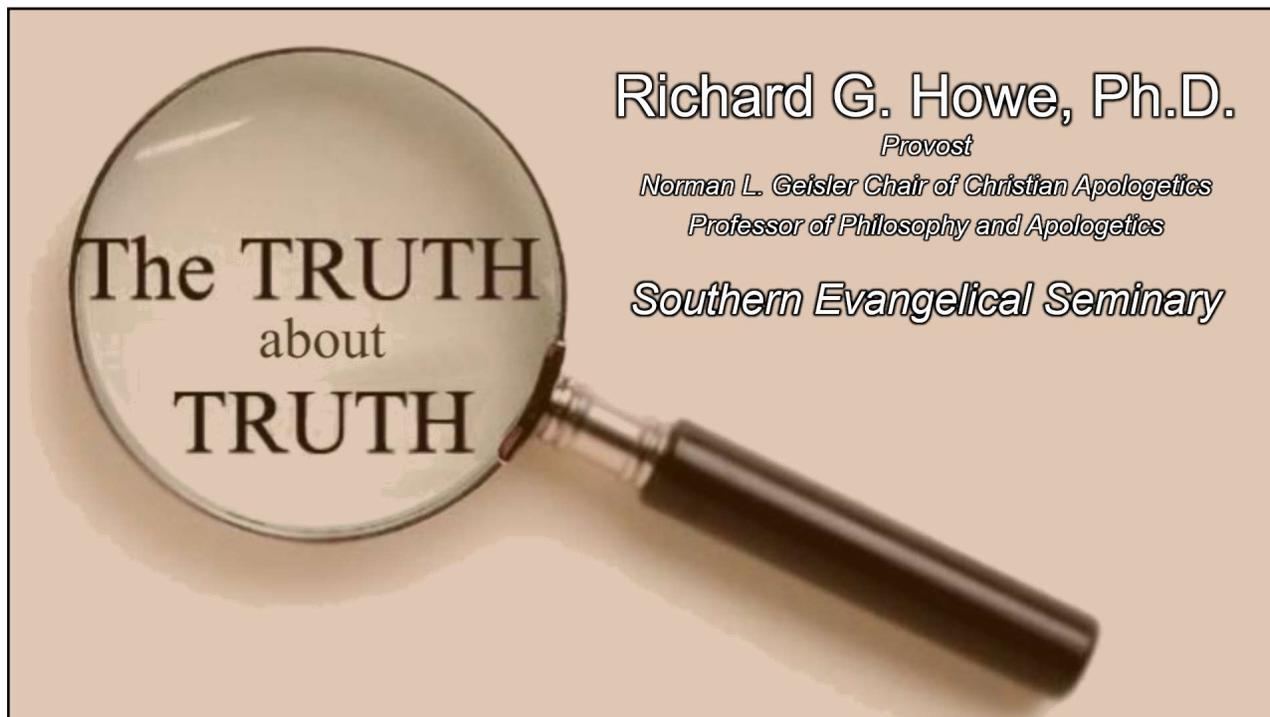
Very soon we will explore Plato's understanding of "essences," known as his doctrine or theory of Forms.



Aristotle is significant because of his reaction to Plato regarding the nature of **sensible objects**, his intense emphasis on observation of the natural world, and his contributions to logic.

Here, the term 'sensible' means "knowable by the senses." In the context of philosophical discussions (either formal or informal) I am trying to condition myself to use the term 'sensible' instead of 'physical'.





Correspondence

Truth is correspondence to reality.

- This says that a statement is true in as much as it corresponds to reality.
- Thus, the statement 'It is raining.'
 - ✓ would be a true statement if it is in fact raining in reality.
 - ✓ would be a false statement if it is in fact not raining in reality.

SOCRATES: *But how about truth, then? You would acknowledge that there is in words a true and a false?*

HERMOGENES: *Certainly.*

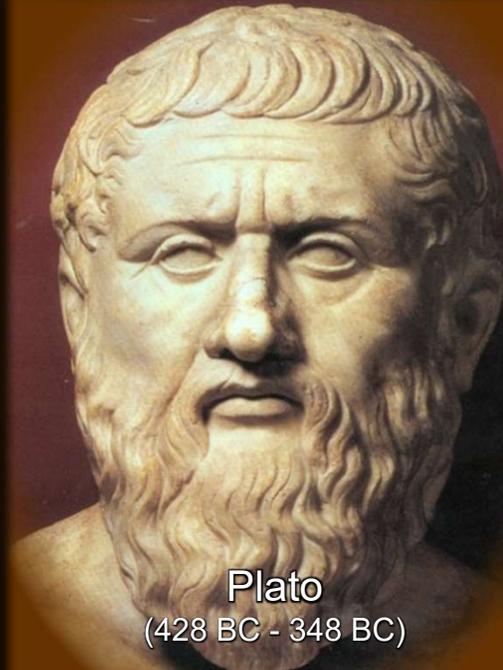
SOCRATES: *And there are true and false propositions?*

HERMOGENES: *To be sure.*

SOCRATES: *And a true proposition says that which is, and a false proposition says that which is not?*

HERMOGENES: *To be sure.*

[Cratylus, 385b, trans. Benjamin Jowett in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds. *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, 423]



Plato
(428 BC - 348 BC)

STRANGER: Then what sort of character can we assign to each of these [statements]?

THEAETETUS: One is false, the other true.

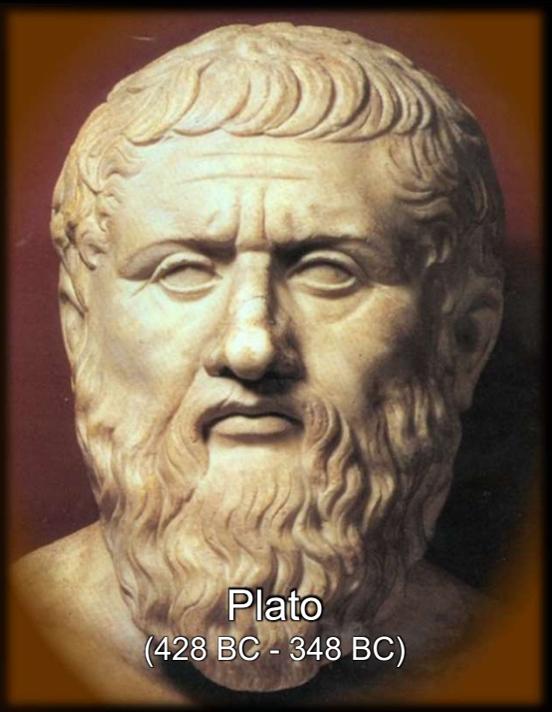
STRANGER: And the true one states about you the things that are as they are.

THEAETETUS: Certainly.

STRANGER: Whereas the false statement states about you things different from the things that are.

THEAETETUS: Yes.

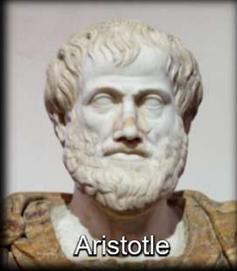
[Sophist, 263b, trans. F. M. Cornford in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds. Plato: The Collected Dialogues Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, 1010]



Plato
(428 BC - 348 BC)

Correspondence Theory of Truth

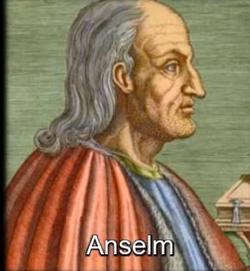
*Other Philosophers Who Hold to the
Correspondence Theory of Truth*



Aristotle



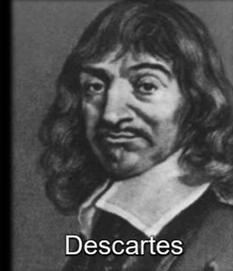
Augustine



Anselm



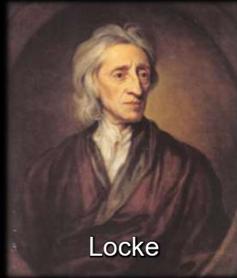
Aquinas



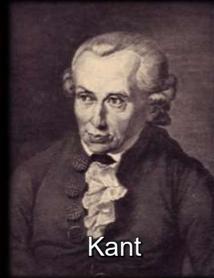
Descartes



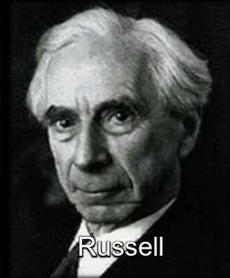
Hume



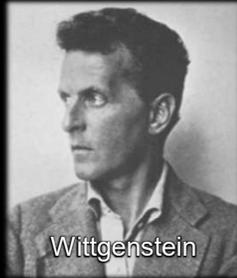
Locke



Kant



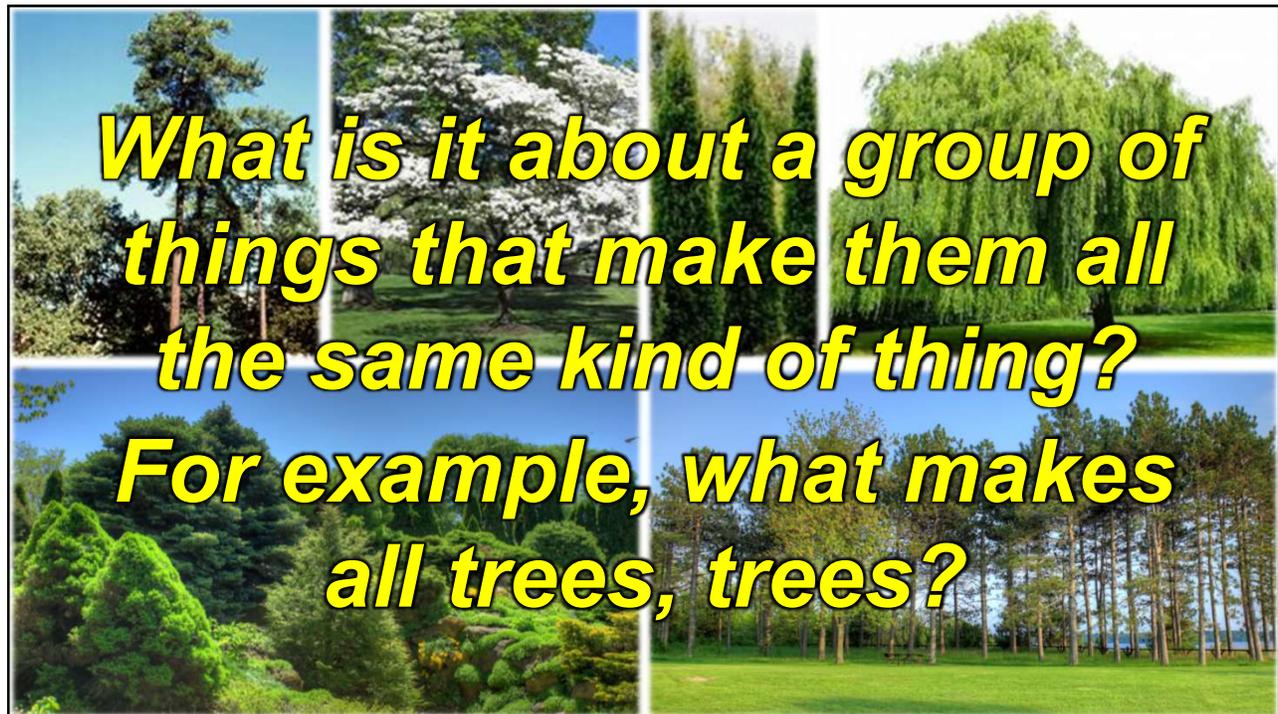
Russell



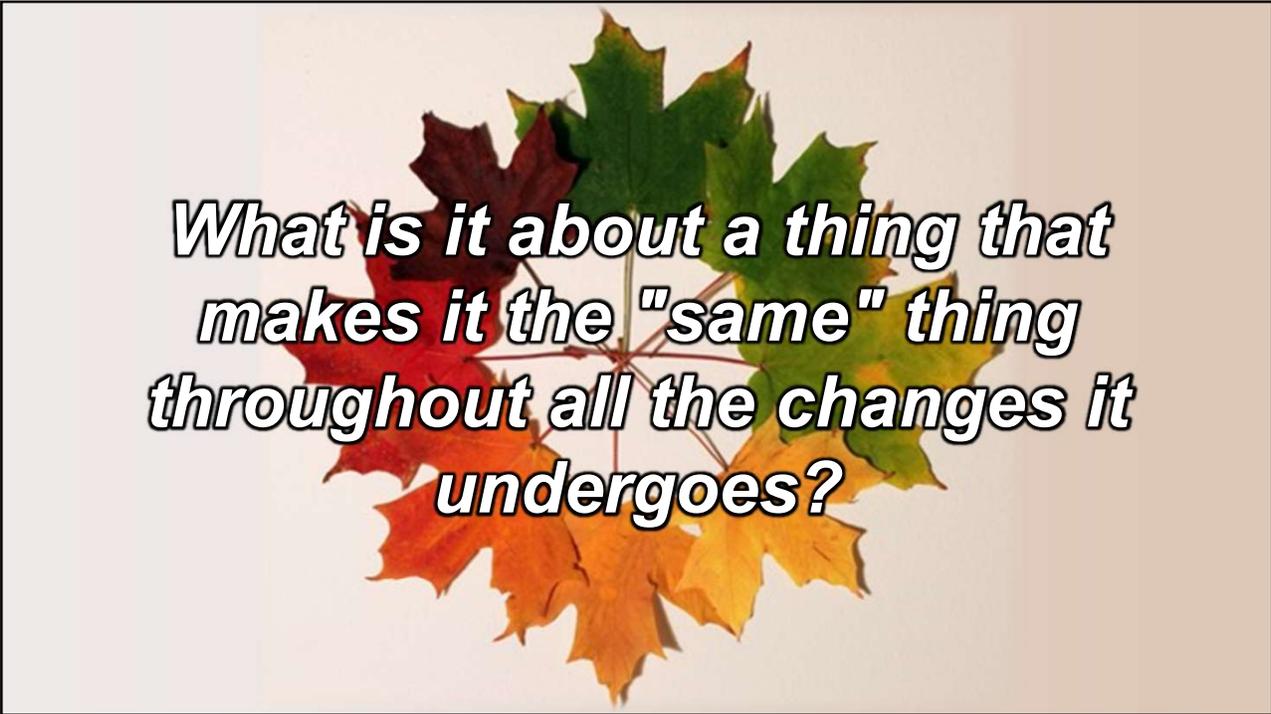
Wittgenstein

*The Metaphysical
Doctrines of
Form and Matter*

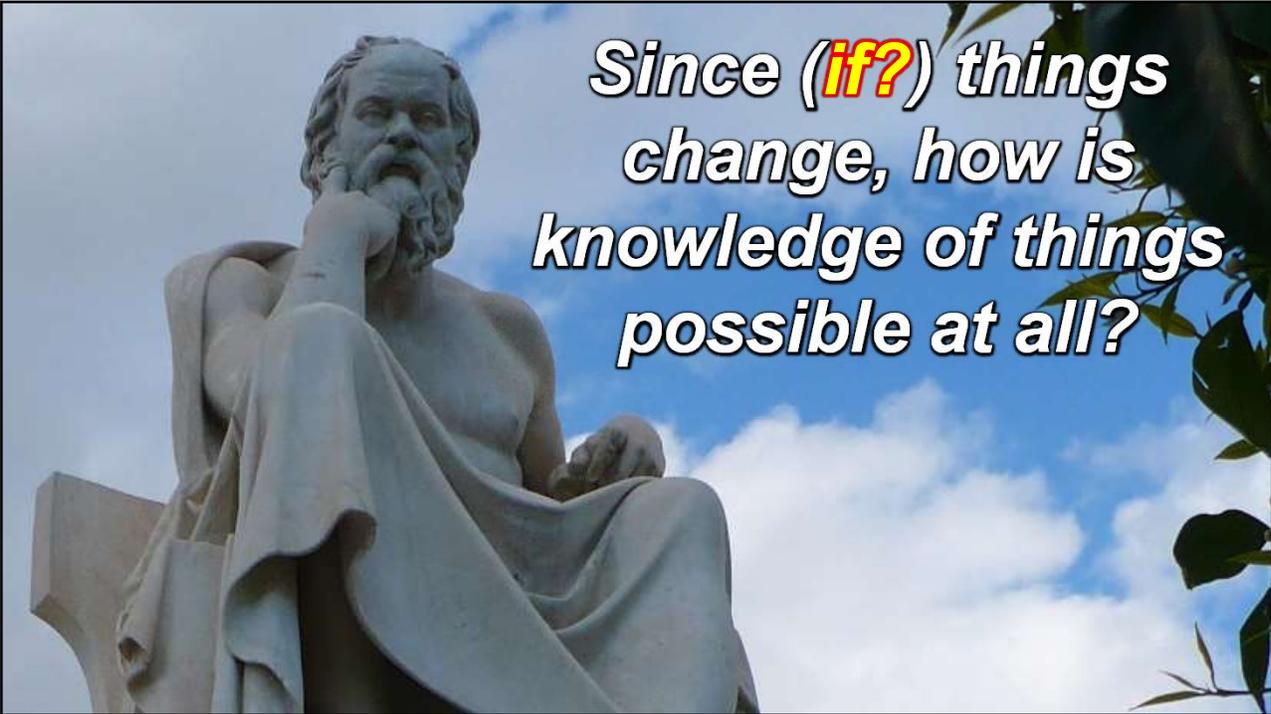
In Greek thought the metaphysical doctrines of Form and Matter arose out of several compelling questions.



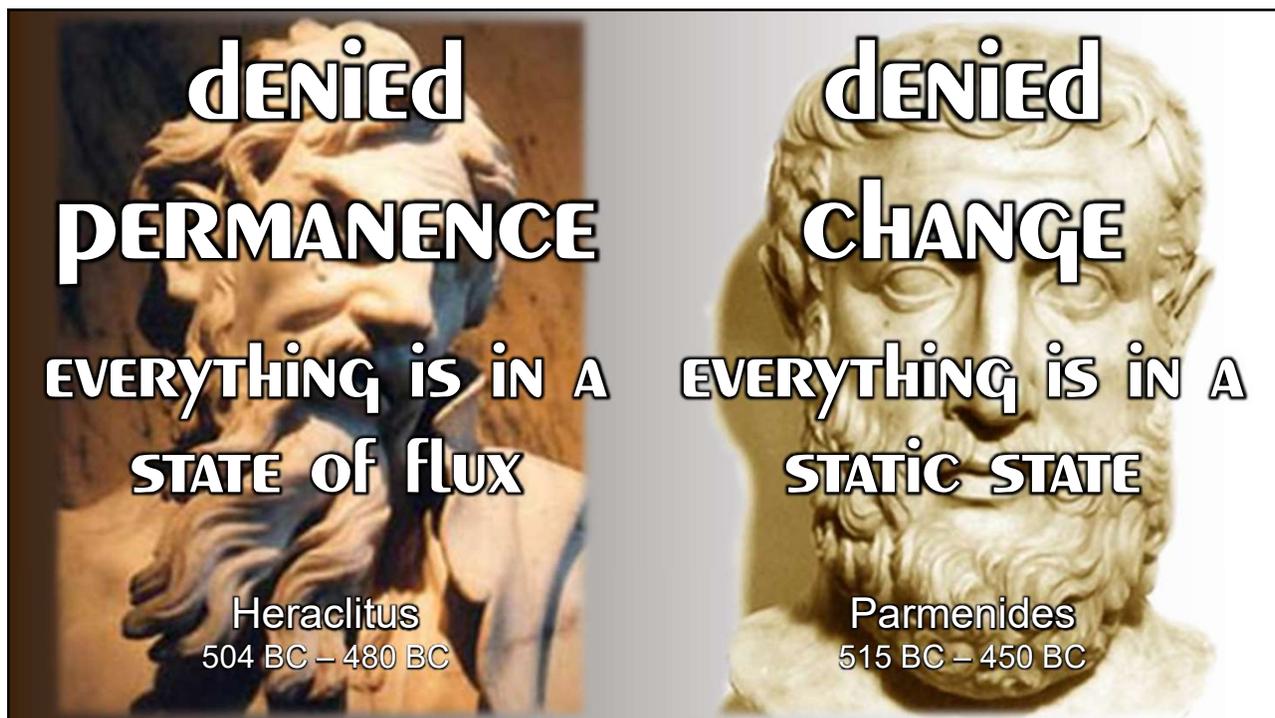
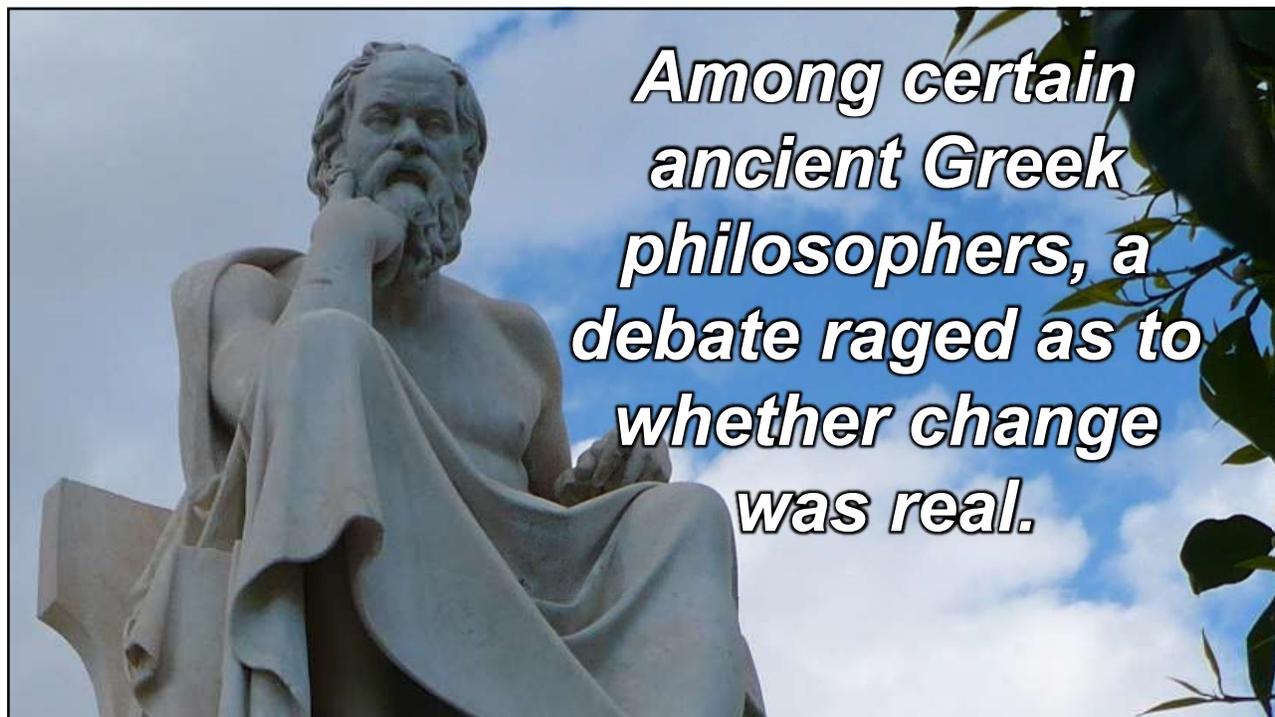
What is it about a group of things that make them all the same kind of thing? For example, what makes all trees, trees?



What is it about a thing that makes it the "same" thing throughout all the changes it undergoes?



Since (if?) things change, how is knowledge of things possible at all?



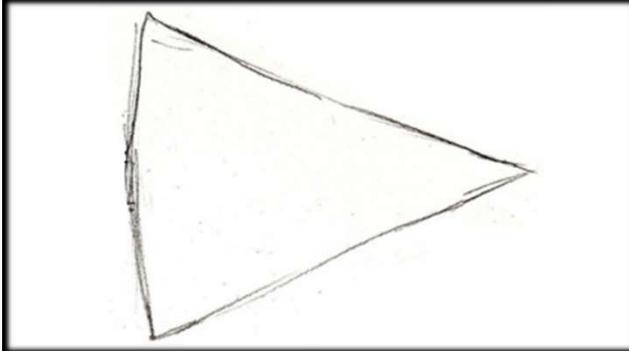
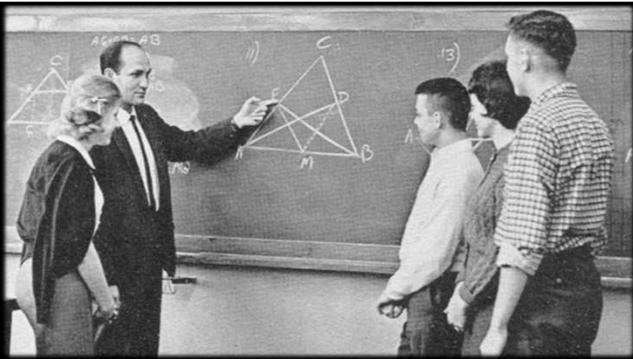
*Plato sought to give a
single, coherent
metaphysical model to
account for both
permanence and change.*



The philosophical term 'Form' translates the Greek word eidos (εἶδος) where we get the English word 'idea'.

Our contemporary usage of the term 'idea' is different than its usage by the ancient Greek philosophers.

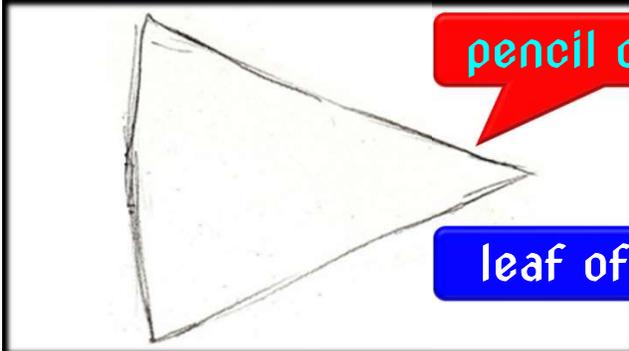
Consider the notion of "triangle."



Each of the triangles have characteristics that are not essential to being a triangle.



chalk on slate

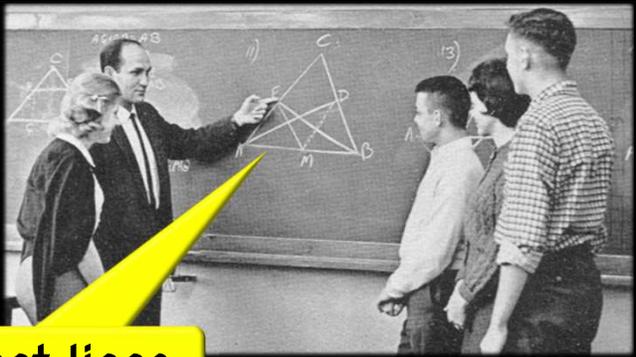


pencil on paper

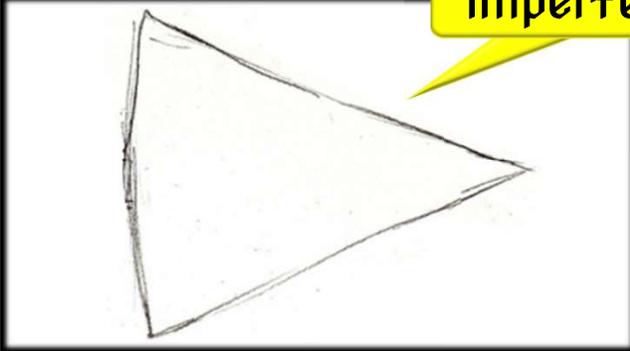


leaf of a plant

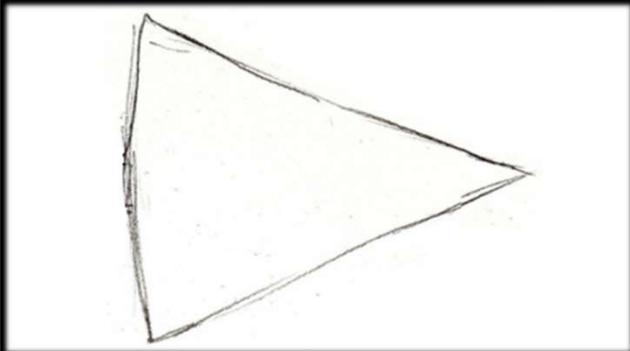
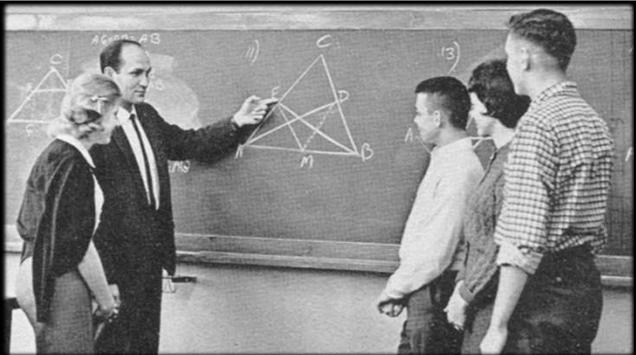
**Each triangle falls short
of being a perfect
triangle, yet we still
know them as triangles.**



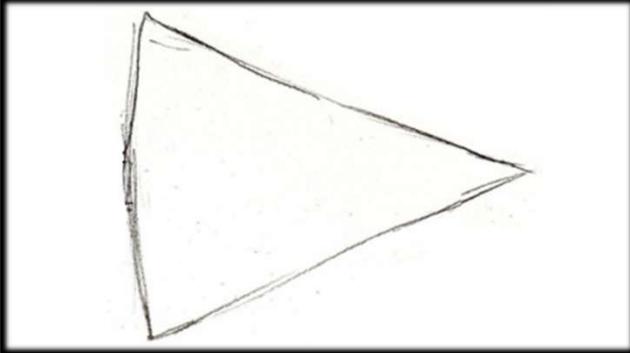
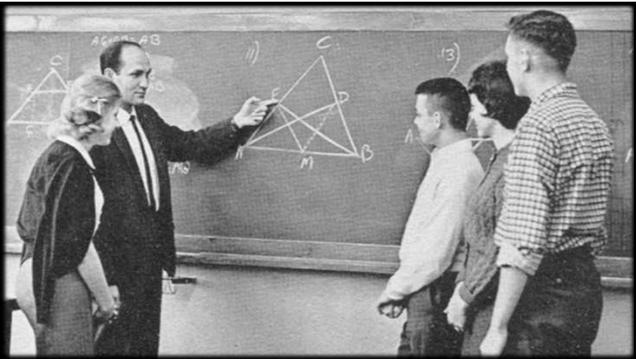
imperfect lines



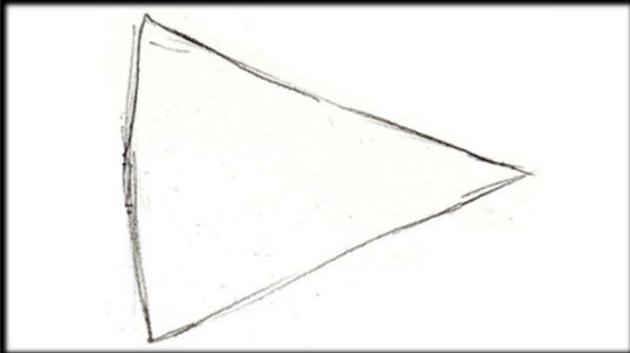
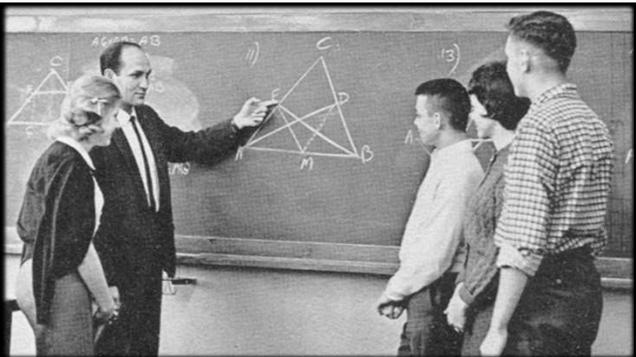
**There is something
common to them all that
makes them all
triangles.**



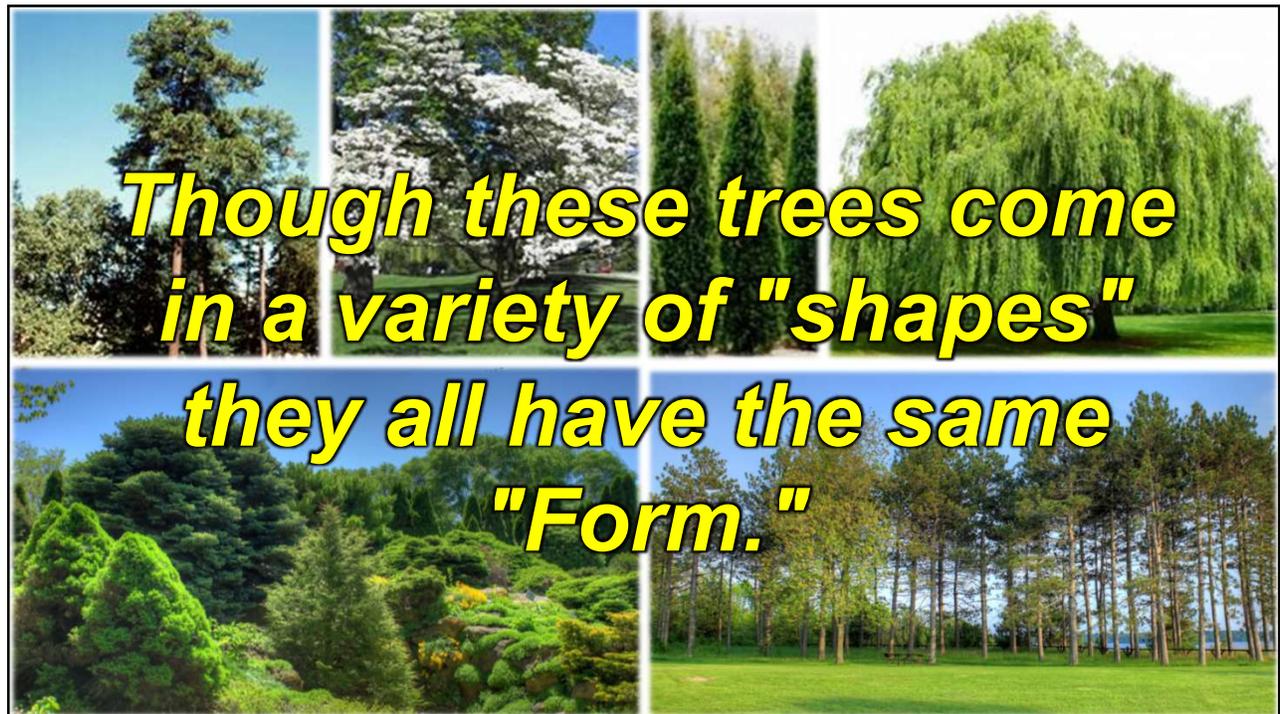
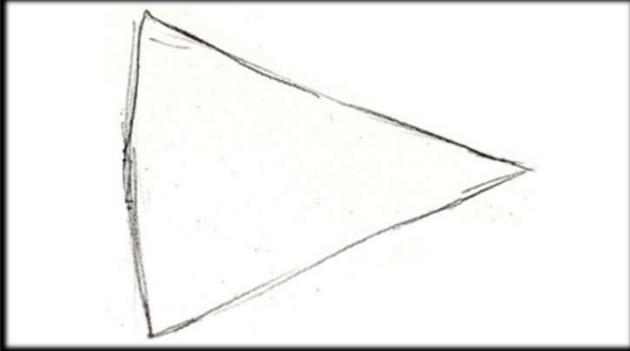
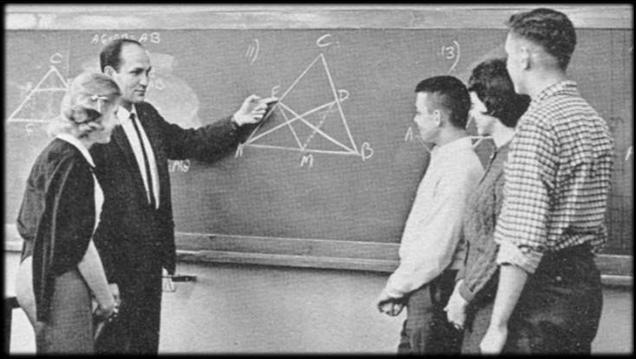
Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas called this common aspect "Form."



**Plato: εἶδος (eidos).
Aristotle: μορφή (morphē).
Aquinas: forma**



Lest one mistakenly think that Form means "shape," consider again the various kinds of trees.

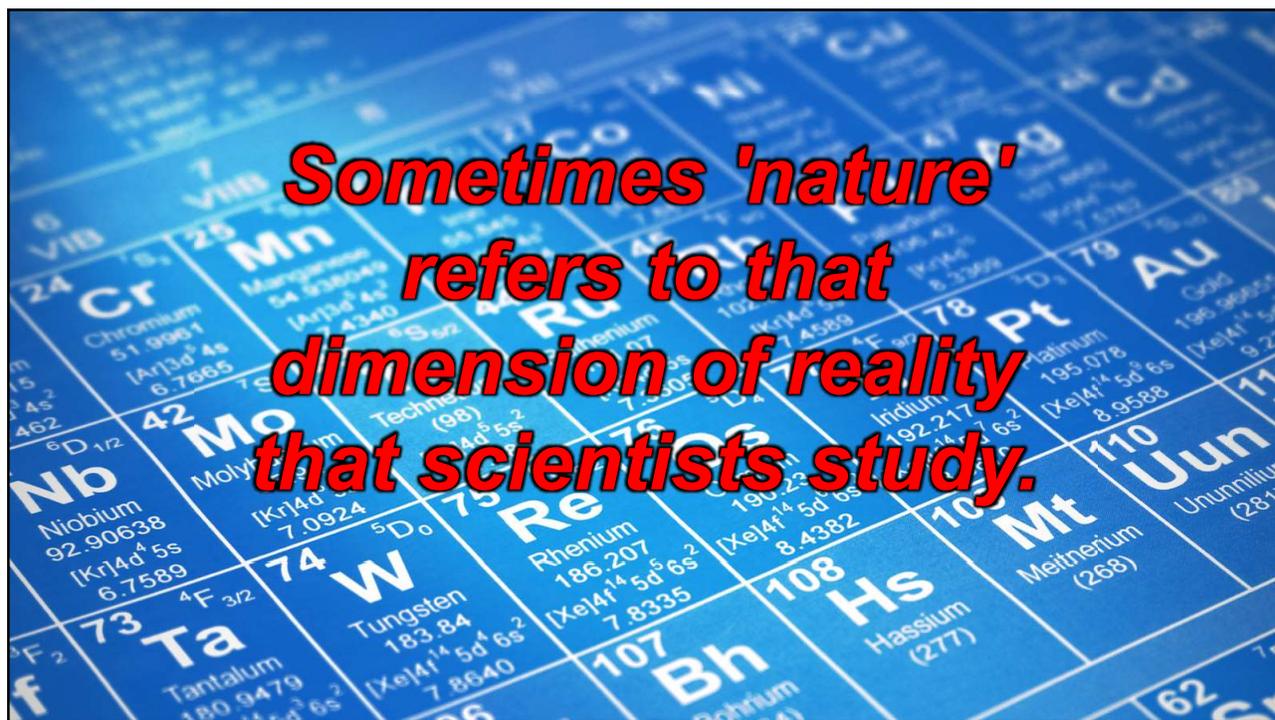


In certain philosophical contexts, a Form is sometimes called a nature.

Other uses of the term 'nature' need to be clarified.

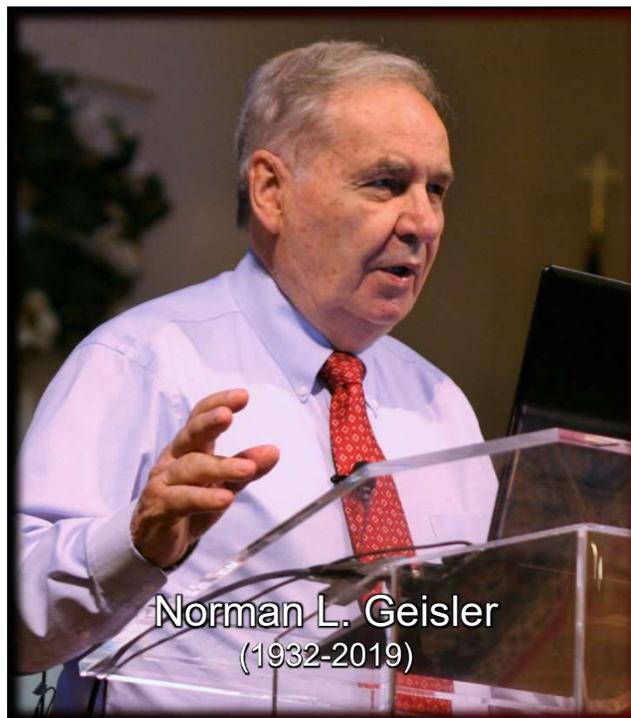
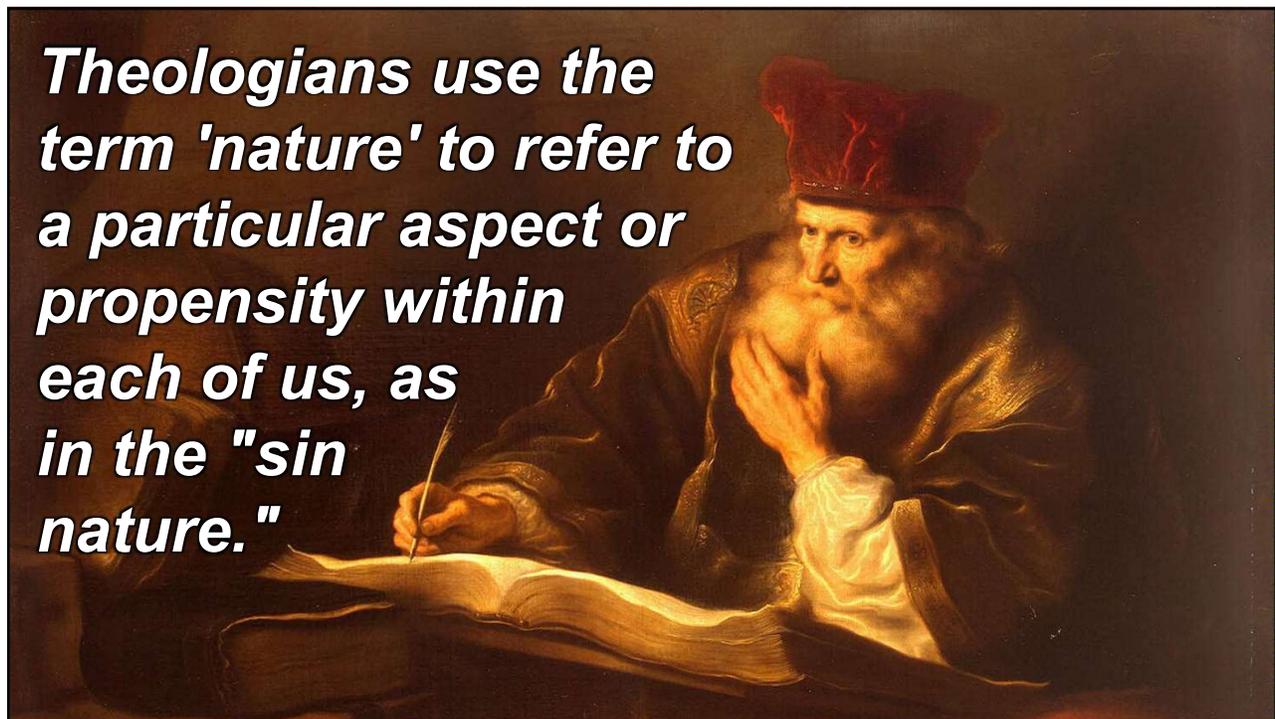


***Sometimes 'nature'
is a catchall term
for the greater
outdoors.***



***Sometimes 'nature'
refers to that
dimension of reality
that scientists study.***

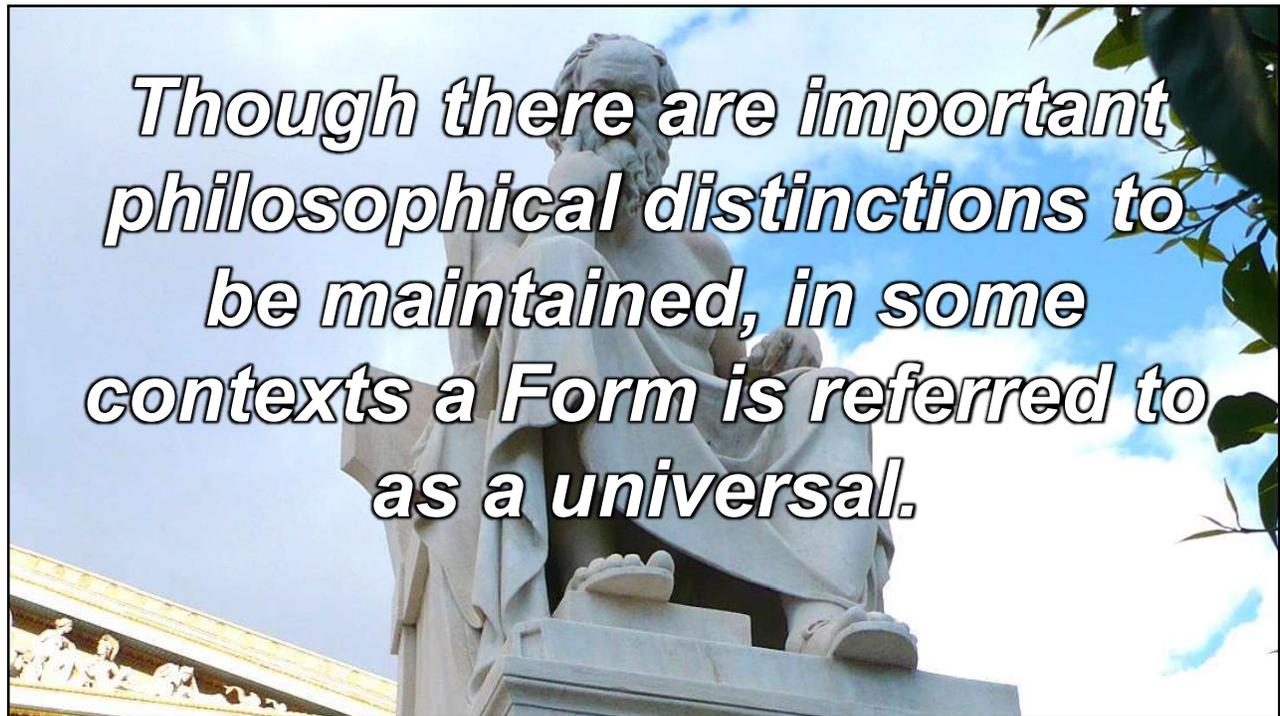
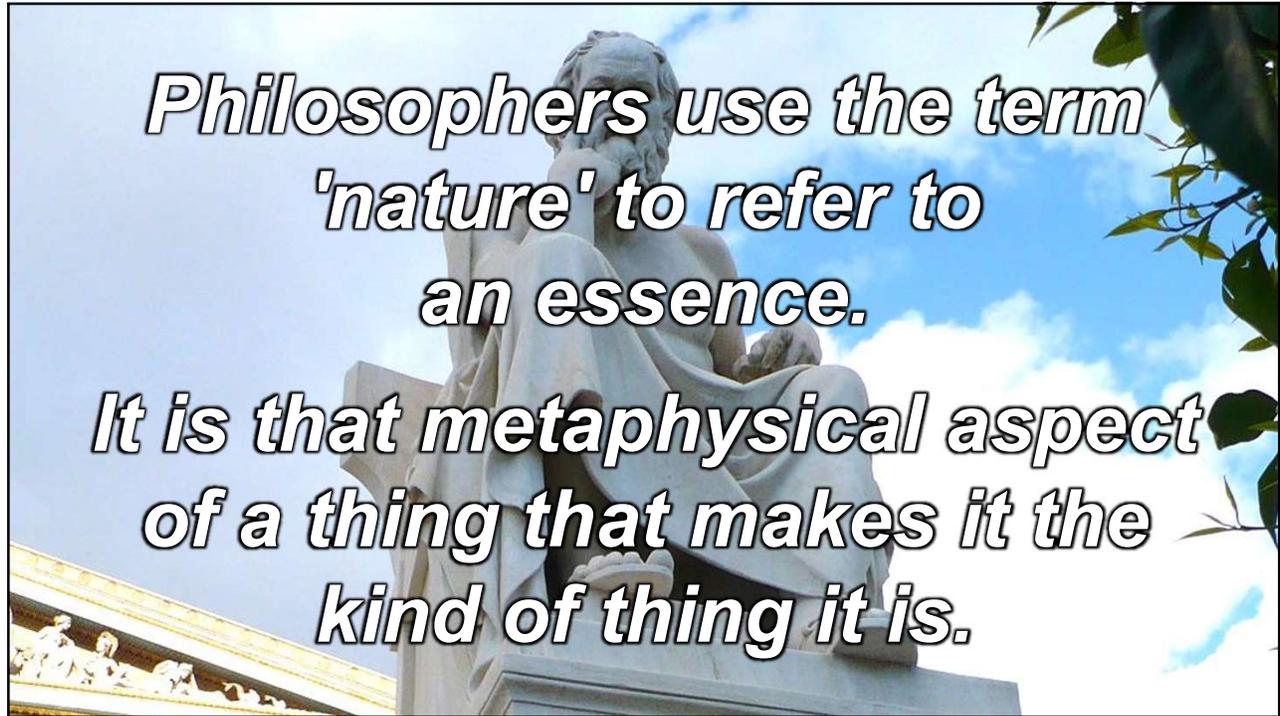
Theologians use the term 'nature' to refer to a particular aspect or propensity within each of us, as in the "sin nature."



Norman L. Geisler
(1932-2019)

"Everyone who is naturally generated from Adam—every human—inherits a sinful nature from him. ... Being sinners by nature, short of and without salvation, we inevitably are and do what comes naturally: We sin."

[Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Vol. Three: Sin Salvation* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004, 125.)





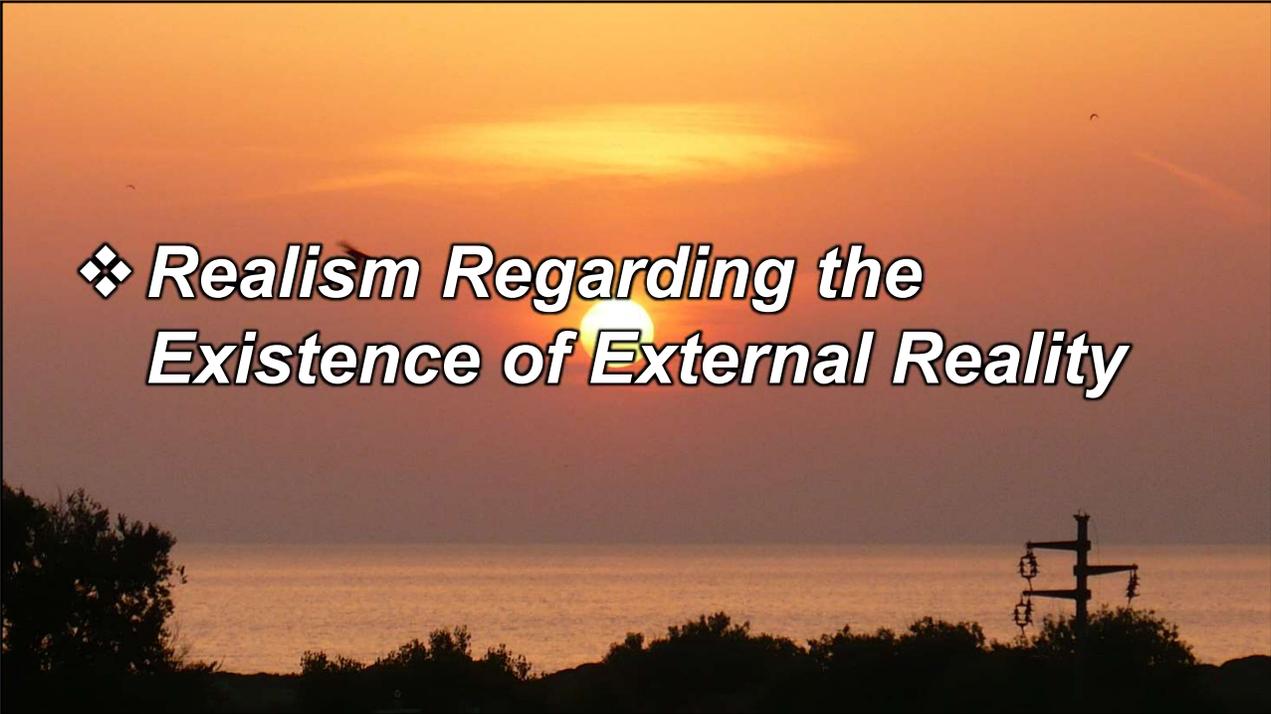
Uses of the Term 'Realism'

- ❖ *Non-philosophical use*
- ❖ *Realism Regarding the Existence of External Reality*
- ❖ *Realism Regarding the Nature of Universals*



❖ *Non-philosophical use*

A realist in the non-philosophical sense of the term is one who approaches an issue with common sense, usually devoid of sentimentality and naiveté.



❖ *Realism Regarding the Existence of External Reality*

Here realism maintains that there is a material reality external to us as knowers and that this material external reality exists whether we are perceiving it or not.

This notion of realism is contrasted with Idealism. Idealism (George Berkeley) maintains that there is no external material reality.

Any view of knowing that maintains that there is a reality external to us as knowers is a form of realism.

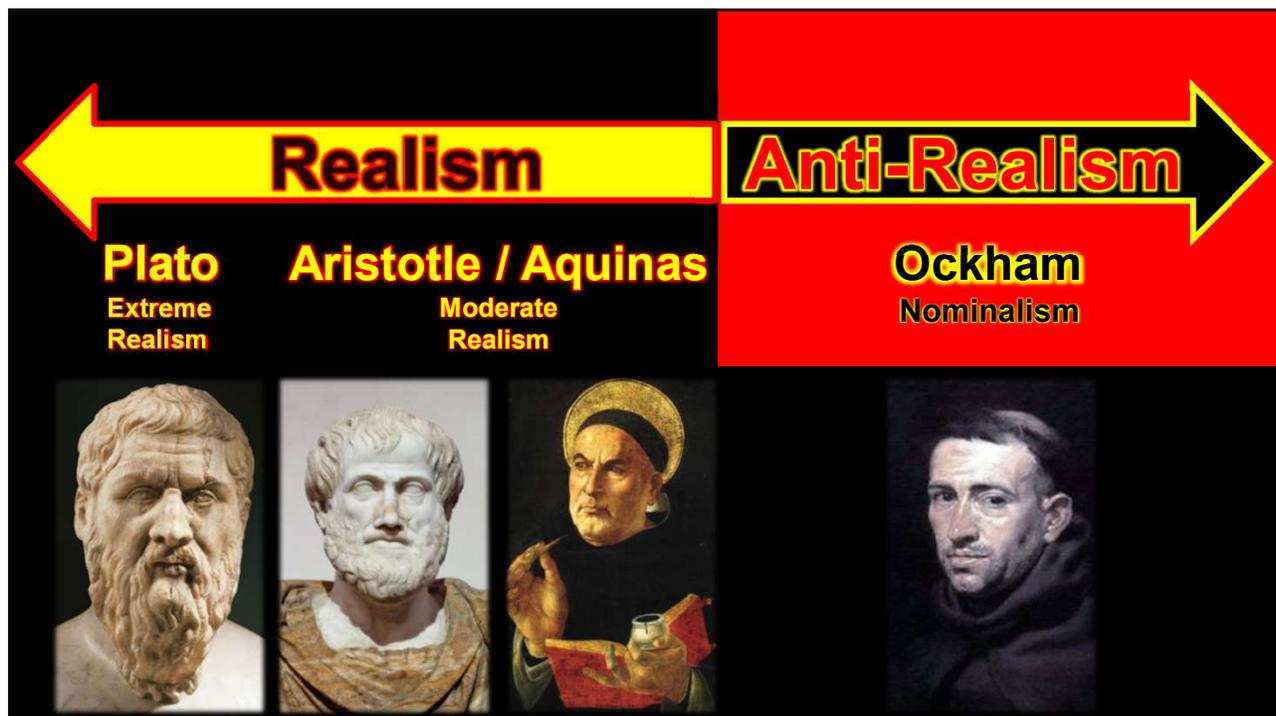
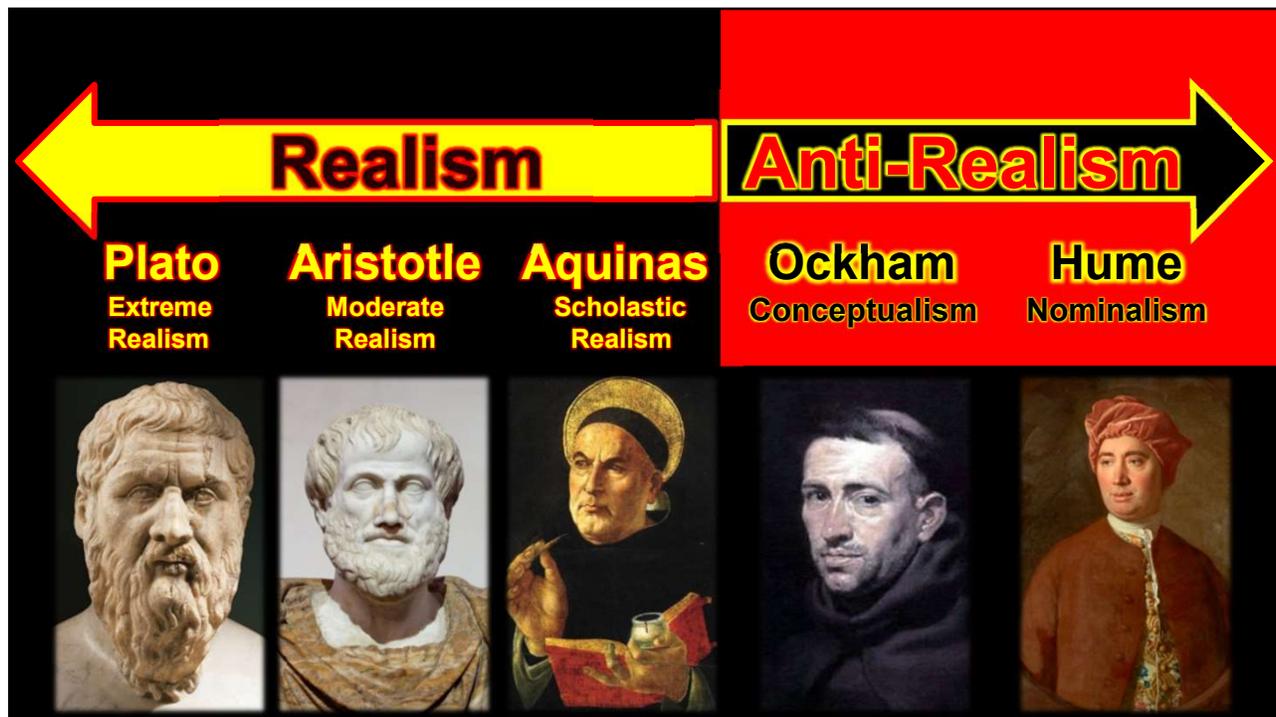
Thus, John Locke is a realist even though Locke's view on how we know external reality is quite different from Plato's, Aristotle's and Aquinas's views.



Nature of Universals

Here realism maintains that universals (e.g., human-ness) are real entities that have existence apart from particulars. (Plato)

This notion of realism is contrasted with anti-realism like conceptualism (William of Ockham) or nominalism (David Hume).

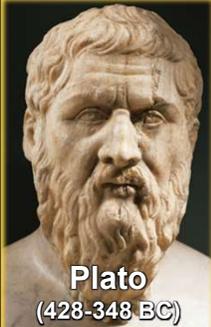




REALISM: UNIVERSALS

Realism regarding universals holds that universals are real and irreducible to particulars

Extreme Realism



Universals are the only things that are fully real. Particulars are merely "shadows" of their exemplars.

REALISM: TELEOLOGY

Realism regarding teleology (Teleological Realism) holds that teleology is a real and irreducible feature of the natural world.

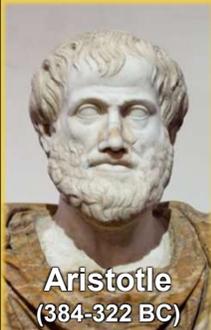
Platonic Teleological Realism

Teleology is irreducible but is entirely derived from an outside (extrinsic) source, as, for example, a divine mind like Plato's demiurge.

REALISM: UNIVERSALS

Realism regarding universals holds that universals are real and irreducible to particulars

Moderate Realism



Universals are real but only exist (as universals) in intellects. They come to exist in the intellect by way of abstraction from something metaphysically real in the particulars (i.e., the Form). Thus, the Form "tree" exists as a universal in the intellect of the knower and as a particular in the tree. The Form is individuated by its Matter.

REALISM: TELEOLOGY

Realism regarding teleology (Teleological Realism) holds that teleology is a real and irreducible feature of the natural world.

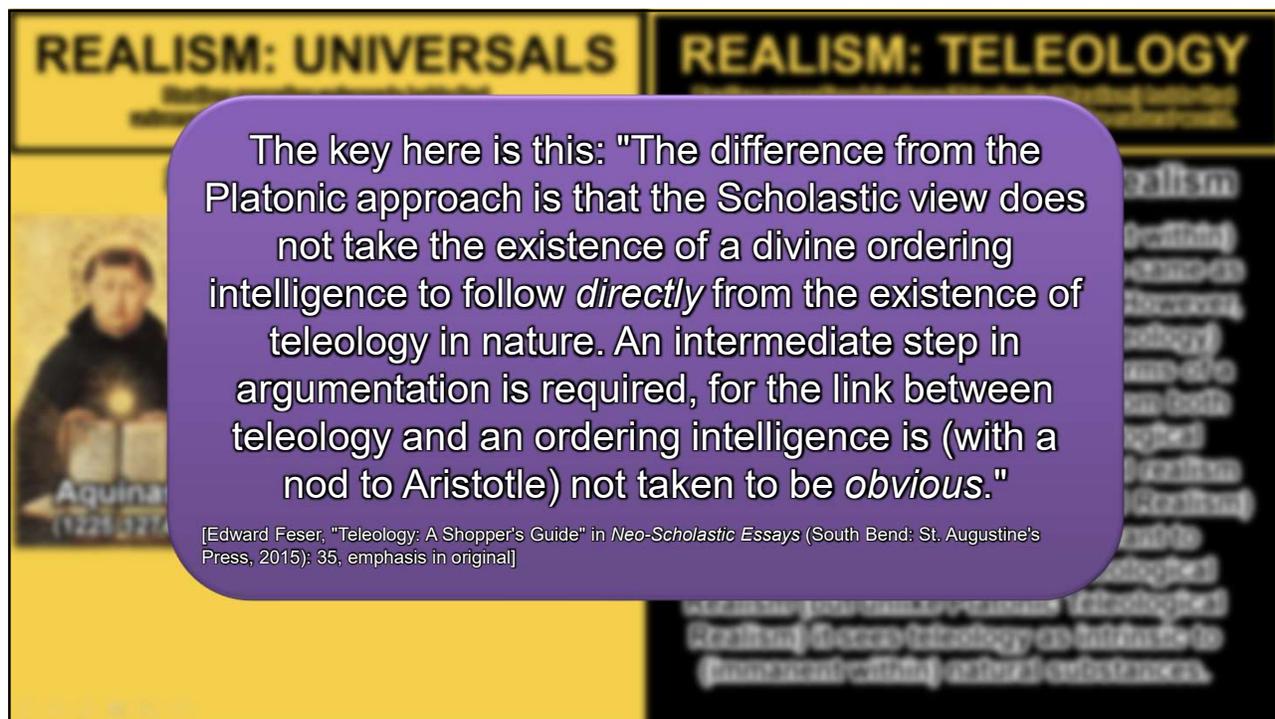
Aristotelian Teleological Realism

Teleology is intrinsic to (immanent within) natural substances and does not derive from any divine source. This is not in conflict with Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. While the Unmoved Mover is the telos toward which all motion is directed, it is not the cause of the existence of the natural substances with their teleologies, in as much as the Unmoved Mover (or Movers) is not at all an efficient cause of the universe.

<h2>REALISM: UNIVERSALS</h2> <p>Realism regarding universals holds that universals are real and irreducible to particulars</p>	<h2>REALISM: TELEOLOGY</h2> <p>Realism regarding teleology (Teleological Realism) holds that teleology is a real and irreducible feature of the natural world.</p>
<h3>Scholastic Realism</h3>  <p>Aquinas (1225-1274)</p> <p>Scholastic Realism is the same as Moderate Realism in that the universals can come to exist in the intellects of humans (by abstraction). Scholastic Realism differs from Moderate Realism in that the universals also exist eternally in the mind of God as their Creator.</p>	<h3>Scholastic Teleological Realism</h3> <p>Teleology is intrinsic to (immanent within) natural substances. In this it is the same as Aristotelian Teleological Realism. However, the existence of final causes (teleology) must ultimately be explained in terms of a divine intellect. In this it differs from both Platonic and Aristotelian Teleological Realism. Like Platonic Teleological Realism (but unlike Aristotelian Teleological Realism) it sees the divine mind as relevant to teleology. Like Aristotelian Teleological Realism (but unlike Platonic Teleological Realism) it sees teleology as intrinsic to (immanent within) natural substances.</p>

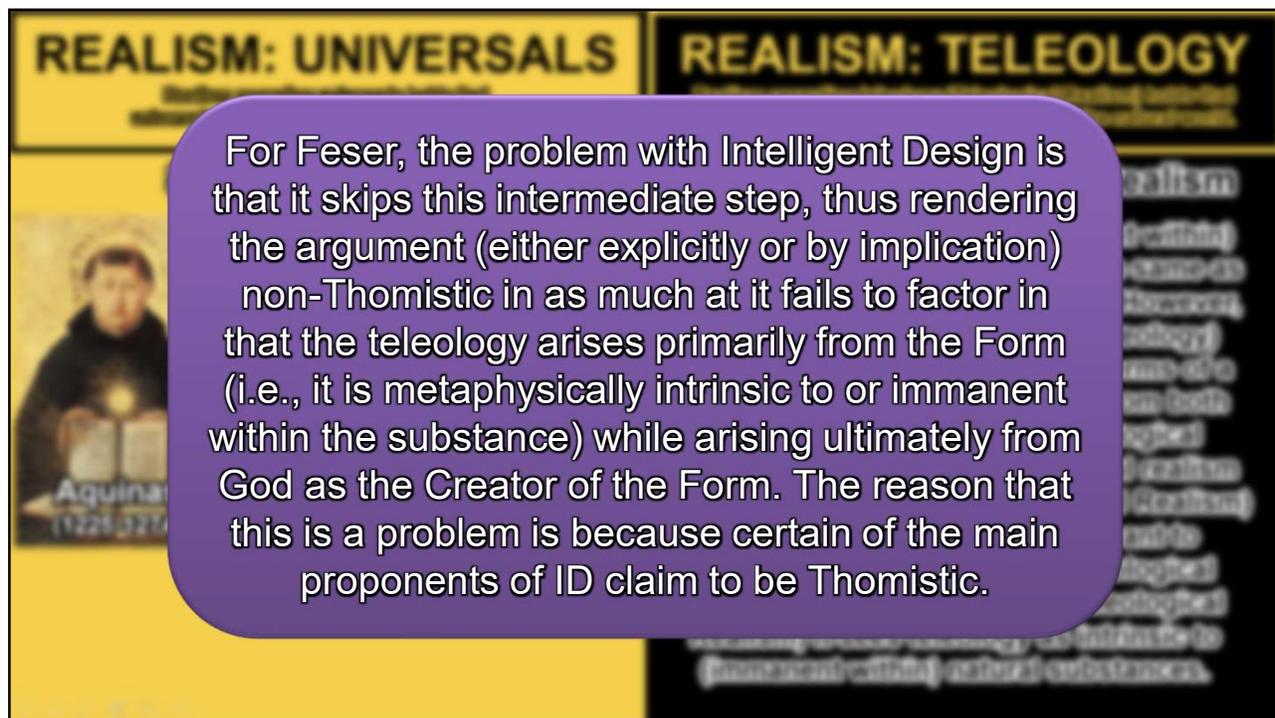
<h2>REALISM: UNIVERSALS</h2>	<h2>REALISM: TELEOLOGY</h2>
 <p>Aquinas (1225-1274)</p> <p>Scholastic Realism differs from Moderate Realism in that the universals also exist eternally in the mind of God as their Creator.</p>	<h3>Scholastic Teleological Realism</h3> <p>Teleology is intrinsic to (immanent within) natural substances. In this it is the same as Aristotelian Teleological Realism. However, the existence of final causes (teleology) must ultimately be explained in terms of a divine intellect. In this it differs from both Platonic and Aristotelian Teleological Realism. Like Platonic Teleological Realism (but unlike Aristotelian Teleological Realism) it sees the divine mind as relevant to teleology. Like Aristotelian Teleological Realism (but unlike Platonic Teleological Realism) it sees teleology as intrinsic to (immanent within) natural substances.</p>

Note that many (if not most) textbooks do not make this distinction and, thus, would call the Realism of the Scholastics Moderate Realism (either because they do not notice the distinction or do not regard it as warranting a separate label).



The key here is this: "The difference from the Platonic approach is that the Scholastic view does not take the existence of a divine ordering intelligence to follow *directly* from the existence of teleology in nature. An intermediate step in argumentation is required, for the link between teleology and an ordering intelligence is (with a nod to Aristotle) not taken to be *obvious*."

[Edward Feser, "Teleology: A Shopper's Guide" in *Neo-Scholastic Essays* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2015): 35, emphasis in original]



For Feser, the problem with Intelligent Design is that it skips this intermediate step, thus rendering the argument (either explicitly or by implication) non-Thomistic in as much as it fails to factor in that the teleology arises primarily from the Form (i.e., it is metaphysically intrinsic to or immanent within the substance) while arising ultimately from God as the Creator of the Form. The reason that this is a problem is because certain of the main proponents of ID claim to be Thomistic.

ANTI-REALISM: UNIVERSALS

Universals are either reducible to particulars
or are unreal altogether.

Conceptualism

Ockham
(1280-1349)

Universals are nothing but concepts in the minds of intellects and have no real grounding in the particulars. It should be noted that some text books label Ockham as a nominalist and would put Hume (dealt with below) entirely outside the discussion of universals as a philosophical skeptic.

ANTI-REALISM: TELEOLOGY

Teleology is either reducible to non-teleological phenomena
or is unreal altogether.

Teleological Reductivism

Admits teleology in some sense, but says it can be reduced to non-teleological phenomena.

ANTI-REALISM: UNIVERSALS

Universals are either reducible to particulars
or are unreal altogether.

Nominalism

Hume
(1711-1776)

There is no reality to universals. Instead, what are referred to as universals are only names or labels given to certain things or properties.

ANTI-REALISM: TELEOLOGY

Teleology is either reducible to non-teleological phenomena
or is unreal altogether.

Teleological Eliminativism

Denies teleology altogether.

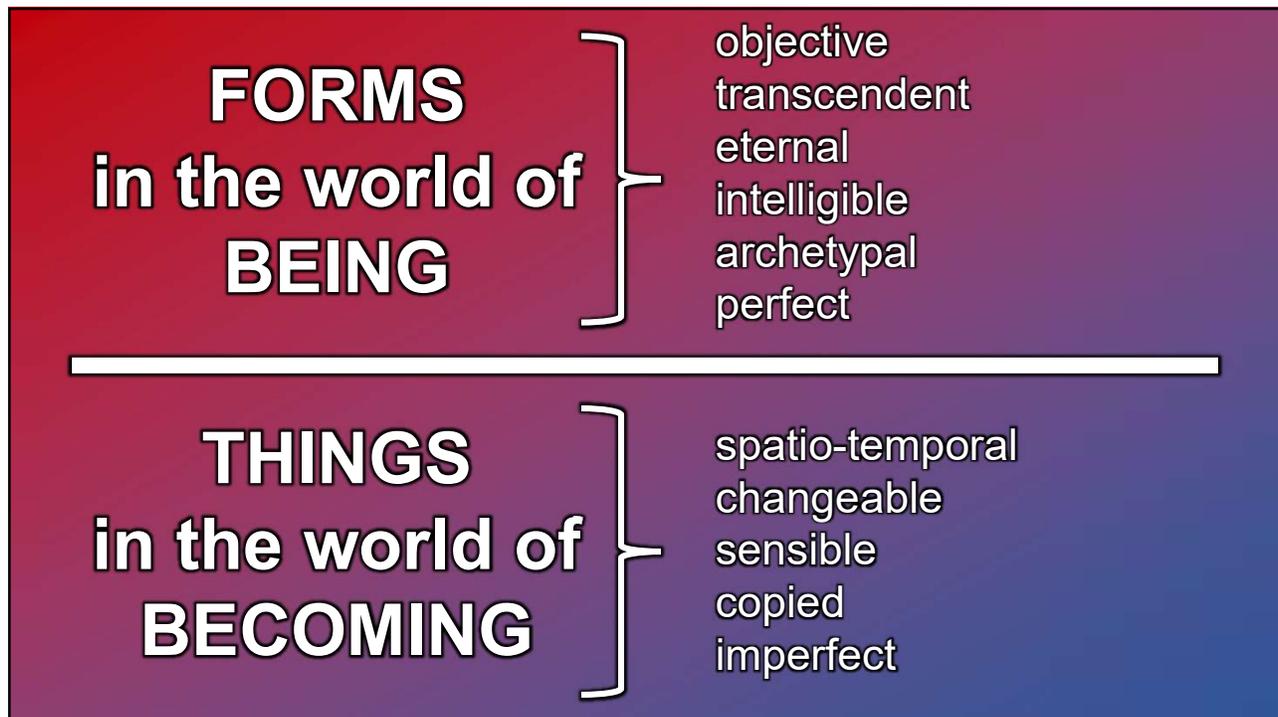


Plato's Theory of Forms and Things

Plato's Theory of Forms and Things

*a transcendent world of eternal and
absolute beings [or things],
corresponding to every kind of thing
that there is, and causing in particular
things their essential natures.*

[Ed. L. Miller and Jon Jensen, *Questions that Matter: An Invitation to Philosophy*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 78]



Characteristics of the Forms

🌀 objective 🌀

*They exist "out there" as objects,
independently of our minds or wills.*

🌀 transcendent 🌀

*Though they exist "out there," they
do not exist in space and time; they lie
above or beyond space and time*

Characteristics of the Forms

∞ eternal ∞

As transcendent realities they are not subject to time and therefore not subject to motion or change.

∞ intelligible ∞

As transcendent realities they cannot be grasped by the senses but only by the intellect.

Characteristics of the Forms

∞ archetypal ∞

They are the models for every kind of thing that does or could exist.

∞ perfect ∞

They include absolutely and perfectly all the features of the things of which they are models.

The Relationship of the Forms to Particular Things

