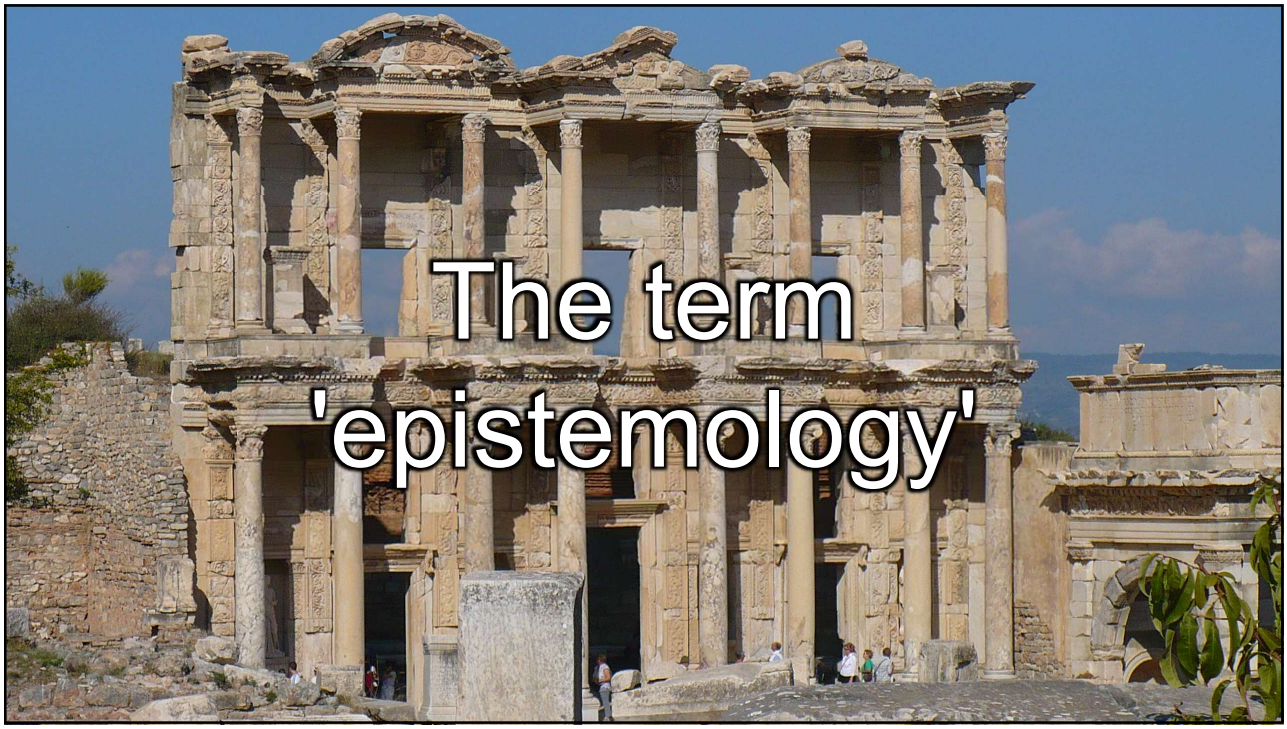

PH 501
CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY
PH 825
SYSTEMATIC PHILOSOPHY
EPISTEMOLOGY:
INTRODUCTION


The term 'epistemology'

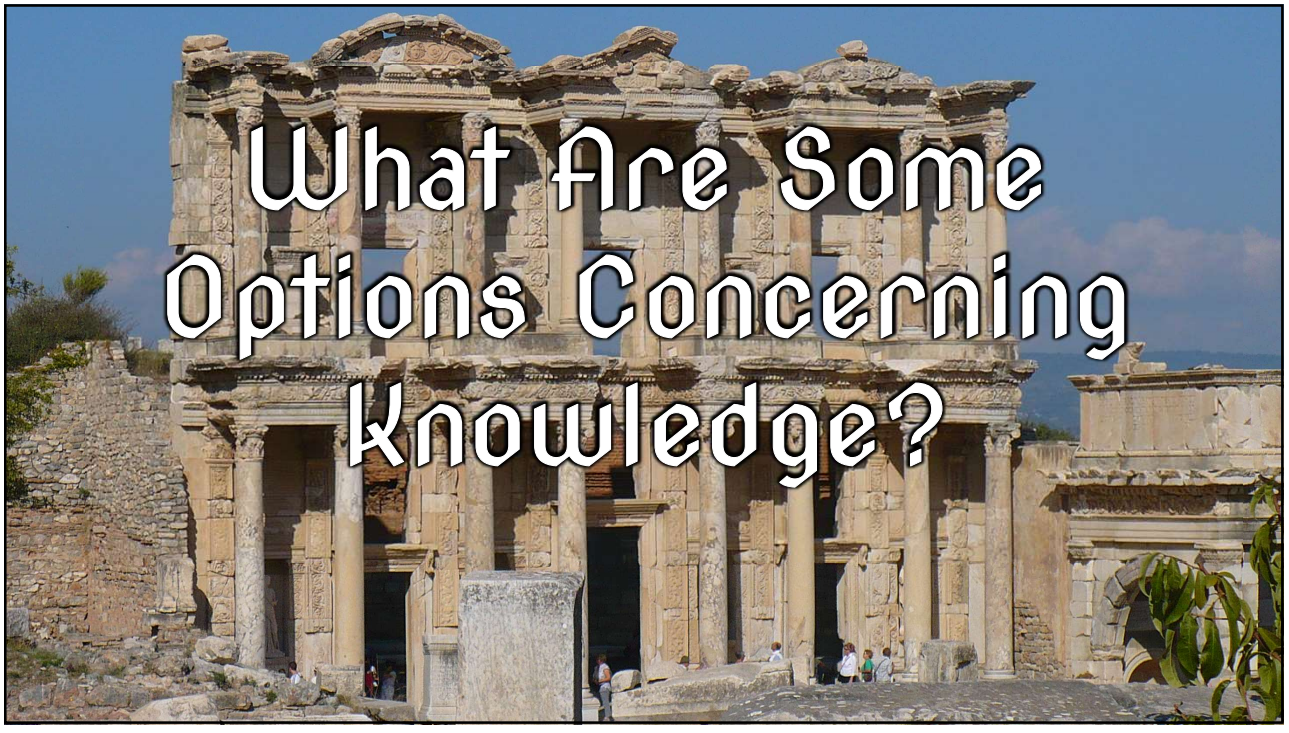
from the Greek

ἐπιστήμη (epistemē)

acquaintance with, understanding, skill

Three Common Epistemological Questions

1. *Is it possible to have knowledge at all?*
2. *Does reason provide us with knowledge of the world independently of experience?*
3. *Does our knowledge represent reality as it really is?*



Skepticism

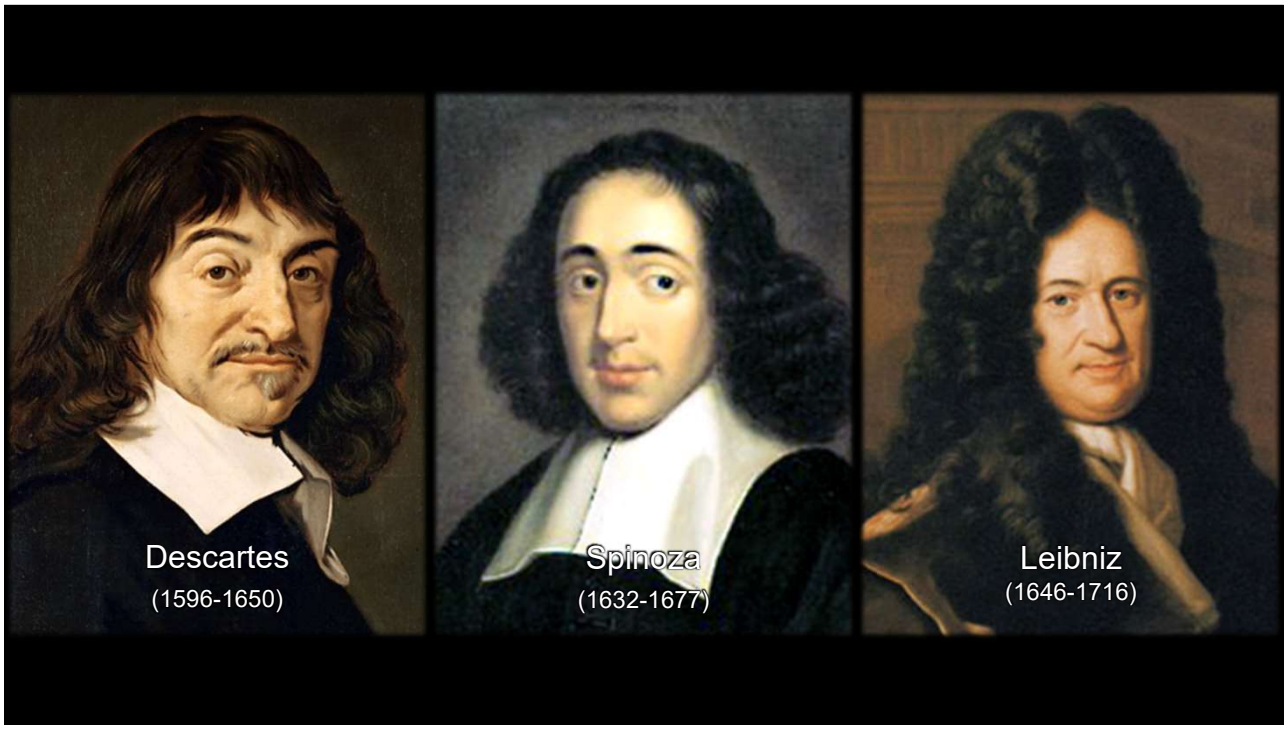
We do not have knowledge.

Rationalism

Reason (apart from sense experience) is the sole (or primary) source of our fundamental knowledge about reality.

Rationalism

*This means that reason is capable of giving us **at least some** knowledge apart from experience.*



Empiricism

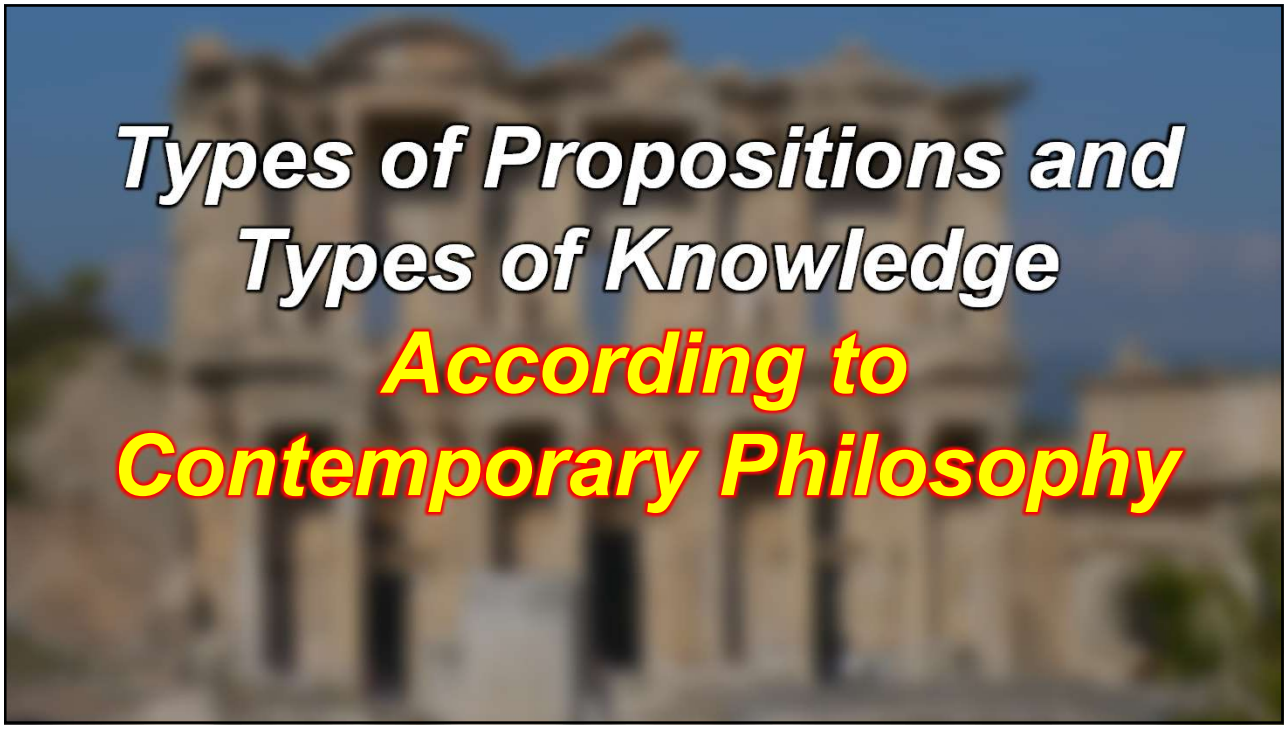
sense experience is either:

the beginning of our knowledge about the world

or

the sole basis of our knowledge about the world


Some Terms
Relevant to
Epistemology


Types of Propositions and
Types of Knowledge
According to
Contemporary Philosophy

analytic proposition

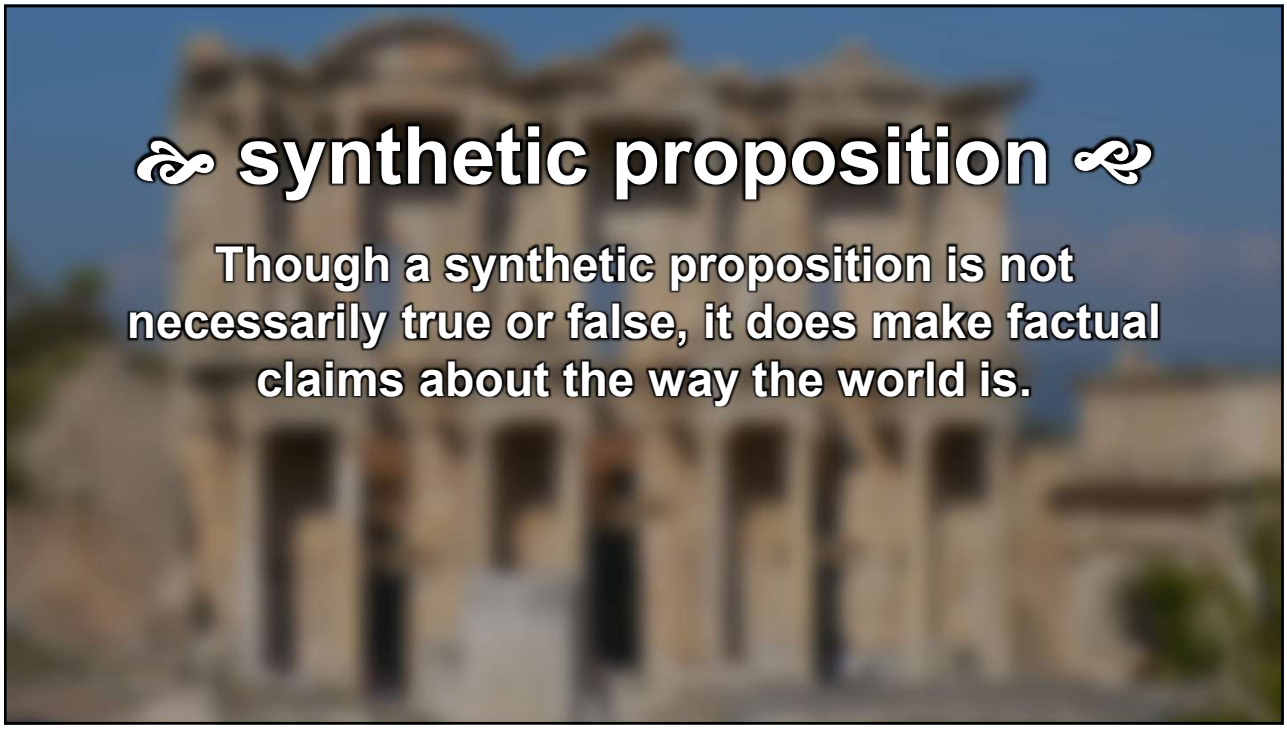
The truth or falsity of a proposition is determined solely by the meanings of its terms = true by definition, e.g., All bachelors are unmarried.

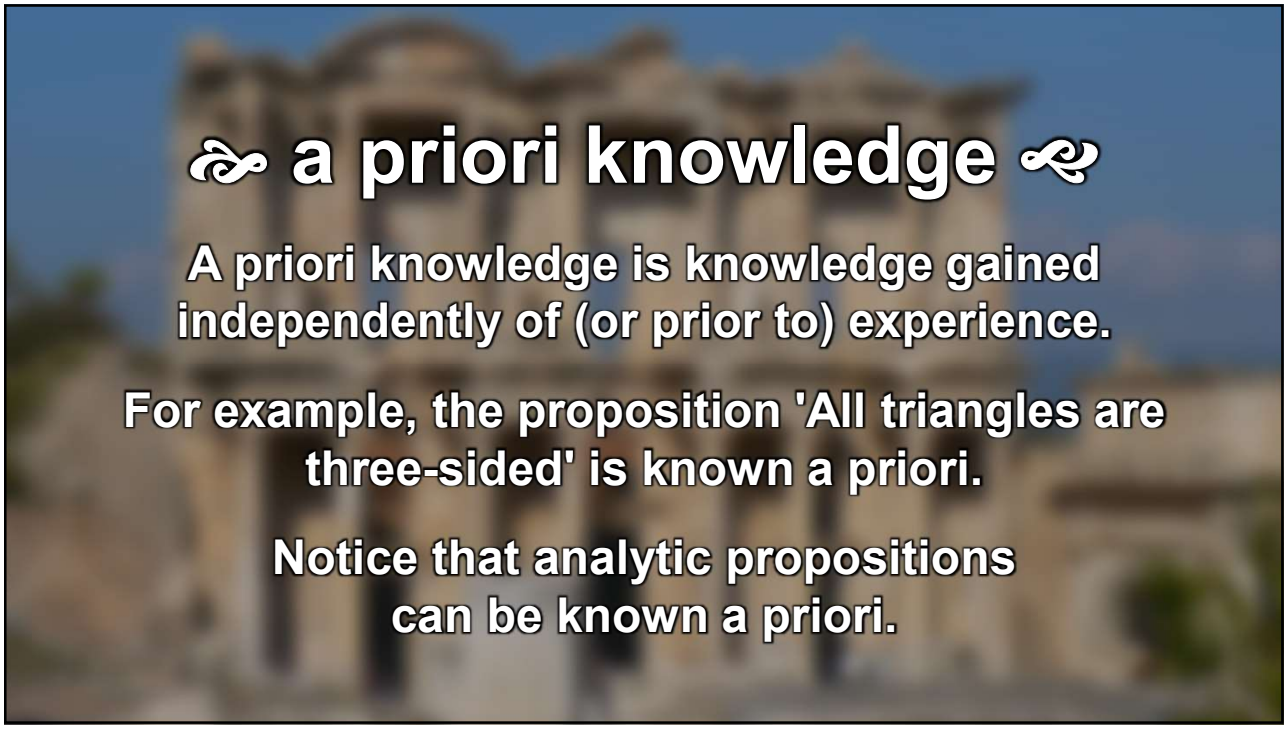
Even though an analytic statement is necessarily true, it does not necessarily give us any factual information about the world.

synthetic proposition

The truth or falsity of a synthetic proposition is not determined solely by the meanings of the terms within the synthetic proposition.

Instead, the truth or falsity of a synthetic proposition is determined by something external to the proposition itself.


synthetic proposition
Though a synthetic proposition is not necessarily true or false, it does make factual claims about the way the world is.


a priori knowledge
A priori knowledge is knowledge gained independently of (or prior to) experience.
For example, the proposition 'All triangles are three-sided' is known a priori.
Notice that analytic propositions can be known a priori.

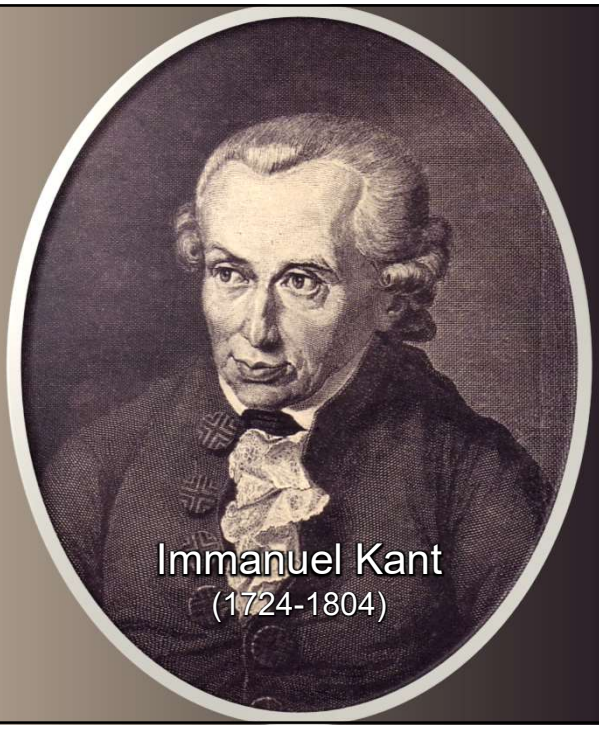
a posteriori knowledge

A posteriori knowledge is knowledge that is based on or after (or posterior to) experience.

For example, the proposition 'Water freezes at 32º Fahrenheit.')

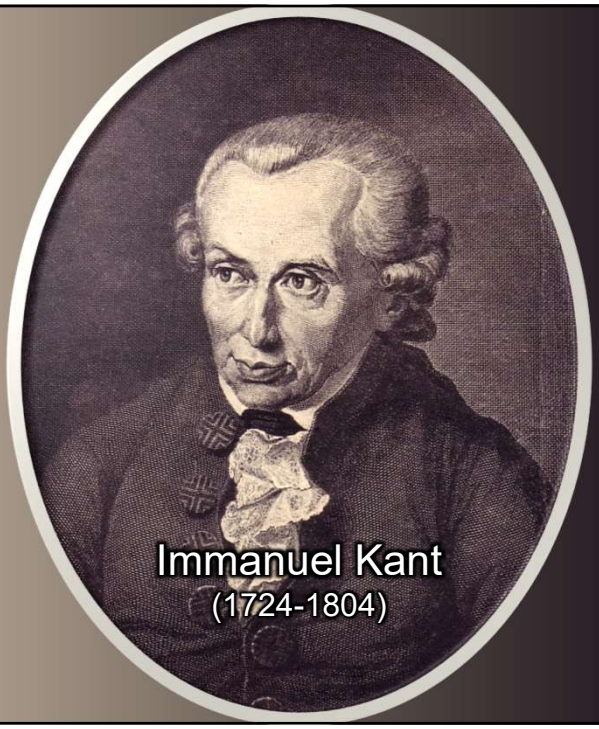
Notice that many of the claims of science are known a posteriori.

We shall see later that one of Immanuel Kant's main projects was an attempt to try to fend off the skepticism exemplified in the philosophy of David Hume.



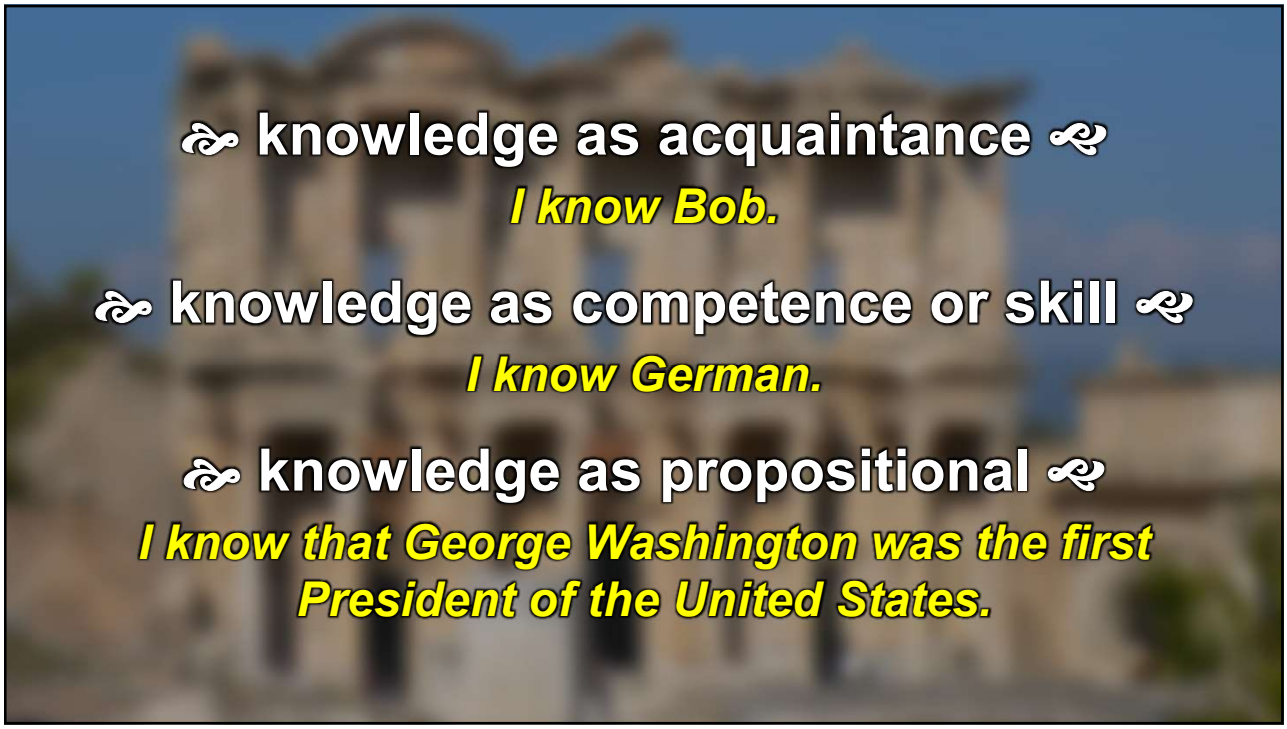
Immanuel Kant
(1724-1804)

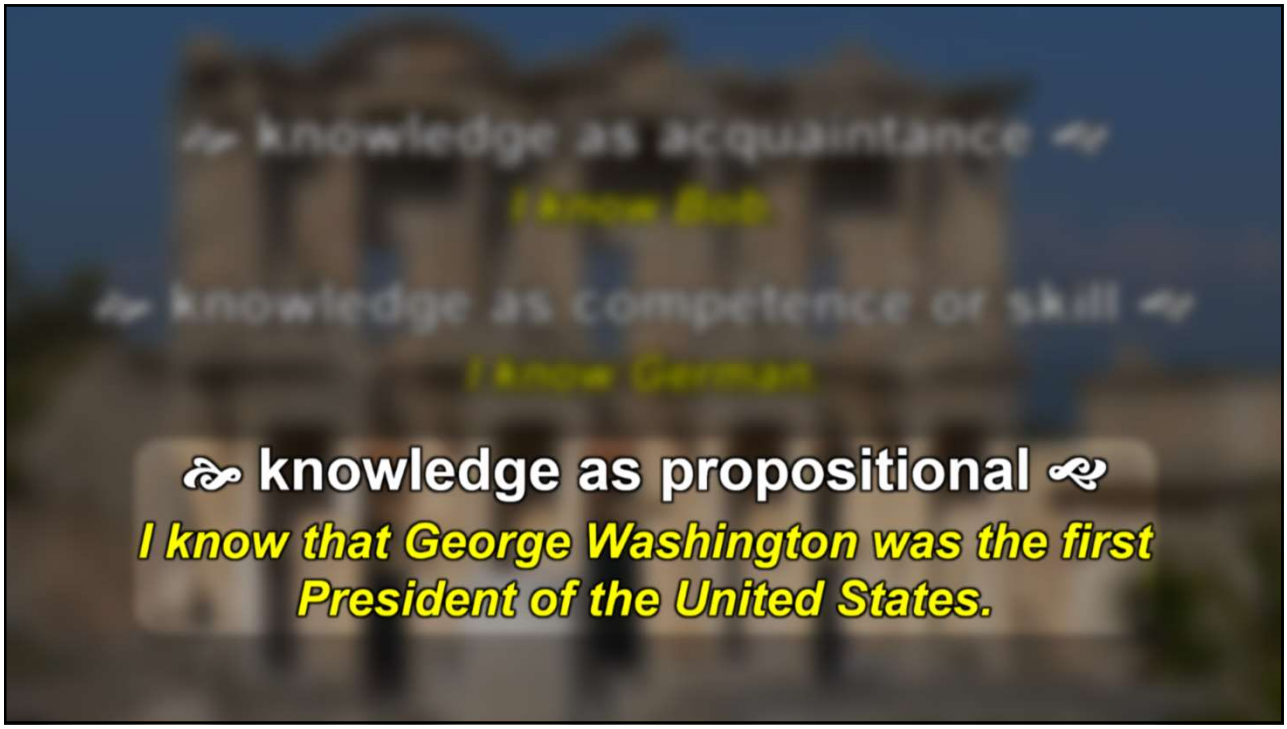
Kant will argue for synthetic a priori knowledge, which is to say, knowledge that is informative (synthetic) yet can be known with certainty prior to experience (a priori).



Immanuel Kant
(1724-1804)

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.


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

When trying to understand a concept, thing, or event, philosophers often seek to identify the necessary conditions and sufficient conditions for it.

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.

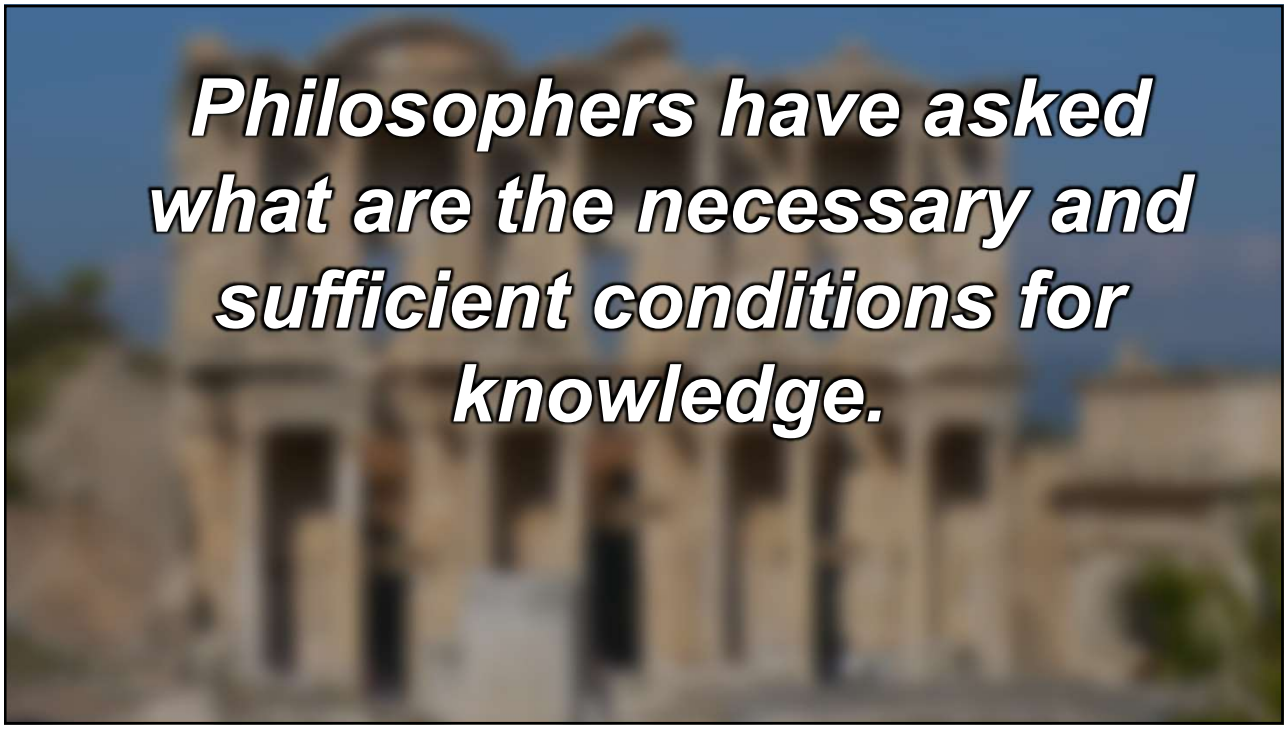
Note that while oxygen is a necessary condition for fire, it is not sufficient.

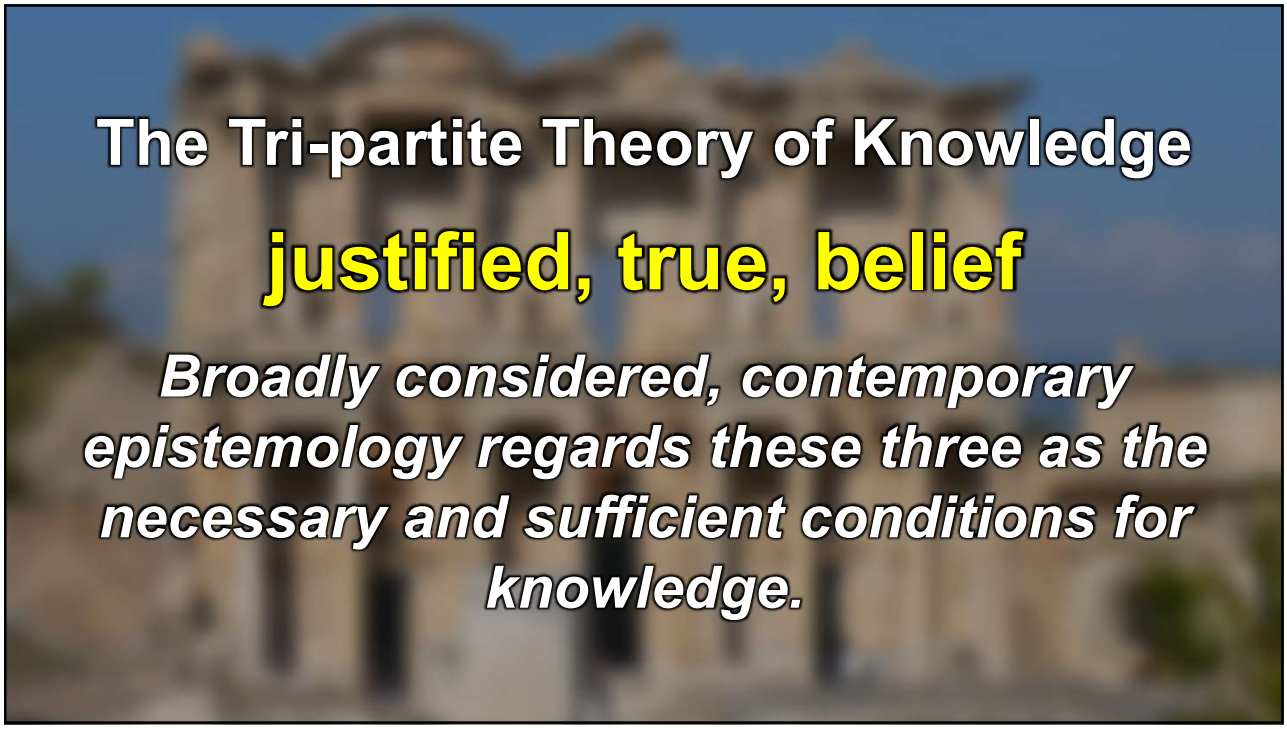
Oxygen can be present and there still not be fire.

Necessary and Sufficient Conditions

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

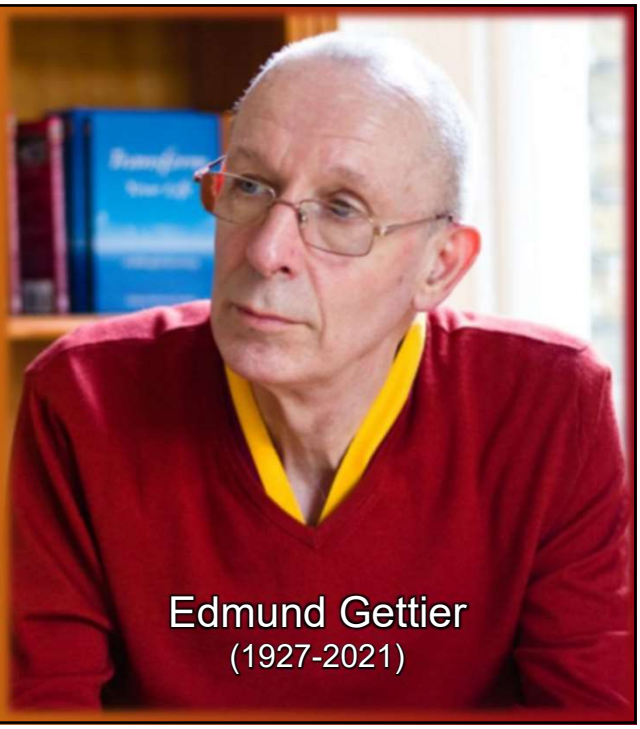
For example, being pregnant is a sufficient condition for a mammal being female, but it is not the cause of the mammal being female.


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).

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]

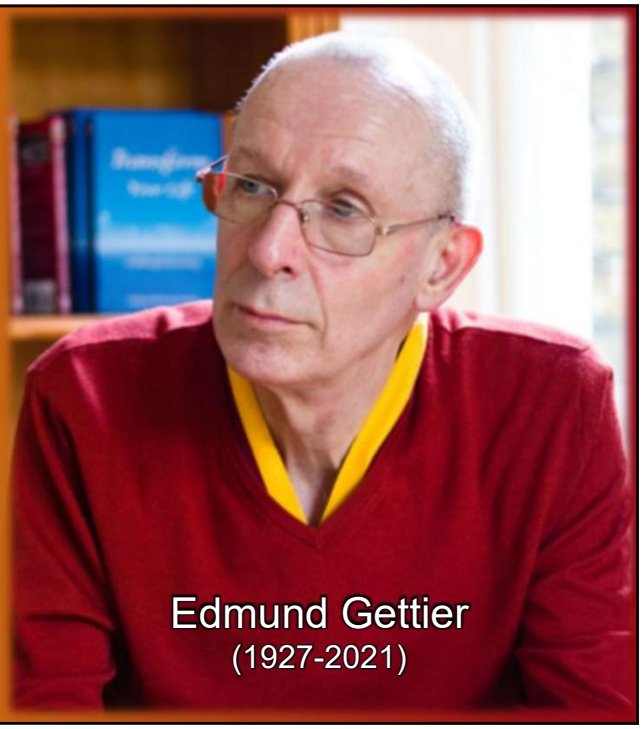
(b) S knows that P *IFF* (i) S accepts P,
(ii) S has adequate evidence for P, and
(iii) P is true.

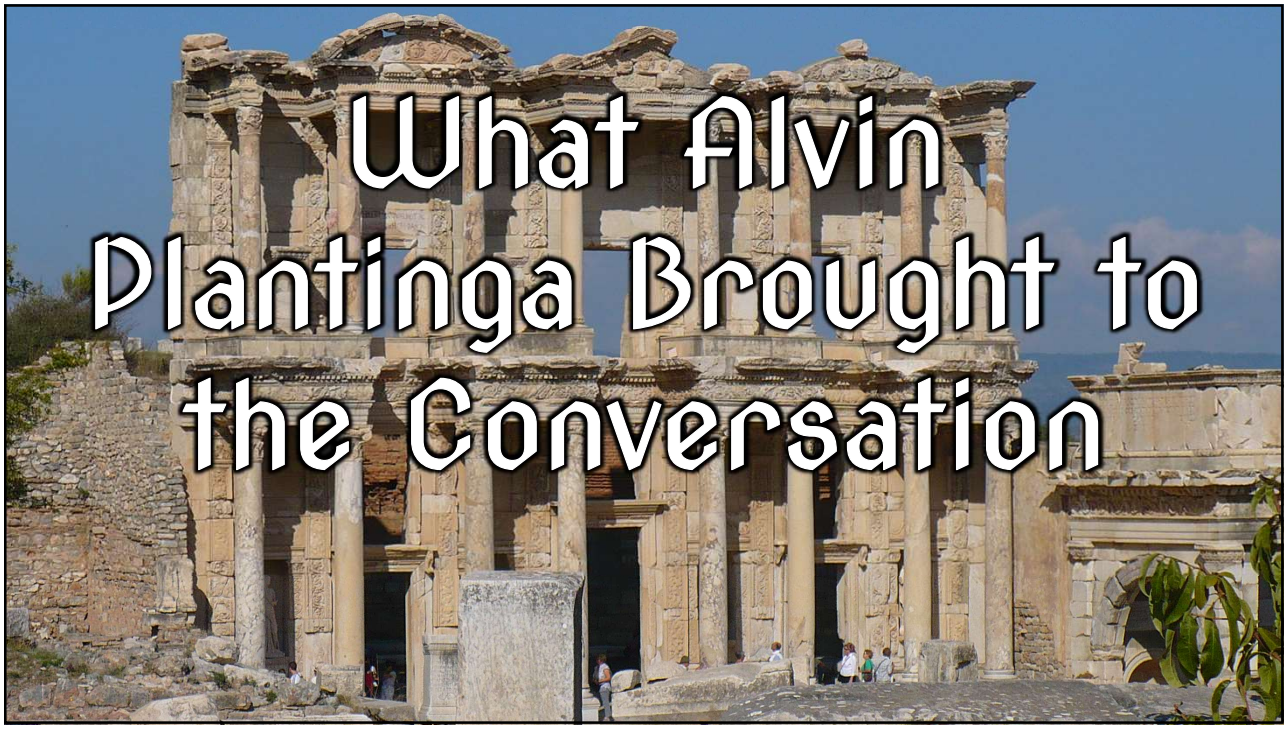
Ayer has stated the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowledge as follows:[3]

(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

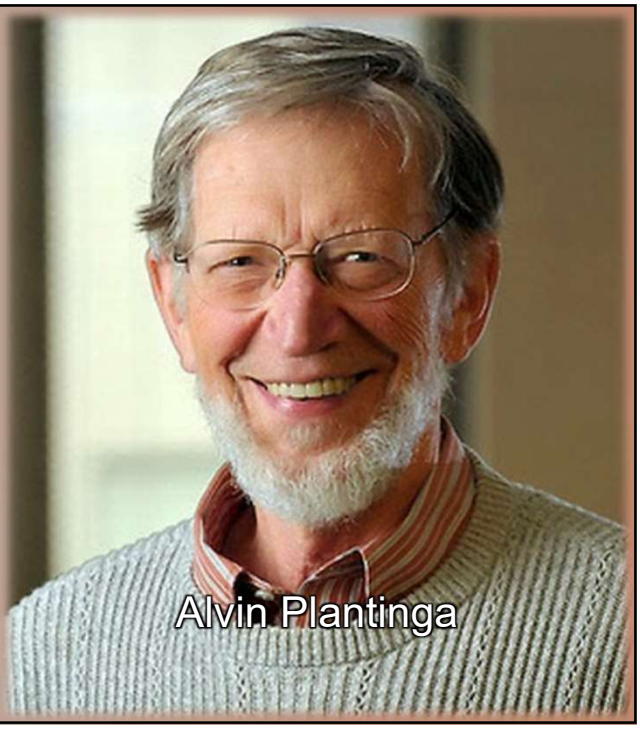




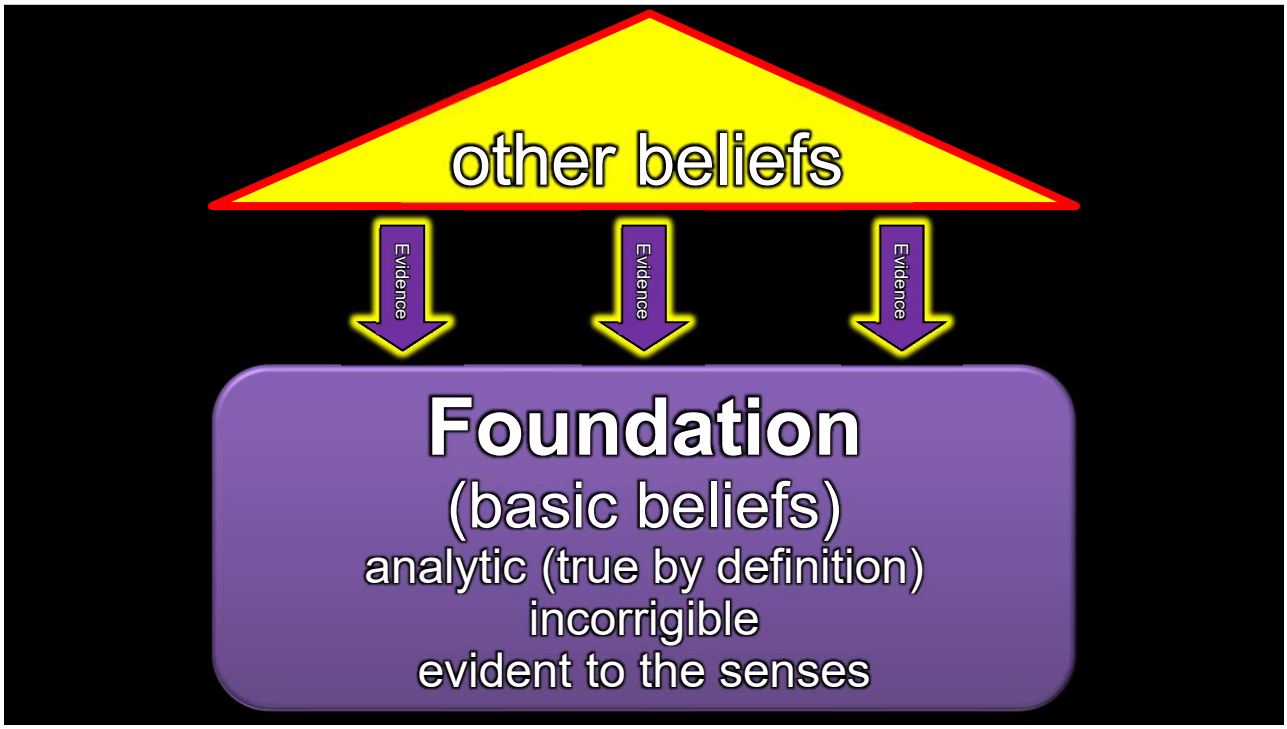
Plantinga's Challenge to "Classical" Foundationalism

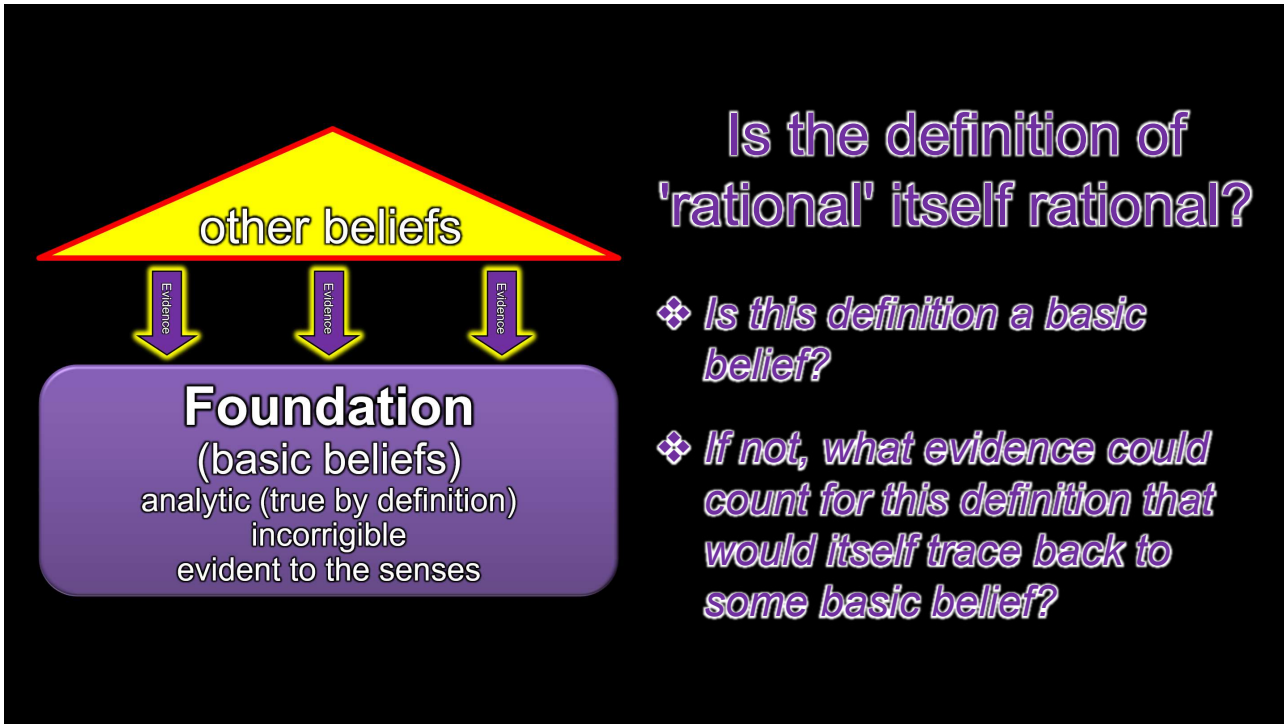
"Classical foundationalism ... is a picture or total way of looking at faith, knowledge, justified belief, rationality, and allied topics. ... According to the foundationalist some propositions are properly basic and some are not; those that are not are rationally accepted only on the basis of evidence,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

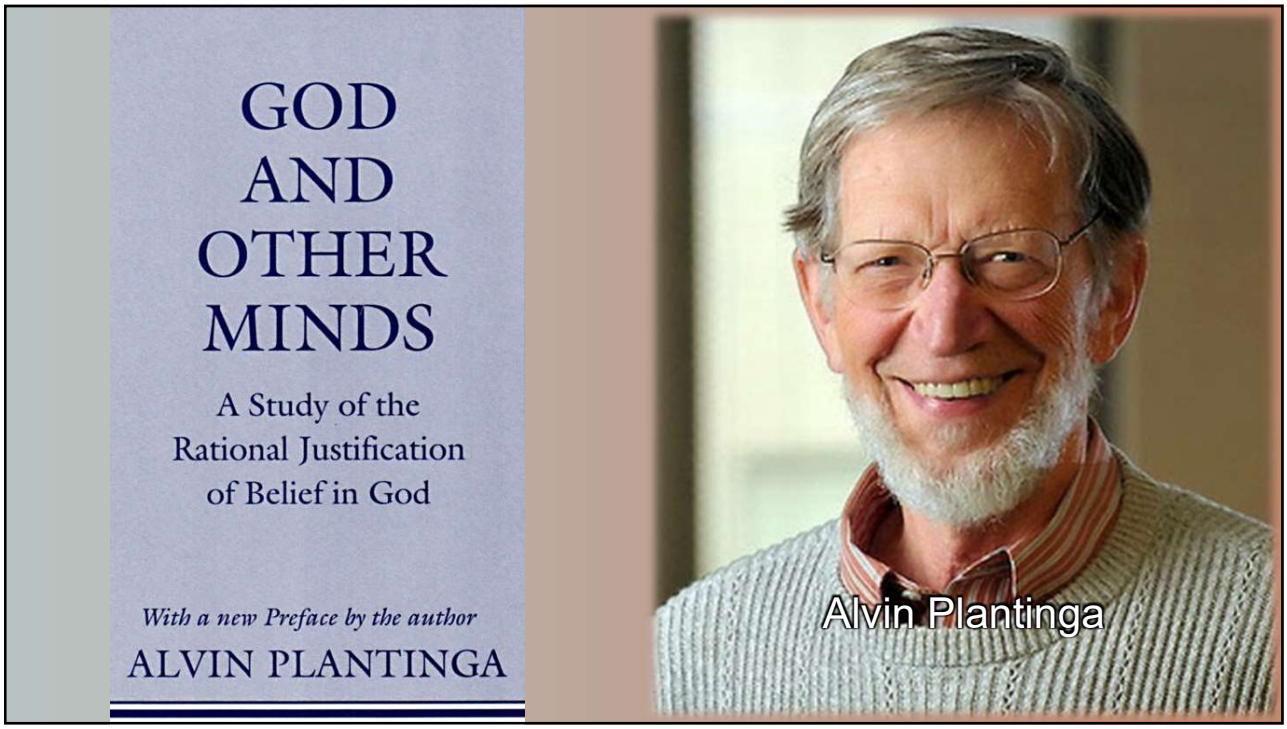
[Alvin Plantinga, "Is Belief in God Rational?" in C. F. DeLaney, ed. *Rationality and Religious Belief* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979) as cited in Louis P. Pojman, *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology* (Belmont: Wadsworth,1987), 455]

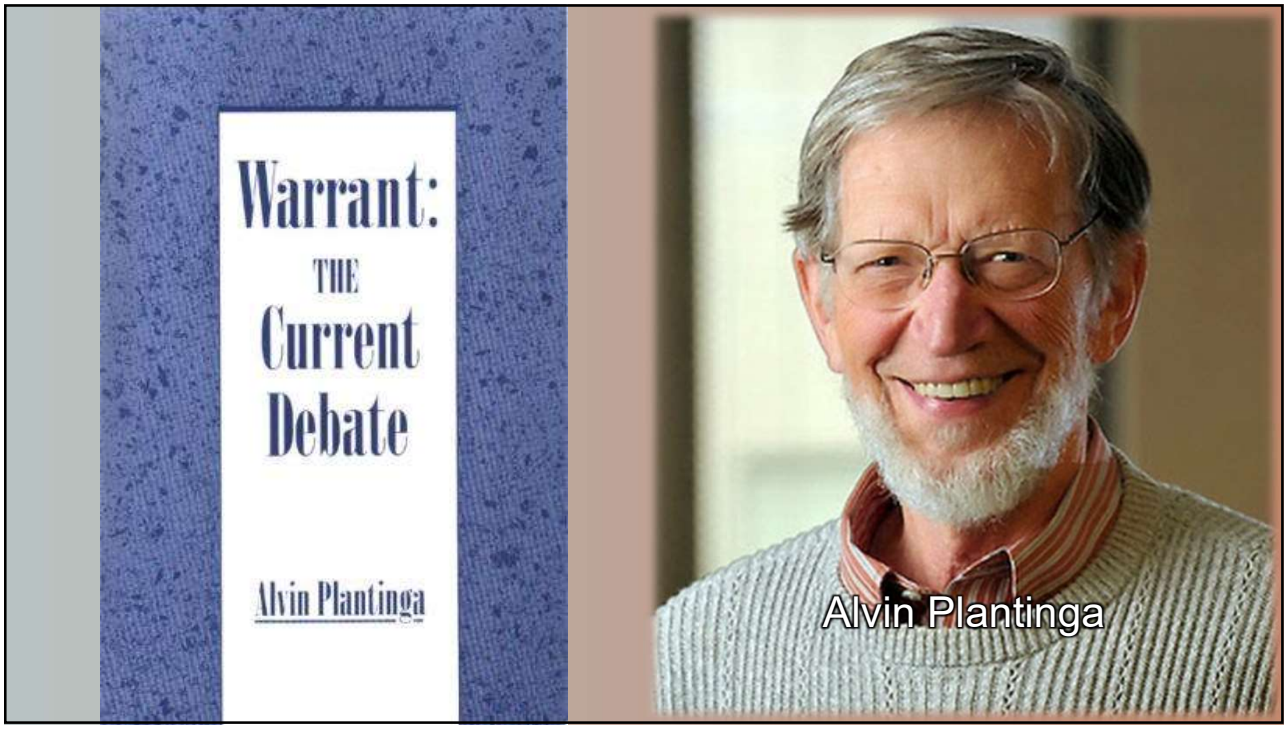


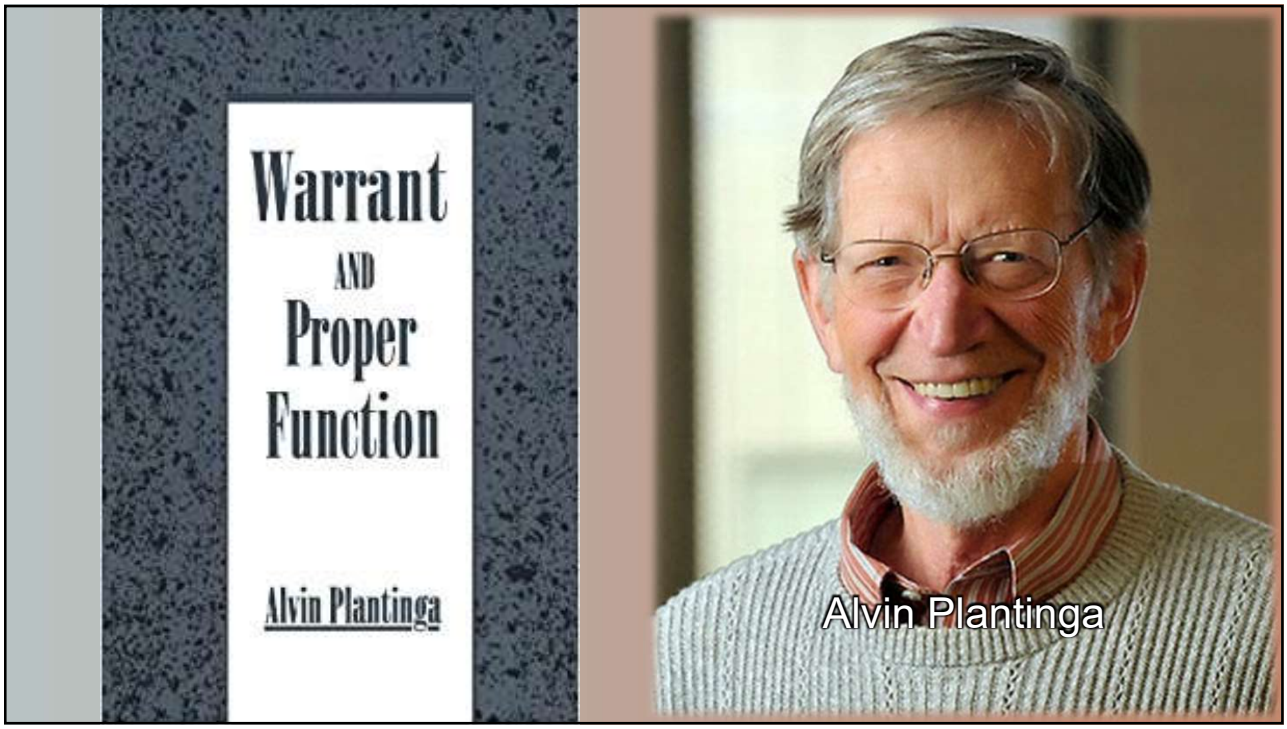
Alvin Plantinga

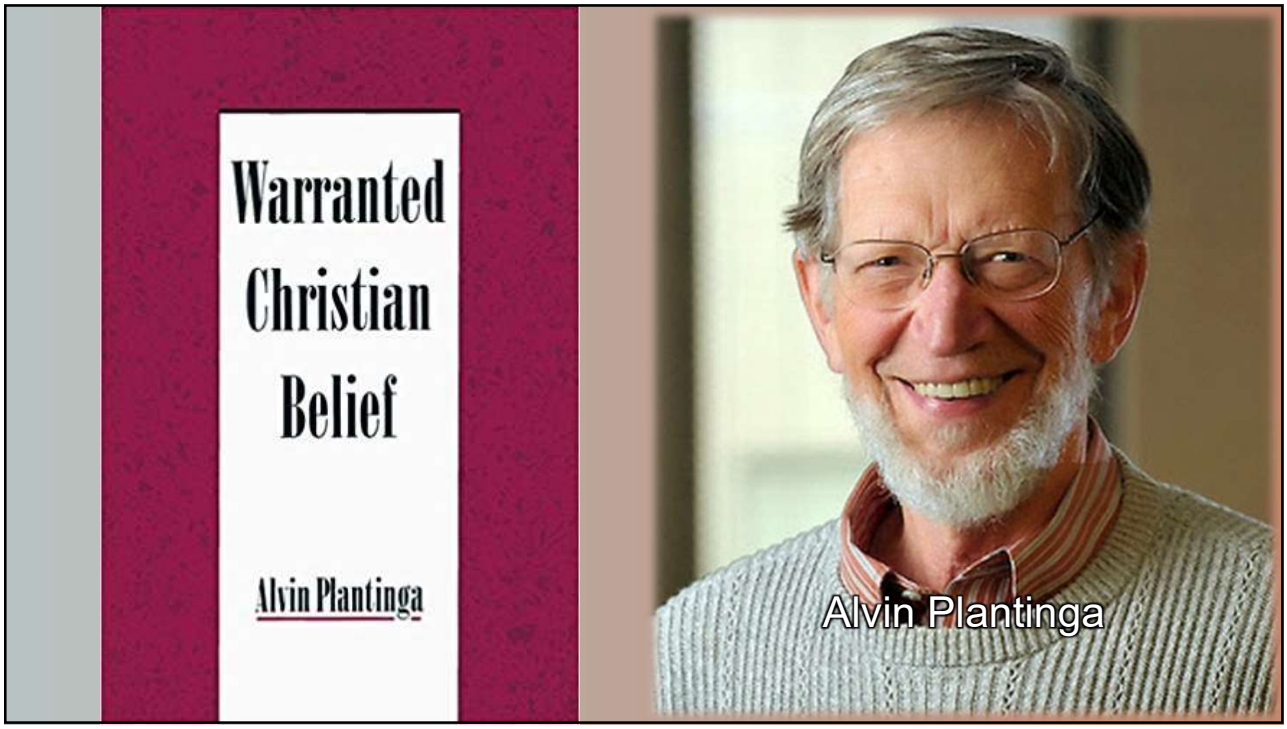

other beliefs
Evidence
Evidence
Evidence
Foundation
(basic beliefs)
analytic (true by definition)
incorrigible
evident to the senses

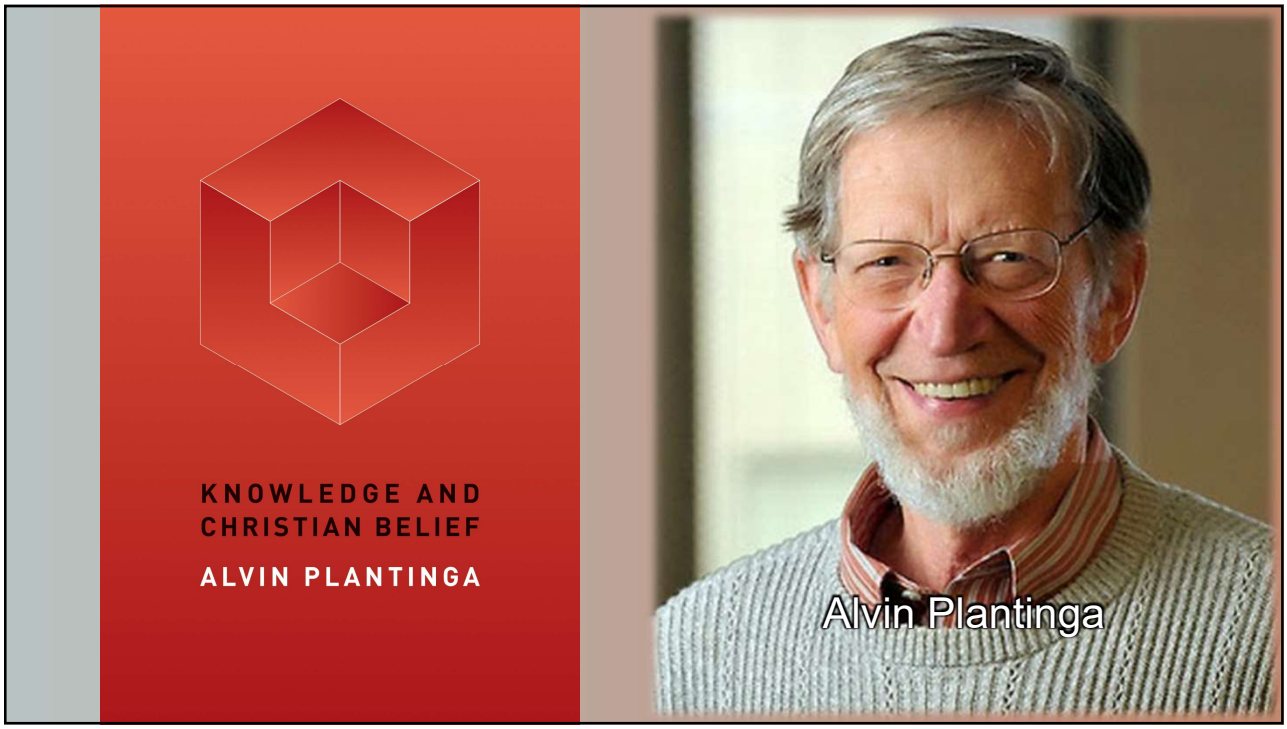

other beliefs
Evidence
Evidence
Evidence
Foundation
(basic beliefs)
analytic (true by definition)
incorrigible
evident to the senses
Is the definition of 'rational' itself rational?
Is this definition a basic belief?
If not, what evidence could count for this definition that would itself trace back to some basic belief?


GOD
AND
OTHER
MINDS
A Study of the
Rational Justification
of Belief in God
With a new Preface by the author
ALVIN PLANTINGA
Alvin Plantinga


Warrant:
THE
Current
Debate
Alvin Plantinga
Alvin Plantinga


Warrant
AND
Proper
Function
Alvin Plantinga
Alvin Plantinga


Warranted
Christian
Belief
Alvin Plantinga
Alvin Plantinga


KNOWLEDGE AND
CHRISTIAN BELIEF
ALVIN PLANTINGA
Alvin Plantinga