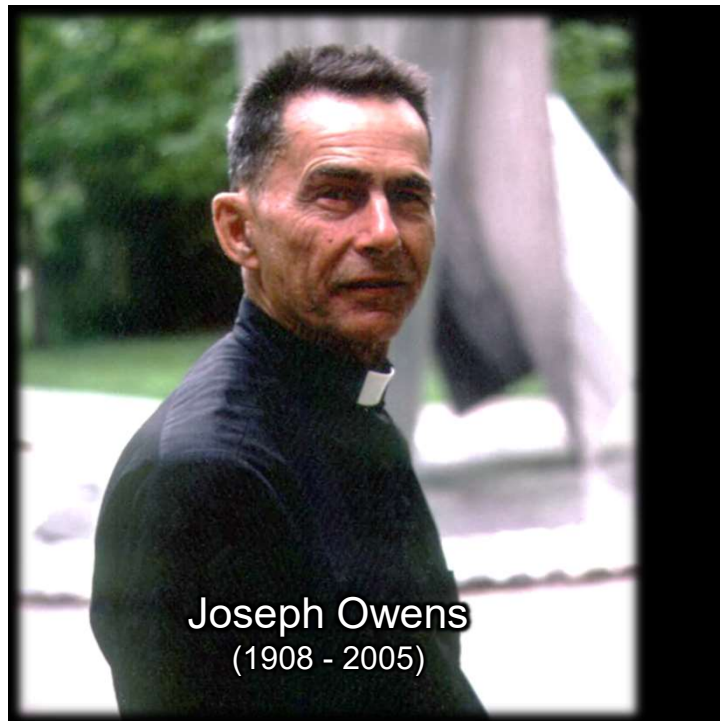
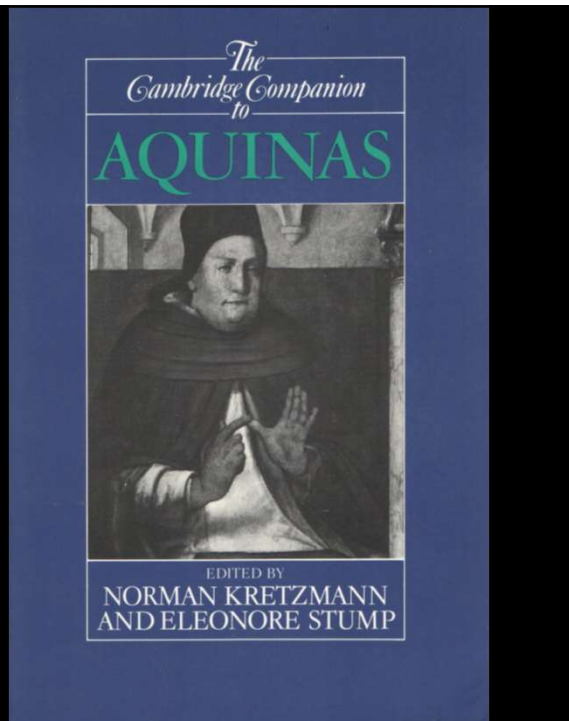
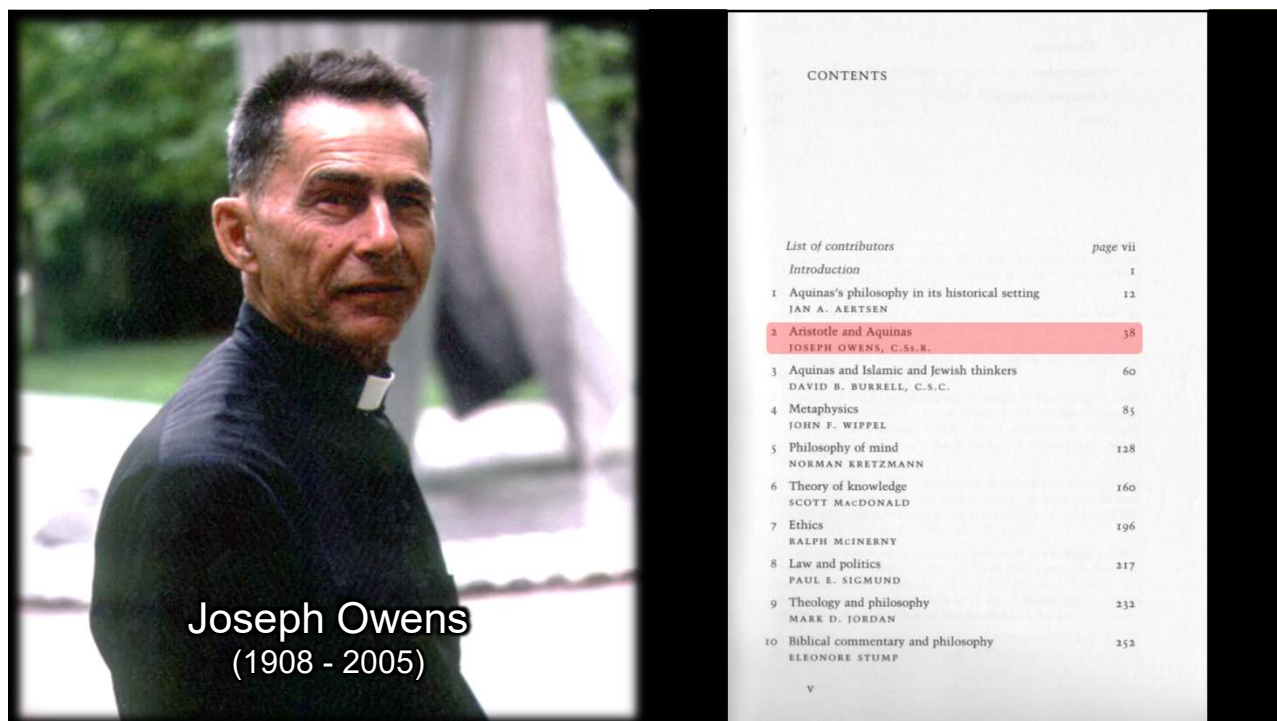


# Aristotle and Aquinas: Similarities



Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)





**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:**

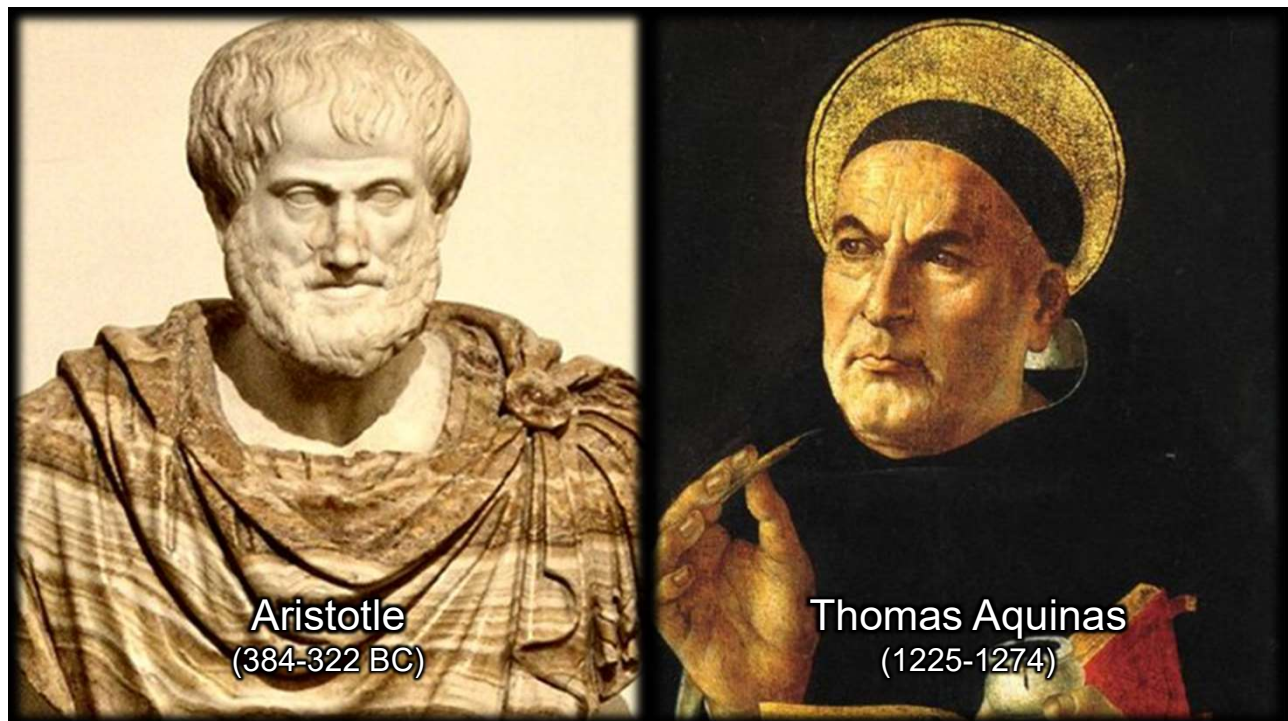
**regard intellectual contemplation  
as the supreme goal of human striving**

**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 and Aquinas: Differences



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

# Aquinas the Christian

## **☞ Thomas Aquinas was Christian ☞**

***There can be no doubt that his Christian faith played an inestimable role in shaping his philosophical thought.***

***It might even be said that Thomas was first and foremost a theologian, and second a philosopher.***

## **☞ Thomas Aquinas was Christian ☞**

***As concerning many of his philosophical conclusions, however, he rarely cheated by appealing to the authority of his faith to settle philosophical issues.***



## **☞ Thomas Aquinas was Christian ☞**

***This is so even if one might suggest that he did let his faith shape the direction of his speculations, if not determine what were his live options. (e.g., one personal God with all His attributes; creation of the universe; survival of the soul after the death of the body)***

## **☞ Thomas Aquinas was Christian ☞**

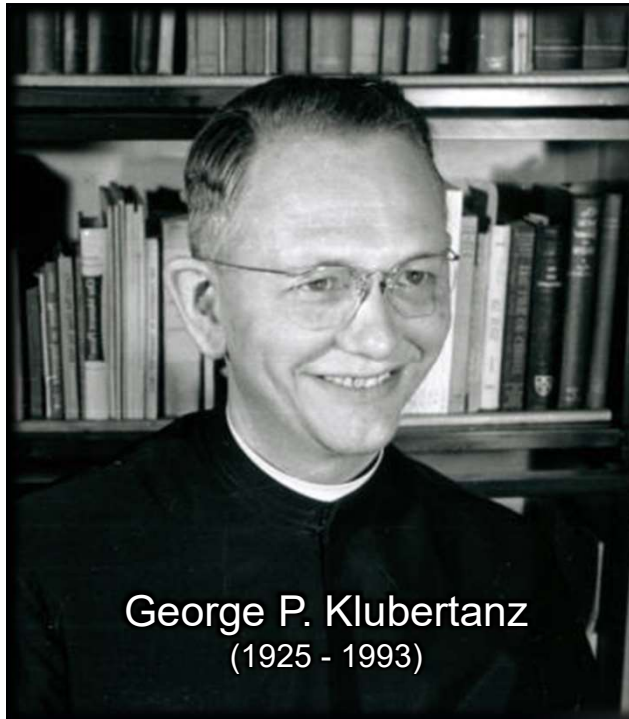
***Still, it probably is fair to say that his overall confidence in the human's ability to know the truth about reality stems from his confidence that we were created by a loving God to be in His image, and that our ability to know some things is a function of our ability to imitate the God who knows all things.***

## ∞ The Primacy of Metaphysics ∞

*The event of knowing is an event of being.*

*What it means to know has everything to do with what it is to be a knower and what it is to be a known.*

*This means that a knower knowing a thing will have something to do with the metaphysical relationship between the two.*



**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.]

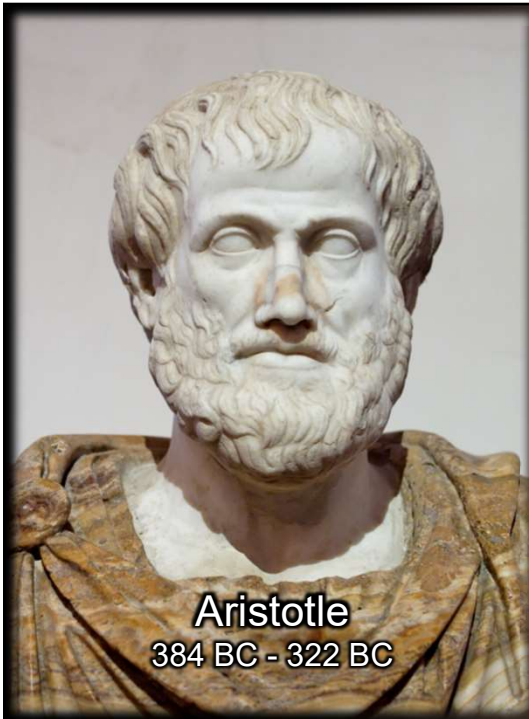
## ∞ The Primacy of Metaphysics ∞

*The discipline of epistemology is largely a modern and contemporary concern.*

*Often, contemporary philosophers seek to answer questions of knowing in ways that are metaphysical "neutral."*

## ∞ The Foundation of Empiricism ∞

*Like Aristotle before him, for Aquinas, all knowledge begins with sensory experience.*



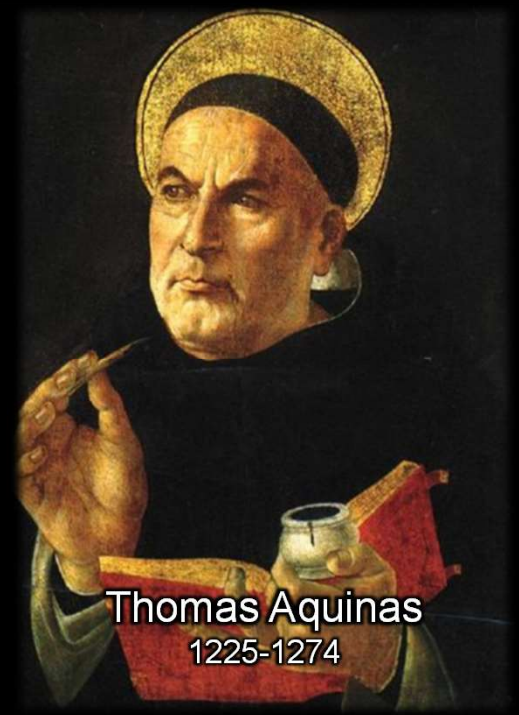
Aristotle  
384 BC - 322 BC

*"From experience again . . . originate the skill of the craftsman and the knowledge of the man of science, skill in the sphere of coming to be and science in the sphere of beings. We conclude that these states of knowledge are neither innate in a determinate form, nor developed from other higher states of knowledge, but from sense-perception."*

[Posterior Analytics II, 19, 100a7-11, trans. G. R. G. Mure in Richard McKeon, ed. The Basic Works of Aristotle (New York: Random House, 1941), 185]

***"Sensible things [are that] from which human reason takes the origin of its knowledge."***

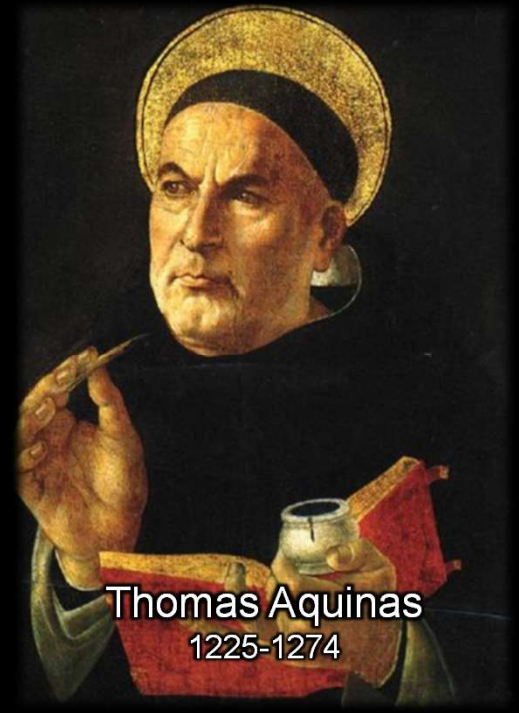
[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I. 9, §2. Trans. Anton C. Pegis. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975): I, 77]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

***"Our knowledge, taking its start from things, proceeds in this order. First, it begins in sense; second, it is completed in the intellect."***

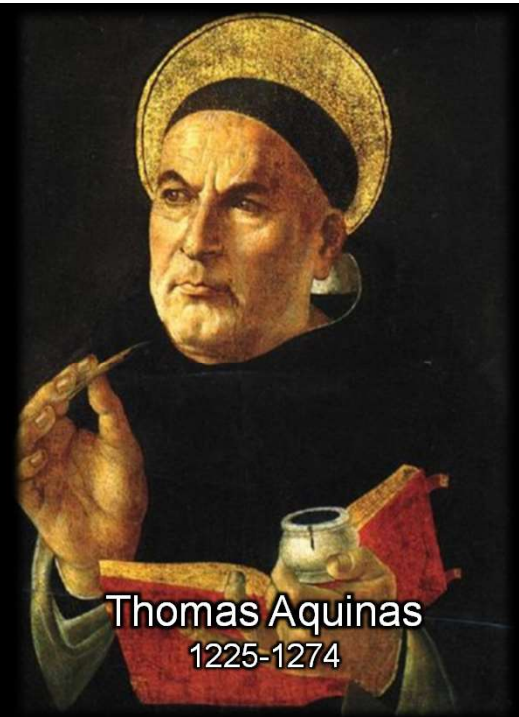
[[Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, I, 11, trans. Mulligan, 48, in *Truth* (3 vols), vol. 1 trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952); vol. 2 trans. James V. McGlynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953); vol. 3, trans. Robert W. Schmidt (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1954). The three volumes were reprinted as *Truth* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994)]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

***"According to its manner of knowing in the present life, the intellect depends on the sense for the origin of knowledge; and so those things that do not fall under the senses cannot be grasp by the human intellect except in so far as the knowledge of them is gathered from sensible things."***

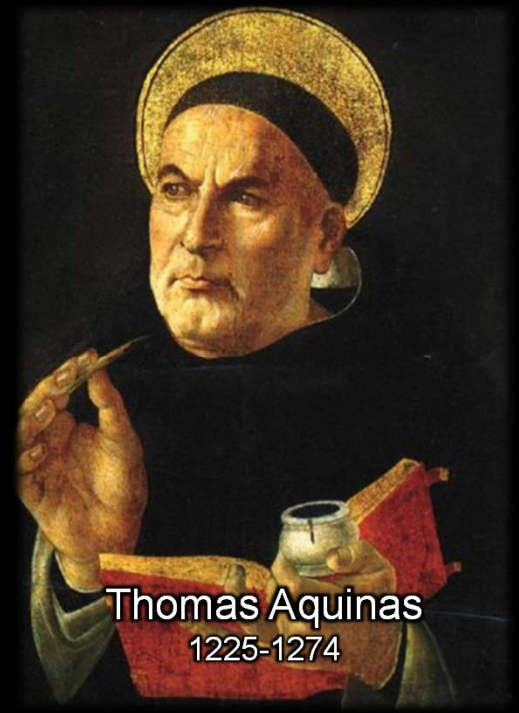
[[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, I, 3, §3. Trans. Anton C. Pegis. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975): I, 64]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

***"Our senses give rise to memories, and from these we obtain experiential knowledge of things, which in turn is the means through which we come to an understanding of the universal principles of sciences and art."***

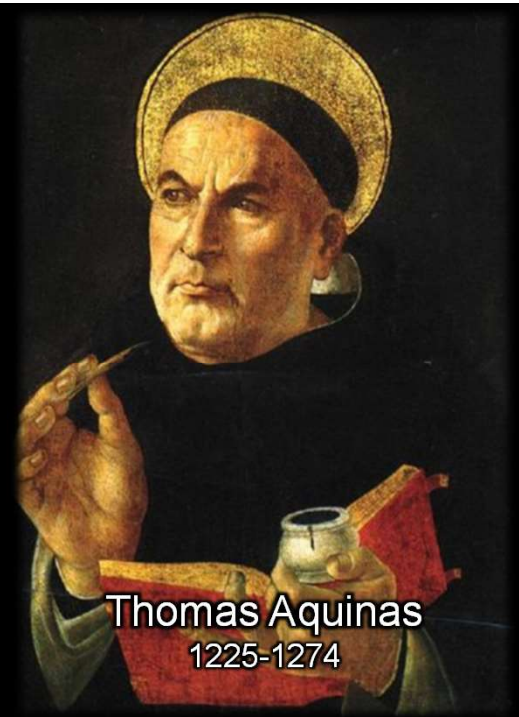
[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, 83, §26. Trans. James F. Anderson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975): II, 279]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

***"Our knowledge of principles themselves is derived from sensible things."***

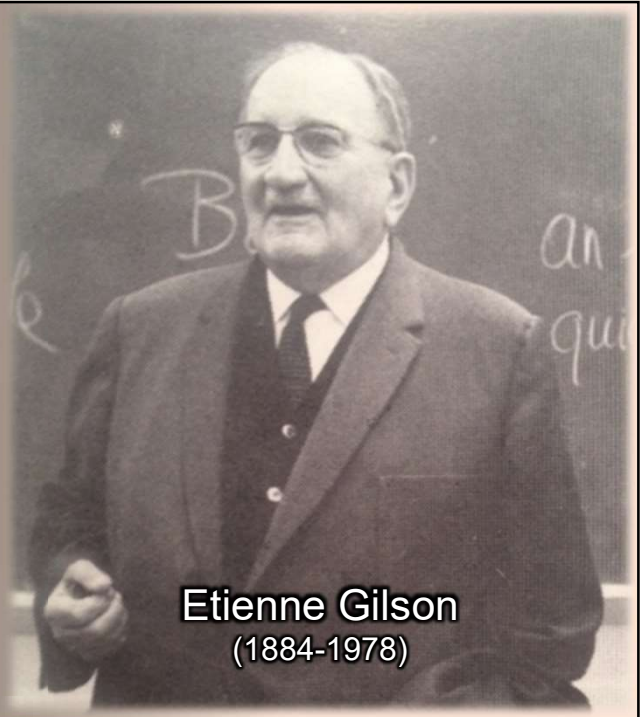
[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, 83, §32. Trans. James F. Anderson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975): II, 282]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

***"The senses are only the bearers of a message which they are incapable of reading, for only the intellect can decipher it."***

[Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 199. While in context Gilson was referring to the act of existing, I believe this point can be extended to other metaphysical aspects of things.]



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

**Surrendering the  
Epistemological Turf  
to the Modernists and  
Postmodernists**

*Too many Christians have more or less surrendered the territory of empirical knowledge to the Logical Positivists and to "scientism" (e.g., Richard Dawkins).*

*They have erroneously let contemporary scientists set the agenda when these scientists claim that all knowledge is constrained to the boundaries of the physical world.*



*These Christians have lost sight of the fact that, while all knowledge **begins** in experience, that is not the end of the matter.*

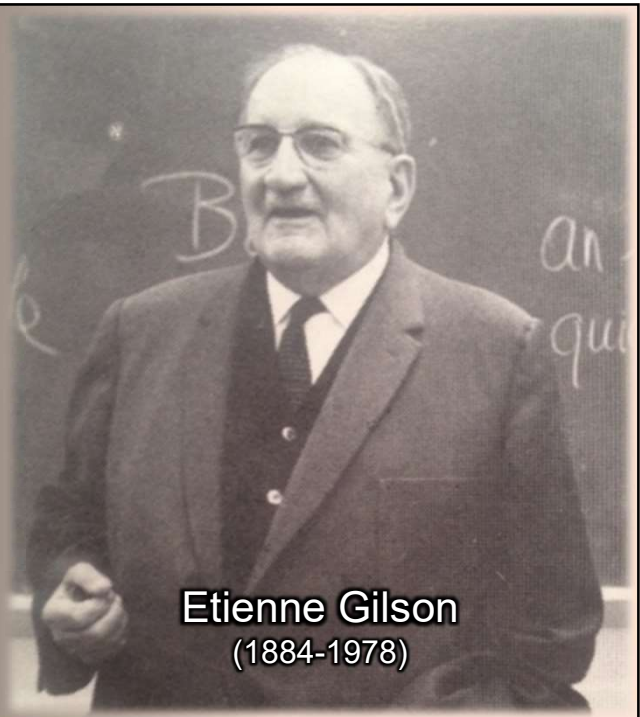
*According to classical empiricism, all knowledge **begins** in experience and is **completed in the intellect**.*

## ∞ The Methodology of Realism ∞

*Our knowledge of external, sensible objects is the first apprehension of the intellect.*

*The existence of the external, sensible world is the starting point for a realist methodology.*

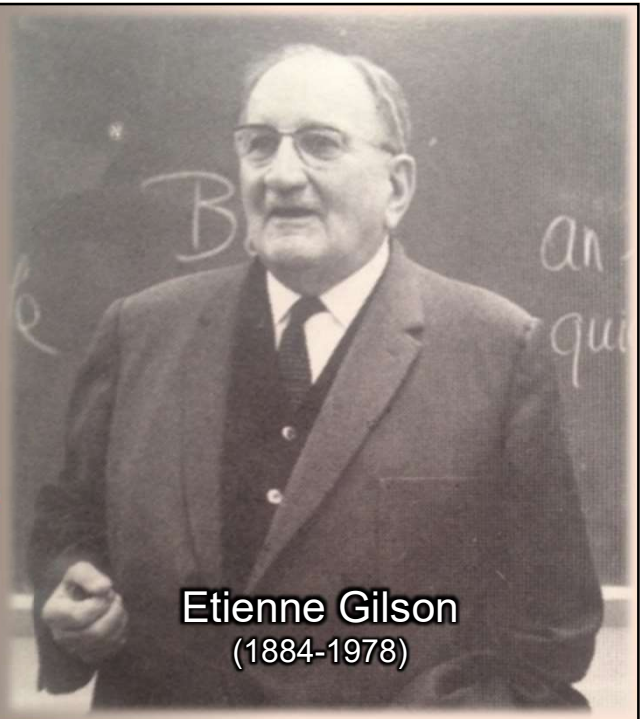
*"After passing twenty centuries of the very model of those self-evident facts that only a madman would ever dream of doubting, the existence of the external world finally received its metaphysical demonstration from Descartes.*



Etienne Gilson  
(1884-1978)

**"Yet no sooner had he demonstrated the existence of the external world than his disciples realized that, not only was his proof worthless, but *the very principles which made such a demonstration necessary at the same time rendered the attempted proof impossible.*"**

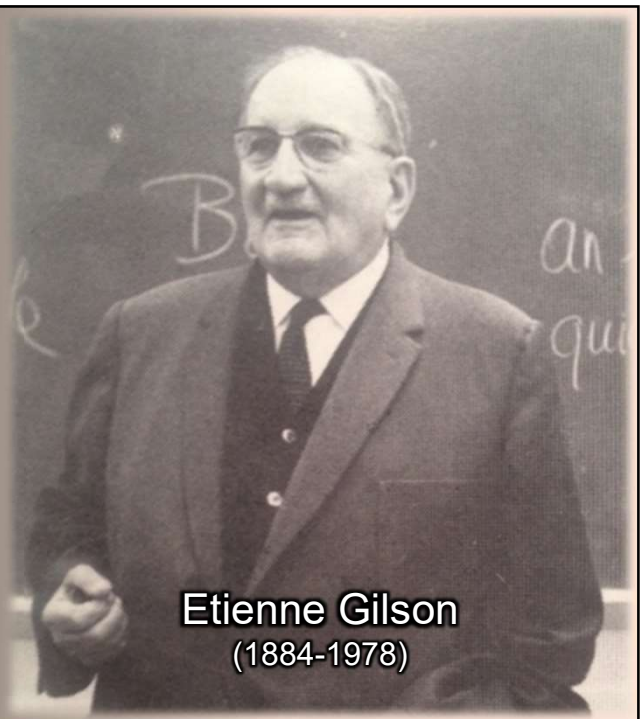
[Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, trans. by Mark A. Wauck, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1986, p. 27]



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

**"The realist, therefore, when invited to take part in discussions on what is not his own ground, should first of all accustom himself to saying No, and not imagine himself in difficulties because he is unable to answer questions which are in fact insoluble, but which for him do not arise."**

[Etienne Gilson, *Methodical Realism*, p. 128]



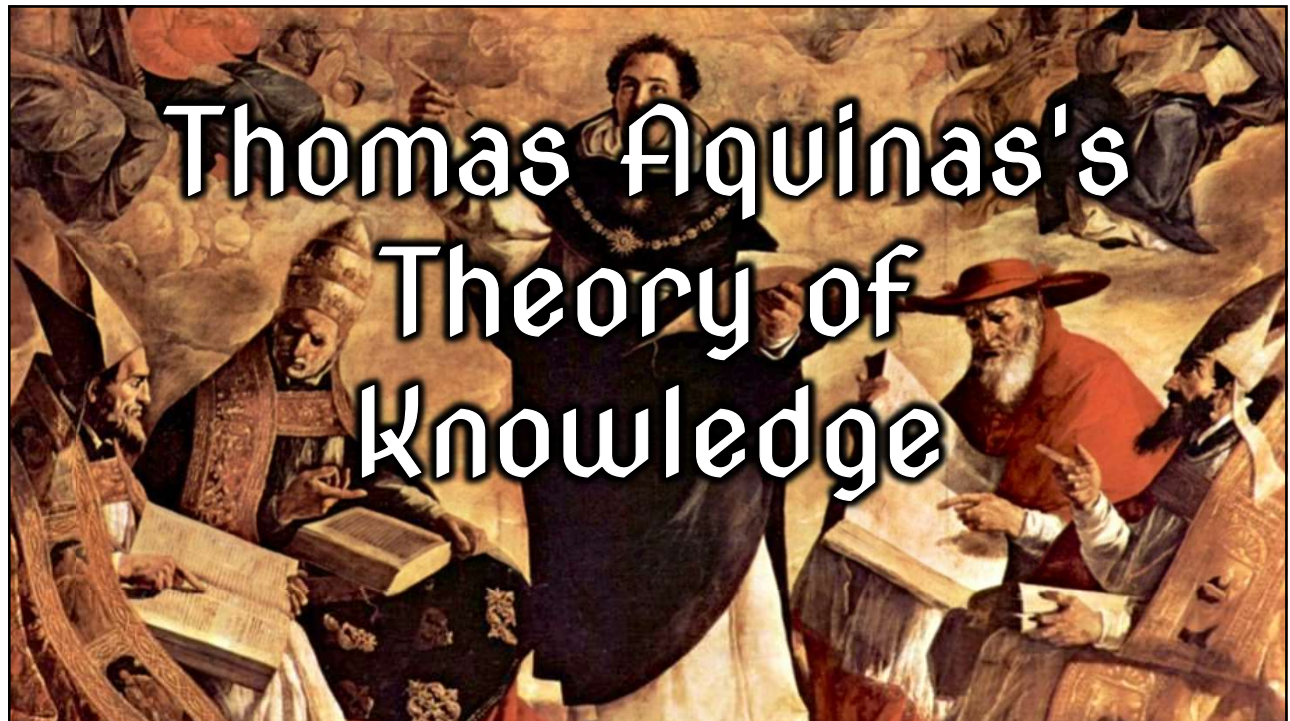
**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

***"The human intellect, to which it is connatural to derive its knowledge from sensible things, is not able through itself to reach the vision of the divine substance in itself, which is above all sensible things and, indeed, impropportionately above all other things."***

[[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, 1, §1. Trans. Charles J. O'Neil (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975): V. 35]



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274



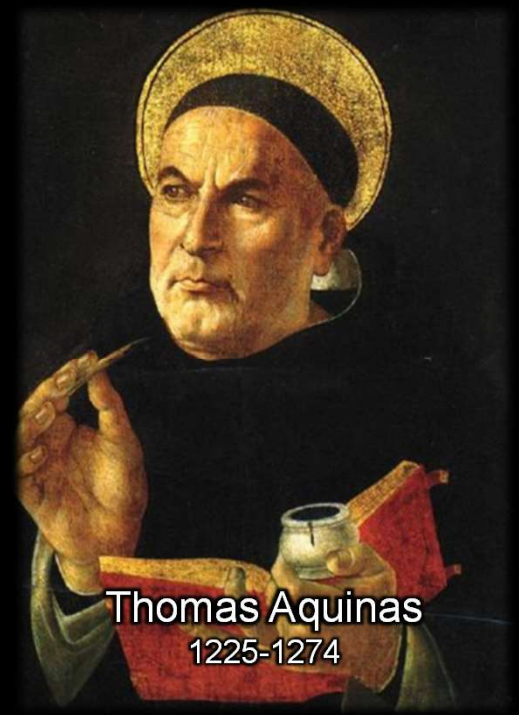
***The knowable object is proportioned to the knowing power.***

***Human beings acquire knowledge of real things as they exist in his environment.***

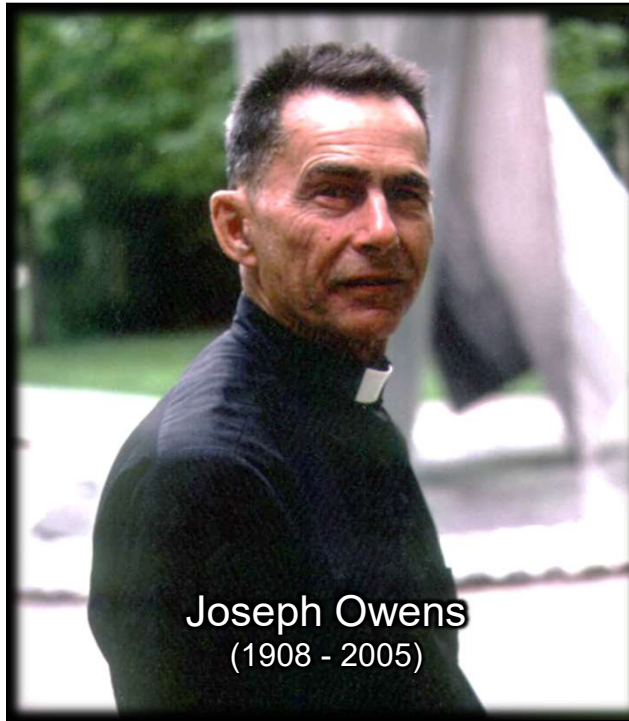
***These things are sensible (bodily) things known through sense perception.***

***"Knowledge is regulated according as the thing known is in the knower. But the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower."***

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, Q12, art. 4, trans. Father of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics), 51]



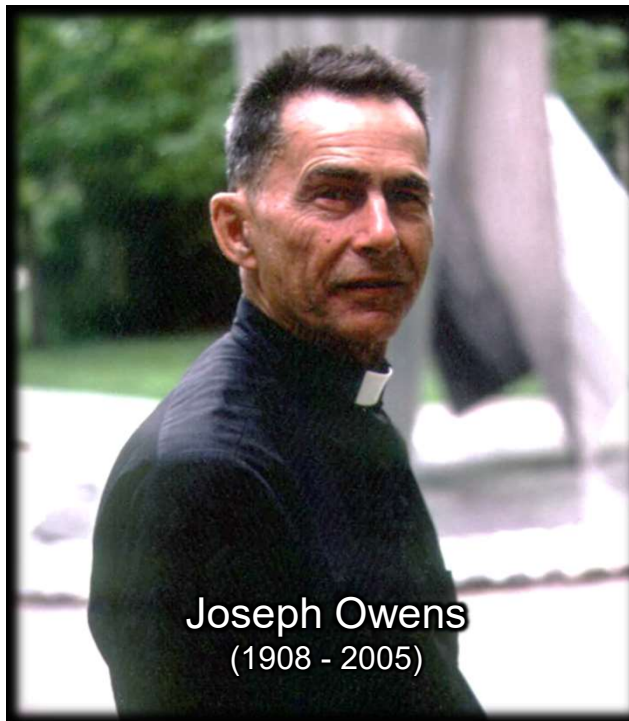
**Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274**



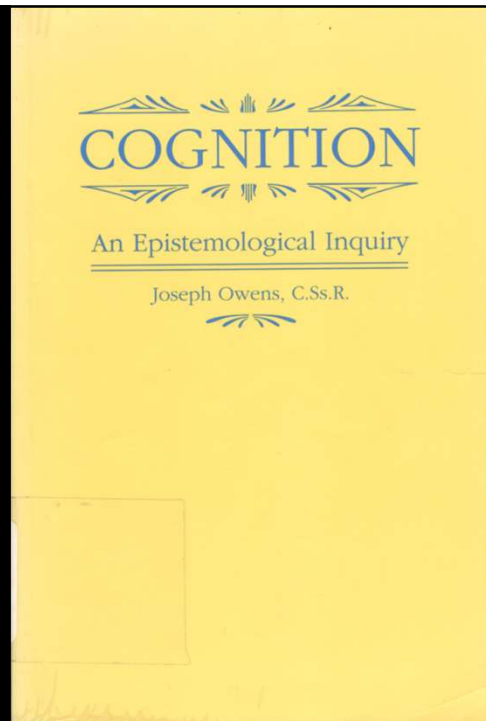
Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

***"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."***

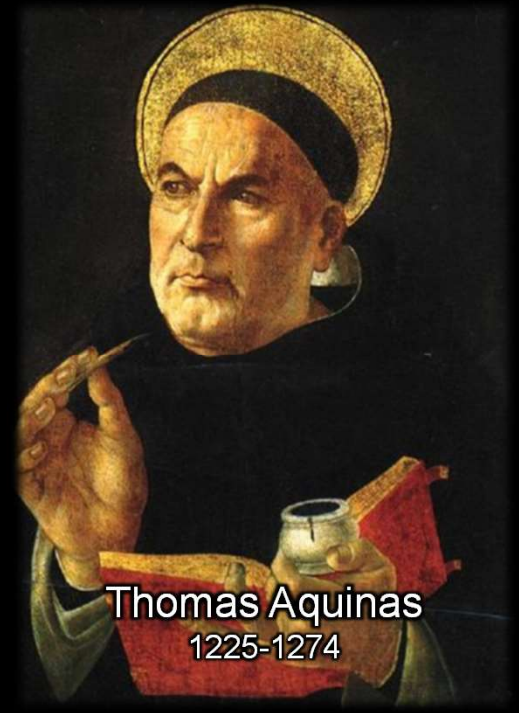
["Aristotle—Cognition a Way of Being," in John R. Catan, ed. *Aristotle: The Collected Papers of Joseph Owens* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981): 78.



Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)



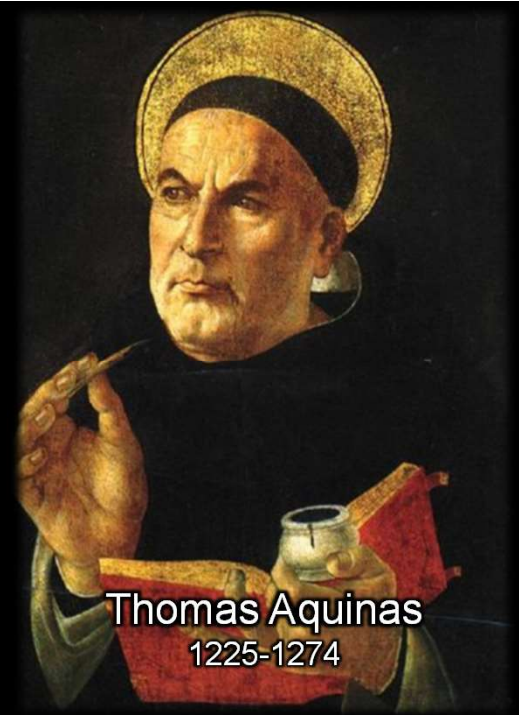
***"Now our soul possess two cognitive powers; one is the act of a corporeal organ, which naturally knows things existing in individual matter; hence sense knows only the singular. But there is another kind of cognitive power in the soul, called the intellect; and this is not the act of any corporeal organ."***



**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

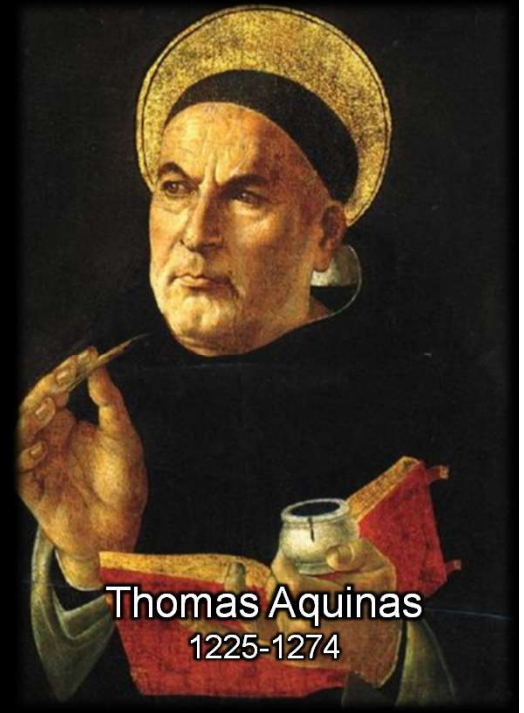
***"Wherefore the intellect naturally knows natures which exist only in individual matter; not as they are in such individual matter, but according as they are abstracted therefrom by the considering act of the intellect; hence it follows that through the intellect we can understand these objects as universal; and this is beyond the power of sense."***

[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, Q12, art. 4, trans. Father of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics), 52]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
1225-1274

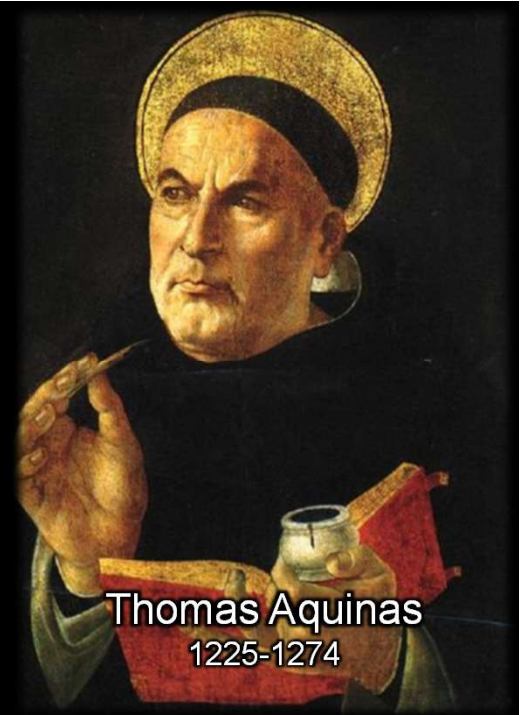
***"Sight cannot in any way know abstractly what it knows concretely; for in no way can it perceive a nature except as this one particular nature; whereas our intellect is able to consider abstractedly what it knows concretely."***



Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274

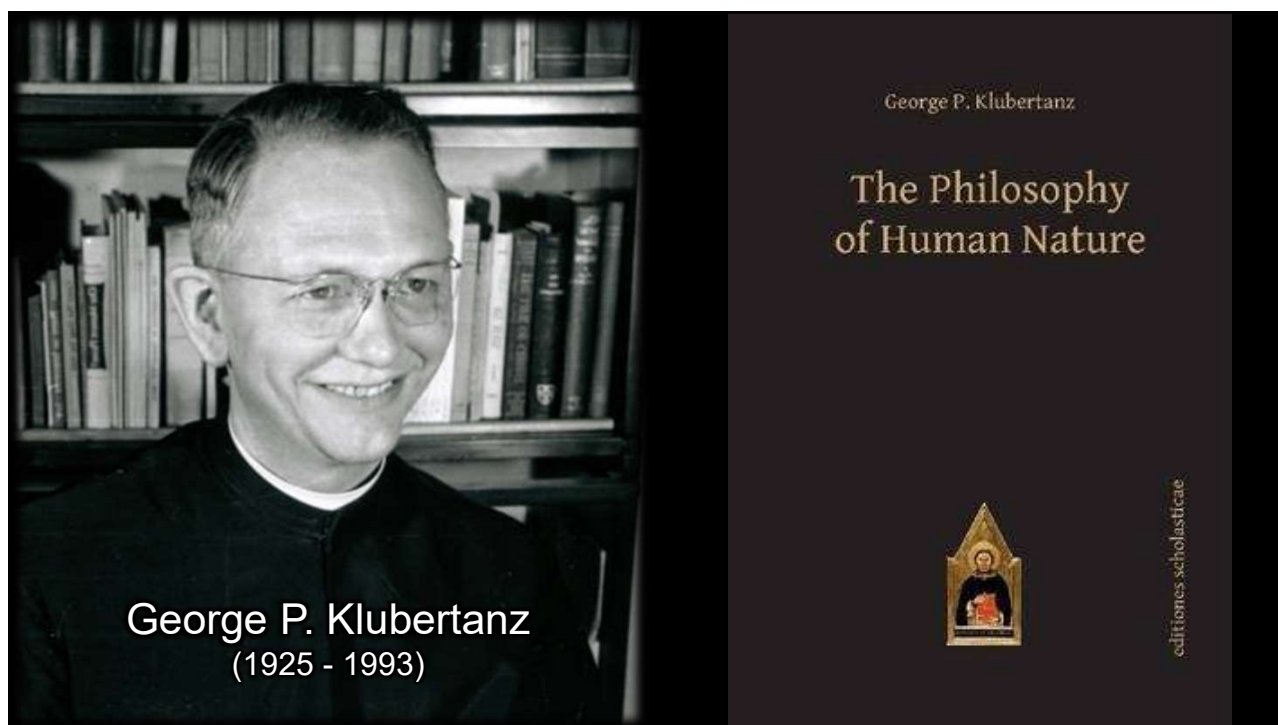
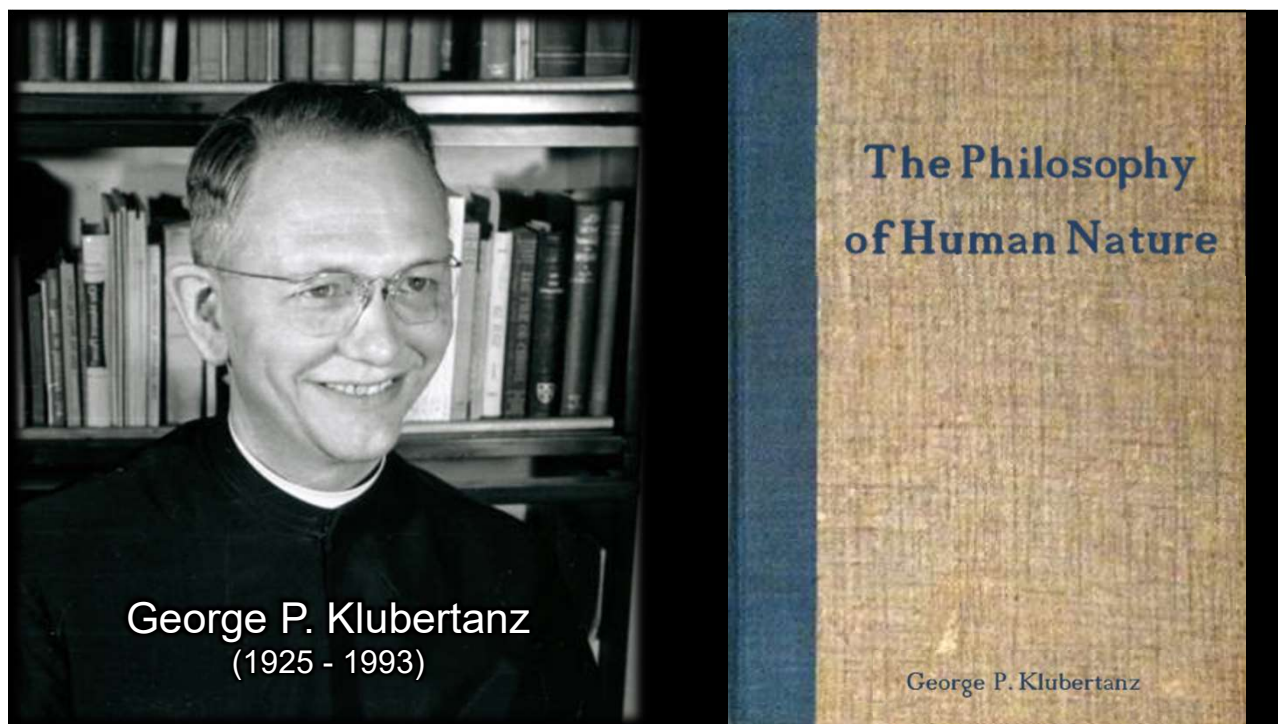
***"Now although it knows things which have a form residing in matter, still it resolves the composite into both of these elements; and it considers the form separately by itself."***

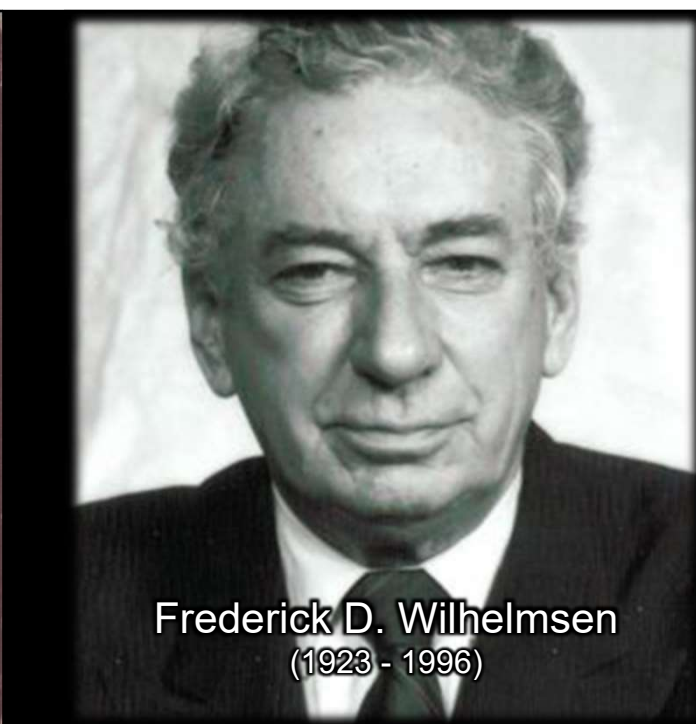
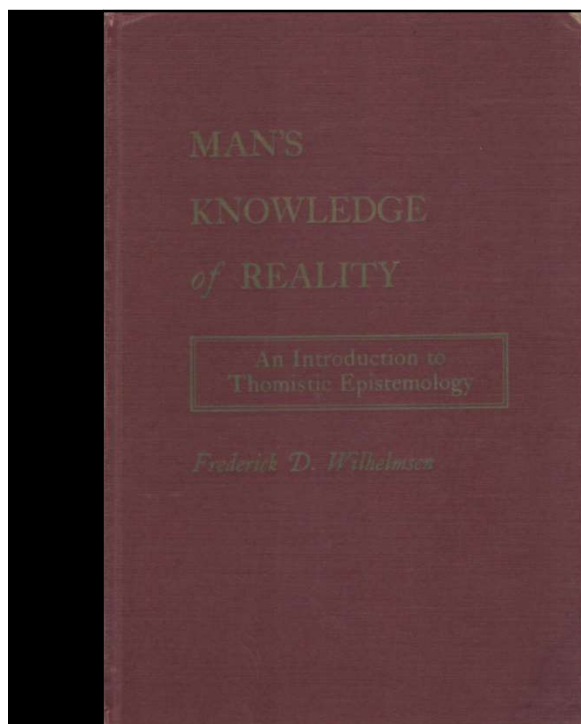
[Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, Q12, art. 4, trans. Father of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics), 52]



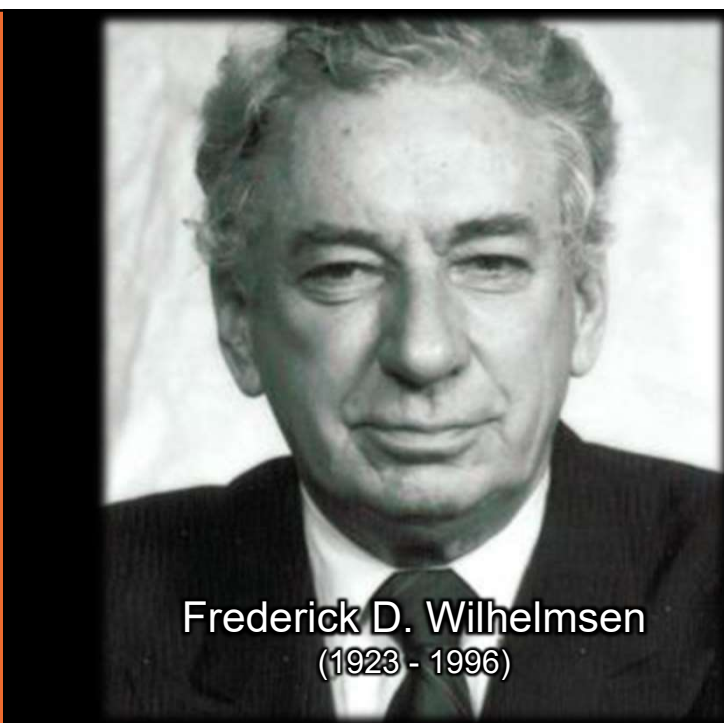
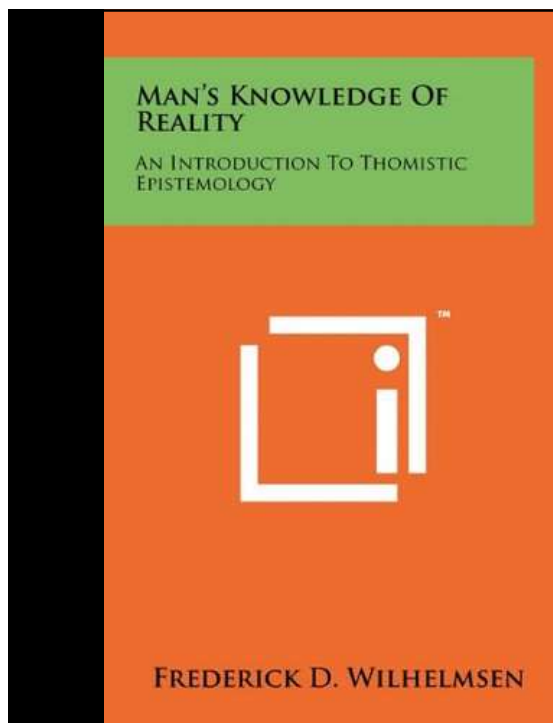
Thomas Aquinas  
1225-1274







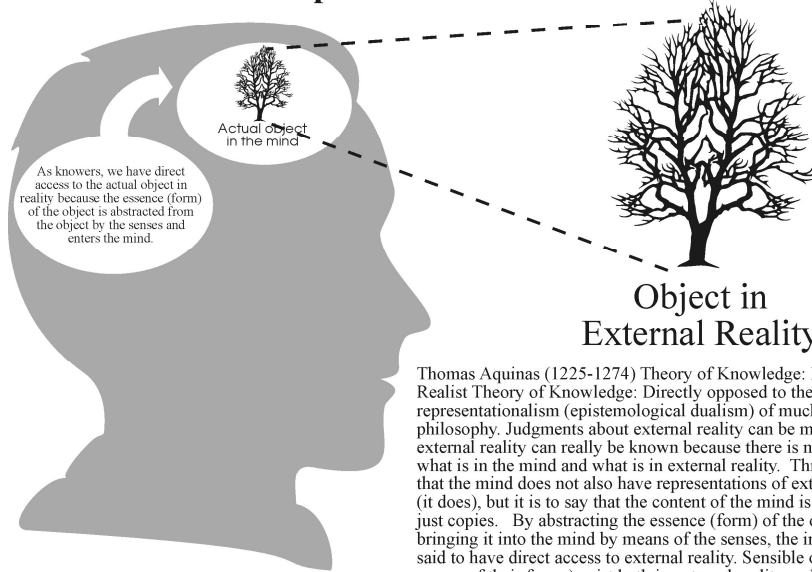
Frederick D. Wilhelmsen  
(1923 - 1996)



Frederick D. Wilhelmsen  
(1923 - 1996)

# Aquinas' Theory of Knowledge

## Classical Empiricism: Moderate Realism



Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) Theory of Knowledge: Moderate Realist Theory of Knowledge: Directly opposed to the representationalism (epistemological dualism) of much of modern philosophy. Judgments about external reality can be made and external reality can really be known because there is no gap between what is in the mind and what is in external reality. This is not to say that the mind does not also have representations of external objects (it does), but it is to say that the content of the mind is not limited to just copies. By abstracting the essence (form) of the object and bringing it into the mind by means of the senses, the intellect can be said to have direct access to external reality. Sensible objects (by means of their forms) exist both in external reality and in the mind.