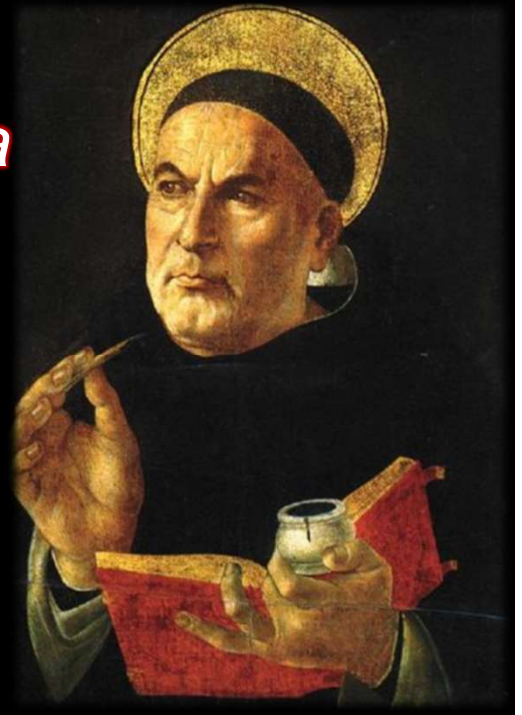
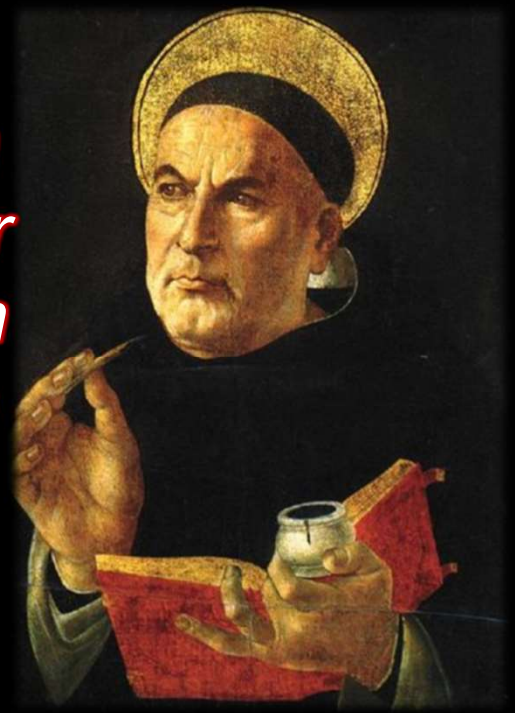


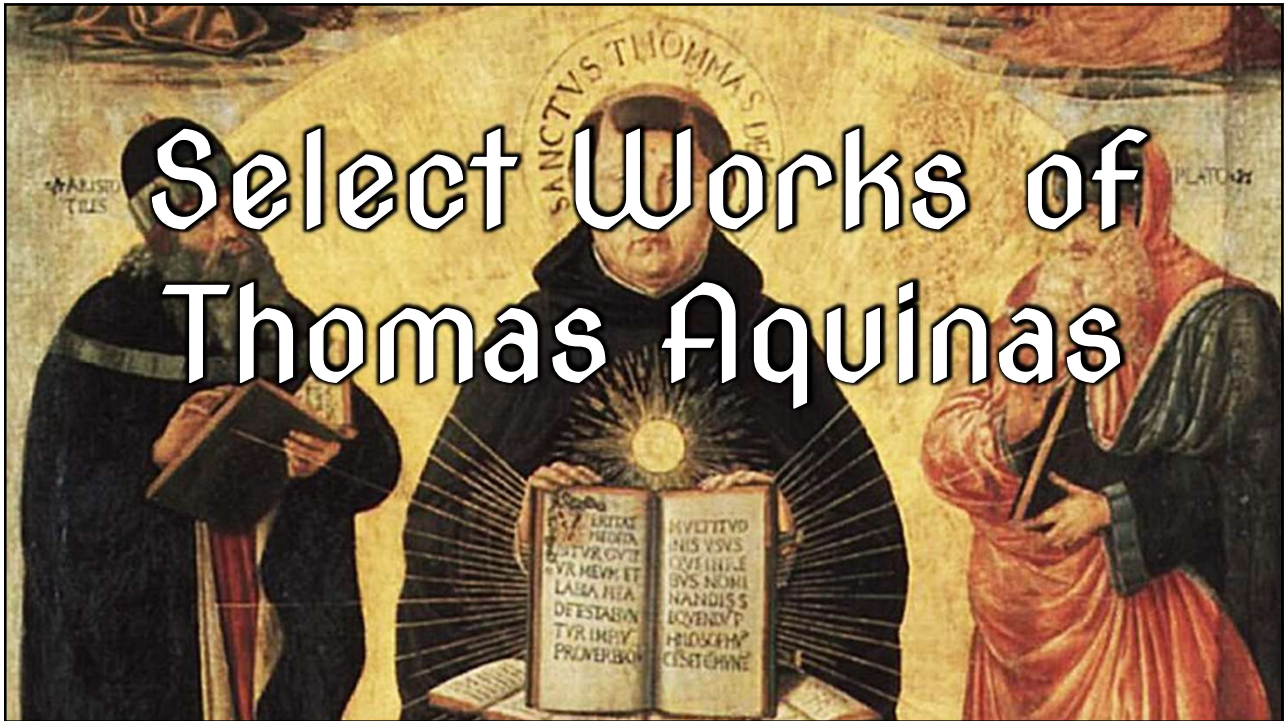
*Thomas Aquinas was a  
13th Century  
Dominican Friar /  
theologian /  
philosopher.*

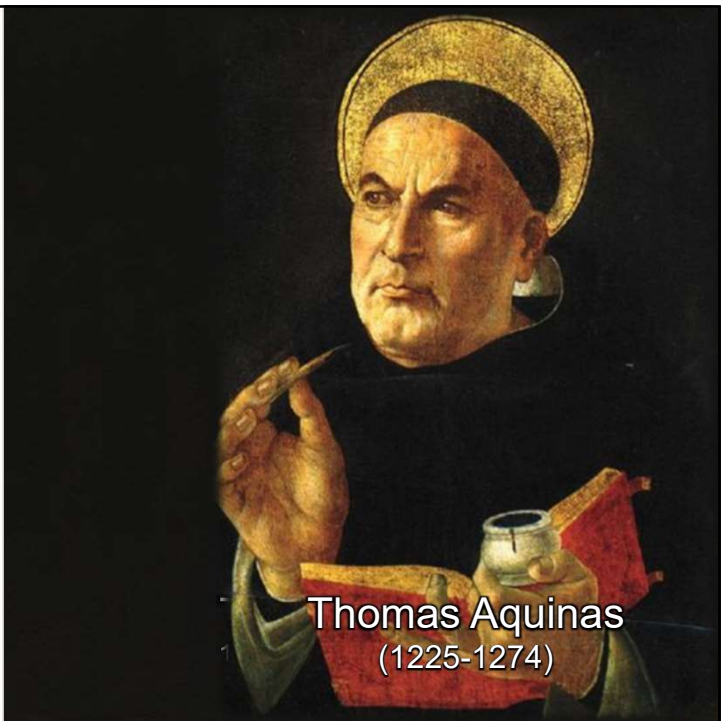
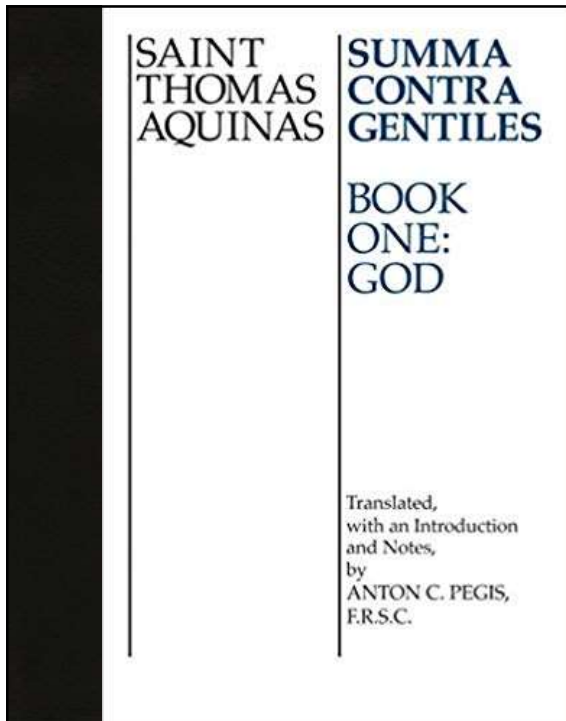
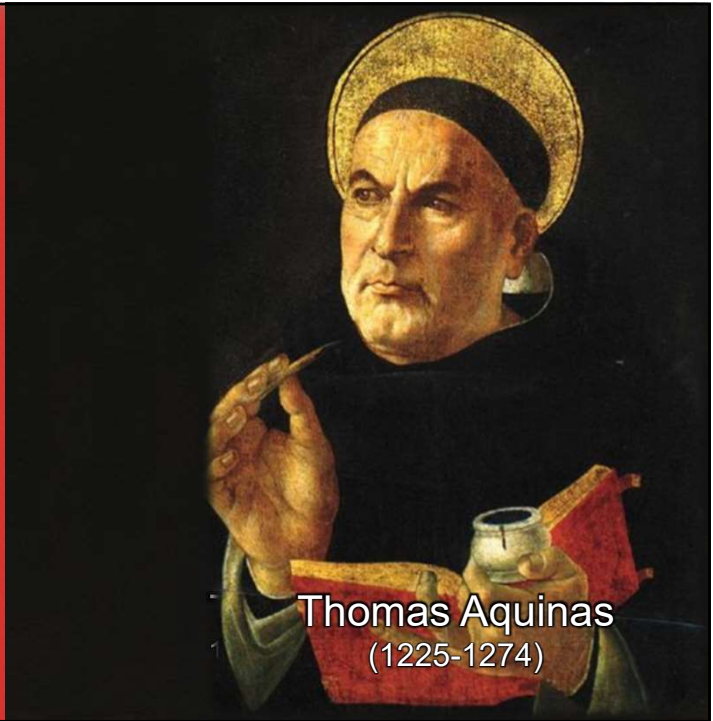
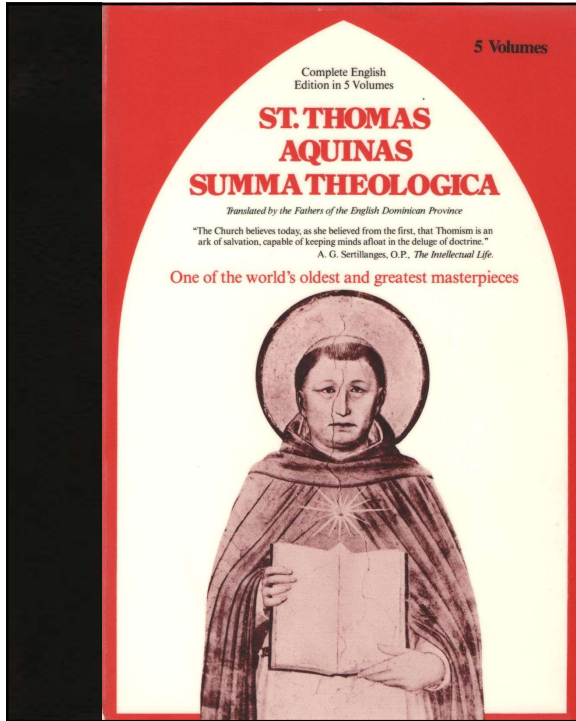


*He was born 1224/5 in  
Roccasecca, Italy, near  
the city of Aquino (from  
which his family name  
was derived).*

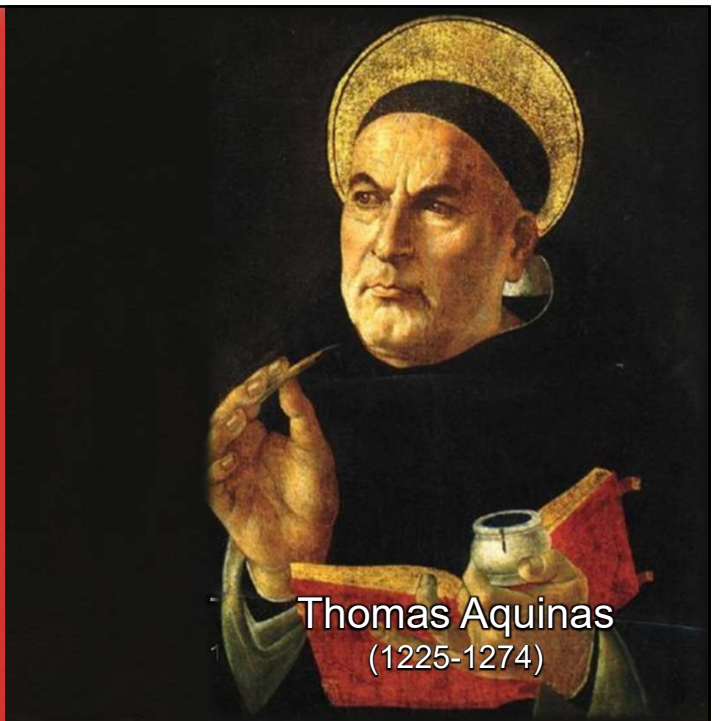
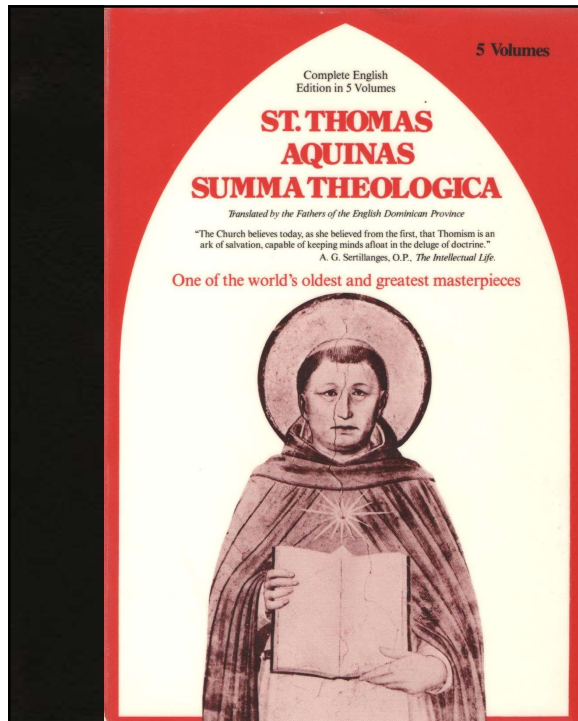










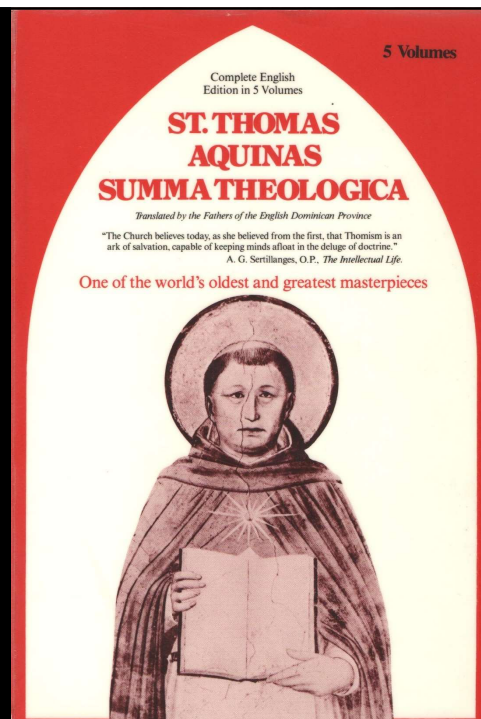


## Thomas Aquinas's "Five Ways"

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



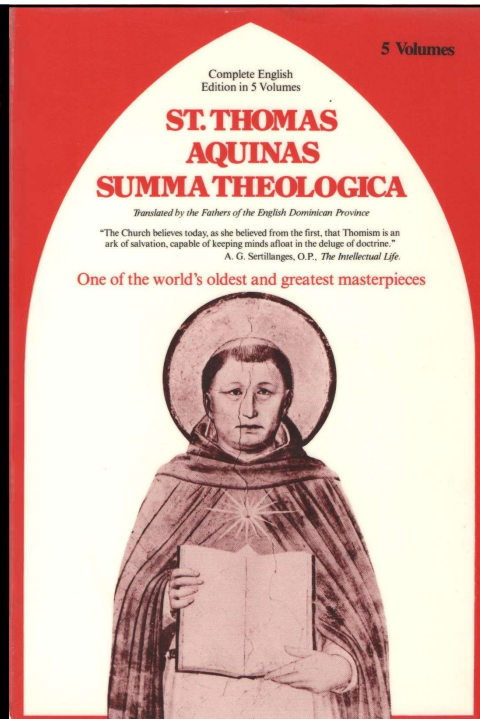
- ❖ Aquinas began writing his *Summa Theologiae* in 1266.
- ❖ Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* is his most extensive work.
- ❖ It was, however, unfinished.
- ❖ It was written as a Teacher's Guide





❖ It was written as an attempt to "set forth whatever is included in this Sacred Science as briefly and clearly as the matter itself may allow ... **in such a way as may tend to the instruction of beginners.**"

[Summa Theologiae, from the Prologue. St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition in Five Volumes, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981)]



Works Antecedent to  
the Summa Theologiae

- ❖ *On Being and Essence*
- ❖ *Writings on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*
- ❖ *Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*
- ❖ *Exposition of the 'On the Hebdomads' of Boethius*
- ❖ *On the Principles of Nature*
- ❖ *Truth*
- ❖ *Summa Contra Gentiles*
- ❖ *On the Power of God*

## ∞ The Content of the *Summa Theologiae* ∞

First Part: God

Second Part: Man

Third Part: Christ



## ∞ The Content of the *Summa Theologiae* ∞

### First Part

*Prima Pars*; I; Ia

119 questions consisting of 584 articles

- ❖ existence and nature of God
- ❖ creation
- ❖ man
- ❖ divine government

## ∞ The Content of the *Summa Theologiae* ∞

### First Part of the Second Part

*Prima Secundae*; I-II; Ia-Iae

114 questions consisting of 619 articles

- ❖ morality
- ❖ the habits
- ❖ law

## ∞ The Content of the *Summa Theologiae* ∞

Second Part of the Second Part

*Secunda Secundae*; II-II; lia-liae

189 questions consisting of 917 articles

- ❖ faith
- ❖ prudence and justice
- ❖ fortitude and temperance
- ❖ acts of certain men (prophecy; tongues; contemplative life, etc.)

## ∞ The Content of the *Summa Theologiae* ∞

Third Part

*Tertia Pars*; III; Illa

90 questions consisting of 549 articles

- ❖ Christ
- ❖ sacraments (section on penance was unfinished)

*This makes a total of 512 questions with 2,669 articles (not counting the supplement).*



## ∞ The Content of the *Summa Theologiae* ∞

Supplement (written by Rainaldo da Piperno)

Suppl.; Suppl. IIIae

99 questions consisting of 446 articles

- ❖ completion of section on penance
- ❖ confession
- ❖ indulgences
- ❖ marriage
- ❖ eschatology

## ∞ The Content of the *Summa Theologiae* ∞

Appendicies 1 and 2 (compiled by Nicolai from Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*)

- ❖ purgatory

## ↻ The Plan of the *Summa Theologiae* ↻

Question (e.g., The Existence of God)

First Article of the Question (e.g., Whether the Existence of God is Self-Evident)

Objections

first objection

second objection

...

"On the contrary" (usually a quote from an authority)

"I answer that" (unpacking of his own arguments pertaining to the article)

Replies to each of the objections

Next Article of the Question

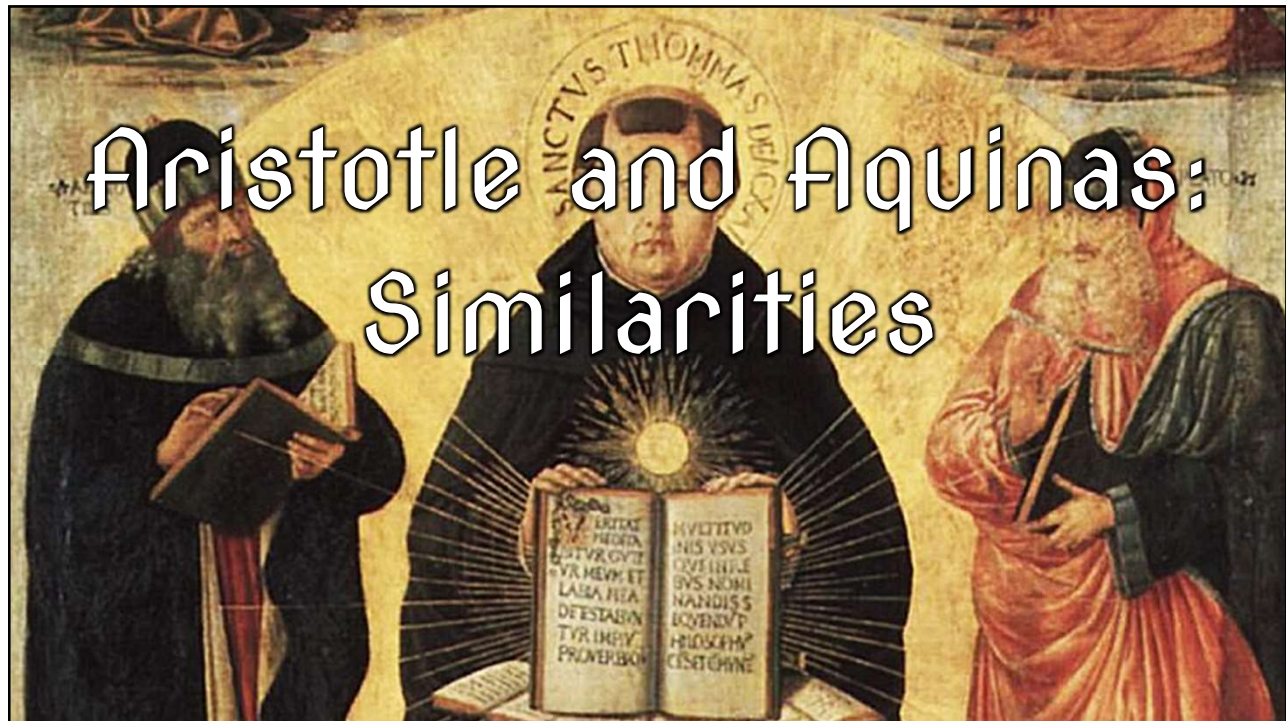
...

[repeat until all the articles for this question are exhausted]

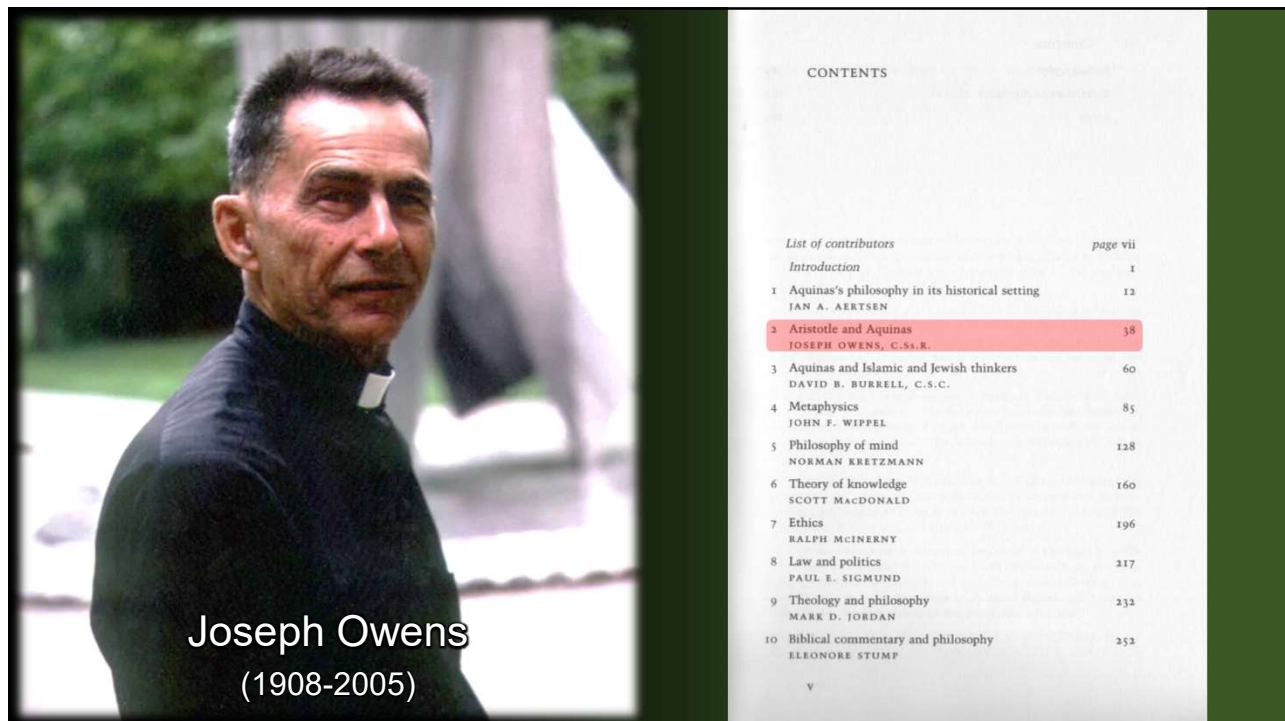
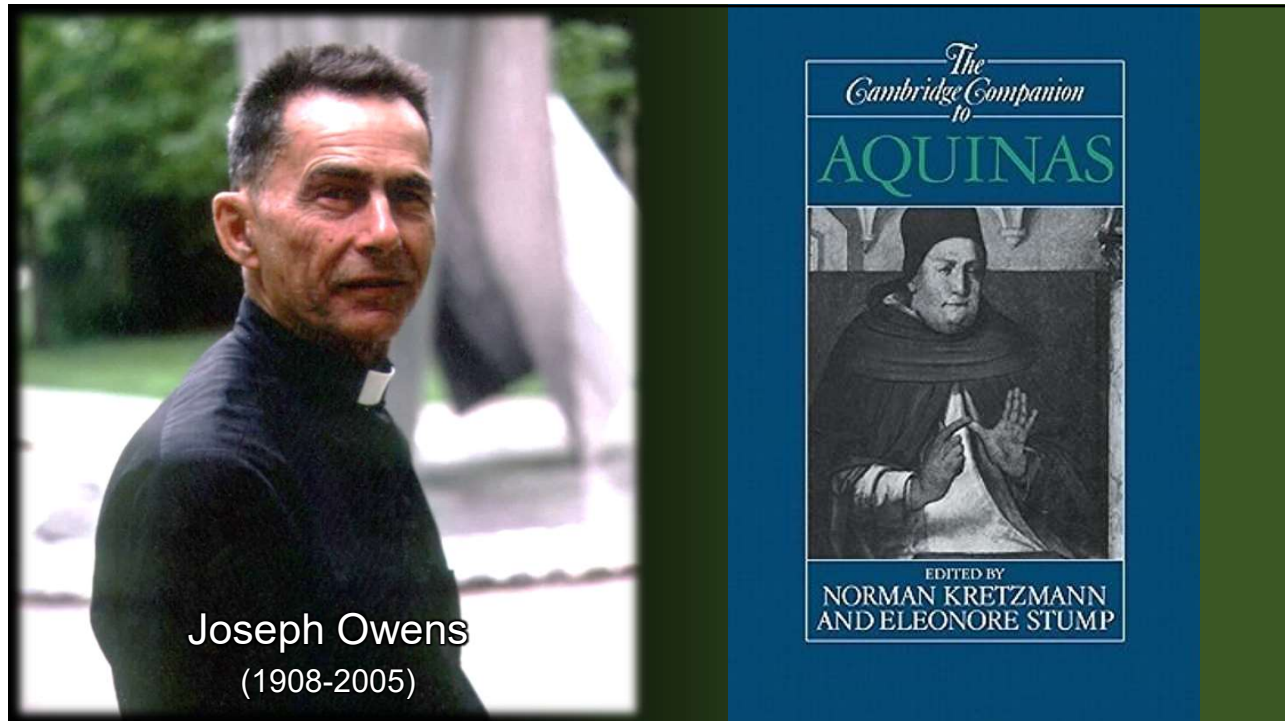
Next Question

...

[repeat until all 614 questions consisting of 3,125 articles questions are exhausted]









## **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**

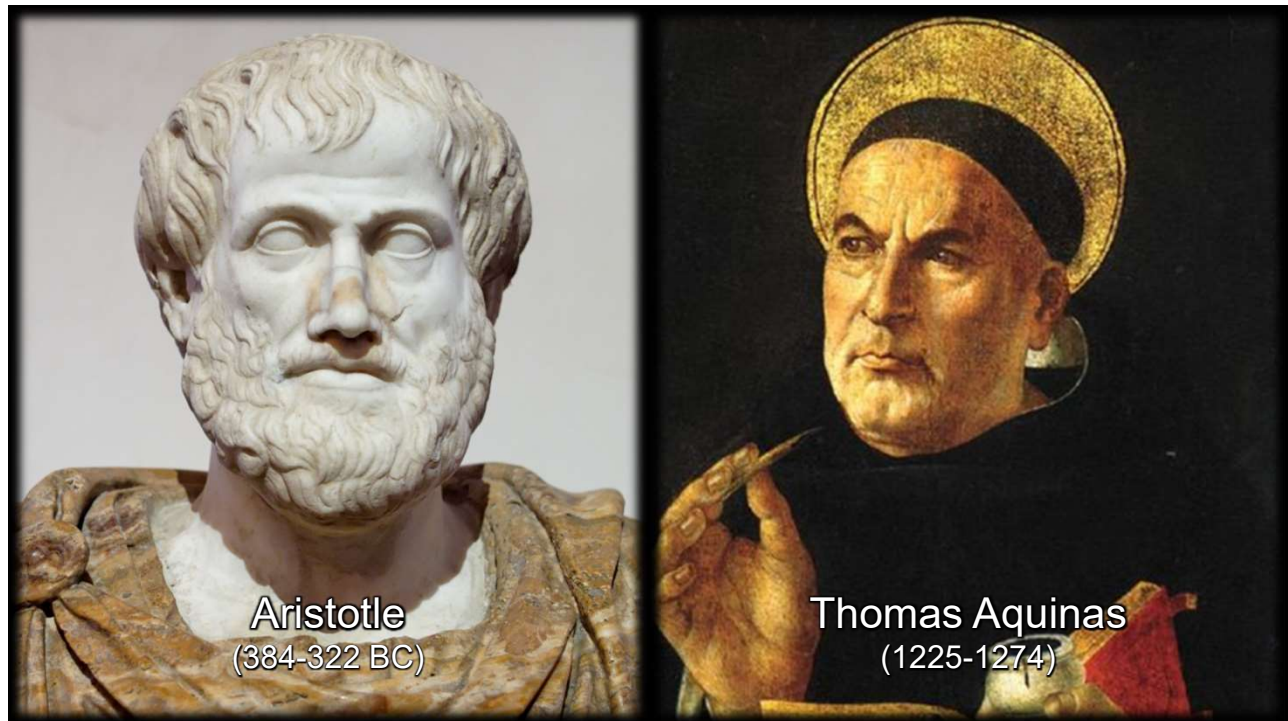
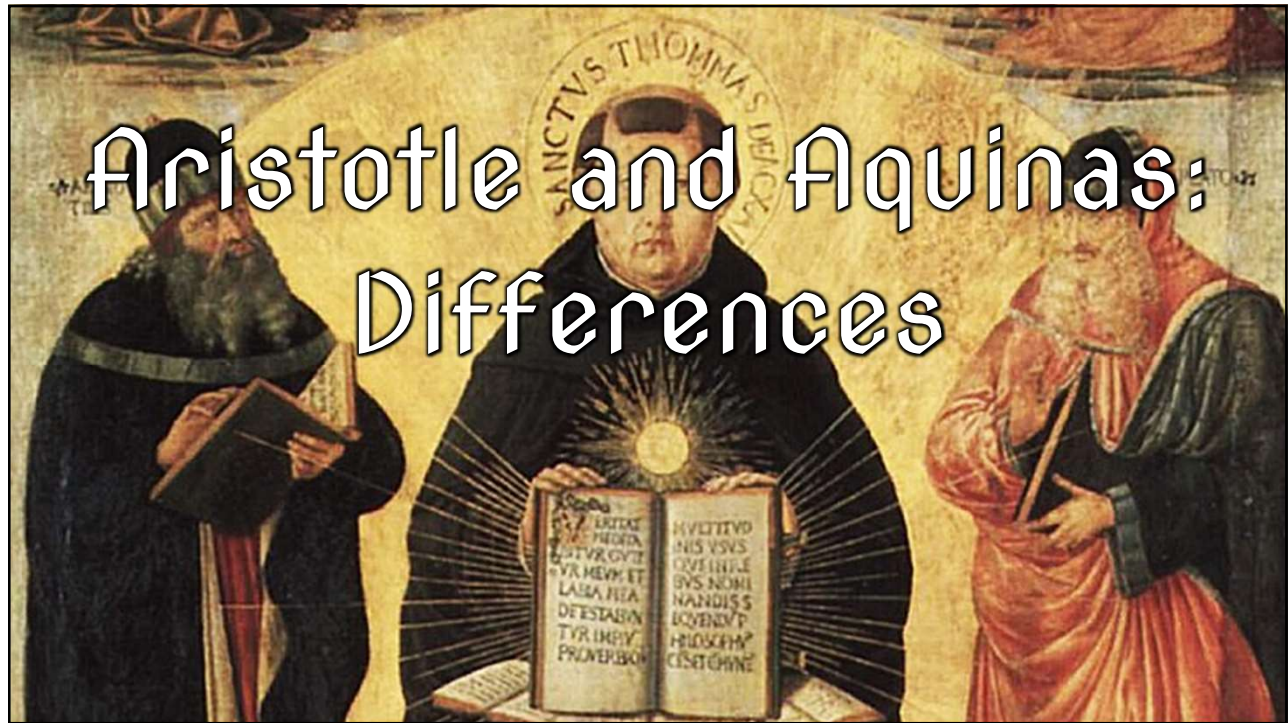
## **Both:**

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

**look upon free choice as the source of moral action**

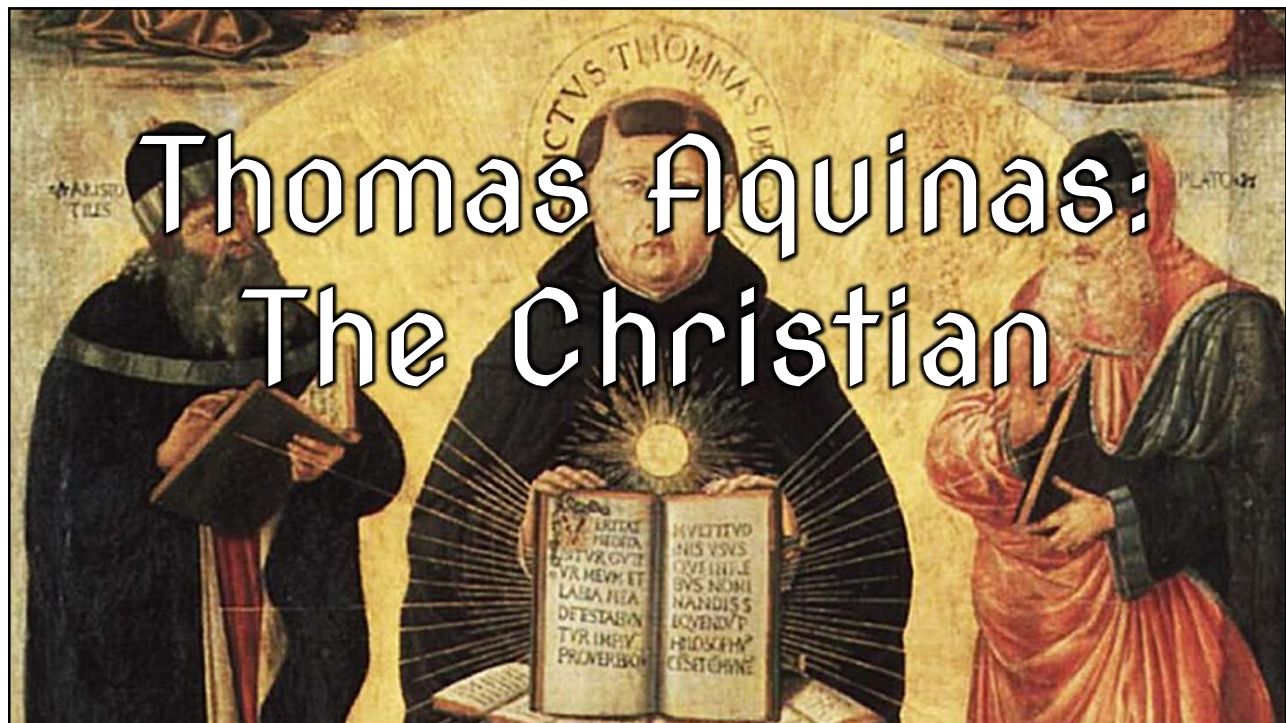
**ground all naturally attainable human knowledge on external sensible things, instead of on sensations, ideas, or language**

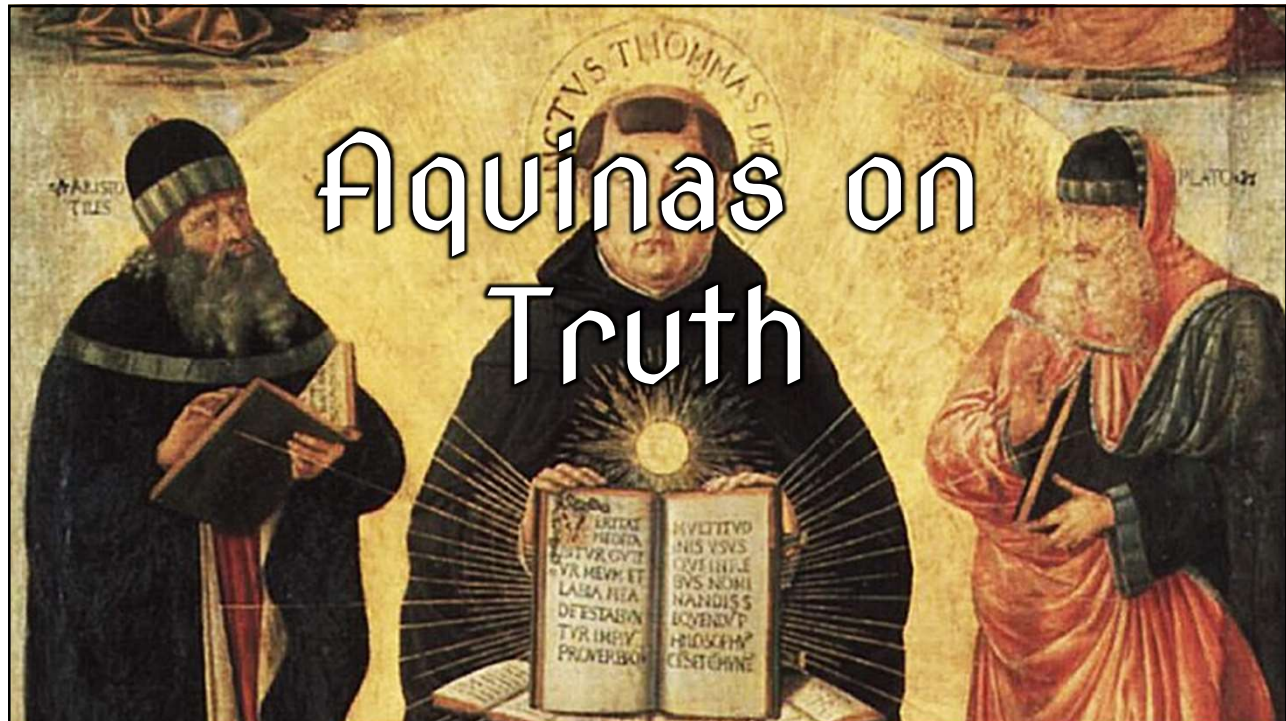
**look upon cognition as a way of being in which knower and thing known are one and the same in the actuality of the cognition**





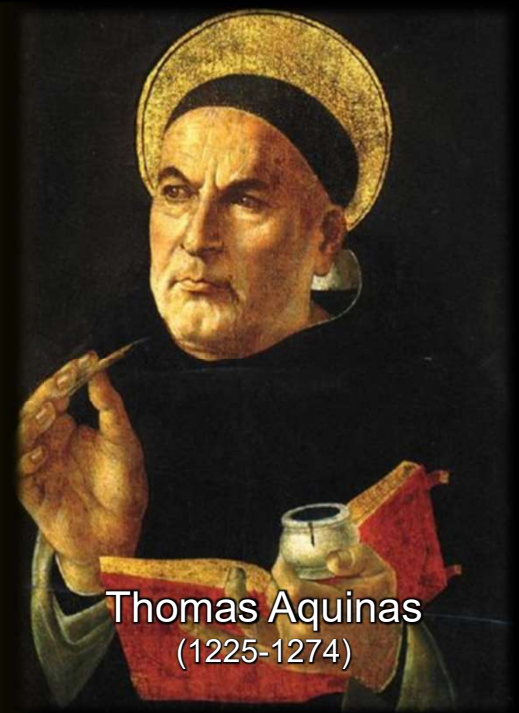
no metaphysical category of existence as such (only a logical distinction)	existence is the actuality of all actualities and the perfection of all perfections
highest element in metaphysics is Form	highest element in metaphysics is existence
for every being, to be is to be a Form	existence is distinct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





***"The true denotes  
that towards which  
the intellect tends."***

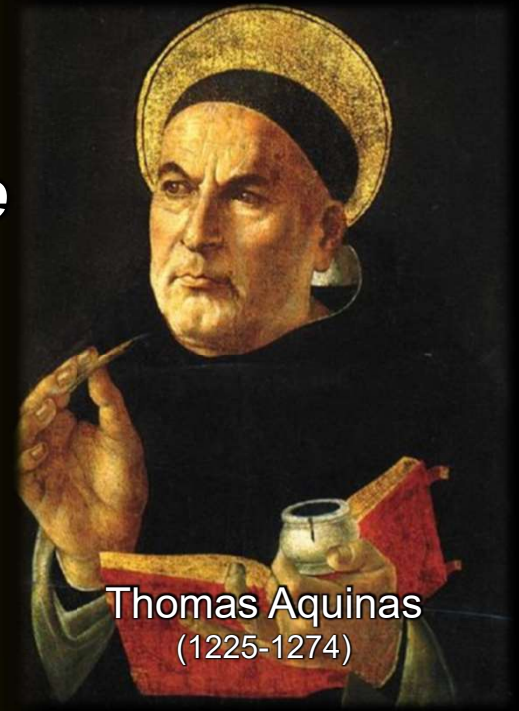
[*Summa Theologiae*, I, 16, 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province  
(Westminster: Christian Classics, 1948), 89]





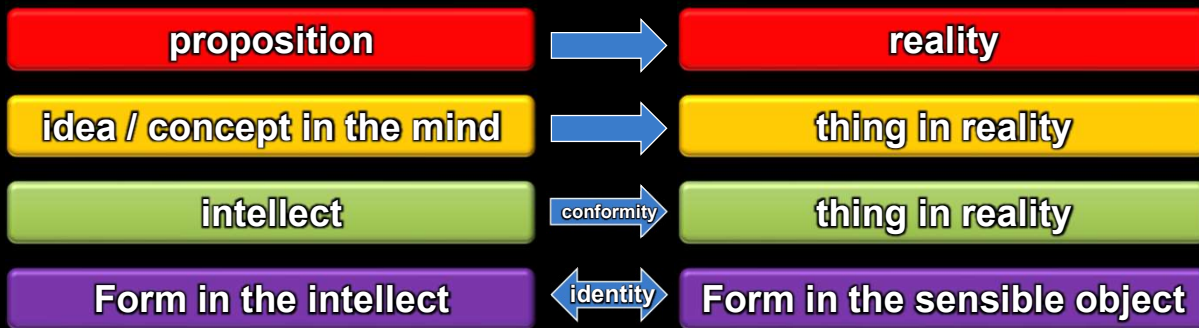
***"Truth is defined by the conformity of the intellect and thing; and hence to know this conformity is to know truth."***

[*Summa Theologiae*, I, 16, 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1948), 90-91]

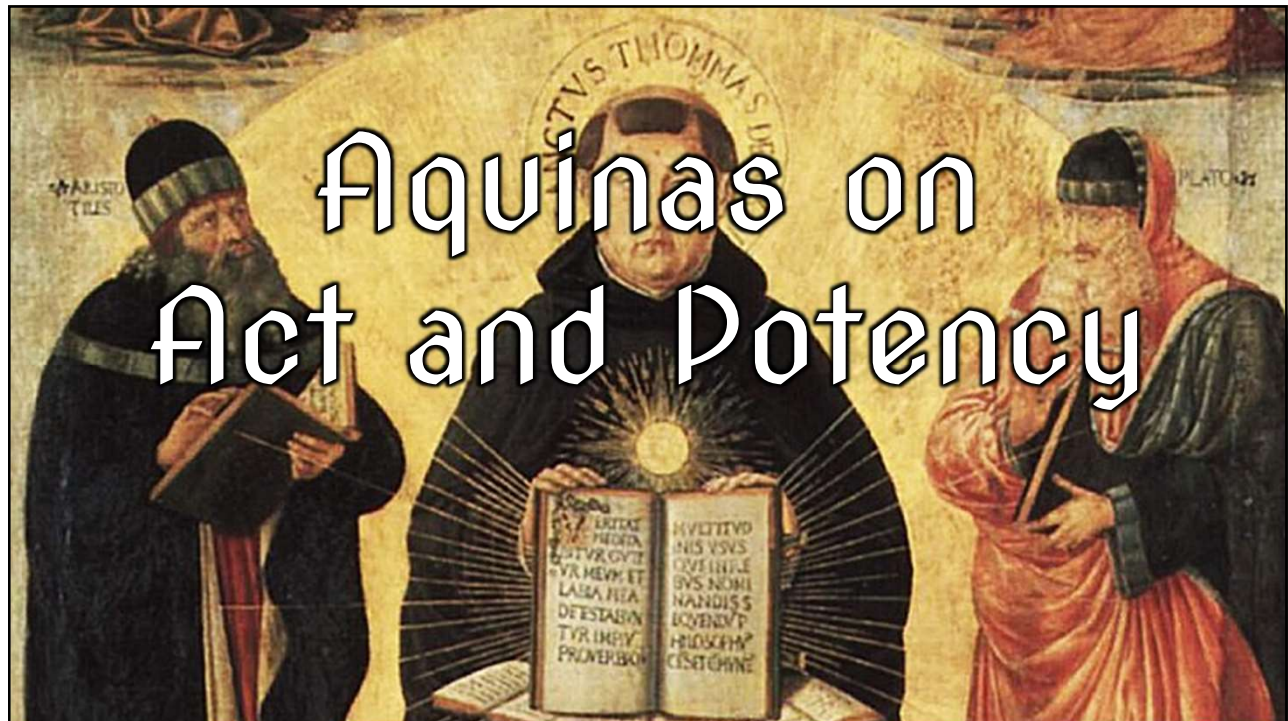


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

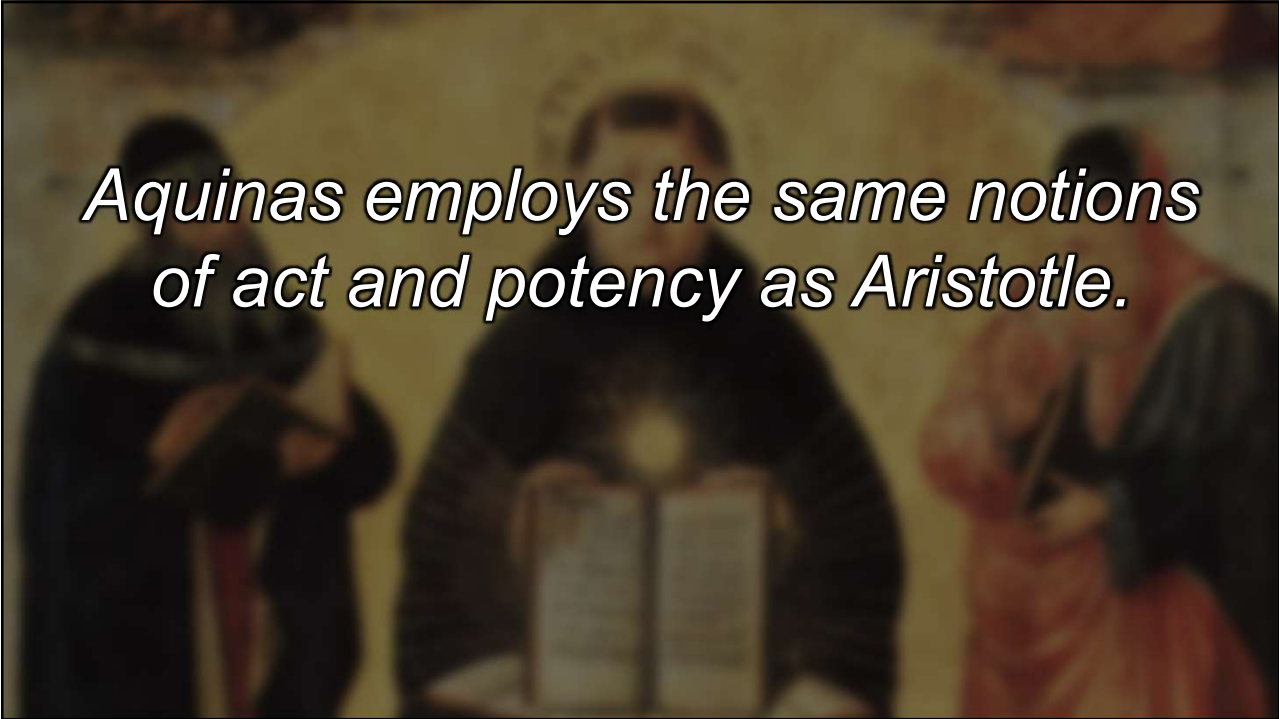
## Correspondence Theory of Truth



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



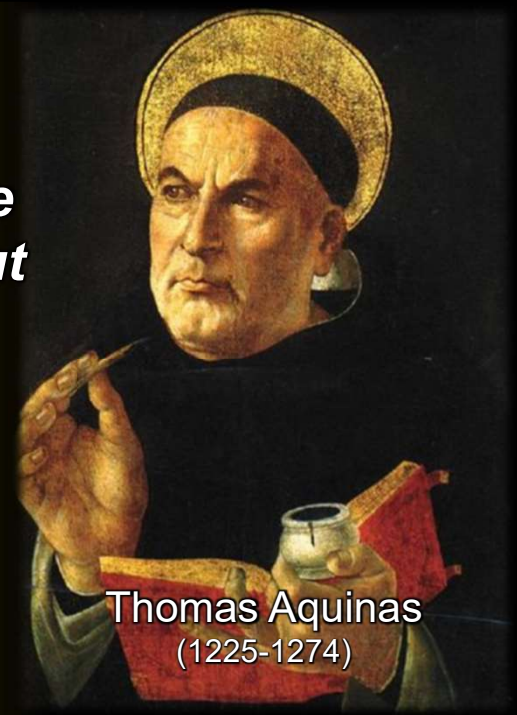




*Aquinas employs the same notions of act and potency as Aristotle.*

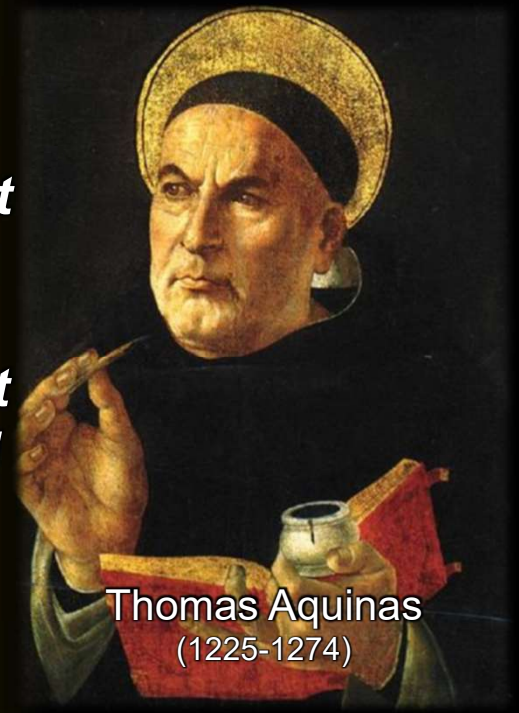
***"By non-existence we understand not simply those things which do not exist, but those which are potential, and not actual."***

[*Summa Theologiae*, I, 5, 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1948), 12]



***"Observe that some things can exist though they do not exist, while other things do exist. That which can be is said to exist in potency; that which already exists is said to be in act."***

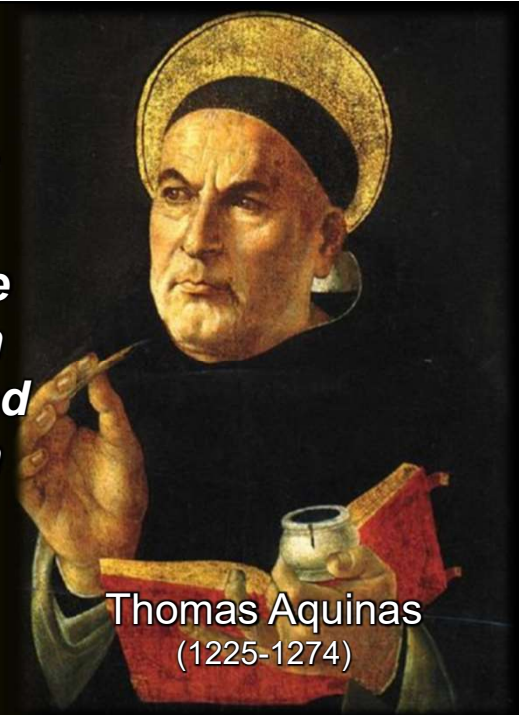
[On the Principles of Nature, trans. Vernon J. Bourke in *The Pocket Aquinas* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960), 61]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

***"A thing is called absolutely possible, not in relation to any power, but from the sole habitude of the terms which are not repugnant to each other; in which sense possible is opposed to impossible, as appears from the Philosopher [Metaph. v, text. 17]."***

[ST, I, Q46, art. 1, ad. 1]

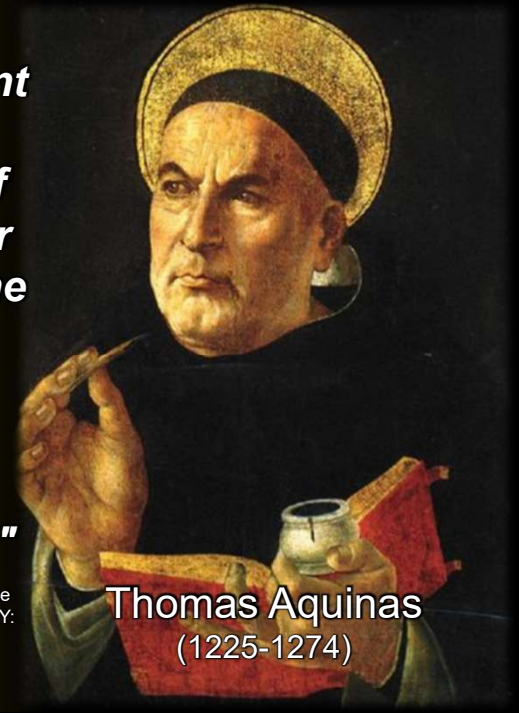


**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)



***"Now, from the foregoing it is evident that in created intellectual substances there is composition of act and potentiality. For in whatever thing we find two, one of which is the complement of the other, the proportion of one of them to the other is as the proportion of potentiality to act; for nothing is completed except by its proper act."***

[*Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, 53, §1-2, trans. James F. Anderson (University of Notre Dame Press Edition) vol. 2, p. 155. Reprint of *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House)]

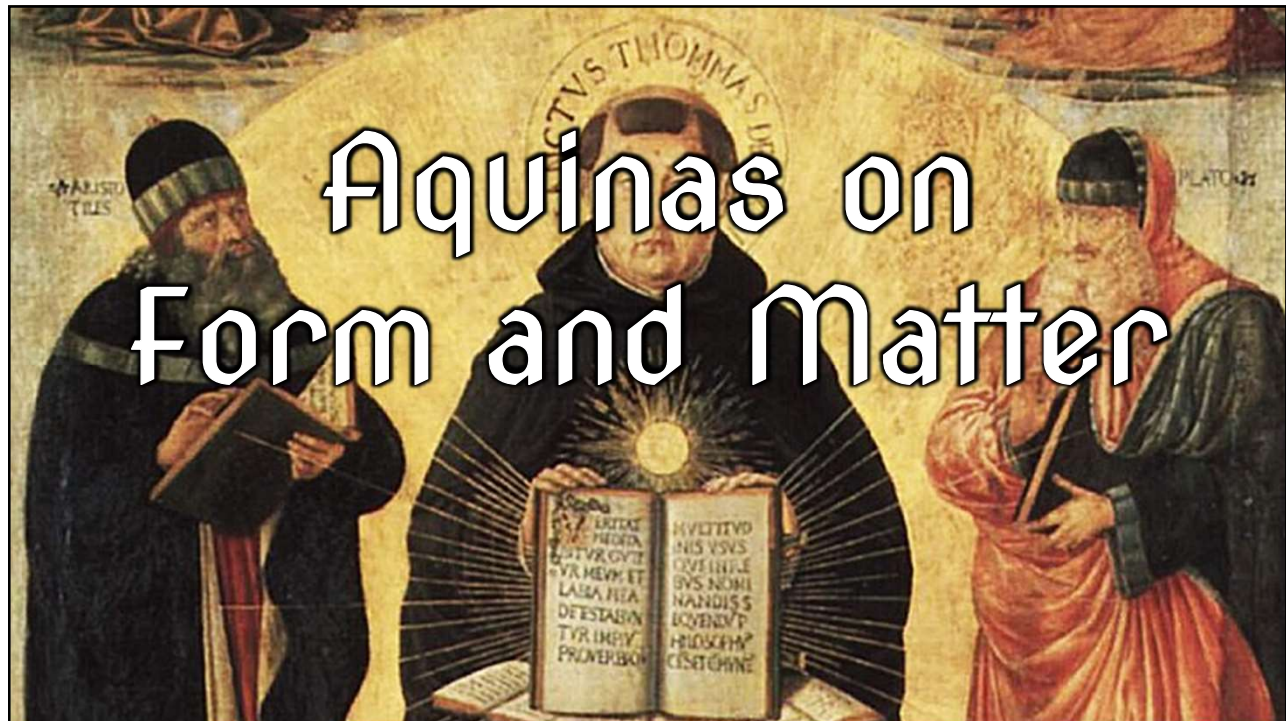


**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

***The significance of Aquinas' employment of act and potency***

***Sensible things are not able to ultimately account for the actualization of their own potentialities.***

***The act / potency of sensible things stands in stark contrast to God's nature of being pure actuality.***



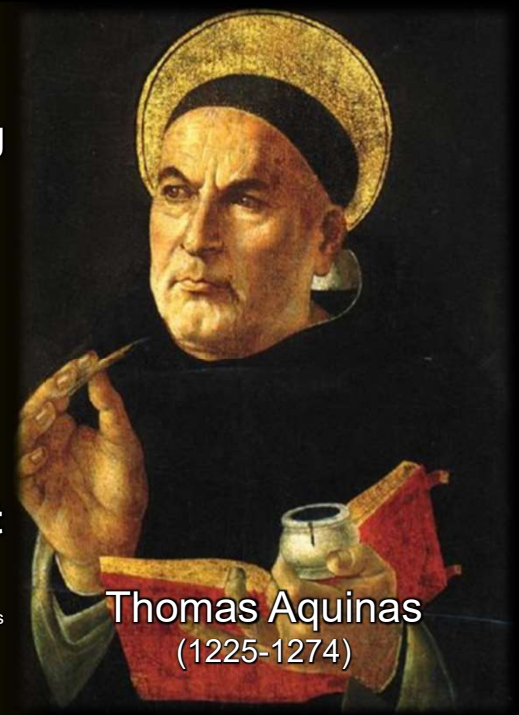


***Not surprisingly, Aquinas follows Aristotle in the notions of form and matter.***

**"Because the definition telling what a thing is signifies that by which a thing is located in its genus or species, philosophers have substituted the term 'quiddity' for the term 'essence.'**

**The Philosopher [i.e., Aristotle] frequently calls this 'what something was to be' [*quod quid erat esse*; τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι (to ti ēn einai)]; that is to say, that which makes a thing to be what it is. It is also called 'form.'"**

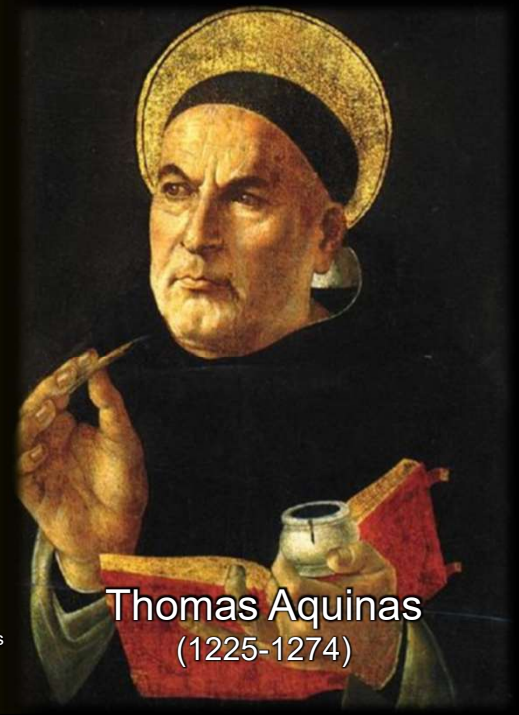
[*On Being and Essence*, I, §4, trans. Armand Maurer, 2nd revised ed. [*Mediaeval Sources in Translation* 1] (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), 31]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

**The Philosopher [Aristotle] frequently calls this [essence] 'what something was to be' [*quod quid erat esse*; τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι (to ti ēn einai)]; that is to say, that which makes a thing to be what it is. It is also called 'form.'**"

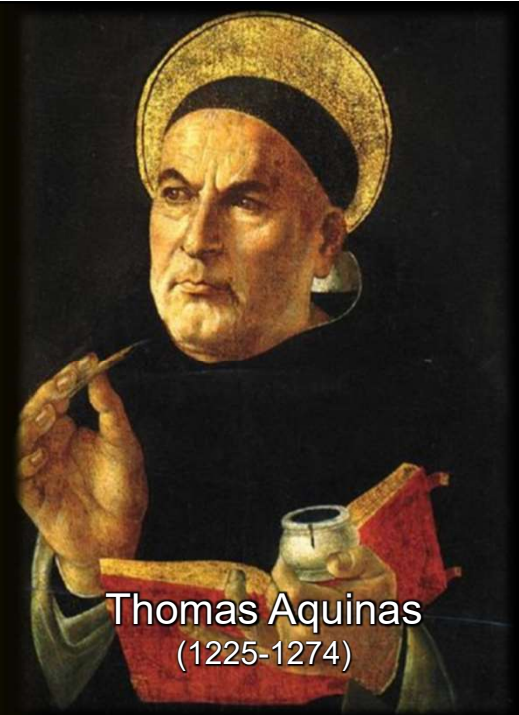
[*On Being and Essence*, I, §4, trans. Armand Maurer, 2nd revised ed. [Mediaeval Sources in Translation 1] (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), 31]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

***"Form and matter are found in composite substances, as for example the soul and body in man."***

[*On Being and Essence*, II, §1, trans. Maurer, 34]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)



# "What-ness"

*with respect to its matter:*

*Form*

*with respect to its operations:*

*Nature*

*with respect to its accidents:*

*Substance*

*with respect to an intellect:*

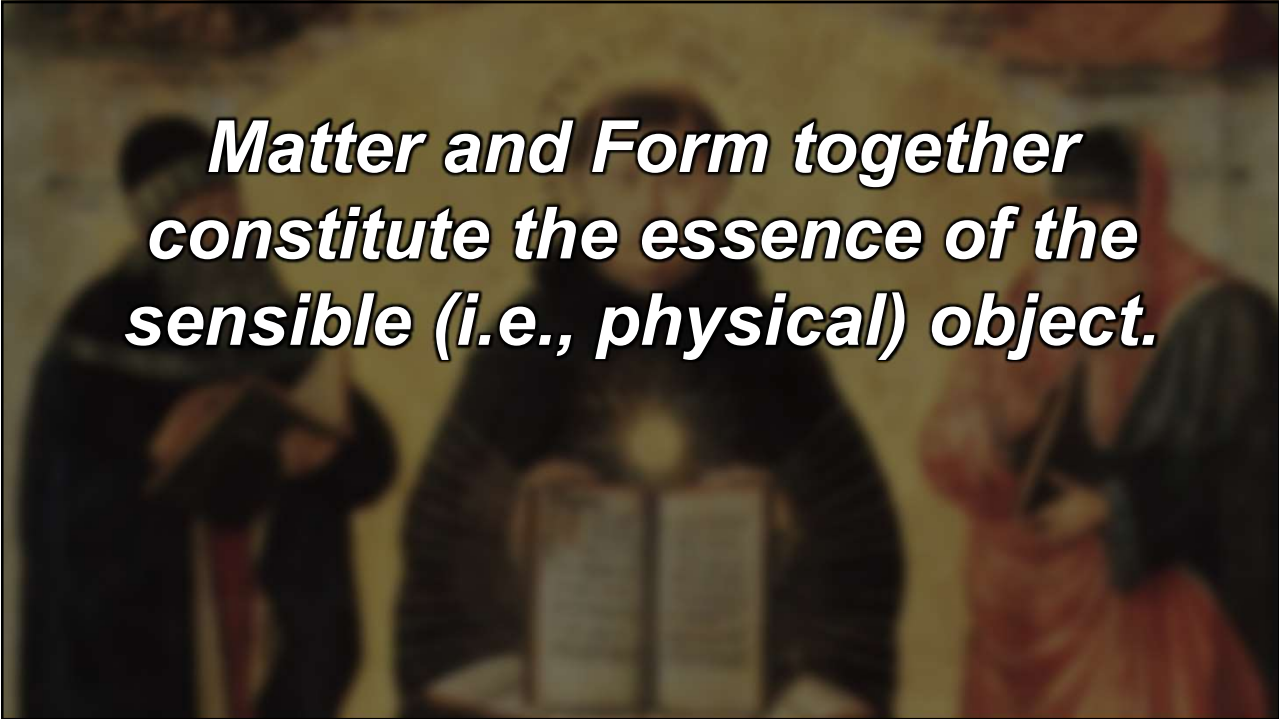
*Quiddity*

*with respect to its existence:*

*Essence*

***Matter is not a principle of knowing but is a principle of individuation.***

***Matter is actualized by Form.***



***Matter and Form together  
constitute the essence of the  
sensible (i.e., physical) object.***

***"It is evident,  
therefore, that  
essence [in  
sensible objects]  
embraces both  
matter and form."***

[*On Being and Essence*, II, §1, trans. Maurer, 35]

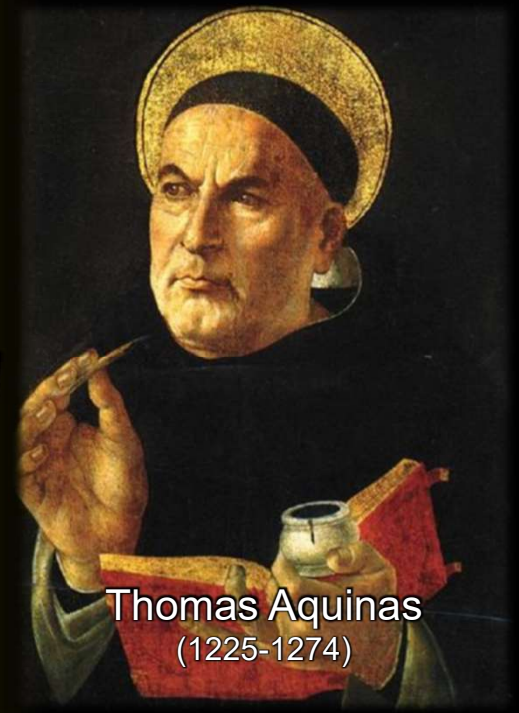


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



***"It is evident,  
therefore, that  
essence [in  
sensible creatures]  
embraces both  
matter and form."***

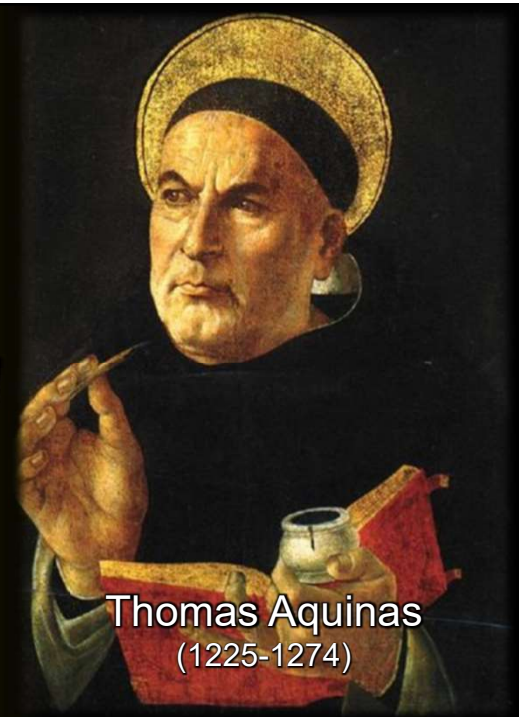
[On Being and Essence, II, §1, trans. Maurer, 35]



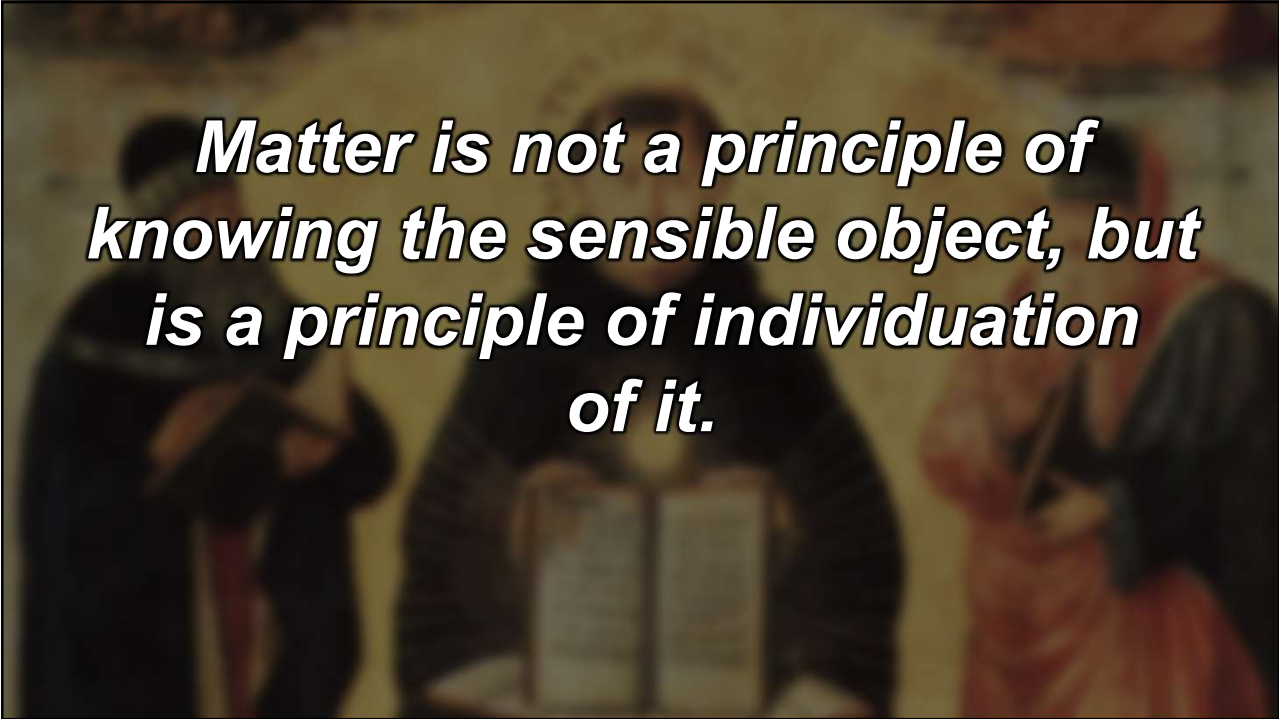
Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"It is evident,  
therefore, that  
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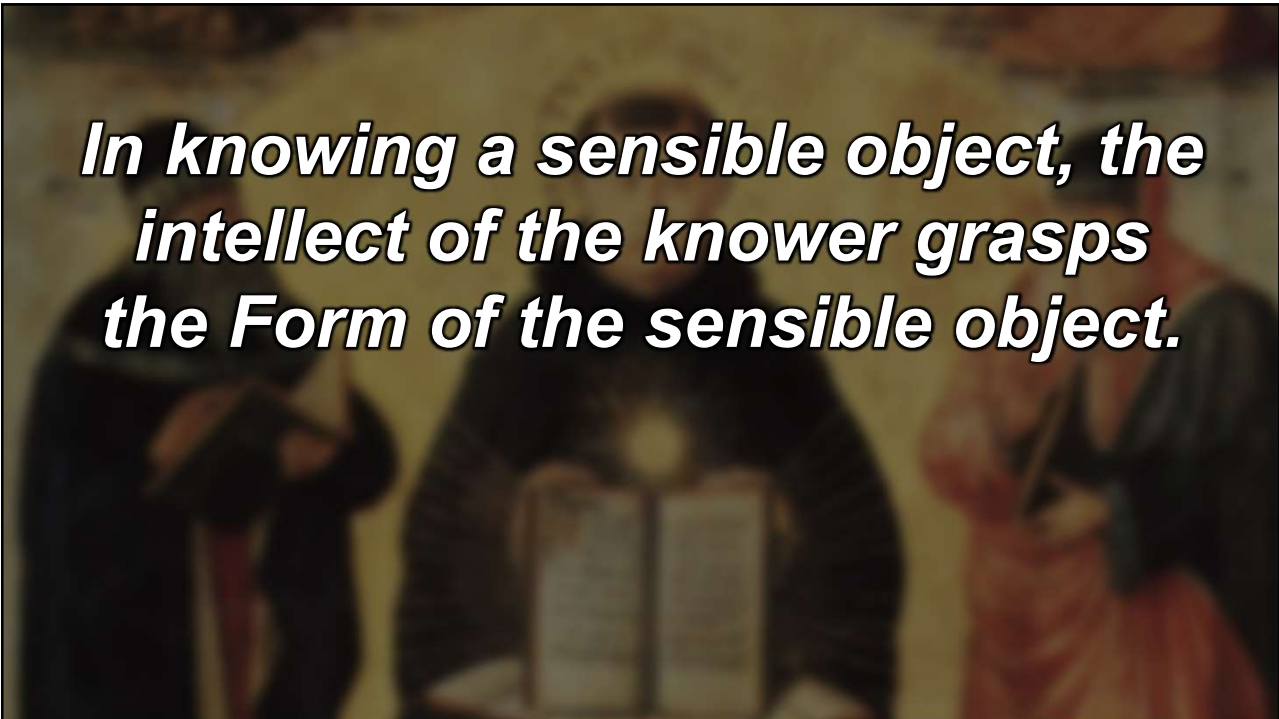
[On Being and Essence, II, §1, trans. Maurer, 35]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



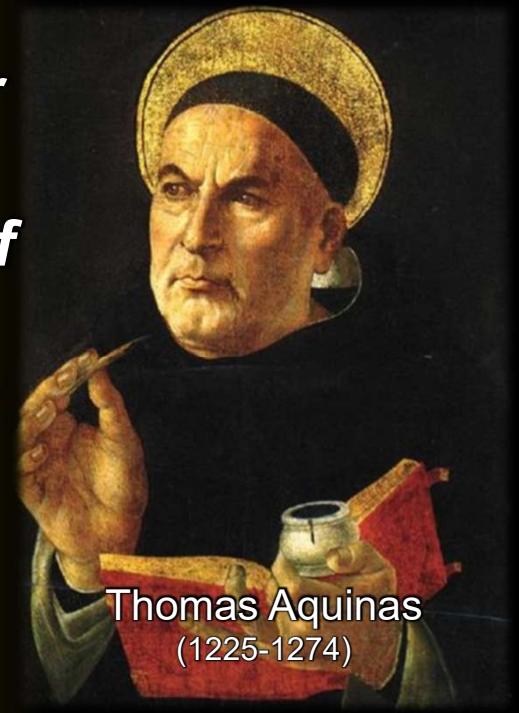
***Matter is not a principle of knowing the sensible object, but is a principle of individuation of it.***



***In knowing a sensible object, the intellect of the knower grasps the Form of the sensible object.***

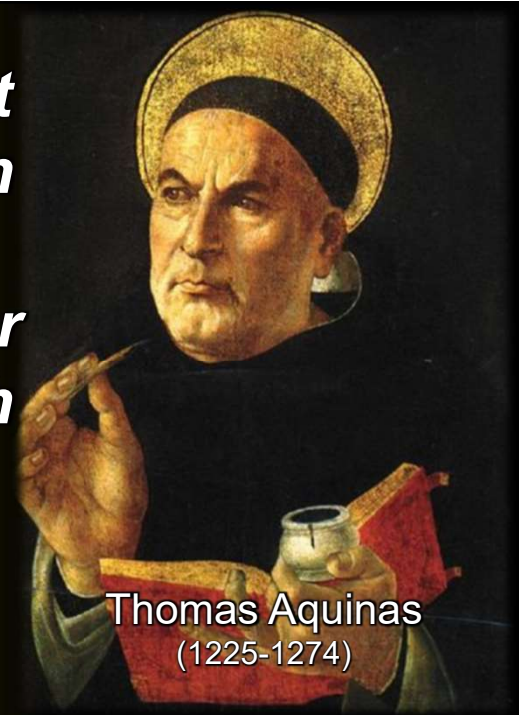


***"Therefore, the manner of knowing a thing conforms to the state of the knower, which receives the form in its own way.***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

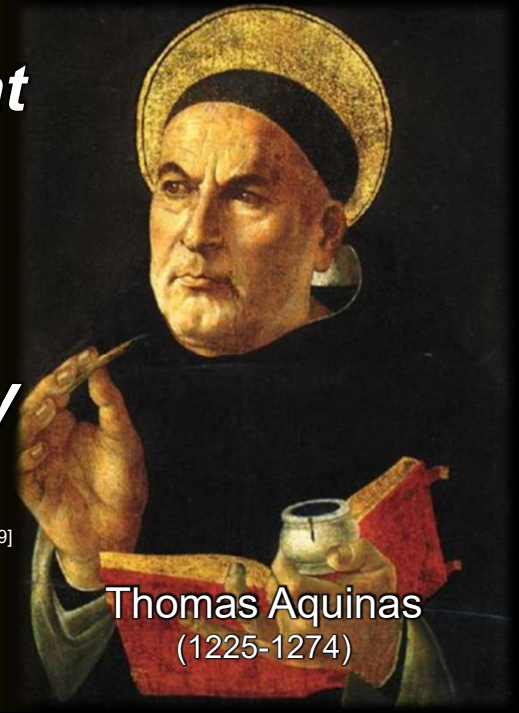
***"It is not necessary that the thing known exist in the manner of the knower or in the manner in which the form which is the principle of knowing exists in the knower.***



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***"From this it follows that nothing prevents us from knowing material things through forms which exist immaterially in our minds."***

[Truth, QX, A. IV, Reply, trans. James V. McGlynn, vol. 2, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), 19]



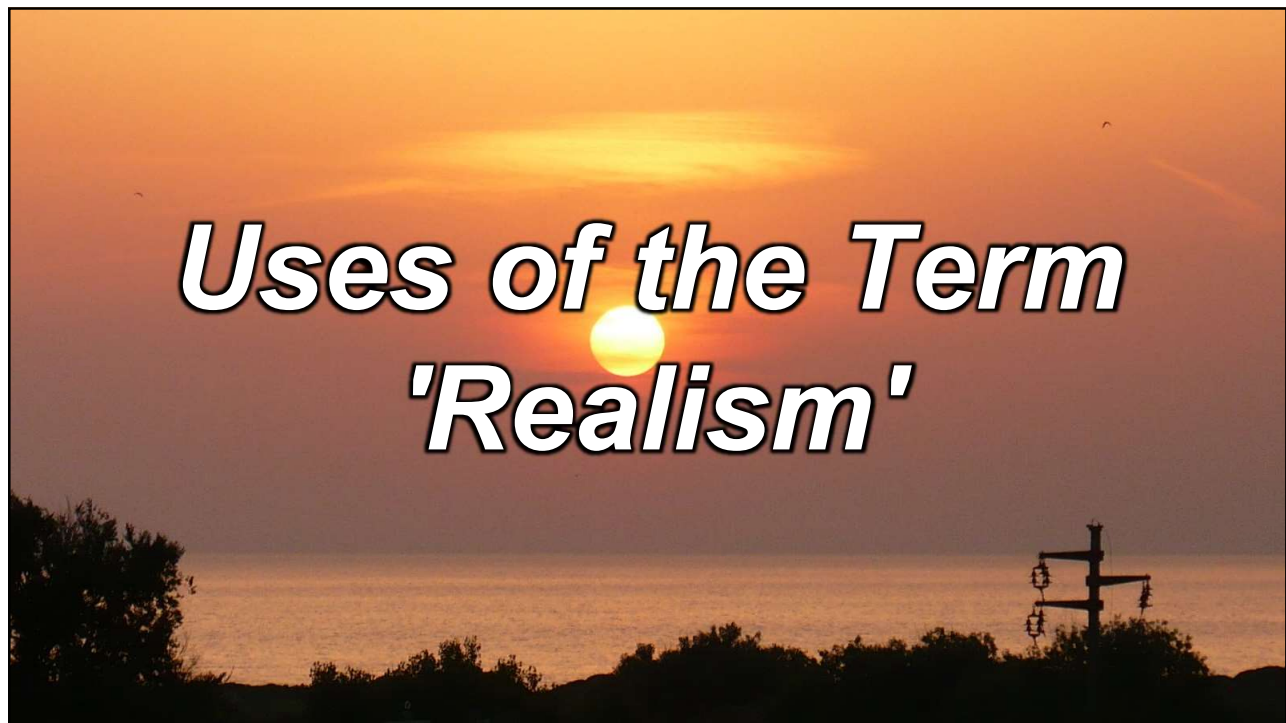
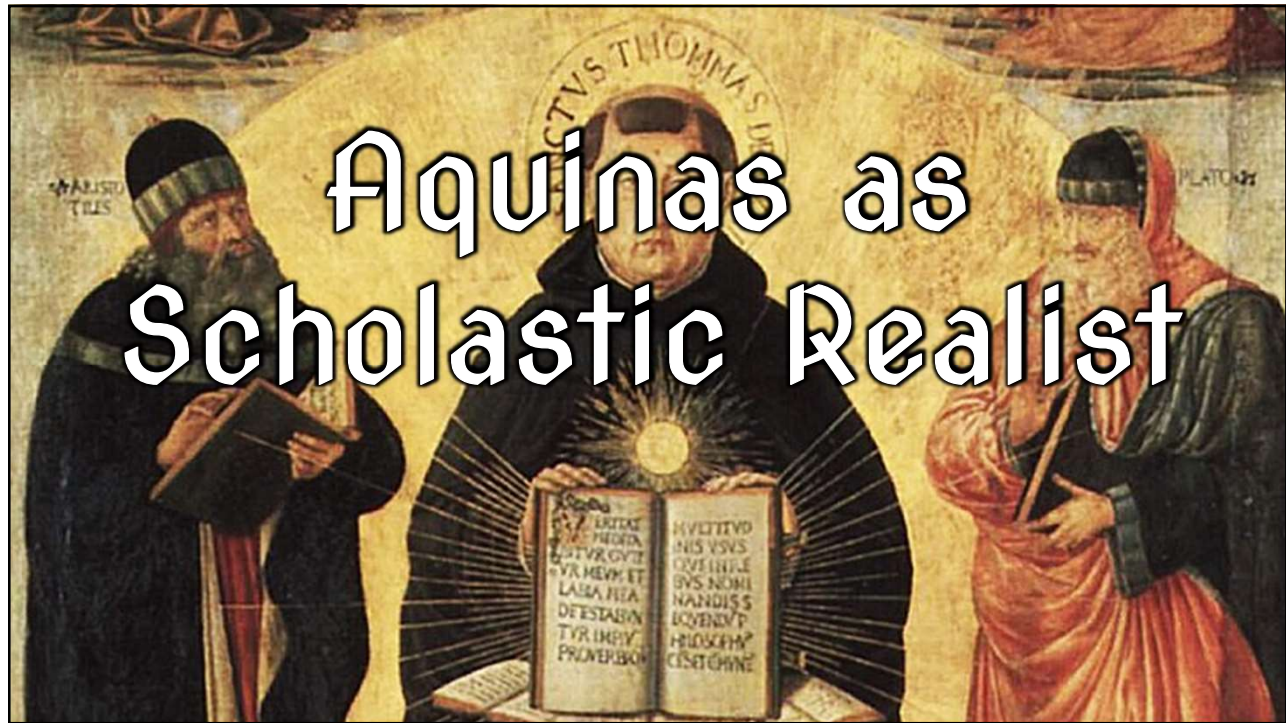
Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

***The significance of Aquinas's employment of form and matter***

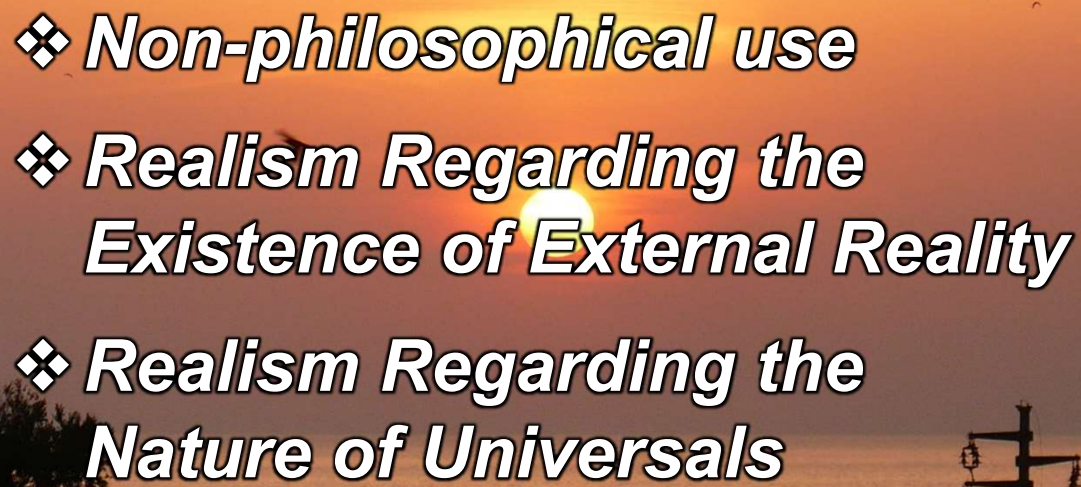


***Thomas will argue that sensible things, being composed of form and matter, are not ultimately able to account for their own existence and thus will need a First Cause as their grounding.***

***Thomas will unpack the metaphysical attributes of God demonstrating that the particular aspects of the nature of God stand in stark contrast to the form and matter aspects of sensible things.***





- 
- A sunset scene with a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow. The sky is a gradient of orange and yellow. In the foreground, there are dark silhouettes of trees and a utility pole with power lines. The text is overlaid on the upper part of the image.
- ❖ *Non-philosophical use*
  - ❖ *Realism Regarding the Existence of External Reality*
  - ❖ *Realism Regarding the Nature of Universals*

- 
- A sunset scene with a bright sun low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow. The sky is a gradient of orange and yellow. In the foreground, there are dark silhouettes of trees and a utility pole with power lines. The text is overlaid on the upper part of the image.
- ❖ *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.***





❖ ***Realism Regarding the 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).*









## 2

## Teleology: A Shopper's Guide

### I. Introduction

The *telos* of a thing or process is the end or goal toward which it points. Teleological notions feature prominently in current debates in philosophy of biology, philosophy of action, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of religion. Naturalists generally hold that teleological descriptions of natural phenomena are either false or, if true, are reducible to descriptions cast in non-teleological terms. Non-naturalists generally hold that at least some natural phenomena exhibit irreducible teleology. For example, Intelligent Design (ID) theorists hold that certain biological phenomena cannot properly be understood except as the products of an intelligence which designed them to carry out certain functions.

Teleology's controversial status in modern philosophy stems from the mechanistic conception of the natural world, which early modern thinkers like Bacon, Galileo, Descartes, Hobbes, Boyle, and Locke put in place of the Aristotelian philosophy of nature that featured in medieval Scholasticism. Following Aristotle, the Scholastics took the view that a complete understanding of a material substance required identifying each of its "four causes." Every such substance is, first of all, an irreducible composite of *substantial form* and *prime matter* (irreducible because on the Scholastic view, substantial form and prime matter cannot themselves be understood apart from the substances they compose, making the analysis holistic rather than reductionist). The substantial form of a thing is its nature or essence, the underlying metaphysical basis of its properties and causal powers; it constitutes a thing's *formal cause*. Prime matter is the otherwise formless stuff that takes on a substantial form so as to instantiate it in a concrete object, and apart from which the form would be a mere abstraction; it constitutes a thing's *material cause*. That which brings a thing into existence constitutes its

#### Teleology: A Shopper's Guide

*efficient cause*. And the end or goal towards which a thing naturally points is its *final cause*.<sup>1</sup>

As the last sentence indicates, the notion of a final cause is closely tied to that of a *telos* and thus to the notion of teleology. But the adverb "naturally" is meant to indicate how the Aristotelian notion of final cause differs from other conceptions of teleology. For Aristotle and for the Scholastics, the end or goal of a material substance is *inherent* to it, something it has precisely because of the kind of thing it is by *nature*. It is therefore not to be understood on the model of a human artifact like a watch, whose parts have no inherent tendency to perform the function of telling time, specifically, and must be forced to do so by an outside designer. For example, that a heart has the function of pumping blood is something true of it simply by virtue of being the kind of material substance it is, and would remain true of it whether or not it has God as its ultimate cause.

The thinkers who founded modern philosophy and modern science rejected this picture of nature. In particular, they rejected the notions of substantial form, of matter as that which takes on such a form, and of a final cause as an *inherent end* or *telos* of a thing. Of Aristotle's four causes, only efficient cause was left in anything like a recognizable form (and even then the notion was significantly altered, since, as we shall see, efficient causes were regarded by the Scholastics as correlated with final causes).<sup>2</sup> Material objects were reconceived as comprised entirely of microscopic particles (understood along either atomistic, corpuscularian, or plenum-theoretic lines) devoid of any inherent goal-directedness and interacting in terms of "push-pull" contact causation alone. This "mechanical philosophy" underwent various transformations as modern philosophy and modern science developed. The philosophical inadequacy of the contact model of causal interaction soon became evident in light of the critiques of occasionalists, Humeans, and others; and in any event, the model could not survive the empirical

<sup>1</sup> For a brief exposition and defense of Aristotelian-Scholastic metaphysics and philosophy of nature, see chapter 2 of my *Aquinas* (Oxford: OneWorld Publications, 2009). For a more detailed exposition and defense, see my *The Last Superstition: A Reformation of the New Atheism* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2008). The most thorough recent defense of Aristotelian-Scholastic metaphysics is David S. Oderberg, *Real Essentialism* (London: Routledge, 2007).

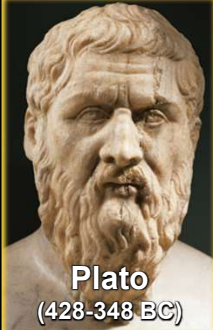
<sup>2</sup> See Kenneth C. Cartwright, *The Causation Debate in Modern Philosophy 1637–1791* (London: Routledge, 1999) for a useful overview of the history of the early modern, gradual transformation of the notion of efficient cause.



## 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.

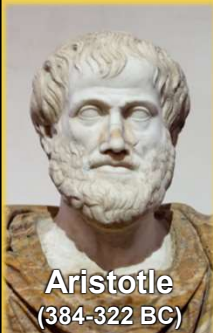
### Platonic Teleological Realism

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.

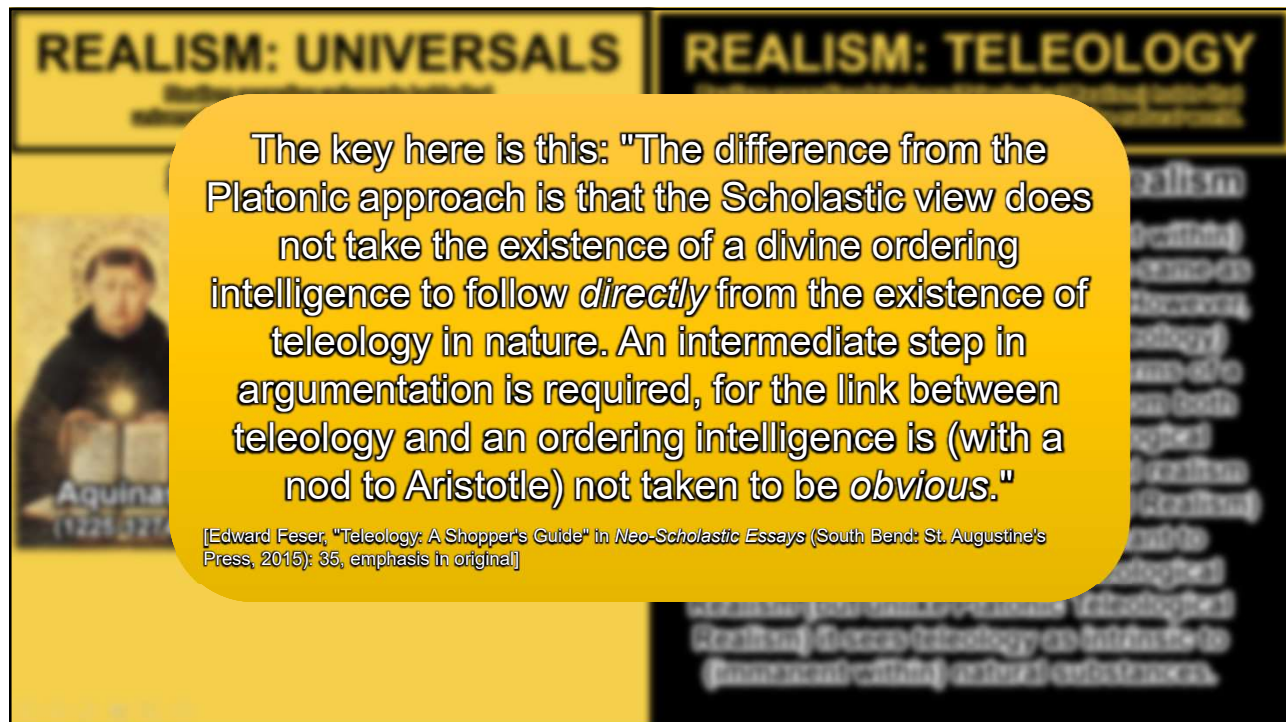
### Aristotelian Teleological Realism

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><b>Aquinas</b> (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 is it 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>

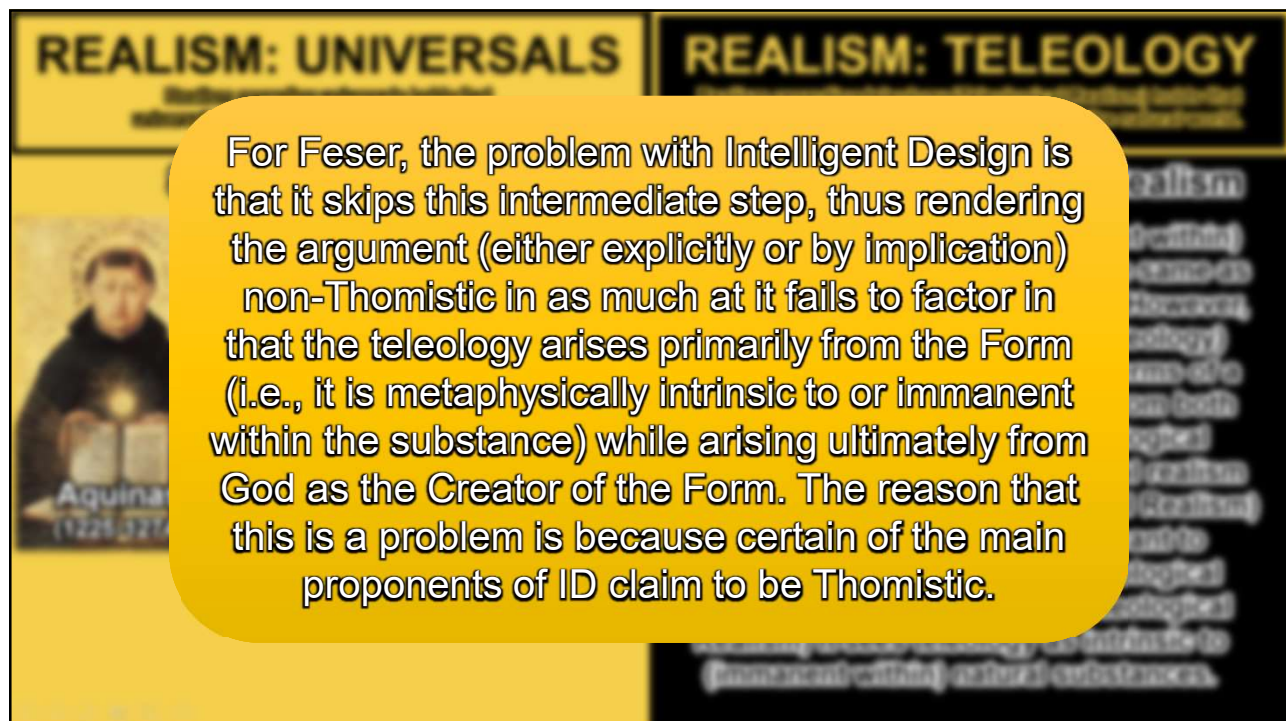
<h2>REALISM: UNIVERSALS</h2>	<h2>REALISM: TELEOLOGY</h2>
<p>Note that many (if not most) textbooks do not make this distinction and, thus, would call the Realism of the Scholastics Moderate Realism (either because they do not notice the distinction or do not regard it as warranting a separate label).</p>	





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.

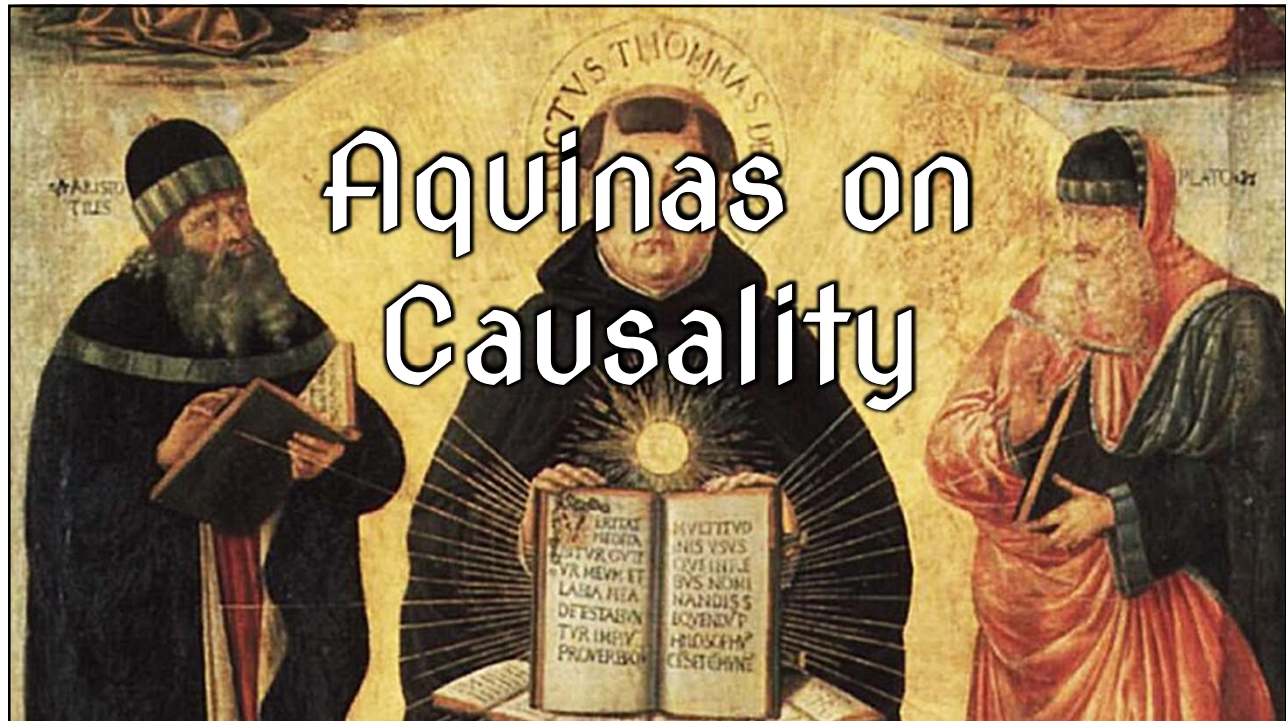
**ANTI-REALISM: TELEOLOGY**

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

**Teleological Eliminativism**

Denies teleology altogether.



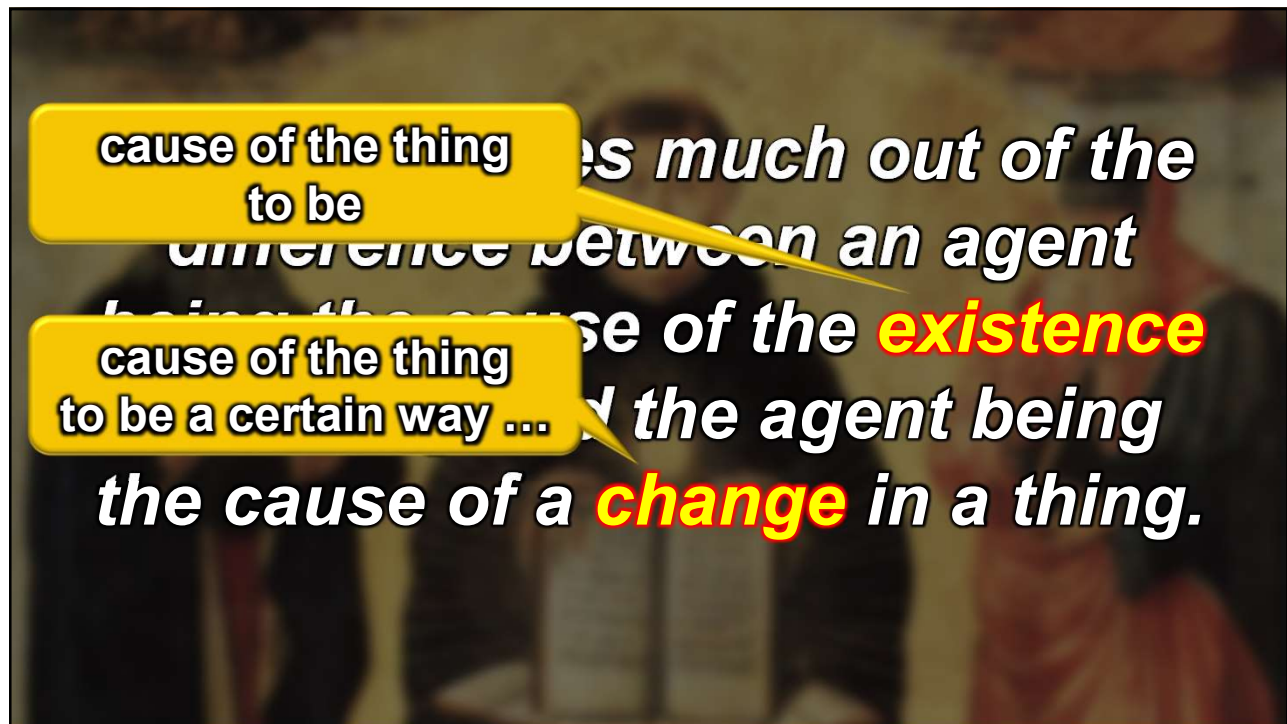


*As with much of his metaphysics (except, notably, regarding existence) Aquinas tracks Aristotle in his understanding of causality.*

*Aquinas makes much out of the difference between an agent being the cause of the existence of a thing and the agent being the cause of a change in a thing.*

*Aquinas makes much out of the difference between an agent being the cause of the **existence** of a thing and the agent being the cause of a change in a thing.*

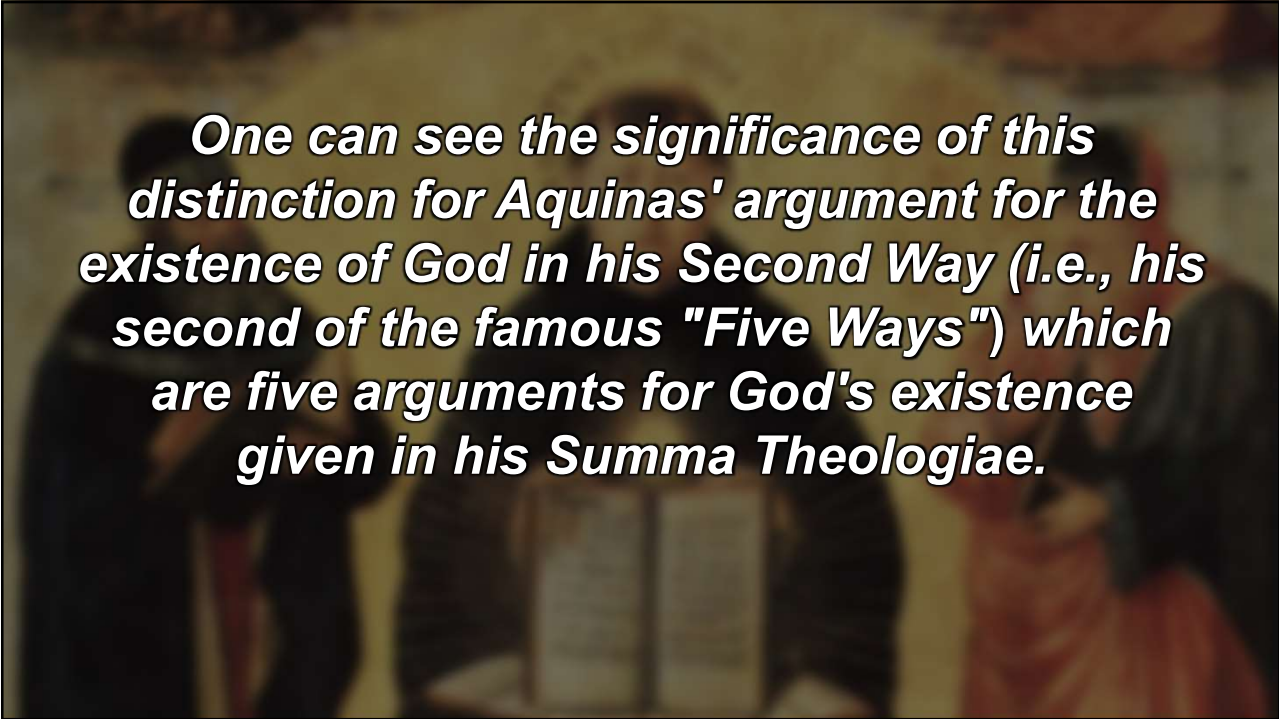




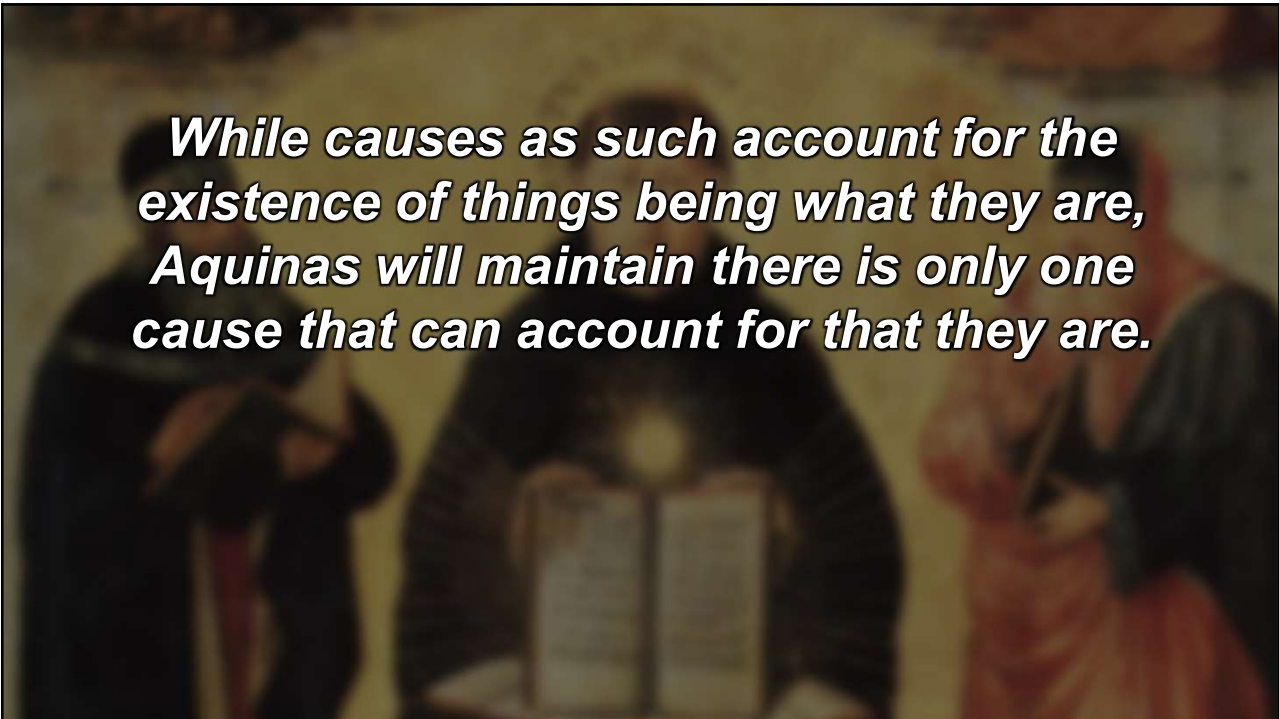
*"Now, the act of being is the first effect, and this is evident by reason of the universal presence of this act. It follows that the proper cause of the act of being is the first and universal agent, namely, God. Other agents, indeed, are not the cause of the act of being as such, but of being this—of being a man or being white, for example.*

*Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)*

[Summa Contra Gentiles, II, 21, trans. Maurer, Vol. 2, p. 61, emphasis in Maurer]

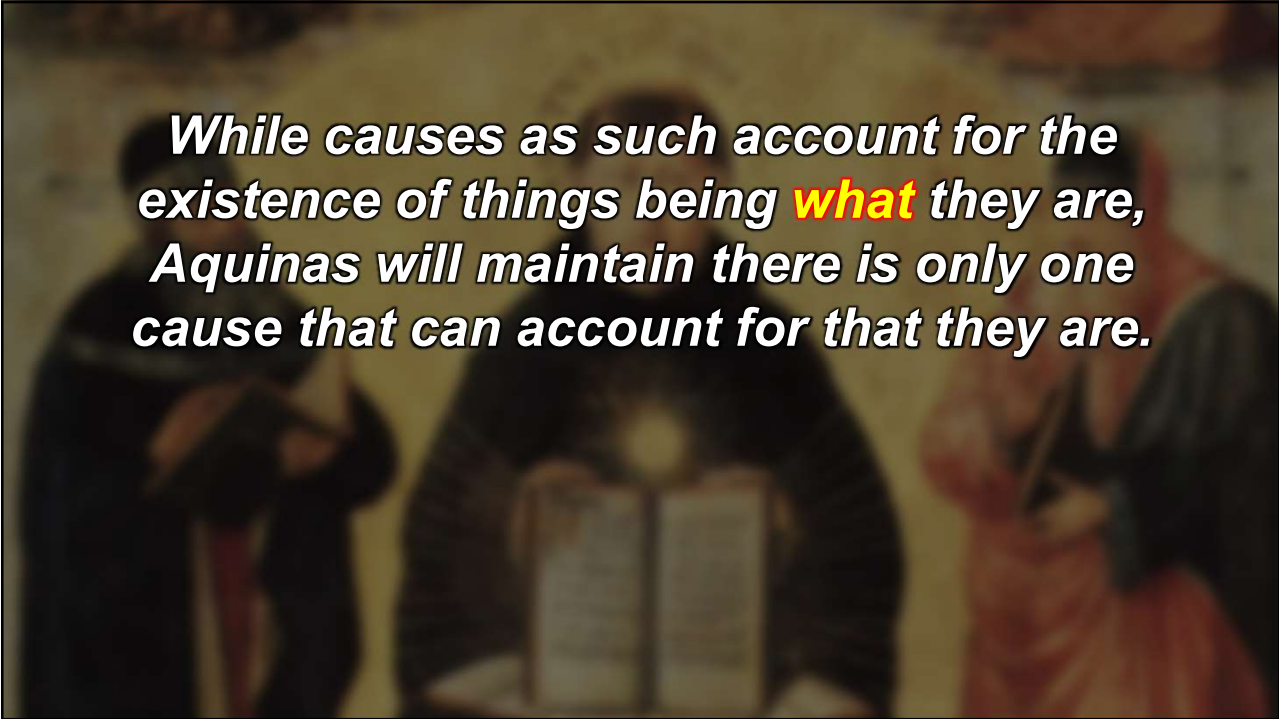


***One can see the significance of this distinction for Aquinas' argument for the existence of God in his Second Way (i.e., his second of the famous "Five Ways") which are five arguments for God's existence given in his Summa Theologiae.***

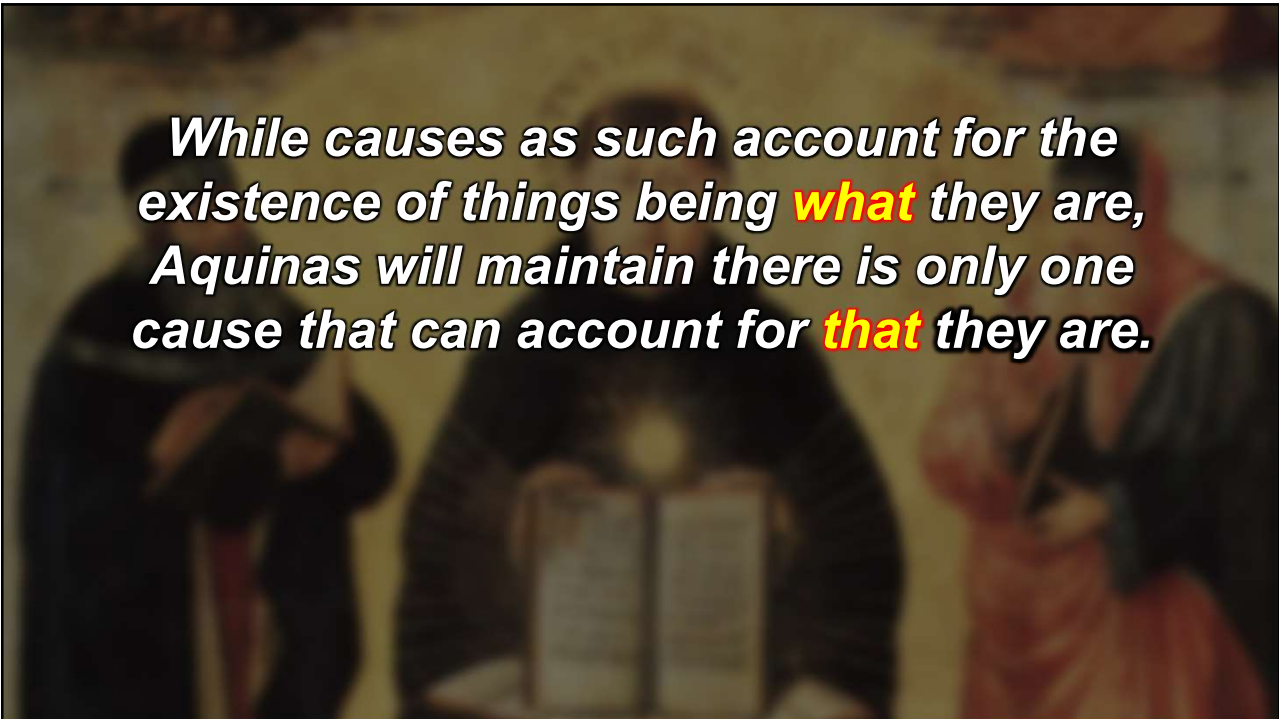


***While causes as such account for the existence of things being what they are, Aquinas will maintain there is only one cause that can account for that they are.***

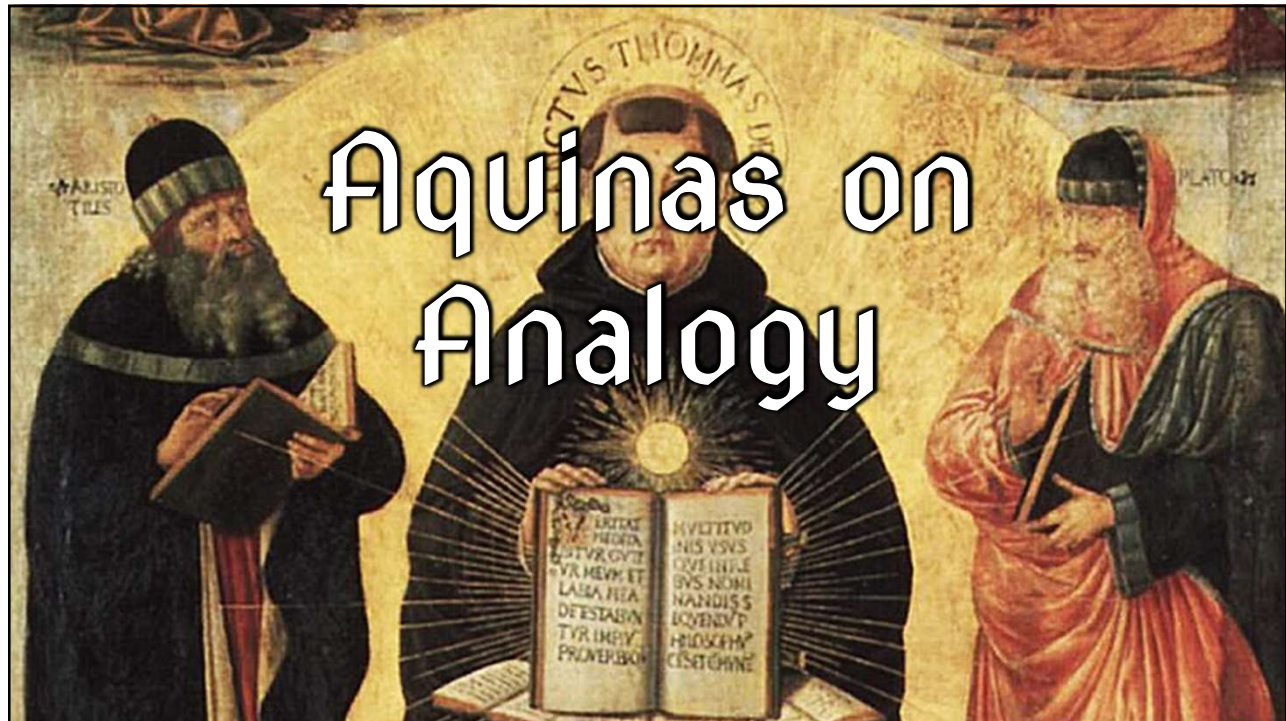




*While causes as such account for the existence of things being **what** they are, Aquinas will maintain there is only one cause that can account for that they are.*



*While causes as such account for the existence of things being **what** they are, Aquinas will maintain there is only one cause that can account for **that** they are.*



## Analogy of Attribution

analogous use of 'healthy'

George is healthy.

Health exists  
intrinsically in George.  
**primary analogate**

cause of health

sign of health

Food is healthy. George's skin  
is healthy.

Term is understood by virtue  
of the relationship to the  
primary analogate.  
**secondary analogates**



## Analogy of Proportion

### Analogy of Proper Proportionality

**life**

- ❖ exists intrinsically in each
- ❖ exists formally in each

plants  
animals  
humans  
angels

### Analogy of Improper Proportionality



**This is a fox.**

predication exists  
intrinsically and formally



**Herod is a fox.**

predication exists  
intrinsically but not  
formally (only  
metaphorically)

## Analogy of Proportion

### Analogy of Proper Proportionality

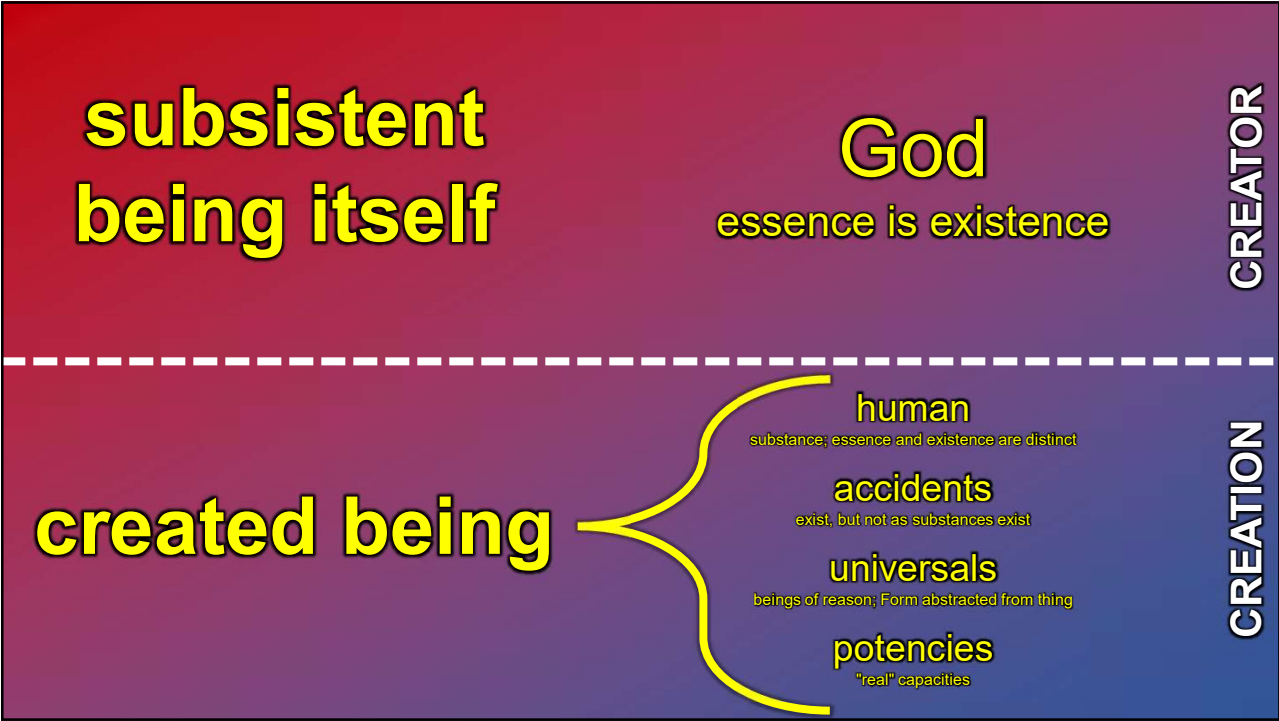
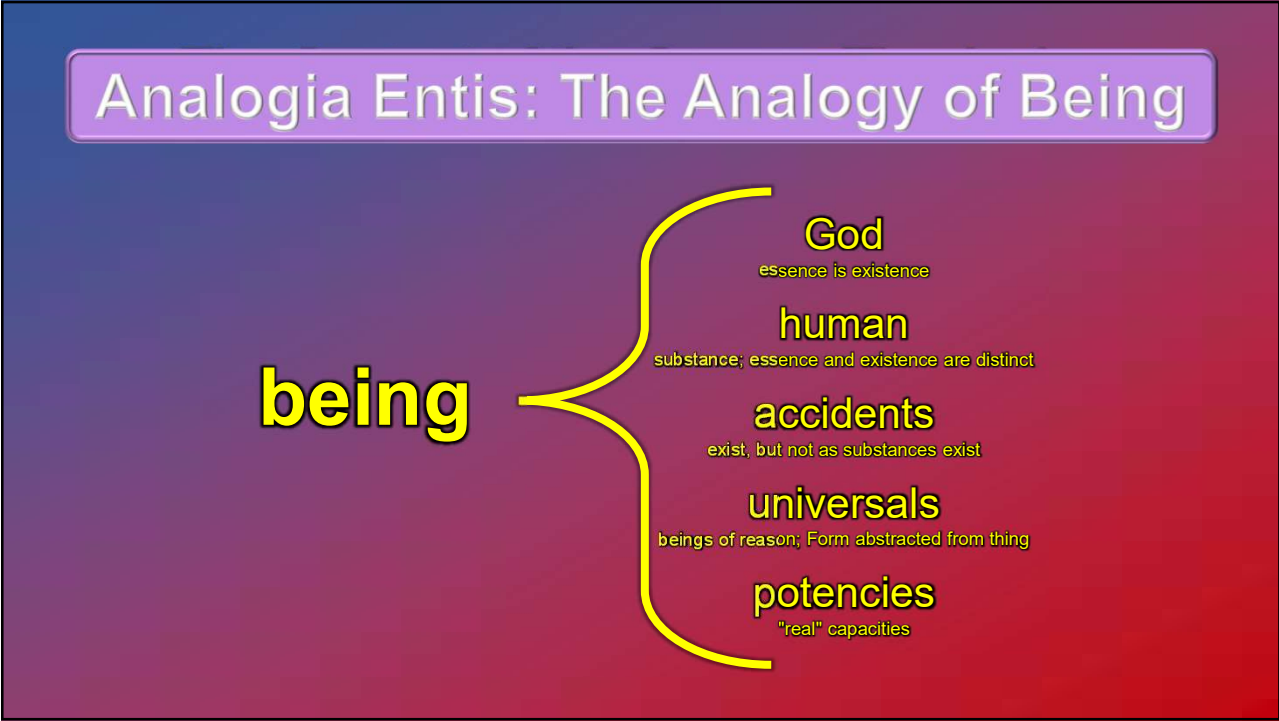
**life**

- ❖ exists intrinsically in each
- ❖ exists formally in each

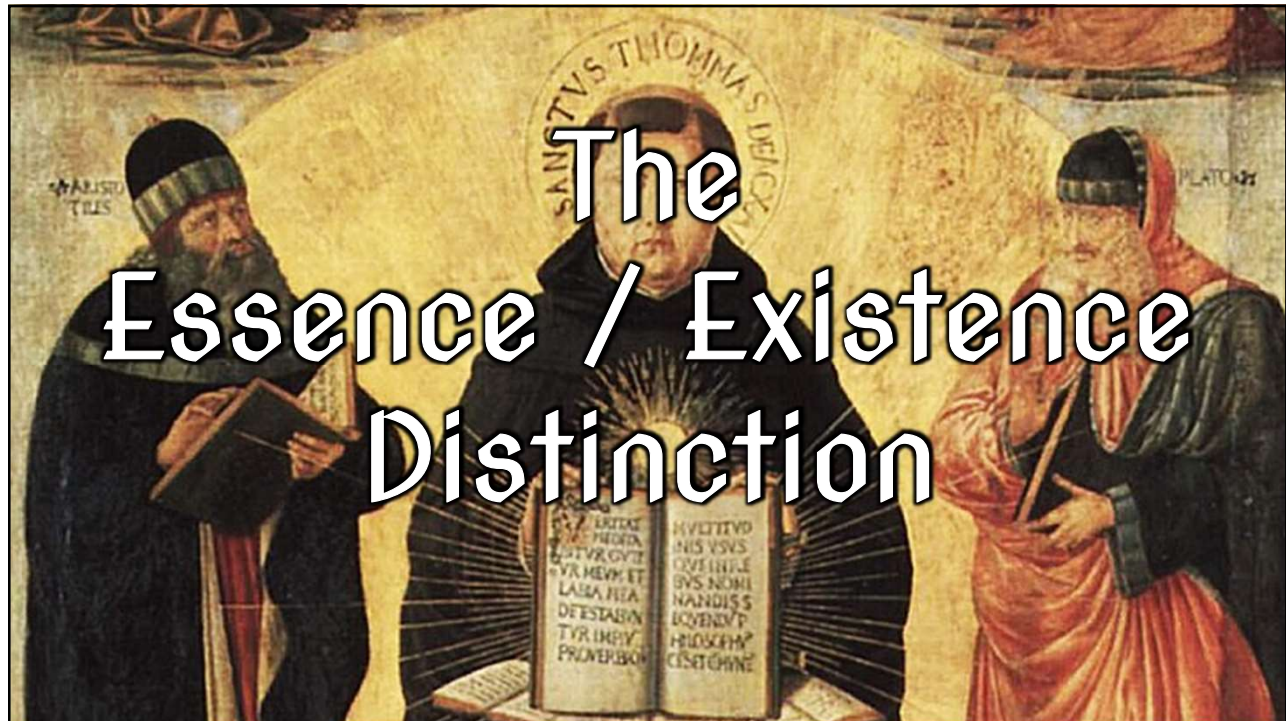
plants  
animals  
humans  
angels

### Analogy of Improper Proportionality

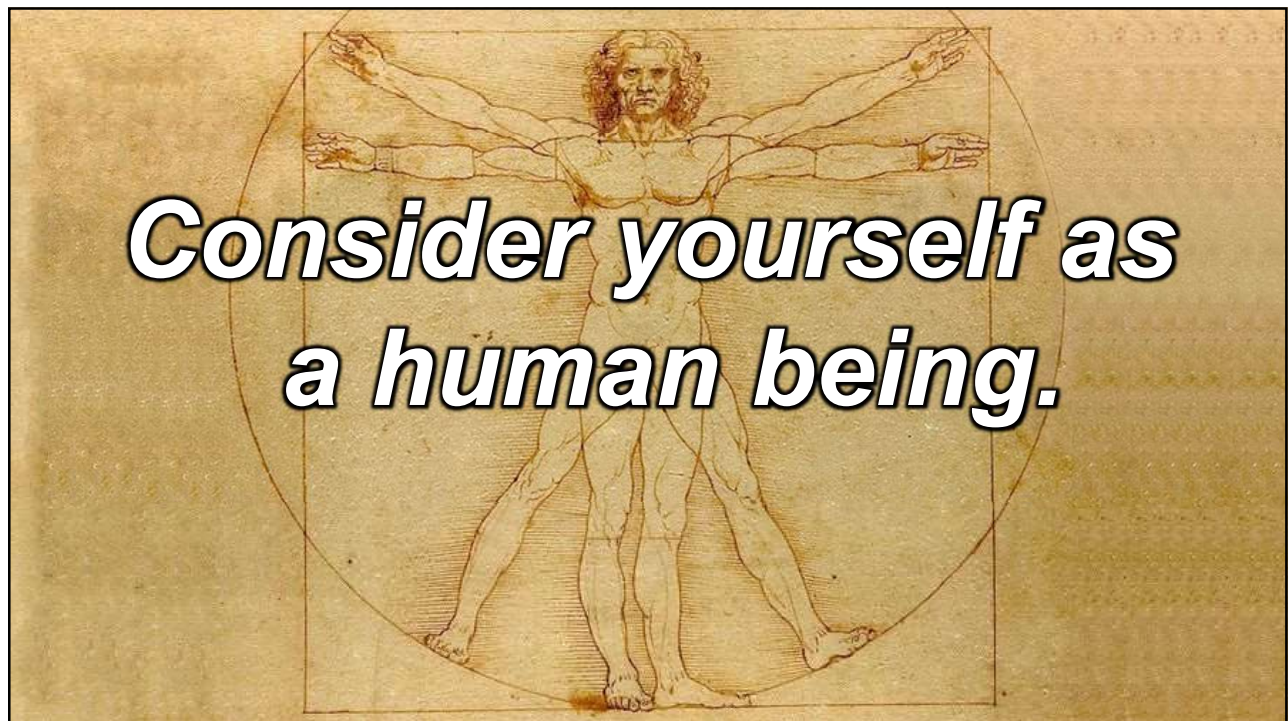
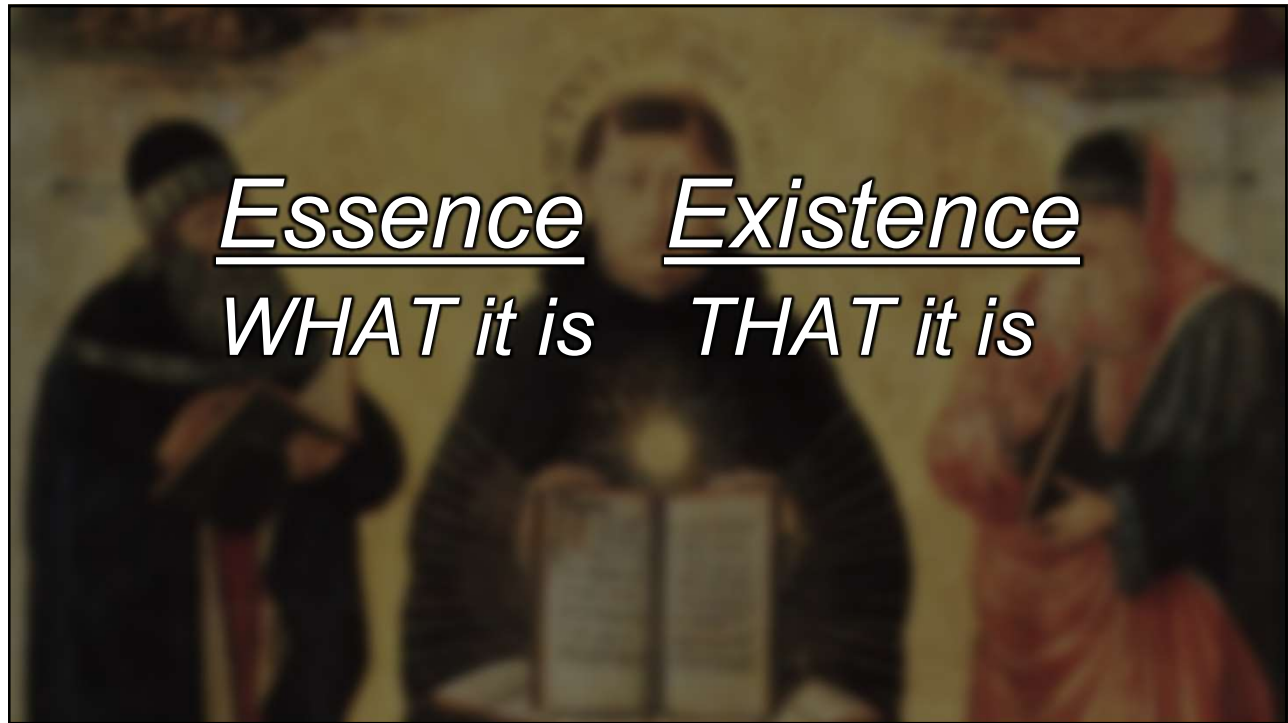
The analogy of  
improper  
(metaphorical)  
proportionality is  
generally regarded  
as unimportant for  
Thomistic  
metaphysics.



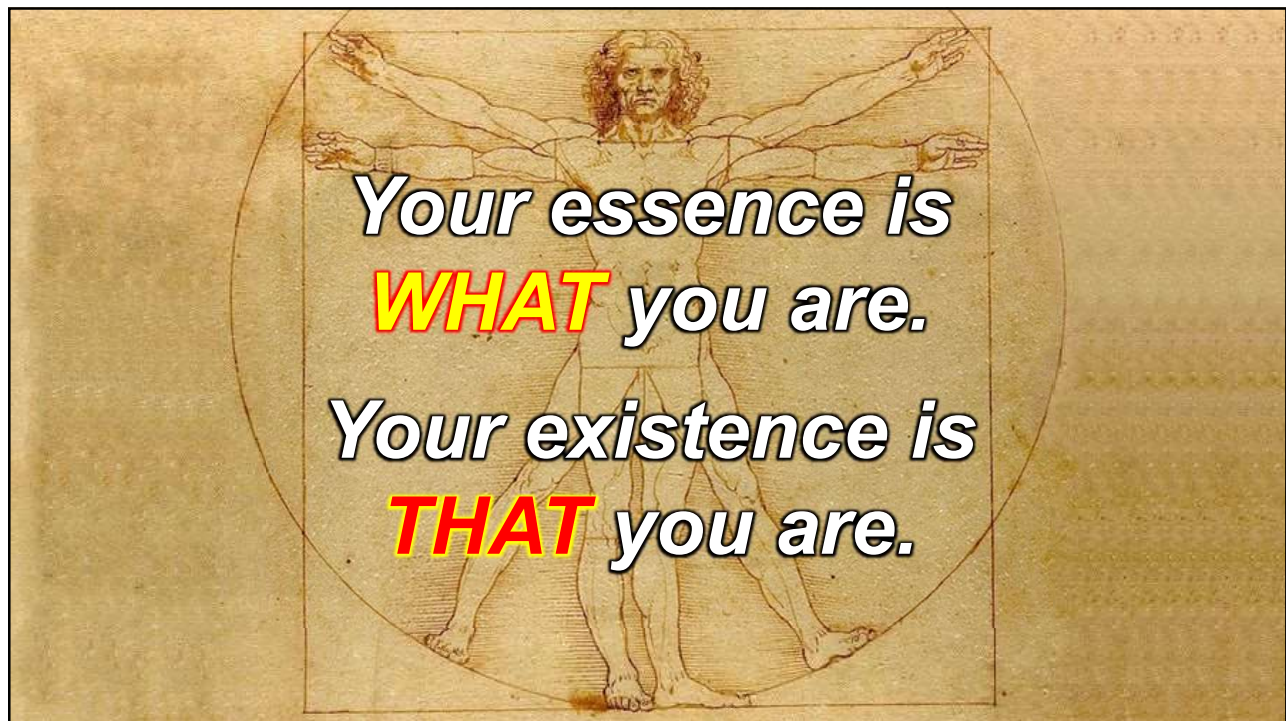
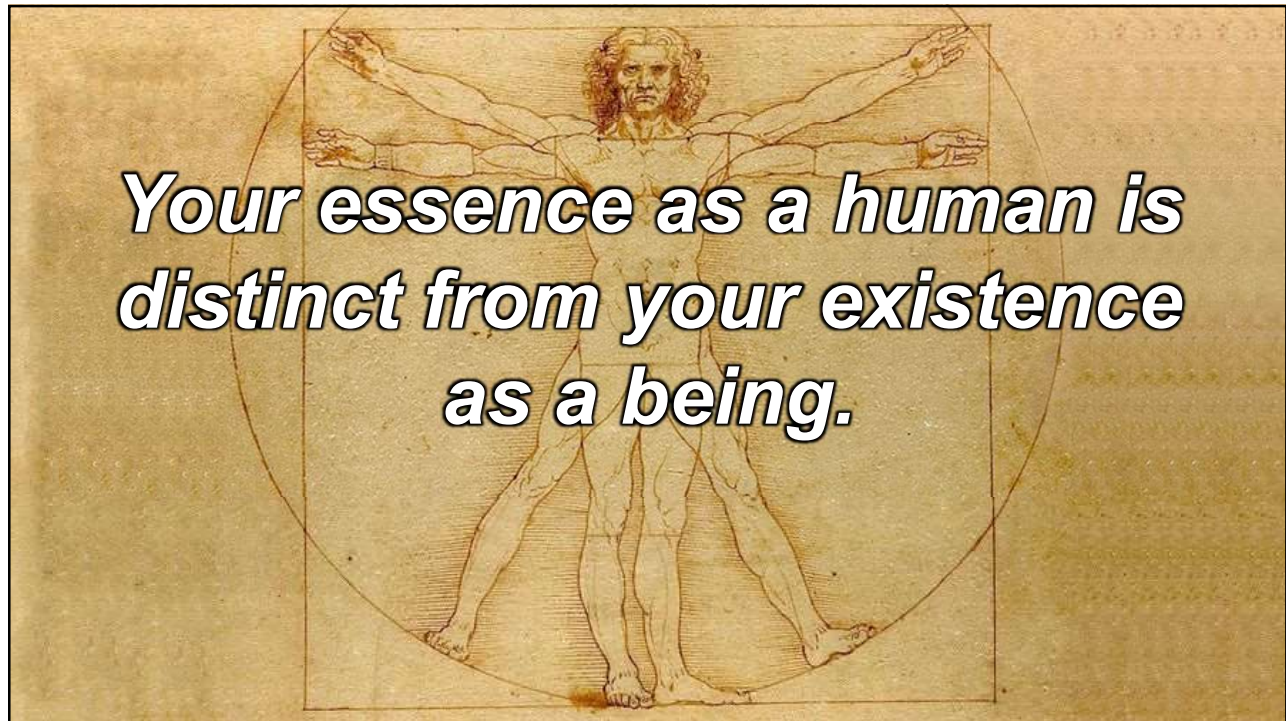




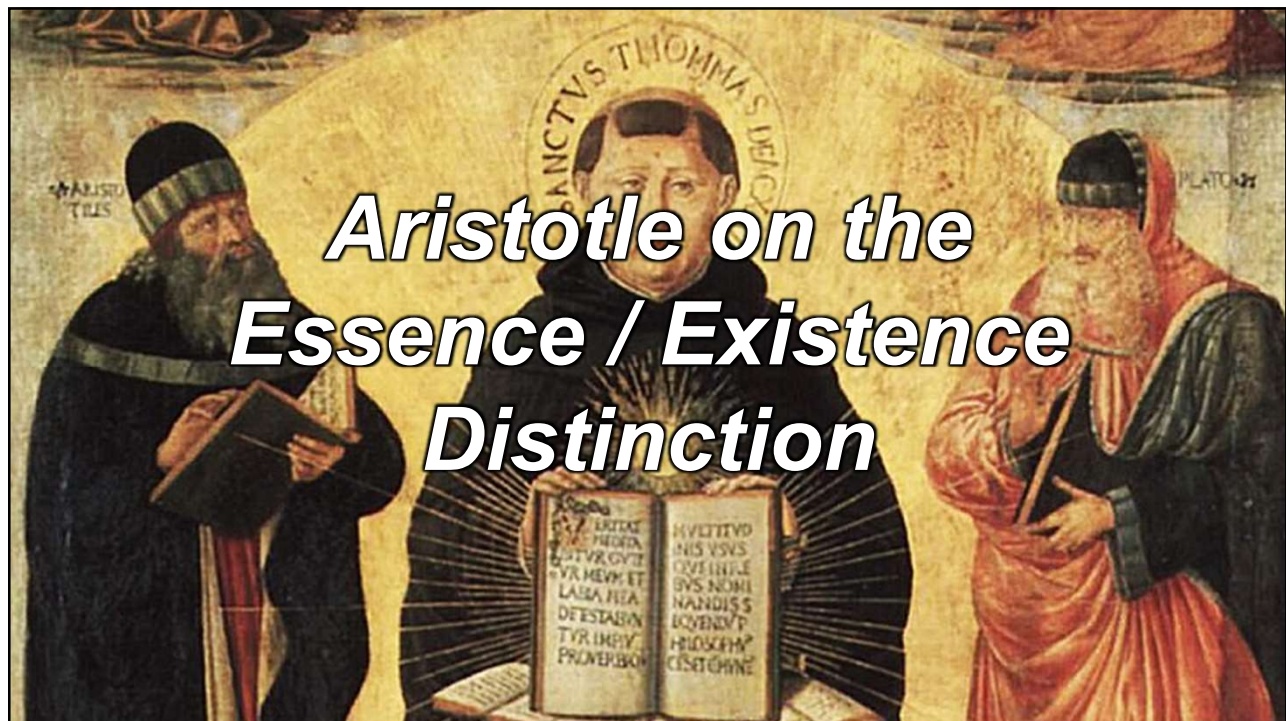
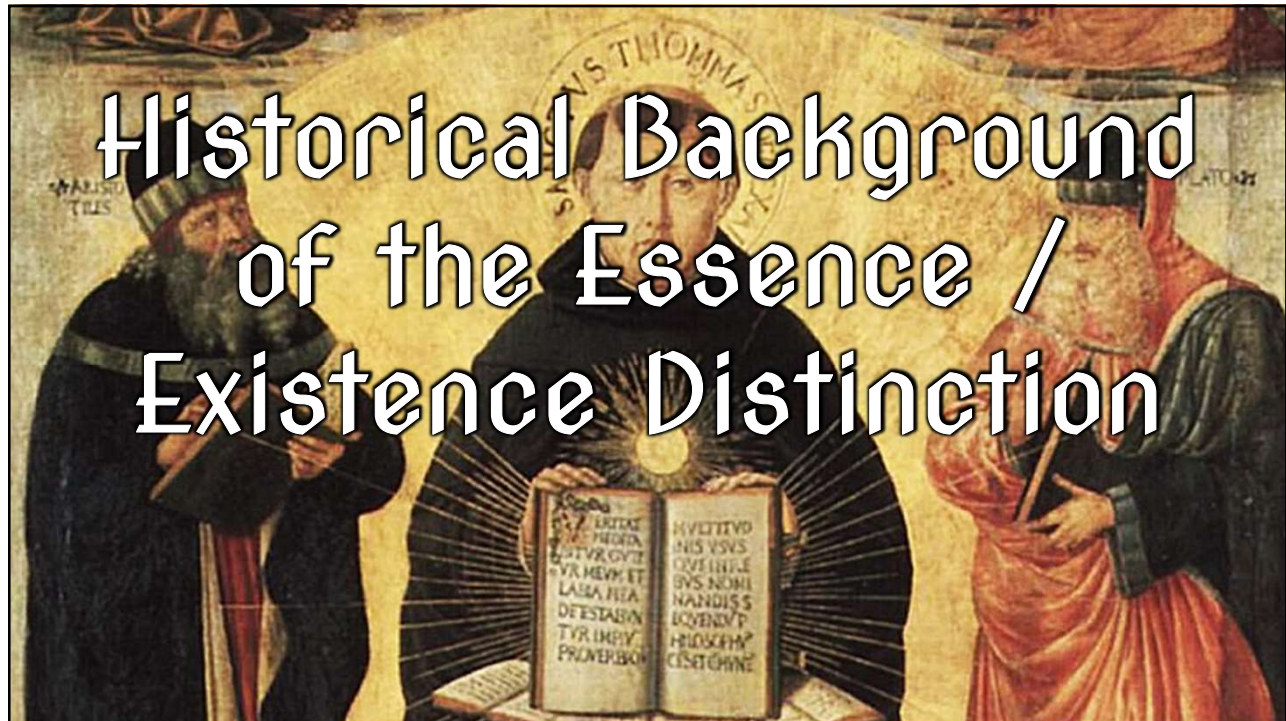
*The essence / existence distinction maintains that there is a real difference in a created thing between its essence and its existence.*



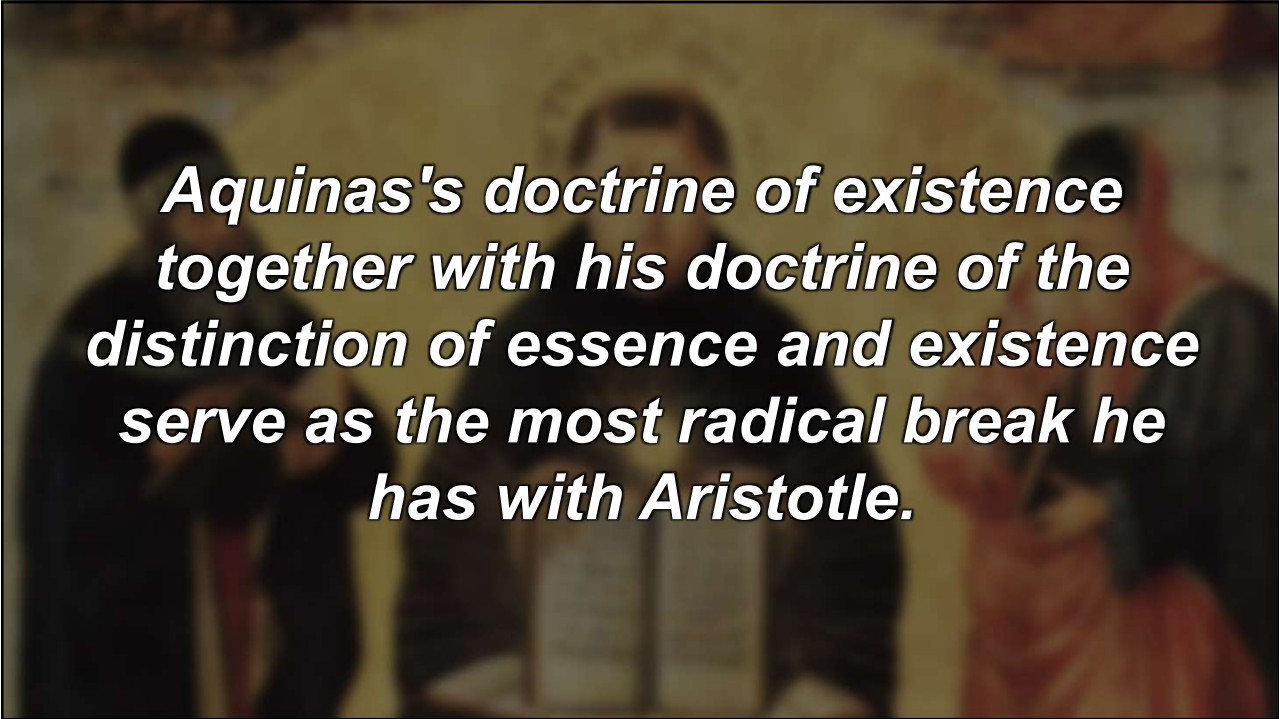




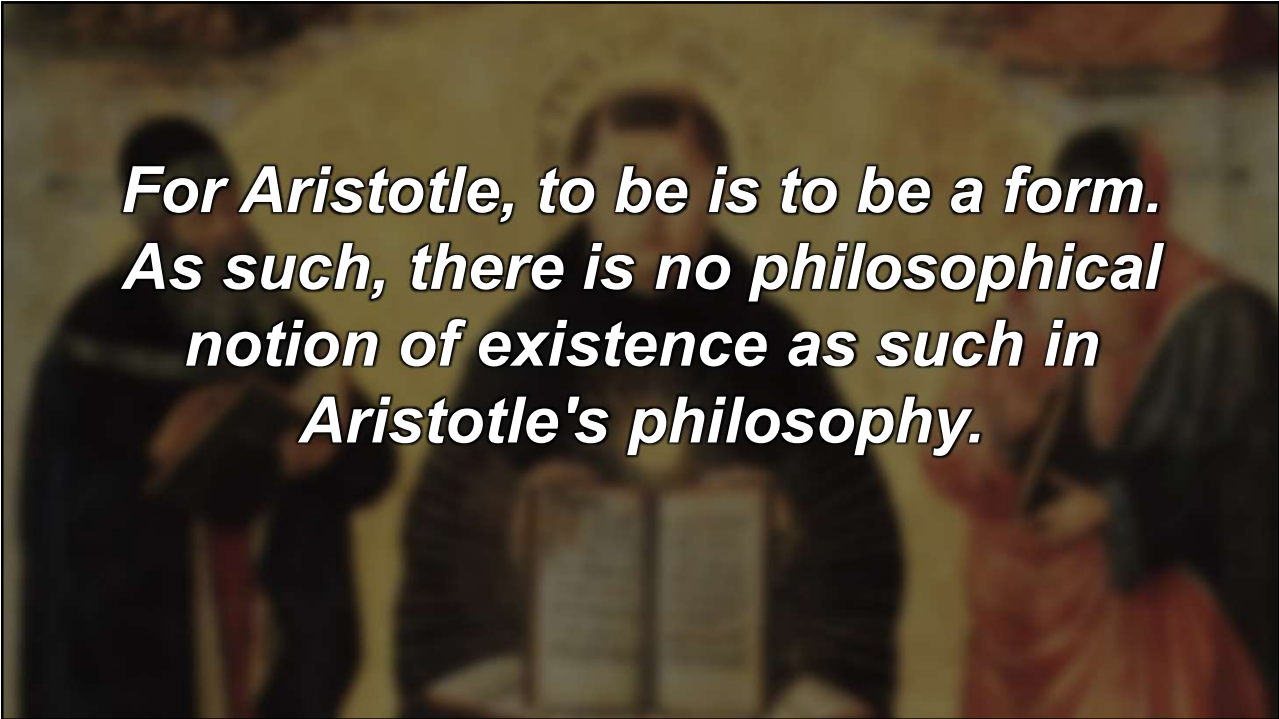




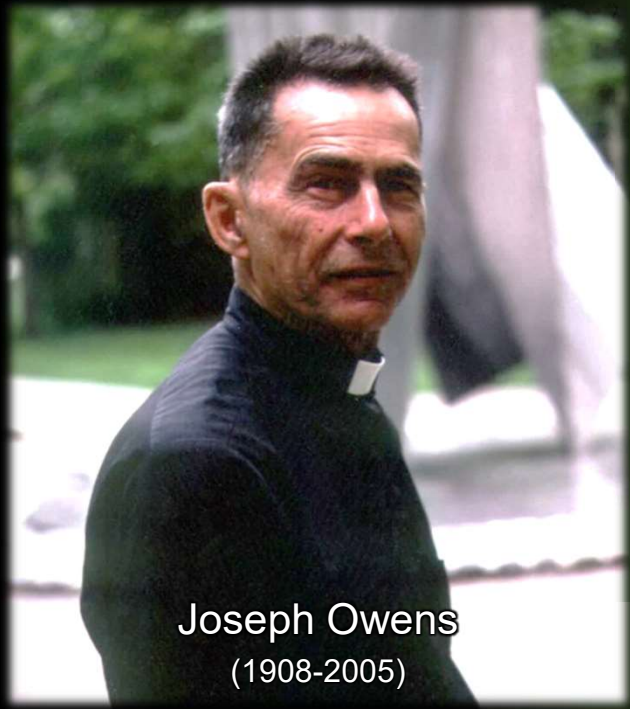




***Aquinas's doctrine of existence together with his doctrine of the distinction of essence and existence serve as the most radical break he has with Aristotle.***



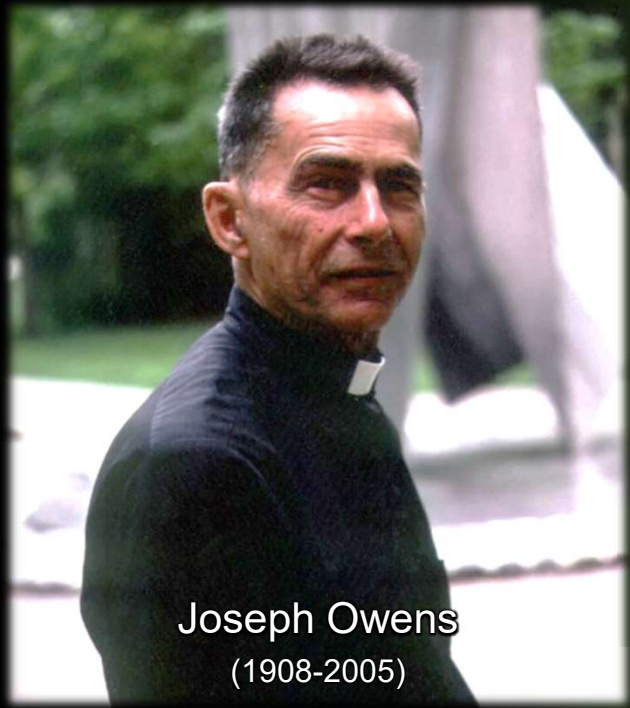
***For Aristotle, to be is to be a form. As such, there is no philosophical notion of existence as such in Aristotle's philosophy.***

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

**Joseph Owens**  
(1908-2005)

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

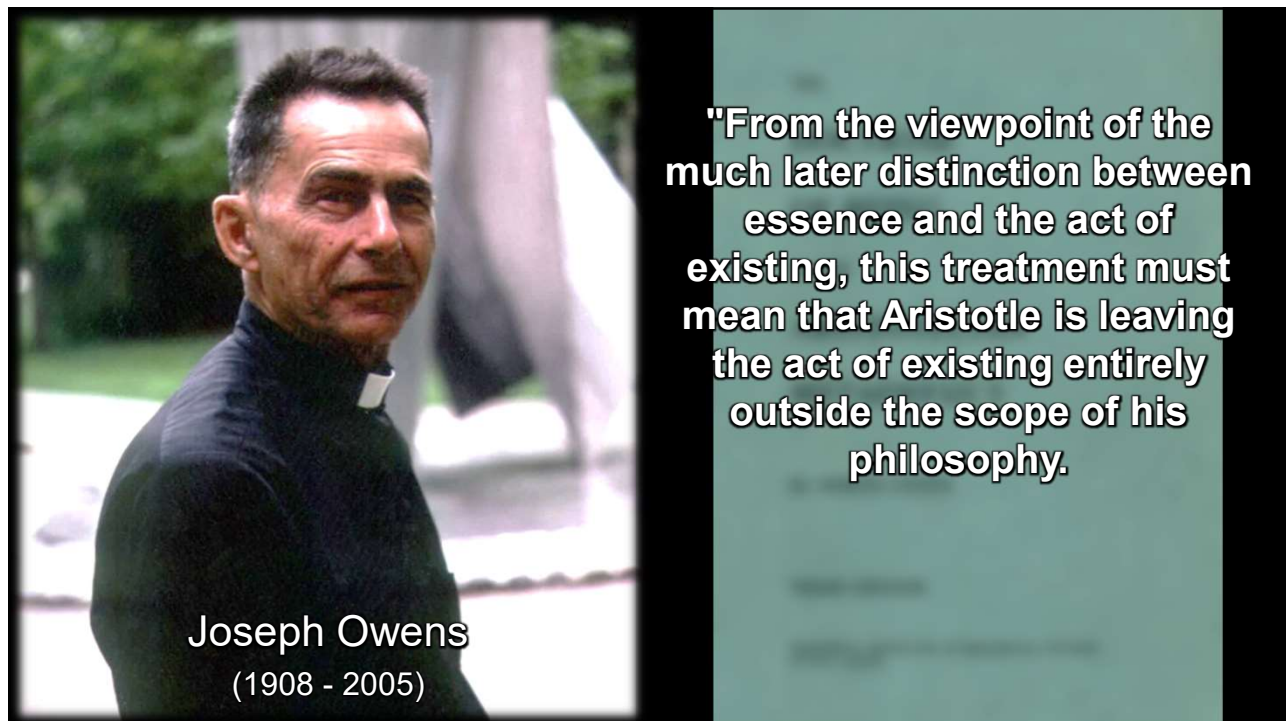
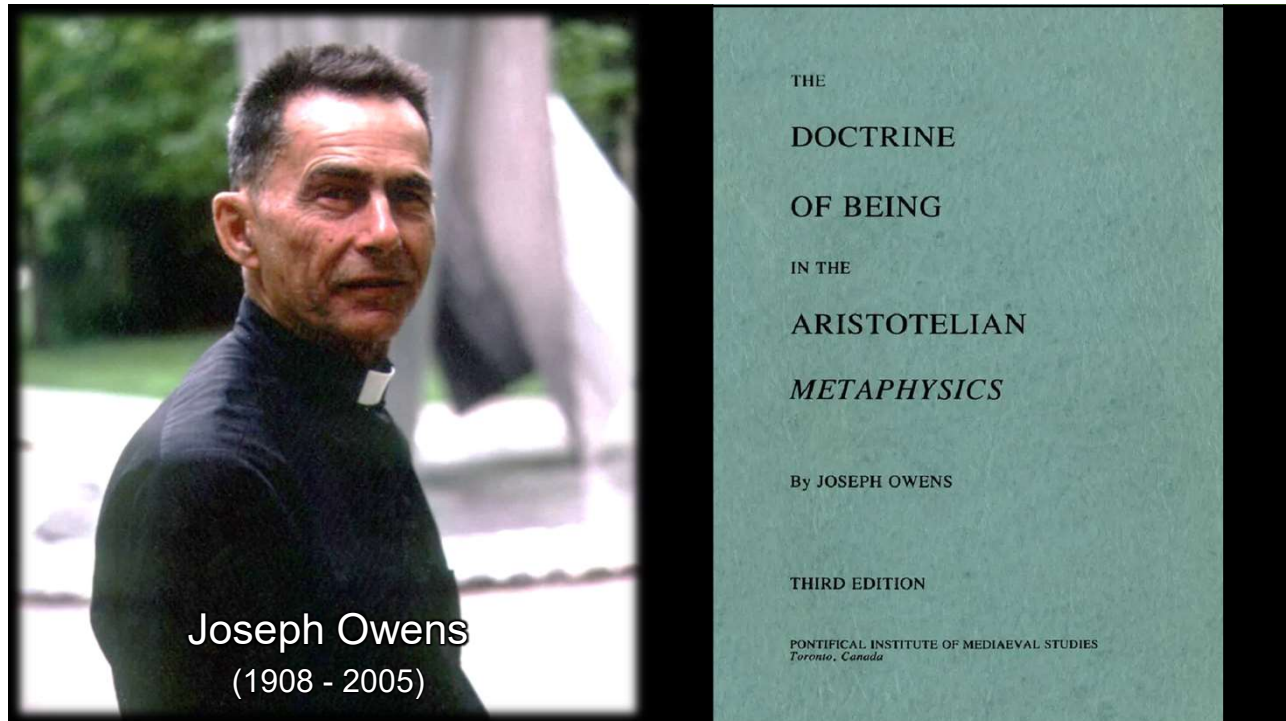
["Aquinas and the Five Ways," *Monist* 58 (January 1974): 21]

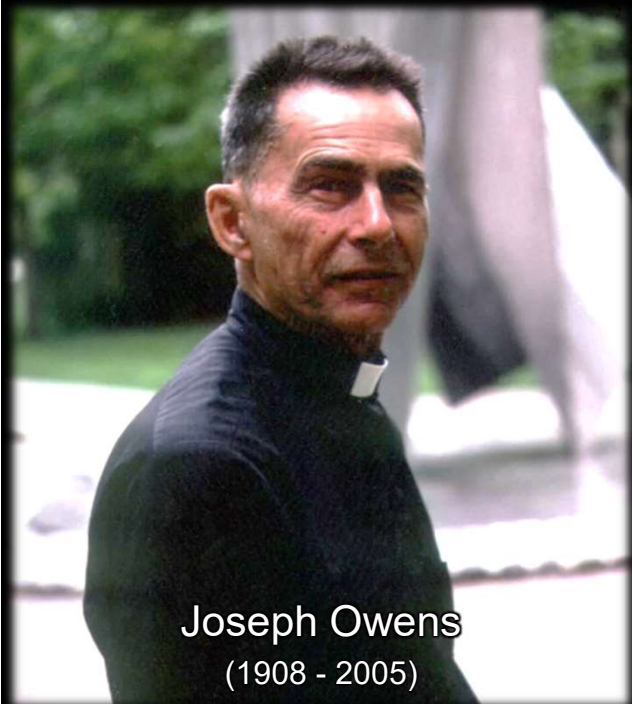
A portrait of Joseph Owens, a man with short dark hair, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera.

**Joseph Owens**  
(1908-2005)

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

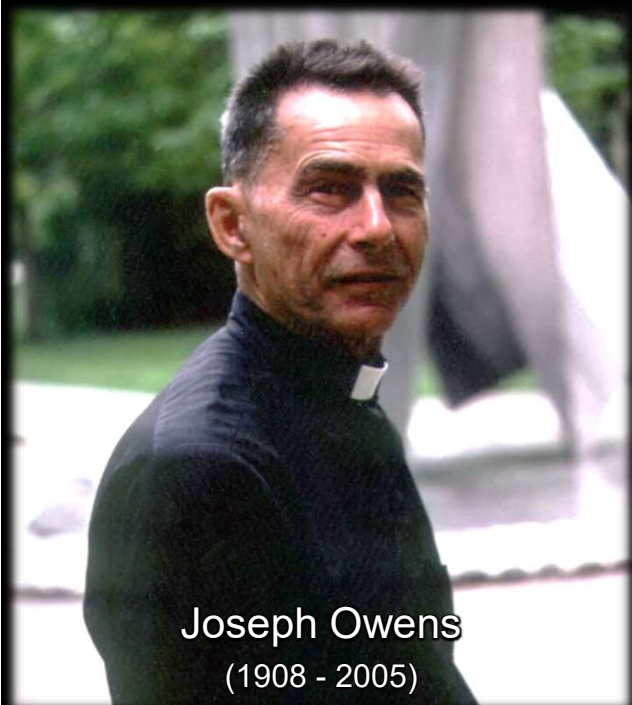




A portrait of Joseph Owens, a man with short dark hair, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera.

Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

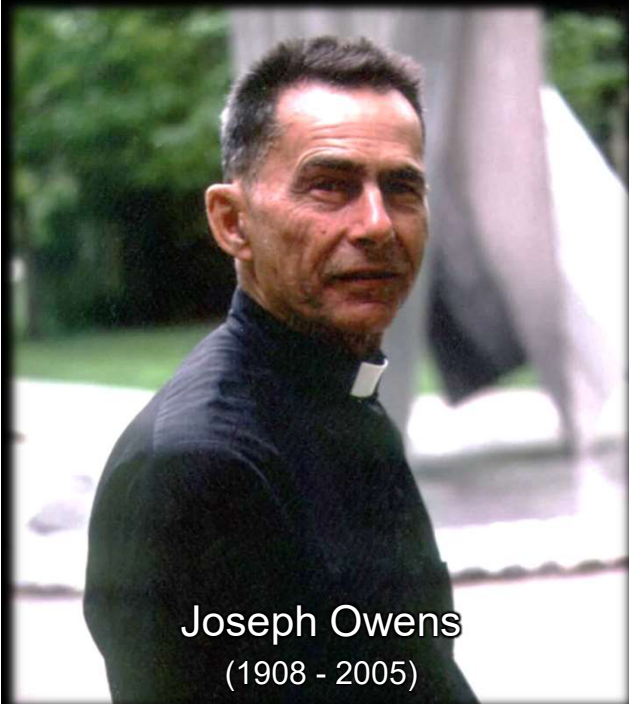
"The act of existing must be wholly escaping his *scientific* consideration. All necessary and definite connections between things can be reduced to essence. ...

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

Joseph Owens  
(1908 - 2005)

"In a word, Aristotle does not for an instant deny existence. ... But he does not seem even to suspect that it is an act worthy of any special consideration, or that it is capable of philosophical treatment. ...

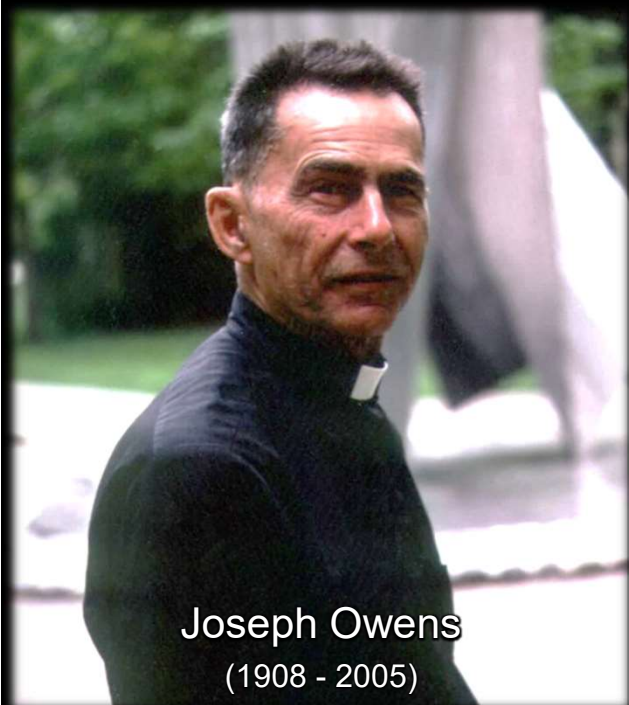




**Joseph Owens**  
(1908 - 2005)

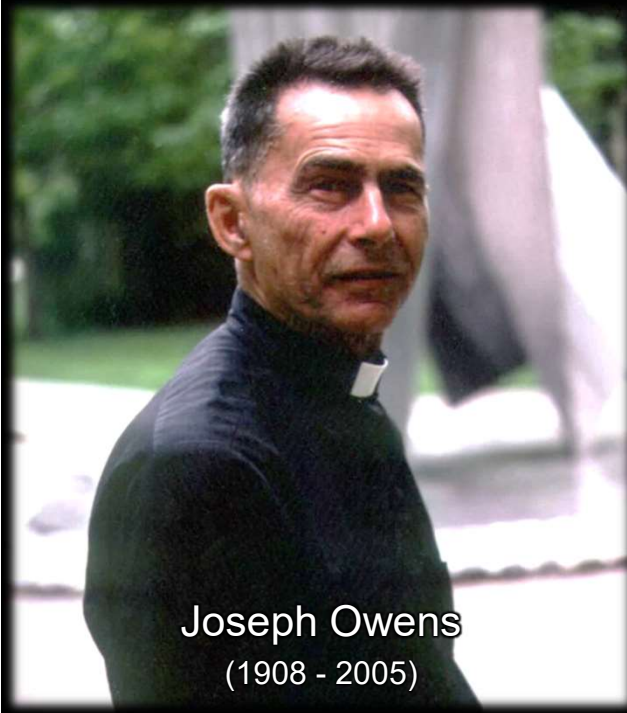
**"The difference in viewpoint can readily be seen in the commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas on this question. St. Thomas takes great pains to show that the contingent as well as the necessary must be immediately caused by the Primary Being."**

[Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics: A Study in the Greek Background of Mediaeval Thought*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies), 309-310, emphasis in original]



**Joseph Owens**  
(1908 - 2005)

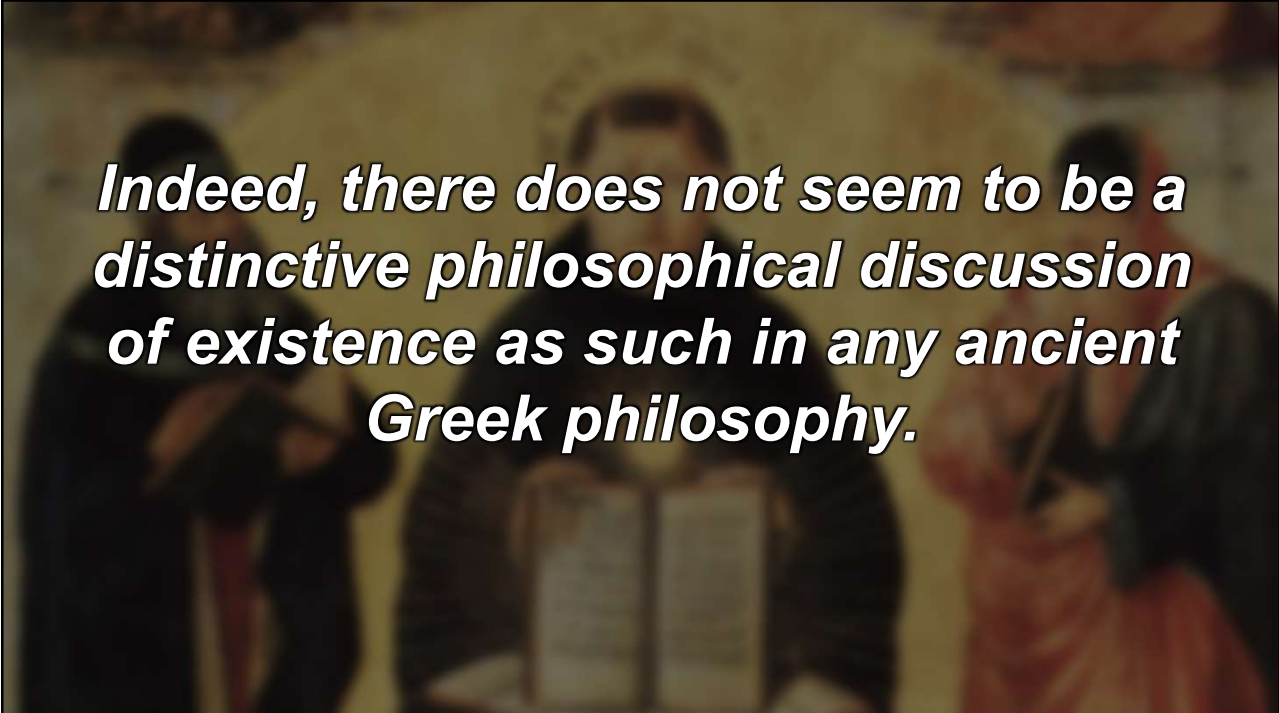
**"In a philosophy conditioned by this fundamental doctrine of Being [in Aristotle], the absence of any treatment of *existence* is inevitable. But this deficiency becomes apparent only when Aristotelian thought is regarded from a later historical viewpoint. What can be known and contemplated for the Stagirite is *form*, even though understood as act. Determination and necessity and finitude are requisite. The contingent and the infinite have no place in this contemplation. What is not form, or reducible to form, has no interest for the Primary Philosophy ..."**

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

**Joseph Owens**  
(1908 - 2005)

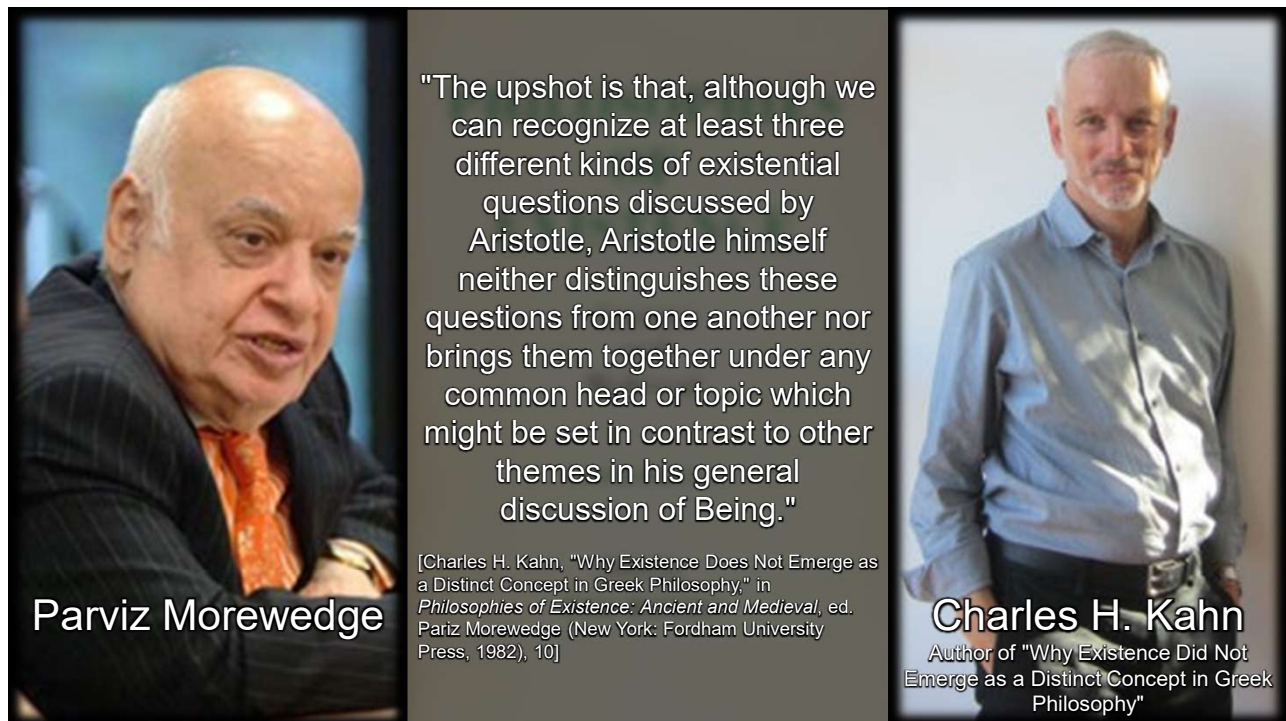
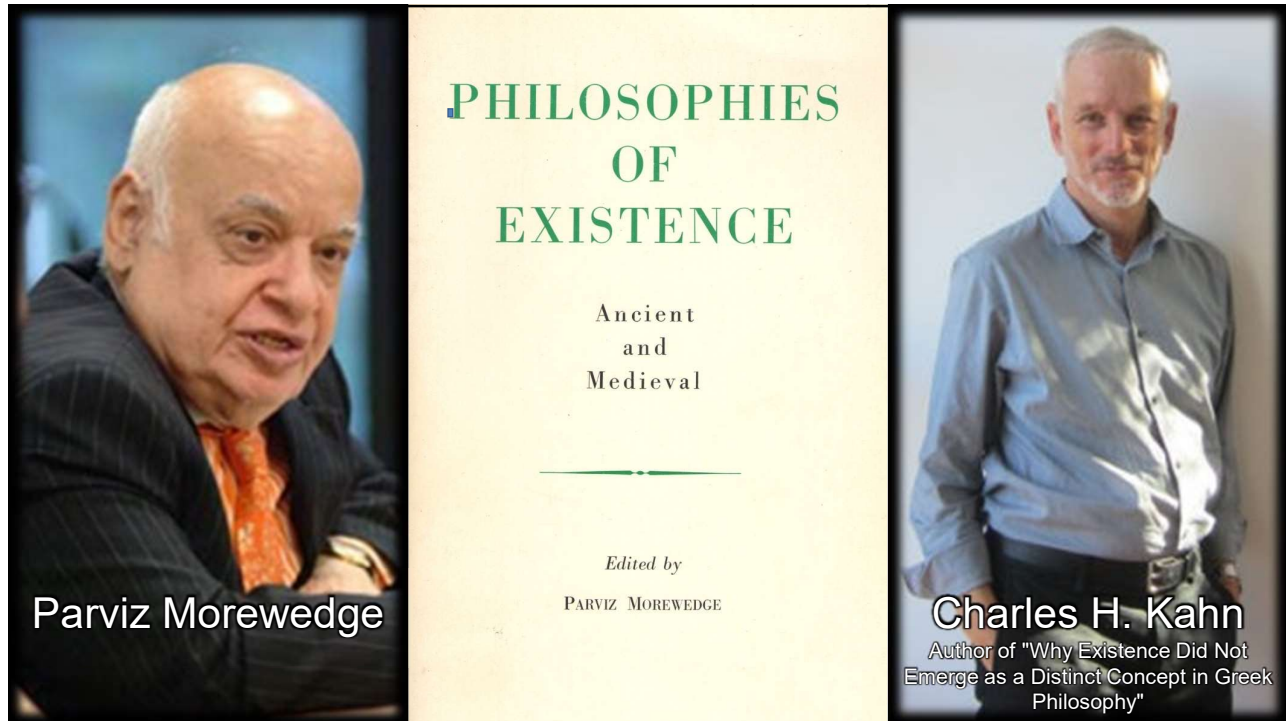
**"The highest instance of Being is form; and it is that form that is studied by the Primary Philosophy in all the other instances. An act like that of existence which is irreducible to form, has no place in the Primary Philosophy or in any other science. Creation, in the Christian sense of a free creation, could have no interest for the Primary Philosophy, even had Aristotle believed it as a religious dogma ... A fundamentally new metaphysics would be required if it were to have a place in philosophy."**

[Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being*, 466-467, emphasis in original]

A blurred background image showing several people in a room, possibly a classroom or lecture hall. The text is overlaid on this image.

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



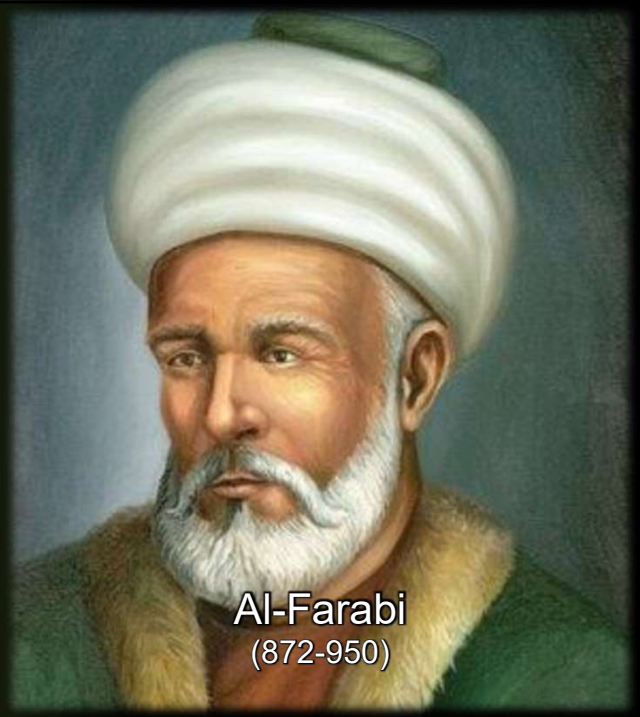




***Thomas was certainly not the first philosopher to make a specific mention of the essence/existence distinction.***

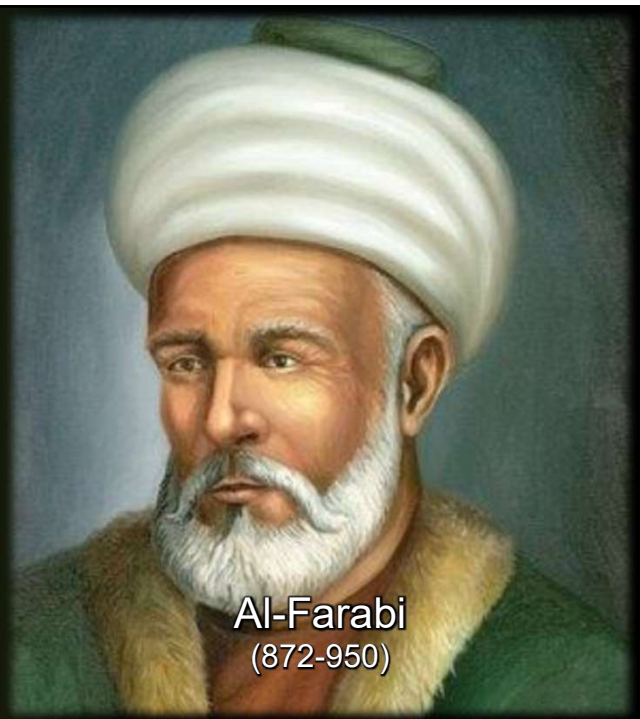


***There is an earlier mention of it is by the tenth century Arabic philosopher Al-Farabi.***



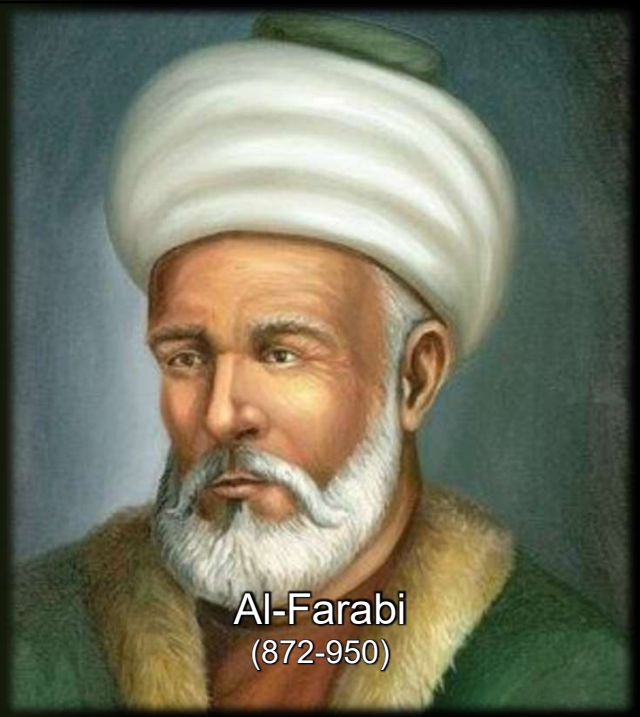
Al-Farabi  
(872-950)

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



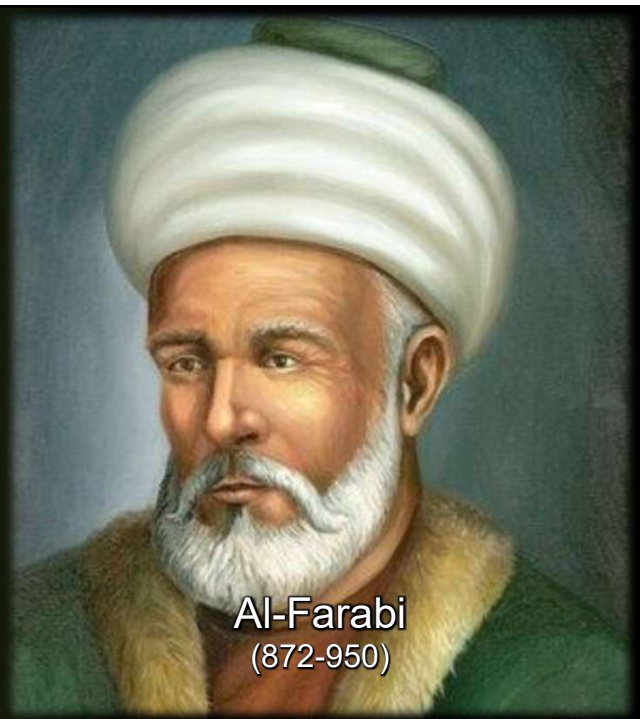
Al-Farabi  
(872-950)

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



Al-Farabi  
(872-950)

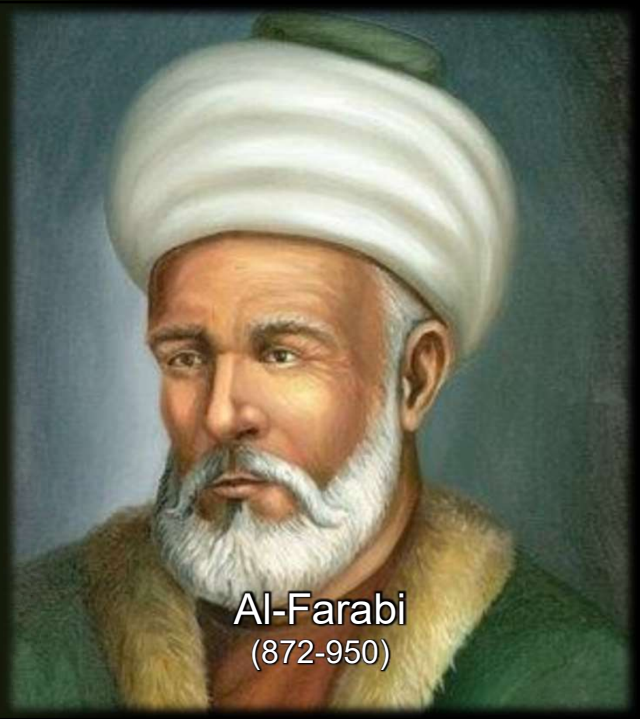
*"But the same token, existence is not included in the essence of things; otherwise it could become one of their constitutive characters,*



Al-Farabi  
(872-950)

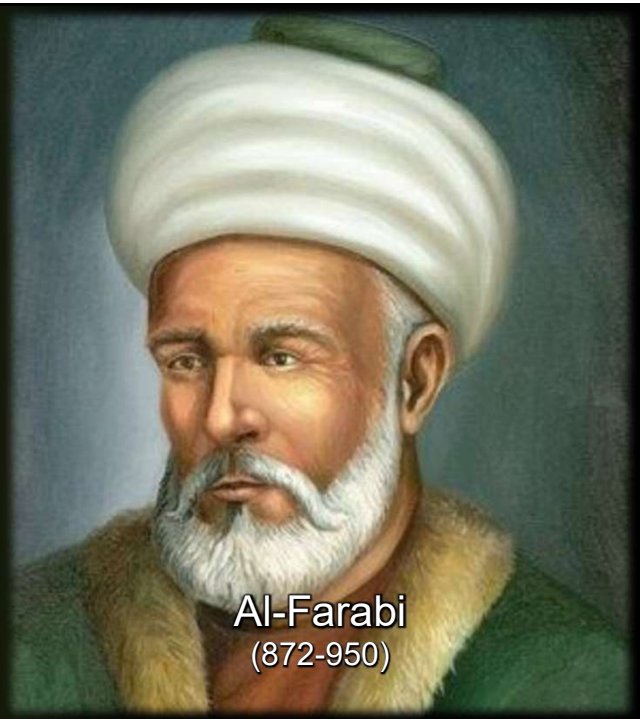


*"and the representation of what essence is would remain incomplete without the representation of its existence. And what is more, it would be impossible for us to separate them by the imagination.*



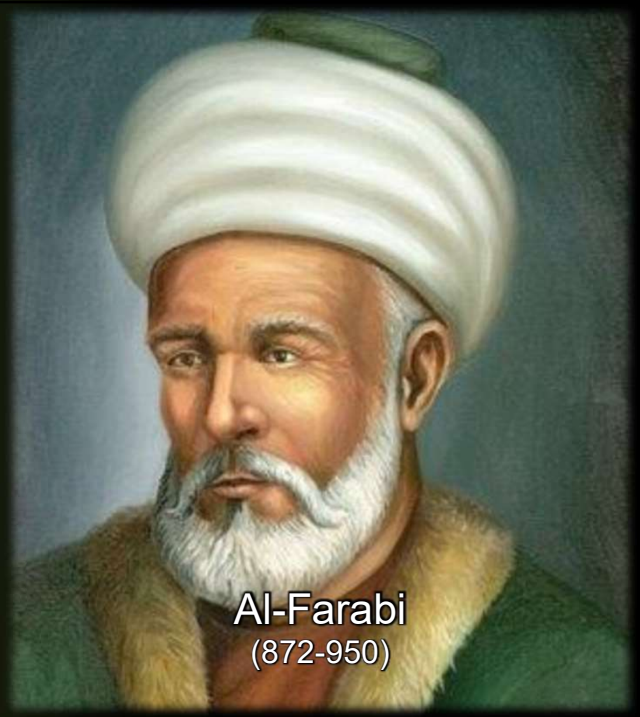
Al-Farabi  
(872-950)

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



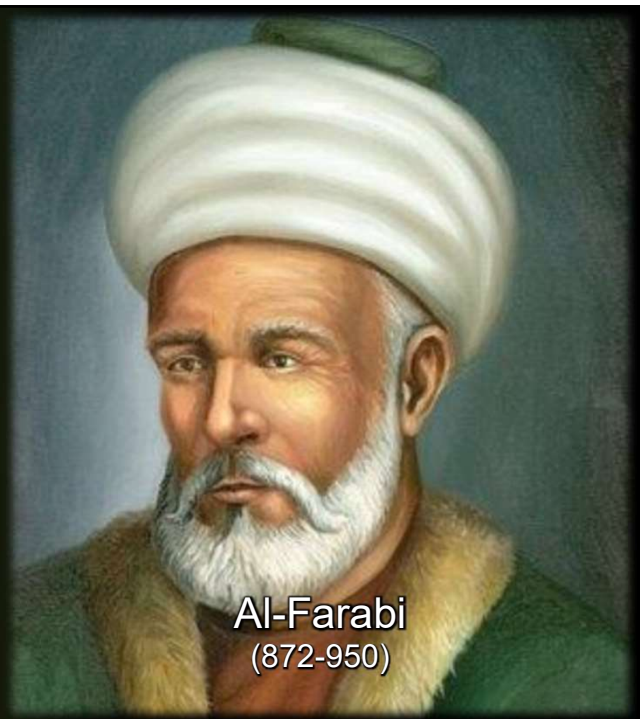
Al-Farabi  
(872-950)

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



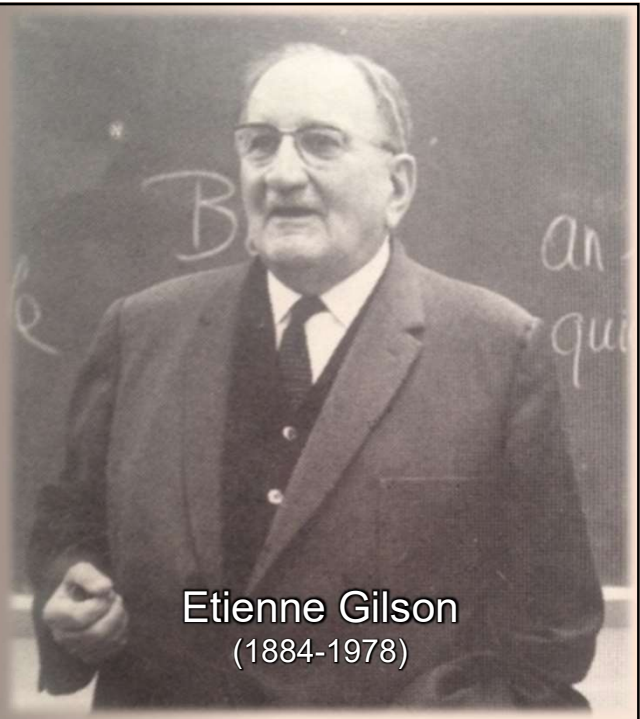
***"If Thus existence is not a constitutive character, it is only an accessory accident."***

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



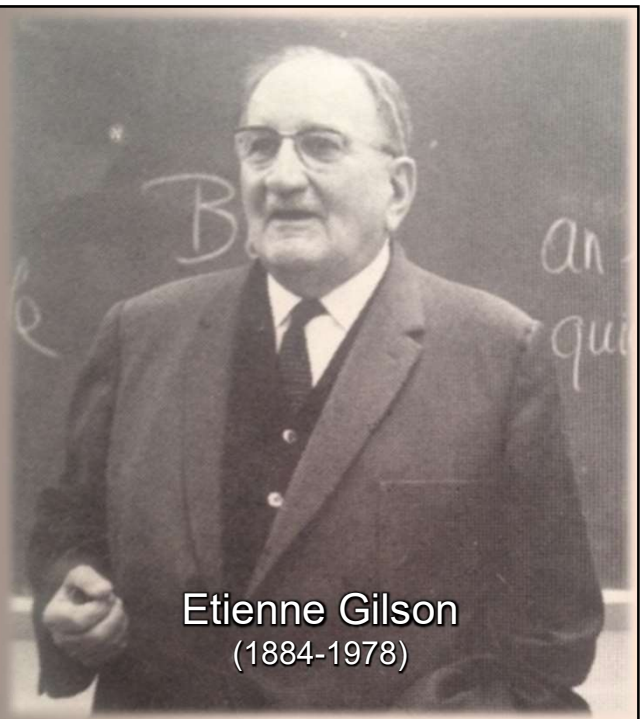


***"In order not to confuse this important metaphysical move [in Alfarabi] with later ones, it should be noted that the primacy of essence dominates the whole argumentation. Not for an instant is there any doubt that existence is a predicate of essence, and because it is not essentially included in it,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



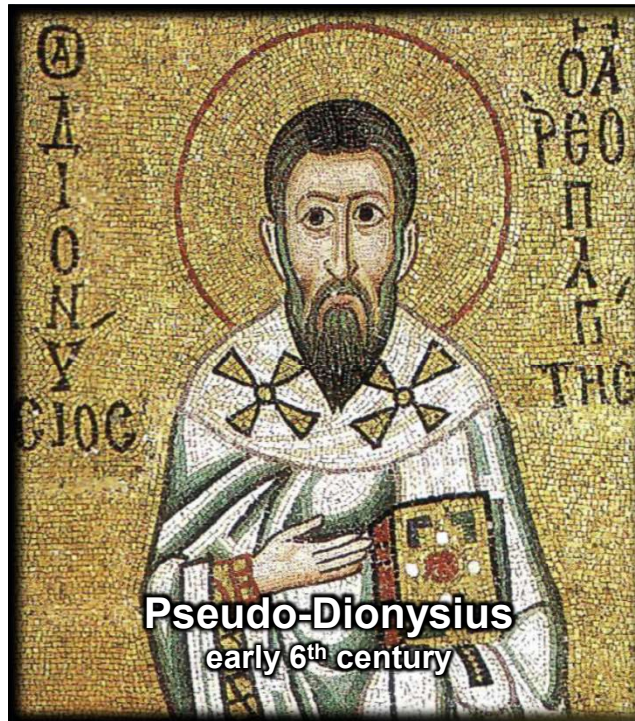
Etienne Gilson  
(1884-1978)

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

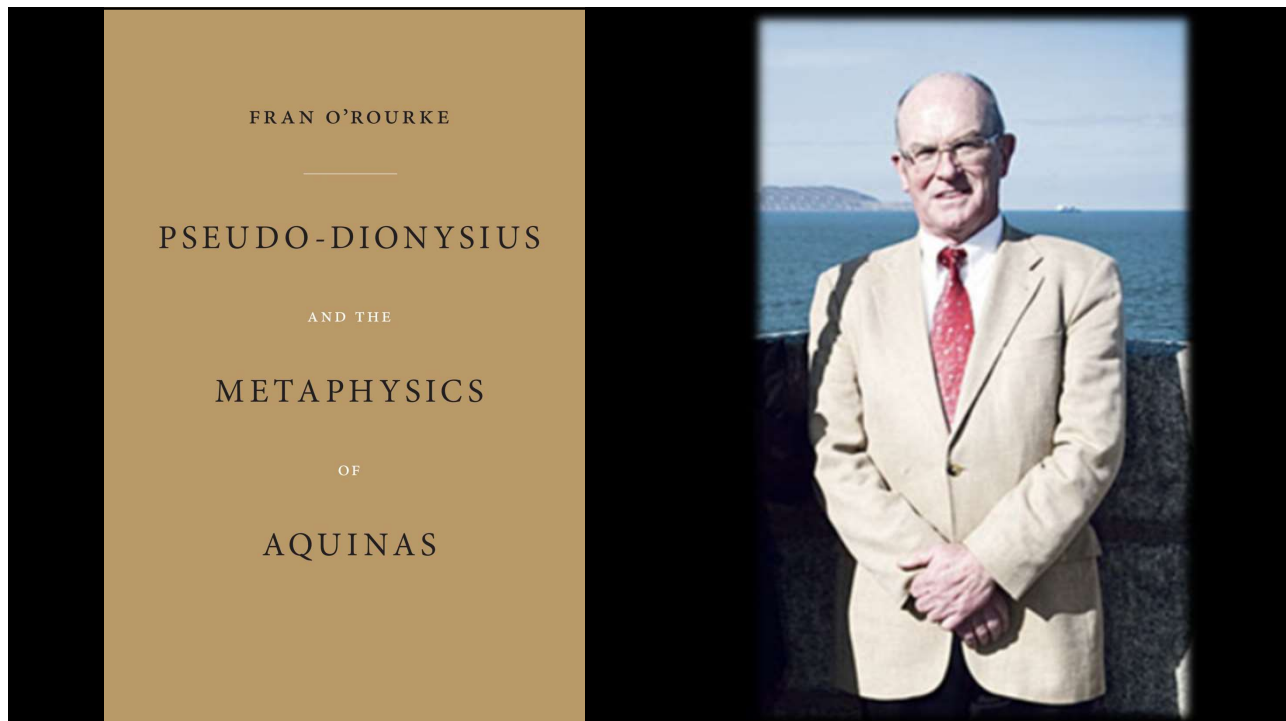


Etienne Gilson  
(1884-1978)

[Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1972), 186]



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

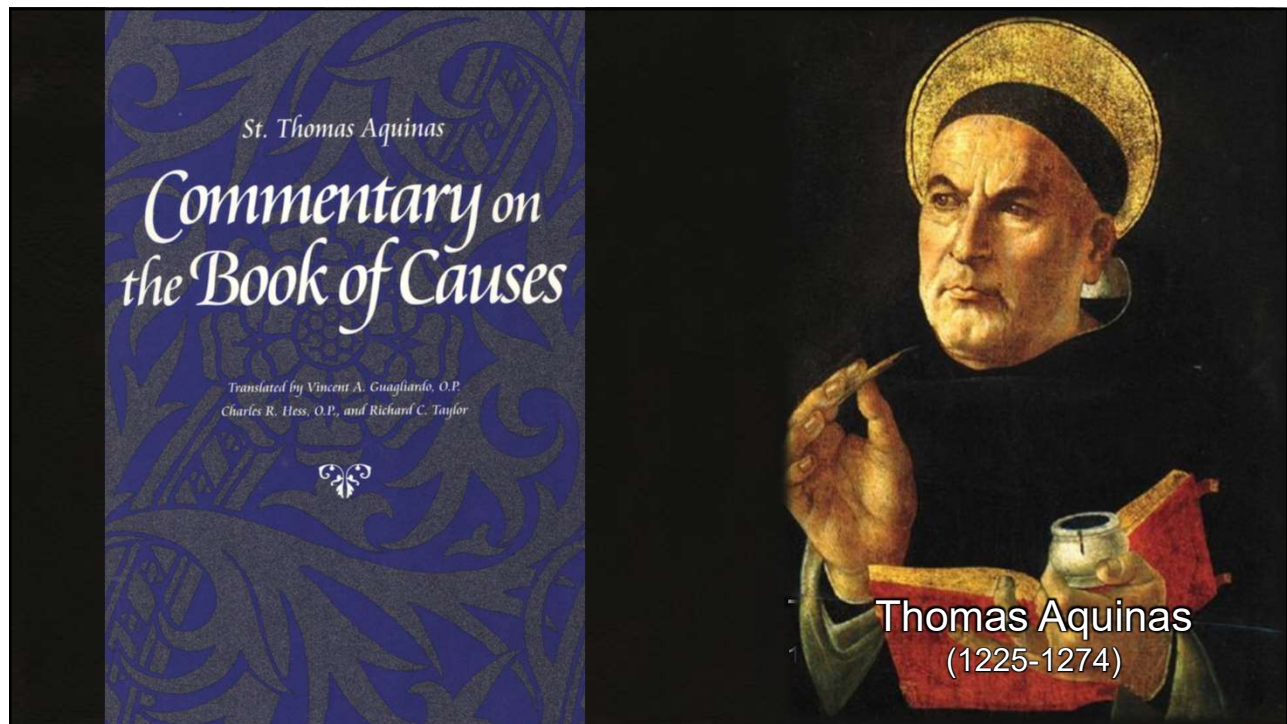




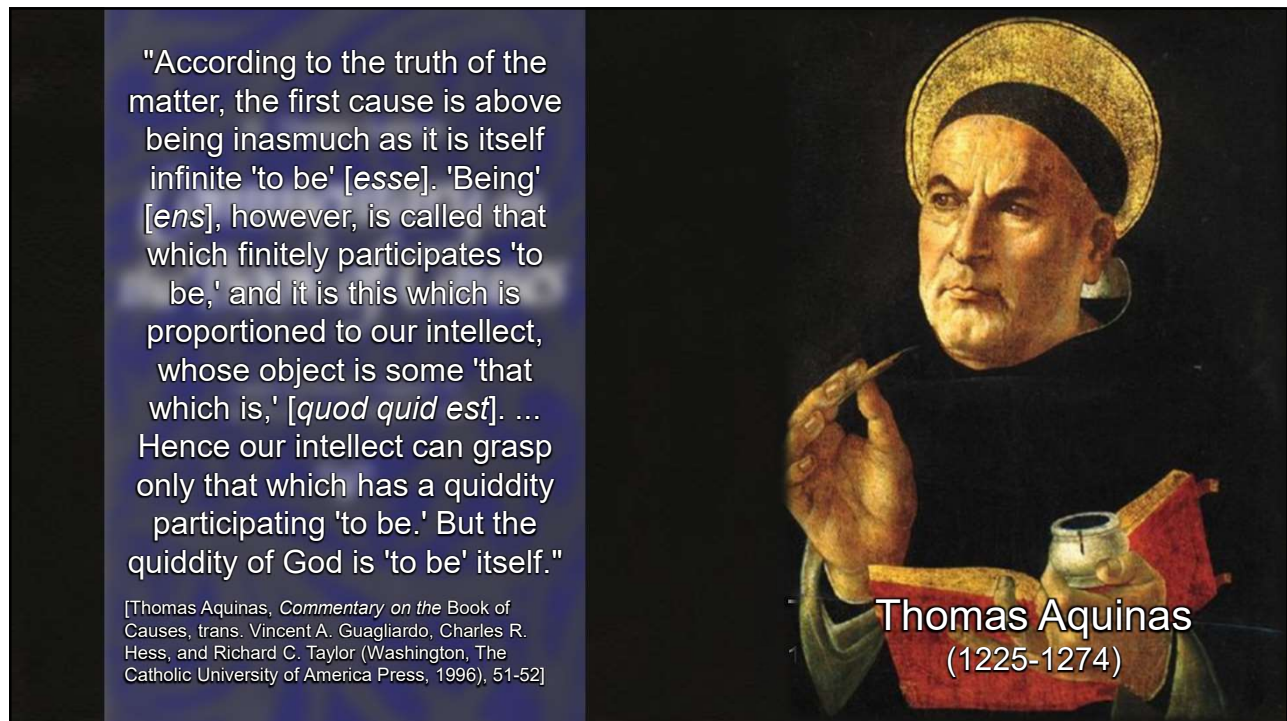
***Probably the biggest influence that suggested the essence/existence distinction was Avicenna, though Aquinas will significantly change the meanings of the terms.***



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



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

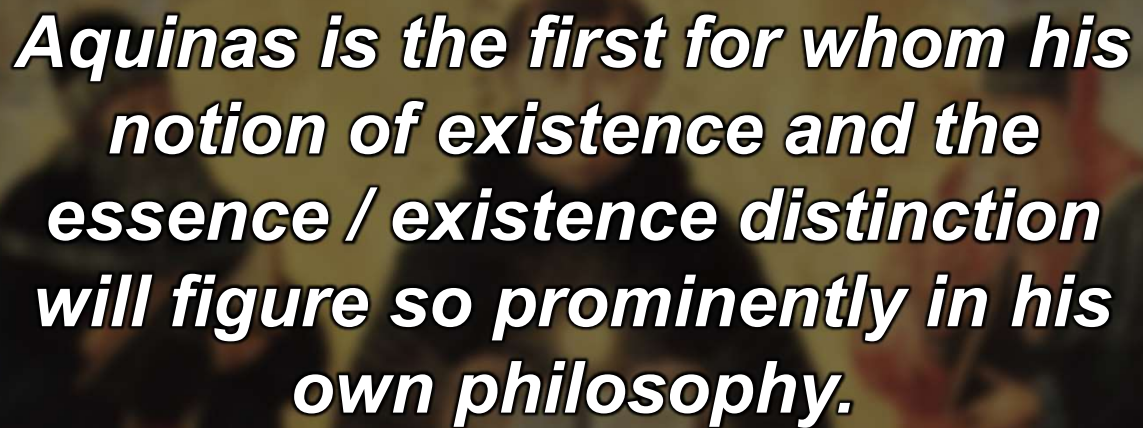


"According to the truth of the matter, the first cause is above being inasmuch as it is itself infinite 'to be' [esse]. 'Being' [ens], however, is called that which finitely participates 'to be,' and it is this which is proportioned to our intellect, whose object is some 'that which is,' [quod quid est].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

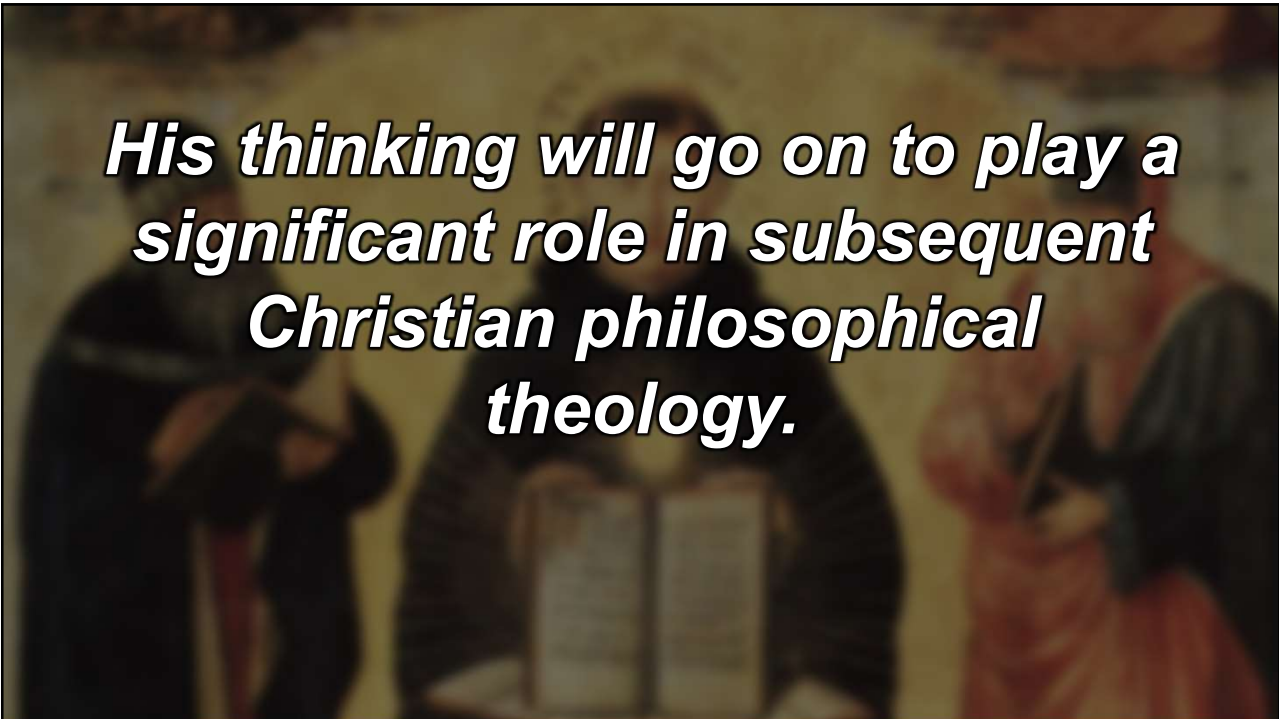
[Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Causes*, trans. Vincent A. Guagliardo, Charles R. Hess, and Richard C. Taylor (Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 51-52]

Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)





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



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

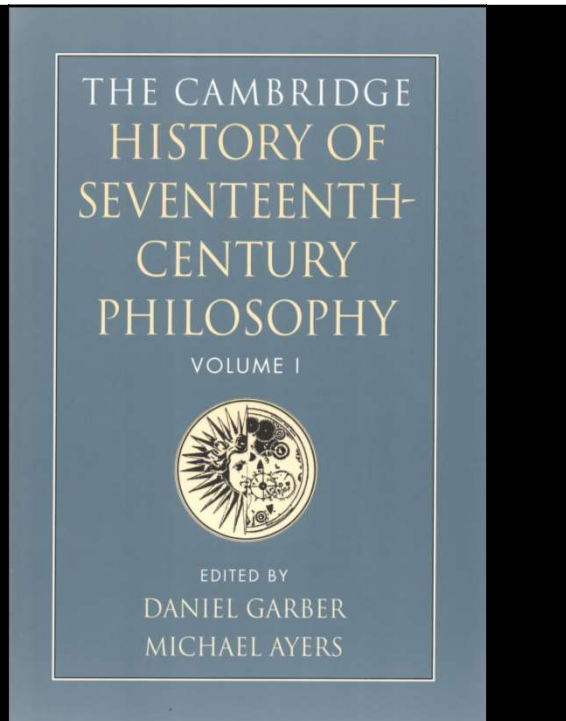


***Controversy over the nature of and place of existence in Aquinas' philosophy (with implications for the essence/existence distinction) erupted as early as the sixteenth century.***

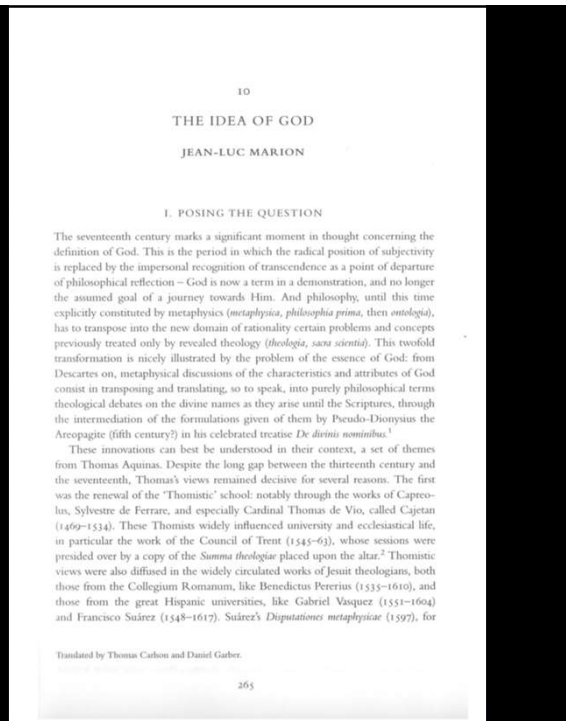




Jean-Luc Marion



Jean-Luc Marion





Jean-Luc Marion

*"Ironically, even though the revival of Thomism was important to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thought, Thomas's theses were often revived in a weakened form, or even in a form that reversed the original meaning altogether."*



Jean-Luc Marion

*"That was the case with the Disputationes metaphysicae. In the Disputationes, Suárez filled the analogical gap between the finite and the infinite by a univocal concept of being (conceptus univocus entis), sufficient to represent to the human mind any being whatsoever in a confused and indeterminate way."*

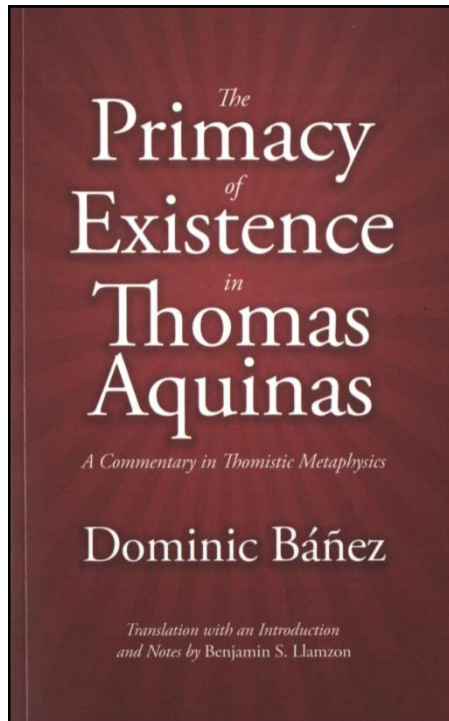
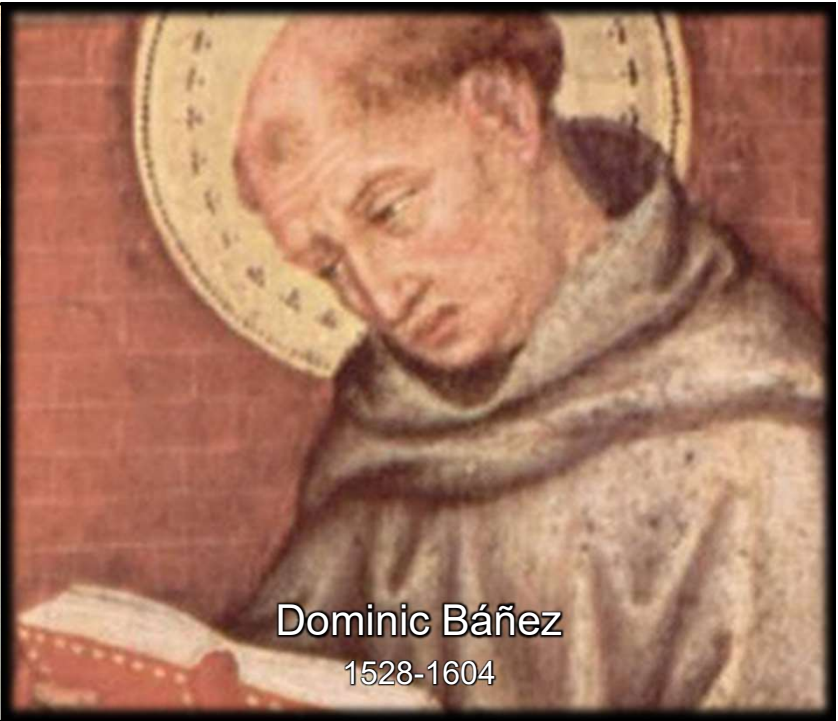
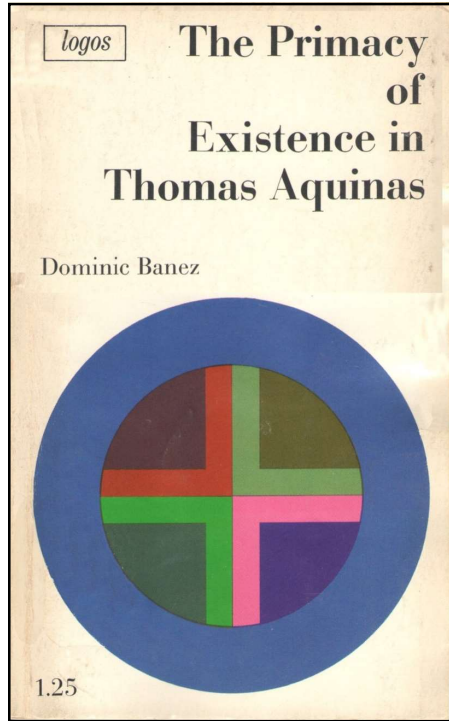
[Jean-Luc Marion, "The Idea of God" in Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers, eds., *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 266-267]



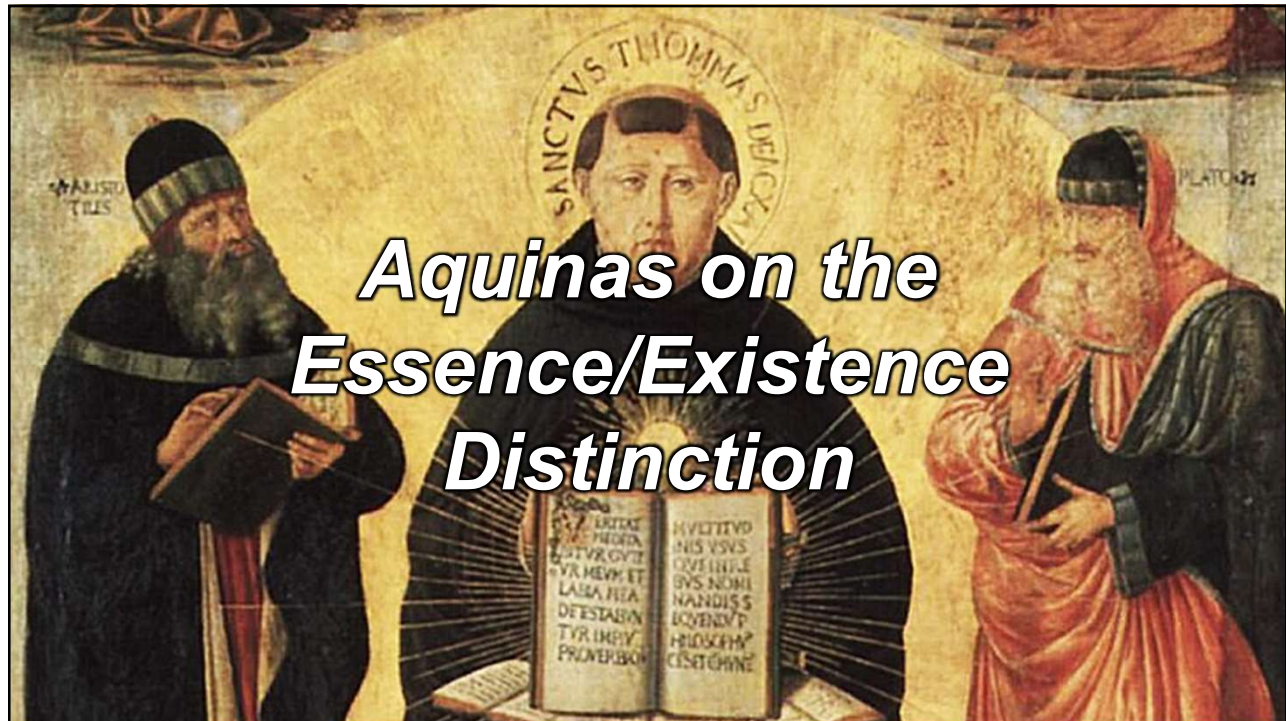


Francisco Suárez  
(1548-1617)

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







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

**Thomas Aquinas  
On being and  
essence**

Translated by  
Armand Maurer



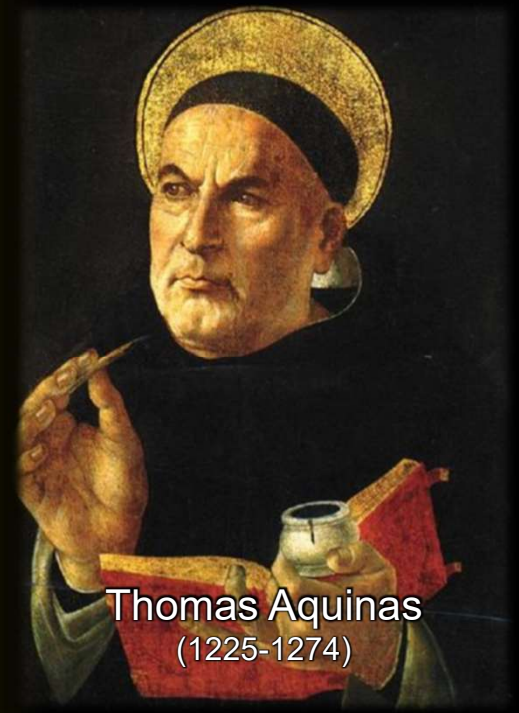
*That essence and existence are distinct in sensible objects is evident from the fact that one can understand the essence of a thing without knowing whether it exists.*







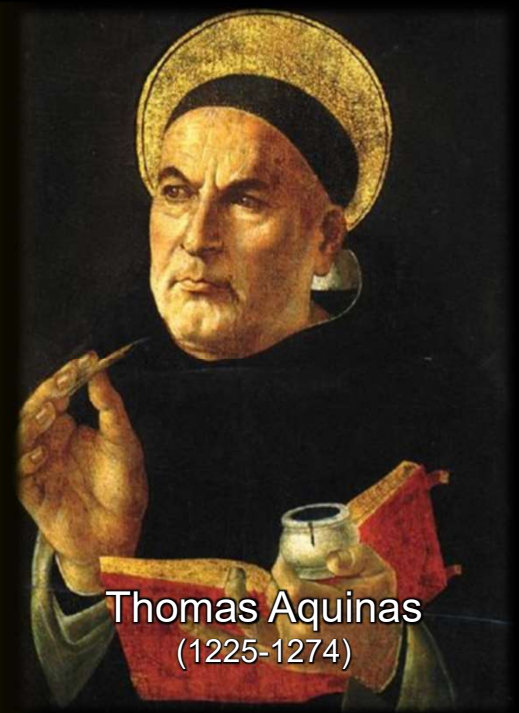
***"Now, every essence ...  
can be understood  
without knowing anything  
about its being. I can  
know, for instance, what a  
man or a phoenix is and  
still be ignorant whether it  
has being in reality.***



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

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

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

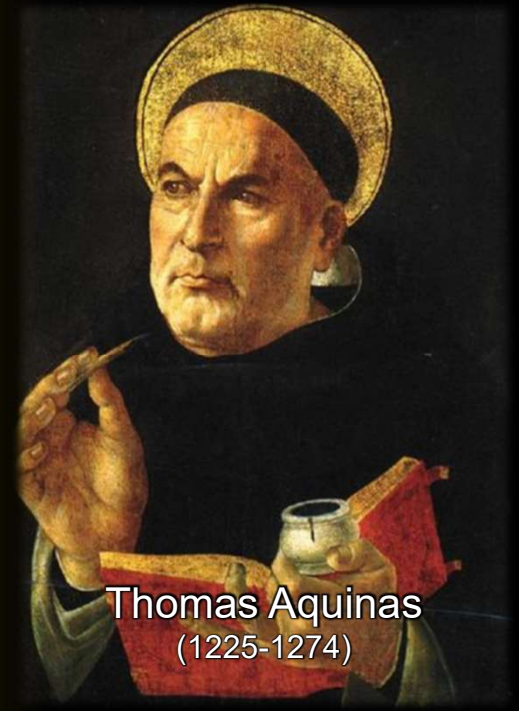


**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)



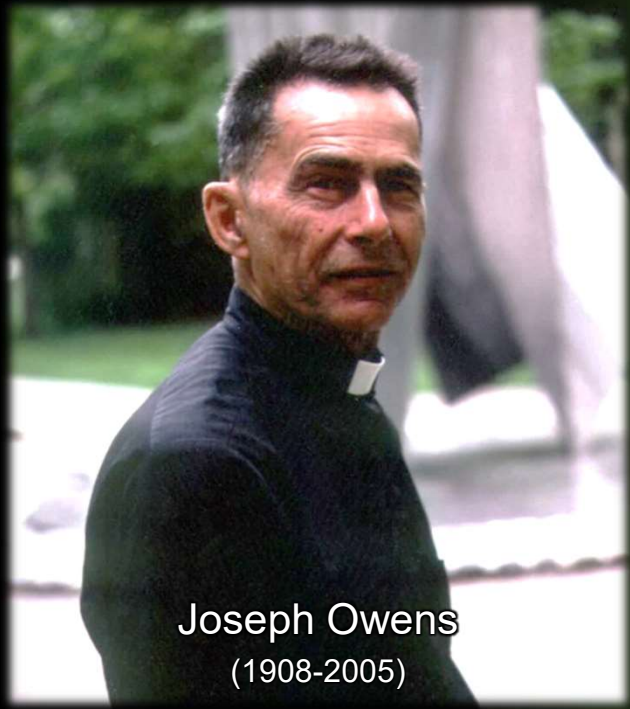
"Everything that is in the genus of substance is composite with a real composition, because whatever is in the category of substance is subsistent in its own existence, and its own act of existing must be distinct from the thing itself; otherwise it could not be distinct in existence from the other things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

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



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

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

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

**Joseph Owens**  
(1908-2005)

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

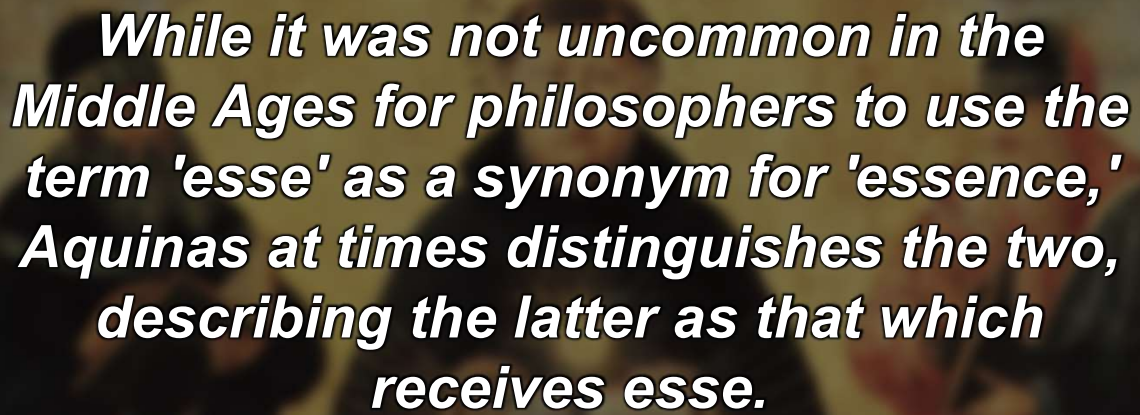
[Joseph Owens, "Aristotle and Aquinas," in Norman Kretzman and Eleonore Stump, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 39]

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





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

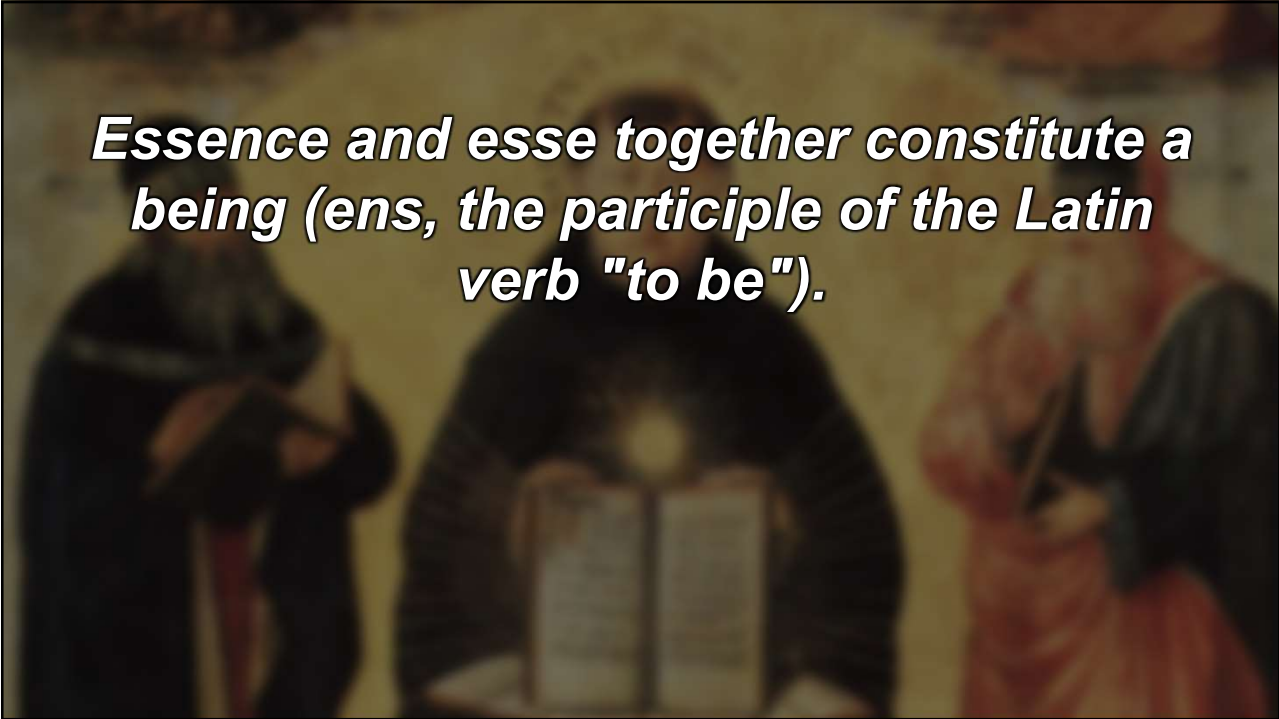


*While it was not uncommon in the Middle Ages for philosophers to use the term 'esse' as a synonym for 'essence,' Aquinas at times distinguishes the two, describing the latter as that which receives esse.*

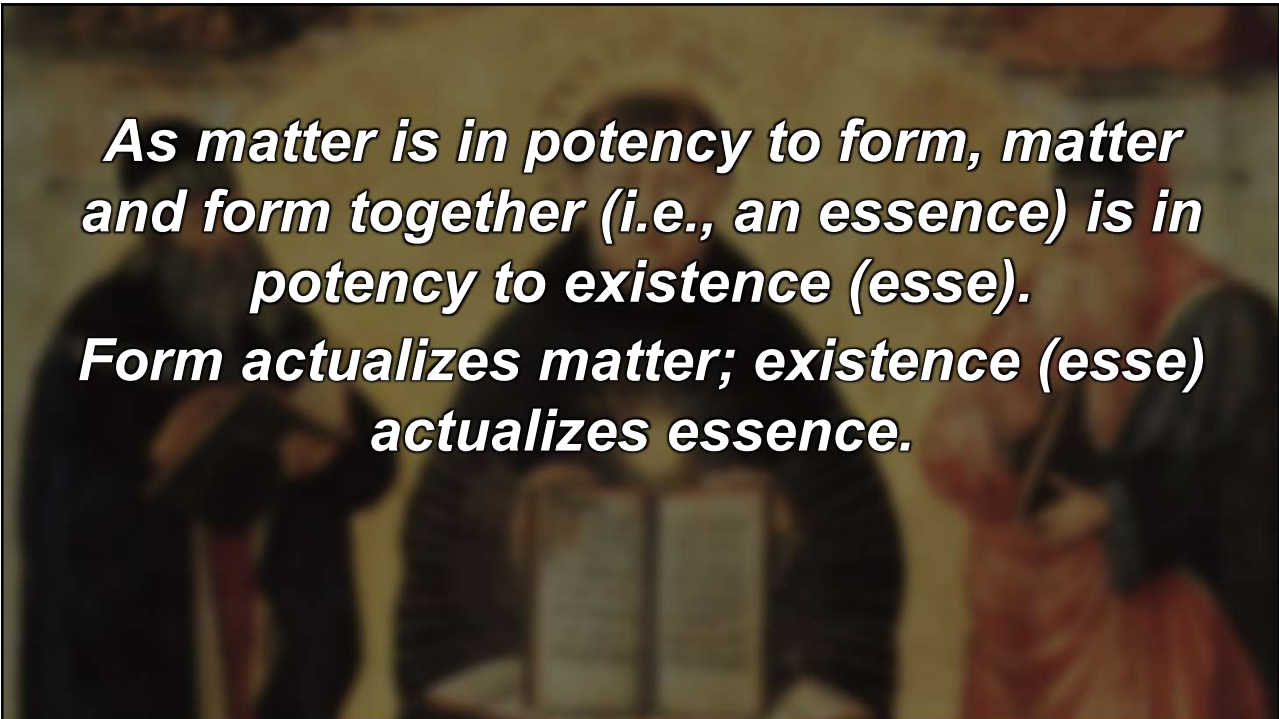


*In Aquinas's metaphysical schema, form and matter in sensible things together constitute an essence.*

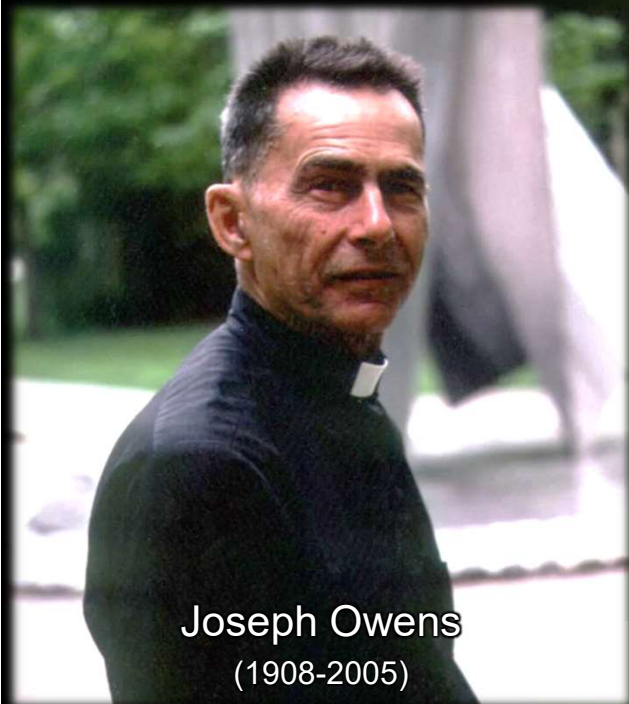




***Essence and esse together constitute a being (ens, the participle of the Latin verb "to be").***



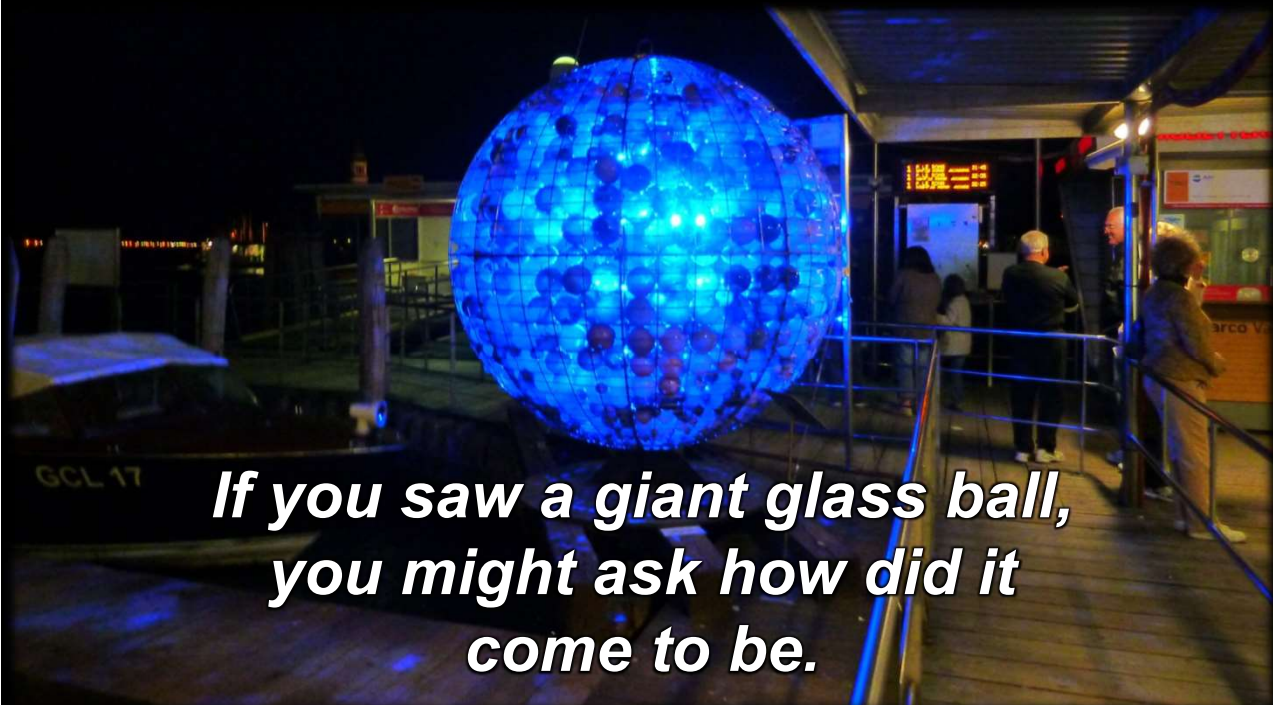
***As matter is in potency to form, matter and form together (i.e., an essence) is in potency to existence (esse).  
Form actualizes matter; existence (esse) actualizes essence.***

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

**Joseph Owens**  
(1908-2005)


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

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


A large, glowing blue glass ball with a grid pattern, illuminated from within. It is displayed in a museum or gallery setting at night. People are visible in the background, and a railing is in the foreground. The text "GCL 17" is visible on the floor to the left.

***If you saw a giant glass ball,  
you might ask how did it  
come to be.***

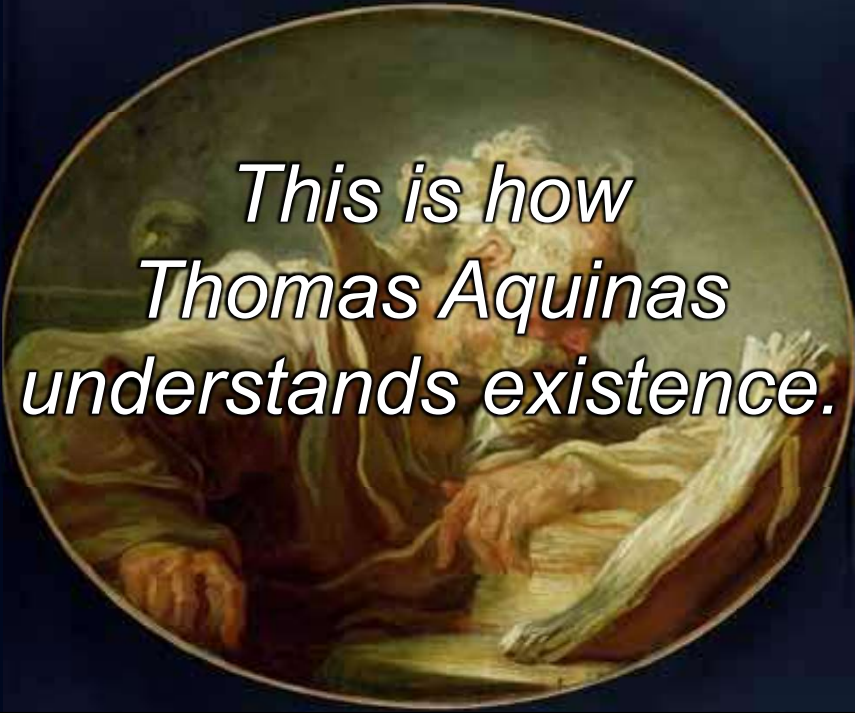




***But if you were hearing music,  
you would not ask how it came to be.***



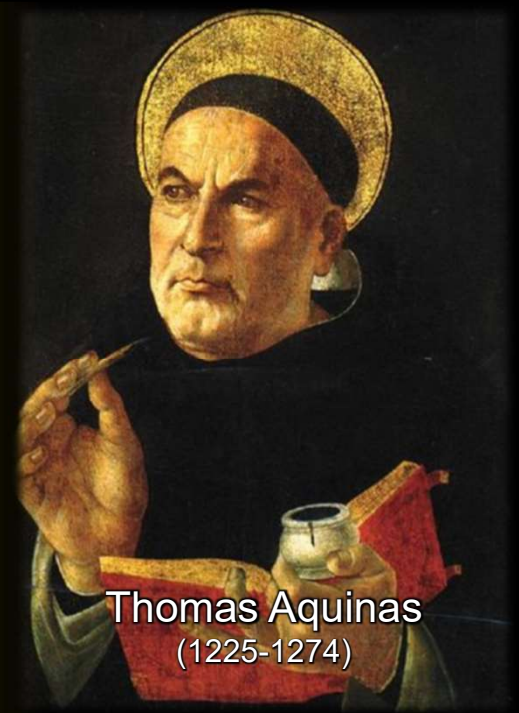
***Rather, you would ask what is causing  
the music to be right now.***



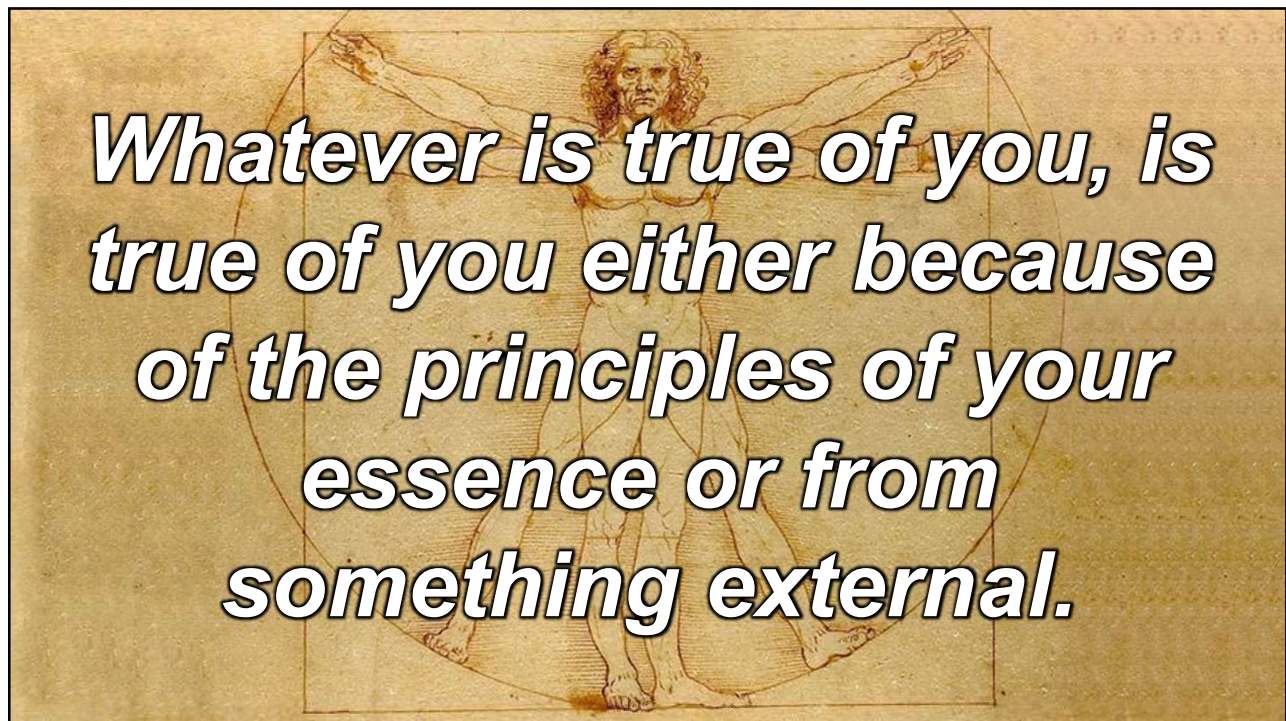
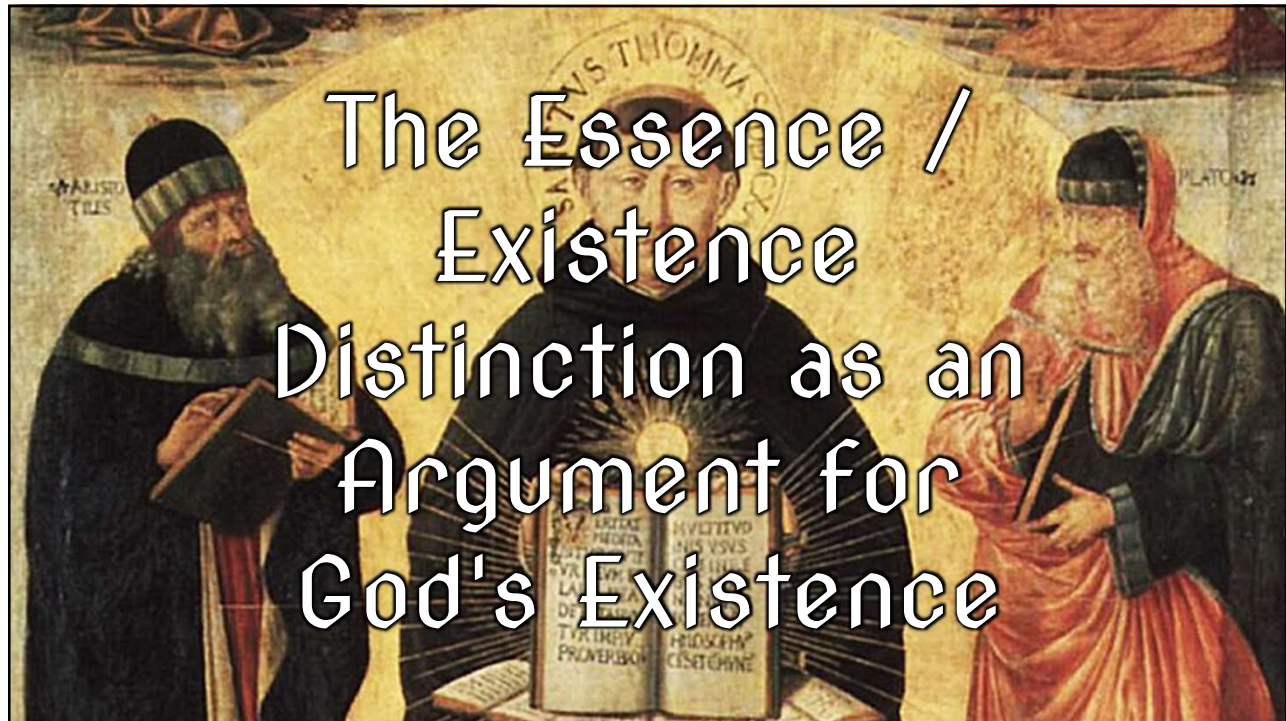
*This is how  
Thomas Aquinas  
understands existence.*

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

[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q, 8]

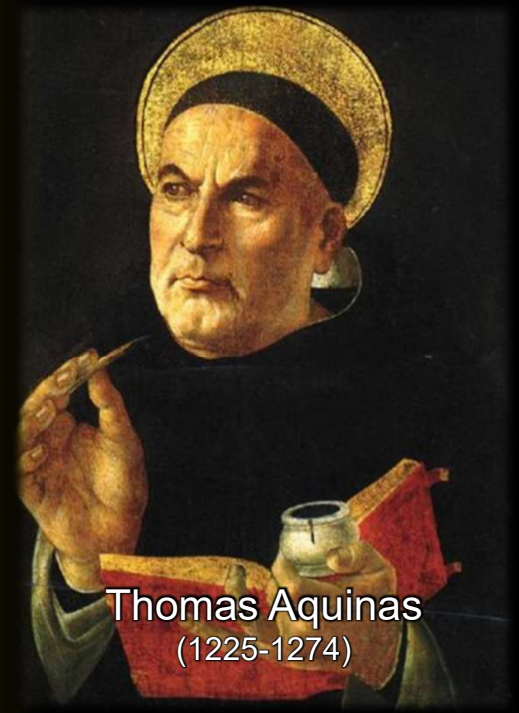






***"Whatever belongs  
to a thing is either  
caused by the  
principles of its  
nature ... or comes  
to it from an  
extrinsic principle."***

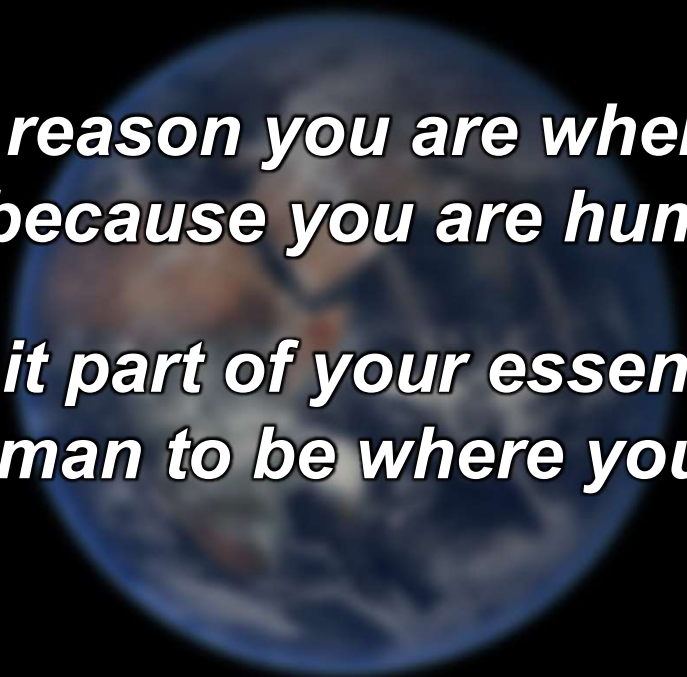
[*On Being and Essence*, IV, §7, trans. Maurer, 56-57]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

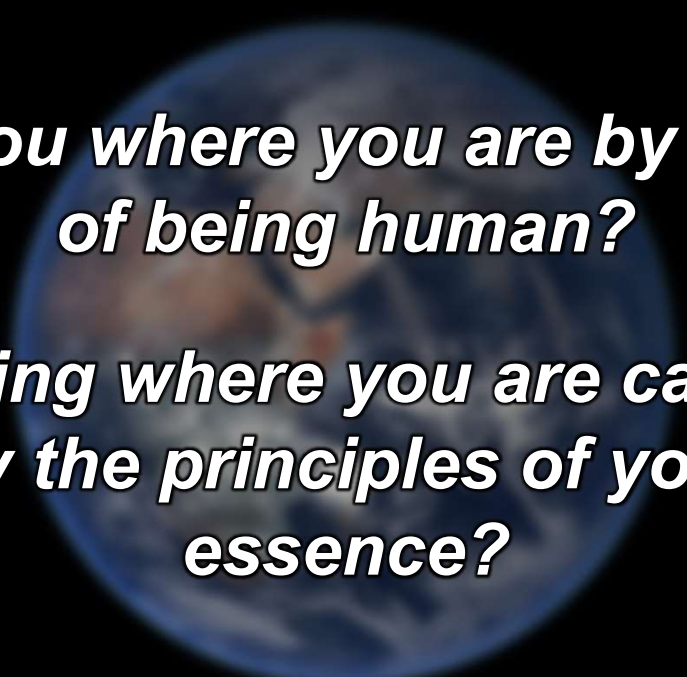






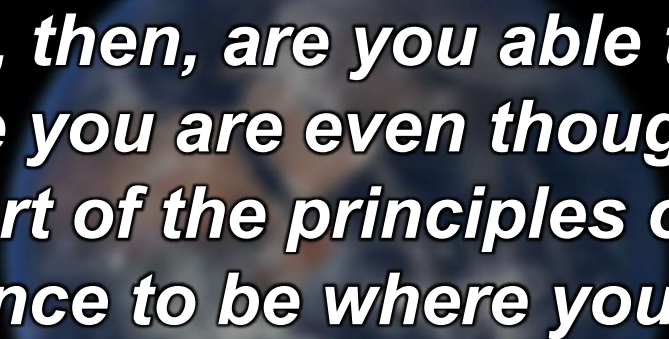
***Is the reason you are where you are because you are human?***

***Is it part of your essence as human to be where you are?***

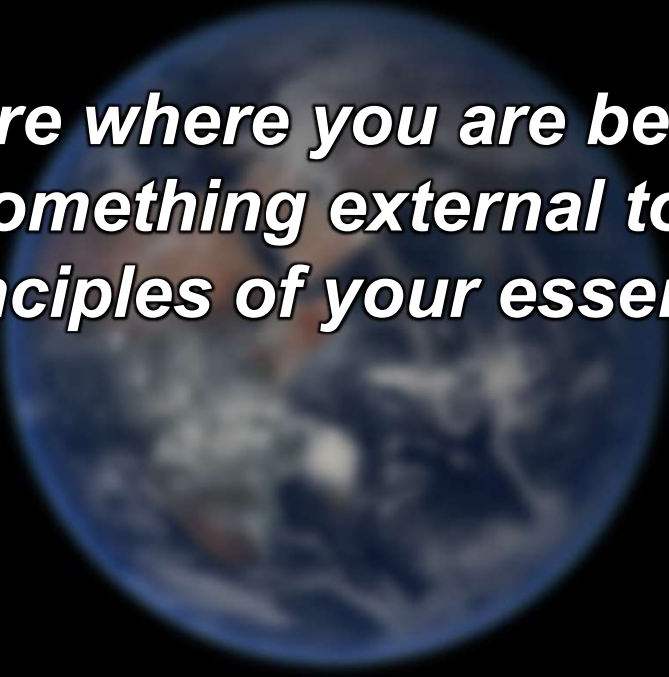


***Are you where you are by virtue of being human?***

***Is being where you are caused by the principles of your essence?***

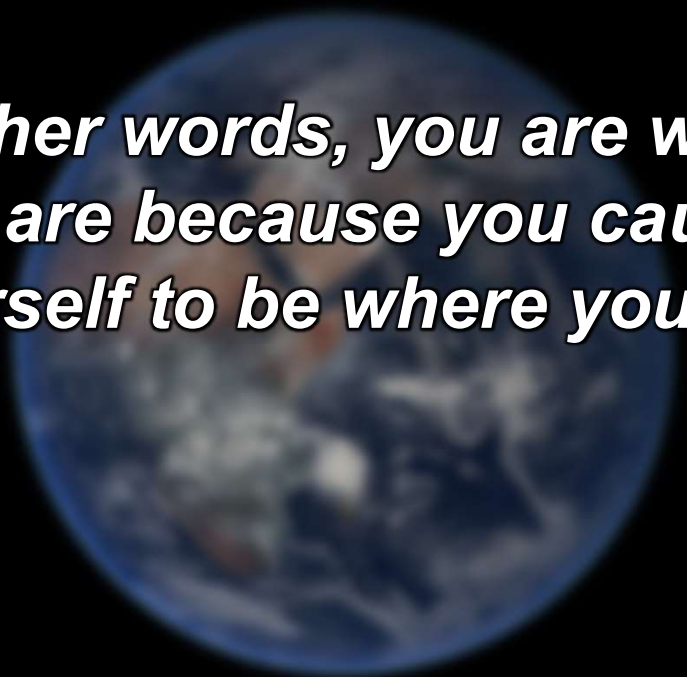


***Why, then, are you able to be where you are even though it is not part of the principles of your essence to be where you are?***

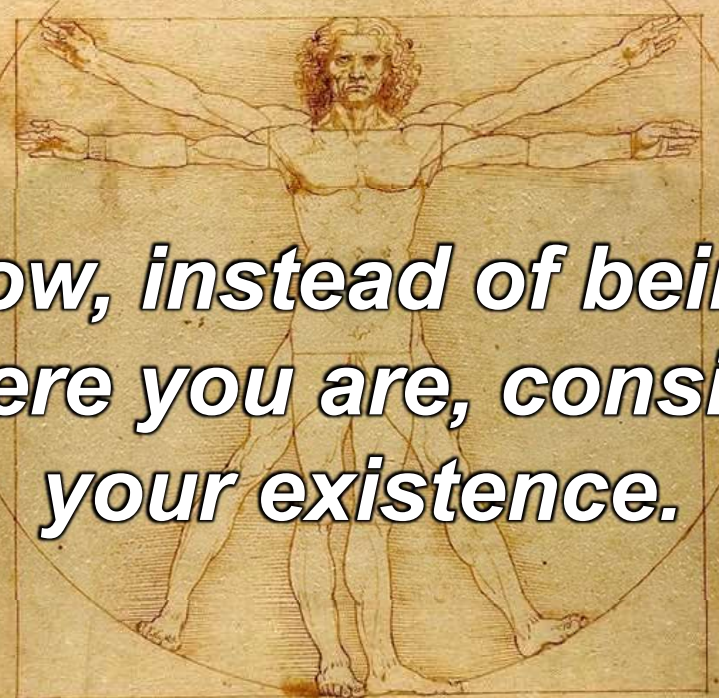


***You are where you are because of something external to the principles of your essence.***

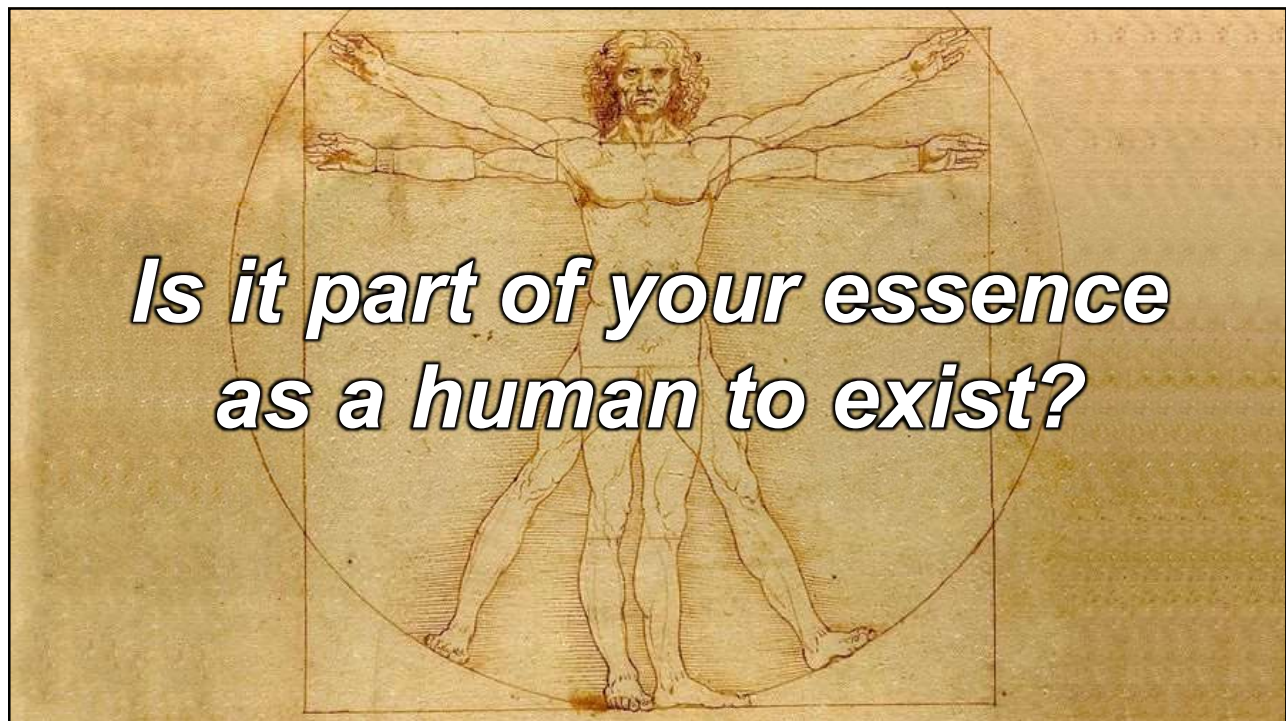
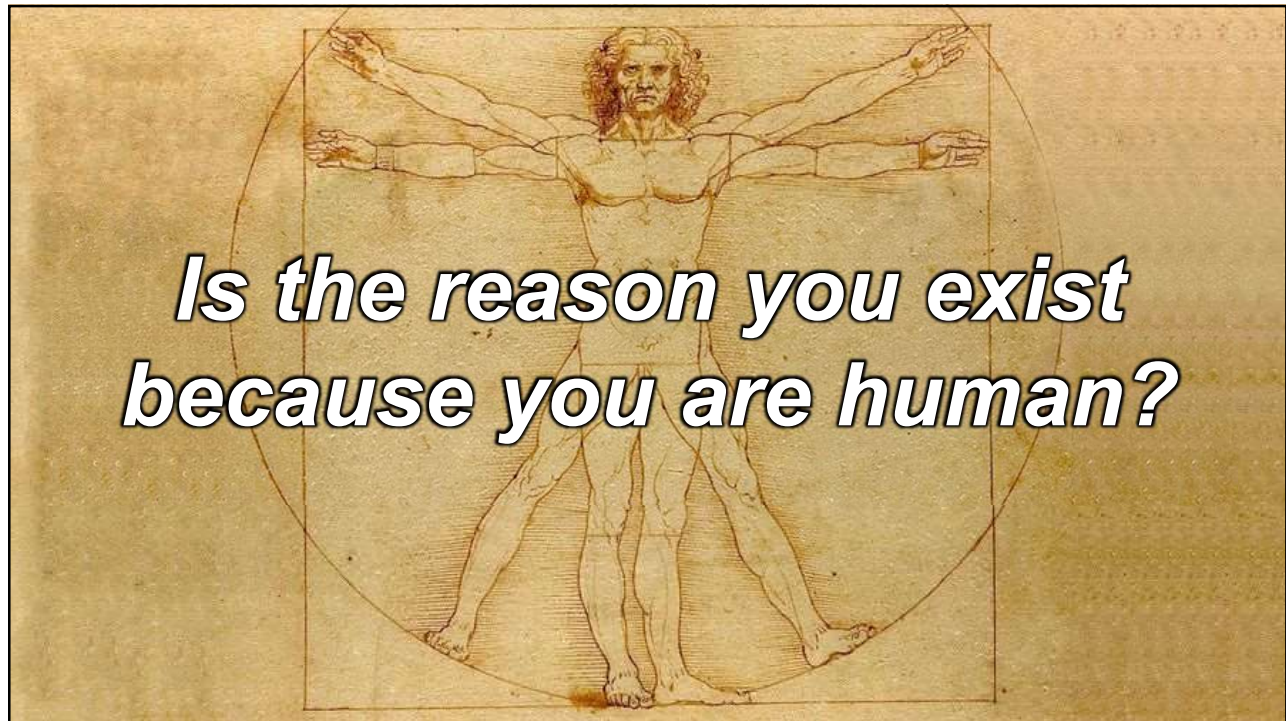




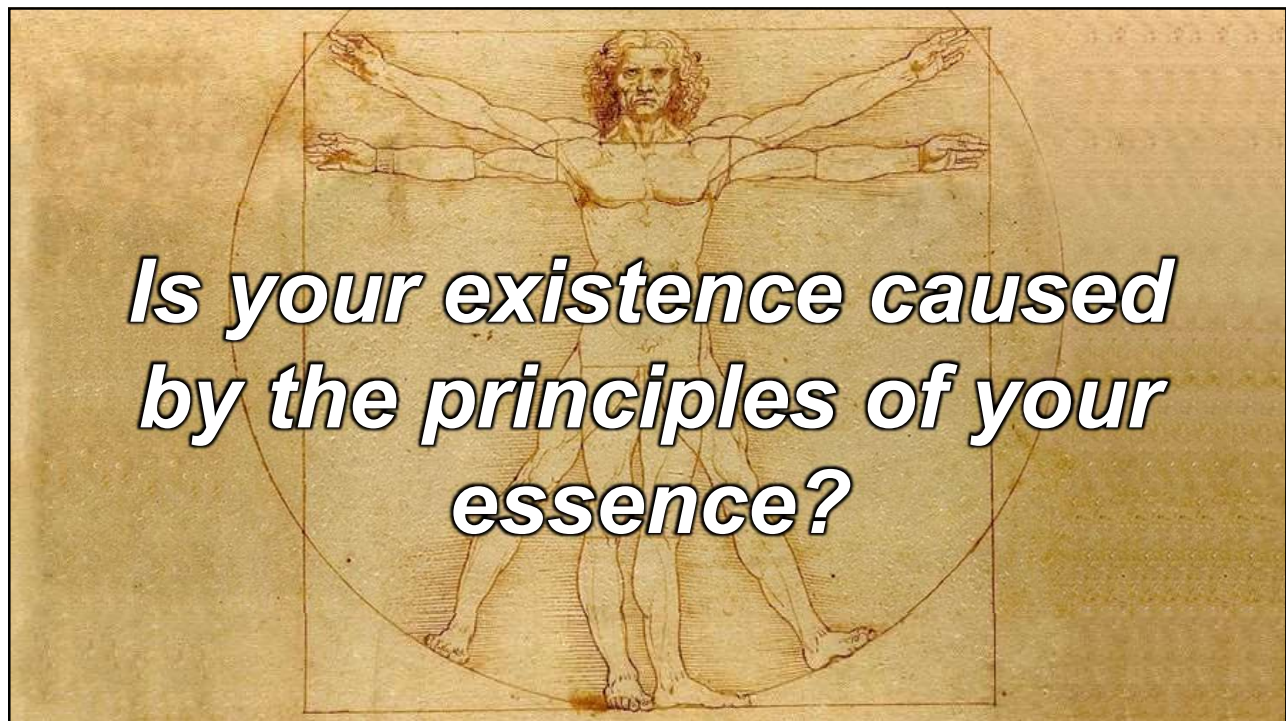
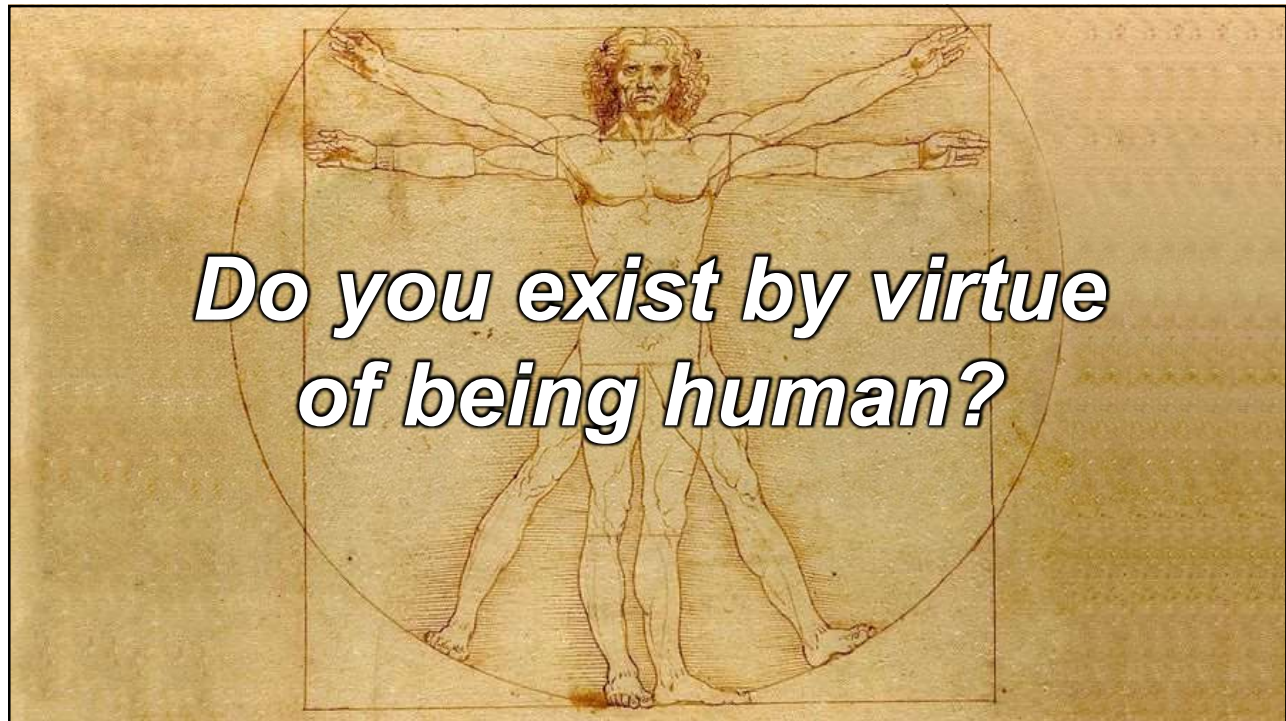
***In other words, you are where  
you are because you caused  
yourself to be where you are.***



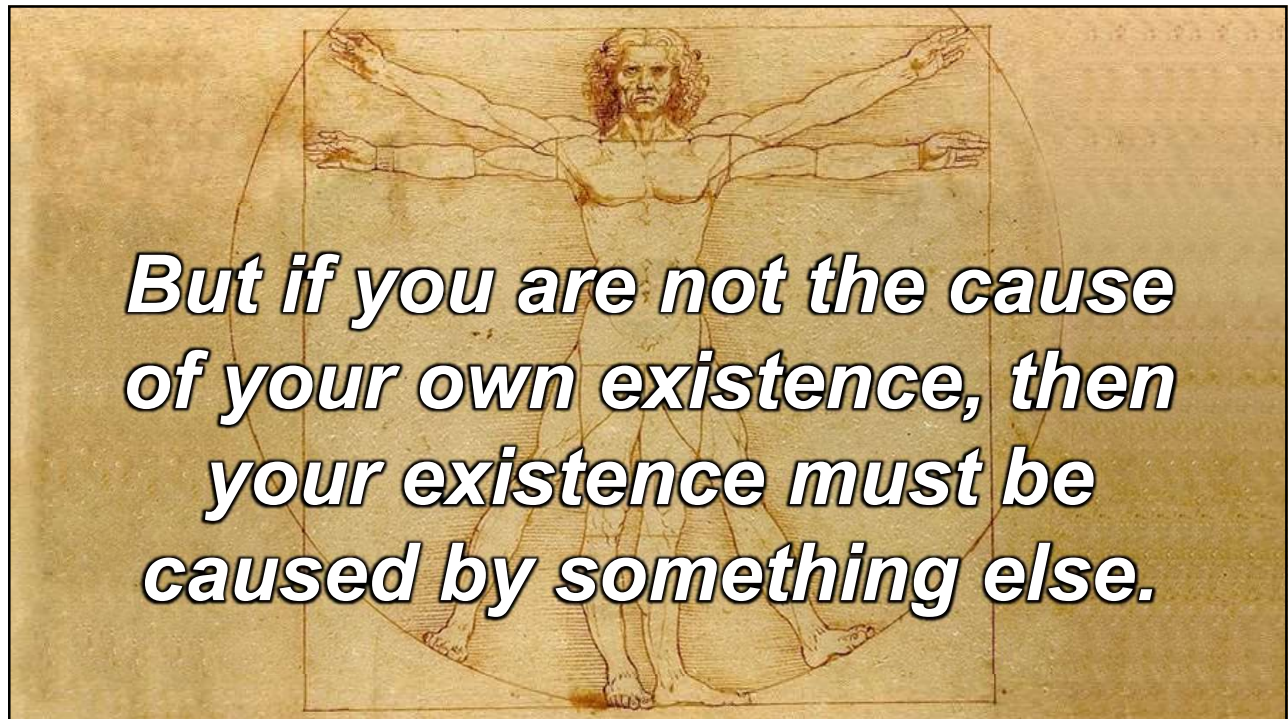
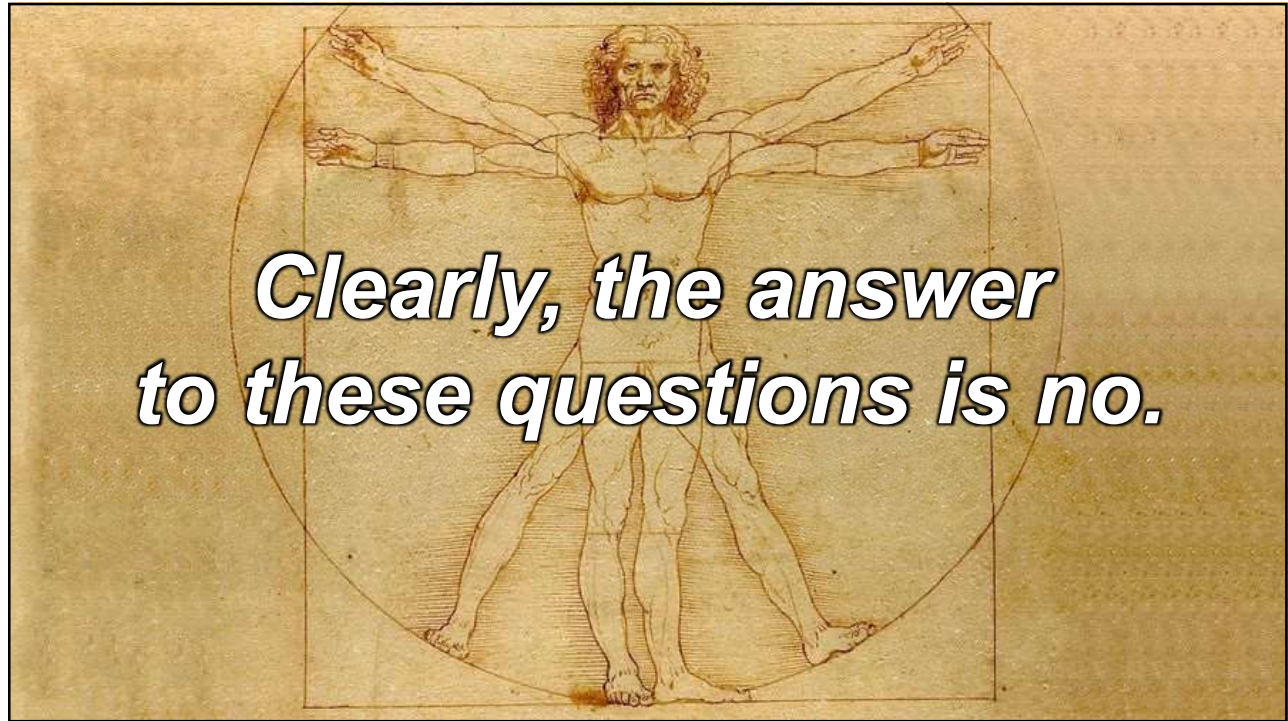
***Now, instead of being  
where you are, consider  
your existence.***





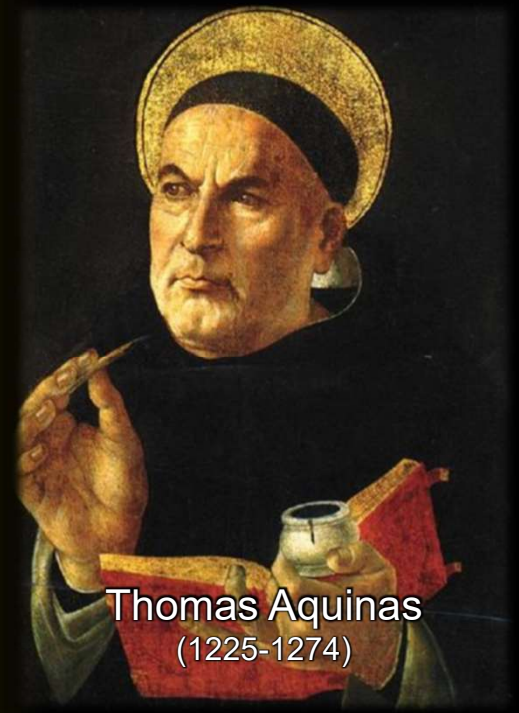








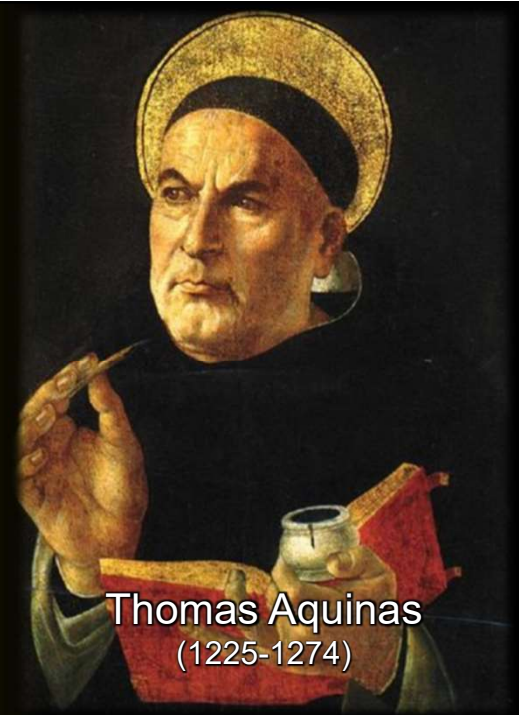
***"Now being itself cannot be caused by the form ... of a thing (by 'caused' I mean by an efficient cause), because that thing would then be its own cause and it would bring itself into being, which is impossible."***



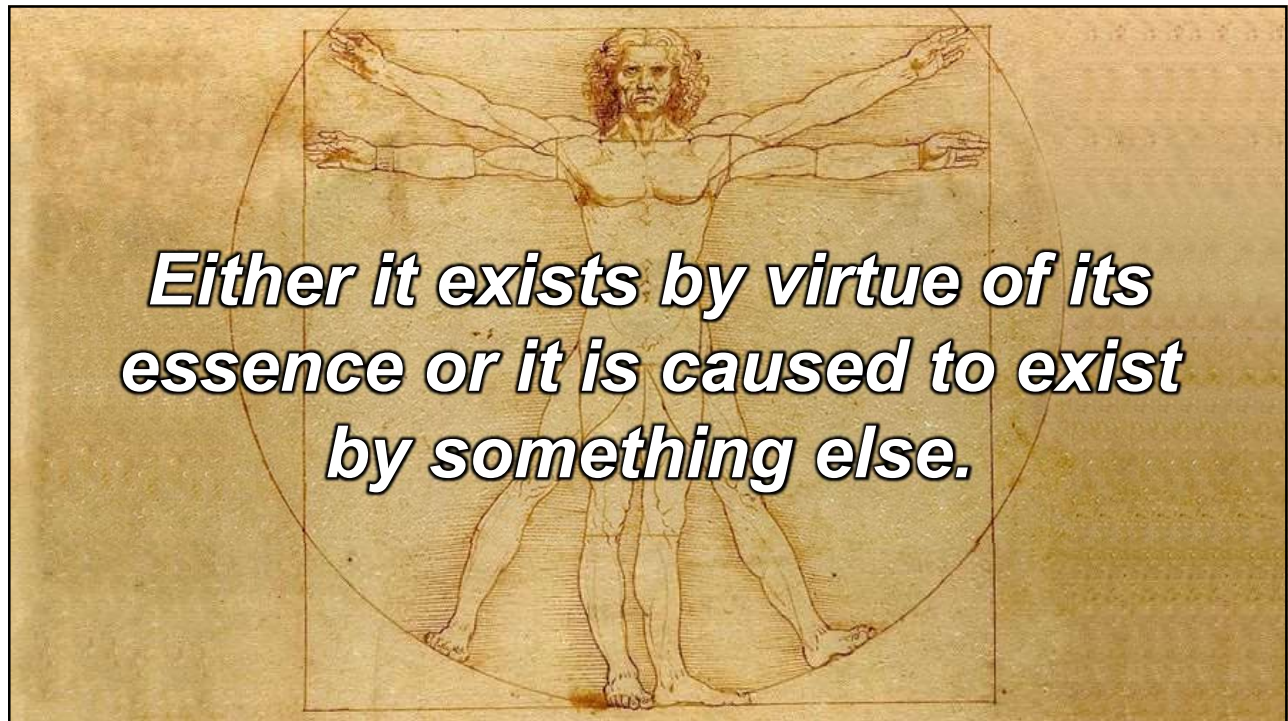
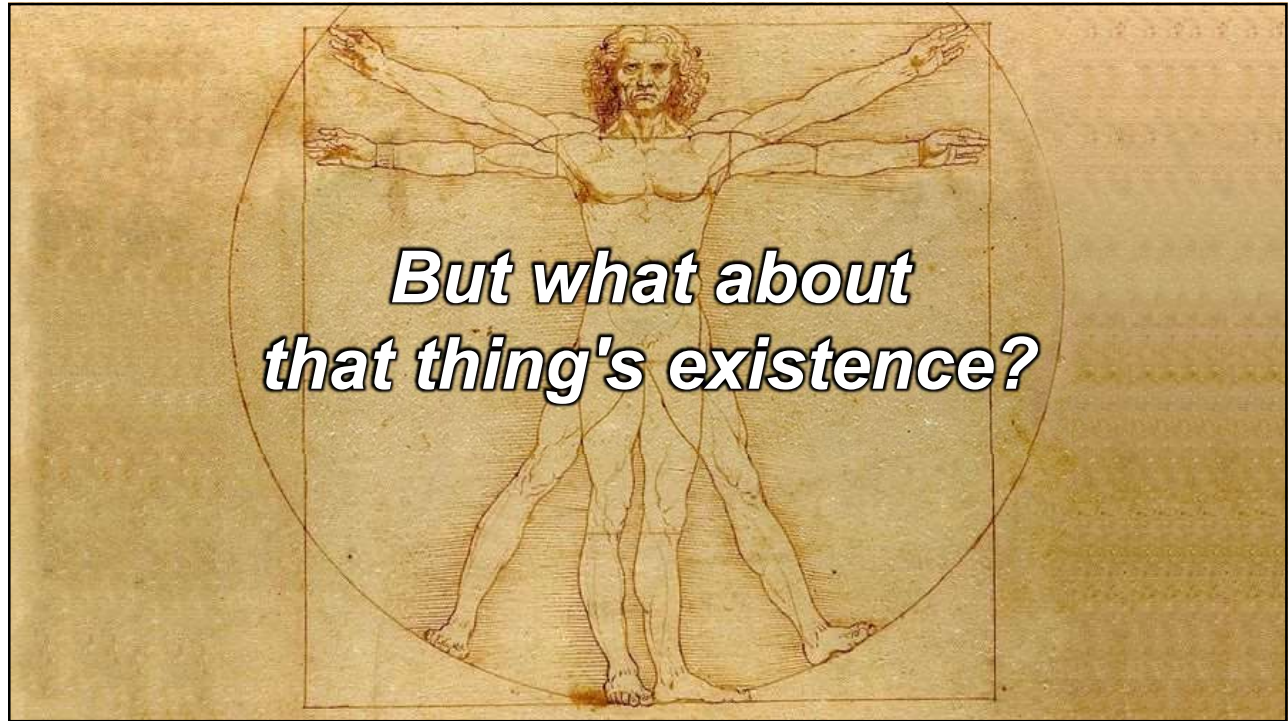
Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

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

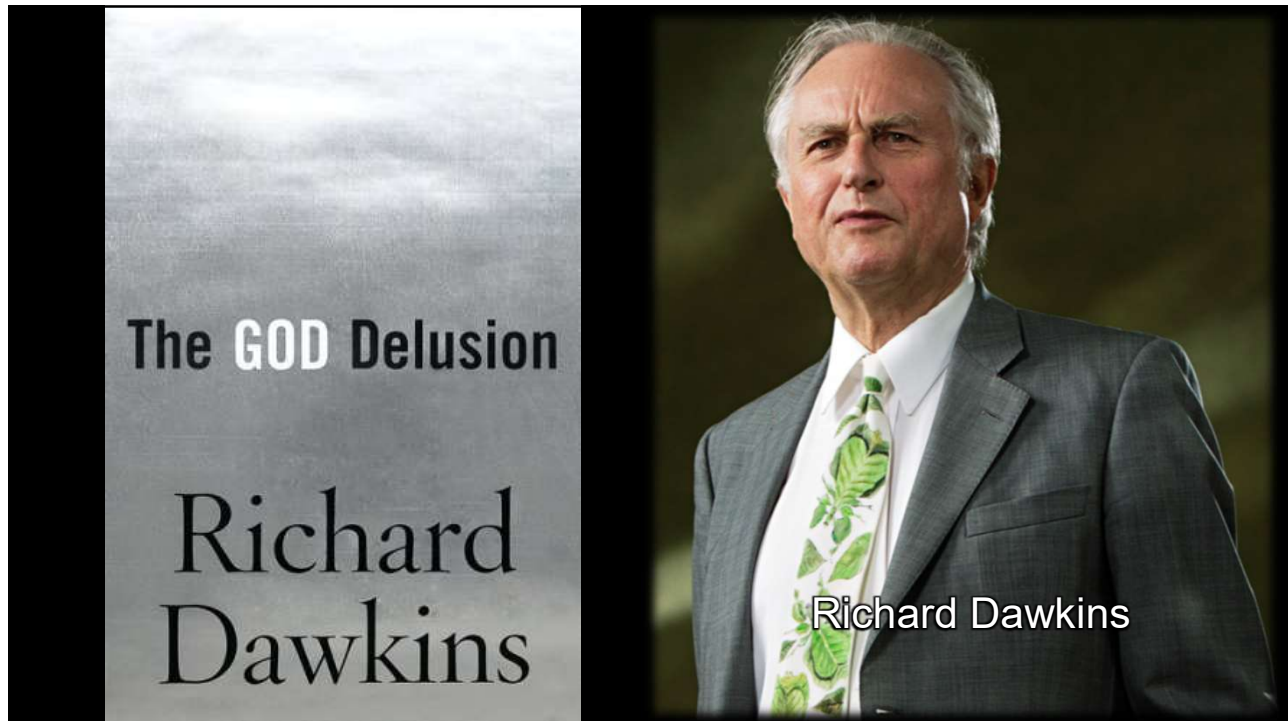
[On Being and Essence, IV, §7, trans. Maurer, 56-57]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

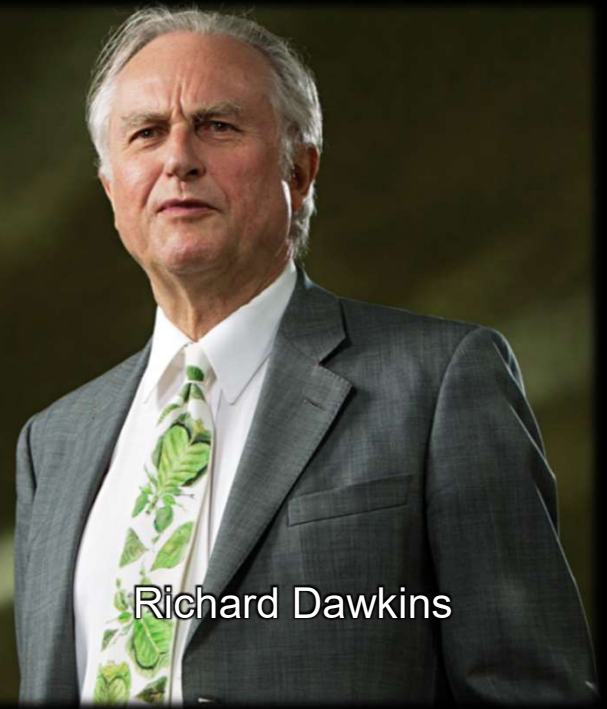






"*Thomas Aquinas's Proofs: The Uncaused Cause*. Nothing is caused by itself. Every effect has a prior cause, and again we are pushed back into regress. This has to be terminated by a first cause, which we call God."

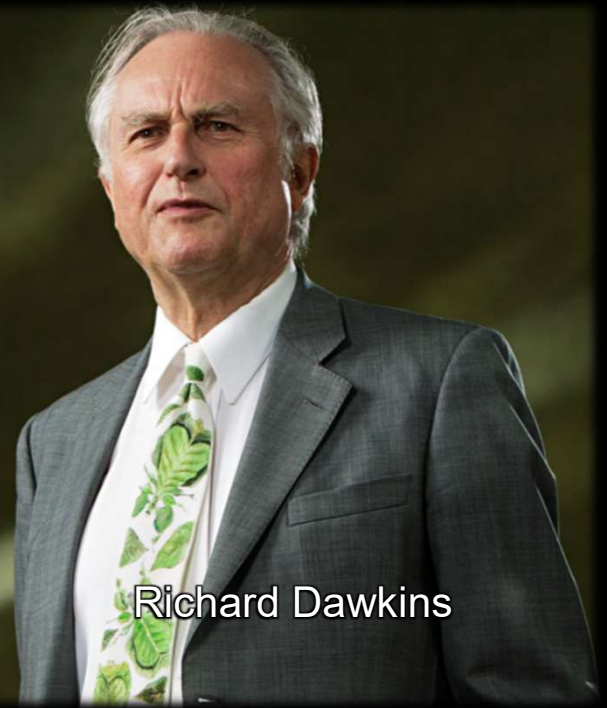
[Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 77]



Richard Dawkins

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

[Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 77]



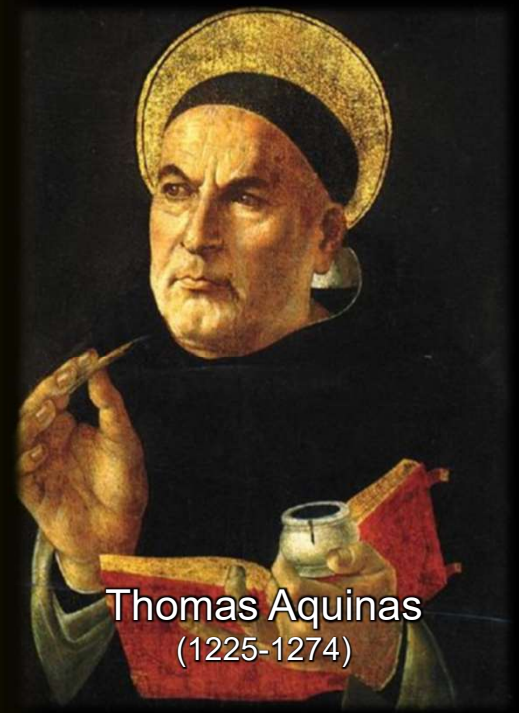
Richard Dawkins



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

∞ First Way ∞

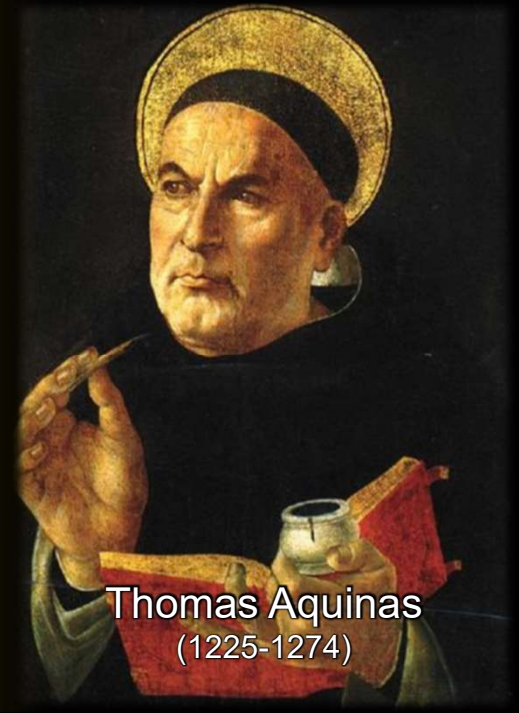
"If that by which it is put in motion be itself put in motion, then this also must needs be put in motion by another, and that by another again. But **this cannot go on to infinity**, because then there would be no first mover ..."



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

☞ Second Way ☞

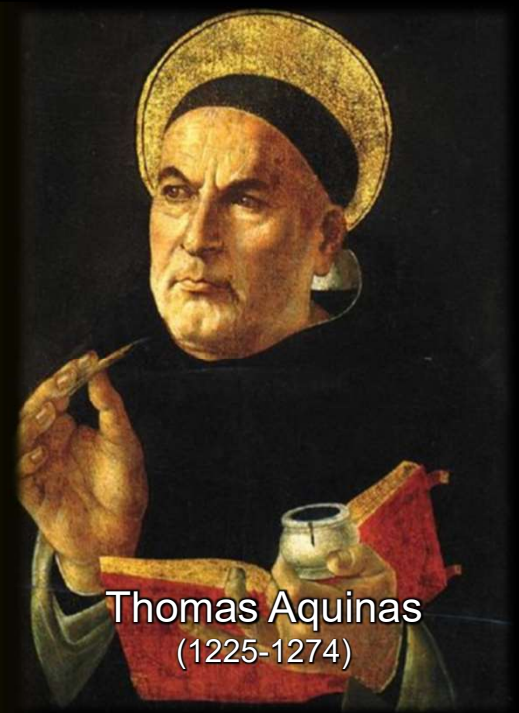
"Now in efficient causes, **it is not possible to go on to infinity**, because in all efficient causes following in order, the first is the cause of the intermediate cause."



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

☞ Third Way ☞

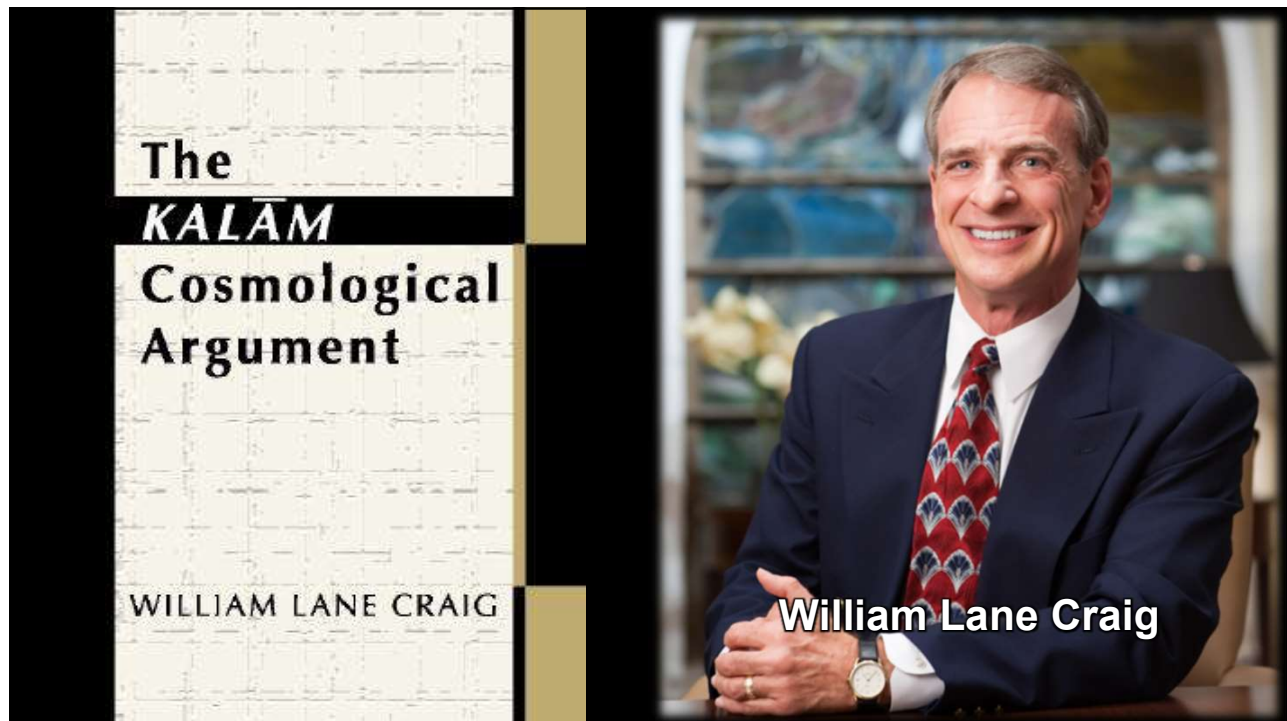
"But every necessary thing either has its necessity caused by another, or not. Now **it is impossible to go on to infinity** in necessary things which have their necessity caused by another, as has been already proved in regard to efficient causes."

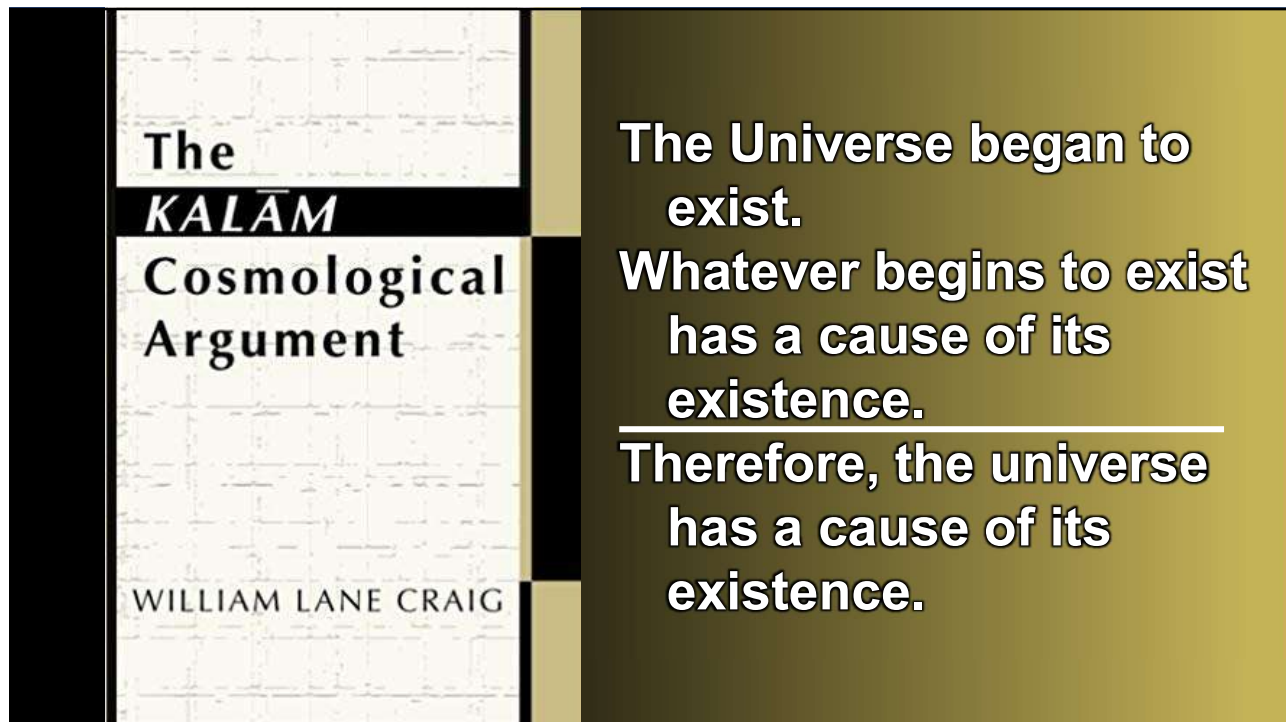


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



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





Note carefully the logic of the argument.  
Aquinas is not arguing:

**"Since there cannot be a infinite regress,  
there must be a first cause."**

Rather, he is arguing:

**Since there must be first cause,  
there cannot be an infinite regress."**



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

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

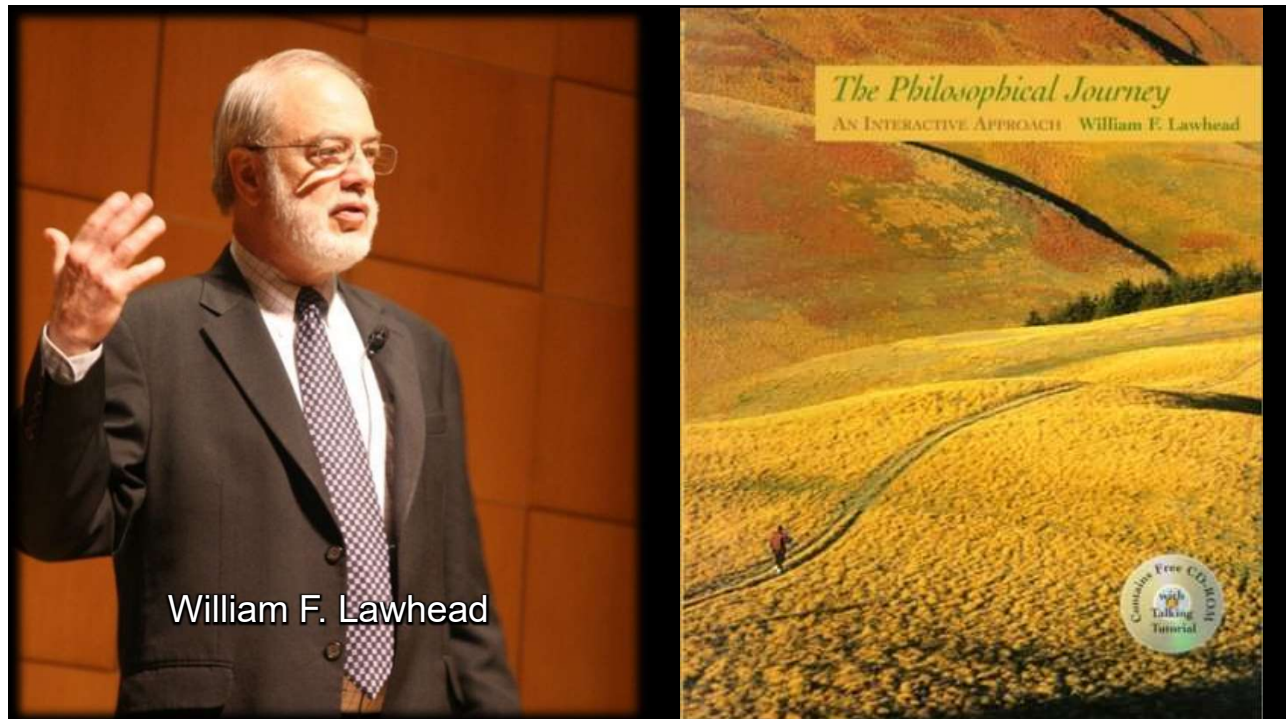
$$2. \sim IR / \therefore F$$

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

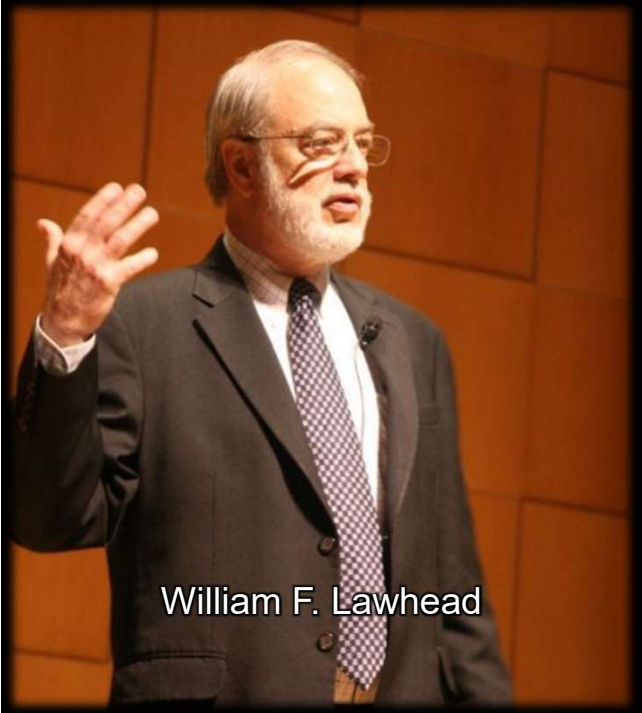
$$1. IR \supset \sim F$$

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

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



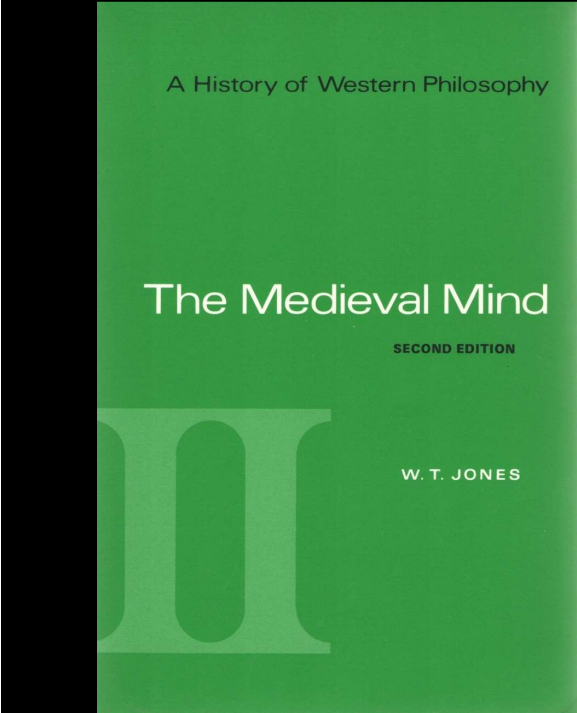




William F. Lawhead

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

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




A History of Western Philosophy

**The Medieval Mind**

SECOND EDITION

W. T. JONES



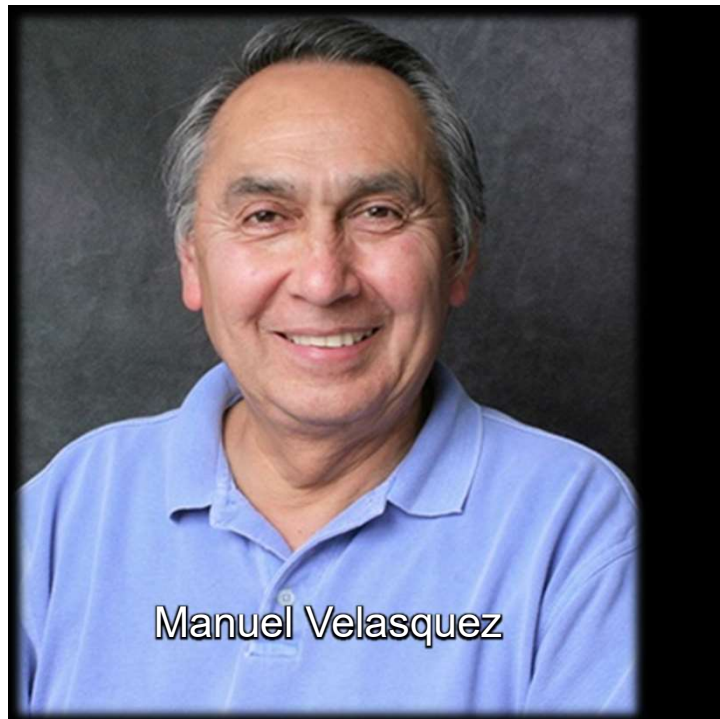
W. T. Jones  
(1910-1993)

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

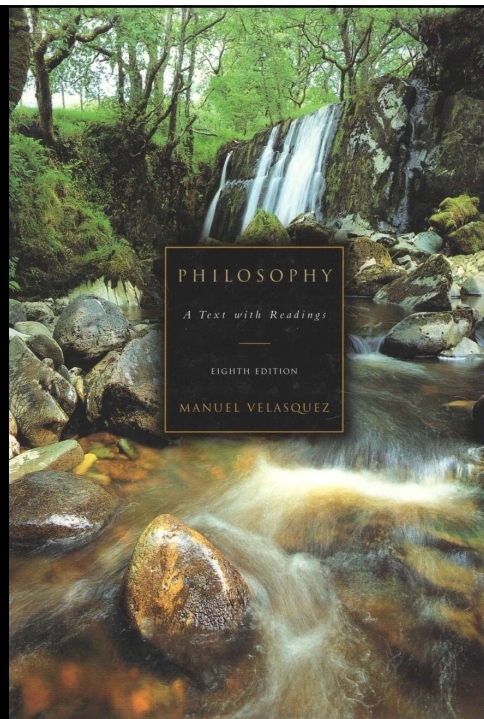
[W. T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy: The Medieval Mind* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1969): 219]



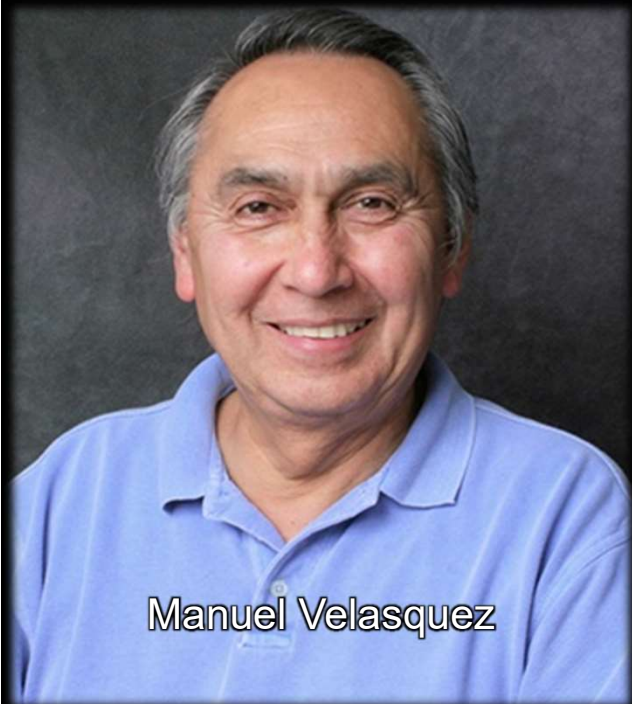
W. T. Jones  
(1910-1998)



Manuel Velasquez



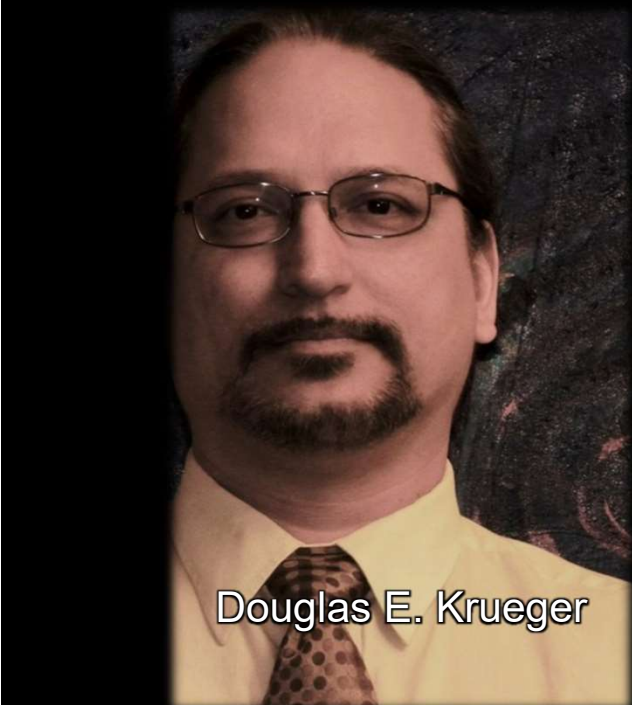




Manuel Velasquez

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

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

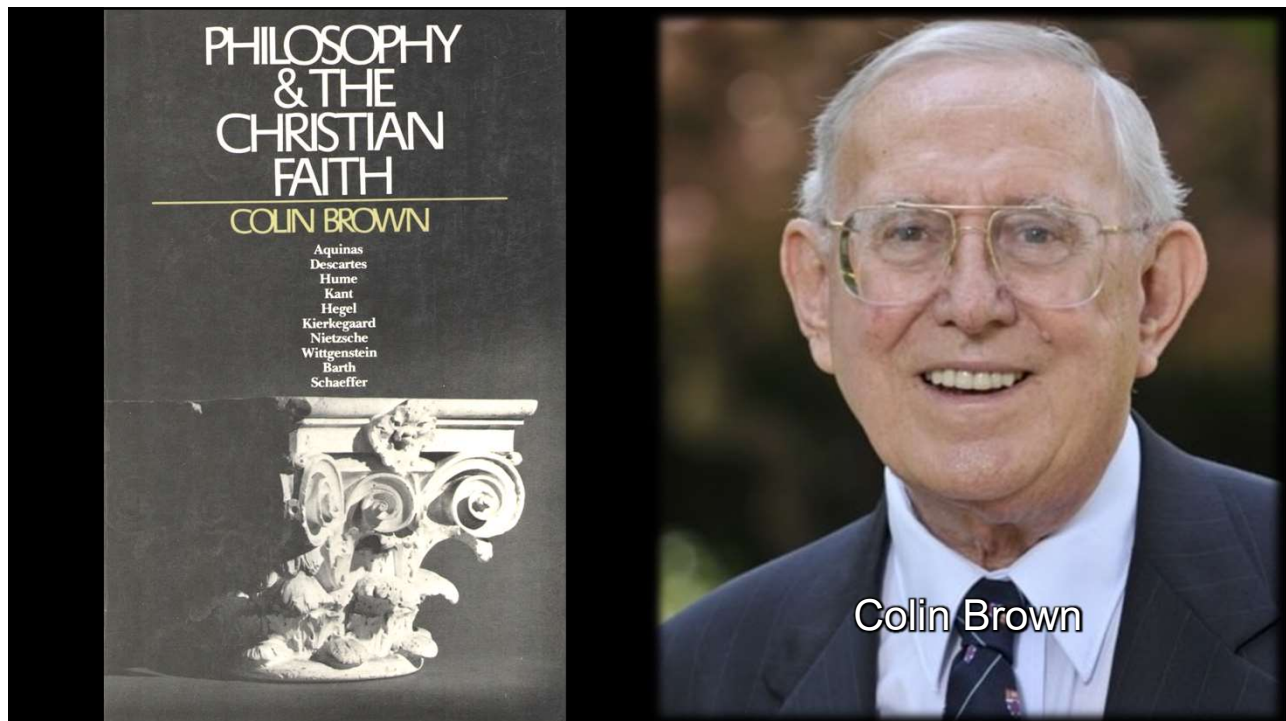
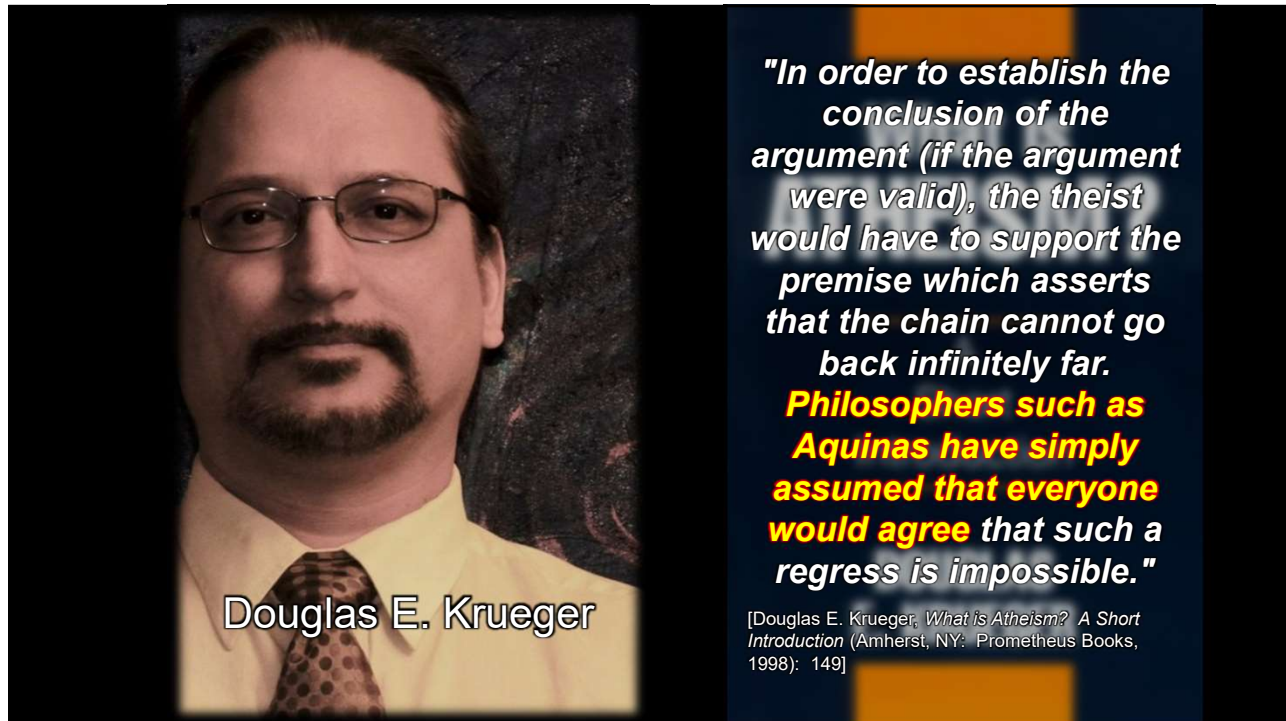


Douglas E. Krueger

**What Is  
ATHEISM?**

A  
Short  
Introduction

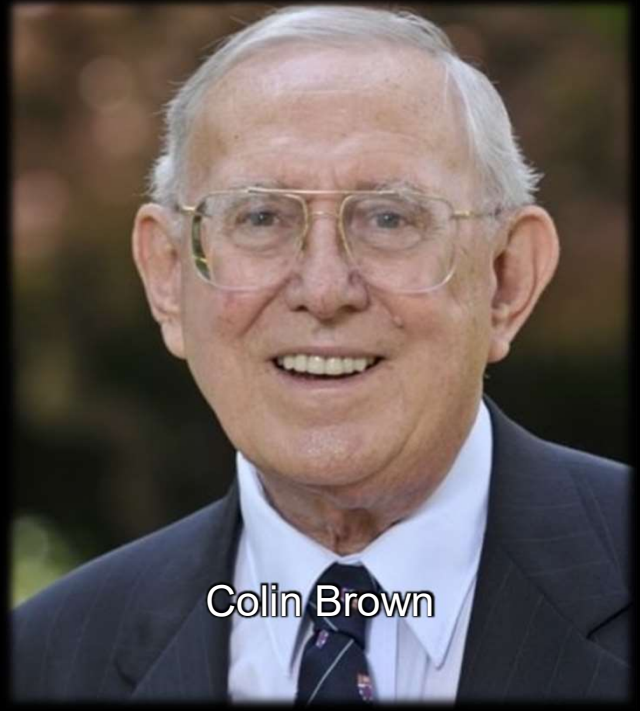
**DOUGLAS  
E. KRUEGER**





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

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



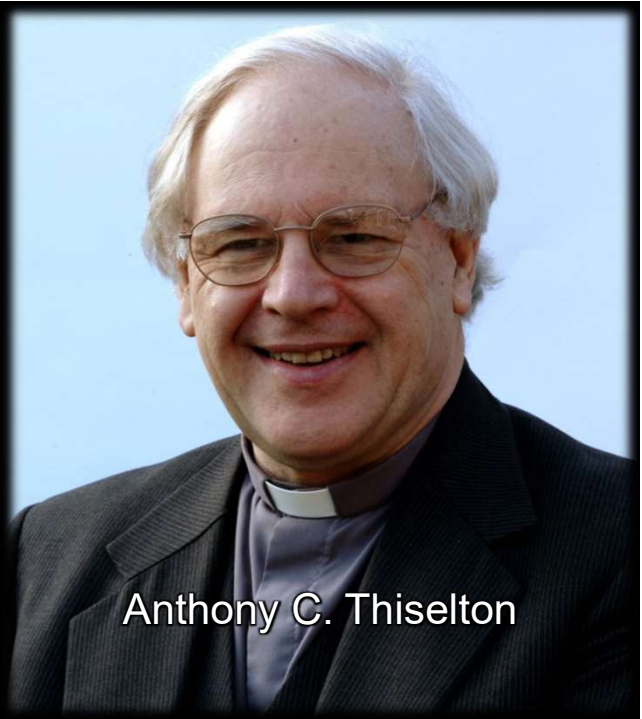
Colin Brown

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

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Anthony C. Thiselton

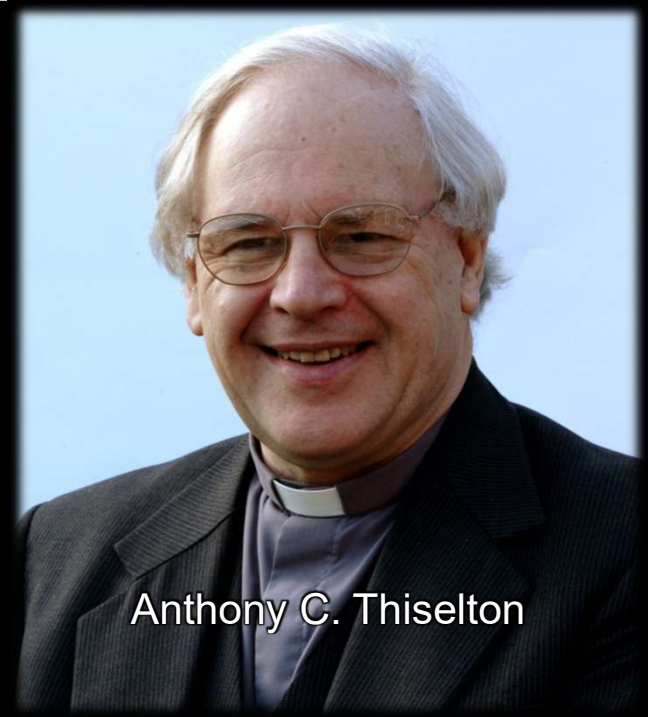
God Method Truth Personhood  
Trinity Holy Love Grace World  
Atheism Non-Human Creation  
Humanity Image of God Desire



Anthony C. Thiselton

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

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



Anthony C. Thiselton

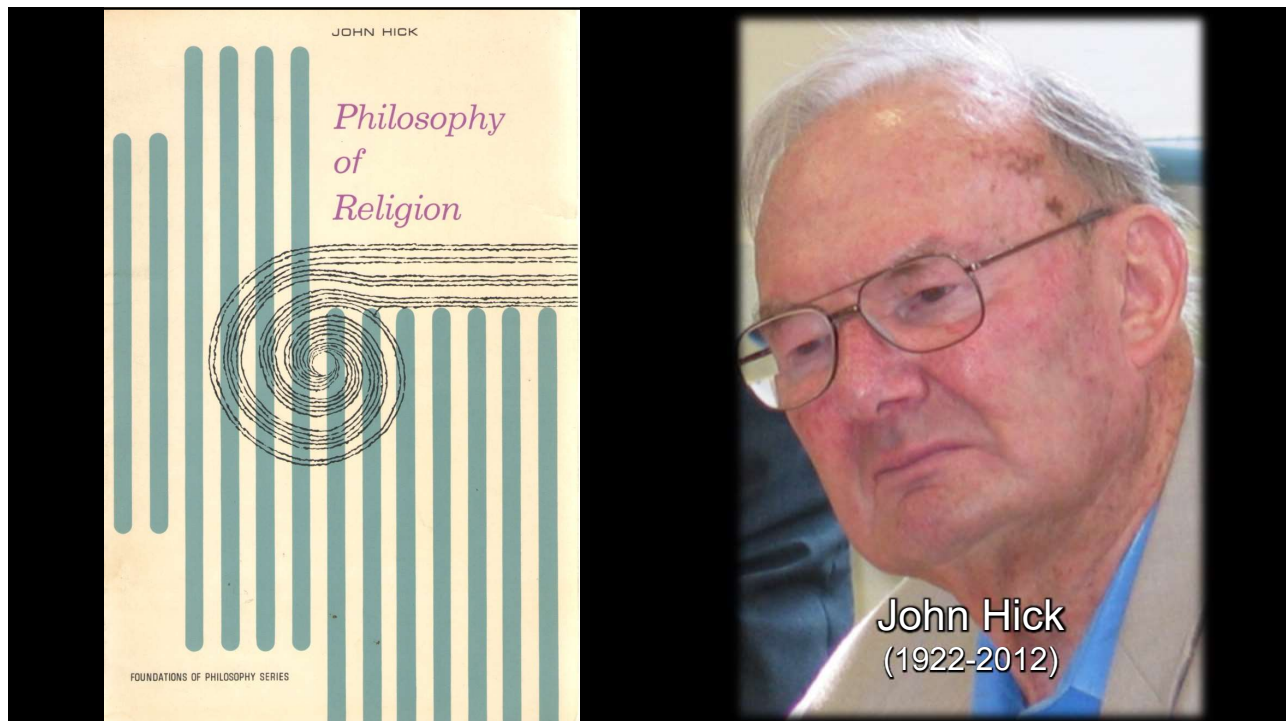
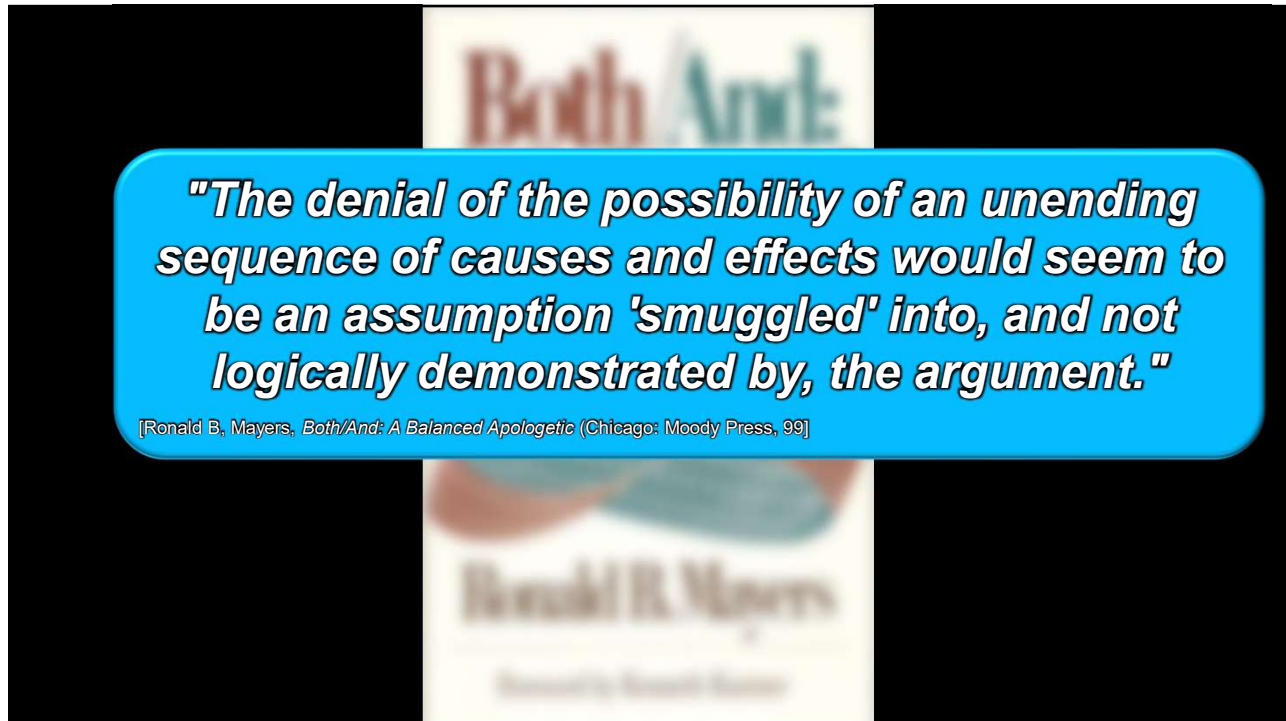
# Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic



Ronald B. Mayers

Foreword by Kenneth Kantzer





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

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

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



**John Hick**  
(1922-2012)

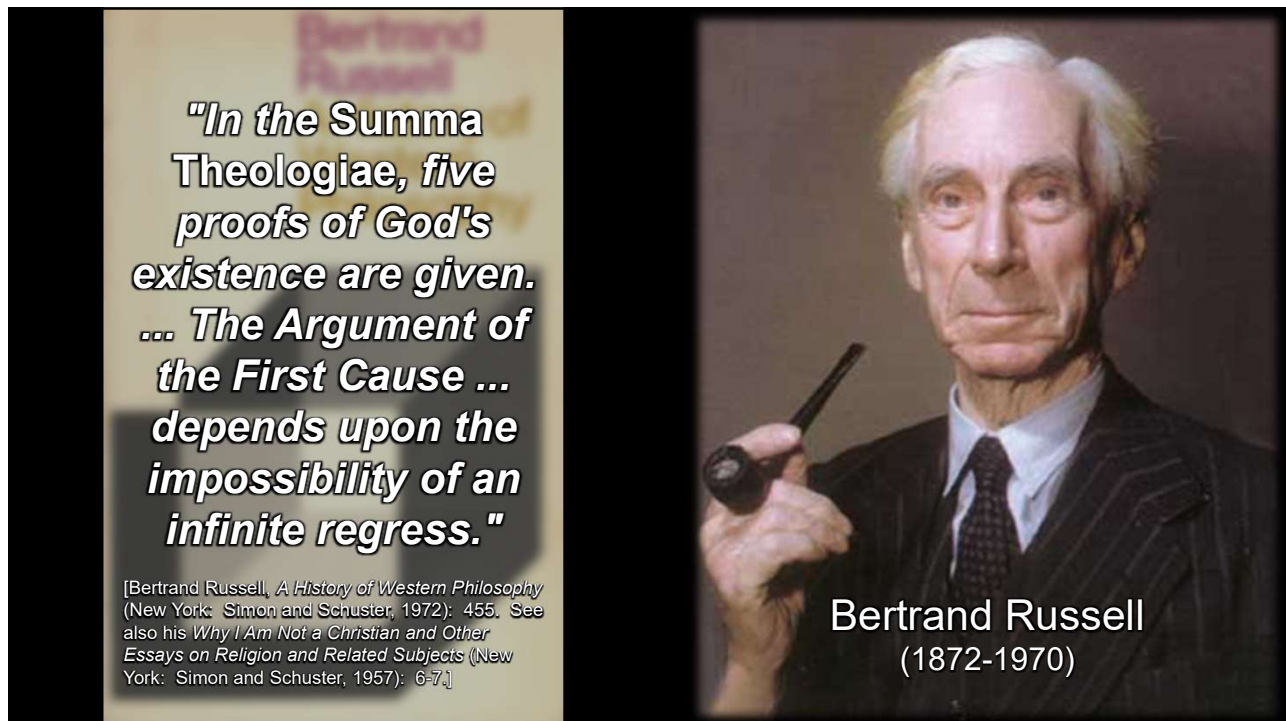
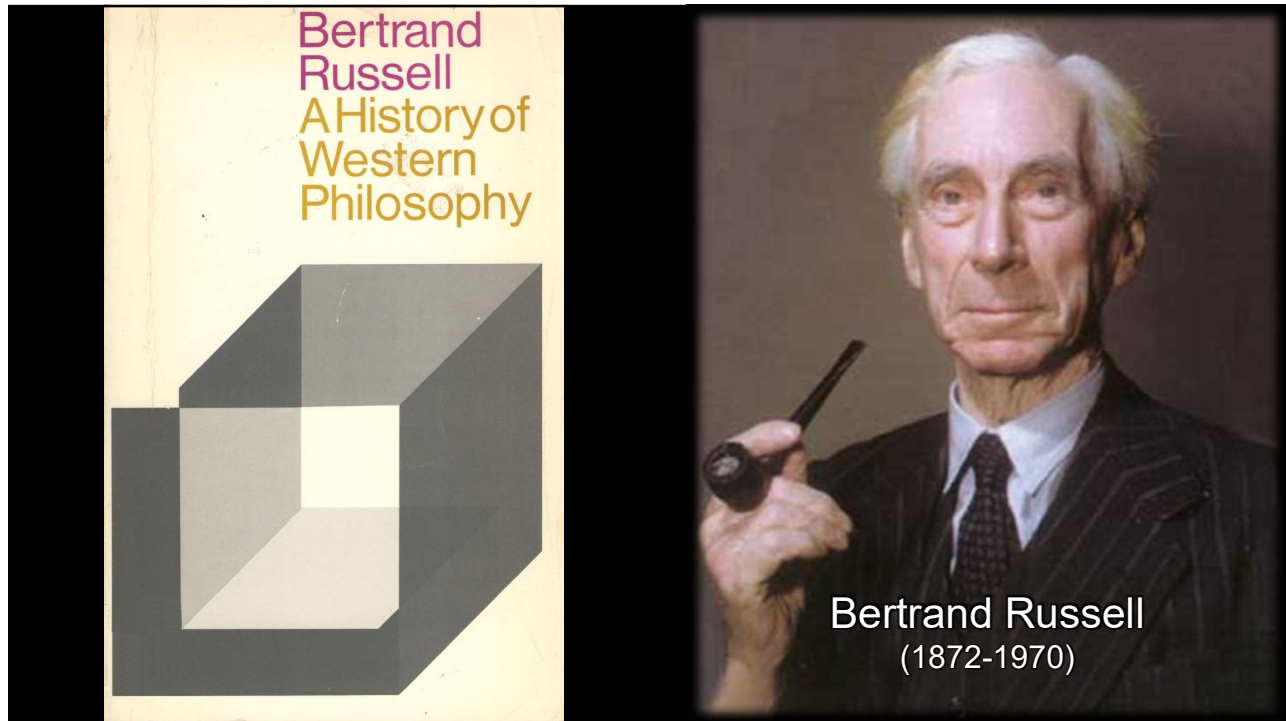
*"The weakness of the [Second Way] argument as Aquinas states it lies in the difficulty (which he himself elsewhere acknowledges) of excluding as impossible an endless regress of events requiring no beginning."*

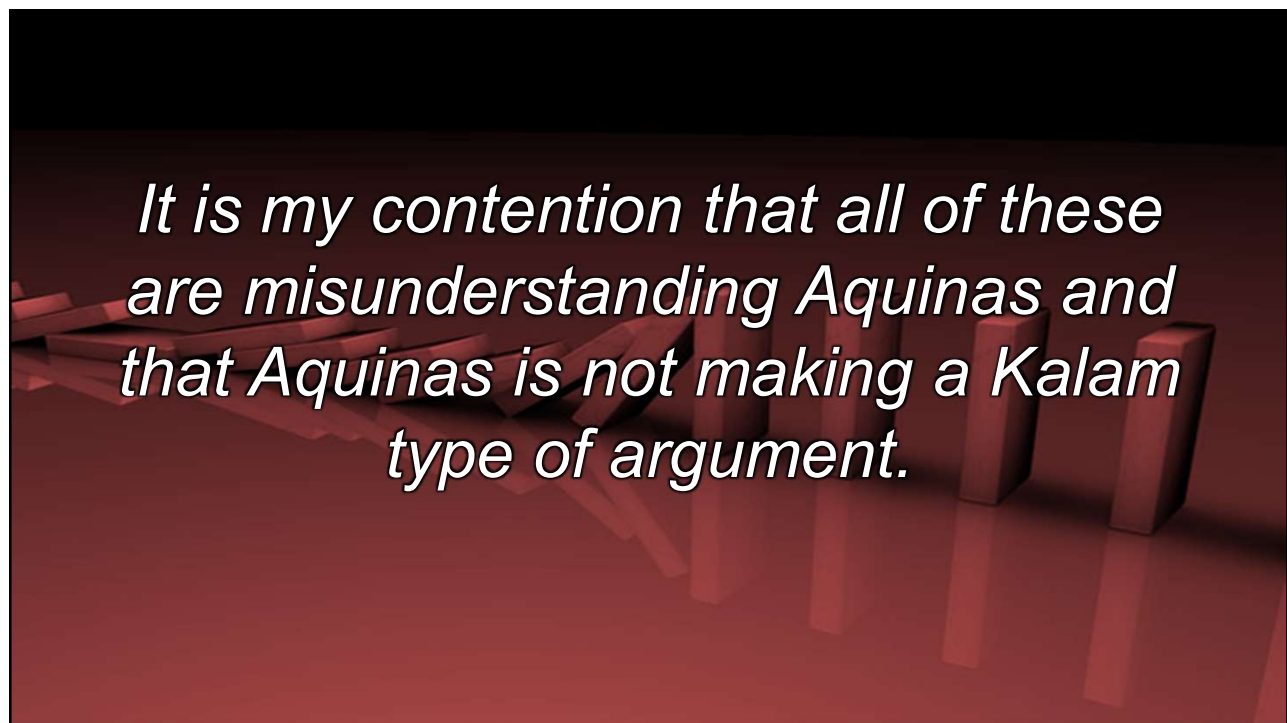
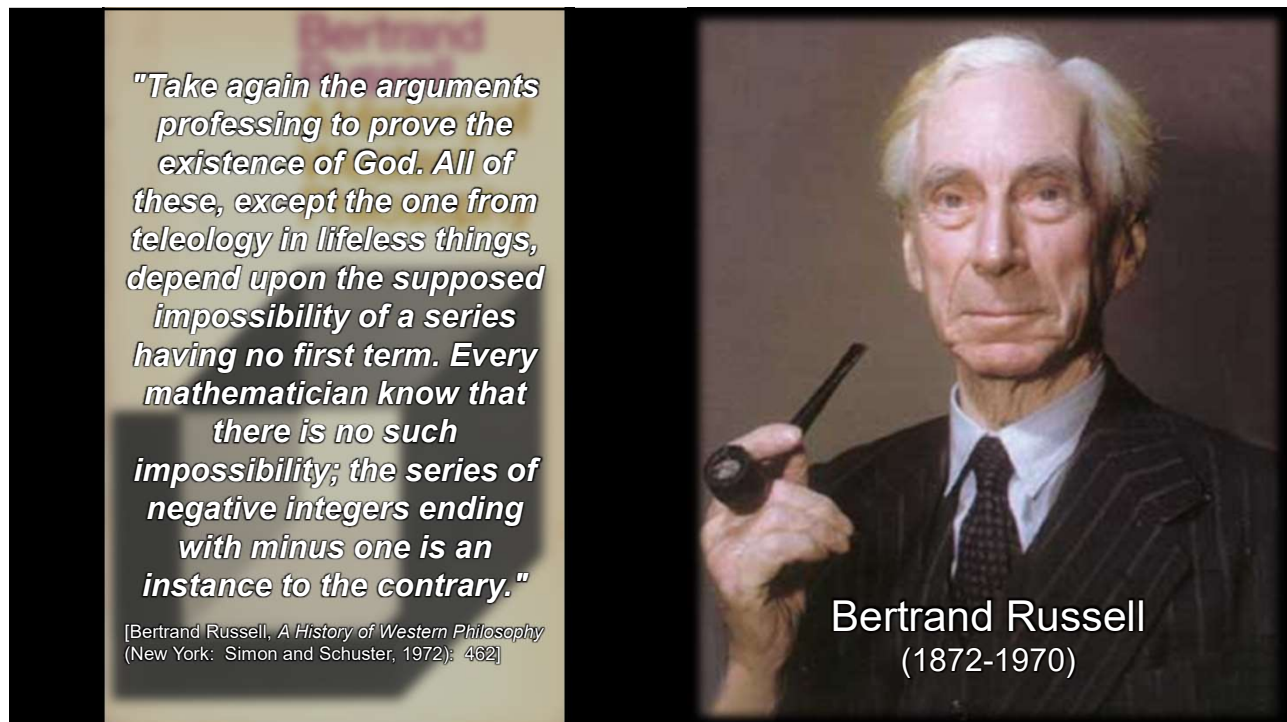
[Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 21]



**John Hick**  
(1922-2012)









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

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

**VS.**

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

*Christian Apologetics Journal*, 8:1 (Spring 2009)  
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**TWO NOTIONS OF THE INFINITE IN  
THOMAS AQUINAS' *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE*  
I, QUESTIONS 2 AND 46**

Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.

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

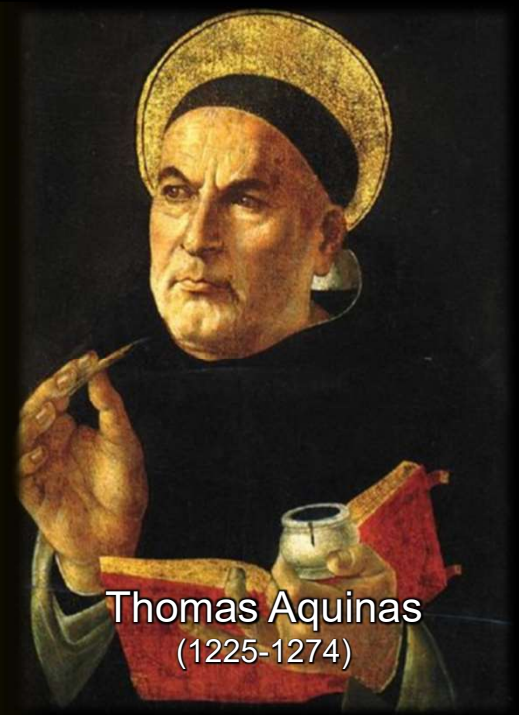
1. *Deum esse quinque viis probari potest*. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 2.  
3. All English translations are from *Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981). Thomas acknowledges that certain of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

2. *procedere per procedendum in infinitum*

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

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

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



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

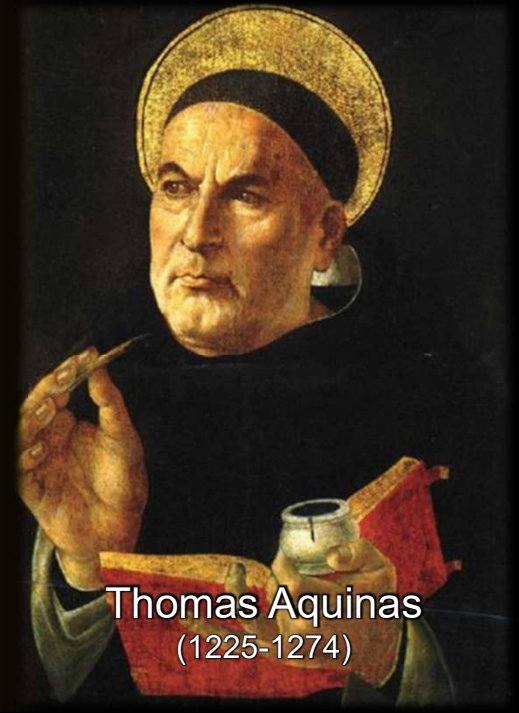


***infinitum per accidens***  
**(accidental infinite)**



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

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

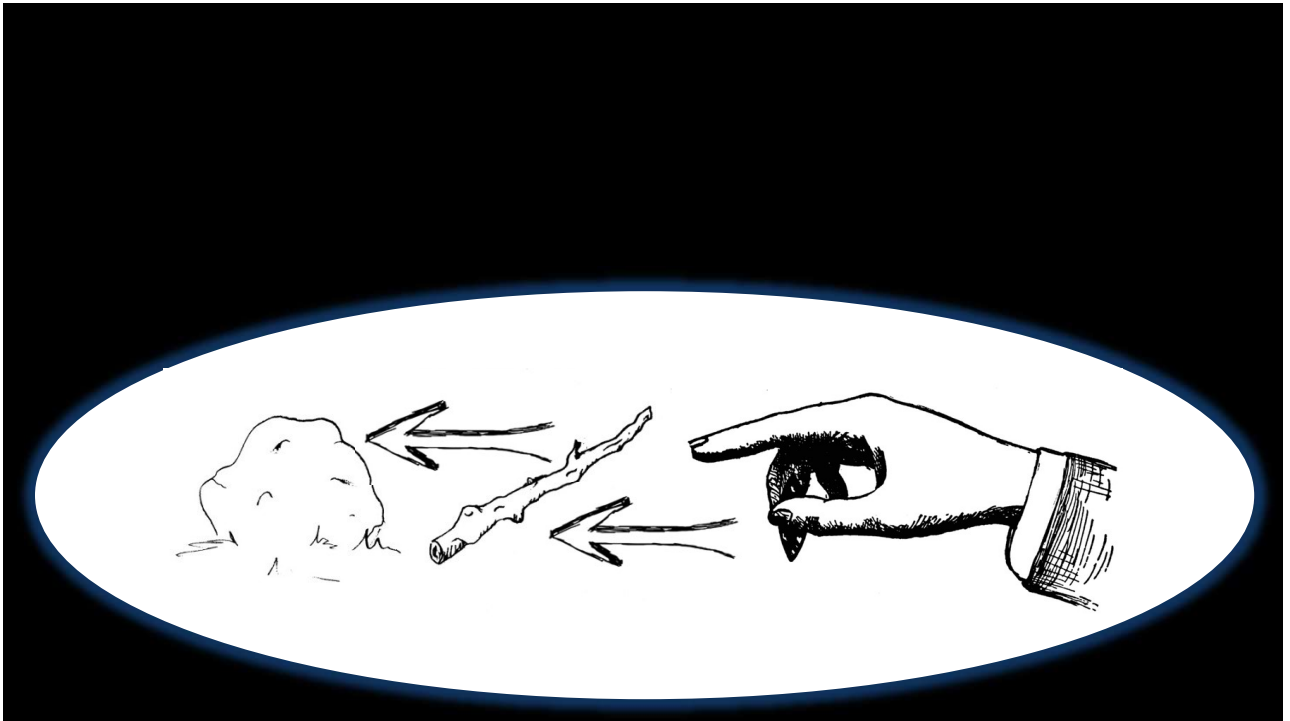


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



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



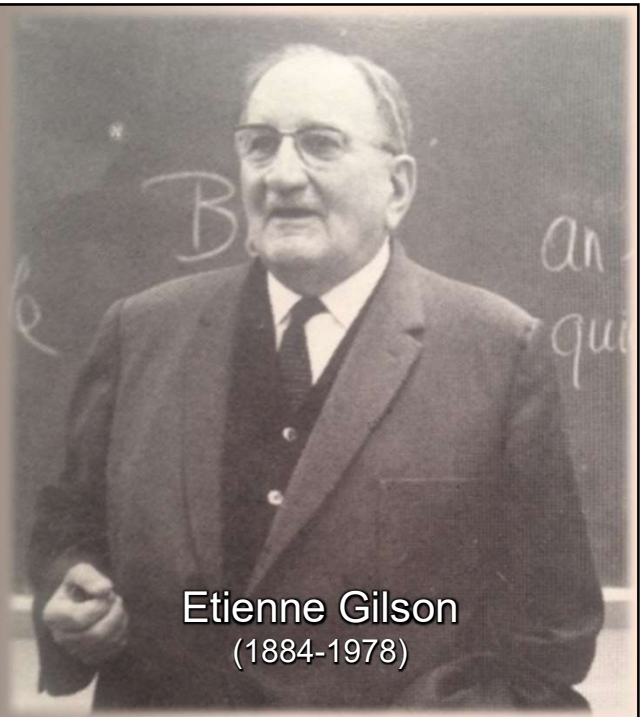






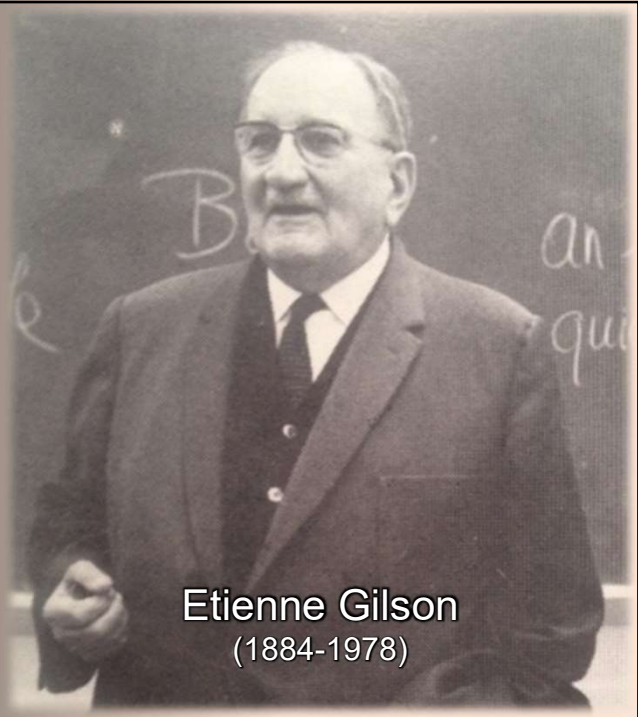


**"The proof in no way considers movement as a present reality the existence of which requires an efficient cause in the past, which is God.**



Etienne Gilson  
(1884-1978)

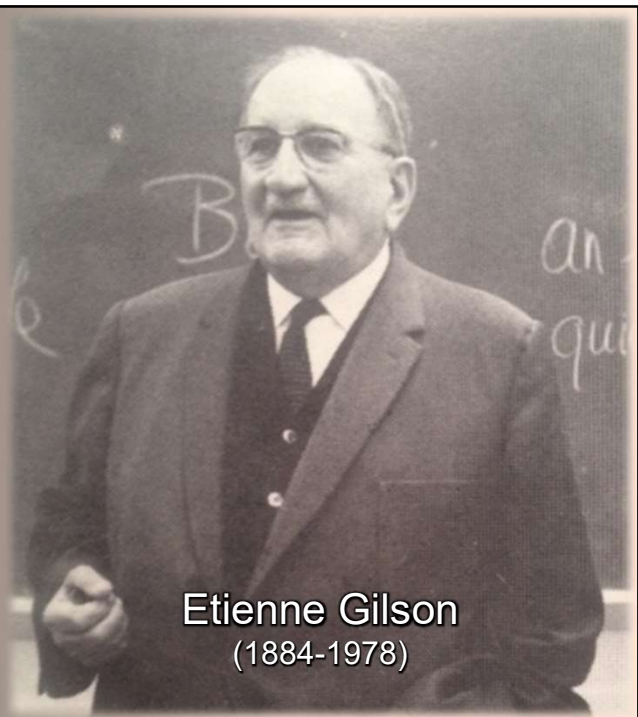
**"It aims simply at establishing that in the universe as actually given, movement, as actually given, would be unintelligible without a first Mover communicating it to all things.**



Etienne Gilson  
(1884-1978)

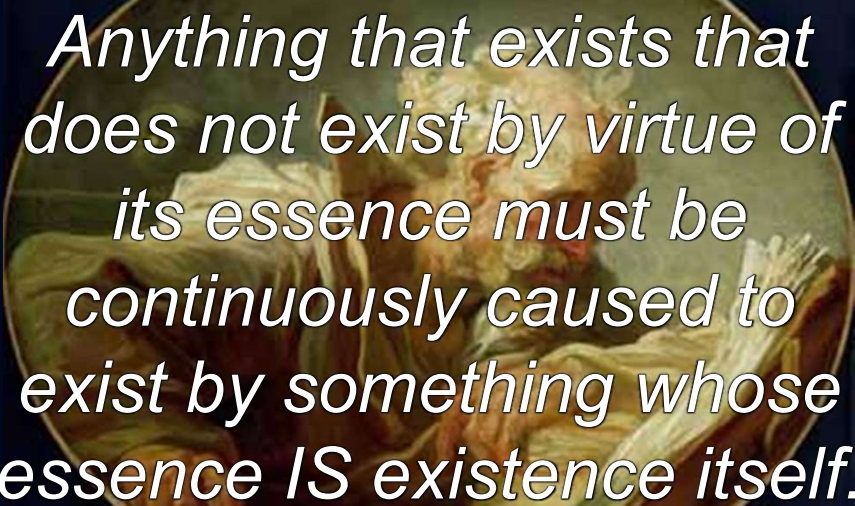
**"In other words the impossibility of an infinite regress must not be taken as an infinite regress in time, but as applying to the present consideration of the universe."**

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



Etienne Gilson  
(1884-1978)

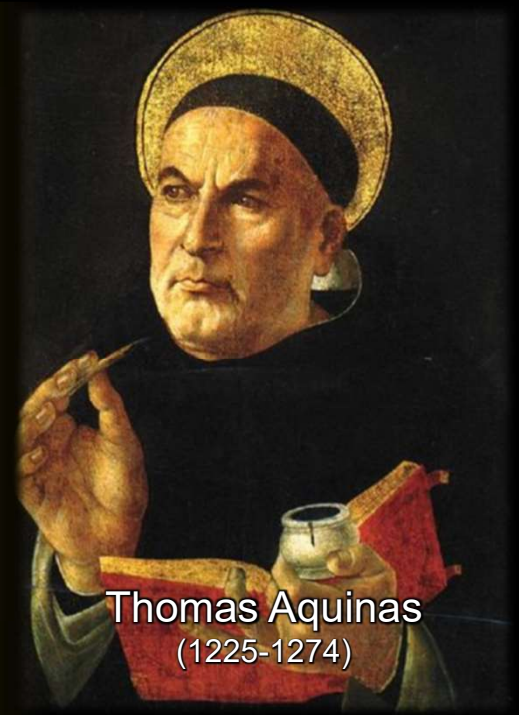




*Anything that exists that does not exist by virtue of its essence must be continuously caused to exist by something whose essence IS existence itself.*

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

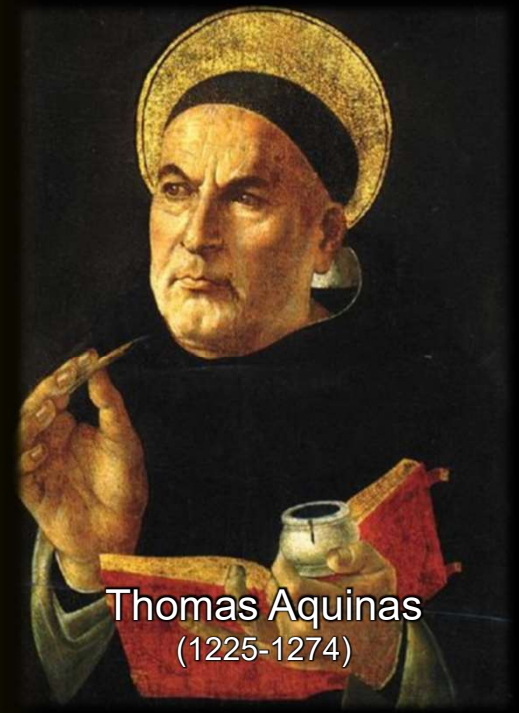
[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q, 46, ii, ad 7]



**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)

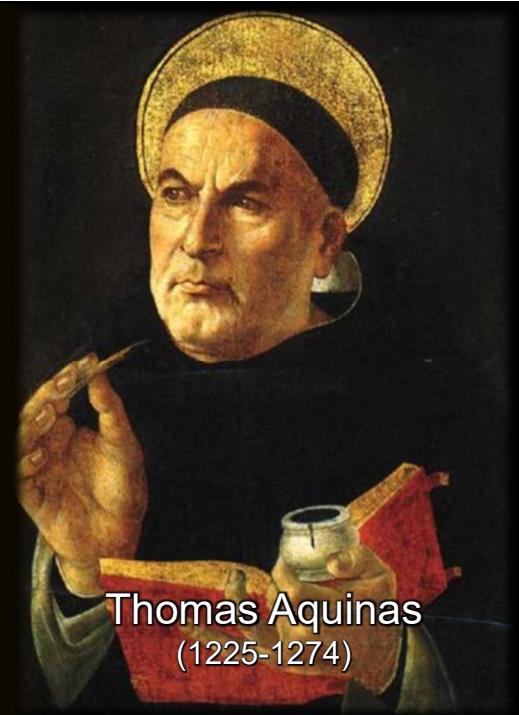
**"As the production of a thing into existence depends on the will of God, so likewise it depends on His will that things should be preserved; for He does not preserve them otherwise than by ever giving them existence; hence if He took away His action from them, all things would be reduced to nothing."**

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



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

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

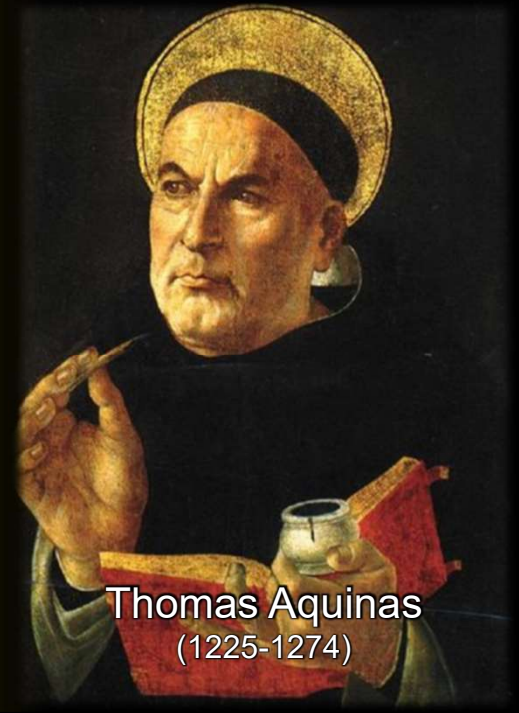


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



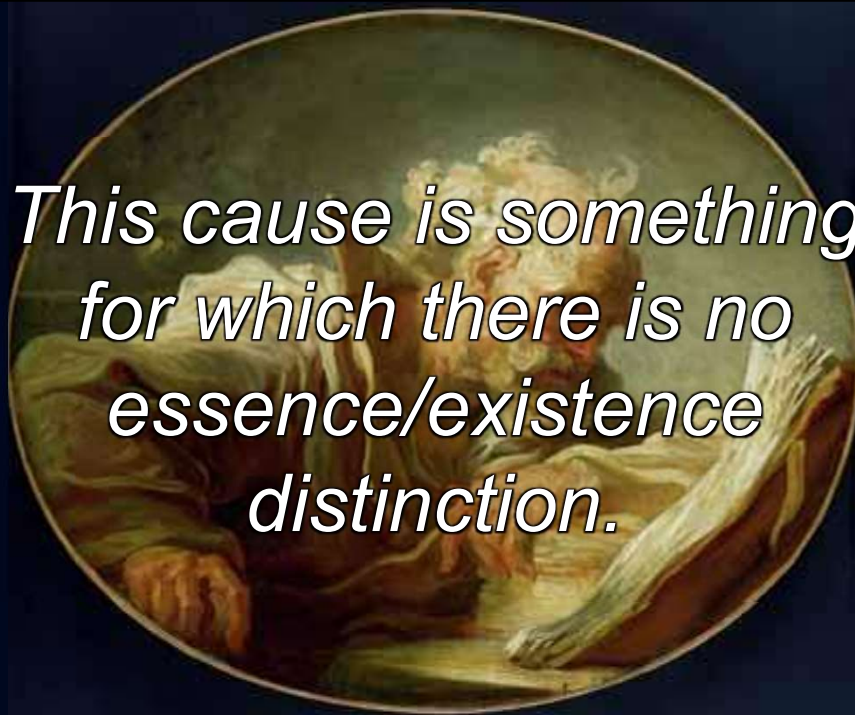
***"Hence from that one being  
all other beings that are not  
their own being, but have  
being by participation,  
must needs proceed."***

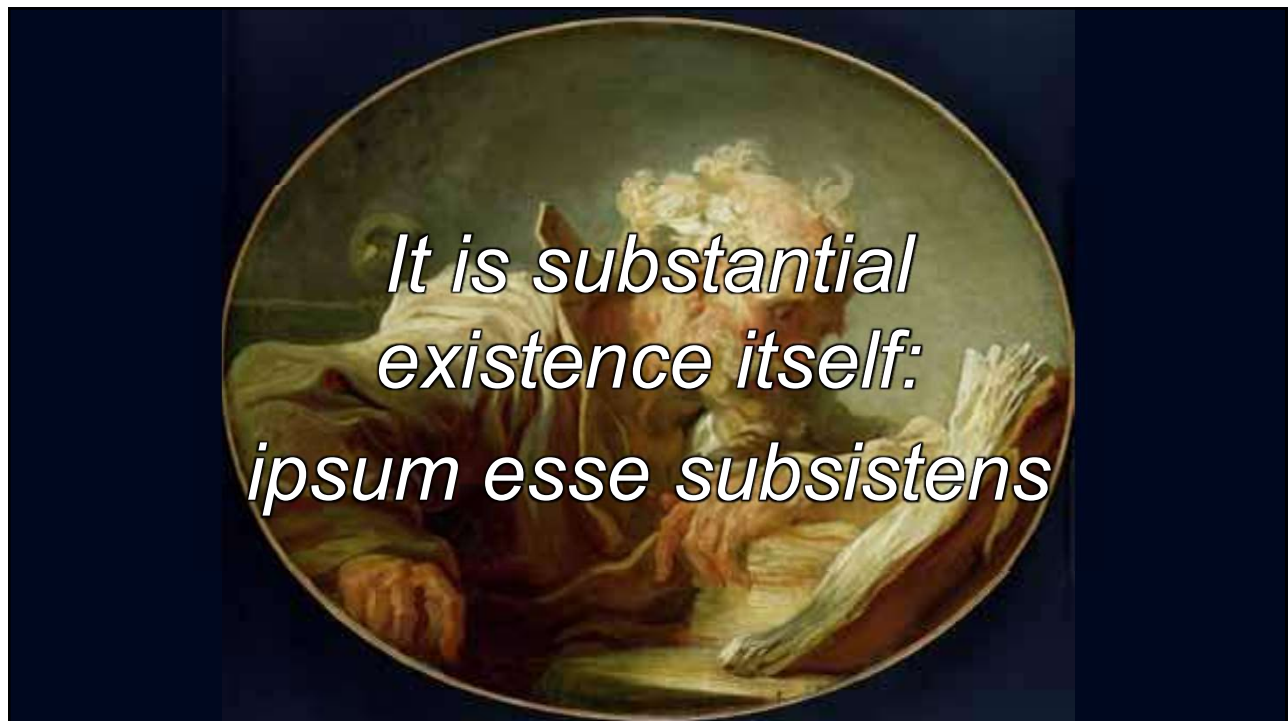
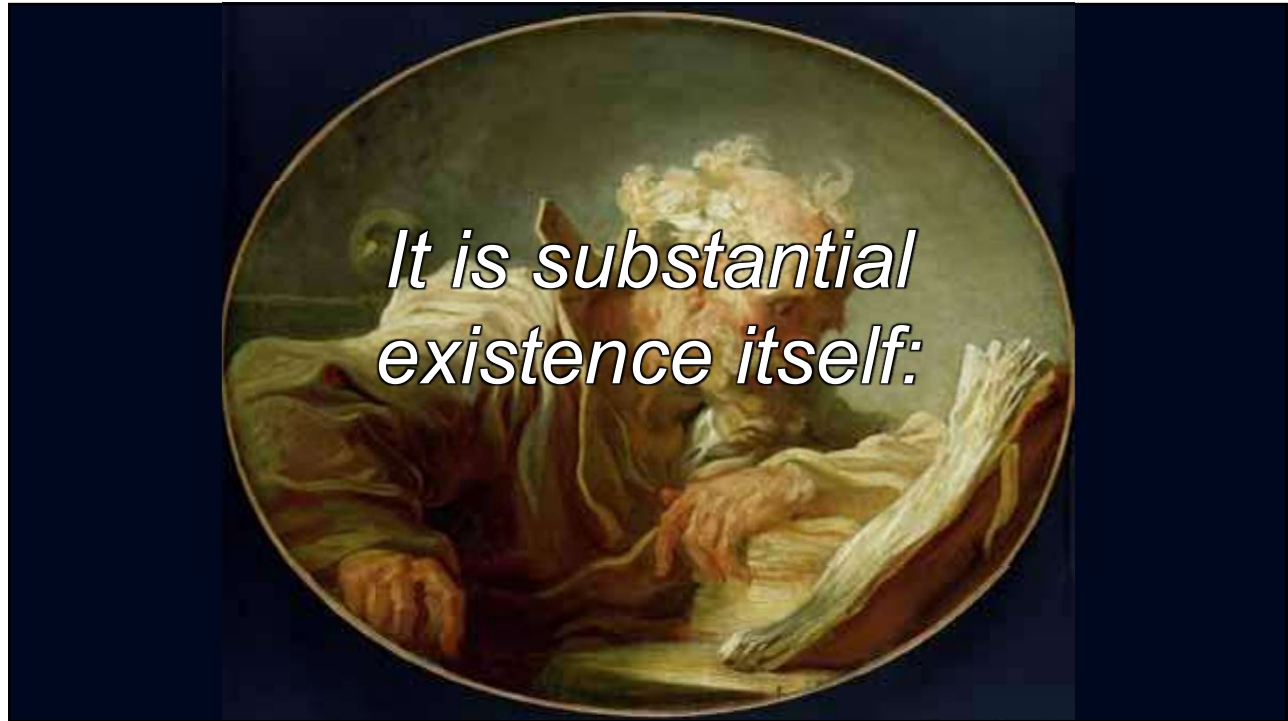
[On the Power of God, *quæstiones disputatæ de potential dei*, Bk. I, Q. 3, art. 5, c, trans. English Dominican Fathers (Eugene: Wipf & Stock 2004), 110.]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

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

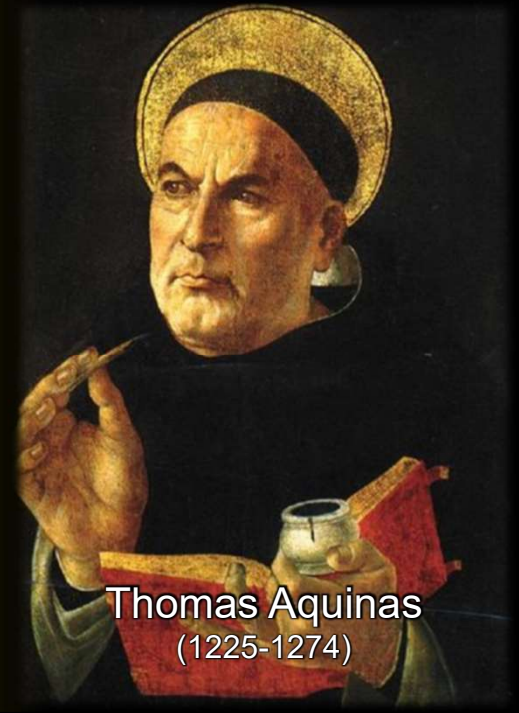






**"To God alone does it belong to be His own subsistent being. ... for no creature is its own existence, forasmuch as its existence is participated."**

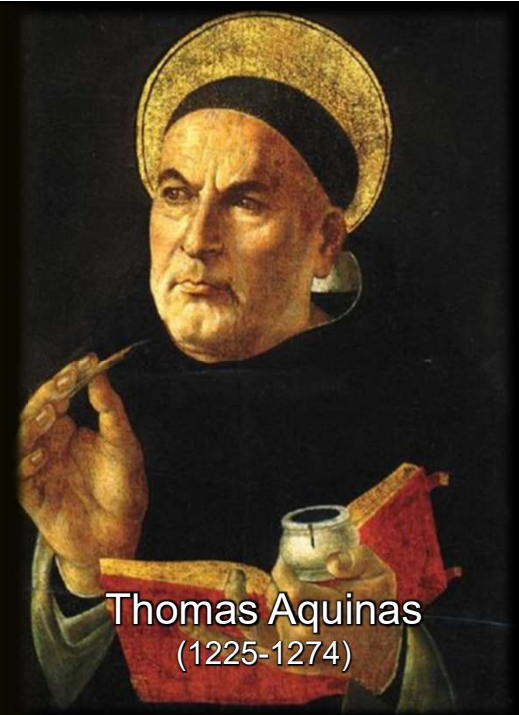
[*Summa Theologiae* 1, Q 12, art. iv]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

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

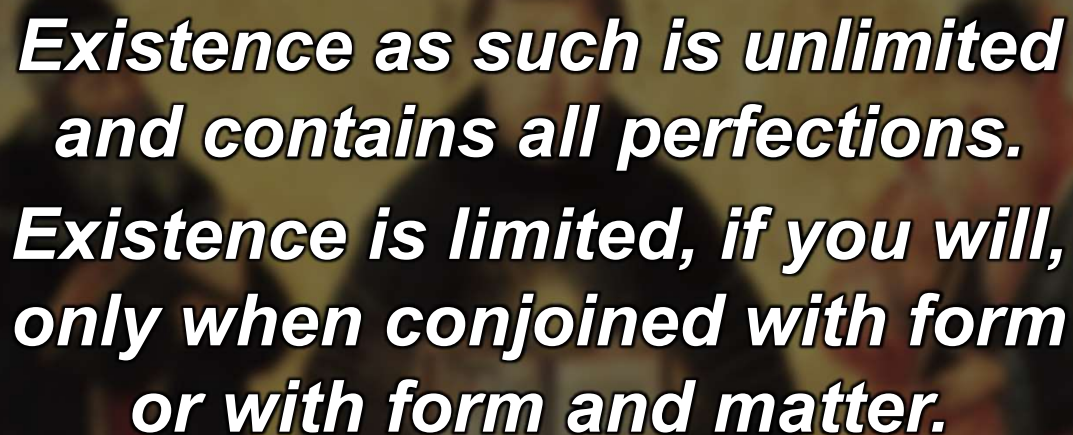
[*On Being and Essence*, IV, §7, trans. Maurer, 56-57]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

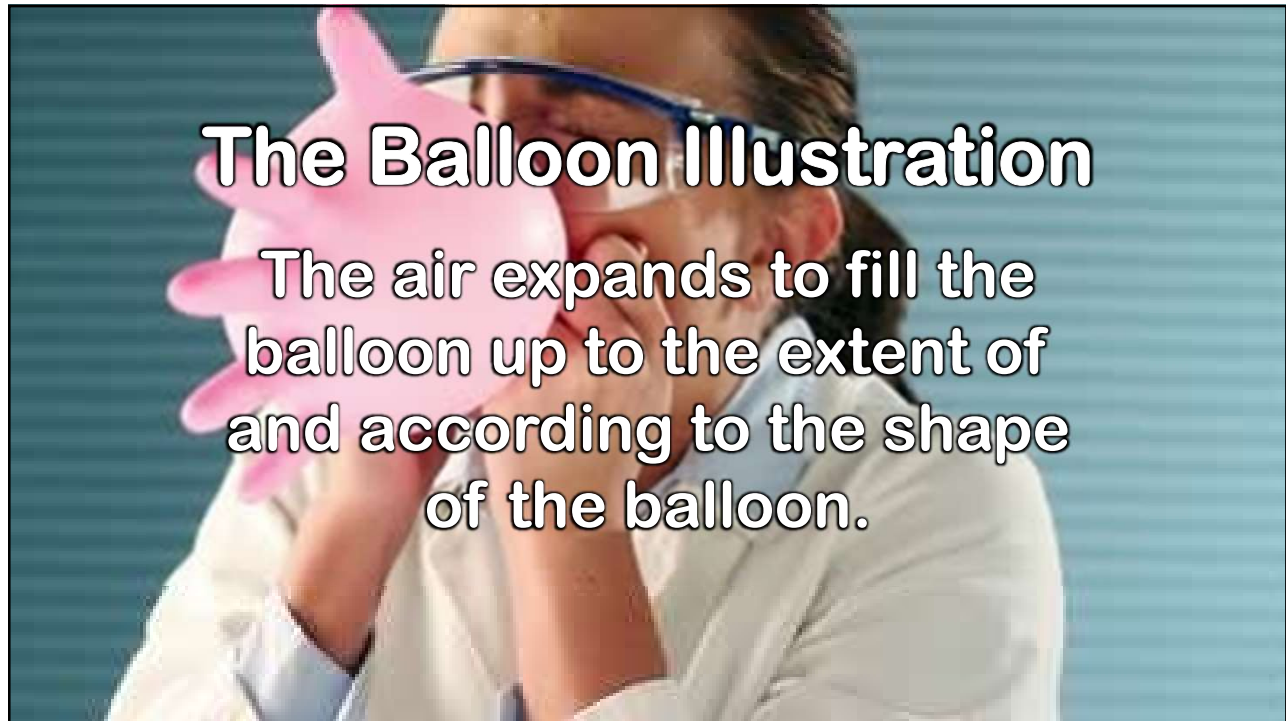


***Existence as such is unlimited  
and contains all perfections.***



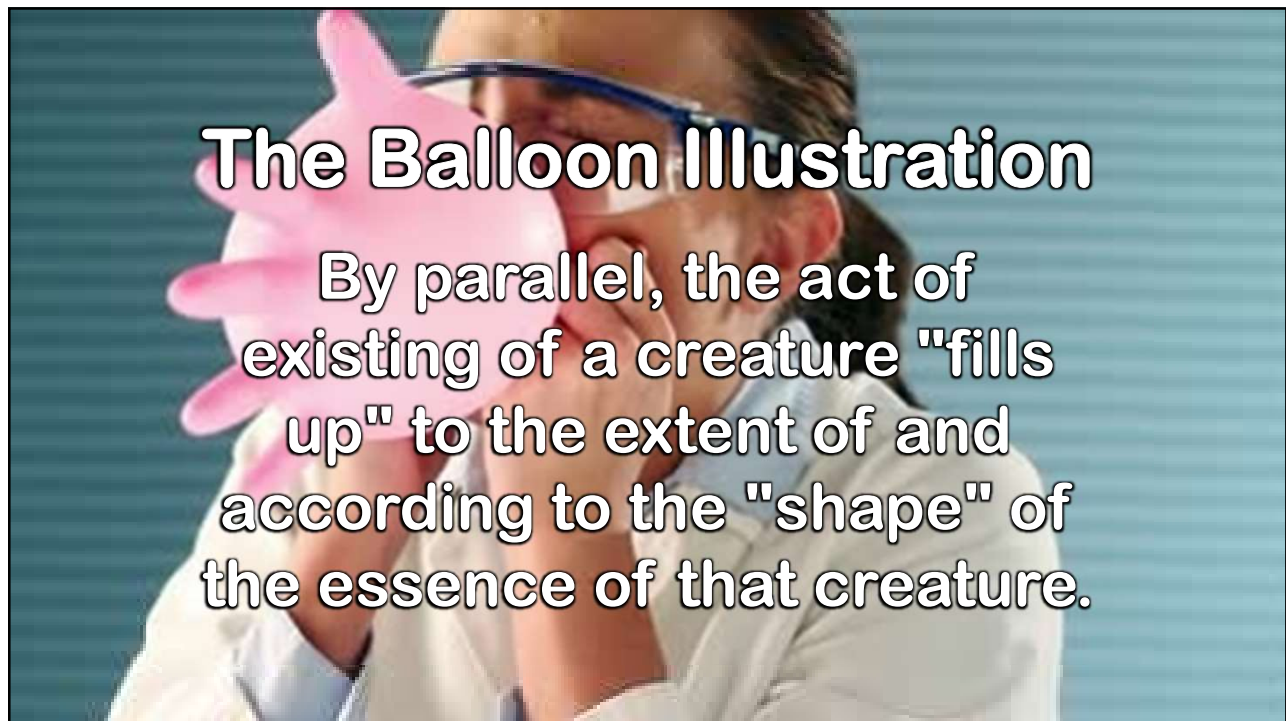
***Existence as such is unlimited  
and contains all perfections.  
Existence is limited, if you will,  
only when conjoined with form  
or with form and matter.***





## The Balloon Illustration

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



## The Balloon Illustration

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

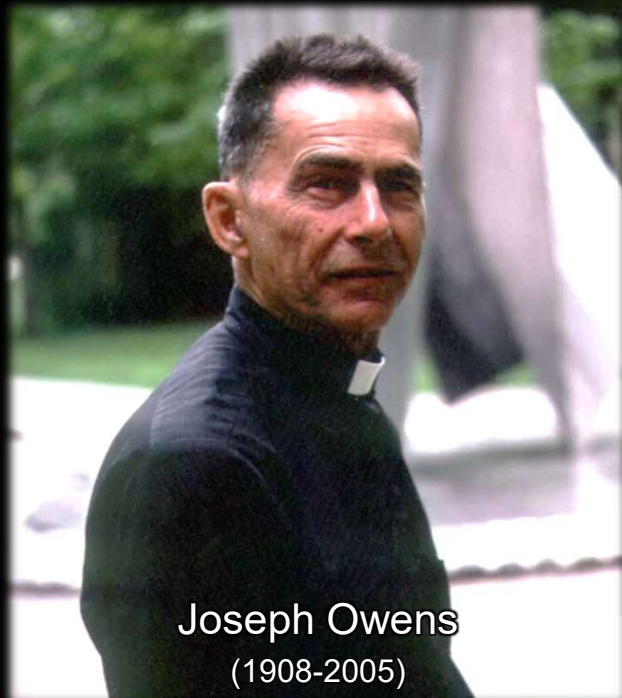
**A horse contains  
all the perfections  
of existence up to  
the extent of and  
according to the  
limitations of the  
essence of horse.**



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

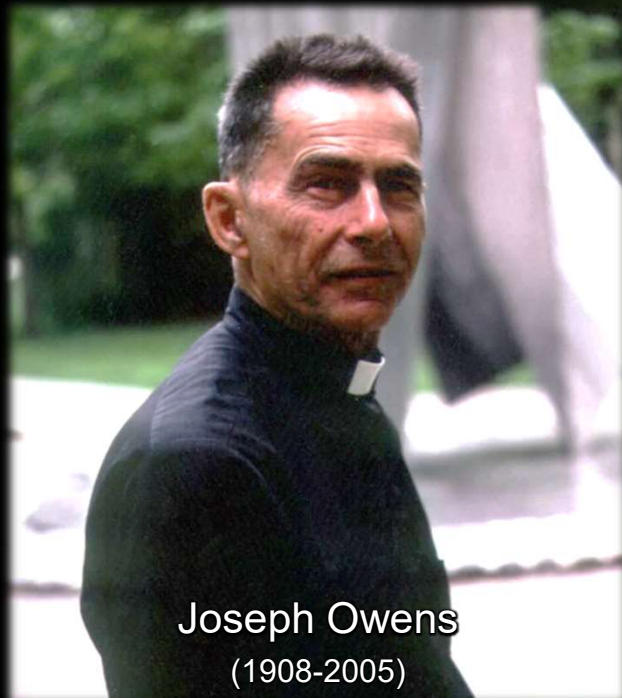




A portrait of Joseph Owens, a man with short dark hair, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The background is blurred, showing green foliage and a white structure.

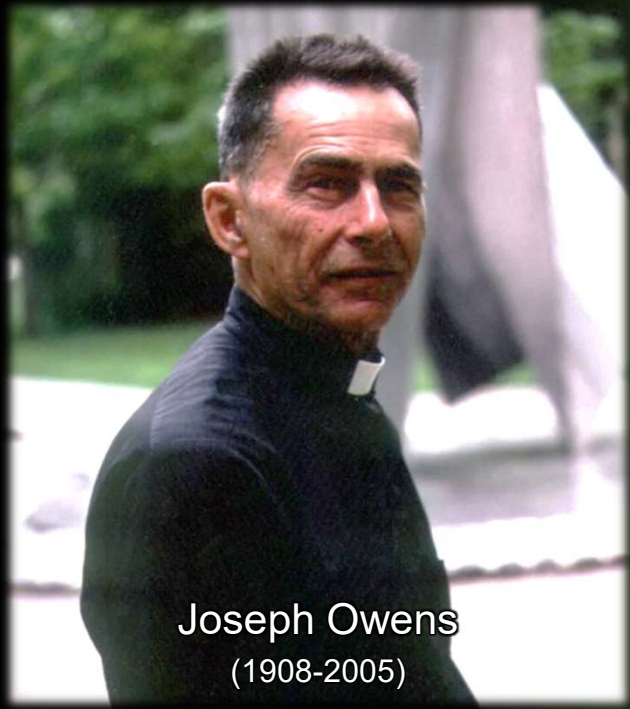
***"An alternate word for actuality in this respect is "perfection" (entelecheia). It was used by Aristotle along with actuality to designate the formal elements in the things.***

Joseph Owens  
(1908-2005)

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

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

Joseph Owens  
(1908-2005)



**Joseph Owens**  
(1908-2005)

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

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

## perfection

(entelecheia, ἐντελέχεια)

en, ἐν = in

+

telos, τέλος = end, goal

+

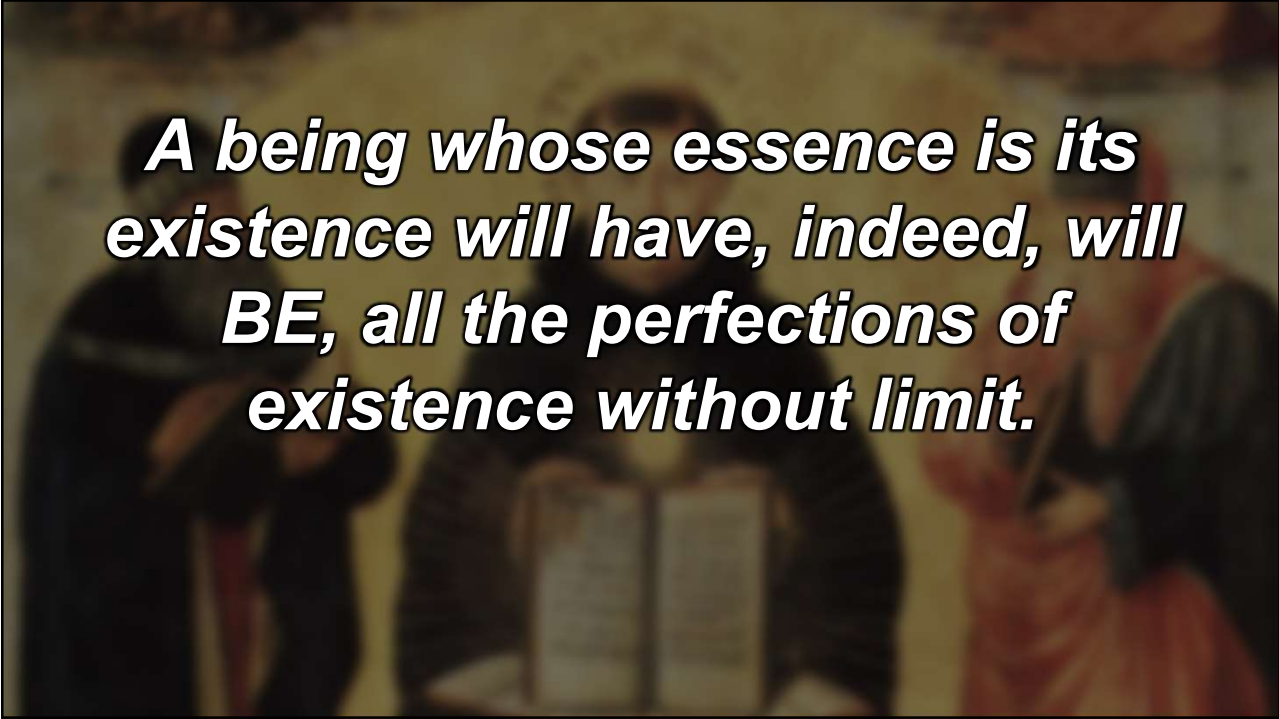
echein, ἔχειν = to have



# perfection

(entelecheia, ἐντελέχεια)

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

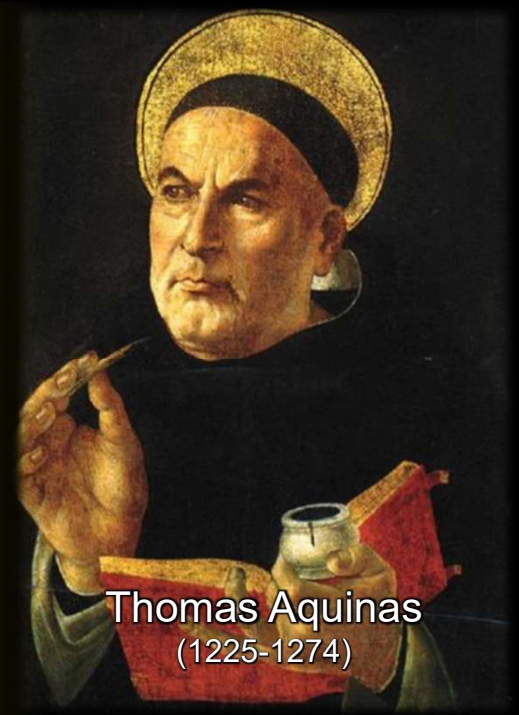


***A being whose essence is its  
existence will have, indeed, will  
BE, all the perfections of  
existence without limit.***

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

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

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

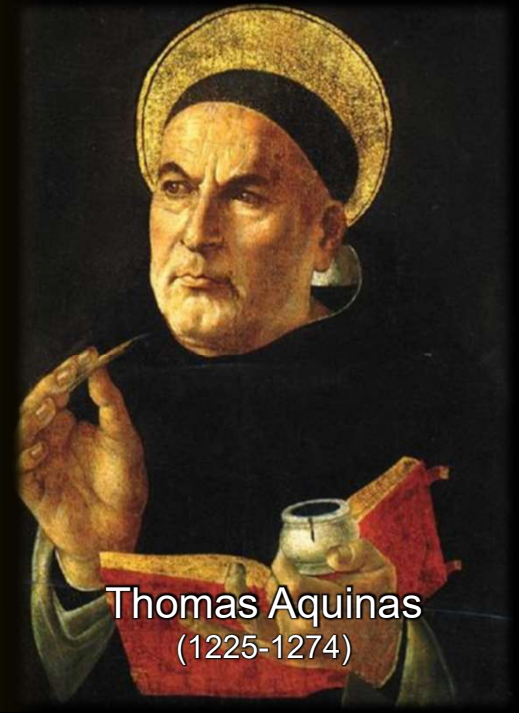


**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)



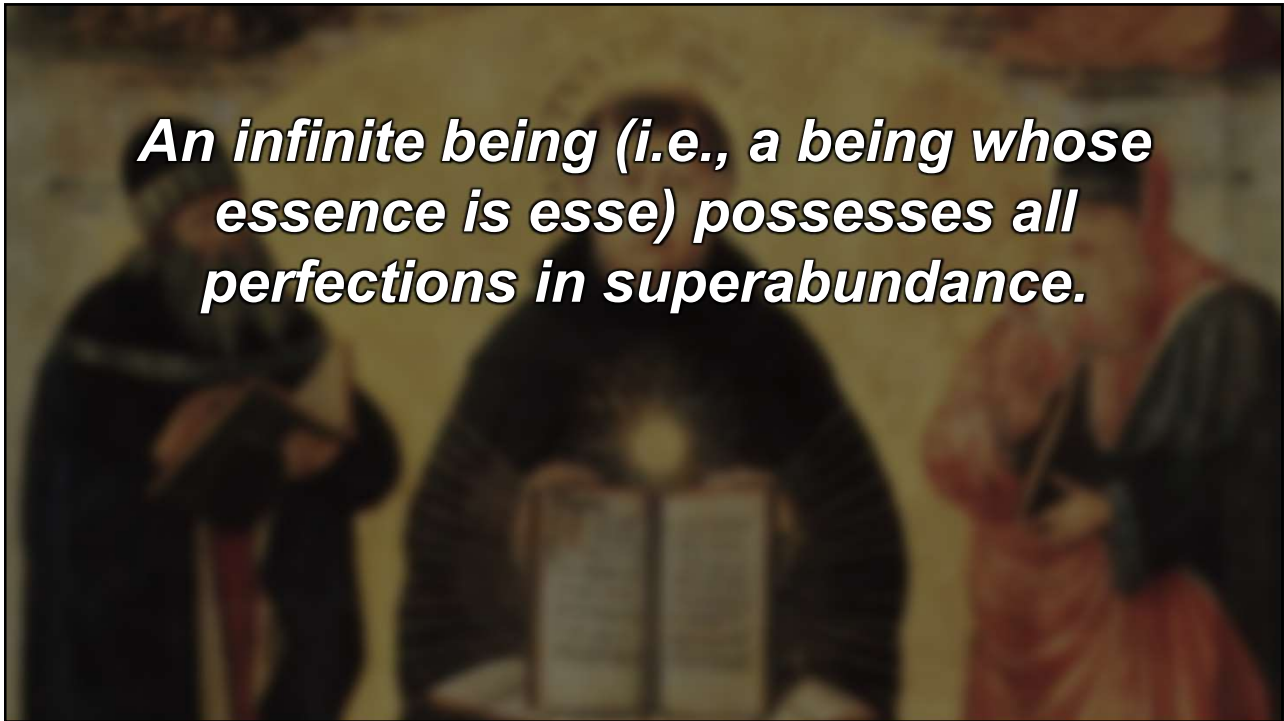
**"God is supremely being,  
inasmuch as His being is  
not determined by any  
nature to which it is  
adjoined; since He is being  
itself, subsistent,  
absolutely undetermined."**

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



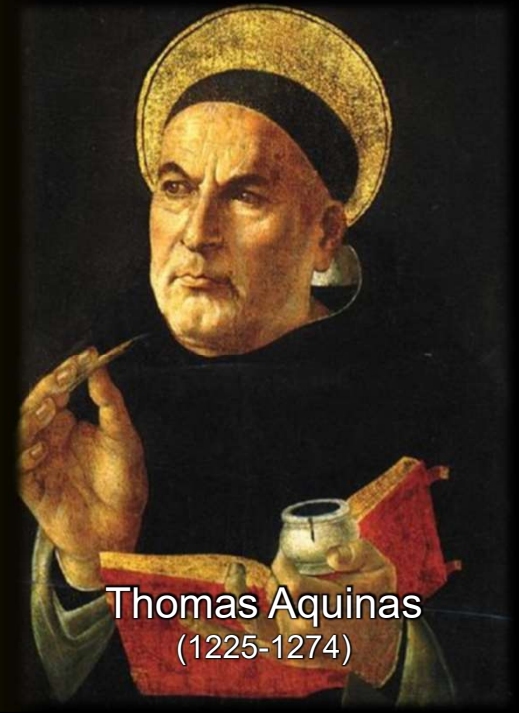
Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

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



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

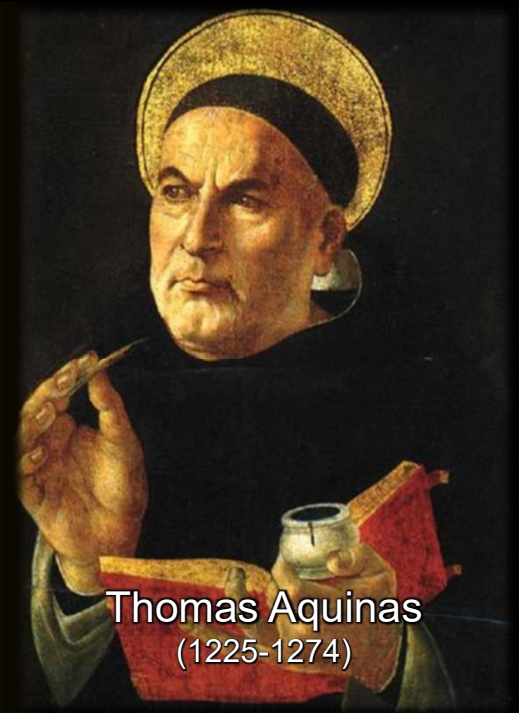
[*Summa Theologiae*, I, 13, 4]



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

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

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

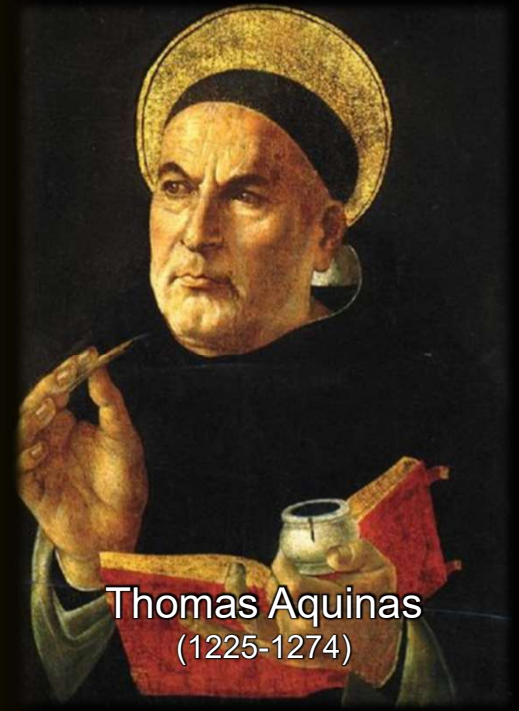


Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

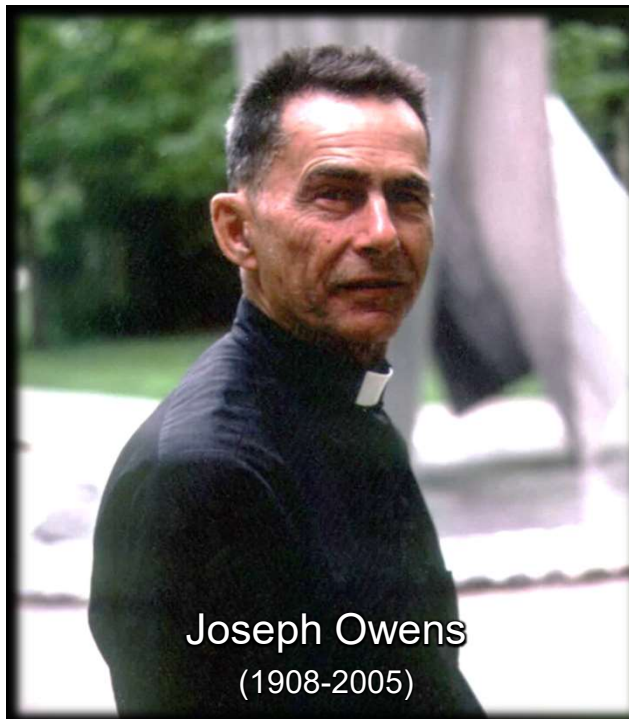


***"All perfections existing  
in creatures divided and  
multiplied, pre-exist in  
God unitedly."***

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



Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)



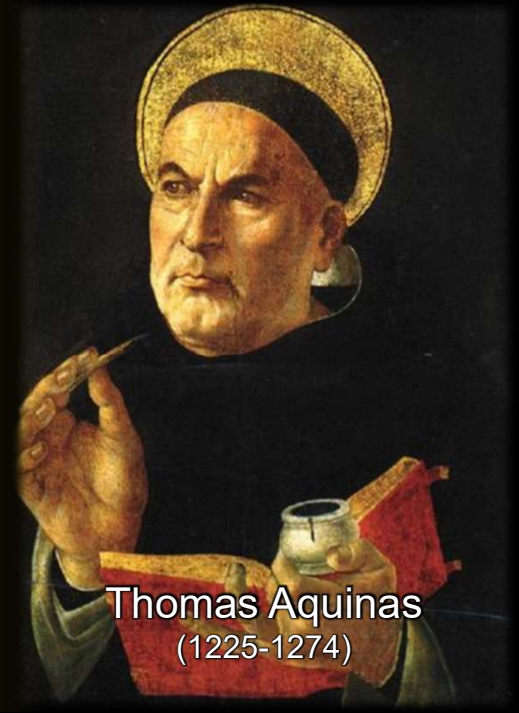
Joseph Owens  
(1908-2005)

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

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

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

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



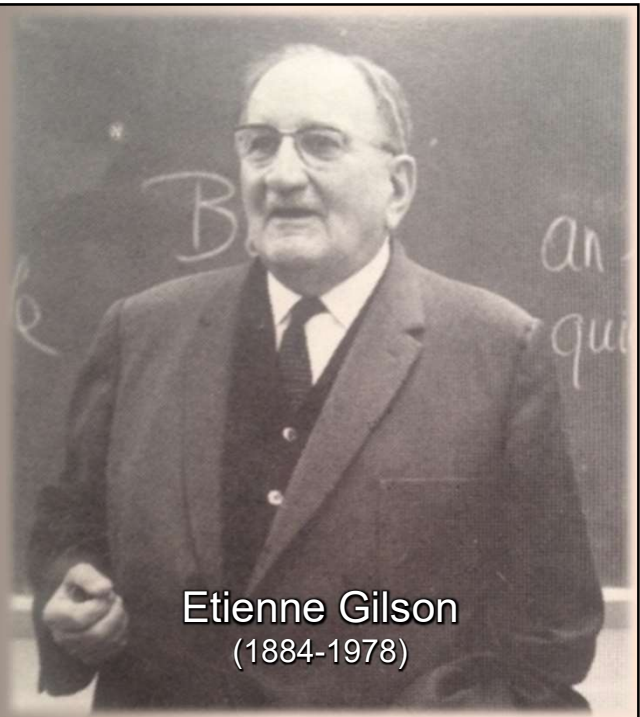
Thomas Aquinas  
(1225-1274)

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



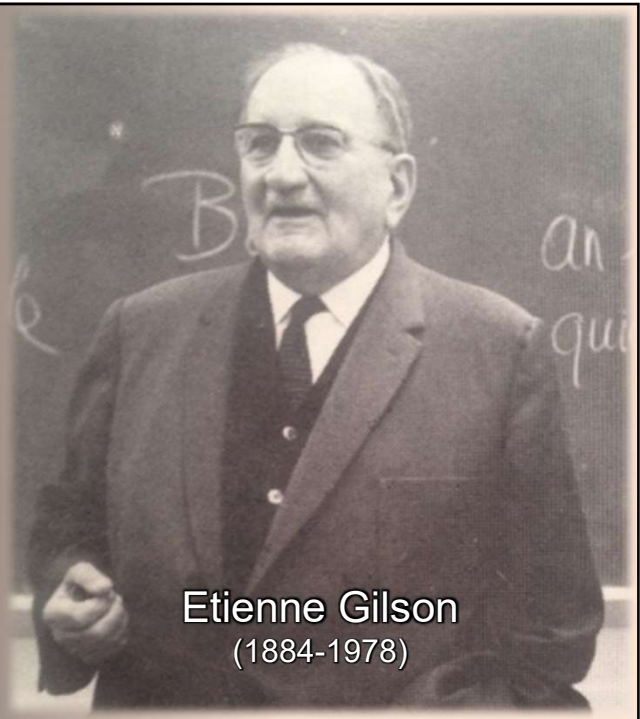
***Marrying the metaphysics of Aristotle with the innovations of esse and the essence / existence distinction, Aquinas was able to demonstrate the existence and attributes of a God that Aristotle's philosophy could never foresee.***

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



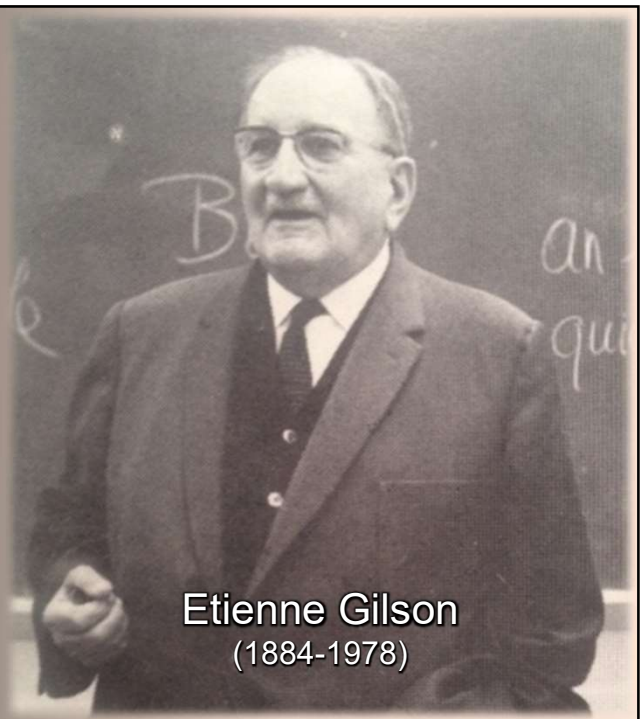
**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

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



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

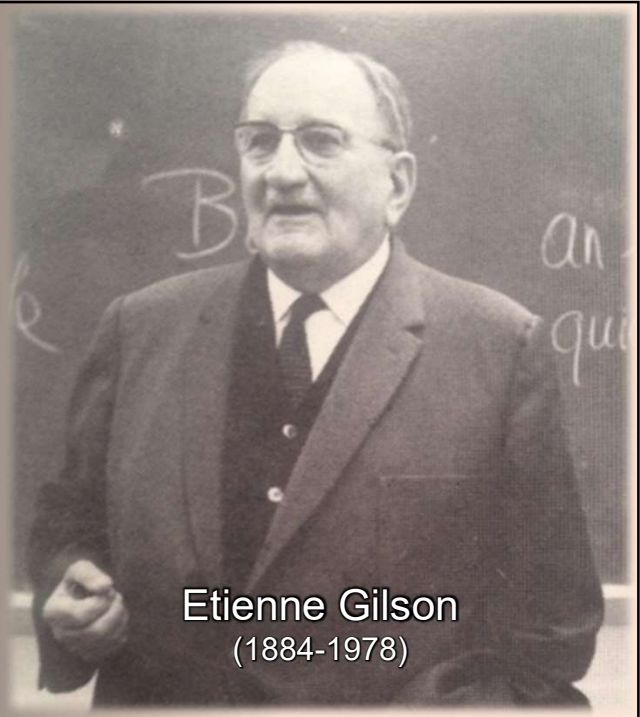
**"The best way to make Aristotle say so many things he never said was not to show that, had he understood himself better than he did, he would have said them. For indeed Aristotle seems to have understood himself pretty well.**



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

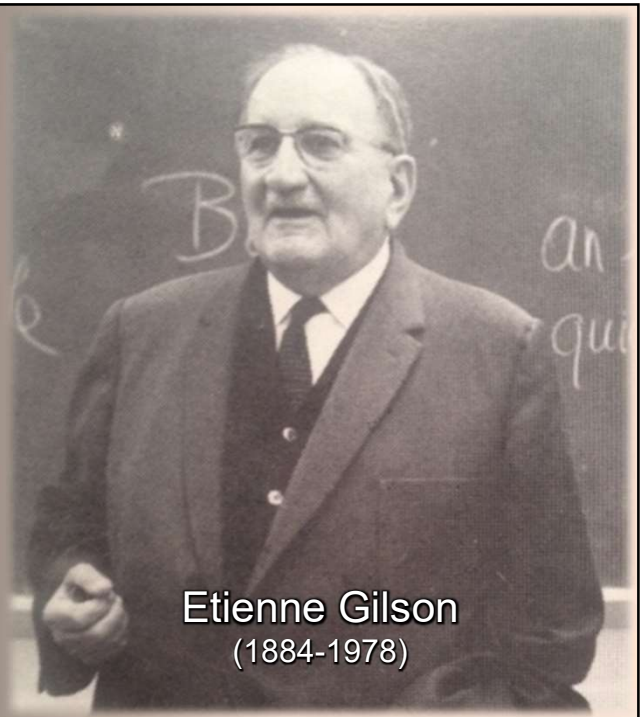


**"He has said what he had to say,  
given the meaning which he  
himself attributed to the  
principles of his own philosophy.  
Even the dialectical acumen of  
Saint Thomas Aquinas could not  
have extracted from the  
principles of Aristotle more than  
what they could possibly yield.**



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

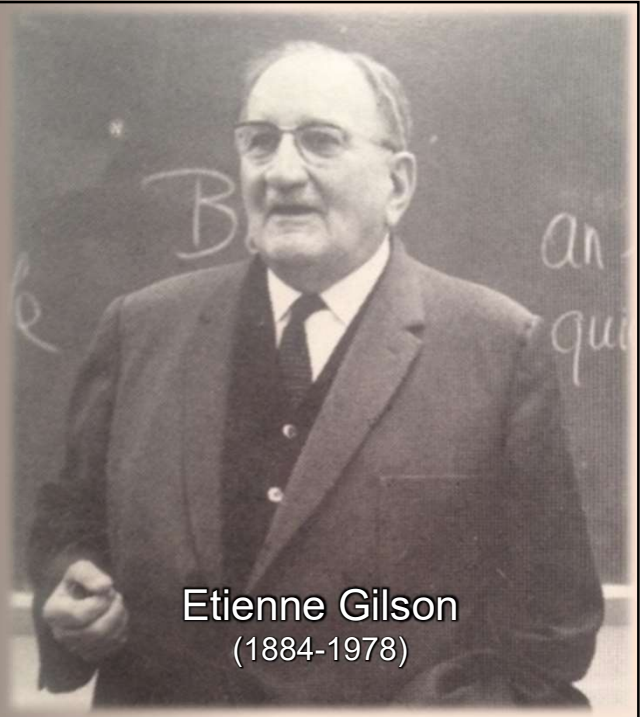
**"The true reason why his  
conclusions were different from  
those of Aristotle was that his  
own principles themselves were  
different. ...**



**Etienne Gilson**  
(1884-1978)

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

[Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London: Sheed and Ward 1972), 365]



Etienne Gilson  
(1884-1978)

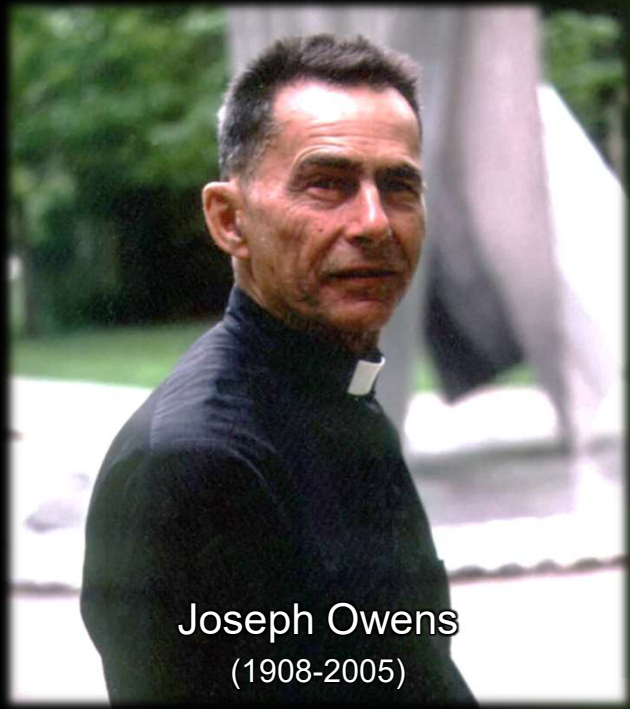
**"Though Aquinas is talking Aristotle, he is thinking his own metaphysics of esse."**

[John F. X. Knasas, "Thomistic Existentialism and the Silence of the *Quinque Viae*," *Modern Schoolman* 63 (March 1986): 157-171 (p. 159)]



John F. X. Knasas

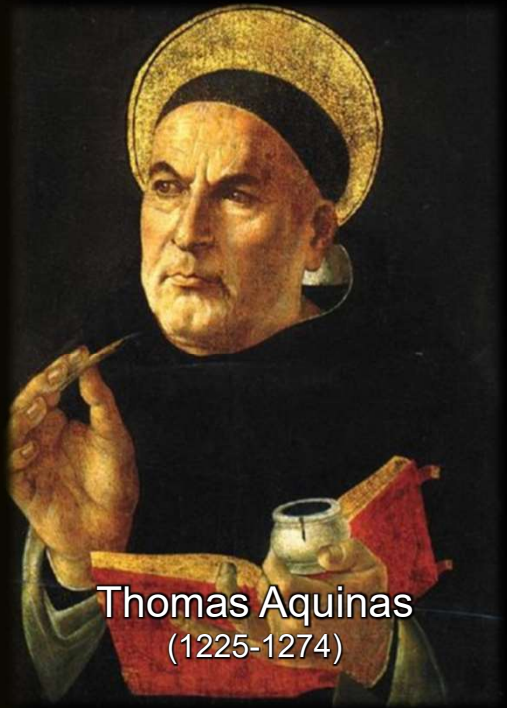




**Joseph Owens**  
(1908-2005)

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

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



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

[*Summa Theologiae* I, 2, 3]

**Thomas Aquinas**  
(1225-1274)



***And God said to Moses,  
"I AM WHO I AM." And He  
said, "Thus you shall say to  
the children of Israel, 'I AM  
has sent me to you.'"***  
***Exodus 3:13 - 14***