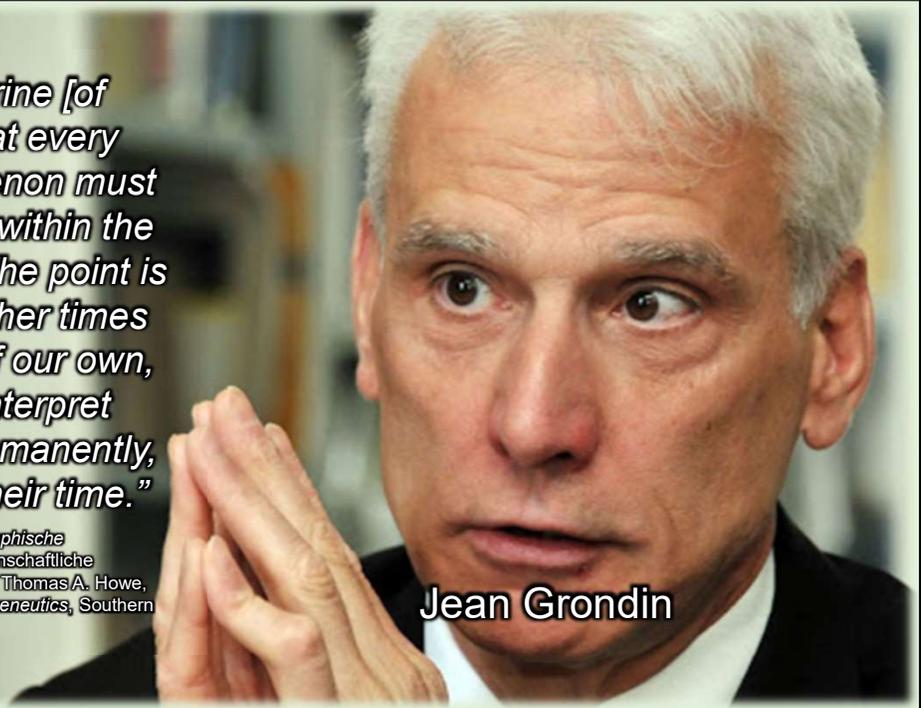


"The basic doctrine [of historicism] is that every particular phenomenon must be conceptualized within the context of its age. The point is to avoid judging other times by the standards of our own, and instead to interpret historical events immanently, as expressive of their time."

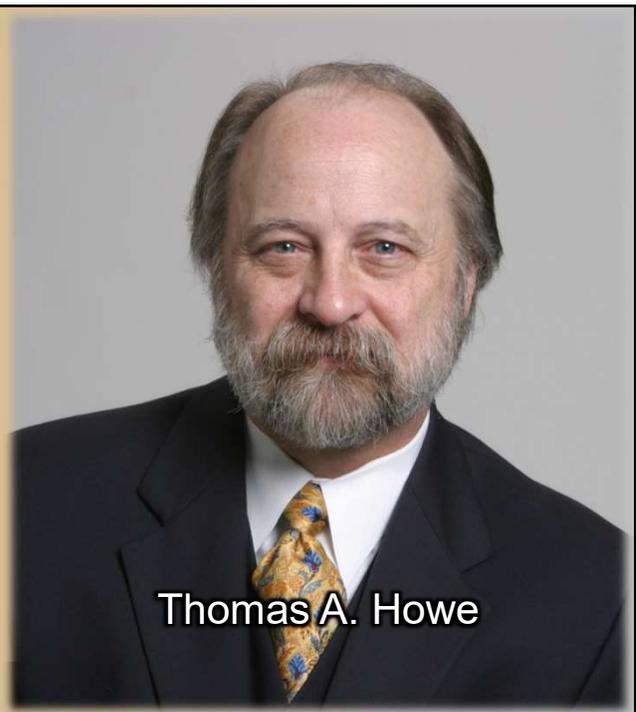
[Jean Grondin, *Einführung in die philosophische Hermeneutik*, 3d ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012), 115, as cited in Thomas A. Howe, *Class Notes PH515 Philosophy of Hermeneutics*, Southern Evangelical Seminary, 25]



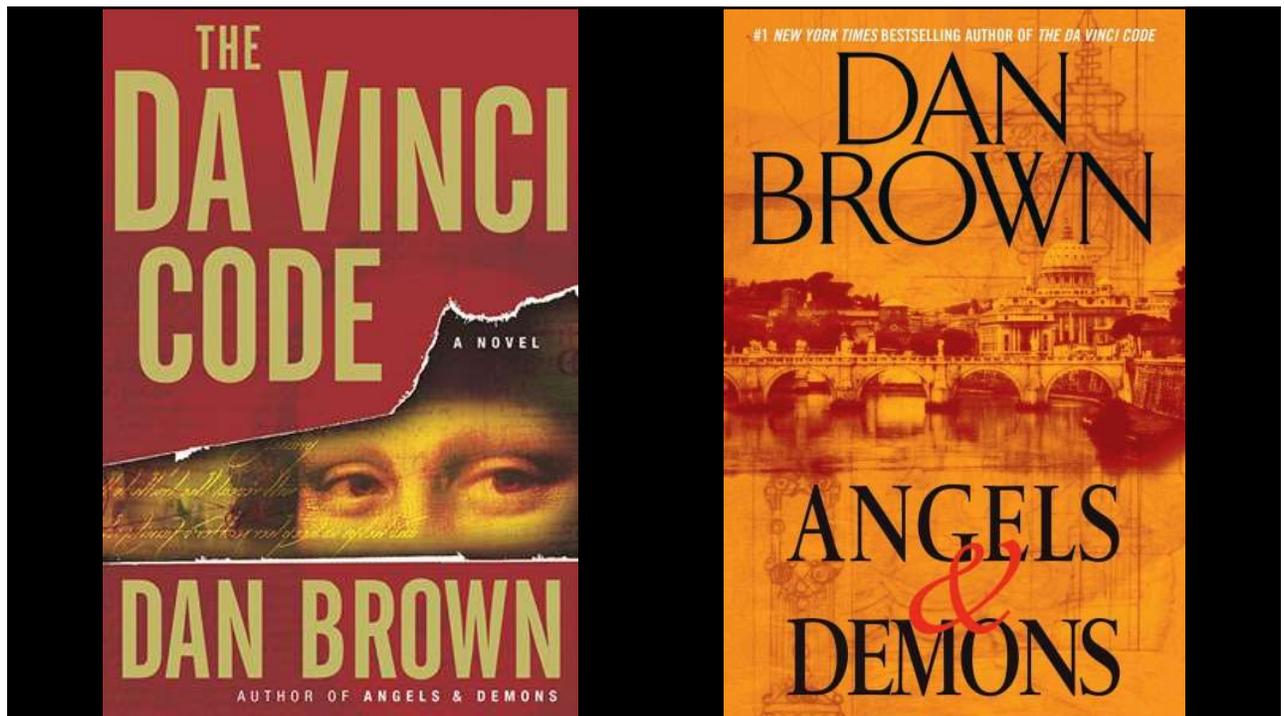
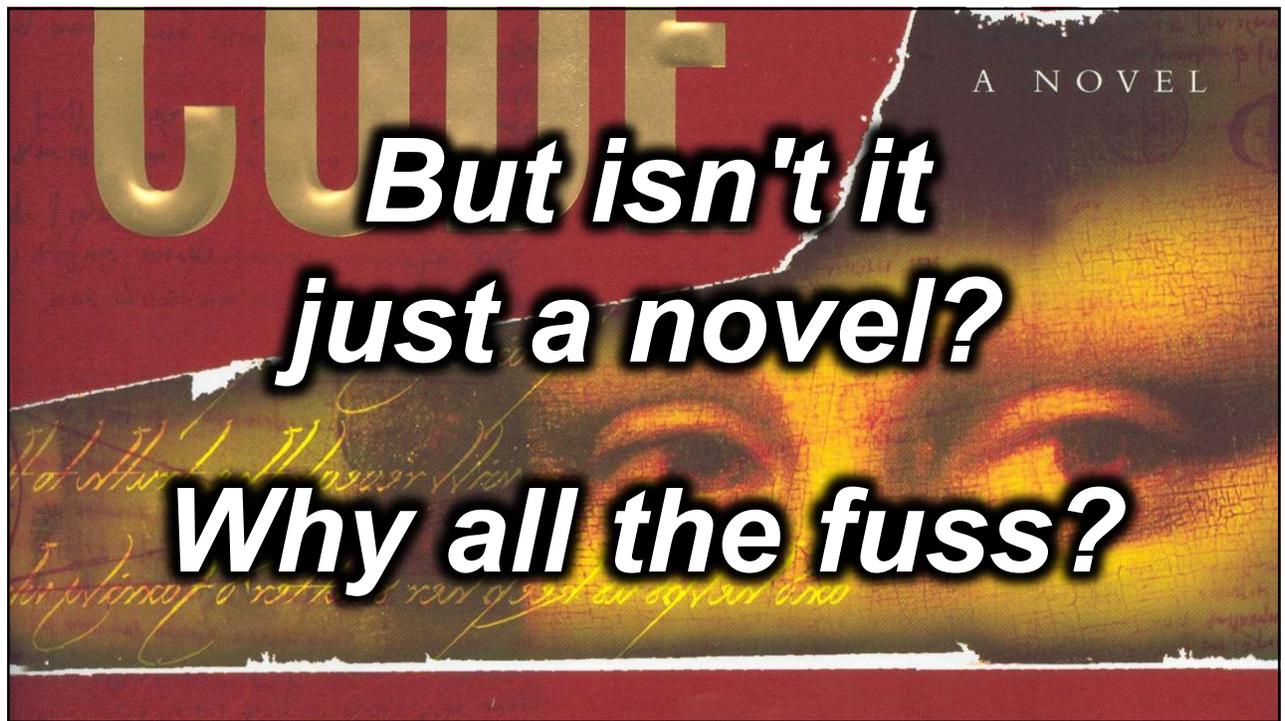
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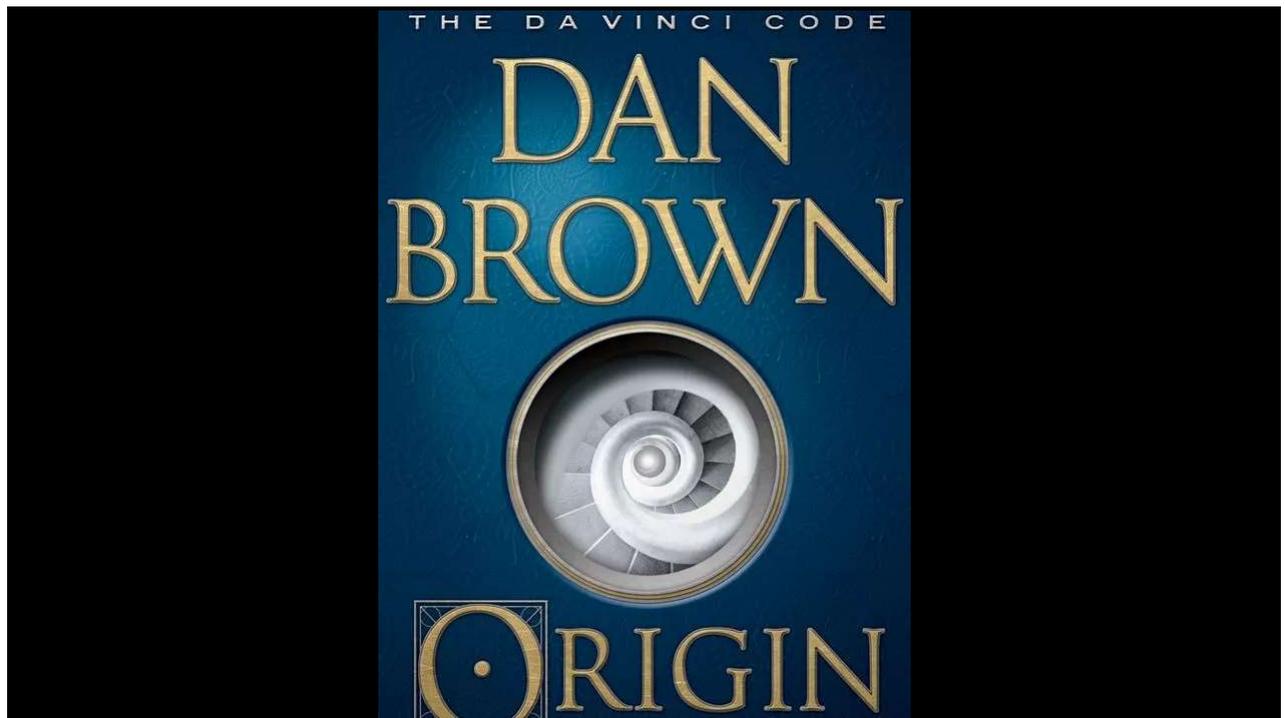
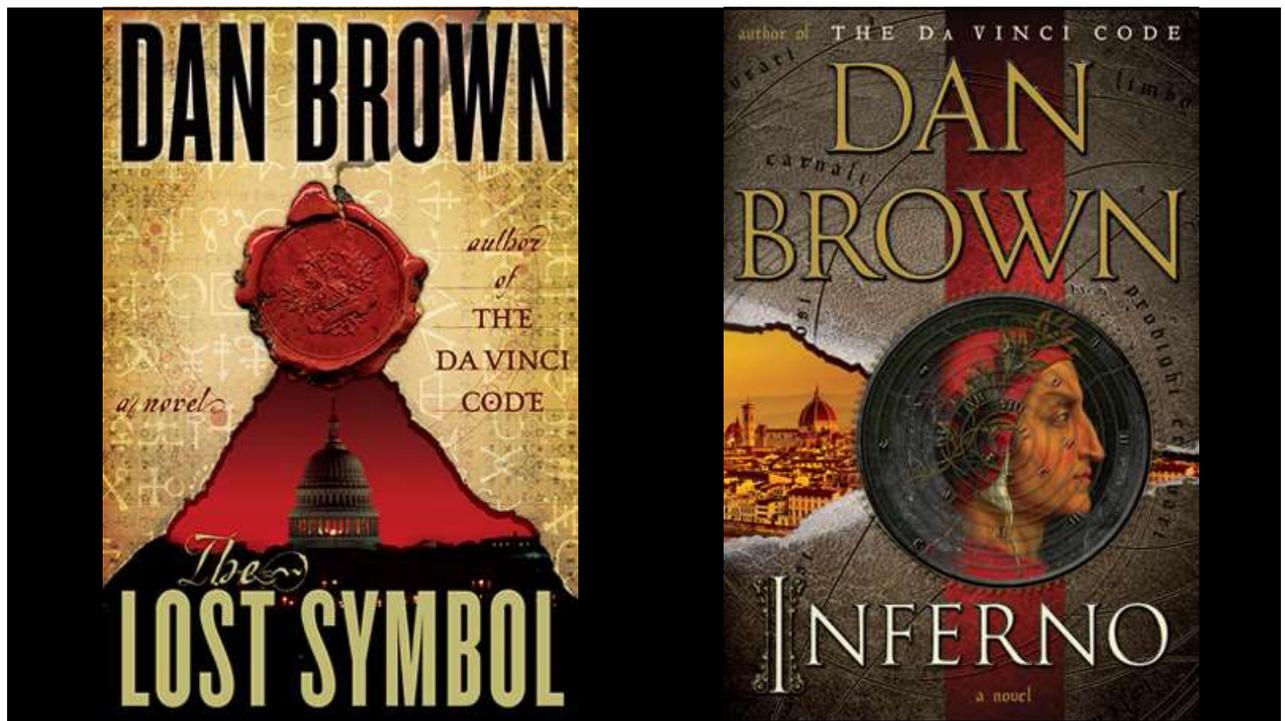
"The inescapability of one's perspective and its relation to the problem of objectivity in historical knowledge has been identified as the primary problem of historicism."

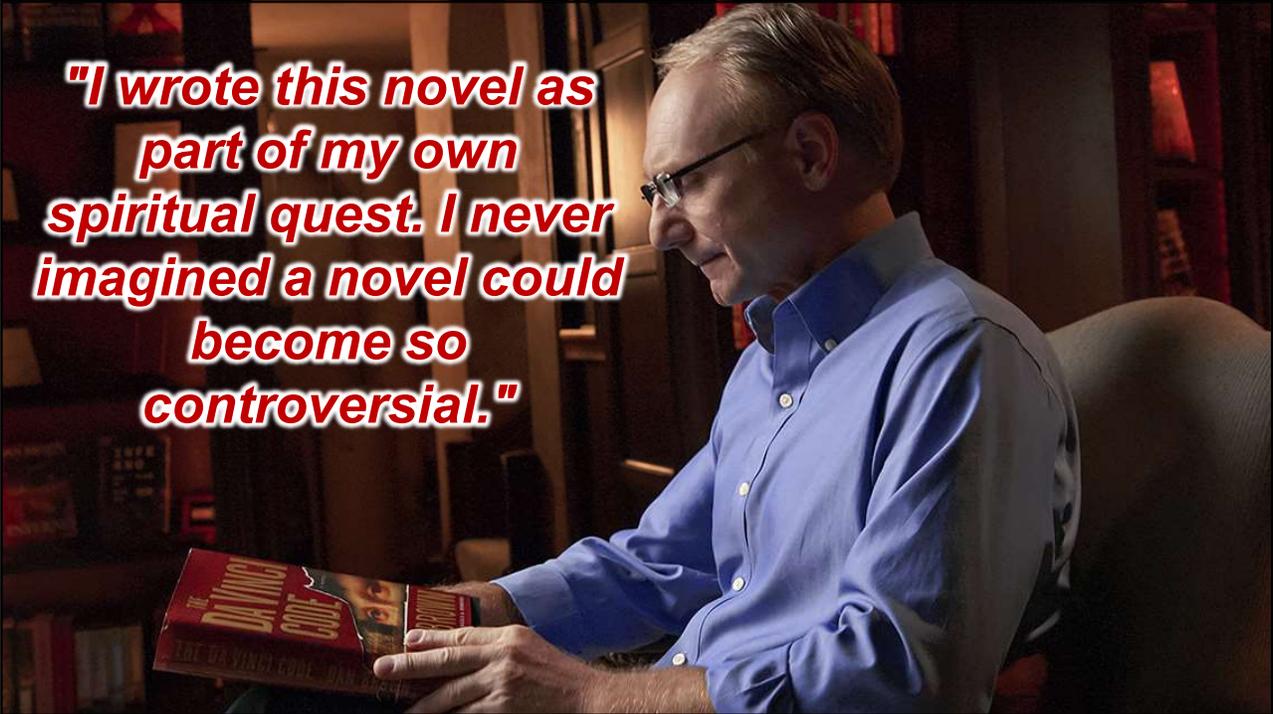
[Thomas A. Howe, *Class Notes PH515 Philosophy of Hermeneutics*, 25]



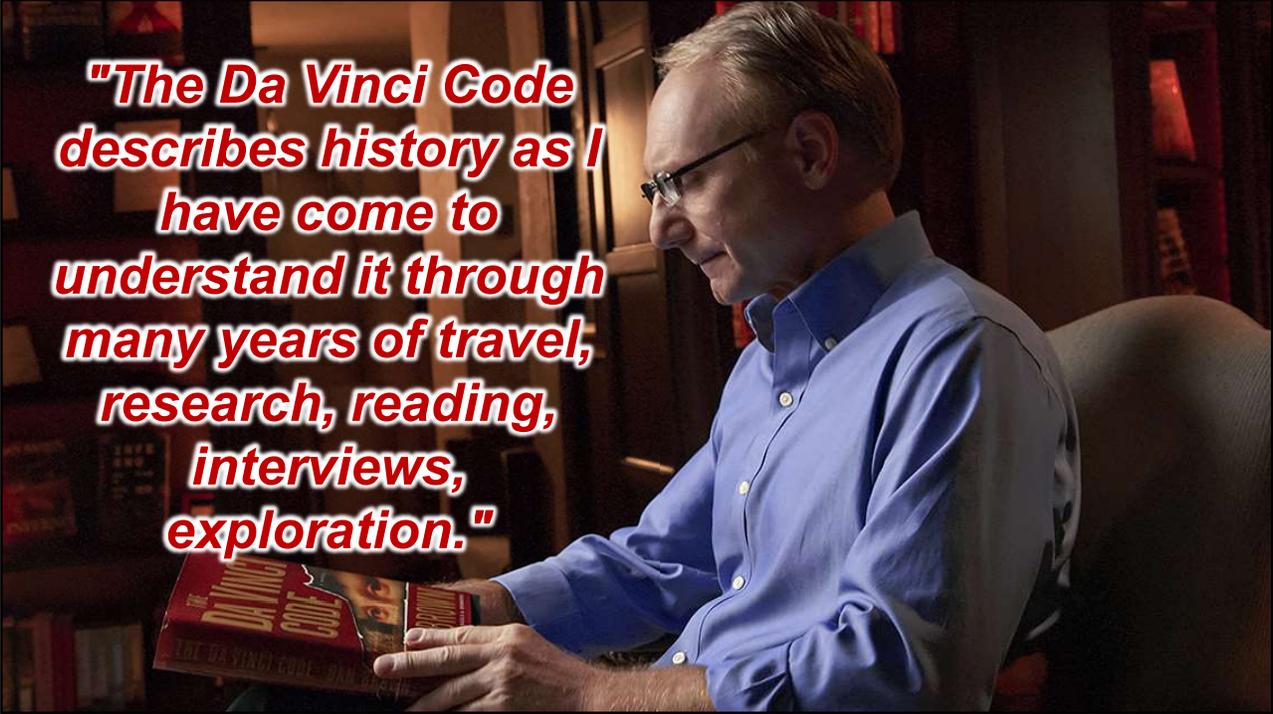
Thomas A. Howe



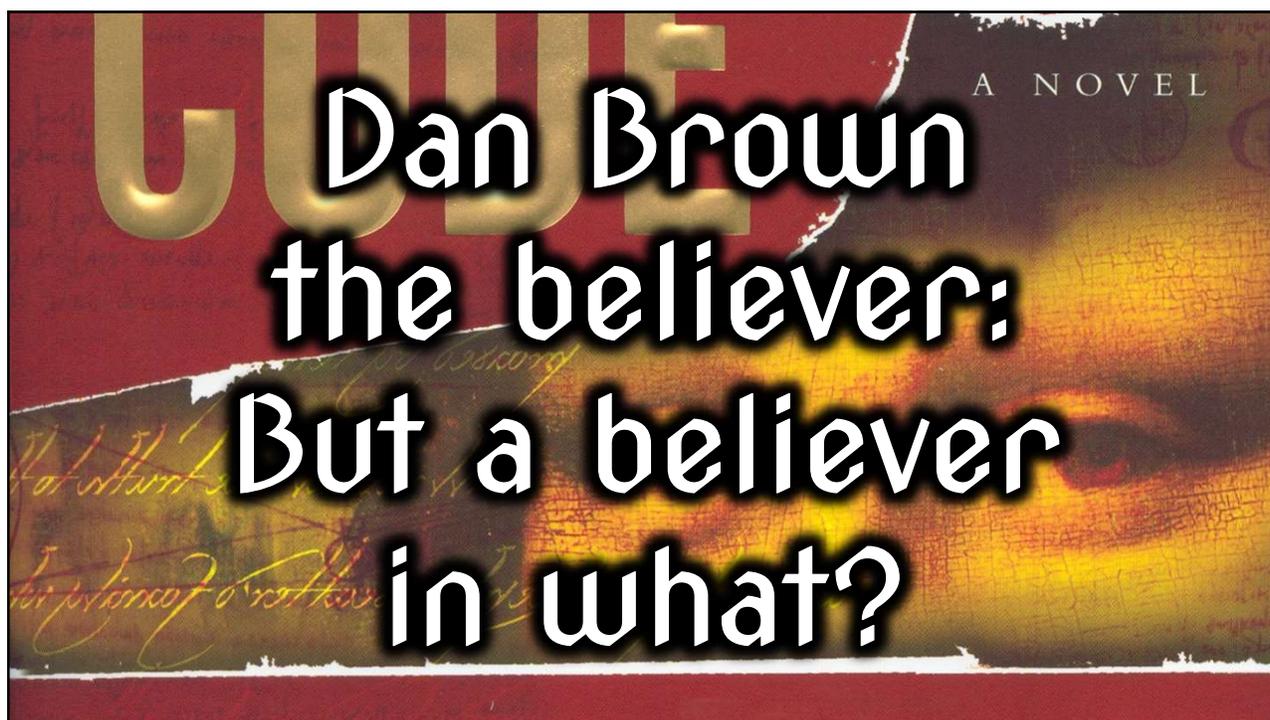
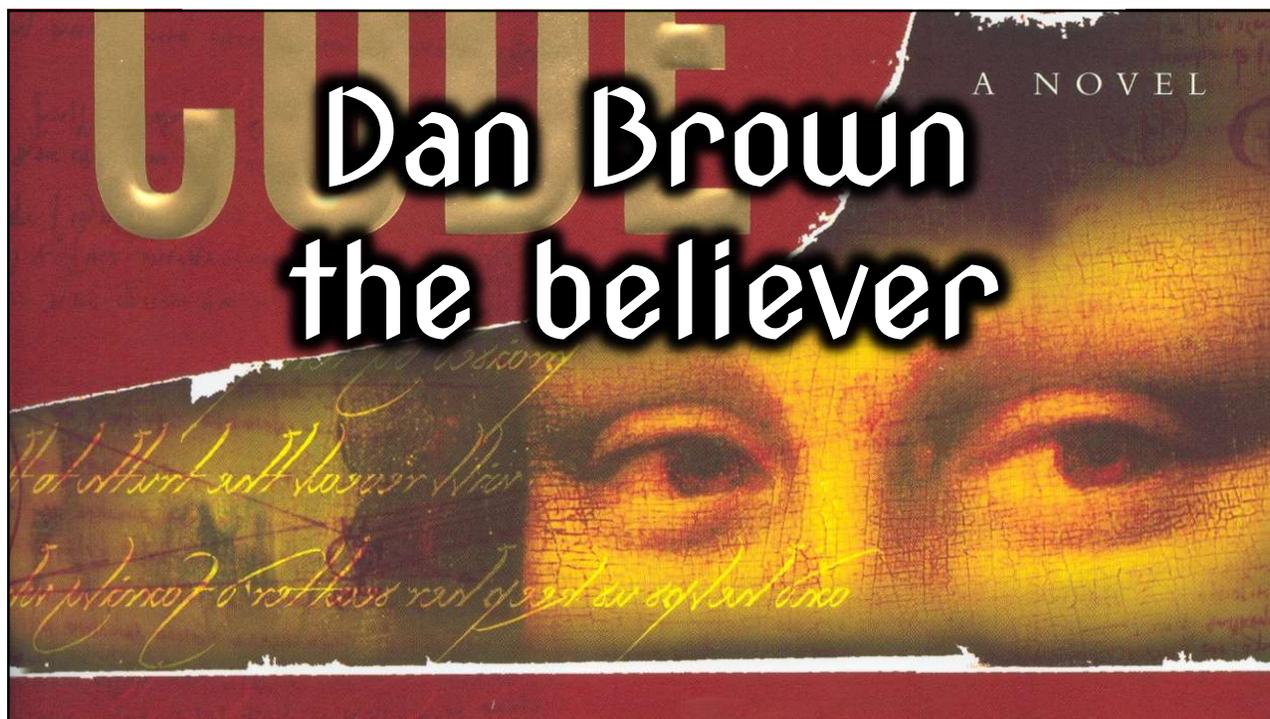


A man with glasses and a blue button-down shirt is seated in a dark, leather office chair. He is holding a copy of the book 'The Da Vinci Code' by Dan Brown. The background is a dimly lit room with bookshelves filled with books. The lighting is focused on the man and the book.

"I wrote this novel as part of my own spiritual quest. I never imagined a novel could become so controversial."

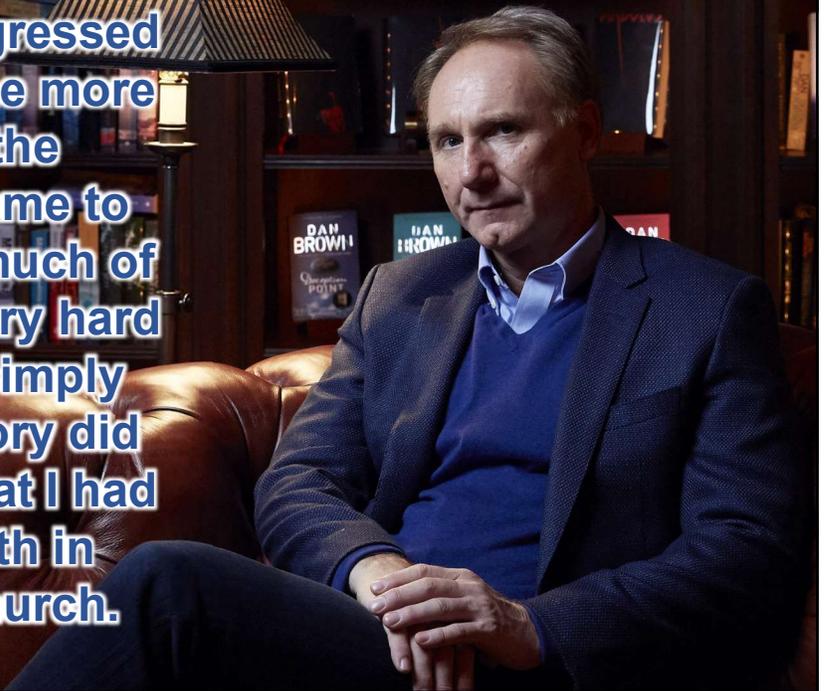
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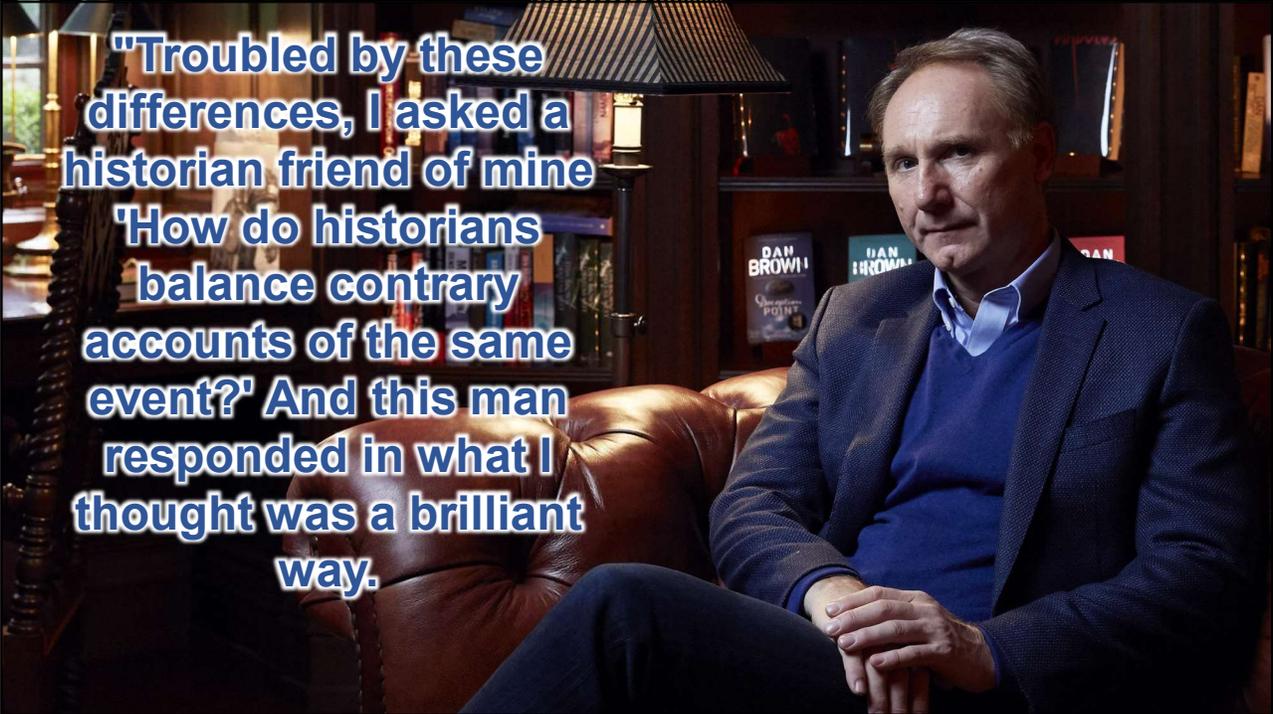
"The Da Vinci Code describes history as I have come to understand it through many years of travel, research, reading, interviews, exploration."



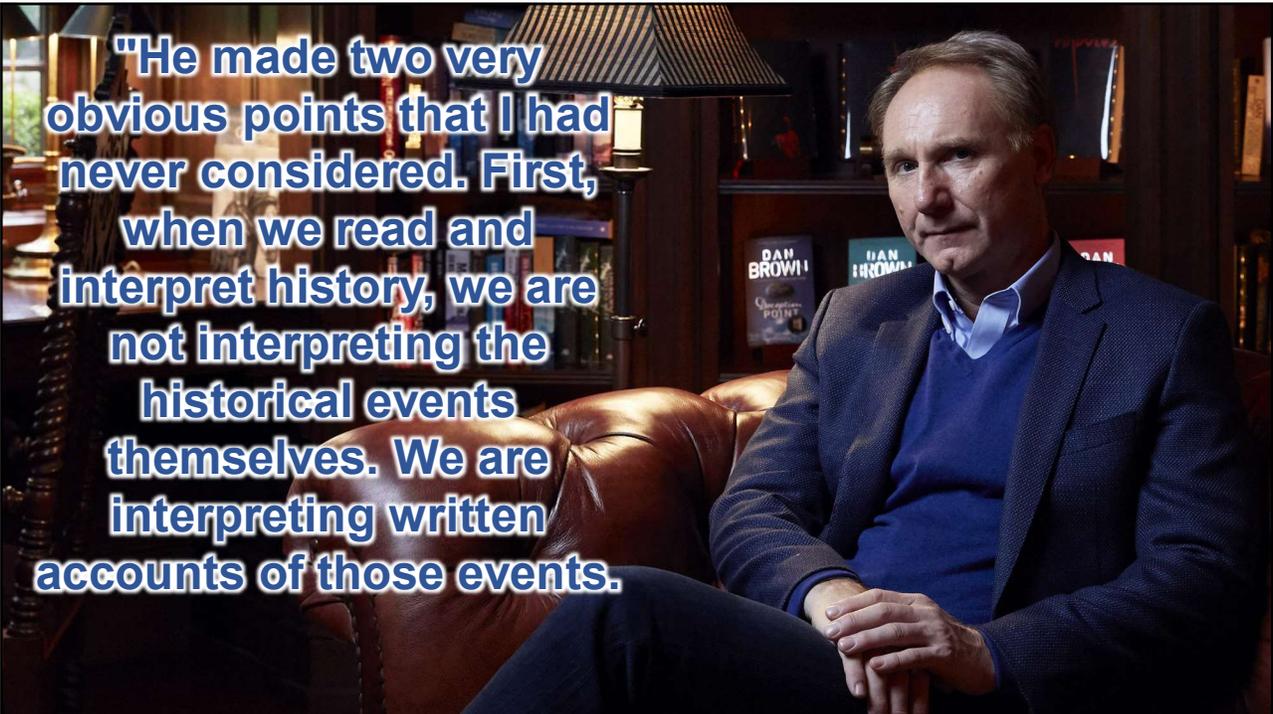
Dan Brown on Historical Skepticism

"The further I progressed in my research, the more troublesome the information became to me. I also found much of the information very hard to accept quite simply because the history did not mesh with what I had been taught both in school and in church.

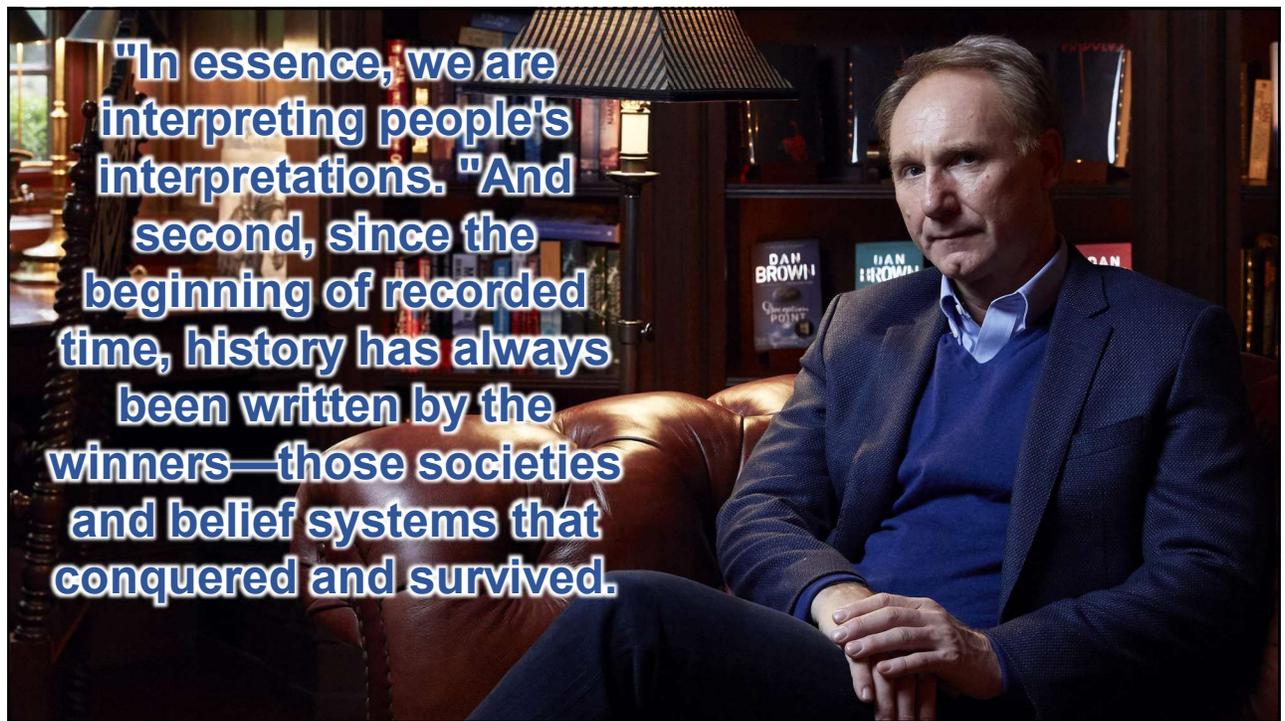




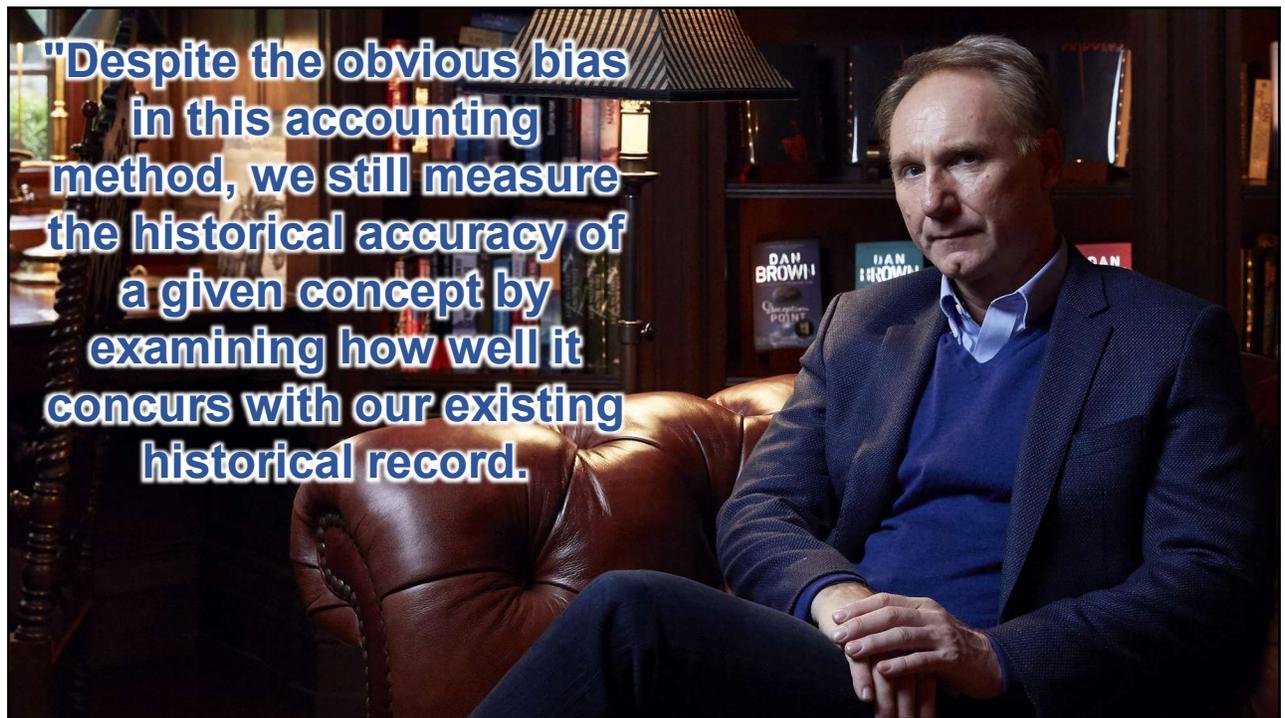
"Troubled by these differences, I asked a historian friend of mine 'How do historians balance contrary accounts of the same event?' And this man responded in what I thought was a brilliant way.



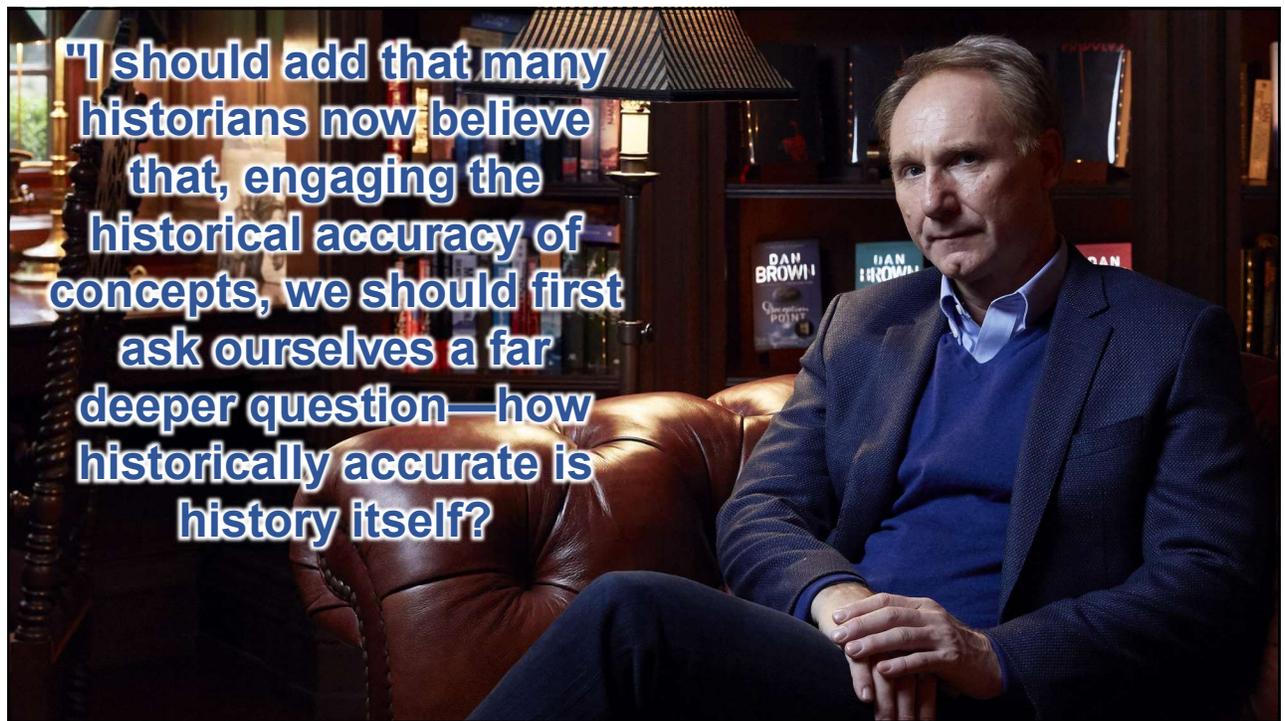
"He made two very obvious points that I had never considered. First, when we read and interpret history, we are not interpreting the historical events themselves. We are interpreting written accounts of those events.



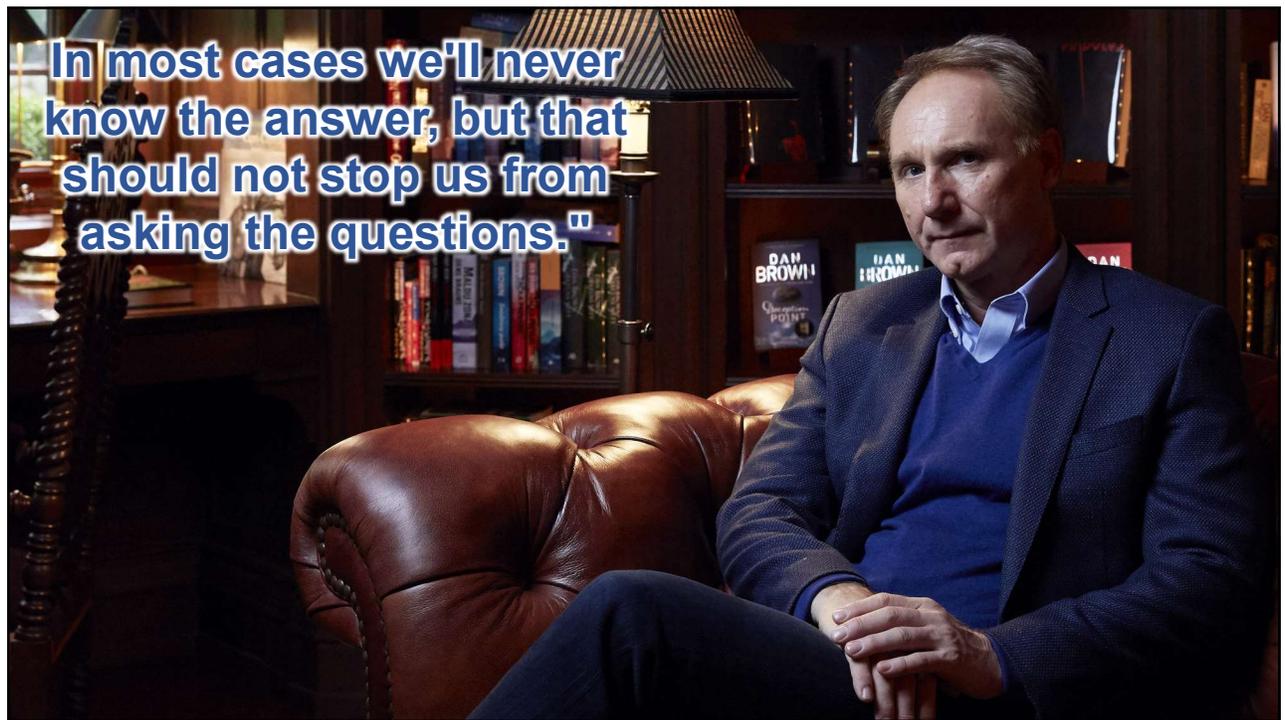
"In essence, we are interpreting people's interpretations. "And second, since the beginning of recorded time, history has always been written by the winners—those societies and belief systems that conquered and survived.



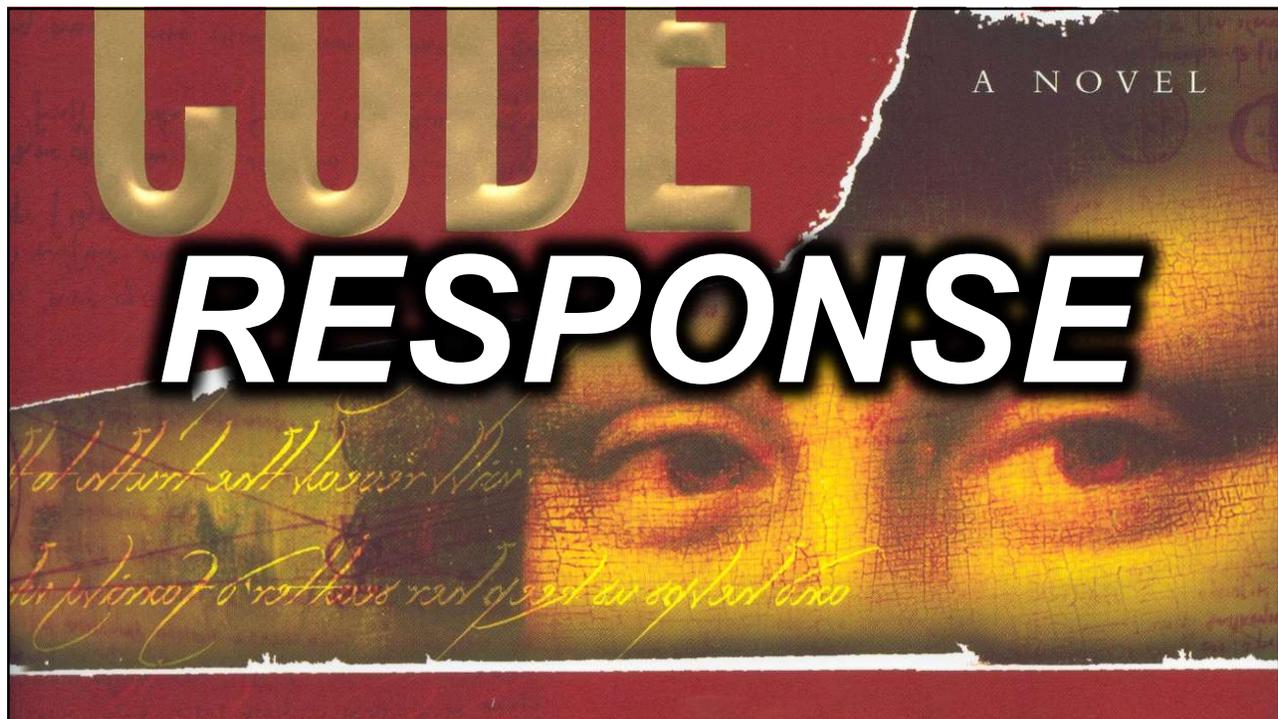
"Despite the obvious bias in this accounting method, we still measure the historical accuracy of a given concept by examining how well it concurs with our existing historical record.



"I should add that many historians now believe that, engaging the historical accuracy of concepts, we should first ask ourselves a far deeper question—how historically accurate is history itself?"



"In most cases we'll never know the answer, but that should not stop us from asking the questions."



What does it mean to say that a writer "interprets" history?

- If he means that the writing of an event is not the event itself, this is a trivial observation and irrelevant to adjudicating conflicting historical reports.

What does it mean to say that a writer "interprets" history?

- If he means that in the writing of an event, the writer always modifies the nature of the event itself, then how could he possibly know this?
 - ✓ He would have to know the exact nature of the event in order to observe that a given writer's reporting of the event was a modification.
 - ✓ But then if he has access to accurate knowledge of the event itself, then there is no problem in the first place.

What does it mean to say that a writer "interprets" history?

- The above criticisms apply *mutatis mutandis* to Browns comment "we are interpreting people's interpretation."
- The fact remains that it is impossible to deny that one can observe history objectively or that one can read someone's observations objectively.

The comment "history was written by the winners" falsely implies that the winners' reporting of history is false or misleading.

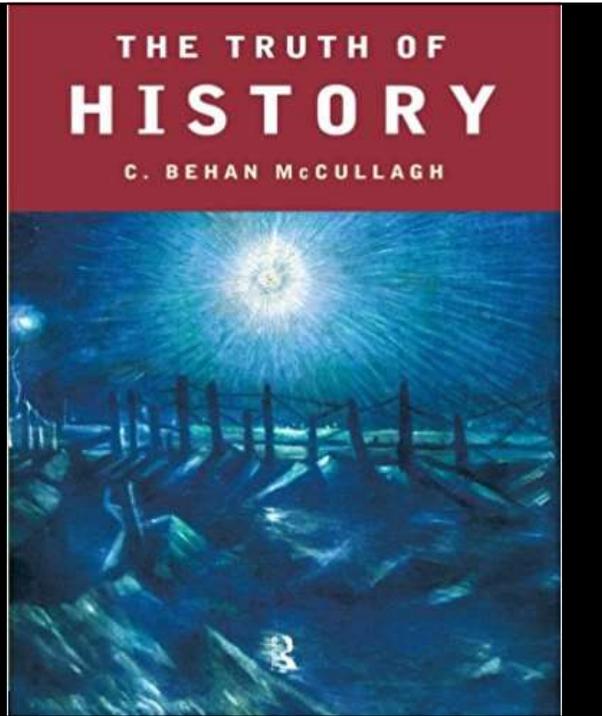
- Since the Allied Forces won World War II, does this mean that the Nazis were not as evil as the "winners" have claimed?

The comment "history was written by the winners" falsely implies that the winners' reporting of history is false or misleading.

- It is not true that history is always written by the winners. The Romans subjugated the Jews, yet our understanding of Jewish history during that period comes from such writers as Josephus.



C. Behan McCullagh



C. Behan McCullagh

"First, scientists tell us that our perceptions are caused by things in the world stimulating our sense receptors ... This being so, our perceptions are best described as providing us with information about reality, but not necessarily mirroring it precisely. ..."



C. Behan McCullagh

"Second, our perceptions are influenced by our culture. ... So our perceptions of the world are not pure sense impressions of it. ..."



C. Behan McCullagh

"Finally, our perceptions are influenced by our needs, interests and desires. ..."



C. Behan McCullagh

"For these three reasons, at least, it is wrong to say that our perceptions simply correspond to the world." (p. 17)



Rev. Edie Bird

Every translation is an interpretation. What this means is that every time people set out to translate a text from one language into another, they must make choices about how to interpret the text. Translators are often faced with several different potential meanings in English for a particular word, sentence or passage in the oldest biblical texts. And these ancient texts differ from one another as well.

In working just with translating the Lord's Prayer from ancient Aramaic texts into English, Neil Douglas-Klotz generated an entire book (Prayers of the Cosmos) rendering about a dozen different possible translations of this one beautiful prayer.

Whenever a text is translated, it is not what was originally written. You simply cannot translate from one language into another and maintain the exact meaning of the original language. Every language

carries the worldview of the people who wrote and spoke it, and these worldviews differ, often dramatically. The worldview that comes with modern American English is very different from the worldview of the ancient Hebrews, or the ancient Greeks or those who spoke Aramaic like Jesus.

And that doesn't bother me at all. In fact, I like to read many different translations of the Bible because they offer fresh insights and interpretations. Coming upon a new translation of a familiar passage is like opening a new door upon the beauty and mystery of God's work in the world. It opens my mind and heart and helps me to grow in humility and love. Knowing that I can't ever know it all, especially about the Bible, keeps me from



idolizing my particular worldview. The various perspectives offered by differing translations of the Bible keep me open to the expansive nature of God's truth.

THE REV. EDIE BIRD is the vicar of St. James' Episcopal Church in Eureka Springs.



Rev. Edie Bird

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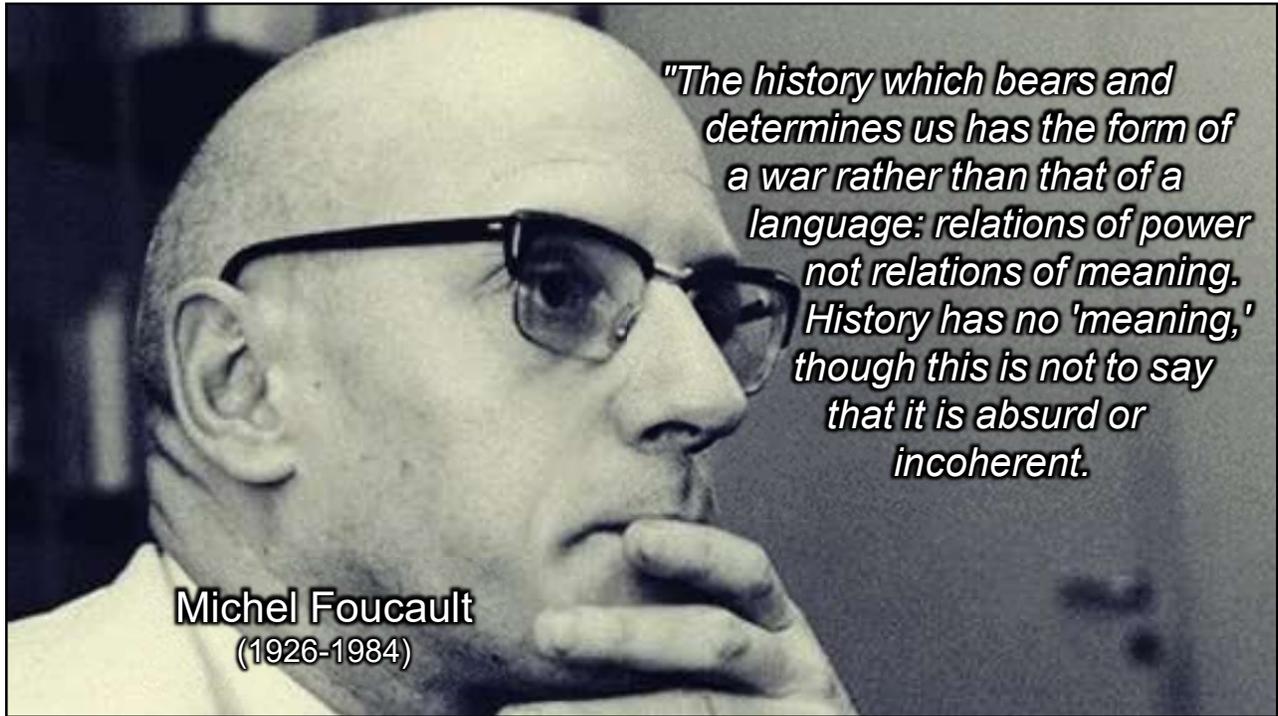
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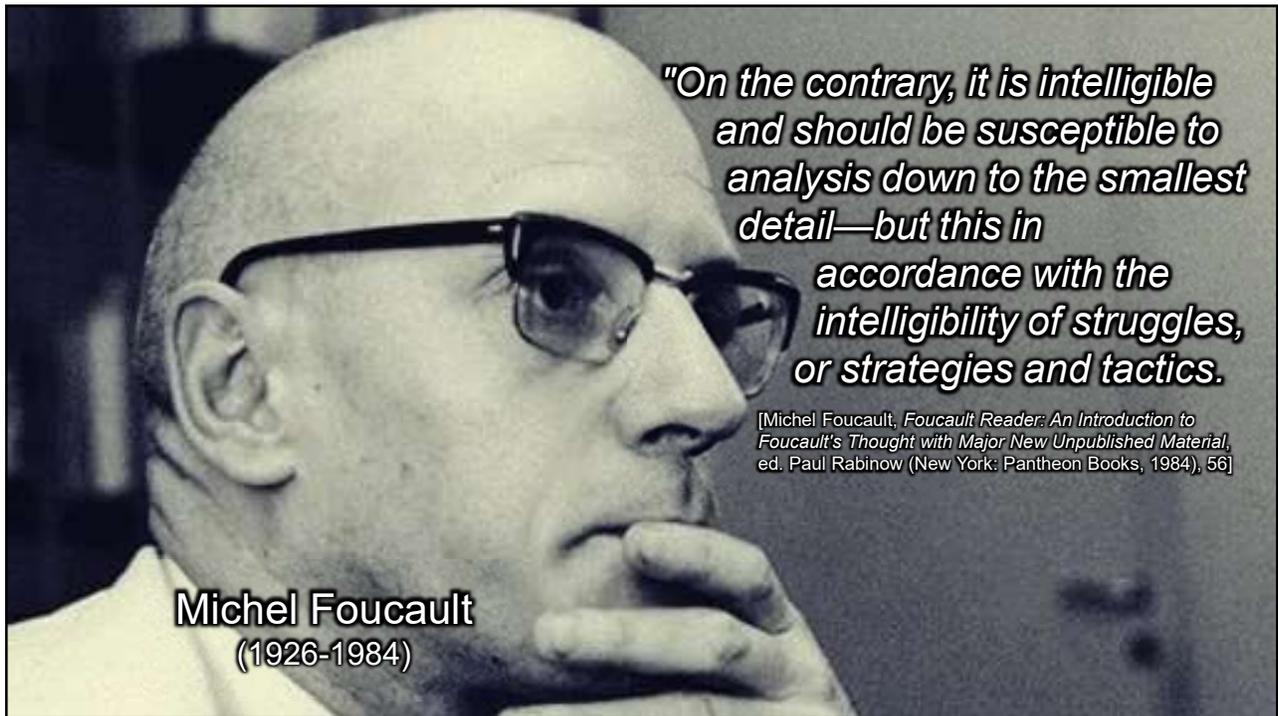


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"The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power not relations of meaning. History has no 'meaning,' though this is not to say that it is absurd or incoherent.

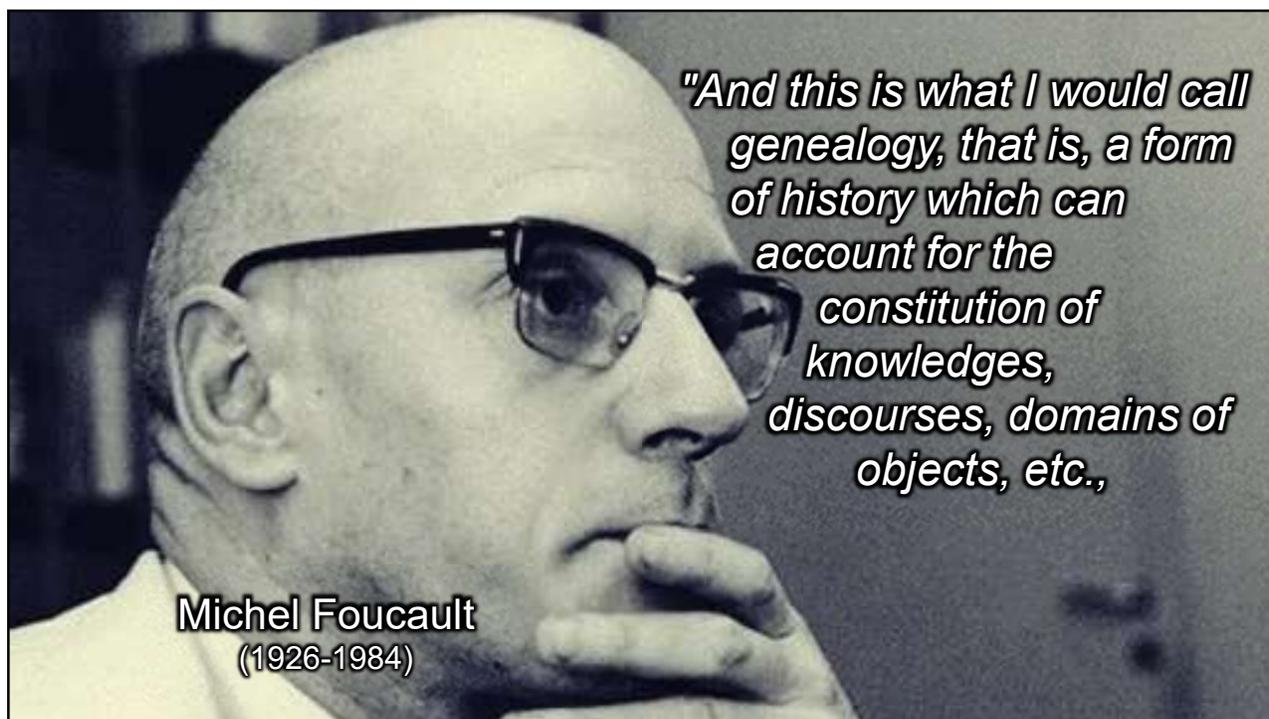
Michel Foucault
(1926-1984)



"On the contrary, it is intelligible and should be susceptible to analysis down to the smallest detail—but this in accordance with the intelligibility of struggles, or strategies and tactics.

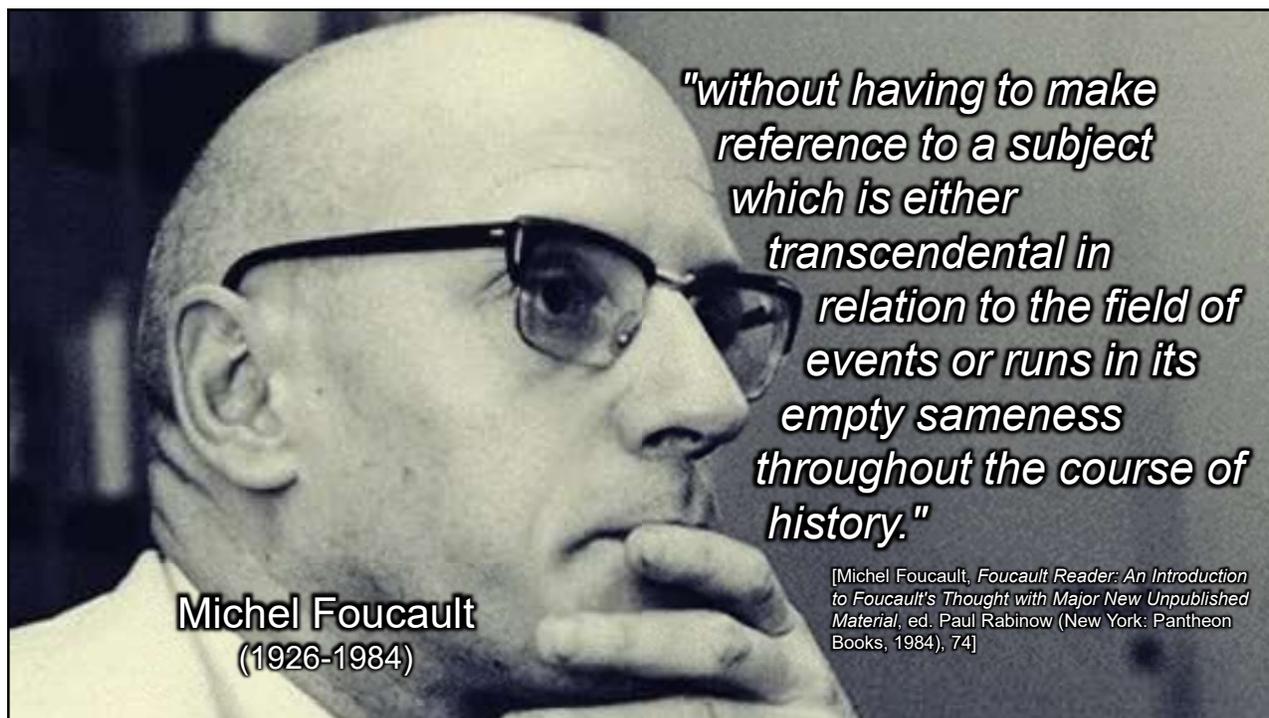
[Michel Foucault, *Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought with Major New Unpublished Material*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 56]

Michel Foucault
(1926-1984)



"And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc.,

Michel Foucault
(1926-1984)



"without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history."

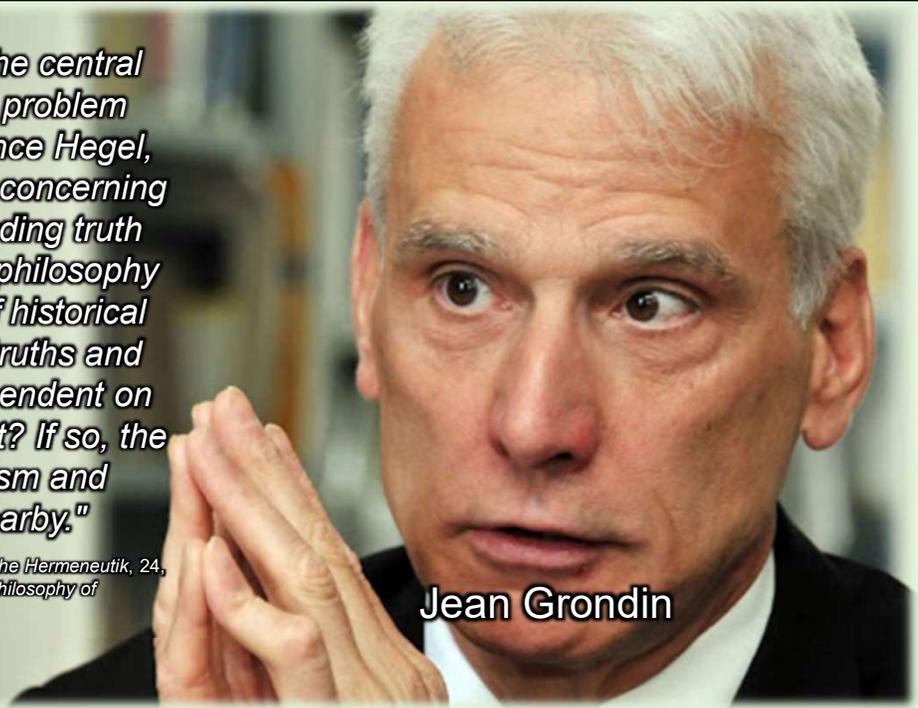
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[Michel Foucault, *Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought with Major New Unpublished Material*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 74]

Can the Historian Rise above His Own Historical Situatingness?

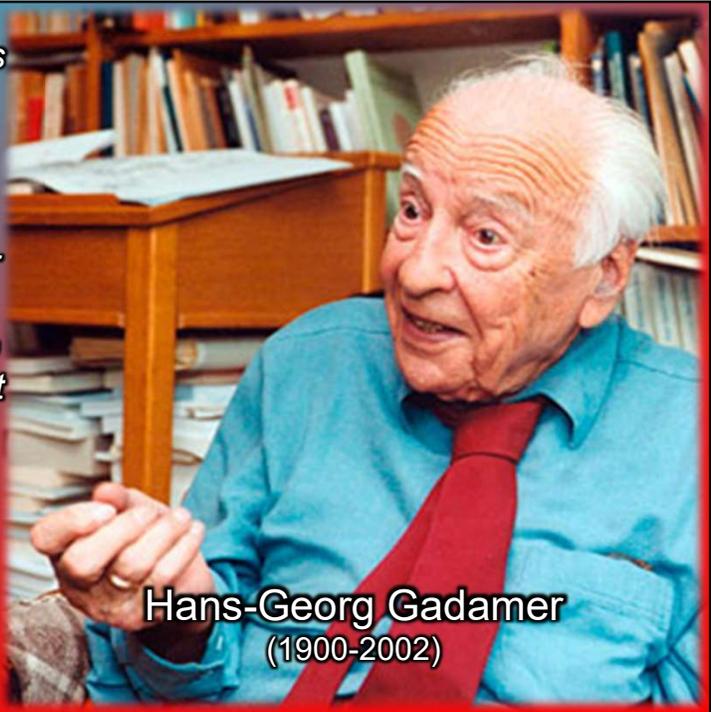
"Historicism . . . is the central and most crippling problem facing philosophy since Hegel, namely, the question concerning the possibility of binding truth and thus conclusive philosophy within the horizon of historical knowledge. Are all truths and rules of conduct dependent on their historical context? If so, the specter of relativism and nihilism lurks nearby."

[Grondin, *Einführung in die philosophische Hermeneutik*, 24, as cited in Howe, *Class Notes PH515 Philosophy of Hermeneutics*, 337]



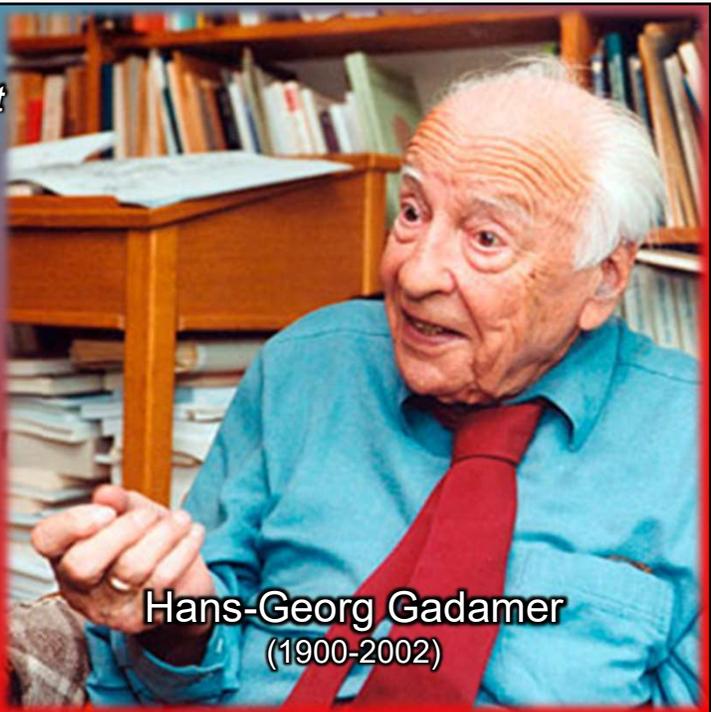
Jean Grondin

"However clearly one demonstrates the inner contradictions of all relativist views, it is as Heidegger has said: all these victorious arguments have something of the attempt to bowl one over. However cogent they may seem, they still miss the main point. In making use of them one is proved right, and yet they do not express any superior insight of value."



Hans-Georg Gadamer
(1900-2002)

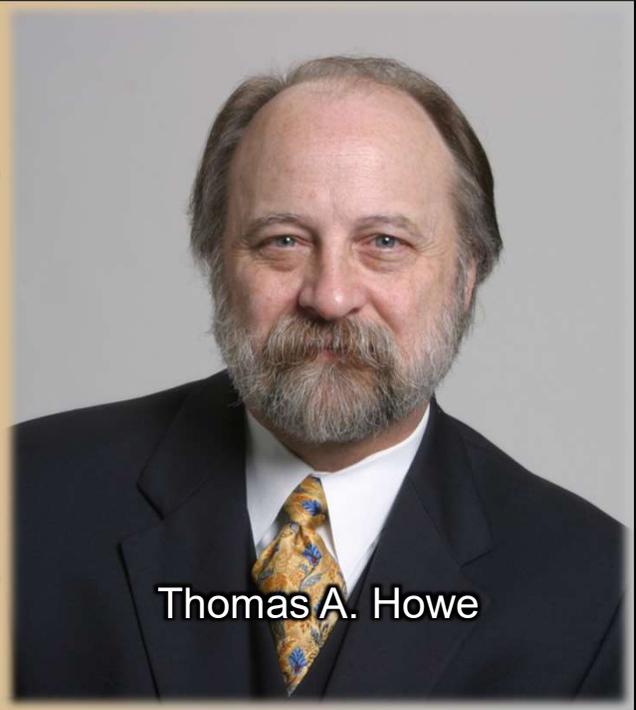
"That the thesis of skepticism or relativism refutes itself to the extent that it claims to be true is an irrefutable argument. But what does it achieve? The reflective argument that proves successful here rebounds against the arguer, for it renders the truth value of reflection suspect. It is not the reality of skepticism or of truth-dissolving relativism but the truth claim of all formal argument that is affected."



Hans-Georg Gadamer
(1900-2002)

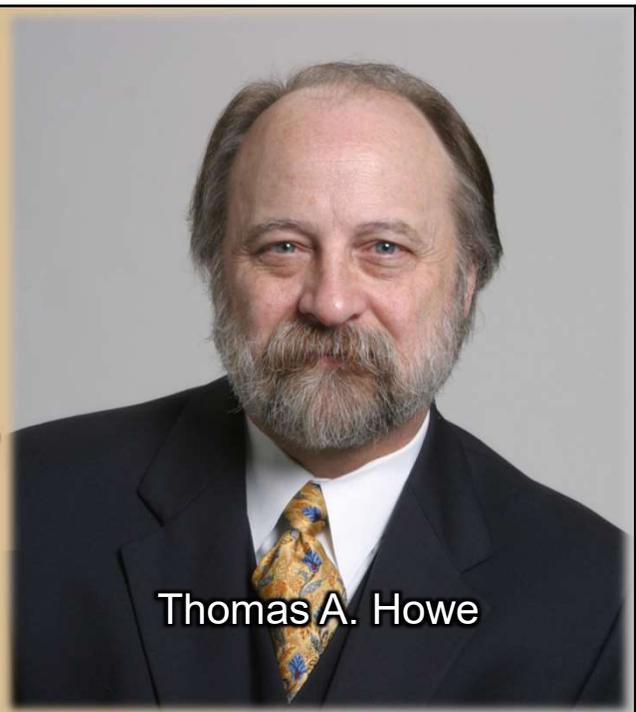
[Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hermeneutik II: Wahrheit und Methode*, Band 2, *Gesammelte Werke* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1993), 350, as cited in Thomas A. Howe, *Class Notes PH515 Philosophy of Hermeneutics*, 338]

"What Gadamer is saying is that, notwithstanding the inevitable relativism, historicism is absolutely and indubitably inescapable, and that this is a-historically true for all people at all times in all cultures. Gadamer appears to have access to an a-historical, transcendent perspective on historicism that he disallows for everyone else. ..."



Thomas A. Howe

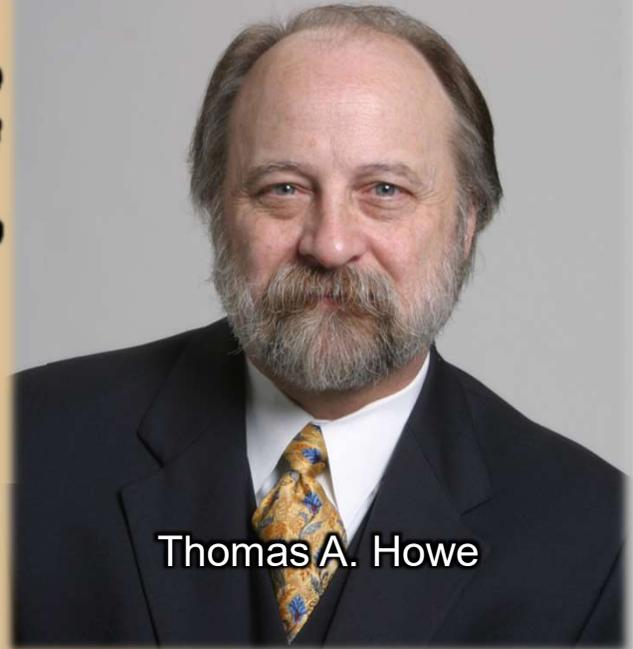
"Since the claims of historicism are indeed self-refuting, and since, as Gadamer acknowledges, 'the thesis of skepticism or relativism refutes itself to the extent that it claims to be true is an irrefutable argument,' then the implications of historicism do not follow,



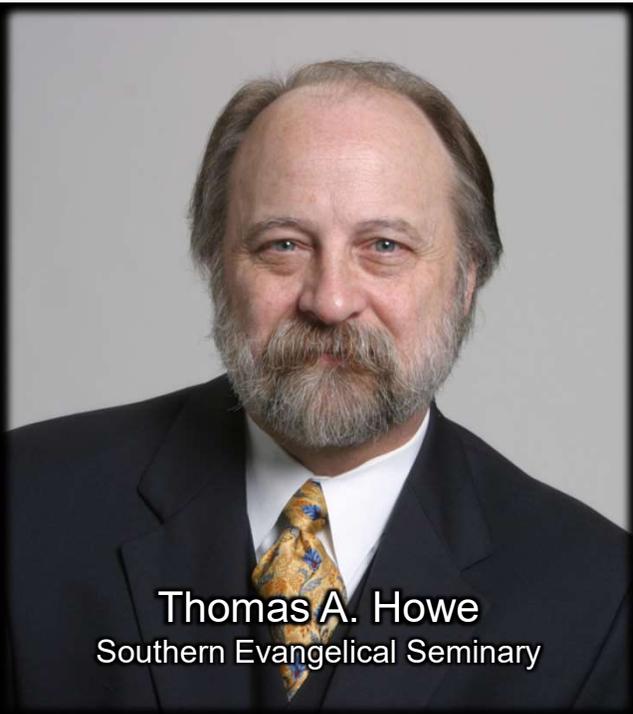
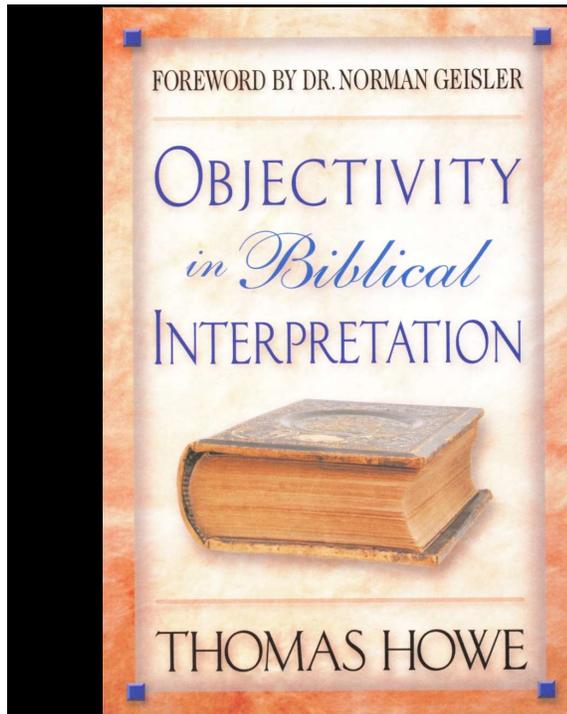
Thomas A. Howe

"and absolute truth, including absolute concepts of justice, the self, reality, and moral law, does exist and is accessible by the finite mind. In fact, the existence of absolute truth is asserted by those who advocate the absolute truth of historicism."

[Thomas A. Howe, *Class Notes PH515 Philosophy of Hermeneutics*, Southern Evangelical Seminary, 338]



Thomas A. Howe

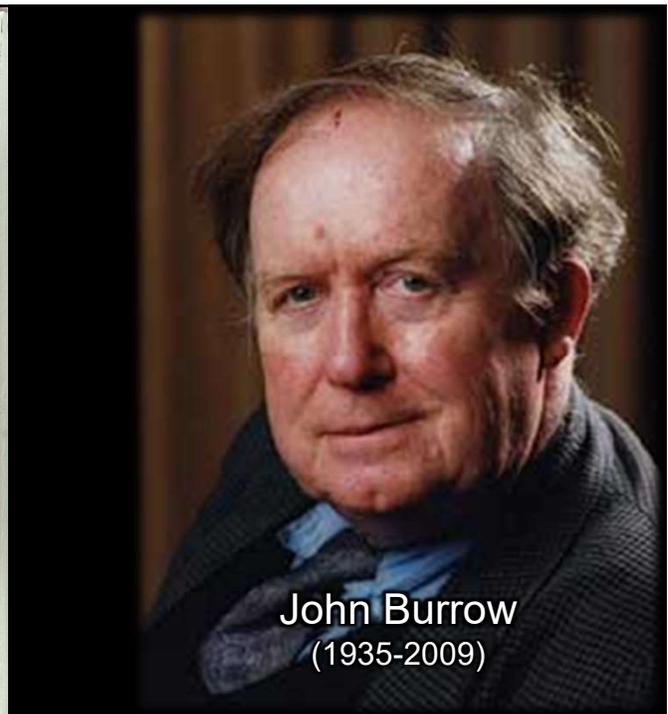
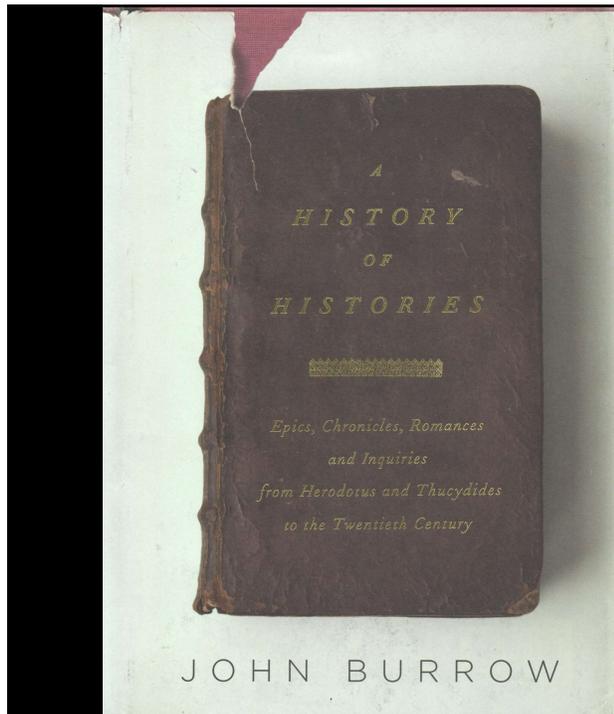


Thomas A. Howe
Southern Evangelical Seminary

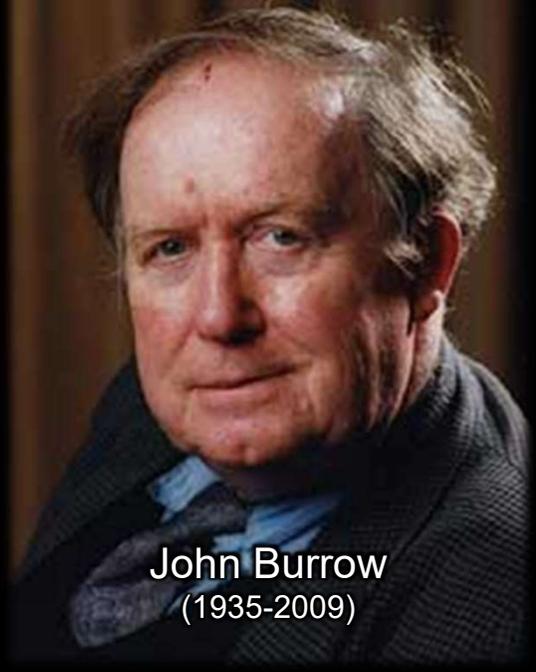
Did ancient writers
care about historical
accuracy and truth?

*The writings from other historians
show that ancient people
understood the differences
between history and myth.*

This is especially true with the Hebrew mindset (within which the New Testament was birthed) which understood the sacredness of history.

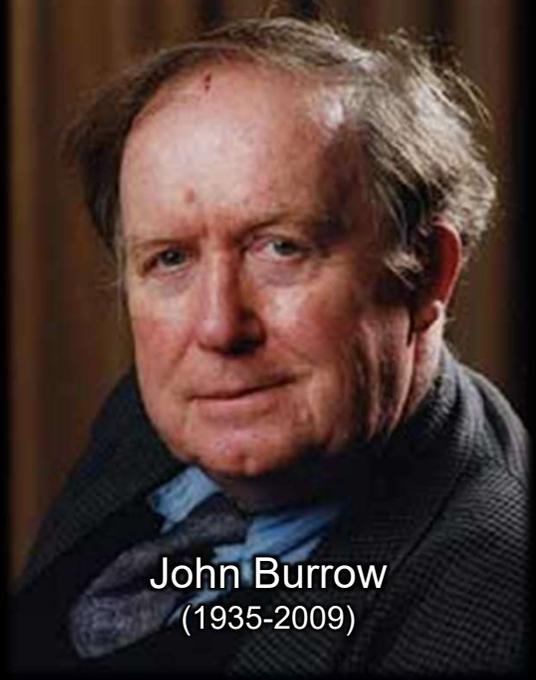


*"The central concerns—
above all with history as
truth-telling and, at least as
an ideal, as free from bias—
were already very old ones
and, though shaken, are still
in some sense with us, for
those of us for whom a
distinction between say,
history and imaginative
fiction is still an important
one.*



John Burrow
(1935-2009)

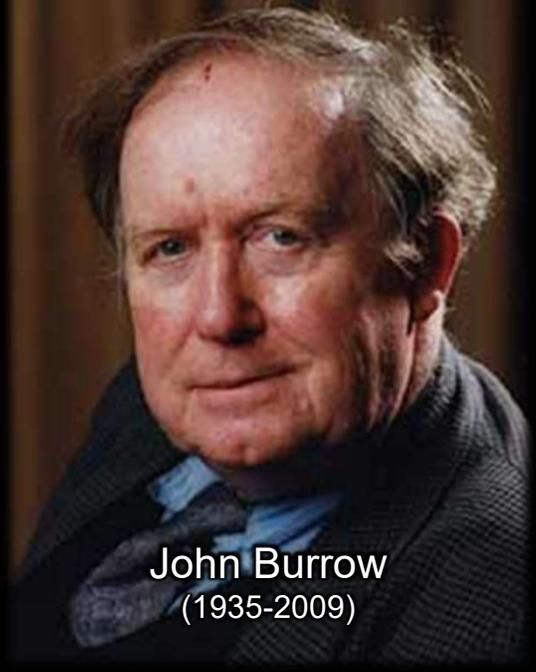
*"In this view Herodotus was
taking an important step in
distinguishing his own
Histories from the work of
the poets, and Thucydides,
though he may have judged
unfairly, was invoking
relevant criteria when he
sneered by implication at
Herodotus as belonging with
authors less concerned to
tell the truth than to entertain
the public. ...*



John Burrow
(1935-2009)

"Of course, in the history of historiography zeal for truth had been a spectrum rather than an absolute—truth mattered, fairly obviously, more to Polybius than to Livy—but someone who wholly and perhaps willfully falls of the negative end of the scale ... counts rather as a parodist or imitator of history."

[John Burrow, *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), xiv-xv]

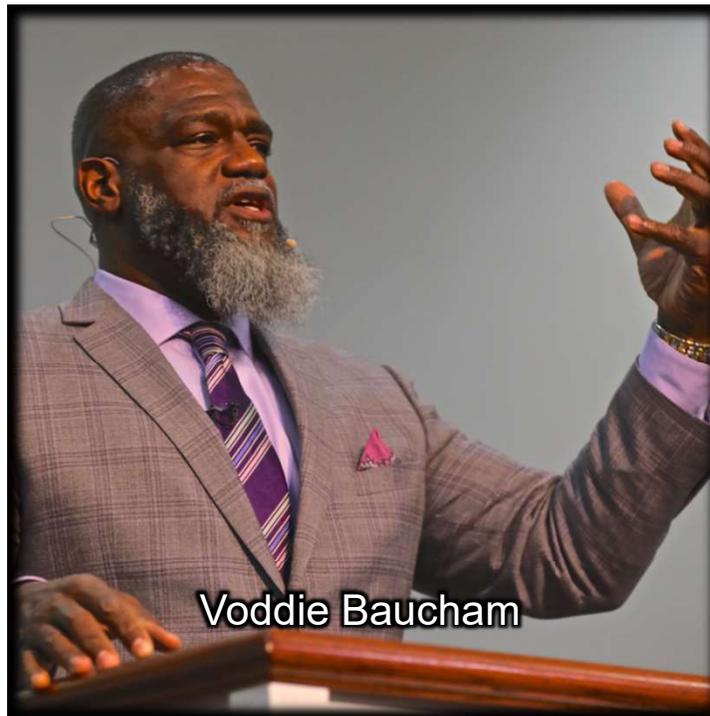


John Burrow
(1935-2009)

Classical Realism and Historical Knowledge

Historicism is self-refuting.

- ❖ *It is undeniable that our faculties of knowing enable us to know reality objectively.*
- ❖ *If this were not so, we would not be able to judge that anyone from the past even had a historical "situatedness" in the first place.*
- ❖ *This is so (as even Gadamer admitted) since our observation of their historical "situatedness" would itself have to be the product of our own historical "situatedness."*
- ❖ *This problem is not unlike the problem that arises from how some contemporary apologists define a "worldview."*



Voddie Baucham

"Our worldviews function in many ways. They function like eyeglasses. You ever heard the term 'Looking at the world through rose colored glasses. If you have a colored pair of lenses and put them on your eyes, everything looks that way. Your worldview functions like that. It is the lens through which you see the world—through which you view the world—and how you interpret reality."

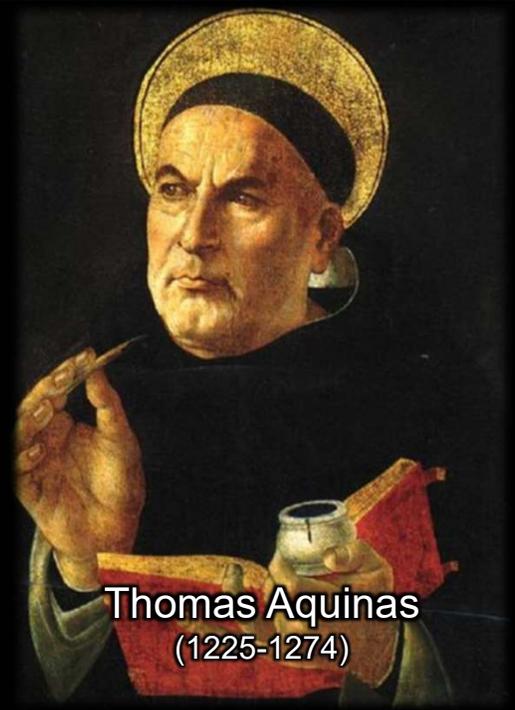
[Voddie Baucham, DVD "Family Driven Faith," Stand for Truth California Christian Apologetics Conference 2008-

Historicism ignores how human beings know reality.

- ❖ *Our intellect is able to know certain metaphysical aspects or "constituents" of sensible objects.*
- ❖ *One such aspect is the nature of the things.*
- ❖ *Knowing the nature of particular things enables us to know certain truths about particular things that fall beyond our immediate experience.*

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

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

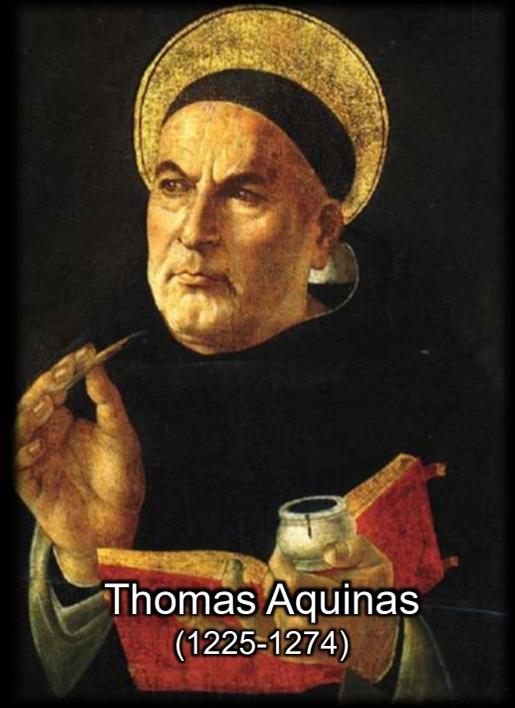


Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

"Our knowledge, taking its start from things, proceeds in this order.

First, it begins in sense; second, it is completed in the intellect."

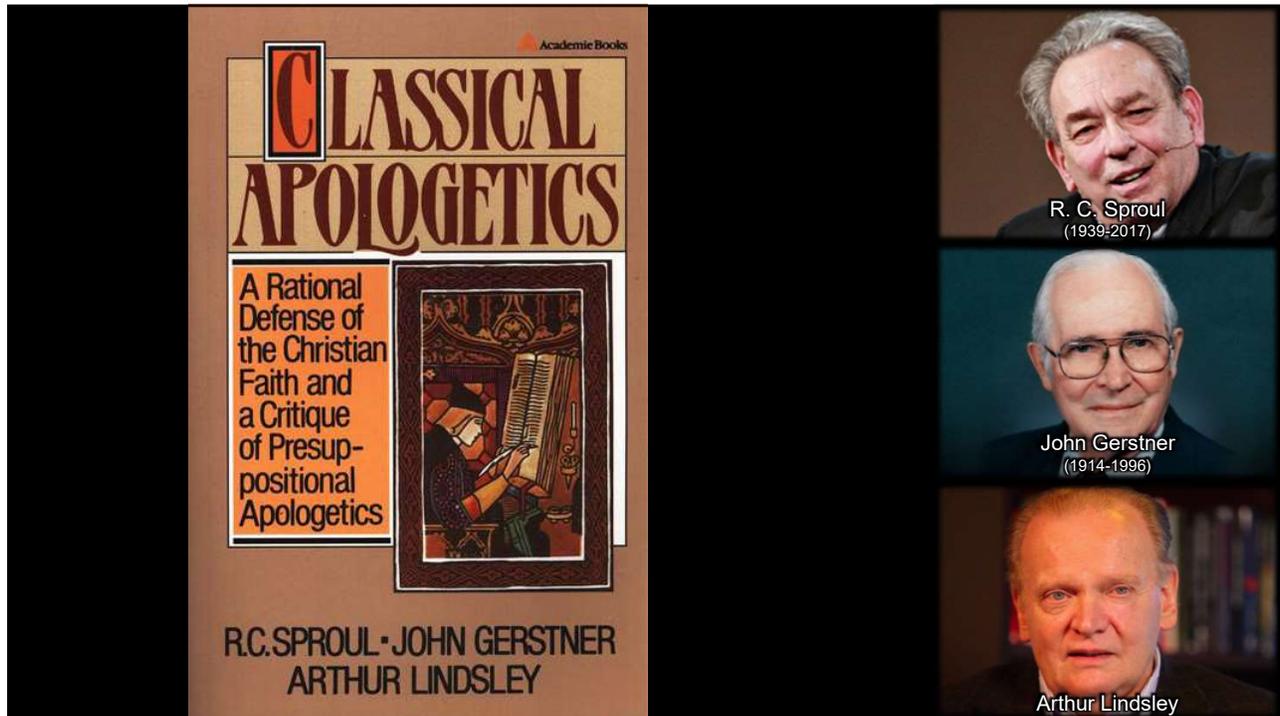
[Thomas Aquinas, *Truth*, I, 11, trans. Mulligan, 48, in *Truth* (3 vols), vol. 1 trans. Robert W. Mulligan (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952); vol. 2 trans. James V. McGlynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953); vol. 3. trans. Robert W. Schmidt (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1954). The three volumes were reprinted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



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

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"The chief problem built into induction is the problem of classification into universals. For a universal to be absolutely established inductively requires that a comprehensive and exhaustive sampling be made."

[R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner, and Arthur Lindsley, *Classical Apologetics: A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith and a Critique of Presuppositionalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 87]



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If by 'absolutely established, they mean that we would be omniscient about it, then I completely agree.

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But if they are meaning absolutely established along the contours of human, knowing, then I disagree.

*"The chief problem built into induction is the problem of classification into universals. For a universal to be **absolutely established** inductively requires that a comprehensive and exhaustive sampling be made."*

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What is more, such a view is decidedly not Thomistic, despite Sproul's claim to be Thomistic.