

Relativism about "X" means that "X" or our knowledge of "X" is different for (i.e., relative to) different people.

Another word for 'relative' or 'relativism' one might hear is 'subjective' or 'subjectivism'.

***The opposite of subjective
is objective.***

***For something to be
objective means that it is
the same for everyone.***

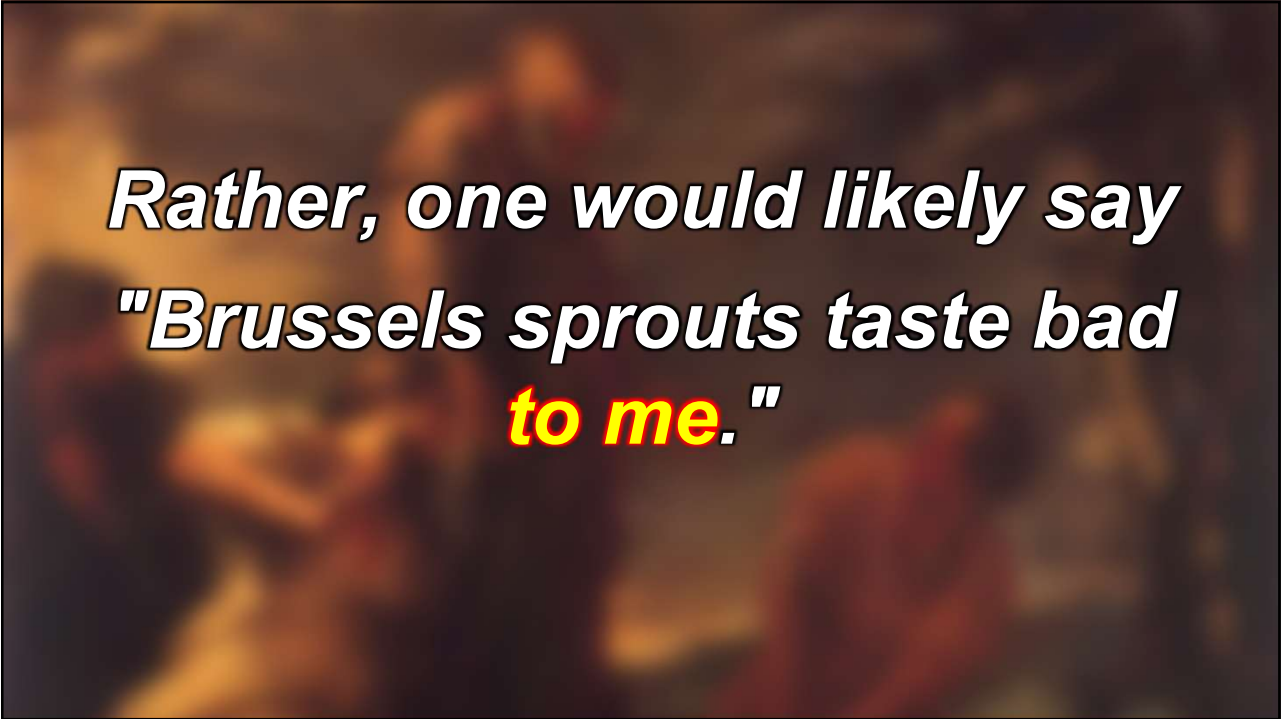
Not all subjectivism is bad.

***Some subjectivism is
completely normal.***

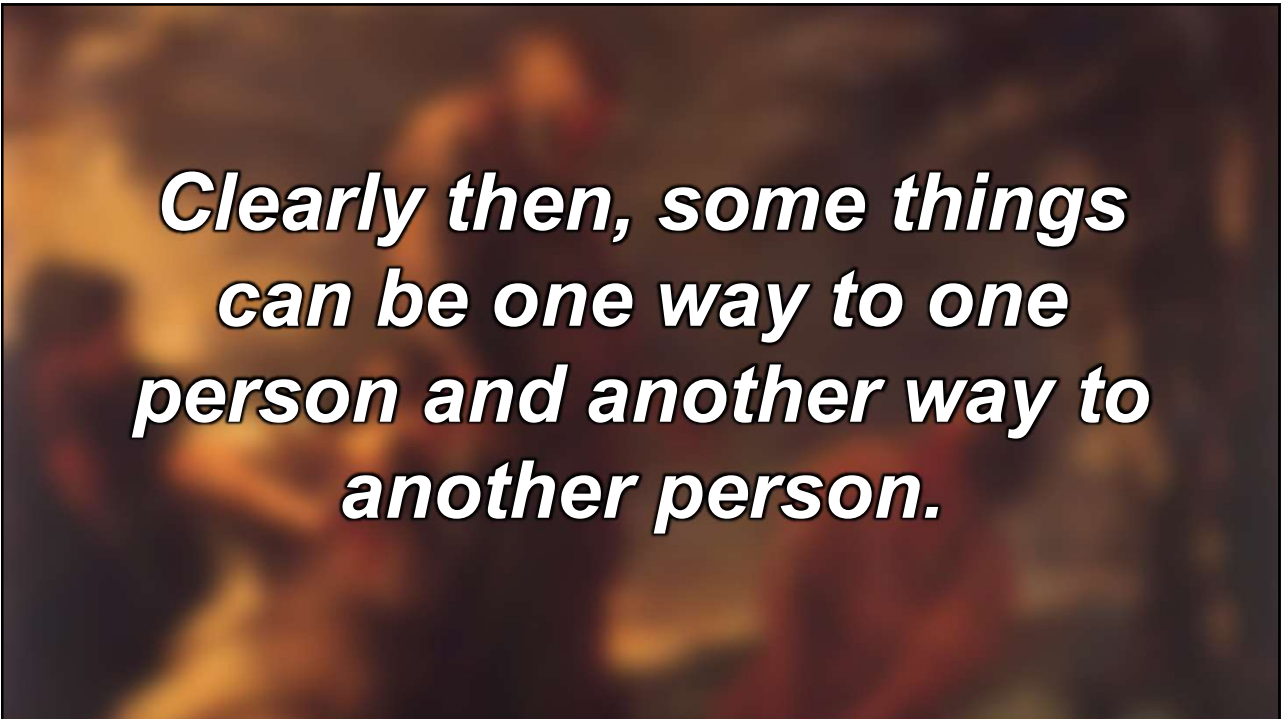




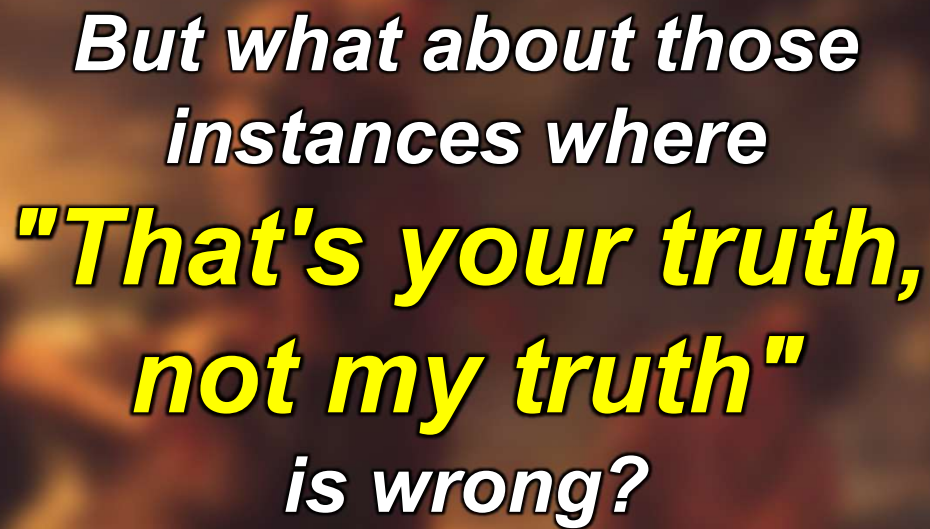
***Granted, no one would say
"That's your truth that
brussels sprouts taste good,
it's not my truth!"***



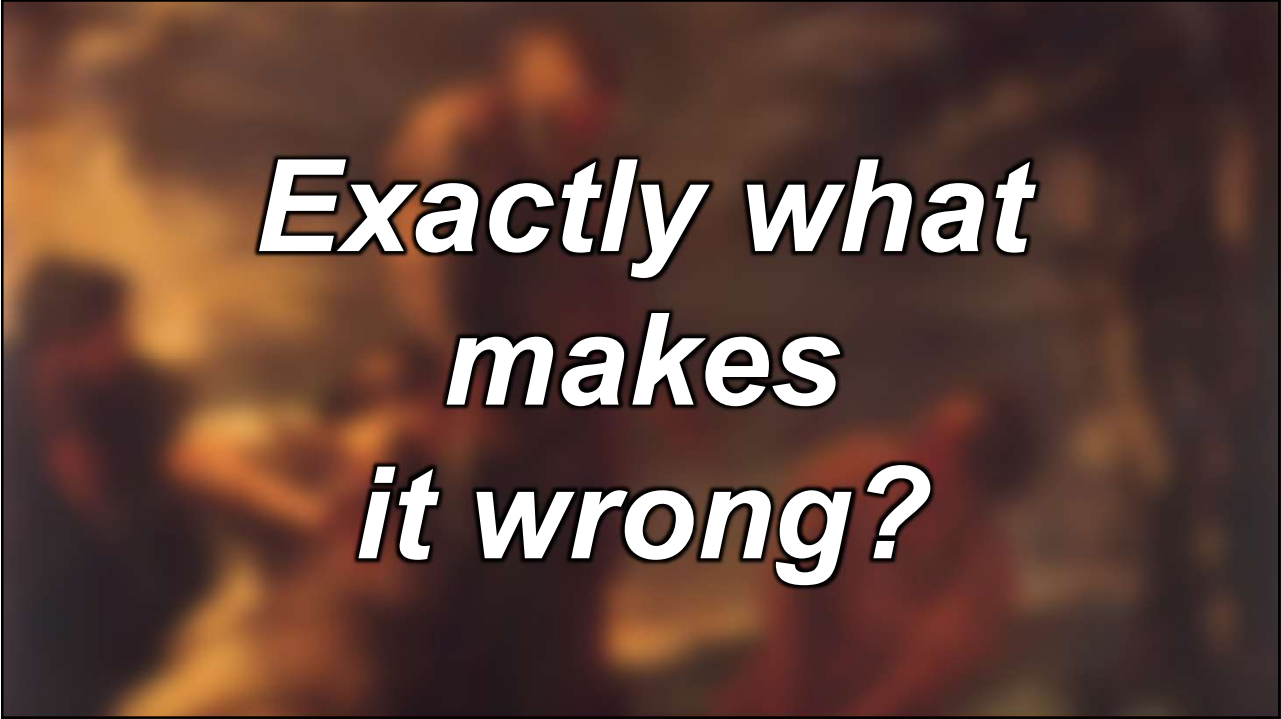
*Rather, one would likely say
"Brussels sprouts taste bad
to me."*



*Clearly then, some things
can be one way to one
person and another way to
another person.*



*But what about those
instances where
**"That's your truth,
not my truth"**
is wrong?*



*Exactly what
makes
it wrong?*

Subjective Truth

VS.

Objective Truth

Subjective Truth



*when something can
legitimately be true for
one person and not true
for another*

Objective Truth



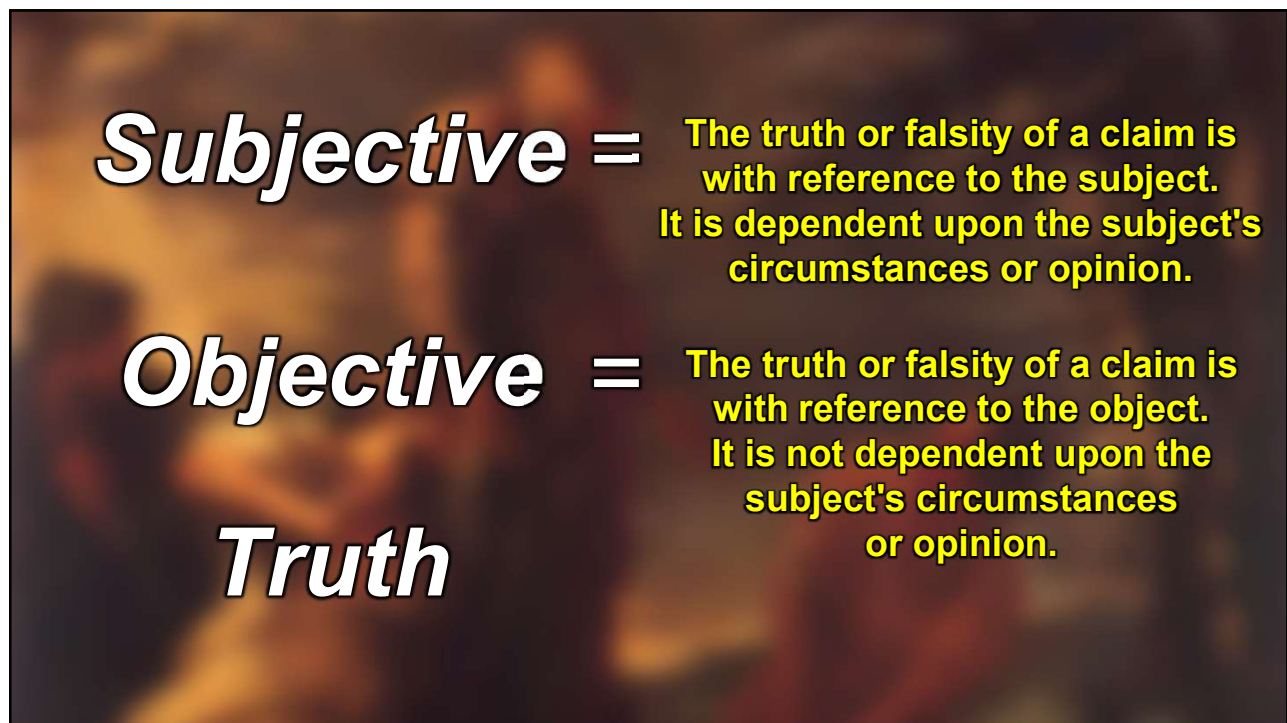
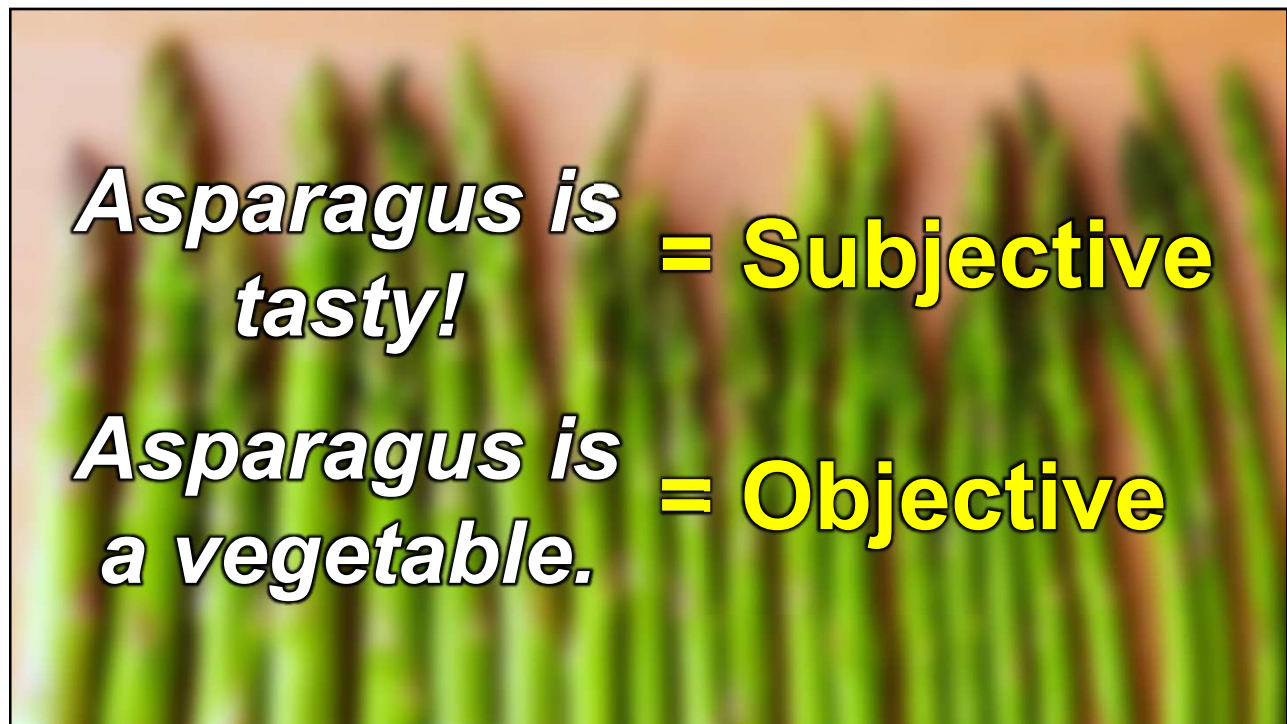
*when something cannot
legitimately be true for
one person and not true
for another*

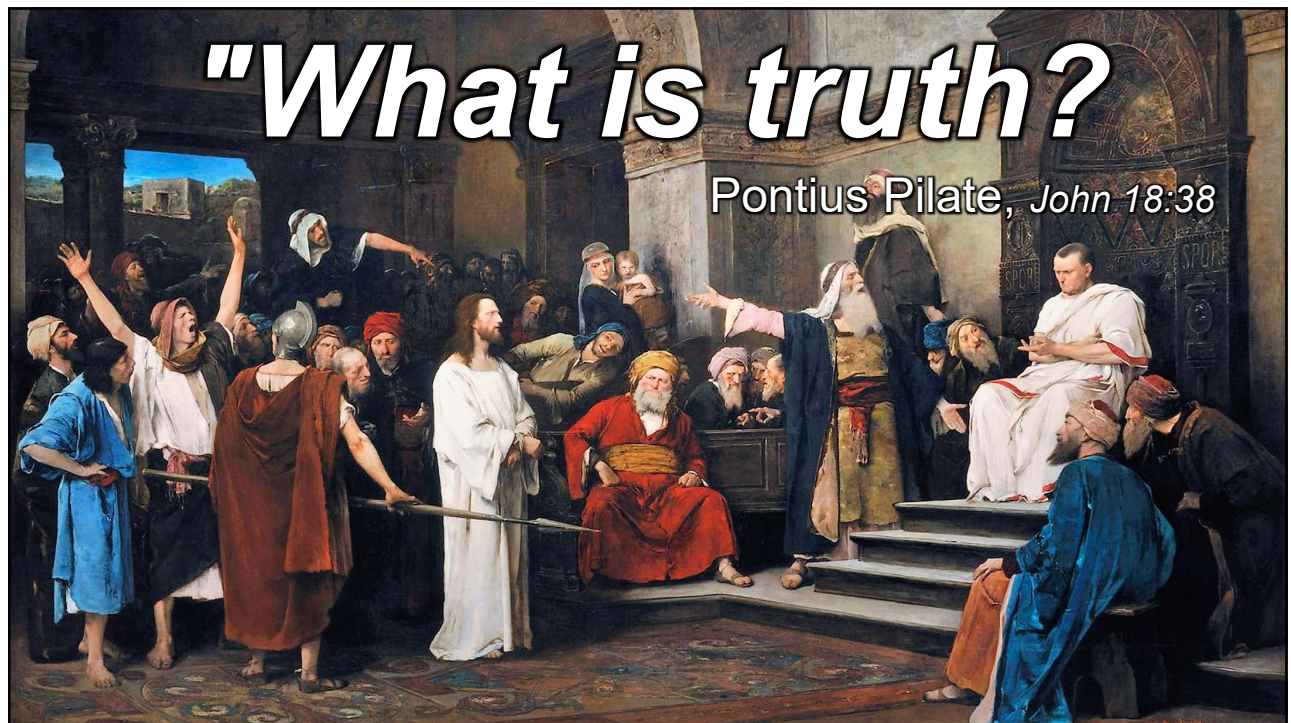
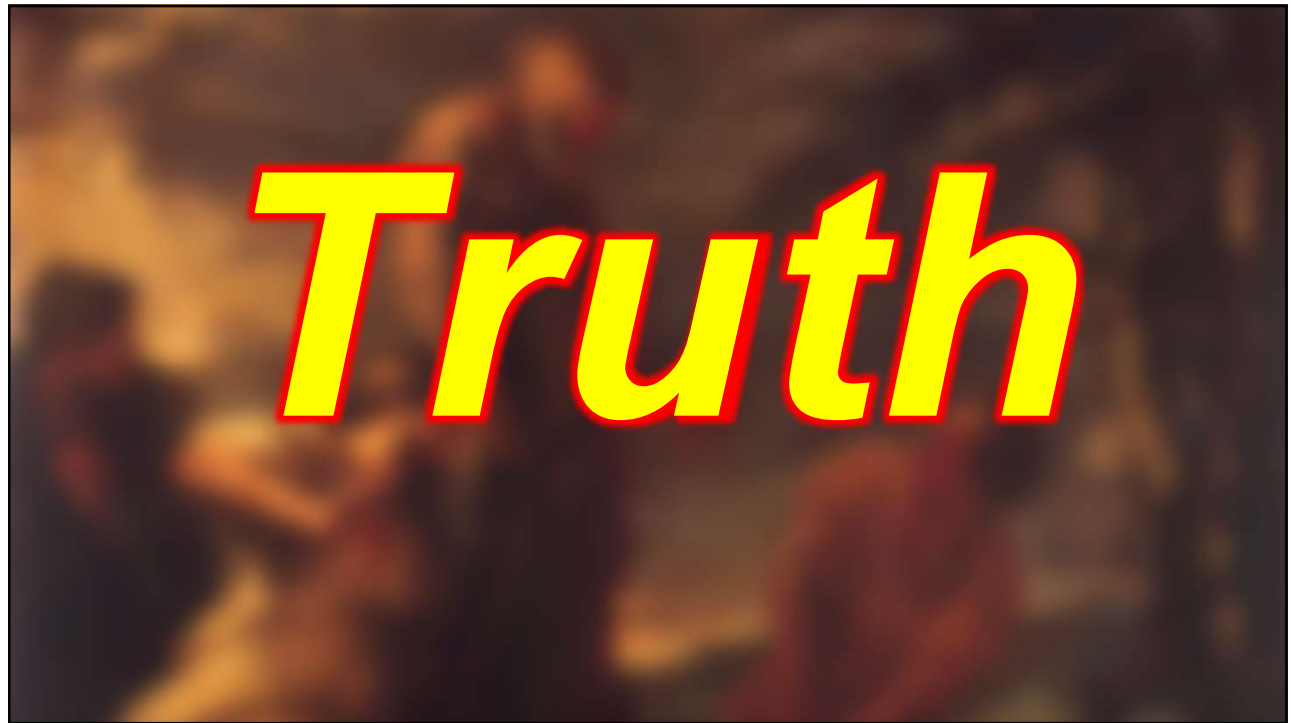
Subjective = The truth or falsity of a claim is
with reference to the subject.
It is dependent upon the subject's
circumstances or opinion.

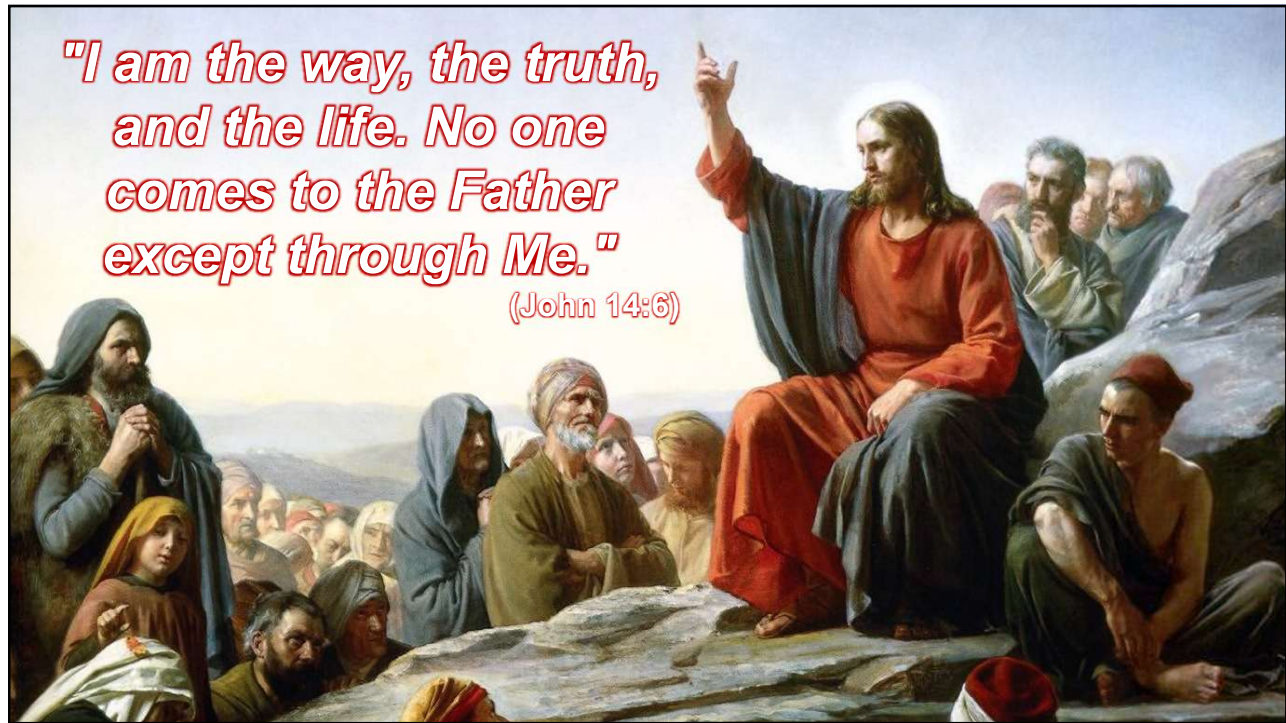
Objective = The truth or falsity of a claim is
with reference to the object.
It is not dependent upon the
subject's circumstances
or opinion.

Truth



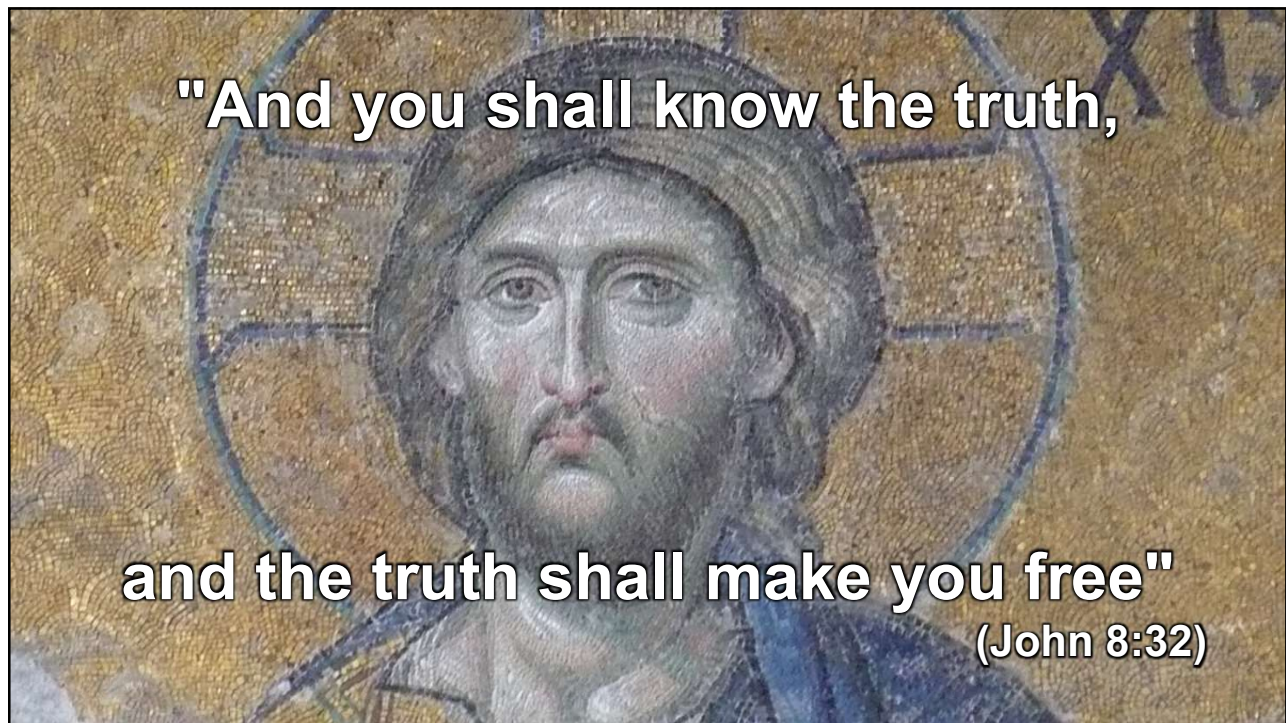






*"I am the way, the truth,
and the life. No one
comes to the Father
except through Me."*

(John 14:6)



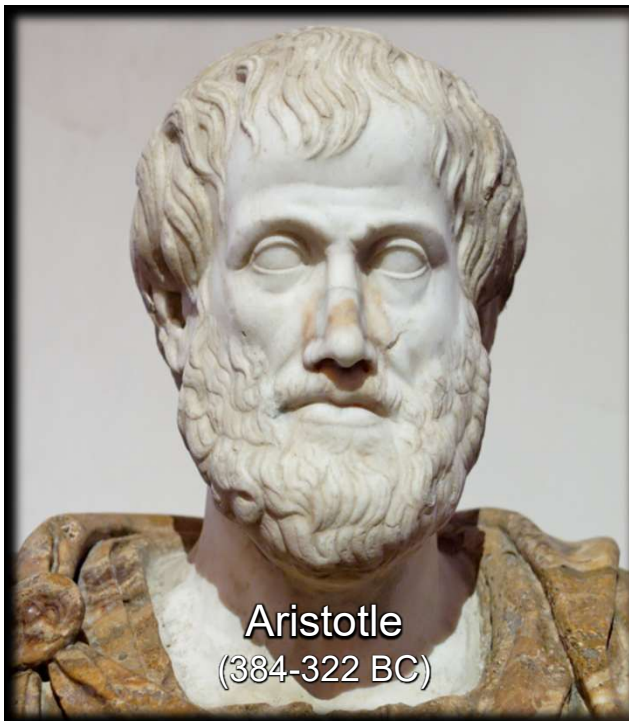
"And you shall know the truth,

and the truth shall make you free"

(John 8:32)

Correspondence Theory of Truth

***A statement is true
when it corresponds to
reality.***

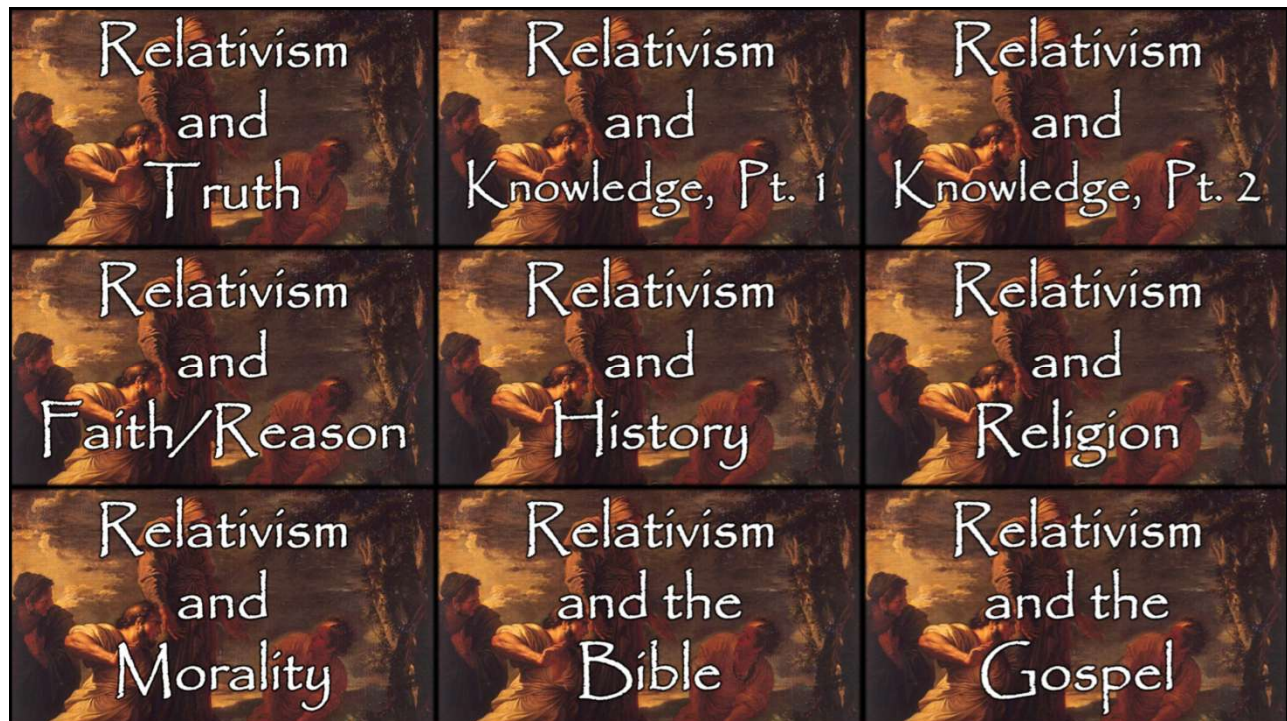
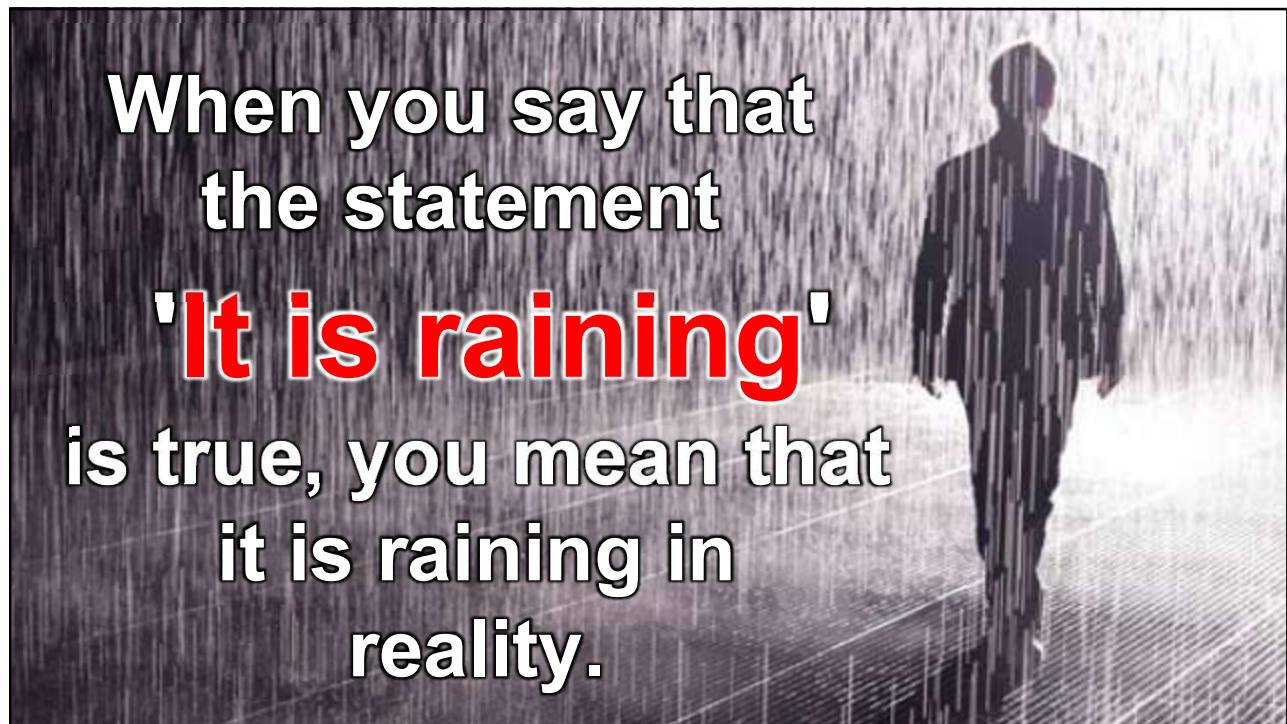


Aristotle
(384-322 BC)

***"To say of what is, that
it is not, or of what is
not, that it is, is false,
while to say of what is,
that it is and of what is
not, that it is not, is
true."***

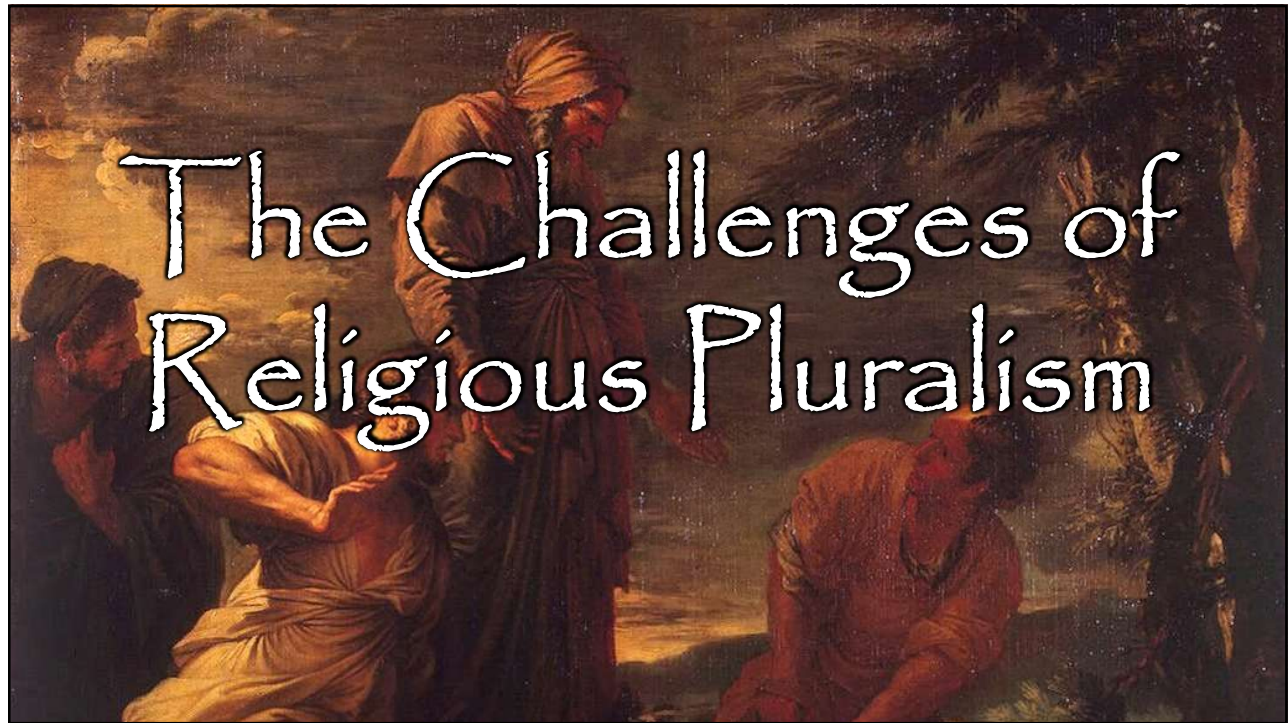
[Metaphysics, IV, 7, 1011^a26-29, Translation by W. D. Ross in Richard
McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941)]

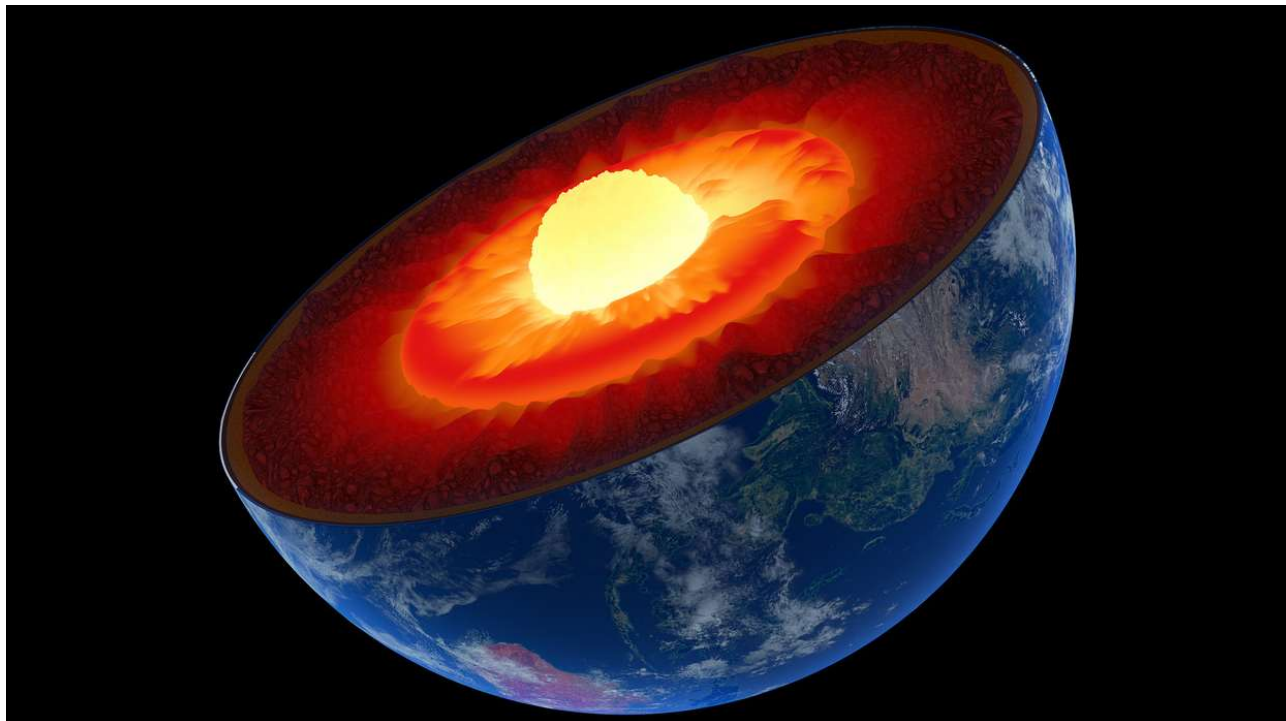
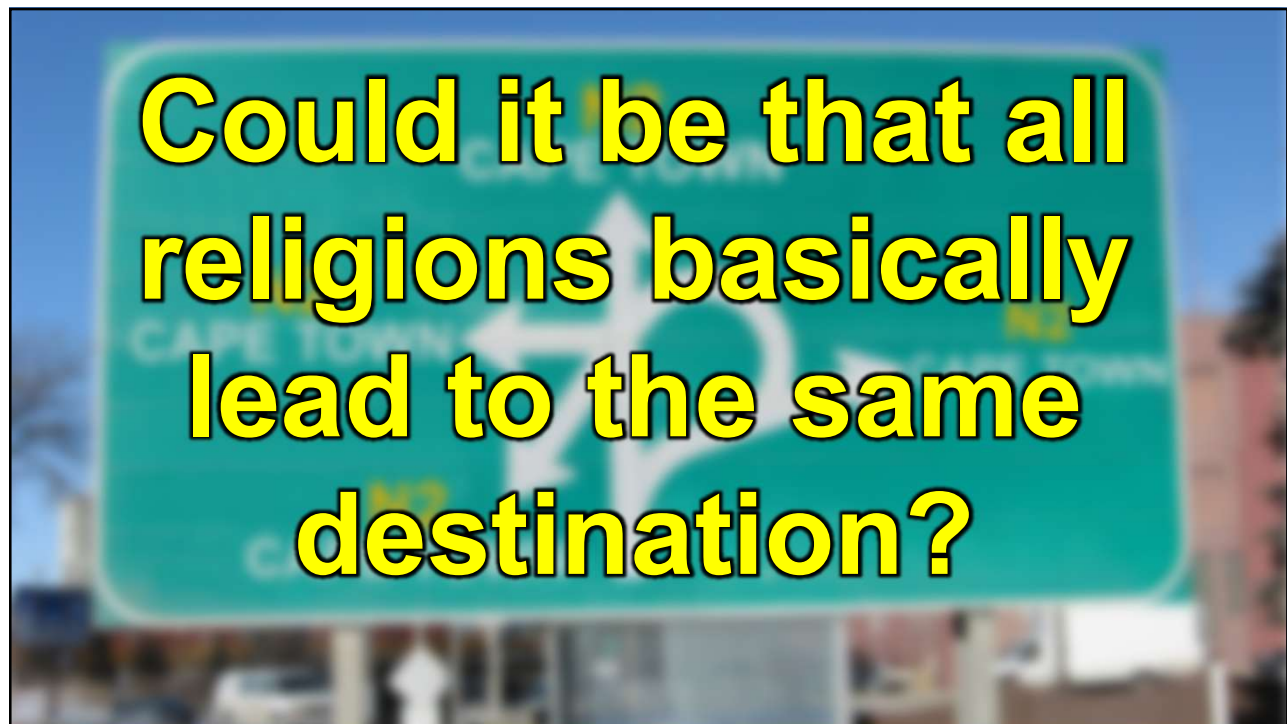




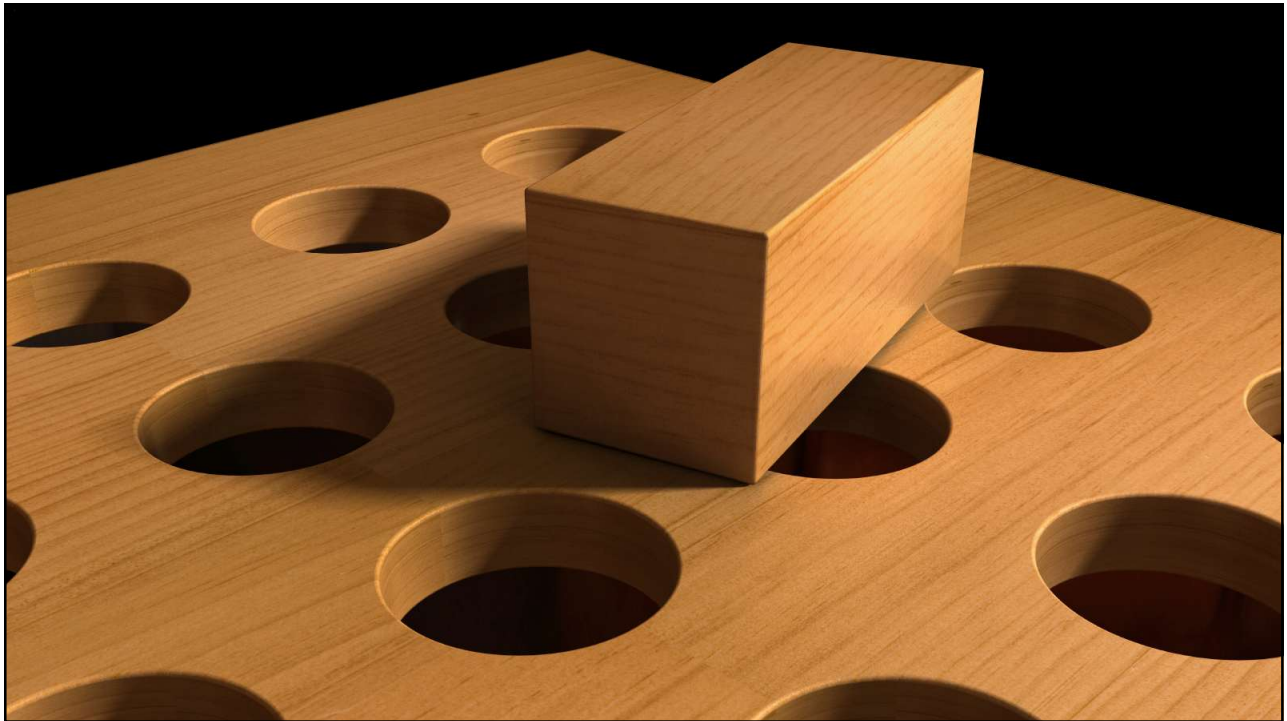


***Relativism regarding
religion is more often
referred to as
religious pluralism.***





***Are Not All
Religions the
Same at the Core?***



Or is it the case that other religions are making claims that are incompatible with the claims of Christianity?



If the world's religions are
making different claims,
how can the Christian
maintain that only
Christianity is true?

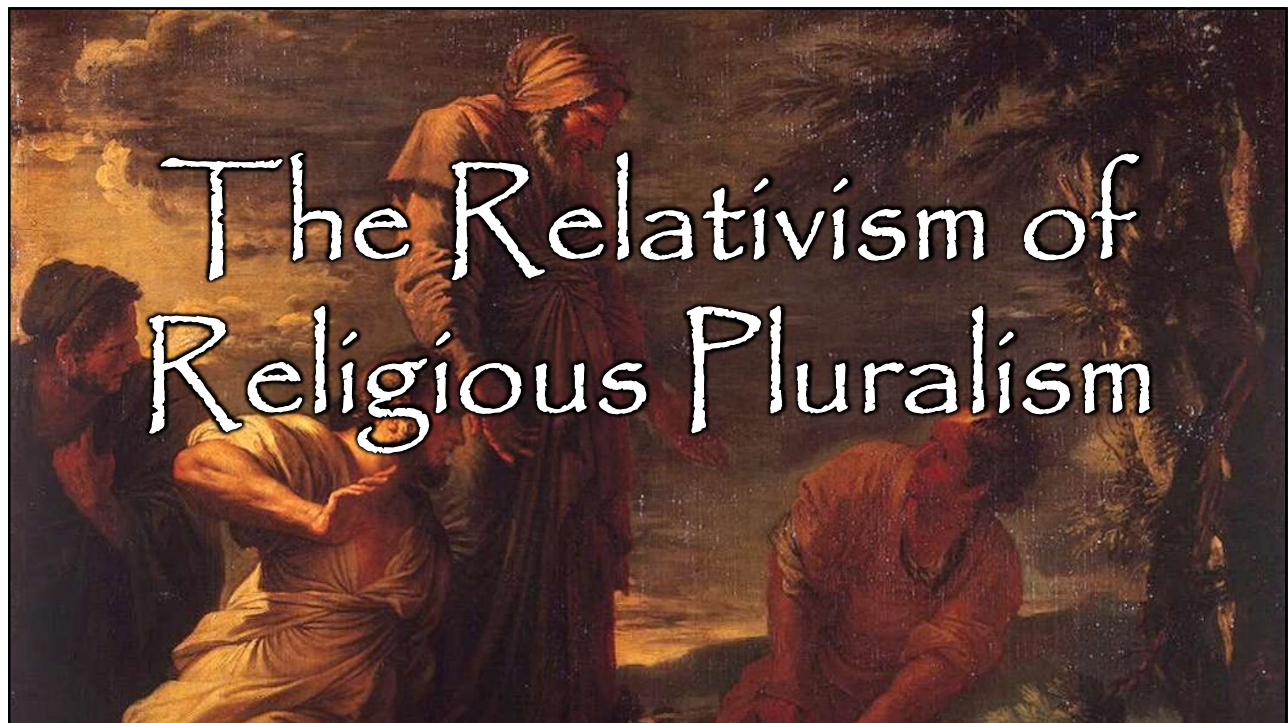


If it is the case that only Christianity is true, are the followers of those other religions eternally lost?



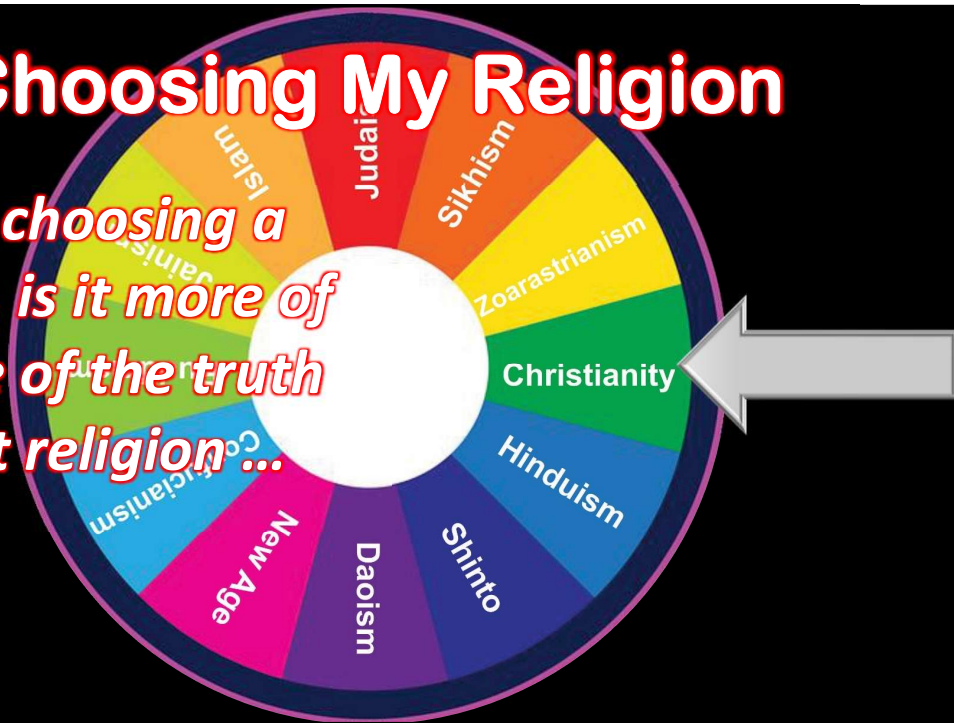


**What about those who
sincerely follow a false
religion and never had a
chance to hear
the Gospel?**



Choosing My Religion

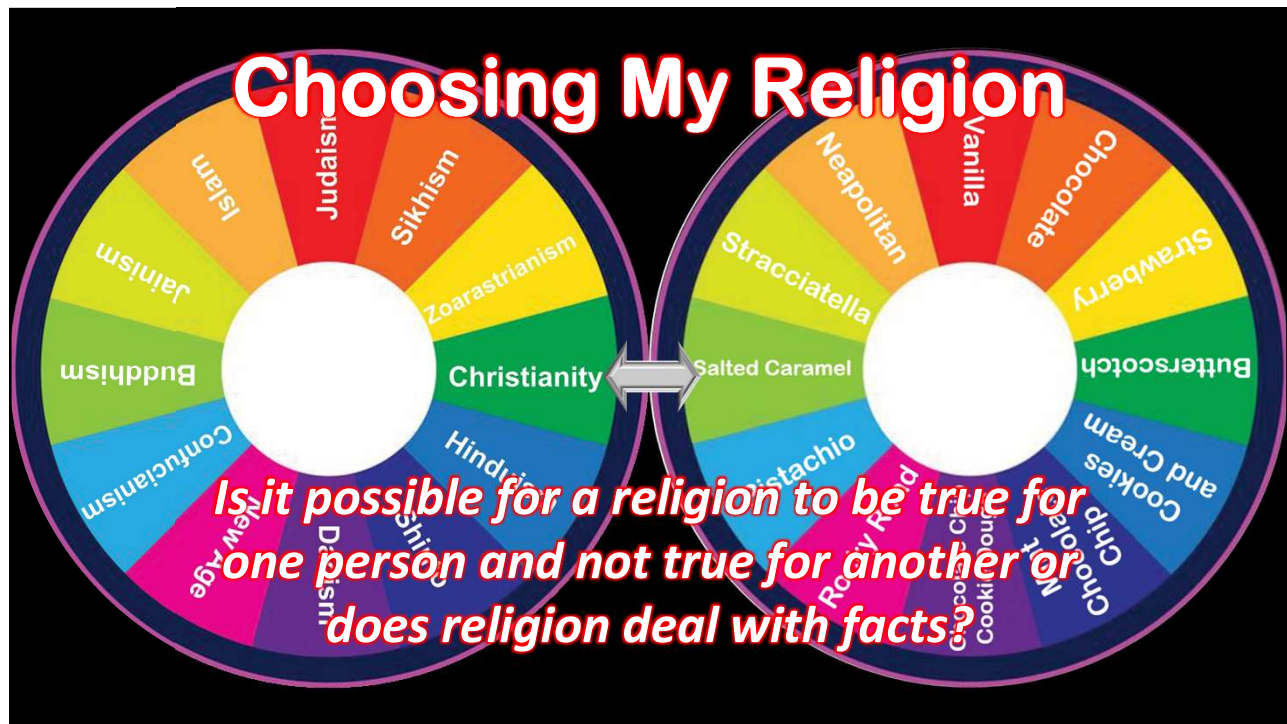
When choosing a religion, is it more of an issue of the truth of that religion...



Choosing My Religion

Or is it more like choosing a desired flavor of ice cream?

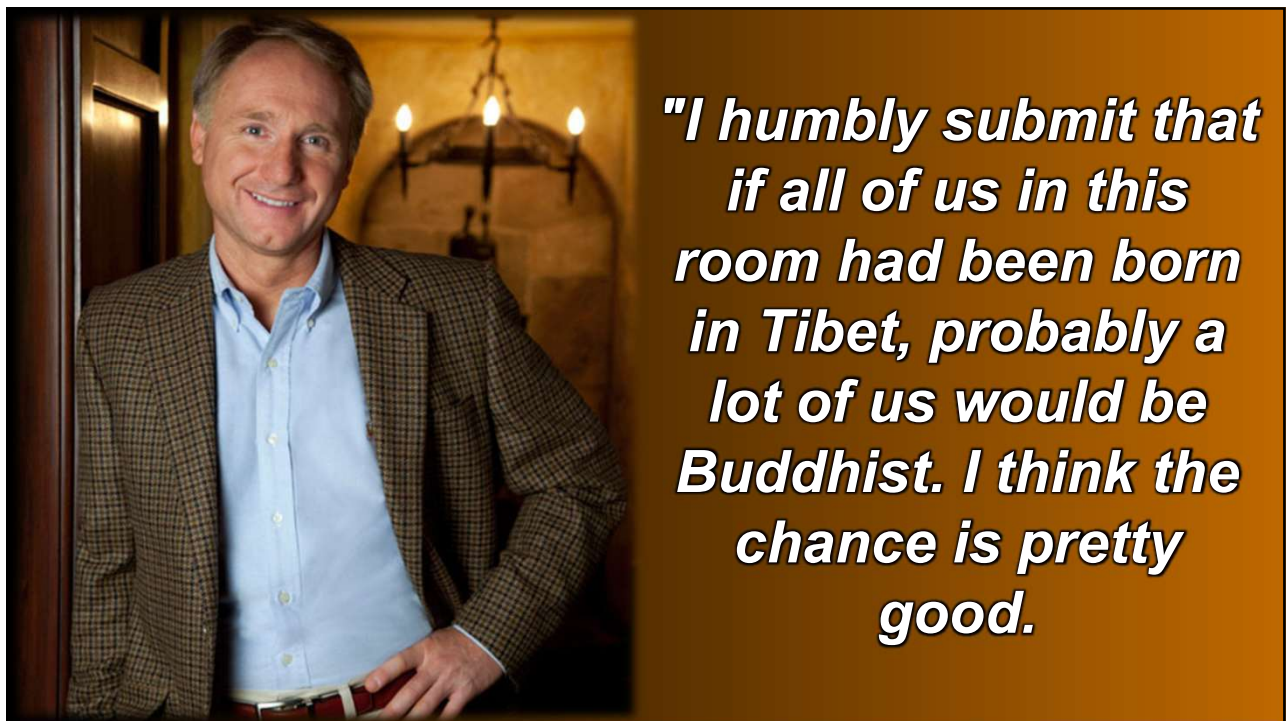
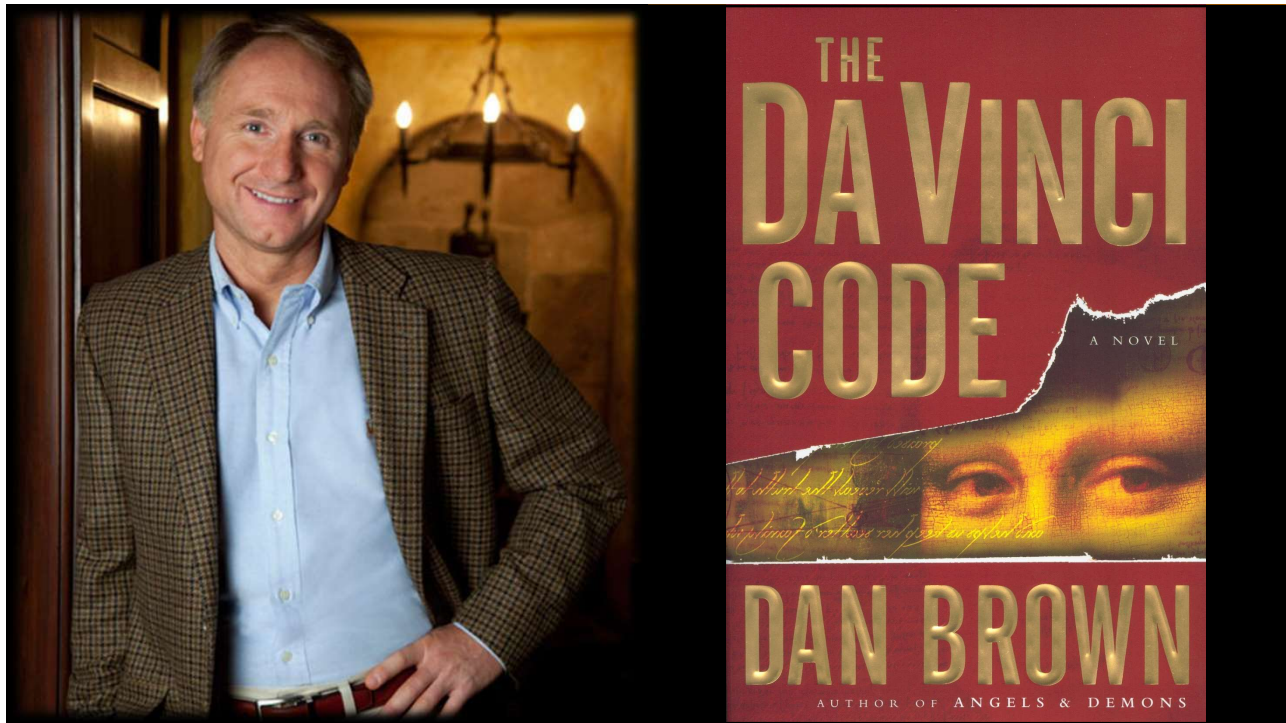


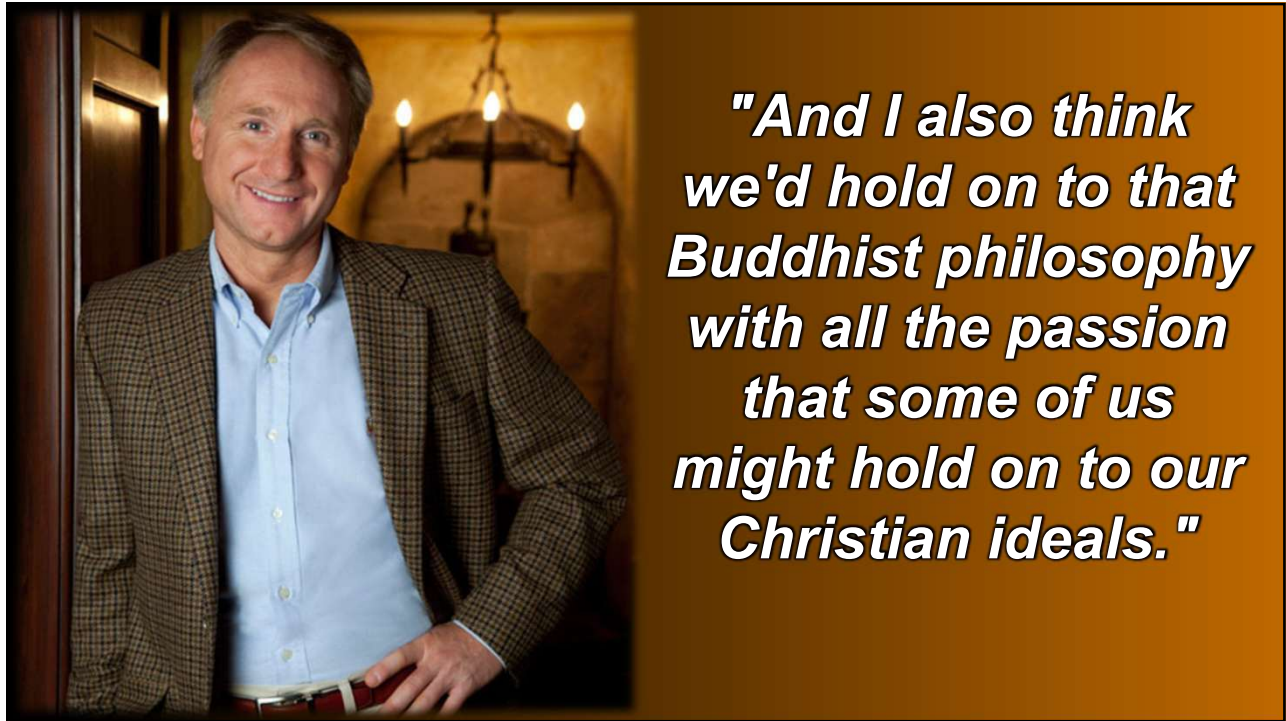


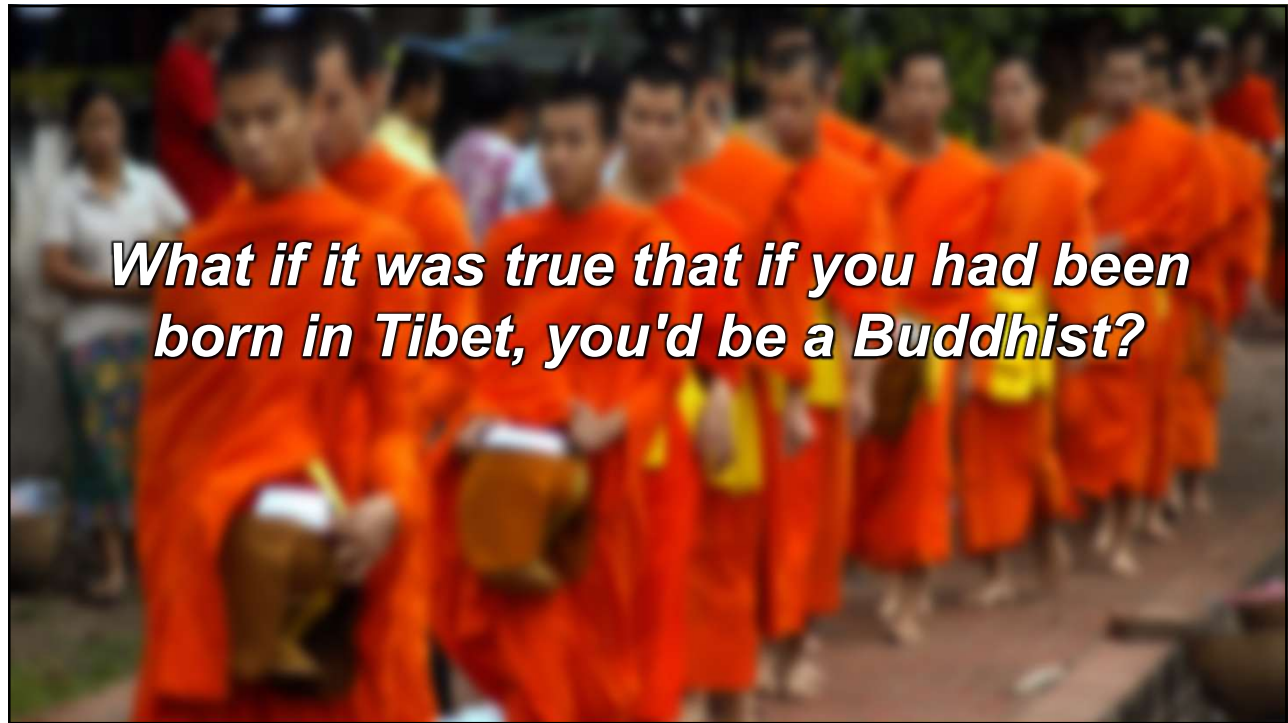


What about Christianity?

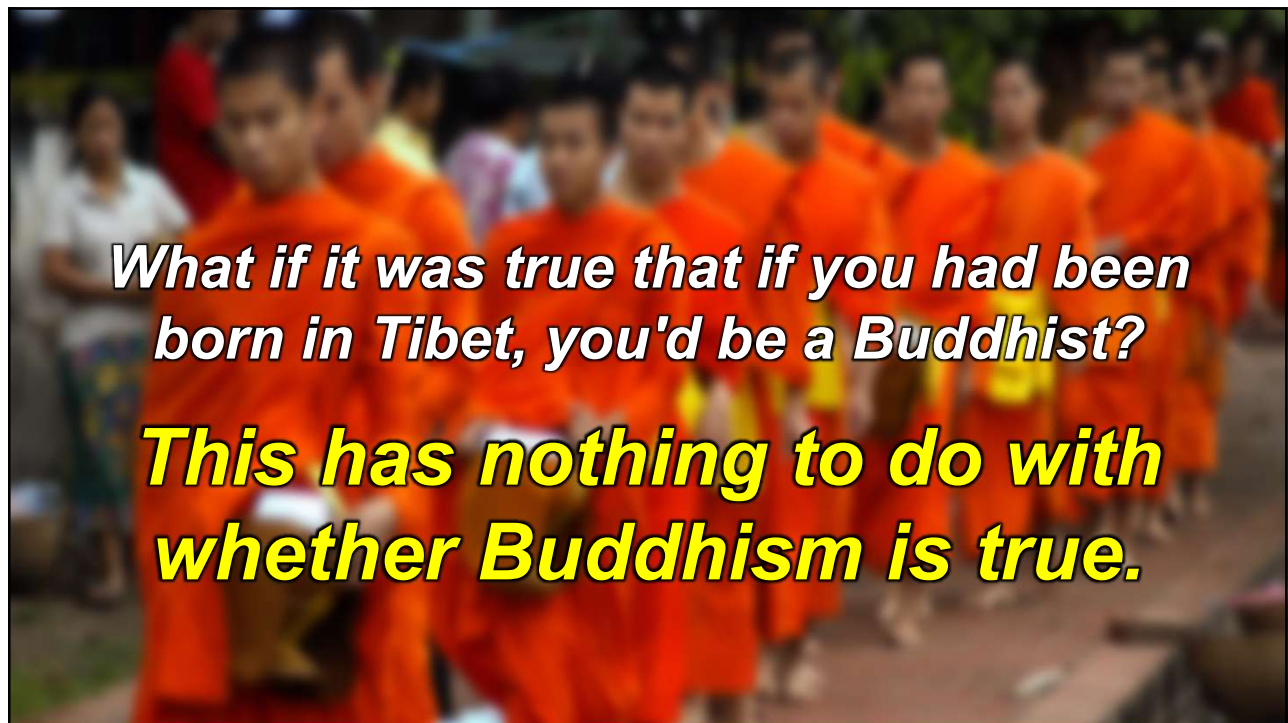
- ❖ It **proclaims** specific truths,
and, thus, obligates certain **beliefs**.
- ❖ It **proscribes** a way of life,
and, thus, obligates certain **behaviors**.





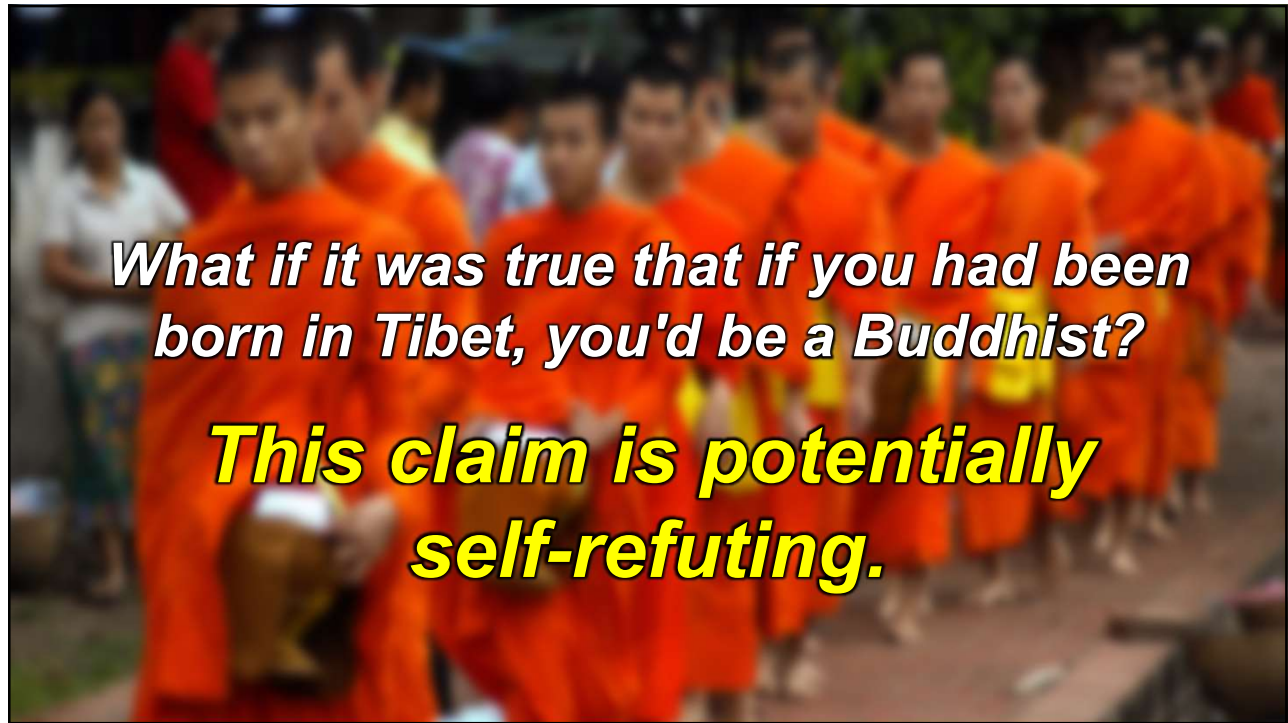


***What if it was true that if you had been
born in Tibet, you'd be a Buddhist?***



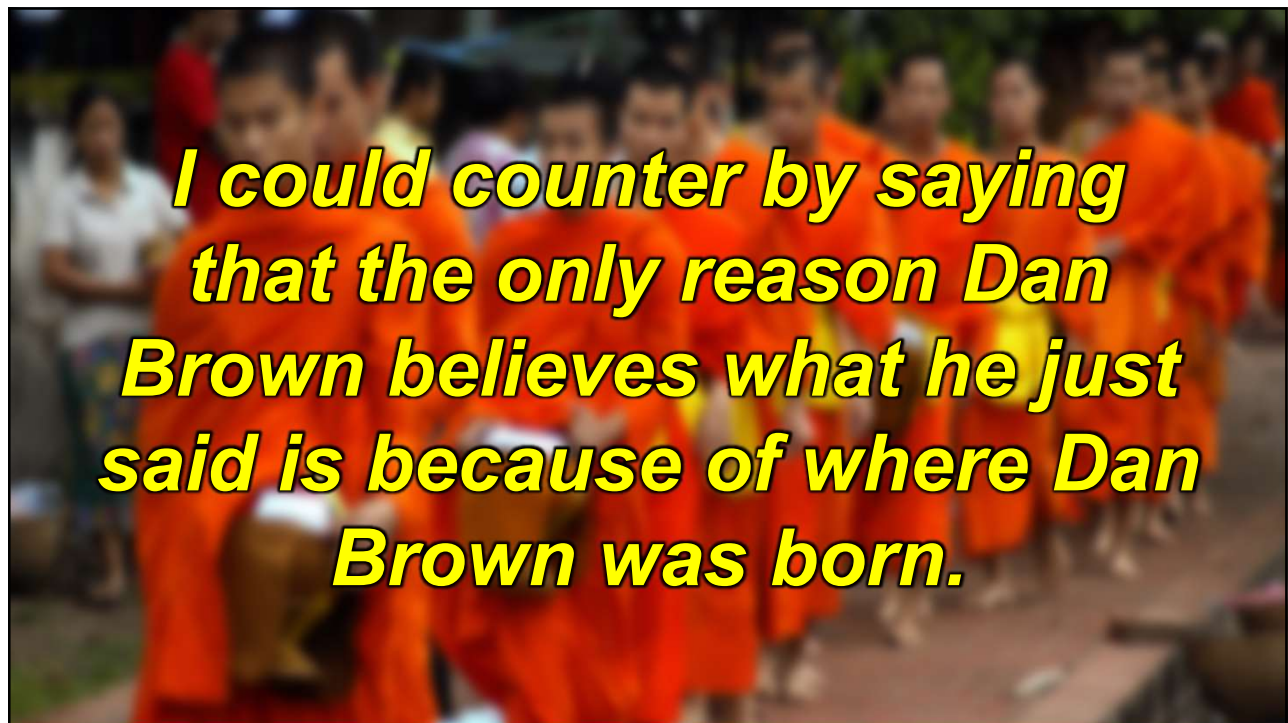
***What if it was true that if you had been
born in Tibet, you'd be a Buddhist?***

***This has nothing to do with
whether Buddhism is true.***

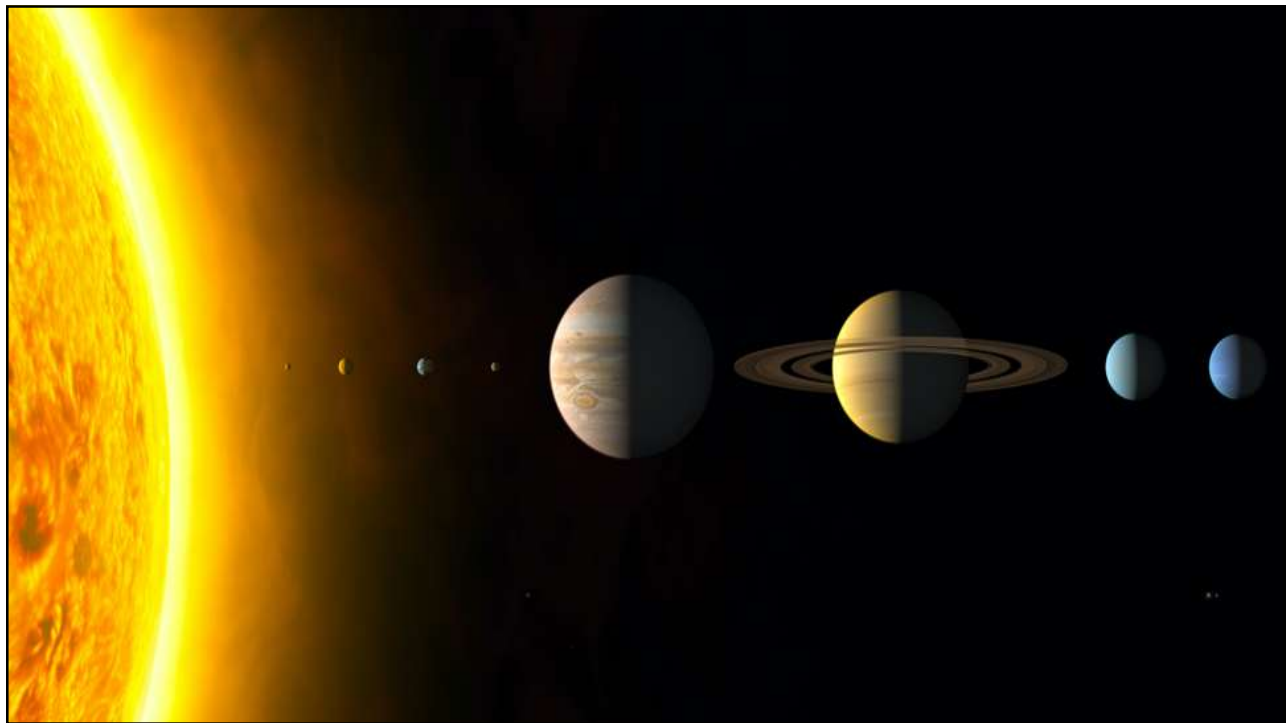
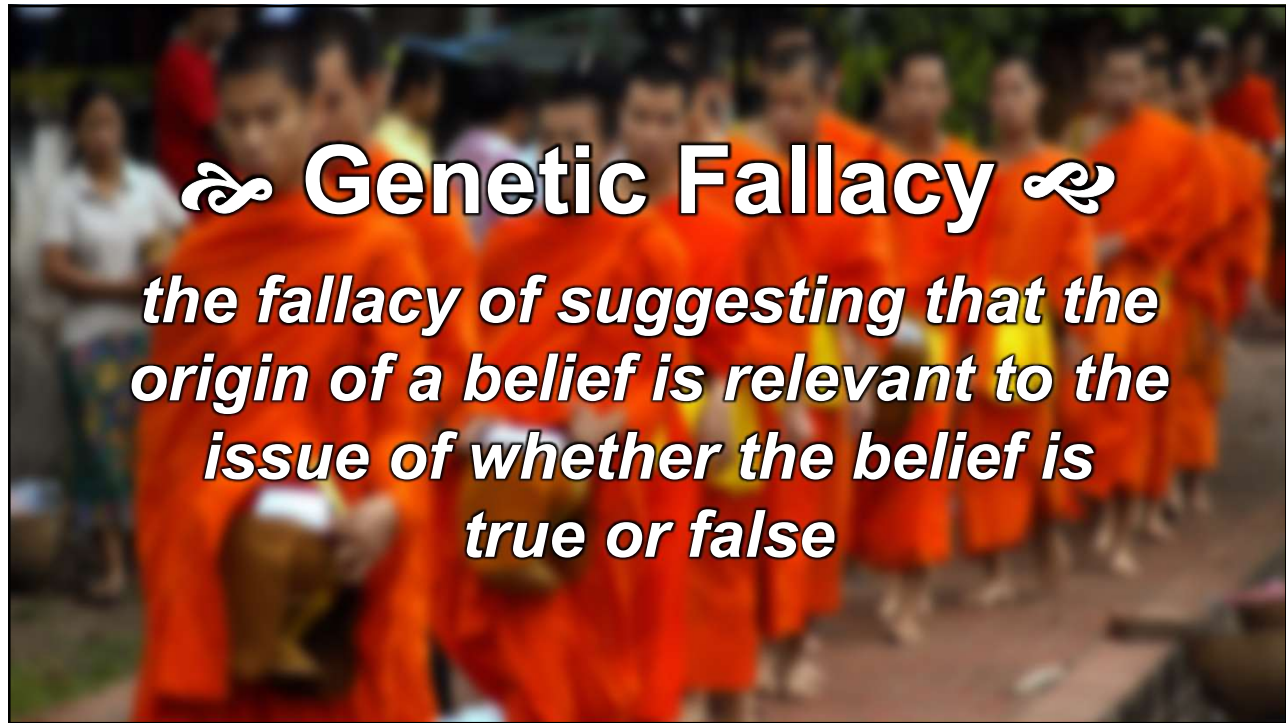


What if it was true that if you had been born in Tibet, you'd be a Buddhist?

This claim is potentially self-refuting.



I could counter by saying that the only reason Dan Brown believes what he just said is because of where Dan Brown was born.

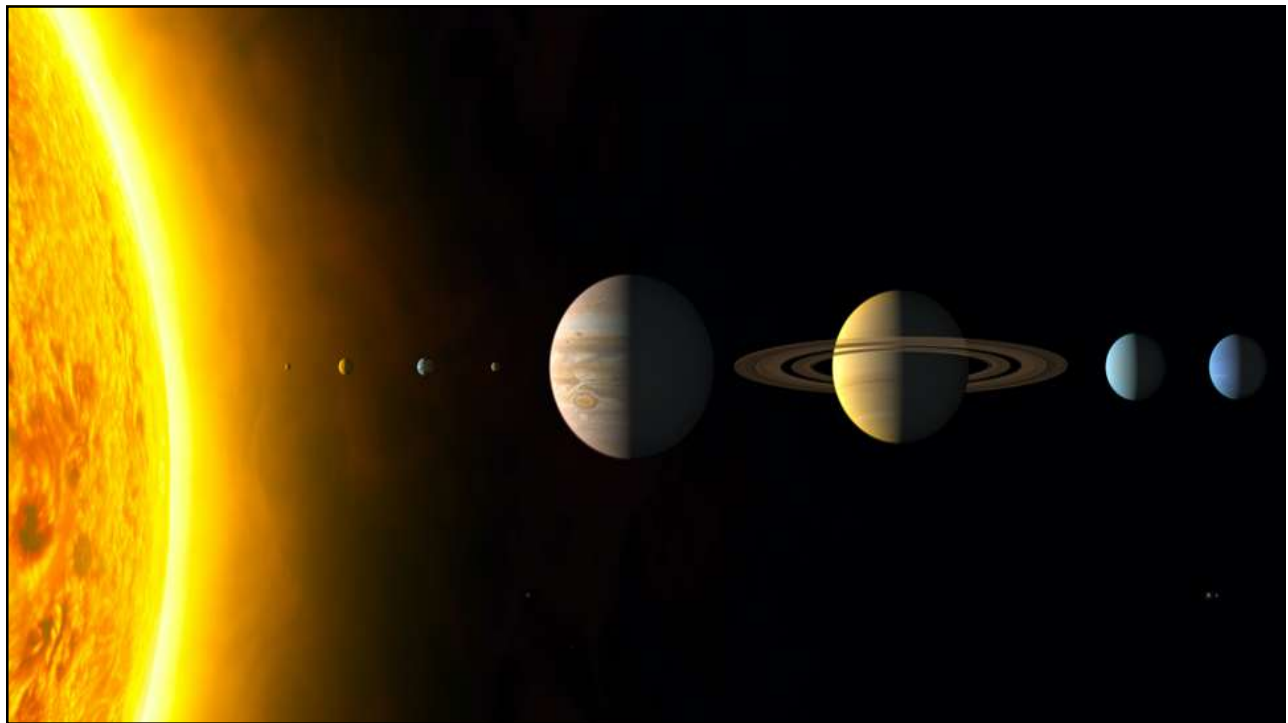
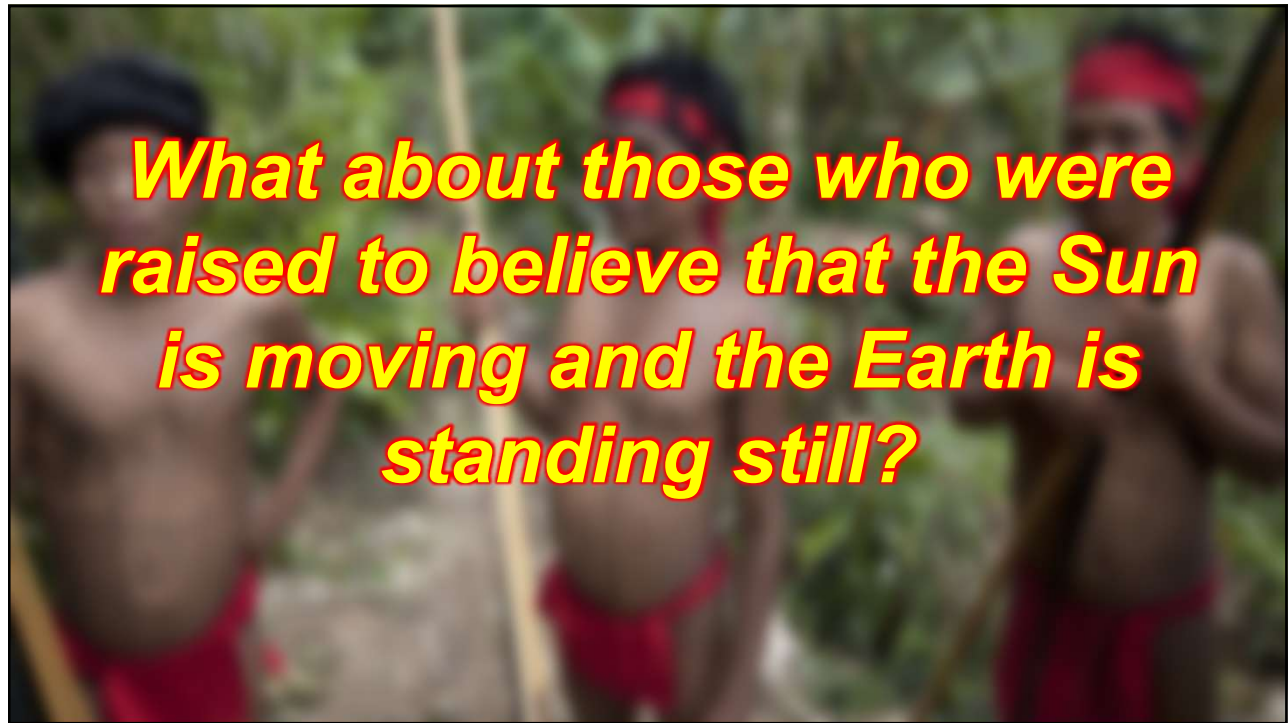


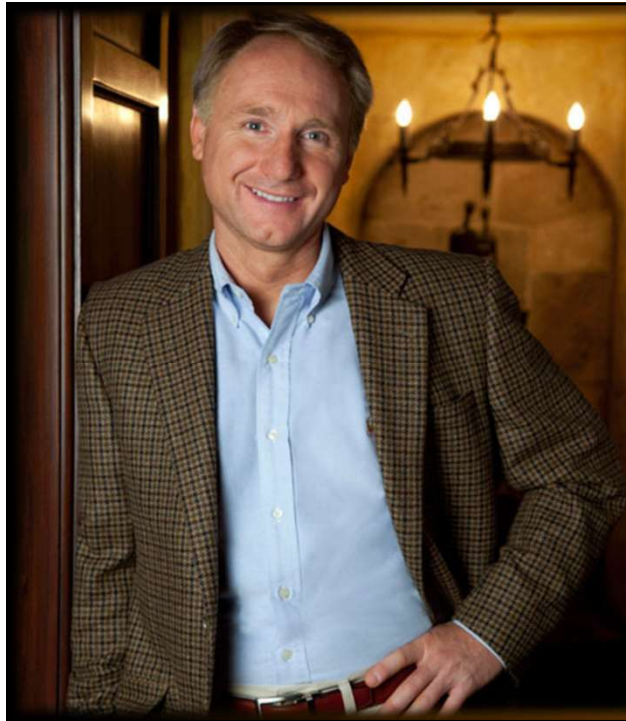
Geocentrism ***vs.*** ***Heliocentrism***

***You were probably raised to
believe that the Sun is
standing still relative to
the Earth.***

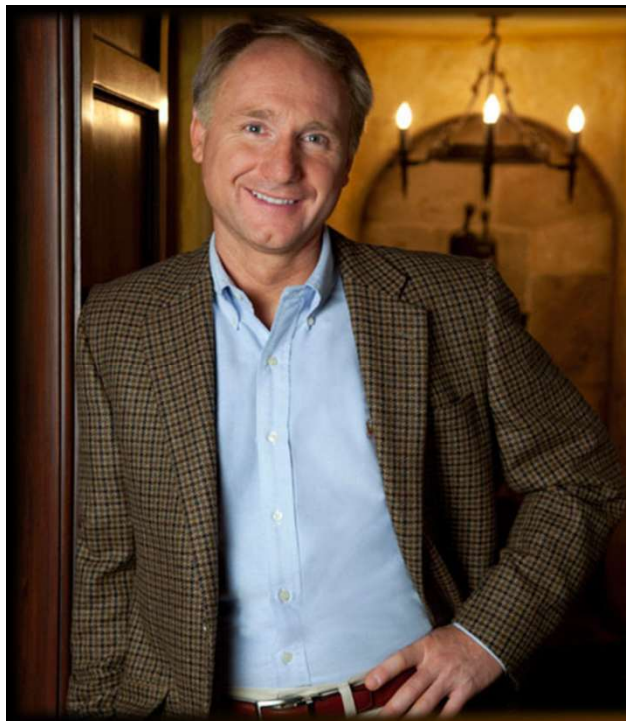
In other words, you were probably raised to believe heliocentrism even if you never heard that word.







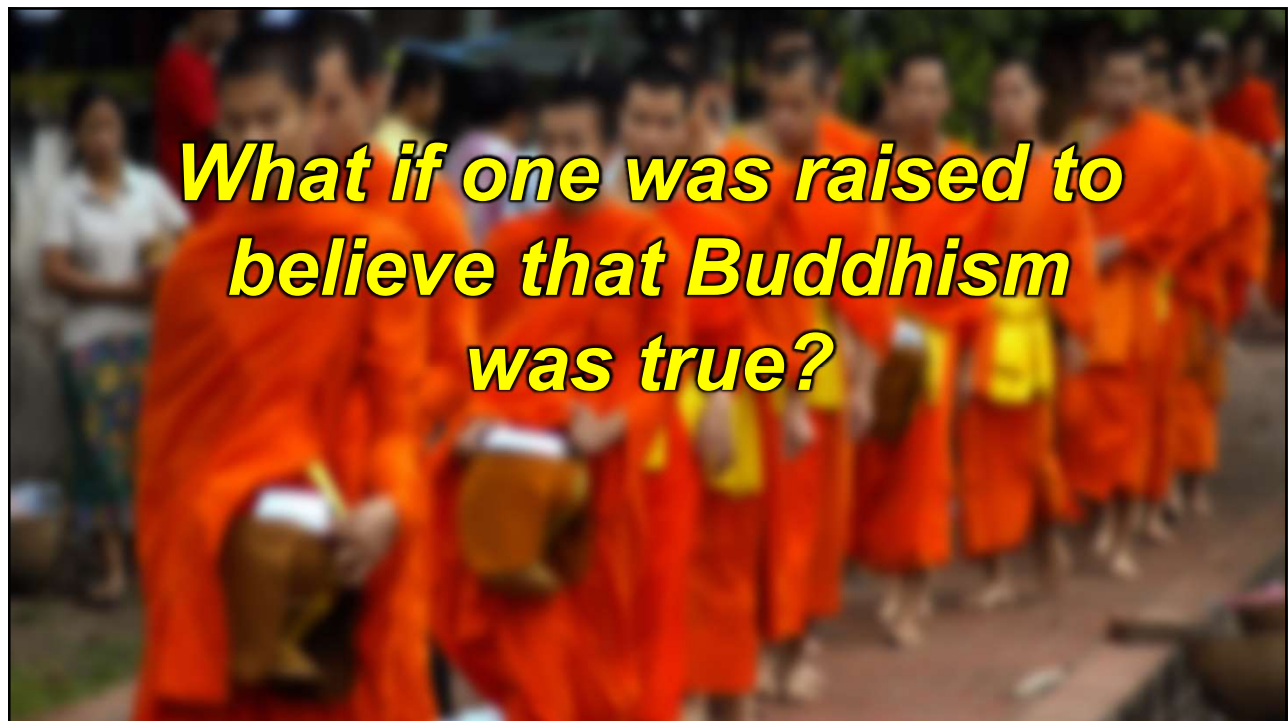
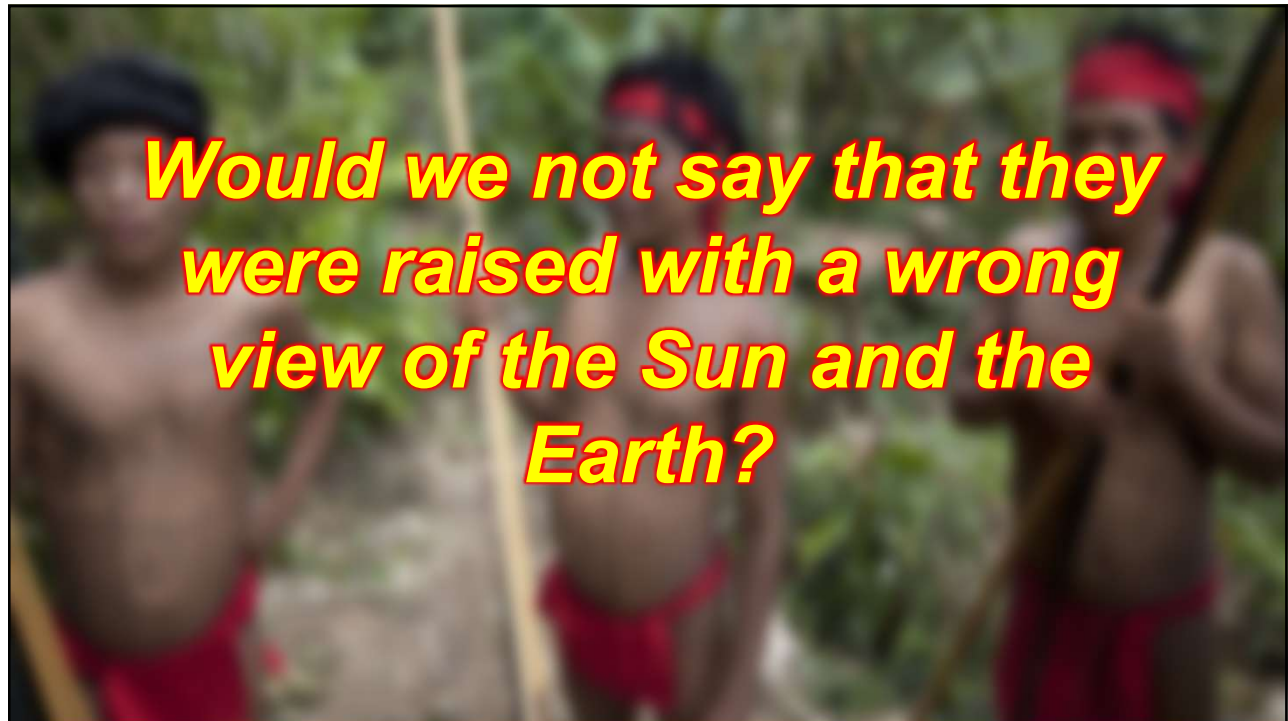
"I humbly submit that if all of us in this room had been born in the Amazon jungle, probably a lot of us would be Geocentrists. I think the chance is pretty good."

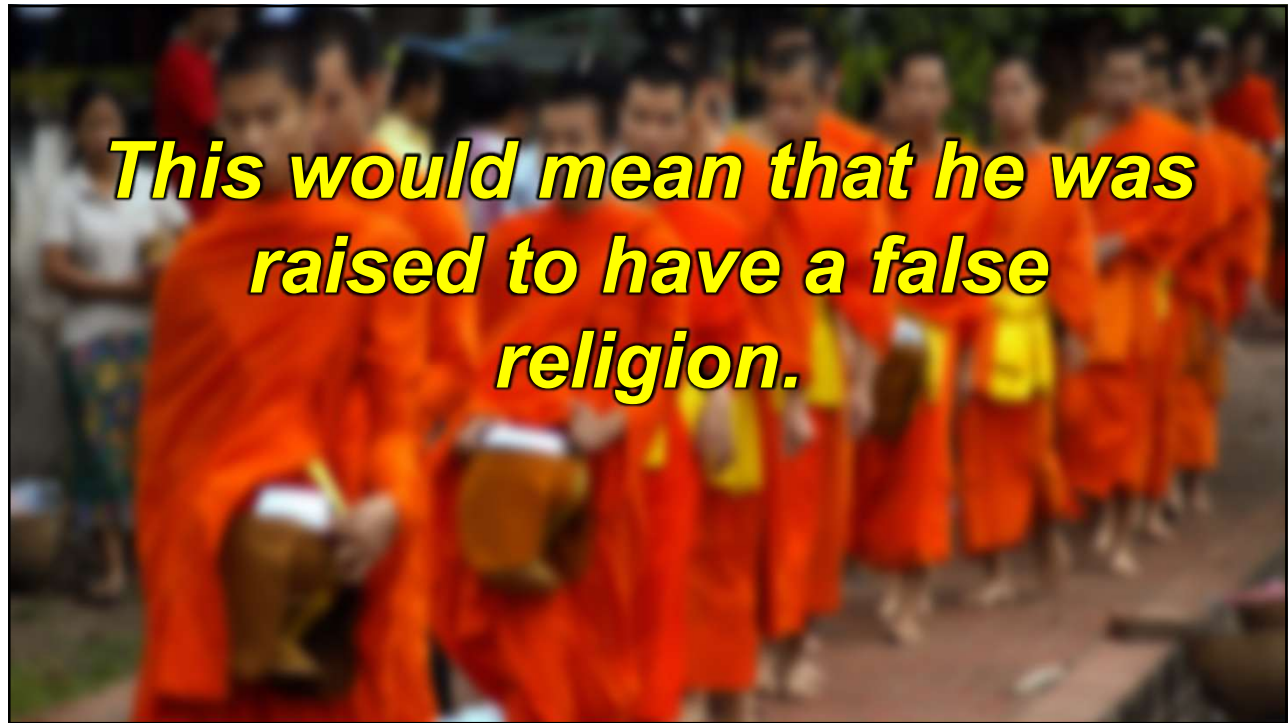


"And I also think we'd hold on to that Geocentric philosophy with all the passion that some of us might hold on to our Heliocentric ideals."

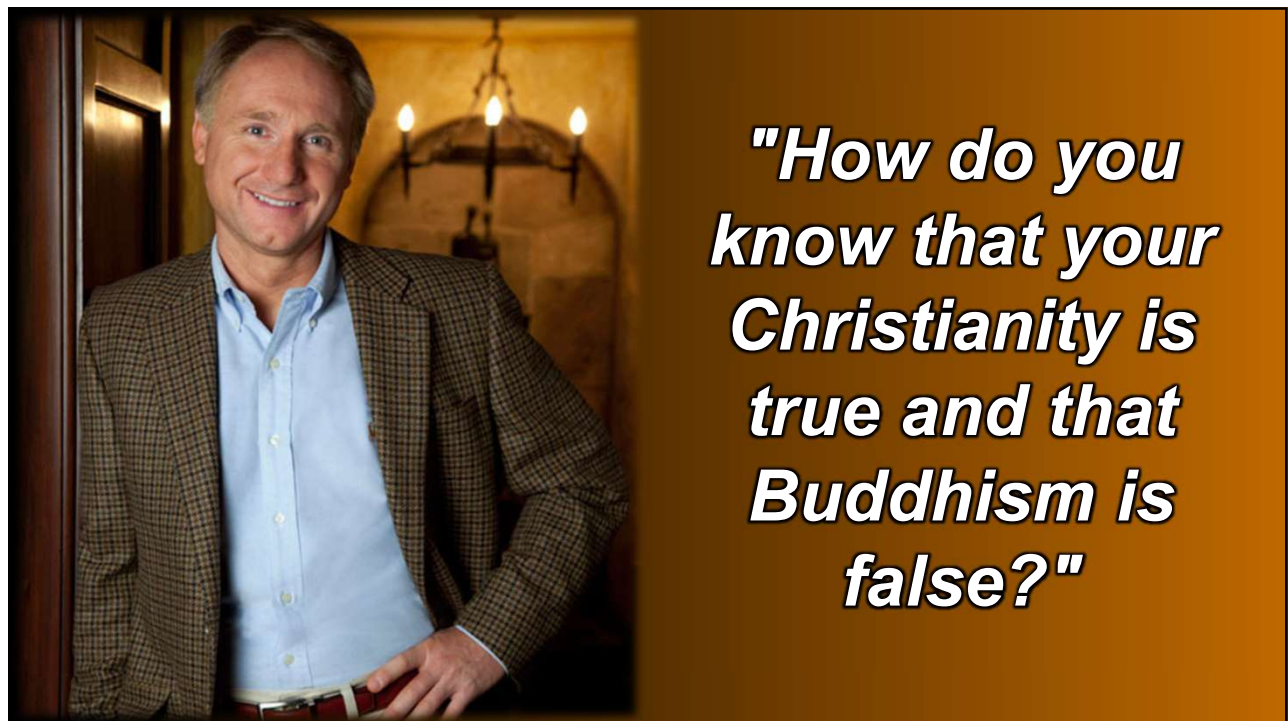


***What about those who were
raised to believe that the Sun
is moving and the Earth is
standing still?***

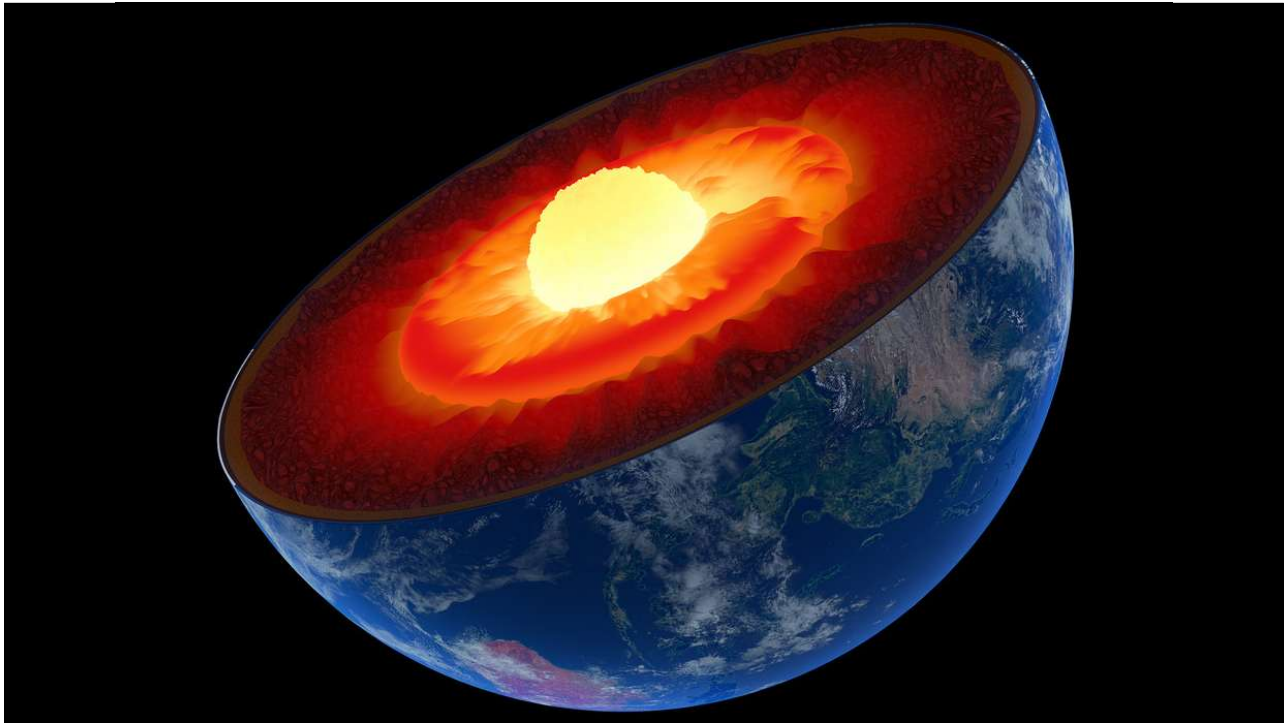




This would mean that he was raised to have a false religion.

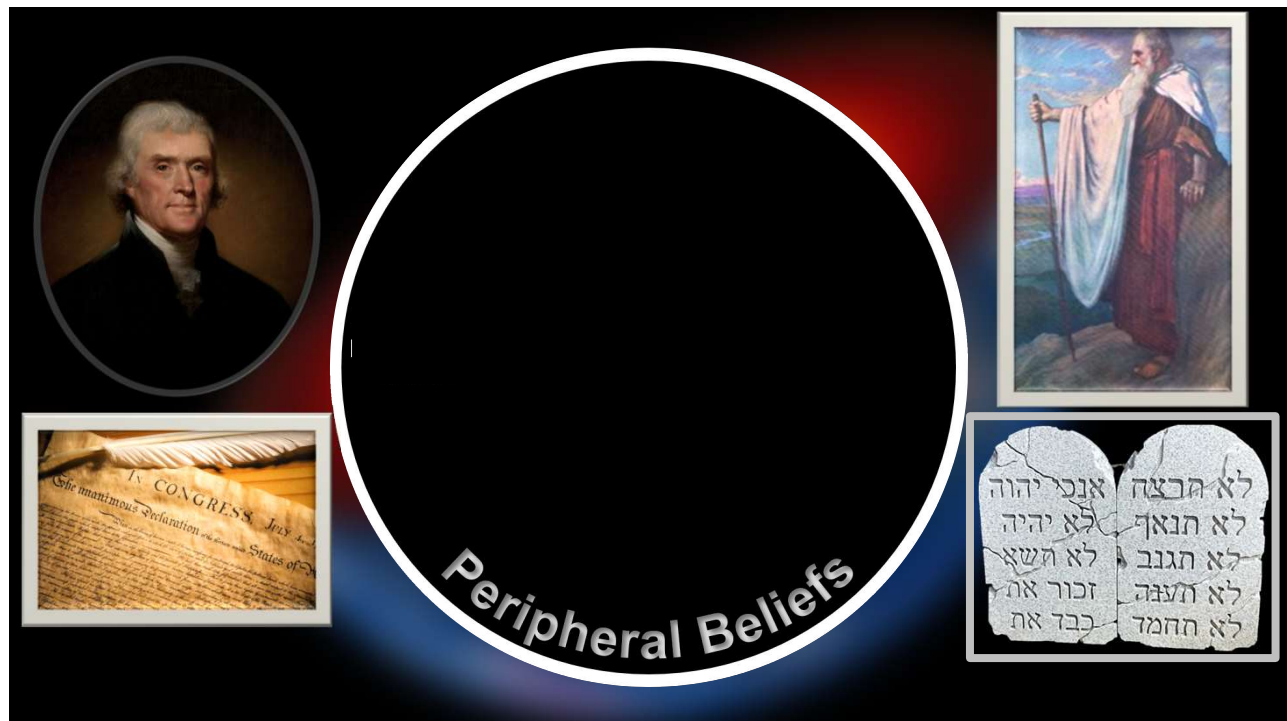


"How do you know that your Christianity is true and that Buddhism is false?"



***Are Not All
Religions the
Same at the Core?***

Core Beliefs vs. Peripheral Beliefs



IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

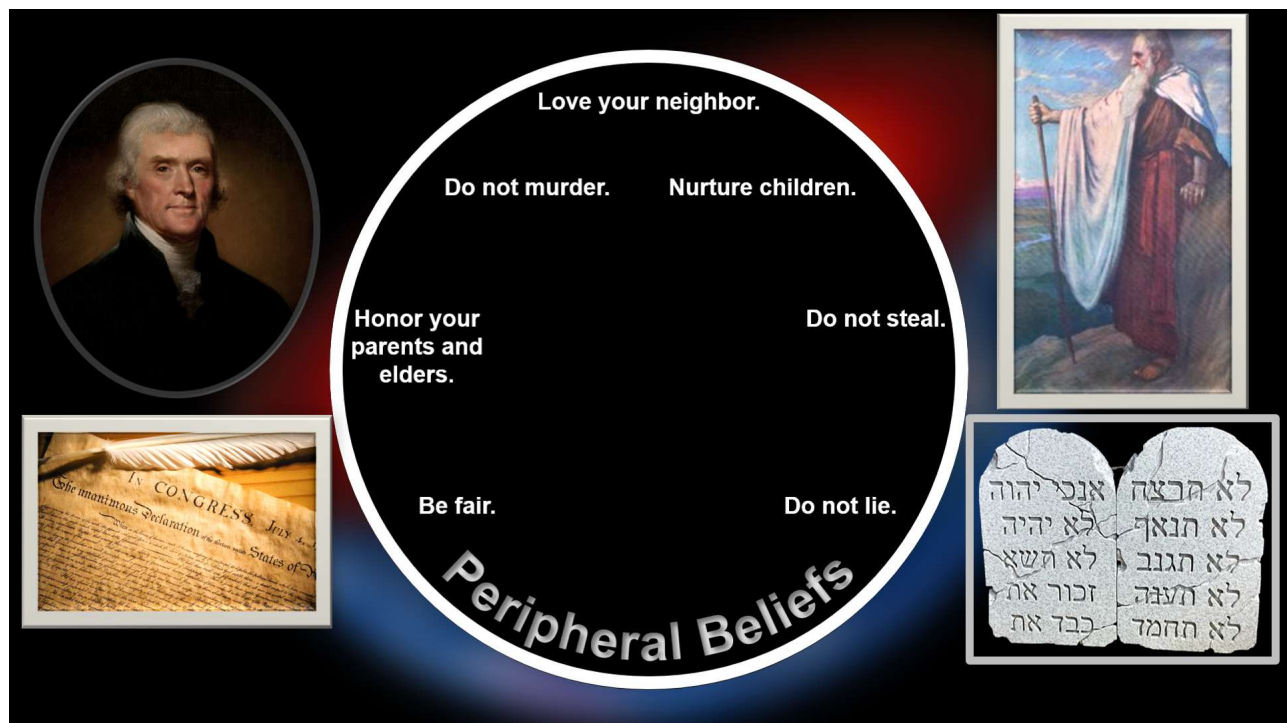
The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

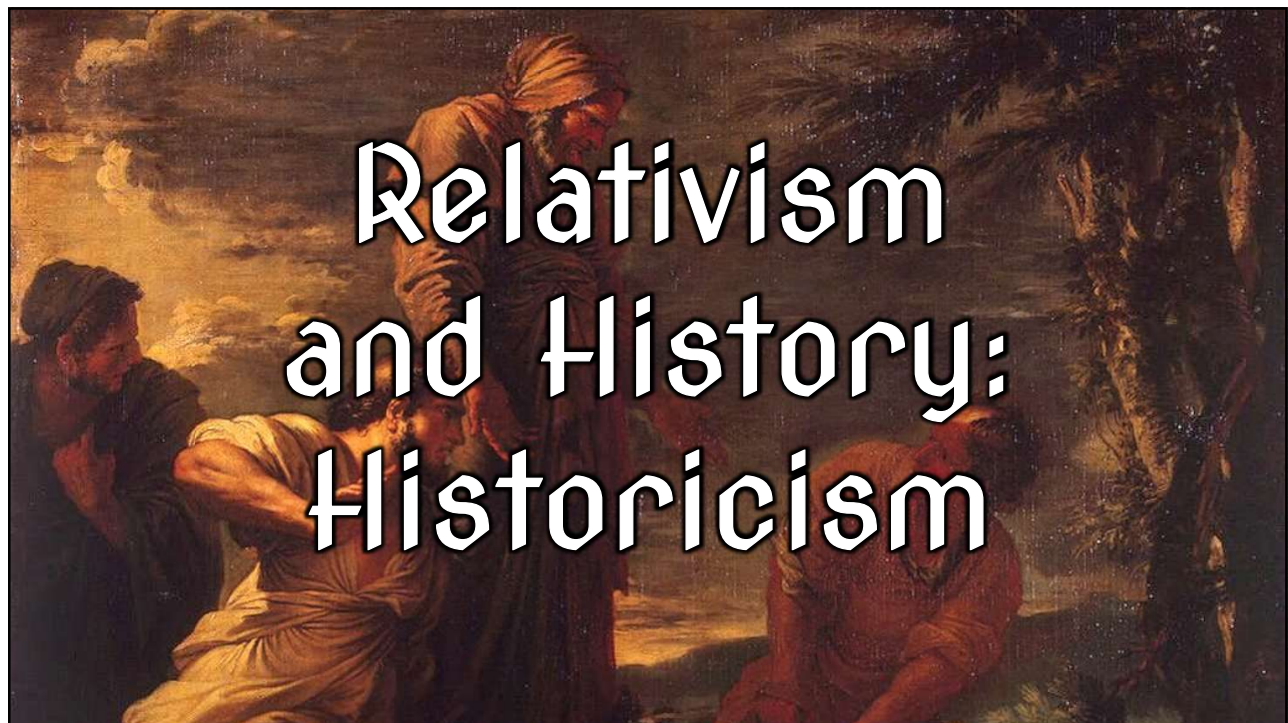
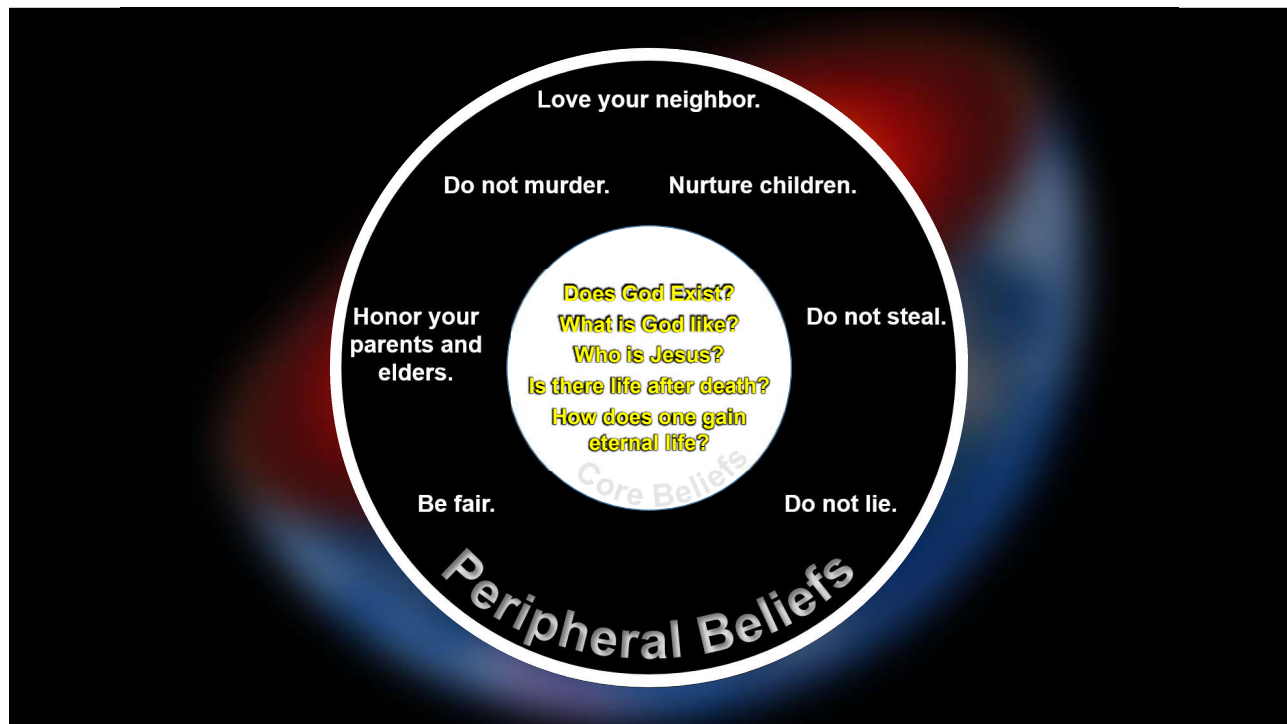
When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. — We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. — Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. — But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. — The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. — To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world. — He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. — He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. — He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right in principle, both to them and formerly to their ancestors only. — He has called together legislative Bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures. — He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the People. — He has refused for a long time after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of Anarchy from without, and convulsions within. — He has endeavored to prevent the Population of these States, for the purpose obstructing the Union; by refusing his Assent to Laws for encouraging their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands. — He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers. — He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries. — He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their substance. — He has kept standing Armies without the Consent of our Legislature. — He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the civil power. — He has combined with others to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation: — For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: — For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States: — For detaching

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

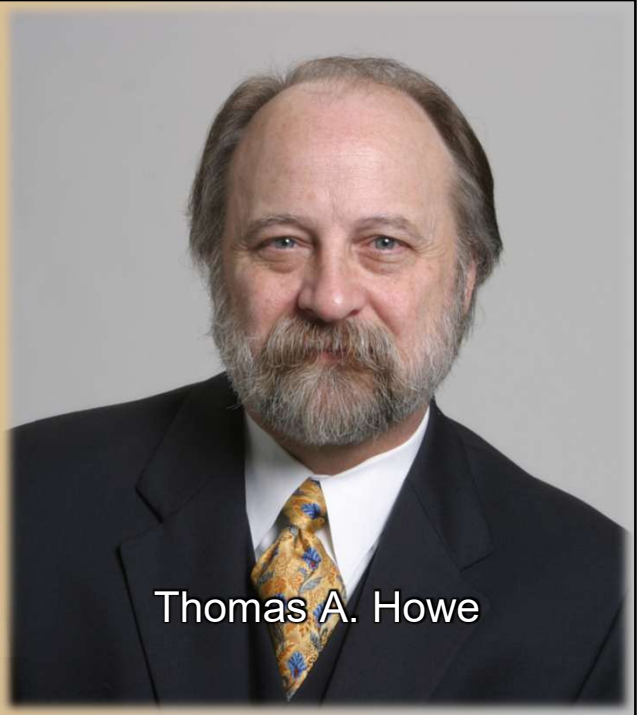
"...the Laws of Nature
and of Nature's God..."





"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]

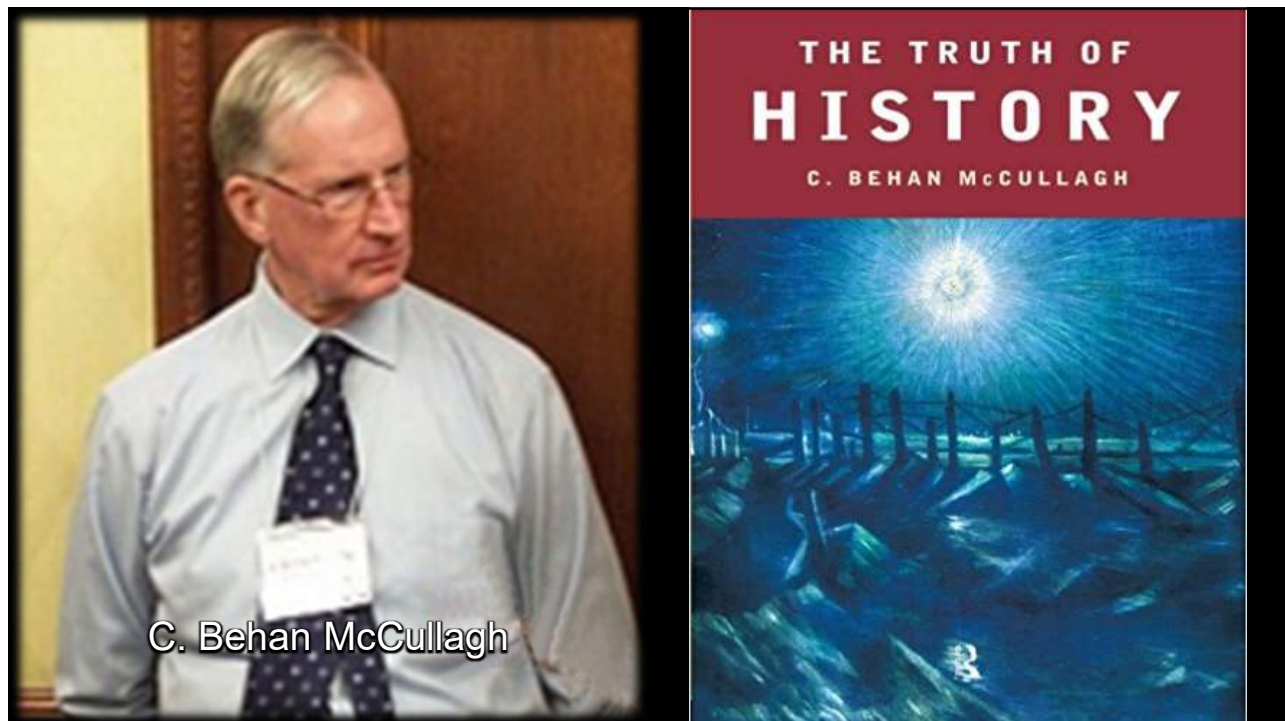
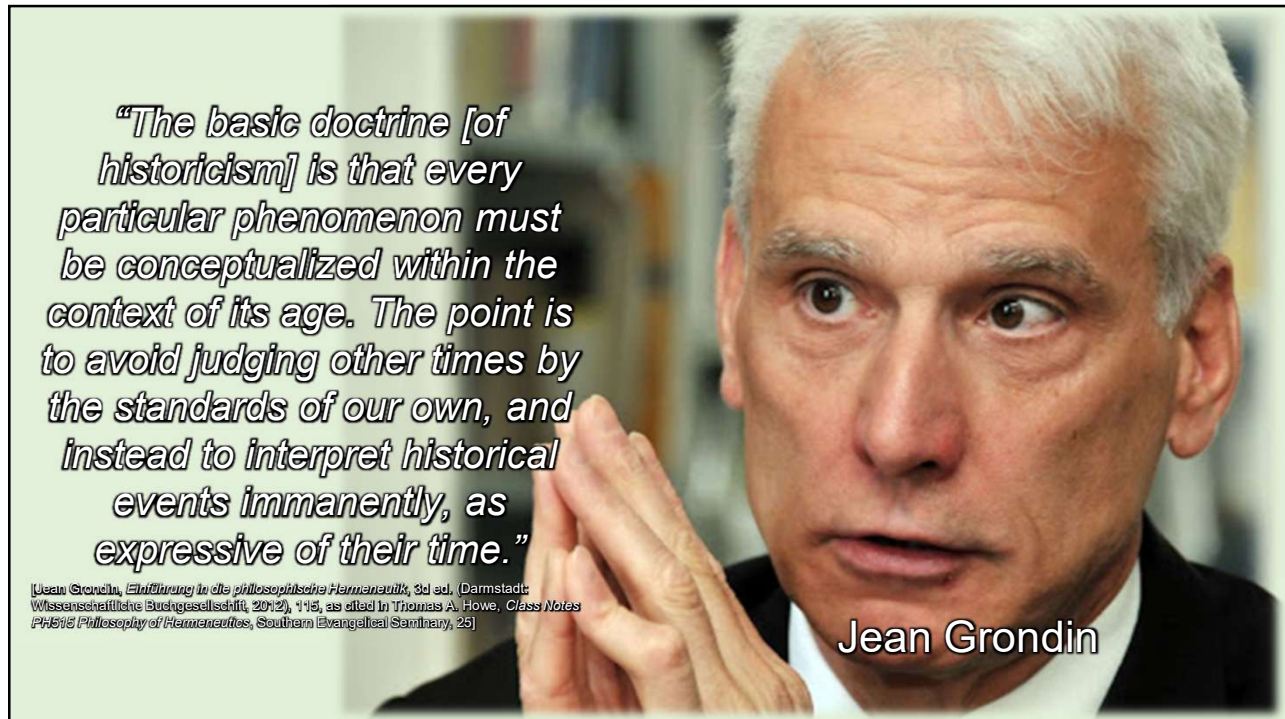


Thomas A. Howe

The notion of relativism with respect to history is sometimes called historicism.

*Historicism maintains that one's place in history (situatedness) **unavoidably** and **inescapably** prevents one from objective knowledge about reality.*


One can see the impact of historicism regarding objective moral judgments about other cultures and objective judgments about biblical interpretation.



A photograph of C. Behan McCullagh, an older man with glasses, wearing a light blue shirt and a dark tie with white polka dots. He is standing in front of a wooden panel wall.

C. Behan McCullagh

"First, scientists tell us that our perceptions are caused by things in the world stimulating our sense receptors ...

A photograph of C. Behan McCullagh, an older man with glasses, wearing a light blue shirt and a dark tie with white polka dots. He is standing in front of a wooden panel wall.


C. Behan McCullagh

"This being so, our perceptions are best described as providing us with information about reality, but not necessarily mirroring it precisely. ...

A photograph of C. Behan McCullagh, an older man with glasses, wearing a light blue shirt and a dark tie with white polka dots. He is standing in front of a wooden panel wall.

C. Behan McCullagh

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

A photograph of C. Behan McCullagh, an older man with glasses, wearing a light blue shirt and a dark tie with white polka dots. He is standing in front of a wooden panel wall.

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."

[C. Behan McCullagh, *The Truth of History* (London: Routledge, 1997), 17.]



C. Behan McCullagh

1. *They do not necessarily mirror things precisely.*
2. *They are influenced by our culture and so are not pure sense impressions of it.*
3. *They are influenced by our needs, interests and desires.*


Therefore, "it is wrong to say that our perceptions simply correspond to the world."



C. Behan McCullagh

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C. Behan McCullagh

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Therefore, "it is wrong to say that our perceptions simply correspond to the world."

Does McCullagh's observation about perceptions mirror them precisely?




C. Behan McCullagh

THE TRUTH OF PERCEPTIONS

1. They do not necessarily mirror things precisely.
2. They are influenced by our culture and so are not pure sense impressions of it.
3. They are influenced by our needs, interests and desires.

Therefore, "it is wrong to say that our perceptions simply correspond to the world."

Are McCullagh's observations about perceptions influenced by his culture?




C. Behan McCullagh

THE TRUTH OF PERCEPTIONS

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Therefore, "it is wrong to say that our perceptions simply correspond to the world."

Are McCullagh's observations about perceptions influenced by his needs, interests, and desires, culture?




C. Behan McCullagh

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Therefore, "it is wrong to say that our perceptions simply correspond to the world."

Does McCullagh's conclusion about his own observations follow, to wit, that McCullagh is wrong to say that his observations simply correspond to the world?



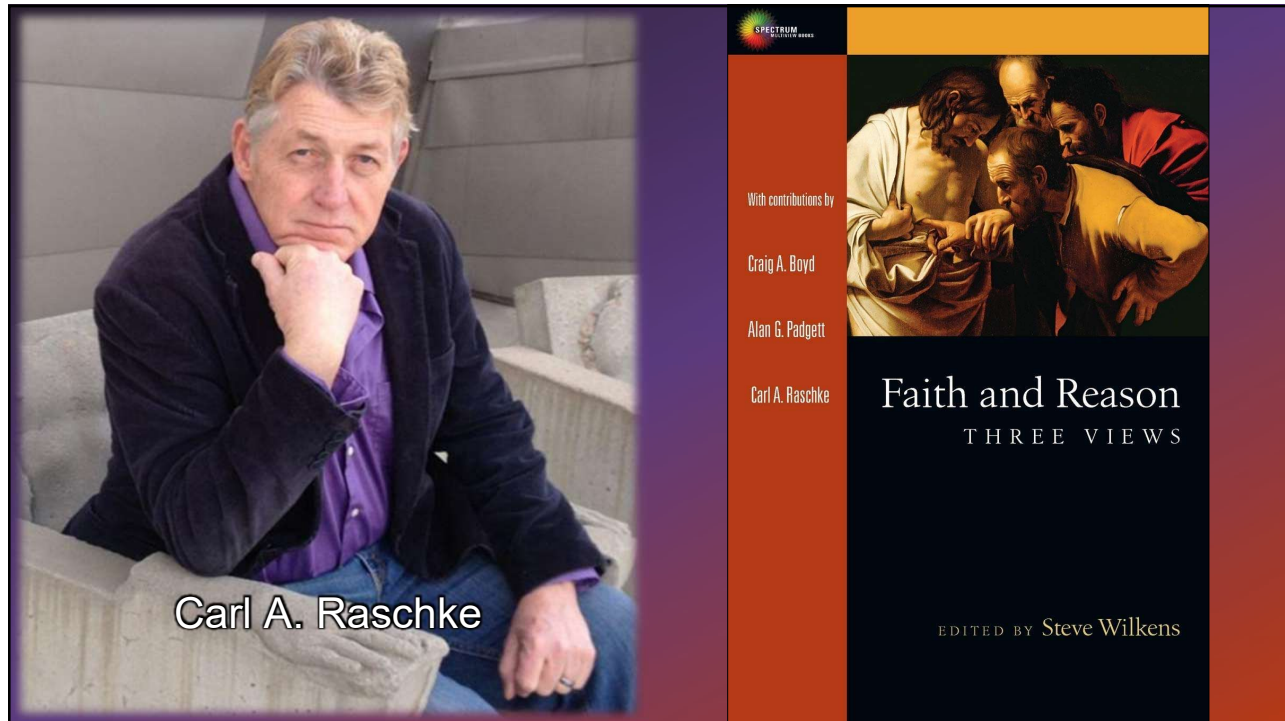
C. Behan McCullagh

THE TRUTH OF PERCEPTIONS

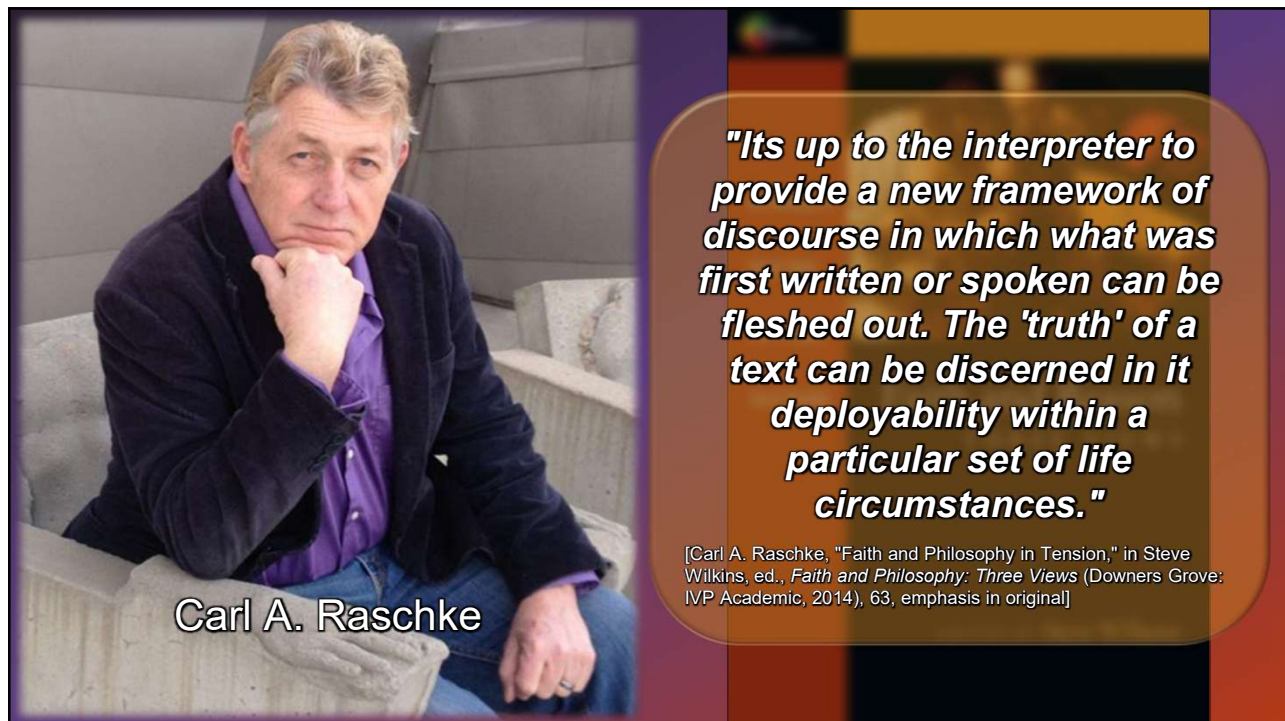
1. They do not necessarily mirror things precisely.
2. They are influenced by our culture and so are not pure sense impressions of it.
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Therefore, "it is wrong to say that our perceptions simply correspond to the world."


If so, then why should we believe that anything he says about perceptions is objectively true?



Carl A. Raschke




Carl A. Raschke



Carl A. Raschke

"Its up to the interpreter to provide a new framework of discourse in which what was first written or spoken can be fleshed out. The 'truth' of a text can be discerned in its deployability within a particular set of life circumstances."

[Carl A. Raschke, "Faith and Philosophy in Tension," in Steve Wilkins, ed., *Faith and Philosophy: Three Views* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 63, emphasis in original]



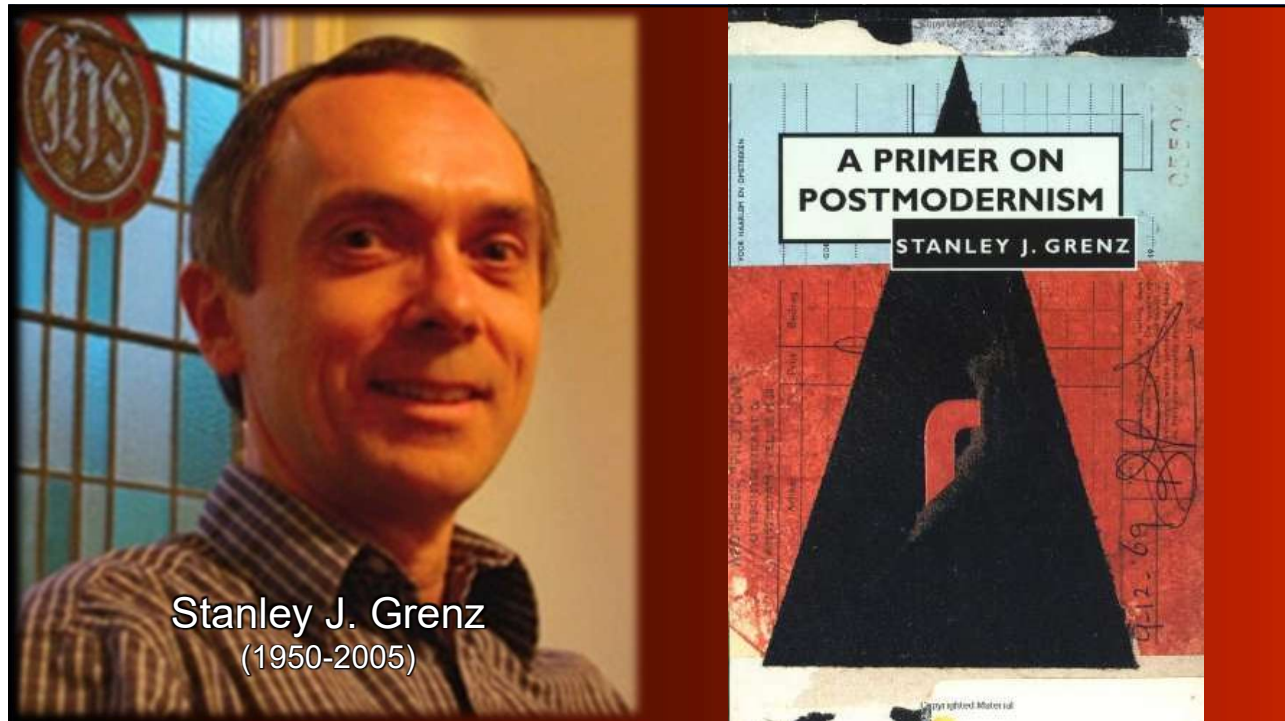
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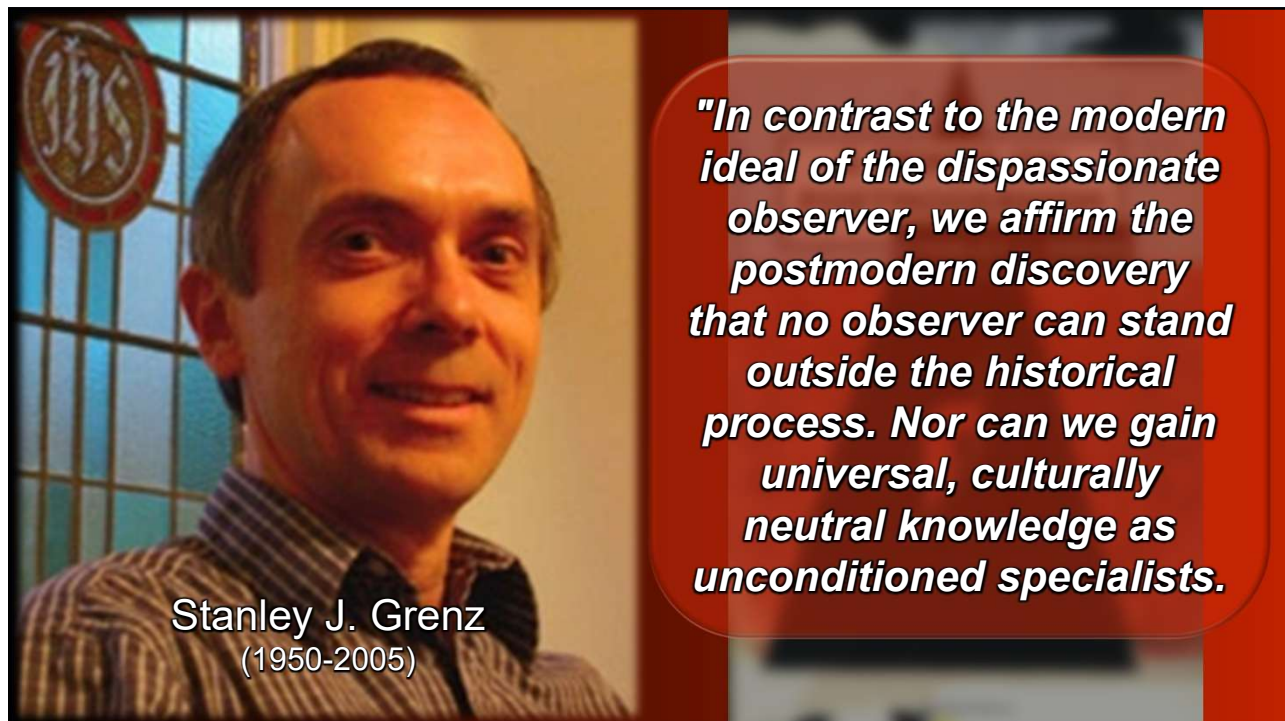
[Carl A. Raschke, "Faith and Philosophy in Tension," in Steve Wilkins, ed., *Faith and Philosophy: Three Views* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 63, emphasis in original]

If "it is up to the interpreter to provide a new framework of discourse," then how are we to take the meaning Raschke was seeking to communicate through his statement here?

If the interpreter provides a new framework, then why should we take Raschke's statement to be objectively true?

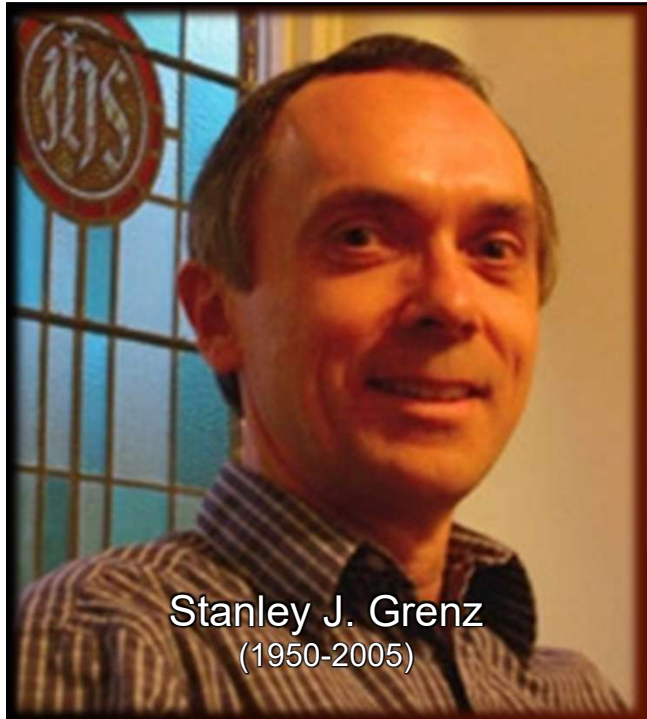


Stanley J. Grenz
(1950-2005)



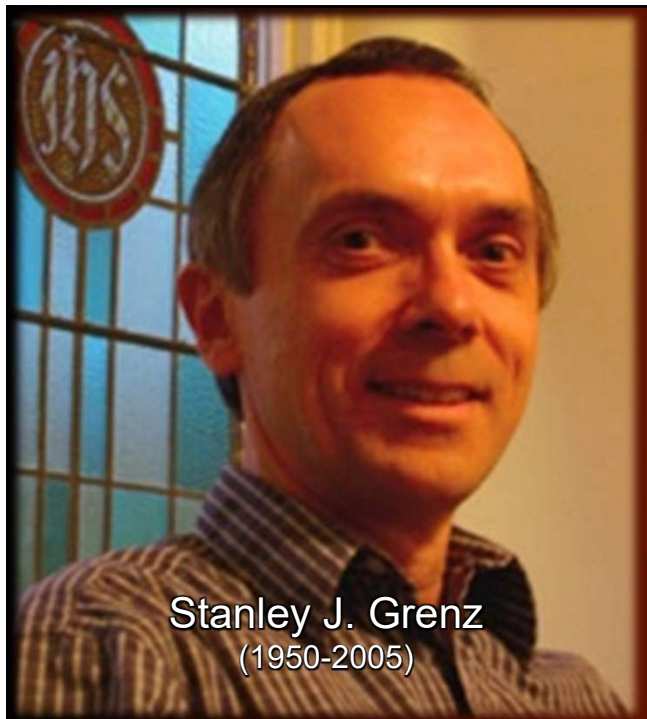
Stanley J. Grenz
(1950-2005)

"In contrast to the modern ideal of the dispassionate observer, we affirm the postmodern discovery that no observer can stand outside the historical process. Nor can we gain universal, culturally neutral knowledge as unconditioned specialists."

A portrait of Stanley J. Grenz, a man with short brown hair, wearing a striped shirt, smiling slightly. He is positioned in front of a window with a circular stained glass design featuring the letters 'IHS'.

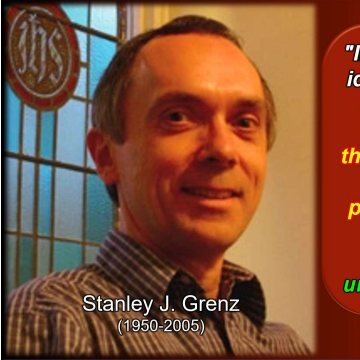
Stanley J. Grenz
(1950-2005)

"In contrast to the modern ideal of the dispassionate observer, we affirm the postmodern discovery that no observer can stand outside the historical process. Nor can we gain universal, culturally neutral knowledge as unconditioned specialists."

A portrait of Stanley J. Grenz, a man with short brown hair, wearing a striped shirt, smiling slightly. He is positioned in front of a window with a circular stained glass design featuring the letters 'IHS'.

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(1950-2005)

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If what Grenz says is true, then his own statement itself does not come from an observer who stands "outside the historical process" and, thus, the statement is not itself "neutral knowledge" coming from an "unconditioned specialist."

Since this is the case, why should we believe that it is objectively true?



Stanley J. Grenz
(1950-2005)

"On the contrary, we are participants in our historical and cultural context, and all our intellectual endeavors are unavoidably conditioned by that participation."


[Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 166]



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If "all our intellectual endeavors" are "unavoidably conditioned" then Grenz's own statement is itself "unavoidably conditioned."

But if his statement is "unavoidably conditioned," then why should we take it as objectively true?



Dan McGee

Medium

Truth and Postmodernism



Dan M. · Follow
4 min read · Mar 29, 2017



31



2



I initially thought this was a parody of conservative thinking, but on second reading, I realized that it was a genuine (albeit likely willful) lack of understanding of postmodernist thinking. Thus, there are some critiques the discussants should consider.

First, postmodernism (and epistemology generally) distinguishes between subjective truths and objective truths. The former are statements about one's individual experience of the world, while the latter comprise propositions supported either inductively or deductively.

For example, the colour red contains both objective and subjective truths. Objectively, 'red' is the term given to light in the visible spectrum with wavelengths around 650 nm. However, seeing the colour is a subjective experience that happens within the brain of each observer. Thus, my experience of seeing red need not be identical to yours.


The discussants might still object to the existence of subjective truths, saying



Dan McGee

"Postmodernism stresses the distinction between objectivity of facts, versus objectivity of knowledge or people. It accepts the possible existence of facts outside human context, but argues that **all knowledge is mediated** by an individual and that the experiences, **biases**, beliefs, and identity of that individual **necessarily influence how they mediate any knowledge.**"

[Dan McGee, "Truth and Postmodernism" downloaded from <https://medium.com/@danmcgee/truth-and-postmodernism-816ea9b3007a>, 02/14/25]



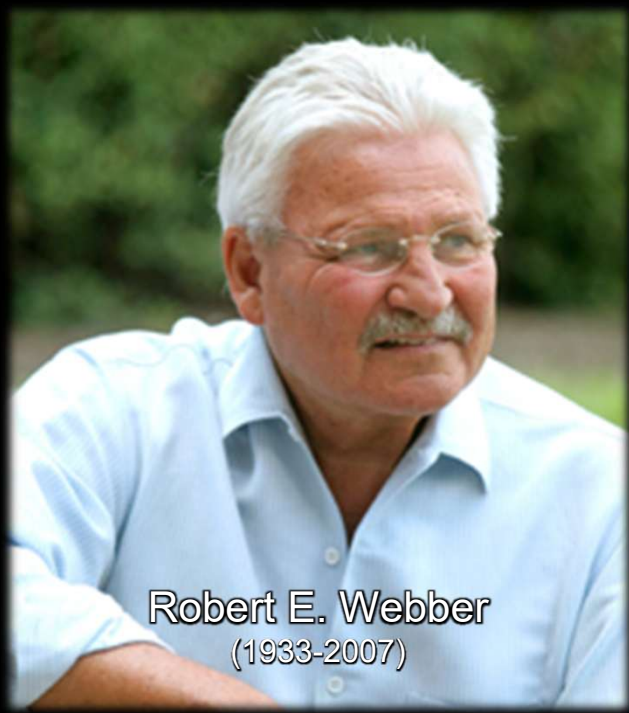
Dan McGee

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If "all knowledge is mediated" and the individual has "biases" that "necessarily influence how they mediate ANY knowledge" (emphasis added), then this would be true of Dan McGee and the knowledge claim he is making right here.

But if this is true of Dan McGee's claim here, why should we take his claim to be objectively true?



Robert E. Webber
(1933-2007)

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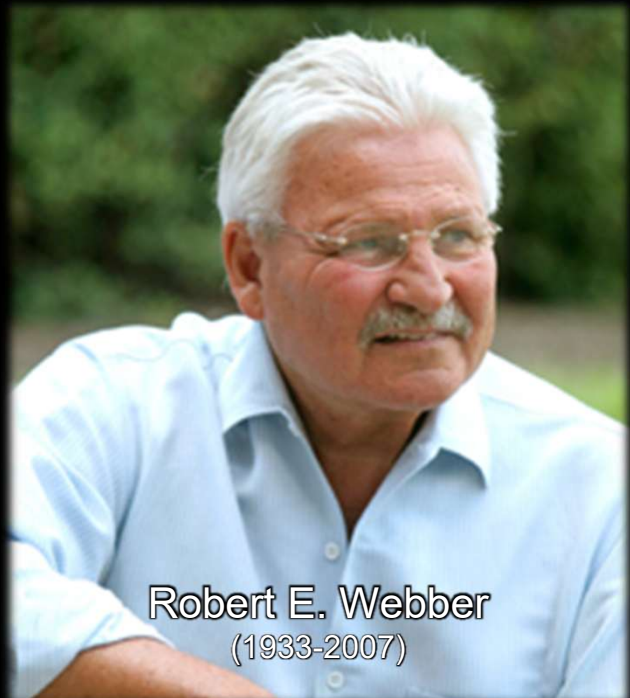
"[A] helpful and thorough guidebook" —*PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*

Meet a NEW GROUP of
LEADERS who are SHAPING the
FUTURE of a movement

the
**YOUNGER
Evangelicals**

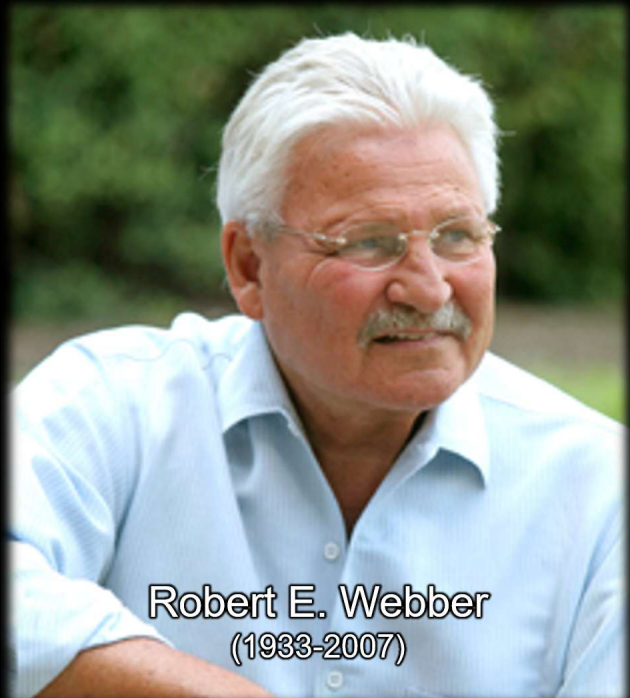
Facing the
CHALLENGES
of the New **WORLD**

robert e. WEBBER
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A portrait of Robert E. Webber, an older man with white hair, a mustache, and glasses, wearing a light blue button-down shirt. He is looking slightly to the right.

Robert E. Webber
(1933-2007)

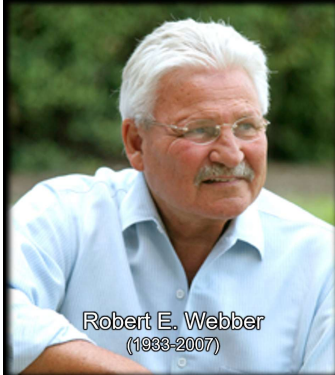
"In the twenty-first century world ... the new attitude ... is that the use of reason and science to prove or disprove a fact is questionable. ..."

A portrait of Robert E. Webber, an older man with white hair, a mustache, and glasses, wearing a light blue button-down shirt. He is looking slightly to the right.

Robert E. Webber
(1933-2007)

"This ... points ... to the postmodern conclusion that we deal with 'interpreted facts.'"

[Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 84]



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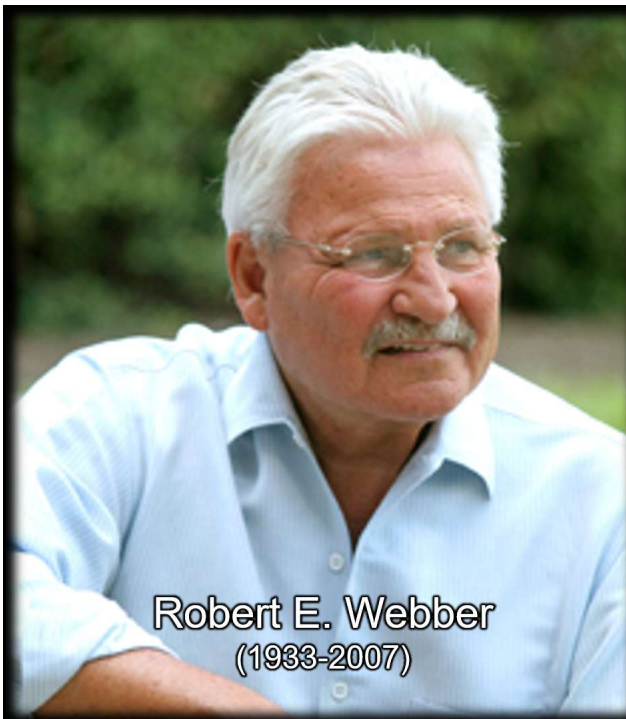
"This ... points
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'interpreted
facts.'"

[Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 84]

***Again, if we deal with
"interpreted facts," then
what does that say about
Webber's statement
itself?***

***Is his claim here merely
an "interpreted fact?"***

***If so, then why should we
take it as objectively
true?***



Robert E. Webber
(1933-2007)

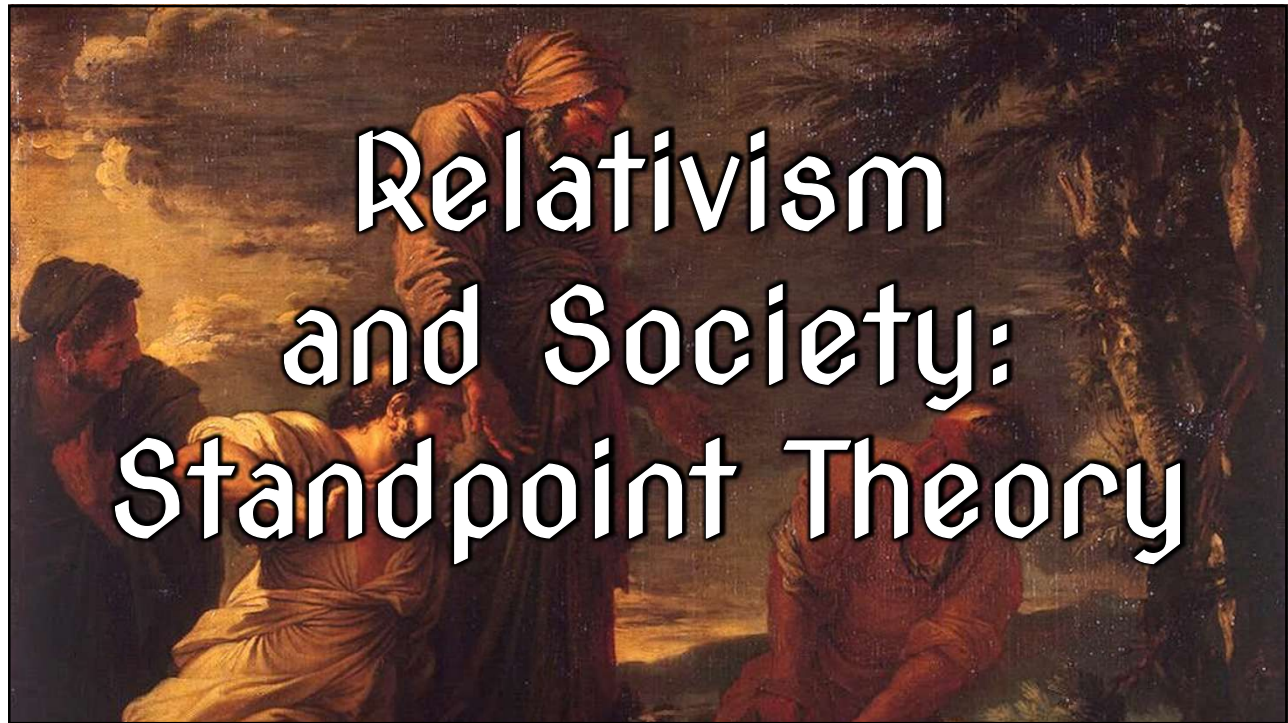
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 <p>Carl A. Raschke</p>	<p>"Meaning is ultimately determined by how the intricate structures of communication work together in an overarching manner, and it is up to the interpreter to provide a new framework of discourse in which what was first written or spoken can be fleshed out. The 'truth' of a text can be discerned in its deployability within a particular set of life circumstances."</p> <p><small>[Carl A. Raschke, "Faith and Philosophy in Tension," in Steve Wilkins, ed., <i>Faith and Philosophy: Three Views</i> (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 61, emphasis in original]</small></p>	 <p>Dan McGee</p>	<p>"Postmodernism stresses the distinction between objectivity of facts, versus objectivity of knowledge or people. It accepts the possible existence of facts outside human context, but argues that all knowledge is mediated by an individual and that the experiences, biases, beliefs, and identity of that individual necessarily influence how they mediate any knowledge."</p> <p><small>[Dan McGee, "Truth and Postmodernism" downloaded from https://medium.com/@darmogee/truth-and-postmodernism-816ea9b3007a, 05/09/22]</small></p>
 <p>Stanley J. Grenz (1950-2005)</p>	<p>"In contrast to the modern ideal of the dispassionate observer, we affirm the postmodern discovery that no observer can stand outside the historical process. Nor can we gain universal, culturally neutral knowledge as unconditioned specialists.</p>	 <p>Robert E. Webber (1933-2007)</p>	<p>"This ... points ... to the postmodern conclusion that we deal with 'interpreted facts.'"</p> <p><small>[Robert E. Webber, <i>The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World</i> (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 84]</small></p>



self-refuting statements



Sharon Crasnow

"Feminist standpoint theory is one of three alternatives to traditional philosophy of science proposed by Sandra Harding in her 1986 The Science Question in Feminism. Feminist standpoint theory has its roots in Marxism and takes as a starting point the idea that people in different social/political locations (different classes in its Marxist version) sometimes have access to information that those in more socially/politically privileged positions do not."

[Sharon Crasnow, "Feminist Standpoint Theory," in Nancy Cartwright and Eleonora Montuschi, eds. *Philosophy of Social Science: A New Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 146]

Communication Theory

All About Theories for Communication.

The Standpoint Theory

in PSYCHOLOGY, BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORY



"The standpoint theory is a post modernistic approach on people's perception. It states how the day-to-day experience alters or influences a person's opinions."

Generally, a standpoint arises when people recognize the value of power which creates different groups within society. The standpoint theory focuses on gender perception and gives attention to feminist viewpoints."

[<https://www.communicationtheory.org/the-standpoint-theory/>, accessed 07/14/25]

One should ask "when people recognize the value of power which creates different groups within society" whether their recognition and "opinions" are themselves altered by their own "day-to-day experience".

*"The standpoint theory is a post modernistic approach on people's perception. It states how the **day-to-day experience** alters or influences a person's **opinions**."*

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One should ask "when people recognize the value of power which creates different groups within society" whether their recognition and "opinions" are themselves altered by their own "day-to-day experience".

If the answer is 'no', then standpoint theory is not true.

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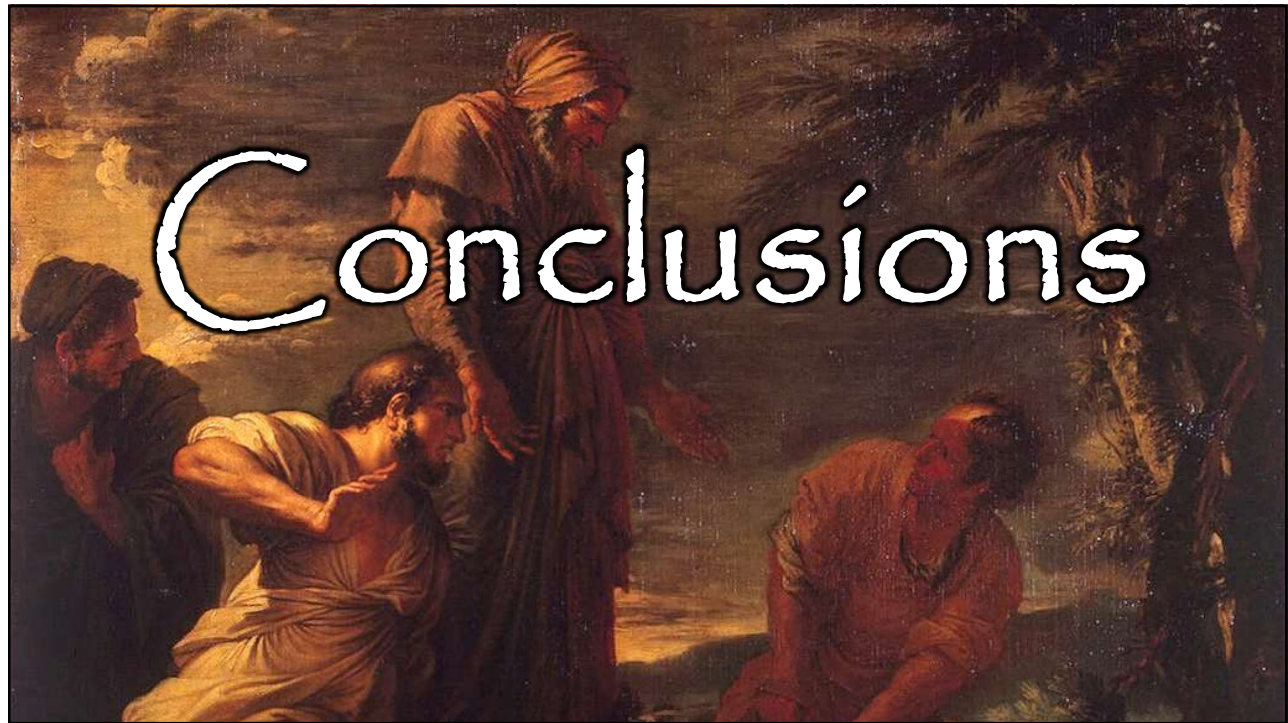
If the answer is 'no', then standpoint theory is not true.

If the answer is 'yes', then why should anyone take their recognition and opinions to be objectively the case?

*"The standpoint theory is a post modernistic approach on people's perception. It states how the **day-to-day experience alters** or influences a person's **opinions**."*

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- ❖ *Some things are subjective and "relative" to the individual.*
- ❖ *But other things are objective and are the same for everyone.*
- ❖ *The claims of Christianity proposit to be objective claims about reality.*
- ❖ *While Christianity shares some truths with other religions, the core, defining truths of Christianity make it unique.*
- ❖ *It is self-refuting to say that we cannot speak or write objective truths.*
- ❖ *Thus, the skeptic cannot claim that it is impossible to get objective truths from its text.*