



LOS ALTOS INSTITUTE

Doing Your Own Research

Notes for Los Altos Institute's Half-Day Course

The Context of “Do Your Own Research”

- The rise of the pejorative in 2020
- Science versus “the Science”
- Short history of expertise
 - The wool boom
 - Bonnie Henry vs. David Bowering et al
 - Old criteria: citation, peer review, subspecialties, etc.
- The role of the pharmaceutical sector
 - Discursive shift conditioned by proximity to opioid crisis

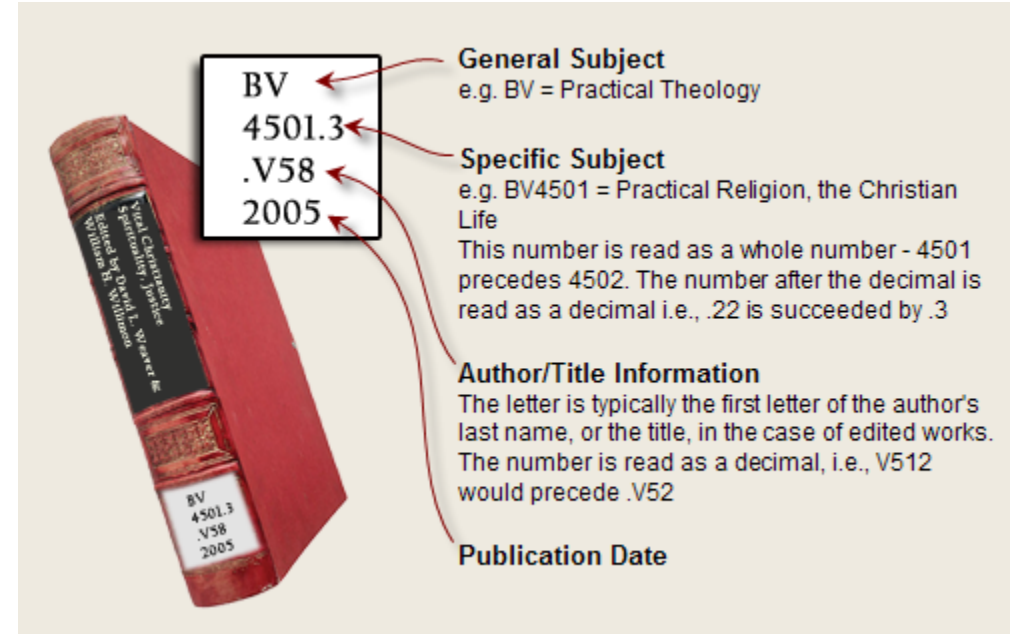


The Basics

- Primary sources
 - Archaeological finds
 - Physical objects
 - Eye-witness accounts
 - Contemporary literary and media interpretations
 - Personal correspondence
- Secondary sources
 - Academic analyses
 - Journalistic analyses
- Crossovers
 - The aging/outdating of secondary sources e.g. early anthropology
 - The reappraisal of past scholarship e.g. Soviet epigenetics

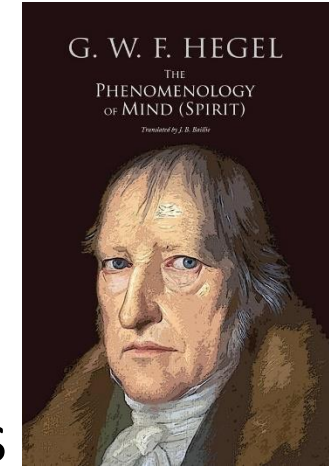
Two Kinds of Libraries

- Circulation libraries
 - Dewey Decimal System
 - School libraries
 - Community libraries
 - Reading room libraries
- Reference libraries
 - Library of Congress system
 - University/college libraries
- Who would stock, how would they shelve *The Secret*?

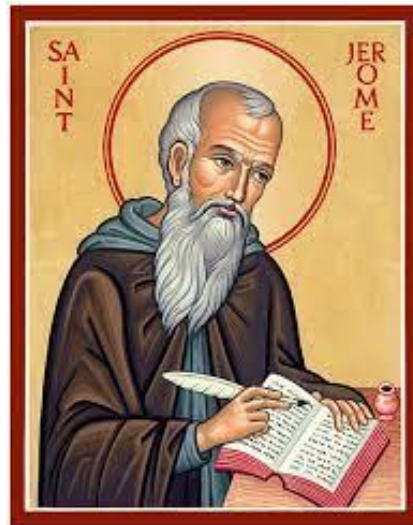


Text Criticism

Best Practices for textual analysis



- Religious background of text criticism
 - Jerome's canonization process
 - Enlightenment text criticism
- Left Hegelians of the Tubingen Institute
 - The synoptic problem



- Text critical principles
 - Multiple Independent Attestation
 - Existence of Socrates
 - Crucifixion of Jesus
 - Embarrassment/Inconvenience
 - Jesus' baptism by John
 - Jesus visit to home town
 - Dissimilarity
 - Not identical yet credible
 - Contextual credibility
 - Jarl Fossum and Samaritan hypostasis

History of the University

- The Scholastic Renaissance
 - Crisis of the Cathedral Schools
 - Peter Abelard and the rise of the university
- The modern university
 - Rise of the tenure system
 - The lab-centred university and the Prussian state
 - The emotional politics of peer review
- Blairite austerity and the university
 - Rise of the sessional/adjunct
 - Dependence on foreign student fees



Peer Review

- Cornerstones of peer review
 - Endogamy
 - Adversarial culture
 - Job security
 - Indirect monetization
 - “Blind” reviewing
 - Methodological atheism
- Practitioners of peer review
 - University-based journals
 - Non-profit journals
 - E.g. The Lancet
- Academic publishers
 - E.g. Routledge, Wiley
- Forces undermining peer review
 - Job insecurity
 - Epistemological fragmentation
 - Financial interventions by industrial sectors
 - Woke social sanction
 - Fake journals

Intermission

Fake and Corrupt Journals After the Break

Kinds of Fake and Corrupt Journals

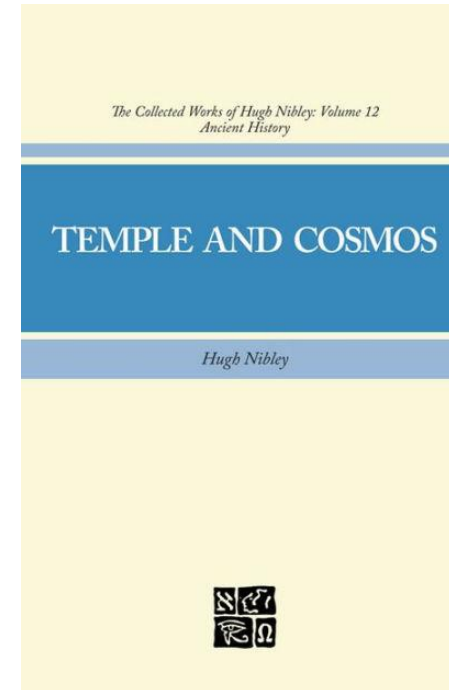
- Faith-based journals
 - E.g. FARMs Review, Journal of Cistercian Studies
- Industry-captured journals
 - E.g. New England Journal of Medicine, the Lancet
- “Journals” created by industry/think tanks
 - E.g. Cato Journal
 - “Sunsetting” strategy due to legitimacy shift
- Pay for play “journals”
 - E.g. European Scientific Journal



There is no guarantee of reliable peer review in any journal today

Academic Fakery Techniques

- Citations that do not match claims
 - E.g. mollusk citations in human biology articles
 - E.g. article topic fraud
- Translations that do not match claims
 - E.g. Hugh Nibley and the three temples system
- Citation of extra-disciplinary experts
 - E.g. “Cultural Marxism” experts, ING Direct
- Citations of primary sources as secondary sources
- Use of standpoint epistemology, personal narration of experience



Fake Presentations of Fakery



- The infamous BBC milk story

- Interviewee has unrelated qualifications
- Interviewee misrepresents topic of four of five studies
- Interviewee cites peer reviewed study with no cohort assembly, testing, etc.
 - Misrepresents object of study anyway
- Presenter does not challenge interviewee in any way
- “Or better!” – sheer invention

Social Science and the Decline of the Cohort

- The golden age of social science 1950-85, rises and falls with the Welfare State
- Medical procedures for broad spectrum of empirical research incorporated into social science:
 - E.g. cohorts, control groups, retrospective cohorts
 - Rules concerning study duration to know outcomes
 - Michael Apted's 7 series emblematic of this
- With the rise of standpoint epistemology, soft methodologies 1985-, feedback effects begin to slowly break down medicine
 - Influence of pharmaceutical industry

Failures of Cohort Studies

- Duration
 - Post-Covid discourse amplifies duration objections
 - Suicidality studies re: trans youth 3 vs 96-month durations
- Lack of anonymity
- Lack of randomness
- Sizes too small for study
- Indirect payments by interested parties
 - Especially in the case of Pharma
- Abandonment of cohort assembly in favour of narrative/anecdotes
 - Early role of Kimberle Crenshaw (1989, 1992)

Logical Fallacies

- *Ad hominem*
 - Al Gore's Plane
 - Reverse oracle
- *Post hoc ergo propter hoc*
- Either/or reasoning
- Begging the question
- Statistical inversion
 - Make things small groups do seem improbable
- Oversimplification
- Non sequitur
- Hidden premise
 - E.g. "natural" is good
 - E.g. the moral arc of the universe bends towards justice
 - E.g. Things have only one true cause

Practicalities of Research

- Research libraries
 - Access to collections
 - Access to electronic journals
 - Access to libraries advisors
- Online journal indices
 - JSTOR: highest standard
 - Pubmed: lower standard
 - Google Scholar, free services: avoid
- Archives
 - Often attached to research libraries
- Newspapers
 - Same rule: paid always better
 - Guardian retconning
- State agencies
 - Legislature/parliamentary agencies
 - Long-term independent agencies
 - Problems of Stats Can 2006-
- Syndical professions
 - Different degrees of capture
 - Nursing vs Engineering, e.g.

Handling Agenda-Driven Publication

- Agenda-driven publishing is most online material
- Never ignore agenda-driven communication but rigorously categorize
 - Did pass peer review?
 - Could pass peer review?
 - Does it have sufficient, responsible citations?
 - Are there at least three qualified scholars who agree this is possible?
 - Does it demonstrate knowledge of other scholarship, its arguments?
 - Is it monetized?
 - Could appear in legacy media?
 - Primary source about opinion, culture, etc.?
- If working with video content, analyze transcript to determine standard

The Context

- Problems of epistemology
- Problems of tribalism
 - Double standards
 - Reverse oraclism
 - Dismissal out of hand
- The Common Sense tradition
- Expertise vs Knowledge
- Possibilities for populist scholarship
- Reconnecting with tradition

