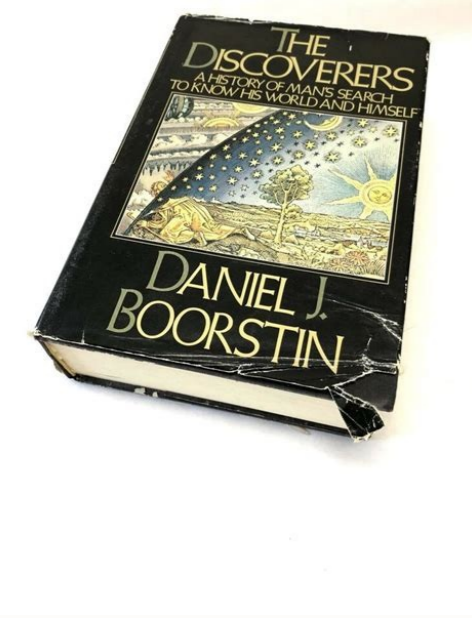
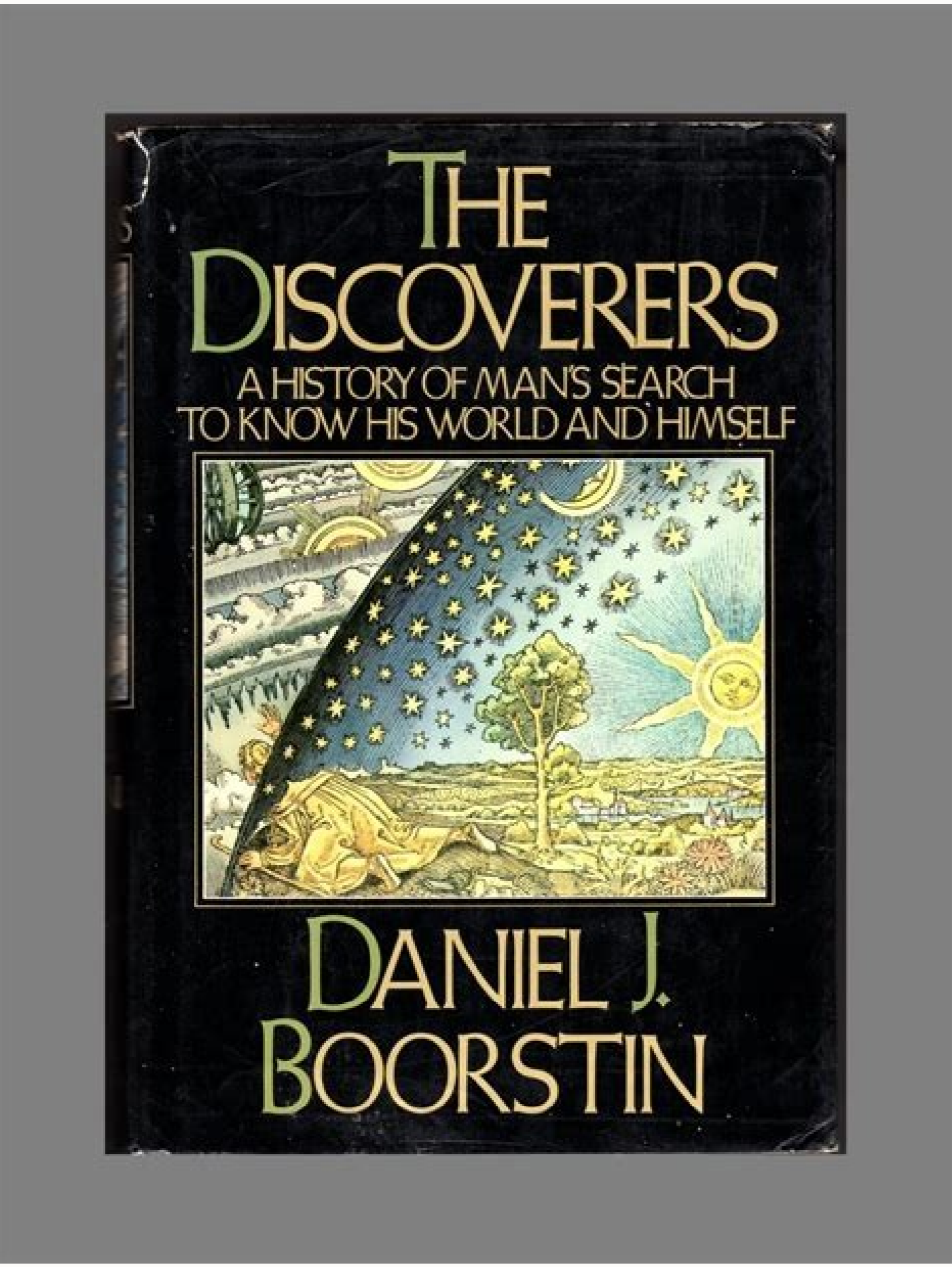
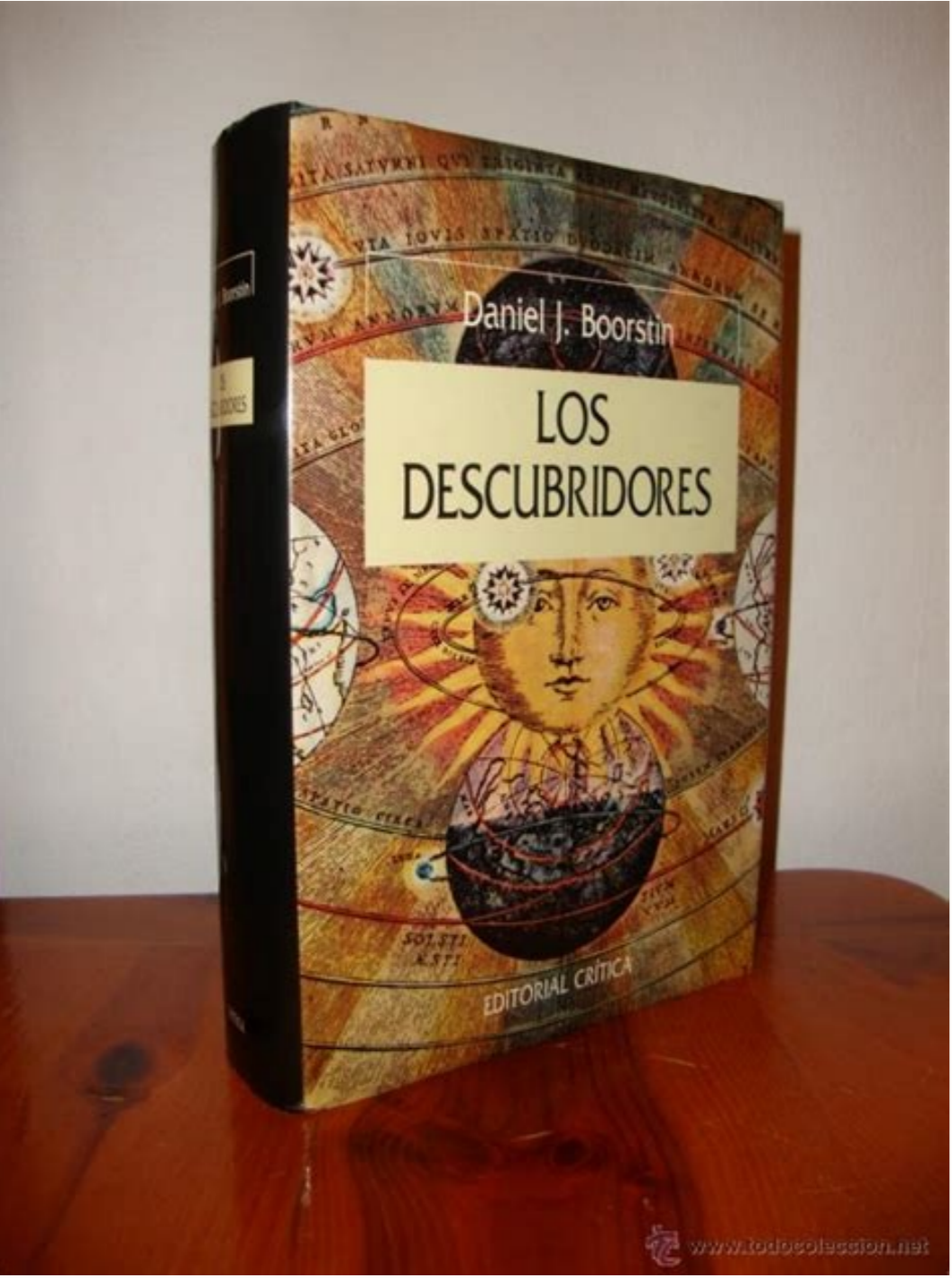
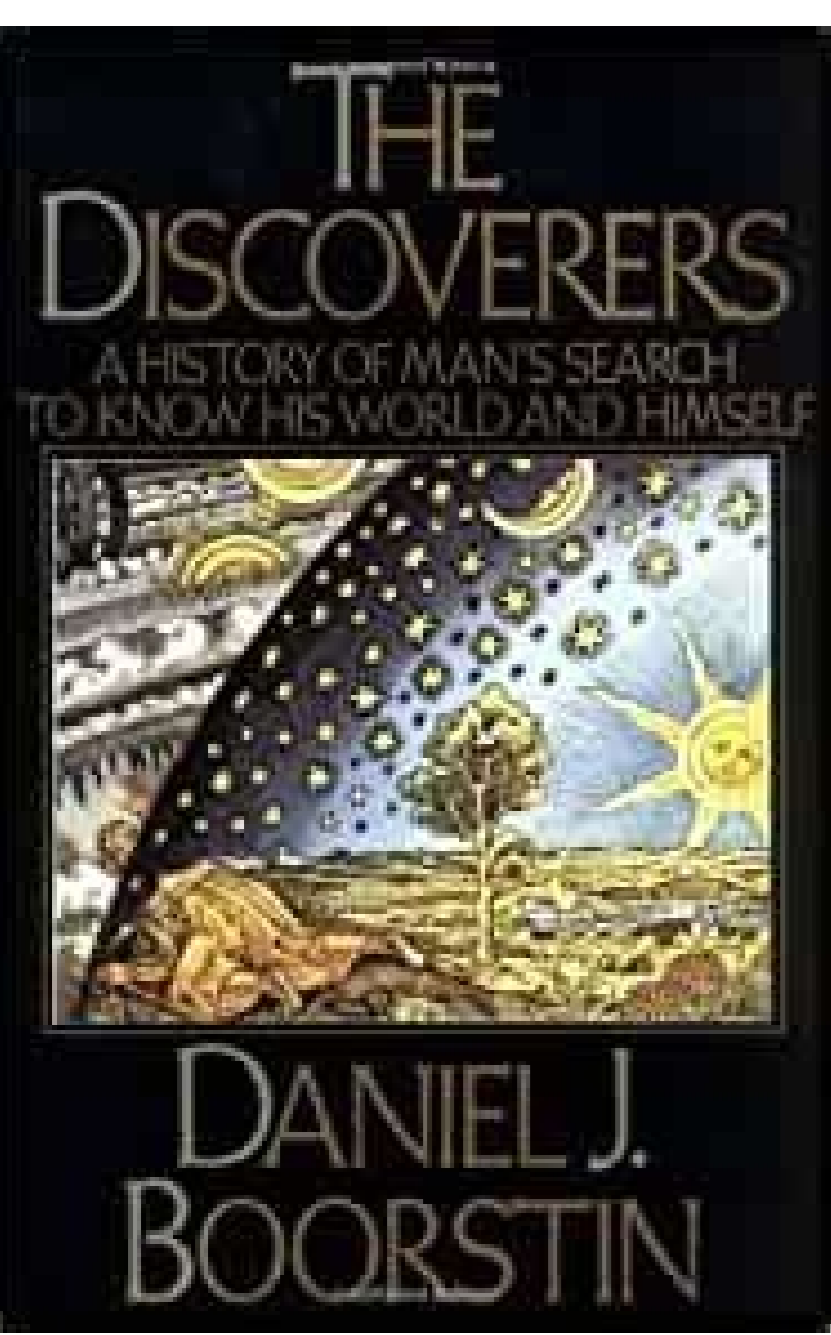
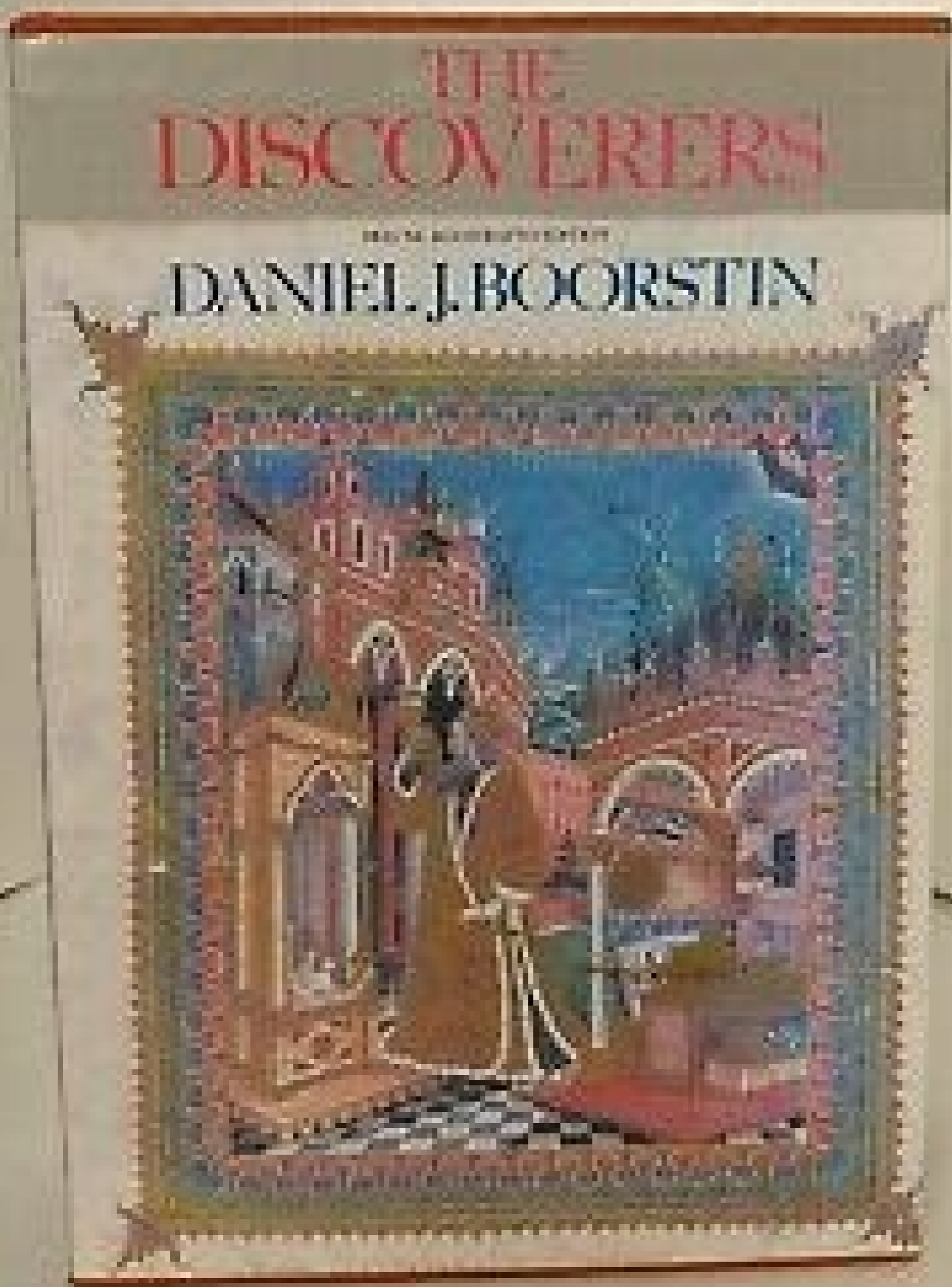


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One of the most ambitious books I have ever read. Boorstin sets off to cover the interplay between society and technological development from the most primitive timekeeping devices up to the wave-particle theory. And he succeeds admirably. This book is required reading for anyone trying to understand how the world works. Some of the best quotes from the book: "The most promising words ever written on the maps of human knowledge are terra incognita—unknown territory" "THE great obstacle to discovery One of the most ambitious books I have ever read. Boorstin sets off to cover the interplay between society and technological development from the most primitive timekeeping devices up to the wave-particle theory. And he succeeds admirably. This book is required reading for anyone trying to understand how the world works. Some of the best quotes from the book: "The most promising words ever written on the maps of human knowledge are terra incognita—unknown territory" "THE great obstacle to discovering the shape of the earth, the continents, and the ocean was not ignorance but the illusion of knowledge" "Slow to change, the sacred written sources acquired credibility by repetition. Sea charts, however, were tested not by literature but by experience. No amount of theology would persuade a mariner that the rocks his ship foundered on were not real." "For the sea had no memory. While the topography of the land remained servile to the written word, to rumor, myth, and tradition, the seascape remained a realm of freedom, freedom to learn from experience, to be guided by fact, and to increase knowledge." "The world's curiosities had become mere symptoms of China's virtue. So was revealed a Chinese Wall of the Mind against the lessons of the rest of the planet." "Columbus might have set out from Cádiz, the main Spanish seaport on the Atlantic, but Cádiz was crowded on his appointed day, for it had been designated as the principal point of embarkation for departing Jews. His day of departure, August 2, 1492, had also been fixed by their Most Catholic Majesties, Ferdinand and Isabella, as the deadline for the expulsion of all Jews from Spain." "TRUTHS," Descartes observed, "are more likely to have been discovered by one man than by a nation." "Europe's ancient institutions of learning, colleges and universities, had been founded not to discover the new but to transmit a heritage. By contrast, the Royal Society and other parliaments of scientists, with their academies in London, Paris, Florence, Rome, Berlin, and elsewhere, aimed to increase knowledge." "The 'liberal arts'—the prescribed foundation of a 'liberal education,' i.e., the subjects best suited for liberi, freemen—might have been called the 'literary arts.'" For the trivium, the whole curriculum for the Bachelor of Arts degree in the Middle Ages consisted of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, read in the Latin works of ancient Rome. Only for the advanced degree, the Master of Arts, was the student examined in the broader quadrivium, which comprised arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music." "When Alcuin joined Charlemagne at Aachen, they naturally made the reform and standardizing of calligraphy a major concern. To ensure the accuracy of holy texts it was essential to bring the learned world together. In this lucky collaboration, Alcuin had the knowledge and the taste to devise standards, Charlemagne had the administrative power, the organization, and the will to enforce them. At his school of calligraphy in the monastery of St. Martin's in Tours, Alcuin taught his reformed script. He had studied ancient monuments and recent manuscripts in search of the most elegant, most legible, and most writable forms. His capital letters followed the dignified inscriptions of Augustan Rome. Then, drawing on the experiments of other monks and on his long experience at York in supervising the transcription of the famous Golden Gospels, he produced a standard form for small letters. Alcuin's Carolingian Minuscule proved successful beyond his dreams. Neat and attractive, easy to write and to read, it dominated scriptoria and libraries. Seven hundred years later, when movable type came to Europe, and after only a brief Gothic interlude, the letters were fashioned on the model of Carolingian Minuscule. Long after other monuments of Charlemagne's empire have crumbled, the pages of this book in your hands remain a vivid reminder of the power of the well-designed written word. What we call the Roman alphabet is really Alcuin's alphabet." "In Europe, though there are records of leather money in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, no record of paper money appears until an issue in Sweden in 1648." "Three centuries later, during the Mongol dynasty, the Chinese tried casting the separate characters not in ceramics but in tin. Still printers found it "both more exact and more convenient" to carve characters on a large block of wood which was "then cut in squares with a small fine saw till each character forms a separate piece." But the Chinese language had no alphabet, which meant that more than thirty thousand type characters were needed. How could these be stored for easy retrieval? One expedient was to classify the characters into the five tones of the Chinese language, then subdivide them into rhyme sections according to the official Book of Rhymes. With this in mind, printers equipped themselves with revolving tables, each about seven feet in diameter, topped by a round bamboo frame divided into compartments. Even with such aids, the selection of the type for a text would be laborious and the replacement of the pieces for reuse would be tedious." "To the Kentish housewife in Caxton's day the English spoken by a London merchant sounded for all the world like French. A century later, in Shakespeare's day, that could not have happened. Caxton's work was largely responsible for the change." "The refusal of Muslim leaders to adopt the printing press also helps explain many of the features of the modern Arabic-speaking world... Not until the Westernizing reform movements (1839-76) of the mid-nineteenth century that aimed to secularize education did printed books again become a force in the life of Turkey. Finally in 1874 the Turkish government gave permission to print the Koran, but only in Arabic." "Poetry cannot be translated," observed Dr. Johnson, "and therefore it is the poets that preserve the language." "But President Andrew Jackson was reputed to have said that he had no respect for a man who knew only one way to spell a word" "One of the greatest Greek inventions was the idea of history. The word "history," along with its cognates in European languages, derives through the Latin historia from the word historiē, which the Greeks used to mean "inquiry," or "knowing by inquiry." Its original meaning survives in the expression "natural history" for inquiry into nature. And this characteristic Greek notion of "inquiry" bore fruit in the sixth century B.C., in the Ionian Enlightenment. "The Greek gods, timeless on Olympus, had not exhorted people to remember their past. But Judaism was oriented to the past, a historical religion in a sense quite alien to the Hindu, the Buddhist, or the Confucian. "Blessed is the nation," sang the Psalmist, "whose God is the Lord, and the people whom he hath chosen for his inheritance." God's purpose for the Jews was disclosed in the past recorded in Sacred Scripture. By recalling the favors and the tribulations that God had visited on them, Jews discovered and remembered their mission as a chosen people. For Jews, remembering the past was the way to remember their God. Scripture told the story of the world from Creation, and Jewish holidays were celebrations or re-enactments of the past." The promise of Jesus Christ, the Christian way out of the cycles, was not an escape into some Universal. Rather it was the extension of the uniqueness of the person forever and ever. The Gospels repeatedly promised "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Christian ideal was not to escape rebirth but to be reborn and so live on forever in a heavenly afterlife. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "The "finality of Jesus," elaborated by Augustine into a theory of history, would govern Christian thought in Europe for the next thousand years." "Only in 1949 did the Chinese government go New Style with the Gregorian calendar. A common time-denominator for the world's events would make it easier to define the latitudes of history, and so discover which events were happening in different places at the same time, and then, too, which of the world's events came before or after others. During most of human history, even in Western Christendom, as we have seen, there was no uniform scheme—in fact, no scheme at all—for dating events in one place in relation to events in another place." "For the base event in his chronology, Newton, oddly enough, chose the fabled voyage of the Argonauts. This great scientist erected the whole grand structure of his world chronology on the flimsiest possible foundation—the date of the mythical adventure led by Jason to Colchis in search of the Golden Fleece. The Argo, Jason's ship, was said to contain a beam cut from the divine tree of Dodona which could foretell the future." "Morgan's efforts to collect data led him to employ a device that was wonderfully adapted to the new world of incremental science. This was the questionnaire. A circular letter or schedule of questions had been tried before by tax collectors and census gatherers. But Morgan's appears to be the first large-scale worldwide effort to gather factual minutiae for scientific purposes. "Questionnaire" does not appear in print in English until 1901... Morgan's own vivid experience of progress had nourished his optimism and made him a prophet and a founder of a science of progress... According to Engels, Morgan had actually anticipated Marx's materialist interpretation, and Morgan's Ancient Society was as "necessary" as Marx's Capital for understanding the history of civilization" ...more

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