Peyton Bowen

Modern Philosophy

There are critical moments in humanity's history where major shifts began for the betterment of mankind. Many of these shifts can be attributed to the age of modern philosophy in movements such as Scholasticism, the Enlightenment, and new political ideologies. At the core of these philosophical movements is the hope to improve working-class people's lives by teaching them to seek the truth for themselves. The thinkers of the time raised questions never dared to be asked before and encouraged the masses to educate themselves from under their oppressive governments. Philosophers like Francis Bacon, John Locke, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx used their ideas to help the public crawl from under the grasp of the ways of the past. The research of these movements presented in this paper will show the pinpoints of the shift in humanity's soul.

In Sir Francis Bacon's book The Novum Organum, he discusses four idols. These idols are what Bacon considers the four main falsehoods or fallacies that stop individuals from gaining true knowledge and becoming their best selves. These idols are preventing society from progressing forward. He describes the four idols: the Tribe, the Marketplace, the Cave, and the Theater. Sir Francis Bacon describes the theater as idols that are in the field of theology, philosophy, and science. It is because educated people build these fields and are primarily accepted by the masses without question. An example of this could be a professor who has a bias and teaches it as fact to a class that takes her word for it. This would prevent the students from gaining true knowledge, which in turn could prevent them from learning something that could better them as people. Bacon's ideas would spread across Europe, as John Lievsay describes as "an extraordinary moment in the history of the printing of Italian texts in England, for it marks the first time that a work of English literature (as distinct from propaganda) had been translated into Italian, printed in England, and exported to an Italy already entering upon an era of cultural eclipse." (Stewart pg.94) Sir Francis Bacon was not alone in trying to get the masses to think for themselves; John Locke also encouraged the public to do the same.

While supporting the idea of indirect realism, the belief that the materialist view of perception postulates that we do not perceive the external world as it really is but know only our ideas and interpretations of how the world is, John Locke pushes it further. His main message was that "we must think for ourselves and not trust received wisdom because others are often wrong." (Hiltz pg.110) Locke believes that two types of categories divide reality, primary and secondary qualities. Through these two qualities, we can perceive the world around us.

Primary qualities are in direct relation to the object's actual being. These qualities include extension, figure, motion, solidary, and number. The primary qualities are represented in mind by a causal mechanism, meaning there can be no mistake or difference varying from person to person. They exist in the physical world external to us as people. Other primary qualities are mass and not weight because weight depends on gravity, whereas an object's mass does not depend on anything. If you went to a pumpkin patch to pick a pumpkin to crave, the primary qualities you would see would be the size (mass) of the pumpkin and the number of pumpkins there. But to be able to tell if the pumpkin was bruised by its coloring or smelt rotten would be its secondary qualities. Secondary qualities are mostly our senses, like color, taste, sound, and smell. Unlike primary qualities, secondary qualities are mind-dependent. These qualities could be completely different from person to person because they are things that exist in our minds individually. Though most people see, taste, and smell alike, some people are color blind or blind, have different taste buds, and have their own memories linked to smells. Locke believes that the primary qualities have power in our minds to create the secondary qualities which we see. Locke's teachings tell us we must rely on our own senses to navigate the world around us.

During the Enlightenment, there was a technological boom like never before. Due to the new technology and scientific discoveries, people began to receive answers to questions that only religion ever tried to take on. Many philosophers began to have discussions for what feels like the first time questioning God. In *Kant, Freud, and the Ethical Critique of Religion,* James DiCenso writes about Freud's theories on religion. DiCenso states, "Freud cannot fully resolve these matters for us, but his work provides resources for a more differentiated contemporary analysis of the status of religion in relation to issues of inter-human ethical co-existence." (pg.163) Like his concepts of childhood's impact on the psyche, leaving humanity with an emotional helplessness, Freud illustrates this feeling of helplessness led to the foundation of religion. Freud says that the need of man to have the protection and support from their physical Father was not enough, and because of that void, humans created a Father in the sky. The Father in the sky would always look after humankind, protecting them from the world and giving them unconditional love. While protecting "his kids," the Father, or God, would be seen as a divine figure who could establish a code for right and wrong that all of "his children" must follow. Now that society was learning to use their senses and question the world based on their perceptions, people were listening to Freud. Between scientific revelations and philosophers like Freud sharing his theories on the existence of God, people could loosen the church's grip on people's lives. In today's age, many people do not support all of Freud's teachings, but "Freud trusted himself to be right. He had a staunch personality and was incredibly enigmatic. His granddaughter, Sophie, said that he knew that he was bright and was going to change the world. He was right. He did change the world." (Utpreksha)

Along with the church losing its power, another famous philosopher and economist, Karl Marx, also tried to take the white gloves off the throats of the poor. German-born philosopher Karl Marx witnessed significant societal changes in his lifetime. During the 19th century, he would have seen empires rise and fall, colonization, power exchanges, gruesome wars, and industrialization. As a philosopher, he looked to history as he began to piece together these ongoing changes and noticed a pattern. He found this pattern as old as time, believing it has shaped our human experience entirely. This pattern is the cycle of the ruling class or the bourgeois profiting off working people, the proletariat class. This cycle has continued and can be seen within capitalism, which Marx famously disagreed with. Marx does not have a problem with the idea of work; in fact, he believes that work at its best fulfills our species' essence and separates us from animals. Animals act only to satisfy their immediate material needs, whereas humans work beyond those needs. One of Marx's main criticisms of capitalism is that it leads to alienation. Alienation in this context is when the condition in which work loses its unique human character and becomes purely about substance, much like the behavior of animals. Once alienated labor takes place, the worker feels as if they have no power, purpose, or mental growth, which causes said worker to feel humiliated, unworthy and insignificant. This process is promoted by capitalism because it helps increase human labor production. Once again, Marx can see that the bourgeois profits from the proletariat class by removing them from their own lives and stripping them of creativity. Alienation separates us from products of labor, from other people, traditional values, our human essence, and most importantly, our families.

Scholar François Allisson describes the impact of Marx's writings about capitalism as it "must have appeared as a solution to theoretical problems as well as a key to understanding the chaotic world outside academia." (pg. 230) Allisson could not have been more right, Marxism would change the political landscape of Russia, and even in today's age, many people are champions of his ideas. While many kids on college campuses today feel fashionable carrying around *The Communist Manifesto,* world leaders, new and old, do not share the idea of camaraderie. In *Seeking a Whole-Person Approach to Education: Revisiting Nineteenth-Century Neo-Scholasticism* by Brian C. Legg says that "new German philosophical teachings such as Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto and Sigmund Freud's examination of identity, gender, and sexuality, coupled with Charles Darwin's evolution theory, threatened to overturn centuries of Christian teaching on theology and orthodoxy." (pg. 213) With the church and government having countless reasons to stop these ideas from trickling down to the peasants, revolutionaries pushed on and continued to spread these philosophies.

By these four men putting pen to paper and paper to printer press, their ideas were able to reach all corners of Europe, which would later influence the rest of the world. Despite persecution from the church and government alike, their ideas continue to be discussed in classrooms today. It would only be possible to talk about this era and its impacts by crediting the minds of Bacon, Locke, Freud, and Marx. Because of them, everyday people learn to think for themselves, question the status quo, and challenge the noble class and clergy. During this time of modern philosophy, humanity's soul softens to the underdog and stands its ground against the institutions that have stepped on them for too long; and the world is better for it.

Works Cited

Allisson, François, et al. “Marxism before Marxism: Nikolaj Sieber and the Birth of Russian Social-Democracy.” *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2020, pp. 298–323, https://doi.org/10.1080/09672567.2020.1720765.

DiCenso, James. “Kant, Freud, and the Ethical Critique of Religion.” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2007, pp. 161–179, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11153-007-9119-8.

Gaude, Utpreksha. “The Relevance of Freud in the Modern World.” *JOURNAL OF CLINICAL AND DIAGNOSTIC RESEARCH*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.7860/jcdr/2021/50338.15275.

Hiltz, Steve. “The Dream of Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Philosophy.” *The Philosophers’ Magazine*, no. 76, 2017, pp. 110–111, https://doi.org/10.5840/tpm20177631.

Legg, Brian C. “Seeking a Whole-Person Approach to Education: Revisiting Nineteenth-Century Neo-Scholasticism.” *Christian Higher Education*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2019, pp. 210–220, https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2019.1566102.

STEWART, ALAN. “Exporting Francis Bacon’s Essayes.” *Shakespeare Studies*, vol. 48, pp. 94–100.