

Conclusion

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A Century of Philosophy

- The writers covered in this course represent only a fraction of the output of philosophers and philosophically-minded thinkers in the nineteenth century.
- Our readings from those writers represents only a fraction of their output, though they cover some of their most central doctrines and arguments.
- So, we have seen just the tip of a very large iceberg.
- Our emphasis has been on philosophers in the “continental” tradition.
- But important philosophical work was done as well in Great Britain, the United States, France, and other places, as well as in the countries of the philosophers we have studied.

Nineteenth Century British Philosophy

- There were two general trends in British philosophy in the nineteenth century.
 - A continuation of the empiricist tradition of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume.
 - An idealist movement inspired by the works of Kant and Hegel.
- The most prominent member of the empiricist tradition was John Stuart Mill (1806-1873).
- Sir William Hamilton (1788-1856) introduced the philosophy of Kant to Britain in the middle of the century.
- A Hegelian movement of “absolute idealism” became dominant late in the century.
 - T. H. Green (1836-1882).
 - F. H. Bradley (1826-1924).
 - Bernard Bosanquet (1848-1923).
- Also prominent was the utilitarian school of ethics, championed by Mill and Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832).

Nineteenth Century American Philosophy

- Early in the century, philosophy was represented in the United States by the literary figures of the “New England transcendentalism” movement.
 - Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882).
 - Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862).
- Influenced by the German idealists (among others), the transcendentalists claimed that we have a non-sensual, intuitive knowledge of God as a soul permeating nature and humanity.
- The distinctively American philosophy, pragmatism (or “pragmaticism”) emerged late in the century.
 - Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914).
 - William James (1842-1910).
- Pragmatism is more of a methodology than a doctrine, admitting as meaningful in philosophy only what has practical consequences.

Nineteenth Century French Philosophy

- Early in the century, there was an anti-empiricist movement which took inner experience as a source of metaphysical knowledge.
 - Victor Cousin (1792-1867).
- The main contributions of French philosophers in the century were in the area of social philosophy.
- A number of philosophers emphasized radical social change.
 - Claude-Henri Saint-Simon (1760-1825).
 - Charles Fourier (1772-1837).
 - Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865).
- Auguste Comte (1798-1857) founded the “positivist” school, claiming that thought progresses as it sheds the burdens of theology and then metaphysics, ending with only “positive” science, including sociology.

Late Nineteenth Century German Philosophy

- The psychologist-philosopher Franz Brentano (1837-1917) took “intentionality” to be the fundamental feature of the mental, a doctrine that influenced many subsequent philosophers.
- Brentano’s student Alexius Meinong (1853-1920) is most famous for his theory of non-existent objects—a theory rejected by the early analytic philosophers.
- The representation of the history of philosophy was subjected to strict standards of scholarship.
- The philosophy of Kant was brought to the fore and revised by a series of “neo-Kantian” philosophers.
 - Kuno Fischer (1824-1907).
 - Hermann Cohen (1842-1918).
- The godfather of analytic philosophy, Gottlob Frege (1848-1925), published his vastly influential “On Sense and Reference” in 1892, though his significance was not understood until the twentieth century.

Logic in the Nineteenth Century

- The nineteenth century was decisive in the development of logic into its modern form.
- Early nineteenth century logicians approached logic through psychology as constituting “rules of thought.”
 - Bernard Bolzano (1781-1848).
 - John Stuart Mill.
- The great advances in logic were made through quasi-mathematical symbolization.
 - Geometrical proof theory stimulated work on axiomatized logical and mathematical systems.
 - Algebra was the model for work on a logical calculus.
- George Boole (England, 1815-1864) produced the first algebraic formulation of logic, symbolically representing negation, conjunction, and disjunction.
- Further developments were made by the English logicians Augustus DeMorgan (1806-1871) and John Venn (1834-1923).

Predicate Logic and Set Theory

- The work of the English logicians was important, but the real breakthrough in logic was the development of predicate logic.
- The first full axiomatization of predicate logic, the *Begriffsschrift*, was published in 1879 by Frege.
- In a parallel development, Peirce developed a logic of relations in 1883.
- Frege also undertook a project, now known as “logicism,” to axiomatize mathematics in purely logical terms.
- Within mathematics itself, Georg Cantor (Germany, 1845-1918) developed set theory, which proved to be a powerful tool in philosophy during the twentieth century.
- Frege’s axiomatization of arithmetic was formulated in terms of set theory, but it was a failure due to the presence of a contradiction discovered by Bertrand Russell in 1901.

The Legacies of Our Authors

- In this course, we have read a number of authors, who were influential beyond their own times.
- Schopenhauer influenced Nietzsche and anticipated Freud.
- Hegel influenced Marx as well as the British idealists.
- The followers of Marx spawned revolutionary movements that took power in countries as large as Russia and China.
- Kierkegaard is credited with initiating the “existentialist” movement in philosophy.
- Nietzsche’s work was the inspiration for both the Nazi philosophy of Hitler and the anti-authoritarian philosophy of Foucault.

Freud and Schopenhauer

- The psychological doctrines of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) bear a striking resemblance to those of Schopenhauer.
- Freud claimed never to have read Schopenhauer until later in life, though there is strong evidence to the contrary.
- There are several areas of similarity.
 - Schopenhauer gave an account of the unconscious mind.
 - Schopenhauer's "will" is very much like Freud's "id."
 - Both take sexuality to be central in the explanation of human behavior.
 - Schopenhauer's account of madness resembles Freud's accounts of repression and neurosis.
 - Schopenhauer had an account of free association that was similar to Freud's.
 - Both were pessimists.

British Idealism

- In the early nineteenth century, German idealism was represented inadequately through such literary writers as Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881).
- In the 1850s, the German writings of Hegel began to filter into Britain, through philosophers such as Benjamin Jowett
- The first philosophical study of Hegel, James Hutchison Sterling's *The Secret of Hegel*, appeared in 1865.
- Another of the initial adapters of German idealism was T. H. Green, who is perhaps best known for his idealistic criticism of empiricism in his introduction to the works of David Hume.
- F. H. Bradley is the most prominent of the British idealists.
 - According to Bradley, reality is is an absolute, sentient, whole of experience.
- The idealist movement was dealt a fatal blow by the rise of analytic philosophy in Britain under the leadership of Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore.

The Rise and Decline of Marxism

- Marx and Engels had predicted workers' revolutions in highly industrialized countries that did not materialize.
- One of their followers, V. I. Lenin (1870-1924) was able to topple the Czarist government in the agrarian country Russia in 1917.
- After the victory of the Soviet Union in World War II, communist regimes were installed in several countries of Eastern Europe.
- The imperial government of the agrarian country China was overthrown by the Marxist Mao Zedong (1893-1976) in 1949.
- The Soviet Union has fallen and China has become capitalist, though still Marxist in name.
- But Marxism still holds sway in some small countries, and Marx is still highly influential among many intellectuals, especially in Europe.

Kierkegaard and Existentialism

- Kierkegaard was the first philosopher who claimed that the conditions of an individual's own existence are primary, while the existence of an objective world is secondary.
- Because of the weight he placed on human existence, he is considered the founder of “existentialism,” a movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- His emphasis on the primacy of non-rational choices and the importance of extreme psychological states in making those choices are echoed in the existentialist literature.
- There were two leading exponents of this basic kind of approach in the twentieth century.
 - Martin Heidegger (Germany, 1889-1976), who called his philosophy “existential phenomenology.”
 - Jean-Paul Sartre (France, 1905-1980), who called his philosophy “existentialism.”
- They carried out their projects in quite different ways.

Nietzsche and His Sister

- Nietzsche's early legacy was defined by his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche.
- Her husband, Bernhard Förster, was an anti-semite and German nationalist.
- With the failure of her husband's colony in Paraguay, she became a vocal proponent of her own version of her brother's views.
- She repressed the publication of *Ecce Homo*, where Nietzsche repudiated doctrines she attributed to him.
- She published discarded notes as his "final" work, which she entitled *The Will to Power*.
- Of particular importance is the false picture of Nietzsche as an anti-semite that emerges from the image of Nietzsche promoted by his sister.

Nietzsche and National Socialism

- During World War I, Nietzsche's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* was used as an inspiration for German soldiers.
- Nietzsche's notion of the "overman" (*übermensch*) was converted into that of the superiority of the German nation over all other nations.
- This distortion of his doctrines was taken over by Hitler and the Nazis.
- The work of Walter Kaufmann has shown that this is a gross mis-appropriation, and that Nietzsche's values had little in common with the values of national socialism.

Nietzsche and Foucault

- Nietzsche had some influence on the “continental” philosophers of the twentieth century such as Heidegger and Sartre.
- But his greatest influence was on the French thinker Michel Foucault (1926-1984).
- One of the most obvious connections is Foucault’s revival of Nietzsche’s “genealogical” approach to the understanding of concepts.
- Foucault wrote an essay on Nietzsche’s conceptions of genealogy and history.
- He placed central emphasis on the relations of power within social institutions.
- This emphasis echoes the primary importance of power in Nietzsche’s explanation of social dynamics.

The “Post-Modernist” Movement

- “Post-modernism” was initially a reaction against “modern” architecture, which was generalized into a reaction against “modernity.”
- In philosophy, it is a revolt against classical “foundationalist” thinkers such as Descartes and Kant.
- What is “foundational” about their views is that they begin with a subjective starting point about which we can be certain and try to build on it a theory of reality.
- Post-modernists emphasize uncertainty and generally tend to be relativists.
- It seems fair to classify Hegel with the “modernists” and to view such thinkers as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and some Dostoyevsky characters as prototypes of “post-modernist” thinking.

The Legacy of Nineteenth Century Philosophy

- The philosophers of the nineteenth century left an indelible legacy for future thought and for the conduct of life.
- They explored many ground-breaking possibilities.
- They considered deeply the place of the human being in a world, whether centered on God or without a God at all.
- Some of their approaches have been put into practice, with some favorable results and some unfavorable results.
- In the end, they have left humanity much richer as a result of their unbridled creativity.