

# The mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth century



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Understanding the human thought process was constantly ed to change as some philosophers of the late 19th and early 20th century detested scientific reasoning while others regarded science as a path that leads to knowledge (Nietzsche, Freud). In the 19th century Friedrich Nietzsche declared the death of god (Nietzsche, Freud; Mannion). He stated that a man's life is not governed by rational principles as nothing can be considered to be absolutely good or bad through human reasoning. He preached that the instinctive behavior of humans should be tapped as against reasoning and intellect. He also condemned Christianity as it hindered the development of human instincts. He further went on to state that man can only be saved by the evolution of a superman who would create his rules based on his own instincts. He will not adhere to any set rules or code of conducts that have been imposed by the civilization of mankind. He firmly believed in his principles even during the late 19th century which was heralded as an era of scientific progress and development. Many European scholars considered the thoughts expressed by Nietzsche as an expression of the inner energy of man. Like Nietzsche, Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky also believed that human were irrational and rebellious and did not believe in the era of enlightenment or the age of human reason. He was totally against science and reasoning. He strongly believed that man could not fit into a tailor-made world and that he was bound to undergo suffering and act irrationally in order to assert their individuality. There was more to the existence of human beings than merely reason and perform worldly duties expected from him. This, he believed, was the freedom of every man as it is created by him and not put down by the society in which he lives. The philosophers who followed Nietzsche such as Sigmund Freud believed that civilization was indeed

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connected to human reasoning and that scientific developments would develop the knowledge of mankind. According to Freud irrational thinking could have dangerous consequences to mankind. He also realized that man was not governed by a rational thought process and that it was driven by an inner, sometimes irrational unknown force. Though this was in sync with the views expressed by Nietzsche, Freud differed from him in that he wanted to scientifically analyze the unconscious mind of man. From his medical practice, Freud concluded that such irrational and disordered thought processes are a result of fear that is experienced in childhood. These hidden memories resurface as irrational thinking in the later part of life. Freud also believed that there was a constant conflict between the instinctive human mind and the demands of civilization. Through his discovery of human sexuality he declared that man, is completely fulfilled by sexual pleasures and when this drive is unrestricted it drains the energy within a man and hence the need to impose rules and restrict this animal behavior. However, mankind undergoes a painful existence in both the above cases (Nietzsche, Freud). Karl Marx also believed that human thinking and ideas originated from the prevailing ideologies and that it was only a false consciousness that man exhibited and human beings only had the wrong perception that they were thinking freely (Nietzsche, Freud). Marx believed that as the structure of the society evolves human beings also change in accordance. He further stated that humans have an inherent quality that determines the value of the objects created by them. Darwin believed that man had animal instincts and many philosophies were directed to suppress these animal instincts. As a contribution to human biological science Darwin explained the evolutionary concepts of variation and natural selection of human beings (Mannion).

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Hence by the 20th century the contributions made by Marx, Darwin and Freud had dramatically altered the thinking process of man (Nietzsche, Freud; Mannion). While the philosophers in the past eras contended that spiritual, religious and moral beliefs were not subject to change, the development in science and technology in the 20th century brought about the belief that everything was subject to change including human ideas and thoughts (Mannion). References 1. "Nietzsche, Freud and the Thrust Towards Modernism". The History Guide. Historyguide. org. 4 Aug. 2009. Web. 28 June 2011. <http://www.historyguide.org/europe/lecture3.html> <http://www.historyguide.org/europe/lecture3.html> 2. Mannion, Michael. "Ways of Knowing." Mindshiftinstitute. org. 2002. Web. 28 June 2011. <http://www.mindshiftinstitute.org/articles/knowing1.htm>