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His-112-IN1

6 October 2017

Liberalism, Capitalism and the Scientific Method:

Western Ideas by Day, Conversation Creating Rebels by Night

Western ideas made such an impact on the world between 1700 and 1900, that their influence still resonates with societies today. The term “Western ideas” in terms of history is very broad. It can refer to European ideas just as much as it can refer to the ideas of countries and cultures that have had some contact through Europe. Whether that contact be through colonization, immigration or simply influence. Western ideas were spread not only by these, but also through the mighty power of the pen. For the places that embraced Western ideas such as Liberalism, Capitalism, and the Scientific Method, there were a plethora of different benefits. In this essay, these benefits will be examined as well as the reasons to why, then and now, people may or may not be open to embracing these western ideas.

Liberalism, not to be confused with American-liberalism that started in the 20th century, is a well-known school of political thought that was developed during the 1600s. Liberalism is defined in its purest form as, “the freedom from interference by outsiders” (Bell). People didn’t react harshly towards liberalism, rather they accepted it especially when the aim of liberalism further developed, during the 1900s, and began to become more focused on, “the belief that government should be by and for all the people” (Upshur et al. 842).

One reason that people don’t embrace liberalism is because they feel that by having a society where everyone is equal, or where everyone can oversee their own economic “value”, then people will begin to turn against each other. If everyone had a business, then they would do whatever they could to get their businesses to succeed. Similarly, some people don’t accept liberalism because of the idea of free market economies. They believe that free market economies could potentially lead to monopolies and oligopolies.

In addition to this, it is believed that if everyone had the ability to create, market, purchase and sell products, then the world would be at risk of losing natural resources that are extremely necessary for survival. Also among the reasons why people oppose the idea of liberalism is potential unstable market growth, loss of government funded social policies such as public transport and disability care, as well as supply and demand.

Another Western idea that is often either considered to be beneficial or opposed, is Capitalism. Capitalism is, “an economic system in which the means of production and distribution are owned by private individuals or corporations” (“Capitalism”). Capitalism spread throughout Europe during the 17th century and has since become a well-known and well-used world economic system since the Industrial Revolution. Despite the numerous benefits of Capitalism, some people still choose to oppose the idea today.

Some people don’t support capitalism because they believe that the system can be easily abused, mega companies have the option to take over the smaller ones and because of this some people have an image of the “greedy capitalist”. In an article by Michael Guerrero, *"The Values of Neoliberal Capitalism Have Had Terrible Consequences*,” he states that, "Free trade" policies and the loan sharks that have run the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have destroyed national economies. Millions of people have been forced into poverty, and entire communities have been displaced from the countryside.” This is centrally the fear of those that oppose capitalism come to life.

The third Western idea, the Scientific Method, is, “the principles and procedures of scientific inquiry that form the basis of modern science” (“Scientific Method”). Because of the development of the Scientific Method in the 17th century, the way that the world approached solving and studying scientific problems changed. But, of course, this does not mean that all people embraced the method. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the clergy began to express an organized opposition towards the scientific method. They saw it is as a rejection of religion.

Opposition of the scientific method because of religious reasons can also be very common today. This is mainly due to the common belief that if you believe in science, then you must not, or cannot, be religious. This idea can be applied the same way either way around. Besides this, some oppose the scientific method because science gives us an incomplete image of the world, science isn’t perfect and can be wrong sometimes and scientists can never be wholly unbiased. Despite these oppositions, the scientific method continues to be used to this day.

Finally, whether you oppose of Western ideas or not the influence of Western ideas on everyday thought cannot be denied. Western ideas such as Liberalism, Capitalism and the have wormed their way into pretty much every culture of the world. These ideas will always be topic starters and rightly so as they challenge thought and thinking. If it wasn’t for the Western ideas that were adopted by the world, whether through influence, immigration or colonization, we might possibly not have the world that we live in today.

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