

The Birth of Modern Thought Study Guide

Terms to Identify

Butler, Josephine	Mann, Thomas
Byron, Lord	May laws
Chamberlain, Houston Stewart	Mendel, Gregor
Comte, Auguste	Methodism
Contagious Diseases Acts	Modernism
cubism	natural selection
Darwin, Charles	Nietzsche, Friedrich
ego	papal infallibility
Einstein, Albert	Picasso, Pablo
Ficke, Auguste	pointillism
Folies-Bergere	positivism
Freud, Sigmund	post-impressionism
Gobineau, Arthur de	Protestant Ethic
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von	Proust, Marcel,
Goya, Francisco	Racism
Hegel, Wilhelm Friedrich	Realism
Herder, Johann Gottfried	relativity
Herzl, Theodor	Roentgen, Wilhelm
Huxley, Thomas	Shaw, George Bernard
Ibsen, Henrik	Shelley, Mary
Id	Social Darwinism
impressionism	Spencer, Herbert
Joyce, James	Stopes, Marie
Jung, Carl	Sturm and Drang
Kant, Immanuel	superego
Kulturkampf	Turner, Joseph Mallord William
Lyell, Charles	Wallace, Alfred Russel
	Weber, Max
	Woolf, Virginia
	Zionism

The Birth of Modern Thought Unit Questions

What effect did Darwin's theory of natural selection have on theories of European views of human nature?

How and why did Christianity come under attack in the late 19C?

How did Nietzsche and Freud challenge traditional middle-class and religious morality?

Why were so many late-nineteenth century intellectuals afraid of and hostile to women?

How did many ideas associated with modernism conflict with feminist goals?

Textbook DQ's

The Birth of Science Fiction (Secondary) p 445

Why is Jules Verne considered the father of modern science fiction?

What enduring plot devices did H.G. Wells introduce?

Why did science fiction become so popular?

Charles Darwin's Christian Critics p 448 - 449

Why did Wilberforce reject efforts to reconcile science and scripture?

On what basis did Wilberforce argue that Darwin's theory was incorrect?

How might Gladstone have responded to Wilberforce's arguments?

Popular Religion and Pilgrimage (image) p 451

How is the diversity of pilgrimage represented in this image? What sort of people went on pilgrimage

What is the mood of the pilgrims as they anticipate their arrival in London?

What sort of journey could nineteenth century pilgrims expect, and how had it changed since the medieval and early modern periods?

T.H. Huxley Criticizes Evolutionary Ethics -Outside Primary Reading

What does Huxley mean by the "cosmic process"?

Why does he equate "social progress" with the "ethical process"?

In this passage, does Huxley present human society as part of nature or as something that may be separate from nature?

Leo XIII Considers the Social Question In European Politics - Outside Primary Reading

How does Leo XIII reject the concept of class conflict?

What responsibilities does he assign to the rich and to the poor?

Are the responsibilities of the two classes equal?

What kinds of social reform might emerge from these ideas?

Alexis de Tocqueville Forecasts The Danger of Gobineau's Racial Thought - Outside Primary Reading

Why does Tocqueville see Gobineau's idea as a kind of materialistic determinism (people automatically act the way they do because of their race/nationality)?

Why does he think Gobineau's views are wrong?

Why does Tocqueville believe that Gobineau's ideas are difficult to prove?

Why does he see political danger in racial thinking?

Herzl Calls For A Jewish State - Outside Primary Reading

Why does Herzl define what he calls the Jewish Question as a national question?

What objections does he anticipate to the founding of a Jewish state?

What does he believe the founding of a Jewish state will be an effective move against antisemitism?

H.S. Chamberlain Exalts the Role of Race p. 817

What does Chamberlain mean by "Race" in this passage?

How, in his view, does race, as opposed to character or environment, determine human nature?

How might a nationalist use these ideas?

Virginia Woolf Urges Women to Write - Outside Primary Reading

How does Woolf's fiction of Shakespeare's sister establish a benchmark for women writers?

What does Woolf mean by the common life through which women will need to work to become independent writers?

Why does she emphasize the need for women to have both income and space if they are to become independent writers?

"God is dead." - Nietzsche

"Nietzsche is dead." – God

T. H. Huxley Criticizes Evolutionary Ethics - Outside Primary Reading

*T.H. Huxley was a British scientist who have been among Darwin's strongest defenders. He was also an outspoken advocate for the advancement of science in the late nineteenth century. Huxley, however, became a major critic of social Darwinism, which attempted to deduce ethical principles from evolutionary processes involving struggle in nature. Drawing a strong distinction between the cosmic process of evolution and the social process of ethical development, he argued in *Evolution and Ethics* (1893) that human ethical progress occurs through combating the cosmic process.*

Men in society are undoubtedly subject to the cosmic process. As among other animals, multiplication goes on without cessation, and involves severe competition for the means of support. The struggle for existence tends to eliminate those less fitted to adapt themselves to the circumstances of their existence. The strongest, the most self-assertive, tend to tread down the weaker. But the influence of the cosmic process on the evolution of society is the greater the more rudimentary its civilization. Social progress means a checking of the cosmic, process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest, in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but of those who are ethically the best.

As I have already urged, the practice of that which is ethically best--what we call goodness or virtue--involves a course of conduct which, in all respects, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside, or treading down, all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed, not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive. It repudiates the gladiatorial theory of existence.

It is from neglect of these plain considerations that the fanatical individualism of our time attempts to apply the analogy of cosmic nature to society. . .

Let us understand, once for all, that the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it.

Leo XIII considers the Social Question in European Politics

In his 1891 encyclical Rerum Novarum, Pope Leo XIII provided the Catholic Church's answer to secular calls for social reform. The pope denied the socialist claim that class conflict is the natural state of affairs. He urged employers to seek just and peaceful relations with workers.

The great mistake made in regard to the matter now under consideration is to take up with the notion that class is naturally hostile to class, and that the wealthy and the working men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict. So irrational and so false is this view that the direct contrary is the truth . . Each needs the other: capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital. Mutual agreement results in the beauty of good order, while perpetual conflict necessarily produces confusion and savage barbarity. Now, in preventing such strife as this, and in uprooting it, the efficacy of Christian institutions is marvelous and manifold. . .

Of these duties, the following bind the proletarian and the worker: fully and faithfully to perform the work which has been freely and equitably agreed upon; never to injure the property, nor to outrage the person, of an employer; never to resort to violence in defending their own cause, nor to engage in riot or disorder; and to have nothing to do with men of evil principles, who work upon the people with artful promises of great results, and excite foolish hopes which usually end in useless regrets and grievous loss. The following duties bind the wealthy owner and the employer: not to look upon their work people as their bondsmen, but to respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character. They are reminded that, according to natural reason and Christian philosophy, working for gain is creditable, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honorable livelihood; but to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers – that is truly shameful and inhuman. Again justice demands that, in dealing with the working man, religion and the good of his soul must be kept in mind. Hence, the employer is bound to see that the worker has time for his religious duties; that he be not exposed to corrupting influences and dangerous occasions; and that he be not led away to neglect his home and family, or to squander his earnings. Furthermore, the employer must never tax his work people beyond their strength, or employ them in work unsuited to their sex and age. His great and principal duty is to give everyone what is just.

Alexis de Tocqueville Forecasts the Danger of Gobineau's Racial Thought - Outside Primary Reading

Alexis de Tocqueville is best known for having written Democracy in America. He was also a major historian of the French Revolution, a politician and an important commentator on the events and ideas of his time. He knew Arthur Gobineau, and read the first volume of the latter's Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races shortly after it was published in 1853. Tocqueville then wrote Gobineau a letter in which he sharply criticized the idea of racial determination of human actions. Tocqueville also pointed to how dangerous it would be if the idea ever influenced the political life of nations with mass electorate.

They relate directly to your principal idea. I must frankly tell you that you have not convinced me. Every one of my objections persists. You continually speak about races regenerating or degenerating, losing or acquiring through an infusion of new blood social capacities which they have not previously had. . .

I must frankly say that, to me, this sort of predestination is a close relative of the purest materialism. And be assured that should the masses, whose reasoning always follows the most beaten tracks, accept your doctrines, it would lead them straight from races to individuals and from social capacities to all sorts of potentialities.

Whether the element of fatality should be introduced into the material order of things, or whether God willed to make different kinds of men so that He imposed special burdens of race on some, withholding from them a capacity for certain feelings, for certain thoughts, for certain habits, for certain qualities. . .

The consequence of both theories is that of a vast limitation, if not a complete abolition, of human liberty. Thus I confess that after having read your book I remain, as before, opposed in the extreme to your doctrine. I believe that they are probably quite false; I know that they are certainly very pernicious. Surely among the different families which compose the human race there exist certain tendencies, certain proper aptitudes resulting from thousands of different causes. But that these tendencies, that these capacities should be insuperable, have not only never been proved but no one will ever be able to prove it since to do so one would need to know not only the past but also the future. . . .

If your doctrine were to relate merely to the externally recognizable differences of human families and through these enduring characteristics assign them to differences in creation, it would still be far from convincing to me but at least it would be less fantastic and easier to understand. But when one applies it within one of these great families, for example, within the white race, then the thread of reasoning becomes entangled and loses itself. What, in this whole world, is more difficult to find than the place, the time, and the composite elements that produced men who by now possess no visible traces of their mixed origins? Those events took place in remote and barbaric times, leaving us nothing but vague myths or written fragments.

Do you really believe that by tracing the destiny of peoples along these lines you can truly clarify history? And that our knowledge about humans becomes more certain as we abandon the practice followed since the beginning of time by the many great minds who have searched to find the cause of human events in the influence of certain men, of certain emotions, of certain thoughts, and of certain beliefs? . . . What purpose does it serve to persuade lesser peoples living in abject conditions of barbarism or slavery that, such being their racial nature, they can do nothing to better themselves, to change their habits, or to ameliorate their status? Don't you see how inherent in your doctrine are all the evils produced by permanent inequality: pride, violence, the scorn of one's fellow men, tyranny and abjection in every one of their forms? . . .

After, for some time, one has observed the way in which public affairs are conducted, do you think one can avoid the impression that their effects are the results of the same causes which make for success in private life; that courage, energy, honesty, farsightedness, and common sense are the real reasons behind the prosperity of empires as well as behind the prosperity of private families; and that, in one word, the destiny of men, whether of individuals or of nations, depends on what they want to be?

Herzl Calls For A Jewish State

There were Jewish leaders who called for the return of the Jews to Palestine for decades before Theodor Herzl wrote his influential pamphlet, The Jewish State. But Herzl's work pushed the formation of a political movement to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The first Zionist Congress, convened by Herzl, was held in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. He became convinced that only the establishment of a separate state for Jews would halt the outbreaks of anti-semitism that characterized late nineteenth century European political and cultural life.

The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet is a very old one: it is the restoration of the Jewish State. The world resounds with outcries against the Jews, and these outcries have awakened the slumbering idea. I believe that I understand Anti-Semitism, which is really a highly complex movement. I consider it from a Jewish standpoint, yet without fear or hatred. I believe that I can see what elements there are in it of vulgar sport, of common trade jealousy, of inherited prejudice, of religious intolerance, and also of pretended self-defense. I think the Jewish question is no more a social than a religious one, notwithstanding that it sometimes takes these and other forms. It is a national question, which can only be solved by making it a political world-question to be discussed and settled by the civilized nations of the world in council.

We are a people—one people.

We have honestly endeavored everywhere to merge ourselves in the social life of surrounding communities and to preserve the faith of our fathers. We are not permitted to do so. . .

Will people say, again, that our enterprise is hopeless, because even if we obtained the land with supremacy over it, the poor only would go with us? It is precisely the poorest whom we need at first. Only the desperate make good conquerors.

Will someone say: Were it feasible it would have been done long ago?

It has never yet been possible; now it is possible. A hundred — or even fifty years ago it would have been nothing more than a dream. Today it may become a reality. Our rich, who have a pleasurable acquaintance with all our technical achievements, know full well how much money can do. And thus it will be: just the poor and simple, who do not know what power man already exercises over the forces of Nature, just these will have the firmest faith in the new message. For these have never lost their hope of the Promised Land. . .

Now, all this may appear to be an interminably long affair. Even in the most favorable circumstances, many years might elapse before the commencement of the foundation of the State. In the meantime, Jews in a thousand different places would suffer insults, mortifications, abuse, blows, depredation, and death. No; if we only begin to carry out the plans, Anti-Semitism would stop at once and for ever.

Virginia Woolf Urges Women To Write - Outside Primary Reading

Virginia Woolf was an English writer and a prominent modernist thinker of the 20th century. Woolf's writing is known for exploring women's lives and has been credited with inspiring many feminist ideas. In 1928, she delivered two papers at a women's college at Cambridge University that became the basis for A Room of One's Own published a year later. There, discussing the difficulty that a woman writer confronted in finding women role models, she outlined obstacles that women faced in achieving the education, the time and the income that would allow women to write. In the passage that follows, which closes her essay, she urges women to begin to write so future women authors would have models. She then presents an image of Shakespeare's sister who, lacking such models, had not written anything, but who, through the collective efforts of women, might in the future emerge as a great writer because she would have the literary models of the women Woolf addressed to follow and to imitate.

A thousand pens are ready to suggest what you should do and what effect you will have. My own suggestion is a little fantastic, I admit; I prefer, therefore, to put it in the form of fiction.

I told you in the course of this paper that Shakespeare had a sister; but do not look for her in Sir Sidney Lee's life of the poet. She died young—alas, she never wrote a word. She lies buried where the omnibuses now stop, opposite the Elephant and Castle. Now my belief is that this poet who never wrote a word and was buried at the cross-roads still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here to-night, for they are washing up the dishes and putting the children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh. This opportunity, as I think, it is now coming within your power to give her. For my belief is that if we live another century or so—I am talking of the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals—and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves; if we look past Milton's bogey, for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, as her brother did before her, she will be born. As for her coming without that preparation, without that effort on our part, without that determination that when she is born again she shall find it possible to live and write her poetry, that we cannot expect, for that would be impossible. But I maintain that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worthwhile.