

Western Materialism and Modernism's Philosophical Sources

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WESTERN MATERIALISM AND MODERNISM'S PHILOSOPHICAL SOURCES

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Abstract: One of materialism's and modernism's most serious flaws is their failure to take a holistic picture of human life. Transcendental ideals are rejected by almost all modernist ideologists. To put it another way, there is no objective, absolute standard for truth. Truth and moral standards, on the other hand, are only relative, with validity restricted to time, location, and situation. Modernists label societies founded on divine revelation as "static" and "petrified." Change is considered a virtue in and of itself, and the sooner things change, the better. The highest virtue of modernity is being current. The primary goal of this article was to investigate features of Western materialism and modernization, as well as the underlying causes at work in the process of materialism and modernization. It begins by studying the nature of materialism and the modernization process through an examination of the core narrative of Western history. The knowledge gathered from this analysis is utilized to create a conceptual framework. The paradigm is then used to investigate the consequences of Western modernity on non-Western countries.

Abstrak: Salah satu kelemahan materialisme dan modernisme adalah kegagalan mereka dalam melihat gambaran holistik dari kehidupan manusia. Hampir semua ideologi modernisme menolak ide-ide transenden. Dengan kata lain, tidak ada standar objektif dan absolut untuk kebenaran. Kebenaran dan standar moral hanya bersifat relatif, dengan kevalidan terbatas pada waktu, tempat, dan situasi. Modernisme menyebut masyarakat yang didirikan atas wahyu ilahi sebagai "statis" dan "terpaku pada masa lalu". Perubahan dianggap sebagai kebajikan itu sendiri, dan semakin cepat perubahan terjadi, semakin baik. Kebajikan tertinggi dari modernitas adalah menjadi up-to-date. Tujuan utama dari artikel ini adalah untuk mengkaji materialisme dan modernisasi Barat, serta penyebab-penyebab yang mendasar dalam proses materialisme dan modernisasi. Hal ini dimulai dengan mempelajari sifat materialisme dan proses modernisasi melalui pemeriksaan narasi inti sejarah Barat. Pengetahuan yang dikumpulkan dari analisis ini digunakan untuk membuat kerangka konseptual. Paradigma ini kemudian digunakan untuk menyelidiki konsekuensi modernitas Barat terhadap negara-negara non-Barat.

Keywords: Philosophy, Sources, Western, Materialism and Modernism

Introduction

Ancient Greece was the first civilization in history to separate its institutions, science, customs, and arts from religion. Alternatively, ancient Greece was the first fully academic society. Philosophy was built on the idea that a perfect, harmonious society full of beauty and justice might be achieved by the intelligent, rational application of human reason without the intervention of any supernatural force. To this day, his secular ideal remains the dominating motif of Western culture.

The nude human body, according to the ancient Greeks, was the pinnacle of beauty. The naked male and female human body were the dominant motif of Greek art, which sculptors and painters imitated endlessly. Sport and sports were encouraged to the greatest extent possible in order to promote maximum physical development. There were no public gymnasiums in any big city or town for athlete training. Sports events were staged on a regular basis in enormous modern stadiums capable of seating thousands of people, presumably in honor of the gods. It was usual for the athletes to compete naked. The "Olympic Games," which are being conducted today, were the most visible of these events.

Pagan Rome absorbed, treasured, and nurtured Greece's secular legacy. But, because of the Romans were first and foremost militaristic, the reverence of might quickly exceeded the veneration of beauty. The Greeks' enormous idealism quickly devolved into cynicism and skepticism.

The Roman Catholic Church ruled dominant throughout the thousand-year period between the collapse of the Roman Empire and the birth of the Renaissance, which was followed by Modernism.¹ During this time, generally known as "The Middle Ages," Europe's historical links to ancient Greece and Rome were severed. In actuality, the Middle Ages were a separate, one-of-a-kind civilization that could only be labeled "Western" because of its geographical location.

Moreover, the concept of Materialism has been seen from several angles. Materialism, as defined by some economists, is an individual's true and intentional relationship with economic items. Economists describe materialism as the happiness one gets from buying and owning goods, or the intensity and manner with which one pursues economic goals.² The term "materialism" has philosophical roots.³ It is the philosophical notion that there is nothing apart from matter and its action.

Modernism is a violent anti-religious and anti-spiritual values movement. This insurrection stemmed from the European Renaissance, namely Machiavelli's questionable political philosophy. It blossomed in the 18th century with French "Enlightenment" philosophers and reached a climax in the 19th century with Darwin, Freud, and Karl Mark.

¹ Sam Storms, *History of the Roman Catholic Church - Part II*, 2006, <https://www.learnreligions.com/roman-catholic-church-history-700528>.

² Marsha L. Richins and Floyd W. Rudmin, "Materialism and Economic Psychology," *Journal of Economic Psychology* 15, no. 2 (June 1994): 217–31, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-4870\(94\)90001-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-4870(94)90001-9).

³ Kathleen S. Micken and Scott D Roberts, "Desperately Seeking Certainty: Narrowing the Materialism Construct," *Advances in Consumer Research* 26, no. 1 (1999): 513–18.

As Alwy Shihab appointed in his book, that Secularism refers to the condition of declining religious influence and credibility at both the social and intellectual levels.⁴ In its simple form, this theory refers to the cause-and-effect relationship between two inseparable phenomena: (1) Modernism, which ultimately give birth to (2) Secularism. From this perspective, we can conclude that this theory was born from and was rooted in the concepts of the European Enlightenment, identified with the advancement of reason and the decline of religion.

From its origins in Western Europe, this cancerous disease has spread to practically every country on the planet, killing Asian original civilizations. It is hardly an exaggeration to claim that modernity has become the world's dominant faith. Those who adopt this creed are praised for their education and modernity, while those who oppose it are regarded as backward, old-fashioned, and unreceptive. This is why, after gaining political freedom, leaders from Asia and Africa frequently become even more zealous in their adherence to modernity than their old colonial ruler. Furthermore, according to Peter Berger in his book "The Sacred Canopy", with the advent of the modern world, religious institutions were forced to adjust to two conditions.⁵ Materialism, on the other hand, has received extensive attentiveness across the world for its far-reaching and somewhat enslaving impacts on the consumer mindset. It is described as "the value placed on the possession and acquisition of material possessions in fulfilling significant life goals."⁶

Discussion

Renaissance and Materialistic Philosophy

The Medieval Ages Civilization was antagonistic and opposed to contemporary times in every way. This is why no era in European history has been more inaccurately depicted. This is also why, in English, no term has greater negative nuances than medieval. When an American or European hears this word, he immediately thinks of the "Dark Ages" of cruelty, feudalism, ignorance, and deception. When a westerner wants to define a region of the world that he/she considers to be exceptionally backward, he names it "Medieval."

The Renaissance coincided with Europe's prominent philosophers' rejection of Christianity, as well as their unthinking love of ancient Greece and Rome. Pagan rebirth and regeneration were central to the Renaissance. As a result, Western civilization returned to its original theme and has been growing ever since. After the reformation, the Enlightenment, which raised again slogan of universal community. But this time the basis was to be reason instead of faith. This movement, which met with devastating opposition both from Church and the monarchs, failed. The Church saw it as a threat because of its claimed rationalism, and the princes of Europe viewed it as threatening their continued stay in power. The Church supported

⁴ Alwy Shihab, *Examining Islam in the West: Addressing Accusations and Correcting Misperceptions* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pusaka Utama, 2004).

⁵ Peter I Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990).

⁶ Marsha L. Richins, "The Material Values Scale: Measurement Properties and Development of a Short Form," *Journal of Consumer Research* 31, no. 1 (June 1, 2004): 209–19, <https://doi.org/10.1086/383436>.

romanticism, while the monarchs favored nationalism. Both groups work together to combat the Enlightenment's concept of universalism and, for a while, they succeeded.

Niccolo Machiavelli was one of the Renaissance's main individuals who exemplified spirit (1469-1532). He was born in Florence, Italy, and rose to prominence in the city's government. During his thirteen years of service, he was more concerned with Italy's political organization and military power in comparison to neighboring Spain and France. Machiavelli was ousted and exiled as a result of the war with France. During his exile, he published *The Prince*, the most influential book ever written on the techniques for acquiring, consolidating, and expanding political power. Machiavelli is regarded as the founder of contemporary totalitarianism. Power, he felt, was the ultimate objective in and of itself. Above all, Machiavelli believed in patriotism and nationalism. His aim was for a united Italy to be the world's dominant power.

Karl Marx, its main protagonist, epitomized materialistic thought. According to Karl Marx, are the outcome of economic concerns, with the individual being nothing more than a continual improvement in the material environment from which a perfect society would invariably arise.⁷ Marxist philosophy is largely responsible for the current state of Western society. It has gained the same enthusiastic welcome in the United States as the Soviet Union, with the key difference being that, although the latter is direct in its pursuit of its goal, the former is dishonest and hypocritical.

Schopenhauer carried materialistic philosophy all the way to its logical conclusion. Life is an aimless, restless activity for him, a wholly nonsensical force. Because the foundation of desires is need, lack, and, as a result, misery, Both the beast and man are born with a predisposition to suffering. It, on the other hand, obtains its needs through much too easy pleasure, filling the heart with such emptiness and dullness that life becomes a terrible burden. As a result, life swings back and forth like a pendulum from misery to boredom. Every human being and his or her life is a fleeting vision of nature's limitless spirit (Creator of the Modern Mind).

Freud's (1859-1939) discovery of the unconscious mind's compulsive urges as the source of all illogical weapon activity as the root of all irrational weapon behavior presented contemporary thinkers with yet another weapon against religion. Freud stated that the young child projected the image of his parents, who gave him life, protected him from harm, and subjected him to discipline, punishment, and rewards, onto his religious life in adulthood.⁸ History, sociology, and anthropology students enthusiastically adopted the notion that religion is entirely man-made and that ethics are subjective rather than absolute.

By rejecting religious faith as having any positive value, Sigmund Freud was forced to accept that science is no alternative. Apart from its concentration on the actual world, he

⁷ WILL KENTON, "Karl Marx: His Books, Theories, and Impact," Investopedia, 2022, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/k/karl-marx.asp>; "Marxism - Analysis of Society | Britannica," accessed May 7, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Marxism/Analysis-of-society>.

⁸ David Novak, "On Freud's Theory of Law and Religion," *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 48 (September 1, 2016): 24-34, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.IJLP.2016.06.007>.

believes that science has inherently negative features in that it confines itself to solid material reality and opposes illusions.

Apart from that, people grow up with various values for money. Some individuals grow up to be tight with money, while others grow up to be free with money. As a result, these money views can either encourage or discourage the development of materialistic inclinations. They regularly observed that money attitudes clearly drive materialism, with the power-prestige money attitude component having the biggest influence, followed by the anxiety dimension. The fallacious concept of human freedom and possibilities advocated in the Age of Enlightenment and expanded by nineteenth-century philosophical materialism serves as the foundation of various large-scale sociopolitical undertakings that have cost humanity dearly.

The debacle of the Enlightenment gave birth to reason as the prime faculty of science's control over nature. Religion was given a bad name, and the Church was made responsible for Europe's Dark Ages. Religion was seen as opposed to reason; a view that made it possible for Marx to depict it as "the opium of the People." On the personal level, Nietzsche and Freud analyzed religious ethics and psychology in great detail, predicting the end of religion as illusion and bringing about the transvaluation of its values.⁹

Influenced by the idea of Marx, communism came and condemned Christian romanticism as the base of unholy alliance between religion and nationalism. Communism raised the familiar slogan of an ideal universal community, but now it was to be based not on Religion but on a material interpretation of history. The reformation and Enlightenment in a Christian Europe dominated by Church.

The struggle to establish a universal community is far from over. It began with the creation of humanity and will continue, probably, until the end of time. Those who has tried to realize this ideal through nationalism have wrought its exact opposite, people and nations have been turned against one another with devastating results.

Modern Philosophy: Its characteristic and Consequences

The important of knowledge and its role in the development of modern society cannot be denied. By other names, capitalism, socialism, communism, positivism, pragmatism, and fascism are all example of modernism. A closer examination reveals that despite their mutual rivalries and hatreds, all of these modern ideologies are basically "different branches of the same tree".

The rejection of the Hereafter is a central belief of modernism. Rejecting the Hereafter ultimately leads to the conclusion that the only worthy aims in life are bodily comfort, monetary wealth, worldly success, and personal happiness. It undermines morality by denying man's accountability to God for his deeds and weakening his faith in justice's ultimate triumph.

Man-worship characterizes all modernist philosophies. Man-worship is most often disguised as science. Modernists believe that advancements in scientific understanding will finally bestow upon them all divine powers. Another common type of man-worship is

⁹ Abdul Hamid Ahmad Abu Sulayman, *The Islamic Theory of International Relations: Its Relevance, Past and Present* (University Microfilms, 1982).

nationalism, which blends collective loyalty to one's own particular tribe with hostility of foreigners and minorities.

All modernist ideologists, without exception, deny transcendental values. To put it another way, there is no objective, absolute standard for truth. Truth and moral standards, on the other hand, are only relative, with validity restricted to time, location, and situation. Modernists describe divinely revealed cultures as "static" as well as "petrified". Change is regarded as a virtue in and of itself, with the sooner things change, the better. Being modern is the best feature of being modern.

Another significant goal of modernist ideology is to damage family bonds and home life as much as possible. Karl Marx pushed for the abolition of the family in his Communist Manifesto (1848). Of course, Russia and China have been the most effective in achieving this aim. The approach is more subtle in non-Communist nations, but no less successful. The three main weapons used against families are: (1) industrialization, (2) urbanization, and (3) women's emancipation. Actually, all three are active at the same time and work in tandem. Modern industrialization, with its promise of high incomes and other financial advantages, attracts a large number of able-bodied individuals away from the close-knit, well-integrated society of the rural village and into the anonymity of the vast metropolis. Families are frequently broken up as a result of this procedure. The family is no longer a self-sufficient economic entity because of industrialization. As a result, the father spends most of his time away from his family and his wife. Even though nurseries, kindergartens, and schools are increasingly taking on parental tasks, many children are left to their own devices and traverse the streets almost entirely alone. It is no surprise that adolescent misbehavior has grown widespread in such settings.

Women's freedom has proven to be one of the most powerful and important weapons of all time. Every attempt is made to make housekeeping and parenthood as uncomfortable, disagreeable, and unrewarding as possible in order to keep women at home. This is achieved through subtly marketed mass media that demeans the conventional feminine role while elevating women who compete for employment with men. When a female develops financial independence from her husband, she questions his authority as the head of the family. As a result, children in female-dominant households have lost all respect for their father.

The need to assimilate the diversity that exists in our society is imposed by modern life. They were either autochthonous or the consequence of migratory activities. According to Suraiya IT, the intricacy of this challenge is heightened by globalization and the fact that the globe is becoming more interconnected, with diverse communities, faiths, and cultures becoming mutually reliant.¹⁰ She contends that globalization and competitive market forces have also resulted in significant expansion in knowledge industries, which has major consequences on society and educational institutions. From a macro-social perspective, it can be argued that nation-states, including Indonesian Muslim societies, are likely to lose power and influence as the struggle for knowledge dominance, production, and dissemination evolves into a new form of cultural dominance and a knowledge-driven social stratification emerges.¹¹

¹⁰ Suraiya IT, ed., *Social Harmony Teaching in the Qur'an and Sunnah: Islam Dialogue and Modernity* (Banda Aceh: Institute for Idlamic Studies, Interfaith Dialogue and Peace, 2016).

¹¹ IT.

Above all, the origins of modern secular humanism can be traced back to the anthropological teachings of Enlightenment intellectuals, who were the first in modern history to openly challenge Christian anthropology. They put an emphasis on human reason, believing that it might bring the world financial and spiritual success. The belief in the triumph of reason, the positive character of scientific and technical processes, and the absolute value of scientific discoveries established the foundations of Enlightenment philosophy. During this time, an artificial conflict between science and religion arose: science was viewed as the driving force of development, while religion was viewed as an impediment to universal prosperity. The most radical enlighteners entirely rejected religion and attempted to destroy it, while the less radical recognized its legitimacy while insisting on its exclusion from social, political, and educational spheres.

According to Samuel P. Huntington, the problem with modern international civilization is that it creates antagonisms. In the age of media, all of the modern world's contrasts and antagonisms are becoming more obvious. As a result, the world's tensions become more evident, increasing the likelihood of conflicts between groups, governments, religious, and ideological affiliations.¹²

Besides that, modernization and technological advancement brought us all closer together, but also revealed our disparities. Diversity is a vital component of human civilization. In the current war for values, individuals are divided into two camps: those motivated by religious principles on one side and those whose worldview is molded by secular and materialistic humanism on the other. The humanistic notion of the ultimate dignity of the human being and the presence of universal, "common human" values that should serve as the foundation of a single world civilization is at the heart of current globalization ideology.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of time, the issue of Westernized education could not match the maturity of traditionalists in their own domain of culture and learning. Westernism, or the projection of Western modernity into non-Western countries, did not and could not achieve high levels of success. However, a lack of time is not the only issue. The fundamental problem with Westernism was a lack of morale and ethics, which might provide it with power on their own. Only some type of successful Modernism could provide it with the necessary spirit and ethic, as well as root it in the new soil. It was unable to create a successful Modernism.

The Third World's inferiority stems from its scientific, technical, economic, and military backwardness. This intellectual decline began in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when the Muslim world was attacked and devastated by Mongol invasions from the east and Crusader invasions from the west.

During the centuries that followed, the West experienced remarkable and rapid development as a result of scientific and technological discoveries and theories. Because of the backwardness of Third Countries, particularly the Muslim World, Western countries found it relatively simple to conquer and dominate the majority of the Third and Muslim World.

Conclusion

¹² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Yogyakarta: Qalam, 2004).

One of materialism's and modernity's most fundamental shortcomings is their incapacity to provide a comprehensive picture of human life. For example, Freudian ideology felt that free sex life was necessary for human health and enjoyment, but Marx believed that economics was at the heart of existence. Modernist philosophy is characterized by excessive compartmentalism. A single aspect of human existence, such as sex or economics, is taken out of its proper context and exaggerated beyond all possible boundaries. In other words, the component becomes mixed up with the whole.

However, the world we inhabit in now is experiencing previously unseen epochal dynamics. We are witnesses to a process that is founded on the technological information revolution and produces global economies and world systems. At the same time, many societies are in severe crisis, which for a longer length of time is represented as a crisis of ethics, measures, and shared life orientation.

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