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The Influence of Philosophy

The study and practice of philosophy in ancient times has paved the way to branches of study ranging from mathematics, science, ethics, politics, and law. The ideas of past philosophers have shaped much of the world we know today. John Locke’s belief in each individual’s right to life, liberty and property formed the basis of the United States constitution. The democratic system of government and the concept of checks and balances came from Montesquieu in the Enlightenment era. Ideas of free will and moral responsibility have formed the basis of our laws as expressed in the sentiment innocent until proven guilty. Socrates sought truth by challenging influential people in power to explain their reasoning in an effort to achieve a higher understanding of important concepts like justice and freedom.

This demand for practicing logic, reason and critical thinking is still emphasized in education programs across the country in the form of the Socratic method. Through this, individuals are able to gain skills necessary to think independently and make informed decisions which has taken on dramatic importance in our age of technological advancement when determining what is true and what is false in the media. The ability to distinguish good arguments from poor ones is imperative to making informed decisions in any endeavor that an individual pursues. Philosophy requires channeling curiosity to uncover universal truths, thus forming the foundation of all other knowledge. The contributions from great philosophers have impacted civilization in every capacity and without them, the world would be very different today.