

CHAPTER PREVIEW

- How did intellectual developments reflect the ambiguities of modernity?
- How did modernism revolutionize Western culture?
- How did consumer society change everyday life?
- What obstacles to lasting peace did European leaders face?
- What were the causes and consequences of the Great Depression?

Poverty and Inequality in the Interwar Years

Dadaist George Grosz's disturbing *Inside and Outside* portrays the rampant inequality wrought by the economic crises of the 1920s. Wealthy and bestial elites celebrate a luxurious New Year's Eve "inside," while "outside" a veteran with disabilities begs in vain from uncaring passersby. (© Estate of George Grosz/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY/photo: akg-images)

How did intellectual developments reflect the ambiguities of modernity?

The decades surrounding the First World War—from the 1880s to the 1930s—brought intense cultural and intellectual experimentation. As people grappled with the costs of the war and the challenges of postwar recovery, philosophers and scientists questioned and even abandoned many of the cherished values and beliefs that had guided Western society since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the nineteenth-century triumph of industry and science.

Modern Philosophy

In the 1920s many people still embraced Enlightenment ideals of progress, reason, and scientific rationalism. At the turn of the century supporters of these philosophies had some cause for optimism. Women and workers were gradually gaining support in their struggles for political and social recognition, and the rising standard of living, the taming of the city, and the growth of state-supported social programs suggested that life was indeed improving. The bloodbath of the First World War had shaken faith in progress, but the notion that the rational human mind could discover the laws of society and then wisely act on them remained strong.

Nevertheless, as Western society entered the age of modernity, people faced growing uncertainties and contradictions. They discovered that modernity—generally defined by historians as the highly industrialized, urbanized class society that had arrived in most of Europe and North America by 1900—brought pessimism and crisis as well as opportunity and promise. Modernity, they realized, was in essence “Janus faced.” Janus, a Roman god, is typically depicted as a single head with two opposing faces—one happy, one sad. Modernity also had at least two sides, a positive one embodied in the developments associated with science and the spread of reason, and a negative one embodied in persistent irrationalism and pessimism and the violence and destruction of modern war.

Modern philosophy echoed the Janus face of modernity. By the late nineteenth century a small group of serious thinkers had mounted a determined attack on the optimism of Enlightenment rationality. These critics rejected the general faith in progress and the rational human mind. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (NEE-chuh) (1844–1900) was particularly influential, though not until after his death. Never a systematic philosopher, Nietzsche wrote more as a prophet in a provocative and poetic style. In the first of his *Untimely Meditations* (1873),

he argued that ever since classical Athens, the West had overemphasized rationality and stifled the authentic passions and animal instincts that drive human activity and true creativity.

Nietzsche questioned the conventional values of Western society. He believed that reason, progress, and respectability were outworn social and psychological constructs that suffocated self-realization and excellence. Though he was the son of a Lutheran minister, Nietzsche famously rejected religion. In his 1887 book, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he claimed that Christianity embodied a “slave morality” that glorified weakness, envy, and mediocrity. In one of his most famous lines, an apparent madman proclaims that “God is dead,” metaphorically murdered by lackadaisical modern Christians who no longer really believed in him. (See “Evaluating Written Evidence: Friedrich Nietzsche Pronounces the Death of God,” page 804.)

Nietzsche painted a dark world, perhaps foreshadowing his own loss of sanity in 1889. He warned that Western society was entering a period of



Philosophy with a Hammer German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche claimed that his “revaluation of all values” was like writing “philosophy with a hammer.” His ideas posed a radical challenge to conventional Western thought and had enormous influence on later thinkers.
(akg-images)

TIMELINE

1915	1920	1925	1930	1935	1940
◀ 1887 Nietzsche publishes <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>	■ 1919 Treaty of Versailles; Freudian psychology gains popularity; Keynes publishes <i>The Economic Consequences of the Peace</i> ; Rutherford splits the atom; Bauhaus school founded	■ 1925 Berg's opera <i>Wozzeck</i> first performed; Kafka publishes <i>The Trial</i>	1929–1939 Great Depression		
◀ 1900 Freud publishes <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i>		■ 1926 Germany joins the League of Nations		■ 1932 Franklin Roosevelt announces "New Deal for the forgotten man"	1939 ■ Start of World War II
■ 1913 Stravinsky's <i>The Rite of Spring</i> premieres in Paris	1920s Existentialism, Dadaism, and Surrealism gain prominence	■ 1927 Heisenberg formulates the "uncertainty principle"		■ 1933 The National Socialist Party takes power in Germany	
	■ 1922 Eliot publishes <i>The Waste Land</i> ; Joyce publishes <i>Ulysses</i> ; Woolf publishes <i>Jacob's Room</i> ; Wittgenstein writes on logical positivism	■ 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact		■ 1935 Release of Riefenstahl's documentary film <i>Triumph of the Will</i>	
	■ 1922 First radio broadcast by British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)			■ 1936 Formation of Popular Front in France	
	■ 1923 French and Belgian armies occupy the Ruhr; Corbusier publishes <i>Towards a New Architecture</i>				
	■ 1924 Dawes Plan				

nihilism—the grim idea that human life is entirely without meaning, truth, or purpose. Nietzsche asserted that all moral systems were invented lies and that liberalism, democracy, and socialism were corrupt systems designed to promote the weak at the expense of the strong. The West was in decline; false values had triumphed; the death of God left people disoriented and depressed. According to Nietzsche, the only hope for the individual was to accept the meaninglessness of human existence and then make that very meaninglessness a source of self-defined personal integrity and hence liberation. In this way, at least a few superior individuals could free themselves from the humdrum thinking of the masses and become true heroes.

Little read during his active years, Nietzsche's works attracted growing attention in the early twentieth century. Artists and writers experimented with his ideas, which were fundamental to the rise of the philosophy of existentialism in the 1920s. Subsequent generations remade Nietzsche to suit their own needs, and his influence remains enormous to this day.

The growing dissatisfaction with established ideas before 1914 was apparent in other important thinkers as well. In the 1890s French philosophy professor

Henri Bergson (1859–1941), for one, argued that immediate experience and intuition were as important as rational and scientific thinking for understanding reality. According to Bergson, a religious experience or mystical poem was often more accessible to human comprehension than a scientific law or a mathematical equation.

The First World War accelerated the revolt against established certainties in philosophy, but that revolt went in two very different directions. In English-speaking countries, the main development was the acceptance of logical positivism in university circles. In the continental countries, the primary development in philosophy was existentialism.

Logical positivism was truly revolutionary. Adherents of this worldview argued that what we know about human life must be based on rational facts and direct observation. They concluded that theology and

logical positivism A philosophy that sees meaning in only those beliefs that can be empirically proven and that therefore rejects most of the concerns of traditional philosophy, from the existence of God to the meaning of happiness, as nonsense.

Friedrich Nietzsche Pronounces the Death of God

In this selection from philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* (1882), one of the best-known passages in his entire body of work, a "madman" pronounces the death of God and describes the anxiety and despair—and the opportunities—faced by people in a world without faith.

The Madman. Haven't you heard of that madman, who on a bright morning day lit a lantern, ran into the market-place, and screamed incessantly: "I am looking for God! I am looking for God!" Since there were a lot of people standing around who did not believe in God, he only aroused great laughter. Is he lost? asked one person. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he in hiding? Is he frightened of us? Has he gone on a journey? Or emigrated? And so they screamed and laughed. The madman leaped into the crowd and stared straight at them. "Where has God gone?" he cried. "I will tell you! We have killed him. You and I! All of us are his murderers! But how did we do this? How did we manage to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it going now? Where are we going? Away from all the suns? Aren't we ceaselessly falling? Backward, sideways, forward, in all directions? Is there an up or a down at all? Aren't we just roaming through an infinite nothing? Don't you feel the breath of this empty space? Hasn't it gotten colder? Isn't night and ever more night falling?

Don't we have to light our lanterns in the morning? Do we hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell anything yet of the rot of God's decomposition? Gods decompose too! God is dead! God will stay dead! And we have killed him! How do we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? The holiest and mightiest the world has ever known has bled to death against our knives—who will wipe the blood off? Where is the water to cleanse ourselves? What sort of rituals of atonement, what sort of sacred games, will we have to come up with now? Isn't the greatness of this deed too great for us? Don't we have to become gods ourselves simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed, and whoever will be born after us will belong to a history greater than any history up to now!"

EVALUATE THE EVIDENCE

1. Does Nietzsche believe that the "death of God" is a positive experience? In what ways can people come to grips with this "great deed"?
2. How does the nihilism expressed in this passage foreshadow many of the main ideas in the philosophy of existentialism?

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most traditional philosophy were meaningless because even the most cherished ideas about God, eternal truth, and ethics were impossible to prove using logic. This outlook is often associated with the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (VIHT-guhn-shtine) (1889–1951), who later immigrated to England, where he trained numerous disciples.

In his pugnacious *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (*Essay on Logical Philosophy*), published in 1922, Wittgenstein argued that philosophy is only the logical clarification of thoughts and that therefore it should concentrate on the study of language, which expresses thoughts. In his view, the great philosophical issues of the ages—God, freedom, morality, and so on—were quite literally senseless, a great waste of time, for neither scientific experiments nor mathematical logic could demonstrate their validity. Statements about such matters reflected only the personal preferences of a given individual. As Wittgenstein put it in the

famous last sentence of this work, "Of what one cannot speak, of that one must keep silent." Logical positivism, which has remained dominant in England and the United States to this day, drastically reduced the scope of philosophical inquiry and offered little solace to ordinary people.

On the continent, others looked for answers in **existentialism**. This new philosophy loosely united highly diverse and even contradictory thinkers in a search for usable moral values in a world of anxiety and uncertainty. Modern existentialism had many nineteenth-century forerunners, including Nietzsche, the Danish religious philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), and the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821–1881). The philosophy gained recognition in Germany in the 1920s when philosophers Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) found a sympathetic audience among disillusioned postwar university students.

These writers placed great emphasis on the loneliness and meaninglessness of human existence and the need to come to terms with the fear caused by this situation.

Most existential thinkers in the twentieth century were atheists. Often inspired by Nietzsche, they did not believe that a supreme being had established humanity's fundamental nature and given life its meaning. In the words of French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre (SAH-truh) (1905–1980), "existence precedes essence." By that, Sartre meant that there are no God-given, timeless truths outside or independent of individual existence. Only after they are born do people struggle to define their essence, entirely on their own. According to thinkers like Sartre and his lifelong intellectual partner Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986), existence itself is absurd. Human beings are terribly alone, for there is no God to help them. They are left to confront the inevitable arrival of death and so are hounded by despair. The crisis of the existential thinker epitomized the modern intellectual crisis—the shattering of beliefs in God, reason, and progress.

At the same time, existentialists recognized that human beings must act in the world. Indeed, in the words of Sartre, "man is condemned to be free." Because life is meaningless, existentialists believe that individuals are forced to create their own meaning and define themselves through their actions. Such radical freedom is frightening, and Sartre concluded that most people try to escape it by structuring their lives around conventional social norms. According to Sartre, to escape is to live in "bad faith," to hide from the hard truths of existence. To live authentically, individuals must become "engaged" and choose their own actions in full awareness of their responsibility for their own behavior. Existentialism thus had a powerful ethical component. It placed great stress on individual responsibility and choice, on "being in the world" in the right way.

Existentialism had important precedents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the philosophy really came of age in France during and immediately after World War II. The terrible conditions of that war, discussed in the next chapter, reinforced the existential view of and approach to life. After World War II, French existentialists such as Sartre and Albert Camus (1913–1960) became enormously influential. They offered powerful but unsettling answers to the profound moral issues and the crises of the first half of the twentieth century.

The Revival of Christianity

Although philosophers such as Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Sartre believed that religion had little to teach people in the modern age, the decades after the First World War witnessed a tenacious revival of Christian thought. Christianity—and religion in general—had

been on the defensive in intellectual circles since the Enlightenment. In the years before 1914 some theologians, especially Protestant ones, had felt the need to interpret Christian doctrine and the Bible so that they did not seem to contradict science, evolution, and common sense. They saw Christ primarily as a great moral teacher and downplayed the mysterious, spiritual aspects of his divinity. Indeed, some modern theologians were embarrassed by the miraculous, unscientific aspects of Christianity and rejected them.

Especially after World War I, a number of thinkers and theologians began to revitalize the fundamental beliefs of Christianity. Sometimes called Christian existentialists because they shared the loneliness and despair of atheistic existentialists, they stressed human beings' sinful nature, their need for faith, and the mystery of God's forgiveness. The revival of Christian belief after World War I was fed by the rediscovery of the work of the nineteenth-century Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard (KIHR-kuh-gahrd), whose ideas became extremely influential. Kierkegaard believed it was impossible for ordinary people to prove the existence of God, but he rejected the notion that Christianity was an empty practice. In his classic *Sickness unto Death* (1849), Kierkegaard mastered his religious doubts by suggesting that people must take a "leap of faith" and accept the existence of an objectively unknowable but nonetheless awesome and majestic God.

In the 1920s the Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) propounded similar ideas. In brilliant and influential writings, Barth argued that human beings were imperfect, sinful creatures whose reason and will are hopelessly flawed. Religious truth is therefore made known to human beings only through God's grace, not through reason. People have to accept God's word and the supernatural revelation of Jesus Christ with awe, trust, and obedience, not reason or logic.

Among Catholics, the leading existential Christian was Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973). Born into a cultivated French family, Marcel found in the Catholic Church an answer to what he called the postwar "broken world." Catholicism and religious belief provided the hope, humanity, honesty, and piety for which he hungered. Marcel denounced anti-Semitism and supported closer ties with non-Catholics.

After 1914 religion became much more meaningful to intellectuals than it had been before the war. Between about 1920 and 1950, poets T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden, novelists Evelyn Waugh and Aldous Huxley, historian Arnold Toynbee, writer C. S. Lewis, psychoanalyst Karl Stern, and physicist Max Planck all either converted to a faith or became attracted to religion

existentialism A philosophy that stresses the meaninglessness of existence and the importance of the individual in searching for moral values in an uncertain world.

for the first time. Religion, often of an existential variety, offered one meaningful answer to the horrific costs of the First and Second World Wars and the ambiguities of the age of modernity. In the words of English novelist Graham Greene, a Roman Catholic convert, “One began to believe in heaven because one believed in hell.”¹

The New Physics

Ever since the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century, scientific advances and their implications had greatly influenced the beliefs of thinking people. By the late nineteenth century science was one of the main pillars supporting Western society’s optimistic and rationalistic worldview. Progressive minds believed that science, unlike religion or philosophical speculation, was based on hard facts and controlled experiments. Unchanging natural laws seemed to determine physical processes and permit useful solutions to more and more problems. All this marked the upside of the modern age, especially for people no longer committed to traditional religious beliefs.

By the 1920s, developments in the science of physics had begun to cast doubt on the unchanging, factual basis of natural law. An important first step came at the end of the nineteenth century with the discovery that atoms were not like hard, permanent little billiard balls. They were actually composed of many far-smaller, fast-moving, unstable particles, such as electrons and protons. Polish-born physicist Marie Curie (1867–1934) and her French husband, Pierre, for example, discovered that radium constantly emits subatomic particles and thus does not have a constant atomic weight. Building on this and other work in radiation, German physicist Max Planck (1858–1947) showed in 1900 that subatomic energy is emitted in uneven little spurts, which Planck called “quanta,” and not in a steady stream, as previously believed. Planck’s discovery called into question the old sharp distinction between matter and energy: the implication was that matter and energy might be different forms of the same thing. The view of atoms as the stable basic building blocks of nature, with a different kind of unbreakable atom for each of the ninety-two chemical elements, was badly shaken.

In 1905 the German-Jewish genius Albert Einstein (1879–1955) further challenged the mathematical laws at the base of Newtonian physics. Einstein’s **theory of special relativity** postulated that time and space are relative to the viewpoint of the observer and that only the speed of light is constant for all frames of reference in the universe. In order to make his revolutionary and paradoxical idea somewhat comprehensible to the nonmathematical layperson, Einstein used analogies involving moving trains: if a woman in the middle of a moving car got up and walked forward

to the door, she had gone, relative to the train, a half car length. But relative to an observer on the embankment, she had gone farther. To Einstein, this meant that time and distance were not natural universals but depended on the position and motion of the observer.

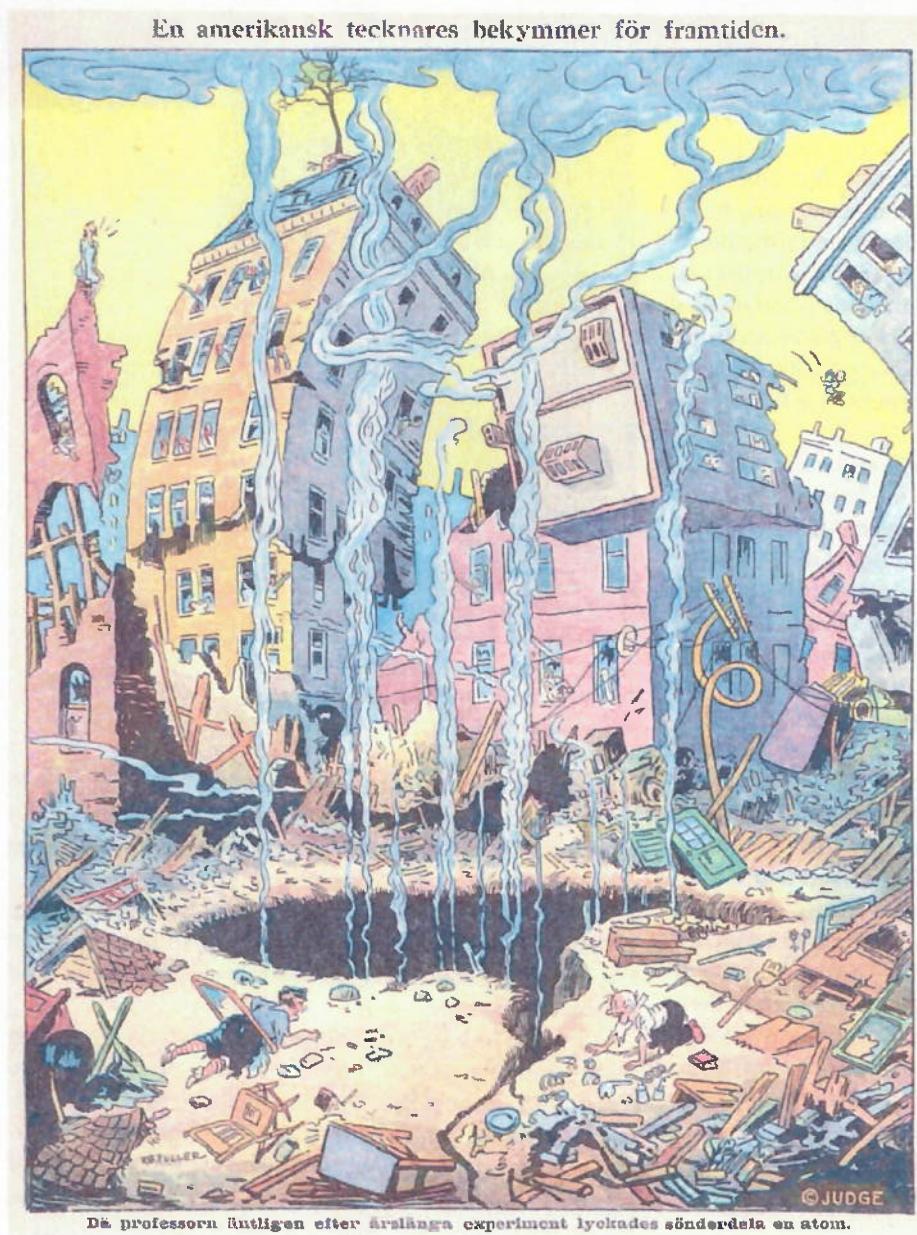
In addition, Einstein’s theory stated that matter and energy were interchangeable and that even a particle of matter contains enormous levels of potential energy. These ideas unified an apparently infinite universe with the incredibly small, fast-moving subatomic world. In comparison, the closed framework of the Newtonian physics developed during the Scientific Revolution, exemplified by Newton’s supposedly immutable laws of motion and mechanics, was quite limited (see “Newton’s Synthesis,” Chapter 16).

The 1920s opened the “heroic age of physics,” in the apt words of Ernest Rutherford (1871–1937), one of its leading pioneers. Breakthrough followed breakthrough. In 1919 Rutherford showed that the atom could be split. By 1944 seven subatomic particles had been identified, the most important of which was the neutron. Physicists realized that the neutron’s capacity to shatter the nucleus of another atom could lead to chain reactions of shattered atoms that would release unbelievable force. This discovery was fundamental to the subsequent development of the nuclear bomb.

Although few nonscientists truly understood the revolution in physics, its implications, as presented by newspapers and popular science fiction writers, fascinated millions of men and women in the 1920s and 1930s. As radical as Einstein’s ideas was a notion popularized by German physicist Werner Heisenberg (HIGH-zuhn-buhrg) (1901–1976). In 1927 Heisenberg formulated the “uncertainty principle,” which postulates that nature itself is ultimately unknowable and unpredictable. He suggested that the universe lacked any absolute objective reality. Everything was “relative,” that is, dependent on the observer’s frame of reference. Such ideas challenged familiar certainties: instead of Newton’s dependable, rational laws, there seemed to be only tendencies and probabilities in an extraordinarily complex and uncertain universe. Like modern philosophy, physics no longer provided comforting truths about natural laws or optimistic answers about humanity’s place in an understandable world.

Freudian Psychology

With physics presenting an uncertain universe so unrelated to ordinary human experience, questions regarding the power and potential of the rational human mind assumed special significance. The findings and speculations of Sigmund Freud were particularly influential, yet also deeply provoking. (See “Individuals in Society: Sigmund Freud,” page 808.)



Before Freud, poets and mystics had probed the unconscious and irrational aspects of human behavior. But most scientists assumed that the conscious mind processed sense experiences in a rational and logical way. Human behavior in turn was the result of rational calculation—of “thinking.” Beginning in the late 1880s Freud developed a very different view of the human psyche. Basing his insights on the analysis of dreams and of “hysteria,” a sort of nervous breakdown, Freud concluded that human behavior was basically irrational, governed by the unconscious, a mental reservoir that contained vital instinctual drives and powerful memories. Though the unconscious profoundly influenced people’s behavior, it was unknowable to the conscious mind, leaving people

unaware of the source or meaning of their actions. Freud explained these ideas in his magisterial book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, first published in 1900.

Freud eventually described three structures of the self—the **id**, the **ego**, and the **superego**—that were basically at war with one another. The primitive, irrational id was entirely unconscious. The source of sexual, aggressive, and pleasure-seeking instincts, the id sought immediate fulfillment of all desires and was

■ theory of special relativity Albert Einstein’s theory that time and space are relative to the observer and that only the speed of light remains constant.

■ id, ego, and superego Freudian terms to describe the three parts of the self and the basis of human behavior, which Freud saw as basically irrational.

Unlocking the Power of the Atom

Many of the fanciful visions of science fiction came true in the twentieth century, although not exactly as first imagined. This 1927 Swedish reprint of a drawing by American cartoonist Robert Fuller satirizes a pair of professors who have split the atom and unwittingly destroyed their building and neighborhood in the process. In the Second World War, professors indeed harnessed the atom in bombs and decimated faraway cities and foreign civilians. (© Mary Evans Picture Library/The Image Works)

INDIVIDUALS IN SOCIETY

Sigmund Freud

In the course of his long and brilliant career, Sigmund Freud developed psychological theories and therapeutic techniques that revolutionized contemporary understandings of the human mind. Freud was born in 1856 to a middle-class Jewish merchant family and moved to Vienna when he was four years old. He entered the University of Vienna to study physiology and biology, and earned a medical degree in 1881 with a dissertation titled "The Spinal Cord of Lower Fish Species."

In 1885–1886 Freud studied in Paris at the clinic of the leading French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot. Charcot's work on hysteria—fainting spells in women—inspired Freud to turn to mental health and psychology. From Charcot, Freud learned to treat patients with hypnosis. In 1886 he married Martha Bernays, the daughter of the chief rabbi in Hamburg. The same year Freud opened a medical practice in Vienna, where he continued to believe that hypnosis could help reveal psychological damage lodged somewhere in the unconscious.

Freud's collaboration with Viennese psychologist Dr. Joseph Breuer marked a breakthrough in the development of psychoanalysis, the label Freud would use to designate his thought and practice. Freud and Breuer worked together to treat "Anna O." a deeply neurotic patient whose symptoms included radical mood swings, hallucinations, and psychosomatic disorders. Her partial recovery—achieved through the so-called "talking cure," in which patients described their experiences and the symptoms began to go away—was described in their coauthored book, *Studies in Hysteria* (1895). The psychologists suggested that the goal of therapy was to decode the logic of the unconscious. No symptom was accidental. To bring relief, the therapist needed to discover and explain the links between repressed experience and the symptom.

Freud worked hard on what he saw as his great mission: to propagate the message of psychoanalysis. He published a series of famous books, including case studies about his patients and detailed explanations of his theories and methods. In 1910 he cofounded the International Psychoanalytic Association, an umbrella group for like-minded colleagues, designed to promote Freudian theories.

The great slaughter of World War I confirmed for Freud the role of aggressive irrationality at the core of the human personality, and after the war Freud began to apply his theories



Sigmund Freud and his wife Martha Bernays, about 1890. (Sigmund Freud Copyrights/ullstein bild/Getty Images)

to human society at large. Most famously, in his book *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud argued that civilization was possible only when individuals renounced their irrational instincts in order to live peacefully in groups. Such renunciation made communal life possible, but it left basic instincts unfulfilled and so resulted in widespread unhappiness. Freud gloomily concluded that Western civilization was itself inescapably neurotic.

Although Freud was a nonpracticing Jew, he was appalled by the anti-Semitism of the German Nazi Party. When the Nazis took over Austria in 1938, he emigrated to London. Suffering from long-term mouth cancer, the eighty-three-year-old Freud committed physician-assisted suicide in September 1939. Although the science of psychology has in many ways moved on, Freud's ideas about the role of the unconscious in human motivation, as well as his famous "talking cure," have had a lasting impact on the Western intellectual tradition.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

- Using the material in the biography above and in the chapter text, summarize the main features of psychoanalysis. Why was the unconscious so central to Freud's ideas?
- How do Freud's theories and therapies reflect the "Janus face" of the modern age?

totally amoral. Keeping the id in check was the superego, the conscience or internalized voice of parental or social control. For Freud, the superego was also irrational. Overly strict and puritanical, it was constantly in conflict with the pleasure-seeking id. The third

component was the ego, the rational self that was mostly conscious and worked to negotiate between the demands of the id and the superego.

For Freud, the healthy individual possessed a strong ego that effectively balanced the id and superego.

Neurosis, or mental illness, resulted when the three structures were out of balance. Since the id's instinctual drives were extremely powerful, the danger for individuals and indeed whole societies was that unacknowledged drives might overwhelm the control mechanisms of the ego in a violent, distorted way. Freud's "talking cure"—in which neurotic patients lay back on a couch and shared their innermost thoughts with the psychoanalyst—was an attempt to resolve such unconscious tensions and restore the rational ego to its predominant role.

Freudian psychology and clinical psychiatry had become an international medical movement by 1910, but only after 1919 did they receive more public attention, especially in northern Europe. In the United States, Freud's ideas attained immense popularity after the Second World War. Many opponents and even some enthusiasts interpreted Freud as saying that the first requirement for mental health was an uninhibited sex life; popular understandings of Freud thus reflected and encouraged growing sexual experimentation, particularly among middle-class women. For more serious students, the psychology of Freud and his followers weakened the old easy optimism about the rational and progressive nature of the human mind.



Freud's Couch As part of his "talking cure," Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud invited neurotic patients to lie back on a couch and speak about their dreams and innermost thoughts. This photo shows Freud's famous couch in his office in Vienna. His theories about the unconscious and instinctual motivation of human behavior cast doubt on Enlightenment ideals of rationalism and progress. (Everett Collection/Newscom)

How did modernism revolutionize Western culture?

Like the scientists and intellectuals who were part of an increasingly unsettled modern culture, creative artists rejected old forms and values. **Modernism** in architecture, art, literature, and music meant constant experimentation and a search for new kinds of expression. Many artists produced critical, challenging works that called attention to the irrational aspects of Western society. Their work was strikingly original, and the era of early-twentieth-century modernism is widely viewed as one of the greatest in Western art.

Architecture and Design

Already in the late nineteenth century, architects inspired by modernism had begun to transform the physical framework of urban society. The United States, with its rapid urban growth and lack of rigid building traditions, pioneered the new architecture. In the 1890s the Chicago School of architects, led by Louis H. Sullivan (1856–1924), used inexpensive steel, reinforced concrete, and electric elevators to build skyscrapers and office buildings lacking almost any exterior ornamentation. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Sullivan's student Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959) built a series of

radically modern houses featuring low lines, open interiors, and mass-produced building materials. European architects were inspired by these and other American examples of modern construction.

Modern architects believed that buildings and living spaces in general should be ordered according to a new principle: **functionalism**. Buildings, like industrial products, should be "functional"—that is, they should serve, as well as possible, the purpose for which they were made. According to the Franco-Swiss architect Le Corbusier (luh cowr-booz-YAY) (1887–1965), one of the great champions of modernism, "a house is a machine for living in."² Corbusier's polemical work *Towards a New Architecture*, published in 1923, laid out guidelines meant to revolutionize building design. Corbusier argued that architects should affirm and adopt the latest scientific technologies. Rejecting fancy ornamentation, they

■ **modernism** A label given to the artistic and cultural movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which were typified by radical experimentation that challenged traditional forms of artistic expression.

■ **functionalism** The principle that buildings, like industrial products, should serve as well as possible the purpose for which they were made, without excessive ornamentation.

EVALUATING VISUAL EVIDENCE

Modern Design for Everyday Use

European design movements of the early twentieth century such as the Bauhaus, an institute for arts and crafts founded in Germany in 1919, had a lasting impact on everyday lifestyles. Bauhaus adherents believed that form should follow function and that, as director Ludwig Mies van der Rohe put it in a famous aphorism, “less is more.” The results, including this “B35” armchair by Marcel Breuer, were streamlined, functional objects stripped of all ornamentation. They were nonetheless works of beauty, whose design and materials expressed the values of the modern age.

EVALUATE THE EVIDENCE

1. The “B35” chair, first produced in 1928–1929, had a simple canvas seat and lacquered wooden armrests, supported by bent tubular steel runners. How does the chair design reflect the modern industrial society in which it was created?
2. Run a Google search for “Marcel Breuer, B35 Armchair.” What do you find? Why do Bauhaus designs remain popular today?

should find beauty in the clean, straight lines of practical construction and efficient machinery. The resulting buildings, fashioned according to what was soon called the “International Style,” were typically symmetrical rectangles made of concrete, glass, and steel.

In Europe, architectural leadership centered in German-speaking countries until Hitler took power in 1933. In 1911 twenty-eight-year-old Walter Gropius (1883–1969) broke sharply with the past in his design of the Fagus shoe factory at Alfeld, Germany—a clean, light, elegant building of glass and iron. In 1919 Gropius merged the schools of fine and applied arts at Weimar into a single interdisciplinary school, the **Bauhaus**. The Bauhaus brought together many leading modern architects, designers, and theatrical innovators.

The impact of the Bauhaus on everyday life, from architecture to interior design, was immense. Working as an effective, inspired team, Bauhaus instructors and students sought to revolutionize product design by unifying art, craft, and technology. They combined the study of fine art, including painting and sculpture,



(Purchase, Theodore R. Gamble Jr. Gift in honor of his mother, Mrs. Theodore Robert Gamble, 1985 (1985.127)/The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY, U.S.A./Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image Source: Art Resource, NY)

with the study of applied art in the crafts of printing, weaving, and furniture making. Bauhaus adherents argued that everyday objects should reflect the highly rationalized, industrialized, and modern society in which—and for which—they were made. No object was too insignificant to be treated as an object of high design, and the industrial ethos of the Bauhaus was brought to bear on textiles, typography, dishware, and furniture. Such goods were mass-produced and marketed at affordable prices, bringing high-concept design into the lives of ordinary Europeans. Bauhaus architects applied the same principles in designing buildings, from factories to working-class housing projects and private homes. (See “Evaluating Visual Evidence: Modern Design for Everyday Use,” above.)

Another leading modern architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969), followed Gropius as director of the Bauhaus in 1930. Like many modernist intellectuals, after 1933 he moved to the United States to escape the repressive Nazi regime. His classic steel-frame and glass-wall Lake Shore Apartments in Chicago, built between 1948 and 1951, epitomized the spread and triumph of the modernist International Style in the great building boom that followed the Second World War.

New Artistic Movements

In the decades surrounding the First World War, the visual arts also entered a phase of radical

■ **Bauhaus** A German interdisciplinary school of fine and applied arts that brought together many leading modern architects, designers, and theatrical innovators.

■ **Dadaism** An artistic movement of the 1910s and 1920s that attacked all accepted standards of art and behavior and delighted in outrageous conduct.

experimentation. For the previous several centuries, artists had tried to produce accurate representations of reality. Now a committed avant-garde emerged to challenge that practice. From Impressionism and Expressionism to Dadaism and Surrealism, a sometimes-bewildering array of artistic movements followed one after another. Modern painting and sculpture became increasingly abstract as artists turned their backs on figurative representation and began to break down form into its constituent parts: lines, shapes, and colors.

Berlin, Munich, Moscow, Vienna, New York, and especially Paris became famous for their radical artistic undergrounds. Commercial art galleries and exhibition halls promoted the new work, and schools and institutions, such as the Bauhaus, emerged to train a generation in modern techniques. Young artists flocked to these cultural centers to participate in the new movements, earn a living making art, and perhaps change the world with their revolutionary ideas.

One of the earliest modernist movements was Impressionism, which blossomed in Paris in the 1870s. French artists such as Claude Monet (1840–1926) and Edgar Degas (1834–1917), and the American Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), who settled in Paris in 1875, tried to portray their sensory “impressions” in their work. Impressionists looked to the world around them

for subject matter, turning their backs on traditional themes such as battles, religious scenes, and wealthy elites. Monet’s colorful and atmospheric paintings of farmland haystacks and Degas’s many pastel drawings of ballerinas exemplify the way Impressionists moved toward abstraction. Capturing a fleeting moment of color and light, in often blurry and quickly painted images, was far more important than making a heavily detailed, precise rendering of an actual object.

An astonishing array of art movements followed Impressionism. Postimpressionists and Expressionists, such as Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), built on Impressionist motifs of color and light but added a deep psychological element to their pictures, reflecting the attempt to search within the self and express inner feelings on the canvas.

After 1900 a generation of artists overturned the art world status quo. In Paris in 1907 painter Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), along with others, established Cubism—a highly analytical approach that concentrated on a complex geometry of zigzagging lines and sharply angled overlapping planes. Cubism exemplified the ongoing trend toward abstract, nonrepresentational art. In 1909 Italian Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944) announced the arrival of Futurism, a movement in art and literature determined to glorify modernity and destroy the burdens of the past. According to Marinetti, traditional culture could not adequately deal with the advances of modern technology—automobiles, radios, telephones, phonographs, ocean liners, airplanes, the cinema, the newspaper—and the way these had changed human consciousness. Marinetti embraced the future, championing the speed and confusion of modernity and calling for new art forms that could express the modern condition.

The shock of World War I encouraged further radicalization. In 1916 a group of international artists and intellectuals in exile in Zurich, Switzerland, championed a new movement they called **Dadaism**, which attacked all the familiar standards of art and delighted in outrageous behavior. The war had shown once and for all that life was meaningless, the Dadaists argued, so art should be meaningless as well. Dadaists tried to shock their audiences with what they called “anti-art,” works and public performances that were insulting and entirely nonsensical. A well-known example is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* in which the masterpiece is ridiculed with the addition of a hand-drawn mustache and an obscene inscription. After the war, Dadaism became an international



The Shock of the Avant-Garde Dadaist Hugo Ball recites his nonsense poem “Karawane” at the notorious Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1916. Avant-garde artists such as Ball consciously used their work to overturn familiar artistic conventions and challenge the assumptions of the European middle classes. (Apic/Getty Images)



movement, spreading to Paris, New York, and particularly Berlin in the early 1920s.

During the mid-1920s some Dadaists turned to Surrealism, a movement deeply influenced by the Freudian idea of the unconscious. Surrealists painted fantastic worlds of wild dreams and uncomfortable symbols, where watches melted and giant metronomes beat time in precisely drawn but impossibly alien landscapes.

Many modern artists sincerely believed that art had a transformative mission. By calling attention to the bankruptcy of mainstream society, they thought art had the power to change the world. The sometimes-nonsensical manifestos written by members of the Dadaist, Futurist, and Surrealist movements were meant to spread their ideas, challenge conventional assumptions of all kinds, and foment social change.

By the 1920s art and culture had become increasingly politicized. Many avant-garde artists sided with the far left; some became committed Communists. Such artists and modern art movements in general had a difficult time surviving the political crises of the 1930s. Between 1933 and 1945, the National Socialist (Nazi) Party came to power in Germany and brought a second world war to the European continent. The Nazis despised the abstract ambiguities of modernism, and hundreds of artists and intellectuals—often Jews and leftists—fled to the United States to escape Nazi repression. After World War II, New York greatly benefited from this transfusion of talent and replaced Paris and Berlin as the world capital of modern art.

A Cubist-Constructivist Set Design for *Romeo and Juliet*

Juliet This 1920 set design for a Moscow production of Shakespeare's famous play is by the noted female avant-garde artist Liubov Popova. Her set is deeply influenced by Cubism and Constructivism, a Russian art movement that often used familiar mechanical forms in abstract works of art. The watercolor testifies to the cross-fertilization of modern art movements, in this case theater, painting, and design. It also exemplifies the artistic experimentation popular in the Soviet Union before Stalin began to force artists to follow the dictates of Socialist Realism. (Private Collection/Moscow, Russia/Scala/Art Resource, NY)

Twentieth-Century Literature

In the decades that followed the First World War, Western literature was deeply influenced by the turn toward radical experimentation that swept through the other arts. The great nineteenth-century novelists had typically written as all-knowing narrators, describing realistic characters and their relationships to an understandable, if sometimes harsh, society. Modernist writers developed new techniques to express new realities. In the twentieth century many authors adopted the limited, often confused viewpoint of a single individual. Like Freud, they focused on the complexity and irrationality of the human mind, where feelings, memories, and desires were forever scrambled. French novelist Marcel Proust (PROOST) (1871–1922), in his semi-autobiographical, multivolume *Remembrance of Things Past*, published in 1927, recalled bittersweet memories of childhood and youthful love and tried to discover their innermost meaning. To do so, Proust lived like a hermit in a soundproof Paris apartment for ten years, withdrawing from the present to dwell on the past.

Some novelists used the **stream-of-consciousness technique**, relying on internal monologues to explore the human psyche. In *Jacob's Room* (1922), the English author Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) created a novel made up of a series of such monologues in which she tried to capture the inner voice in prose. In this and other stories, Woolf portrayed characters whose ideas and emotions from different periods of their lives bubble up as randomly as from a patient on a psychoanalyst's couch. William Faulkner (1897–1962), one of America's great novelists, used the same technique in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), with much of its intense drama confusedly seen through the eyes of a man who is mentally disabled.

The most famous and perhaps most experimental stream-of-consciousness novel was *Ulysses* (1922) by Irish novelist James Joyce (1882–1941). Into an account of a single day in the life of an ordinary man, Joyce weaves an extended ironic parallel between the aimless wanderings of his hero through the streets and pubs of Dublin and the adventures of Homer's hero Ulysses on his way home from Troy. *Ulysses* was surely one of the most disturbing novels of its generation.

stream-of-consciousness technique A literary technique, found in works by Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and others, that uses interior monologue—a character's thoughts and feelings as they occur—to explore the human psyche.

Abandoning any sense of a conventional plot, breaking rules of grammar, and blending foreign words, puns, bits of knowledge, and scraps of memory together in bewildering confusion, *Ulysses* is intended to mirror modern life: a gigantic riddle impossible to unravel. Since Joyce included frank descriptions of the main character's sexual thoughts and encounters, the novel was considered obscene in Great Britain and the United States and was banned there until the early 1930s.

As creative writers turned their attention from society to the individual and from realism to psychological relativity, they rejected the idea of progress. Some described "anti-utopias," nightmare visions of things to come, as in the T. S. Eliot poem *The Waste Land* (1922), which depicts a world of growing desolation:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

...
What are the roots that clutch, what branches
grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no
relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water.³

With its biblical references, images of a ruined and wasted natural world, and general human incomprehension, Eliot (1888–1965) expressed the crisis of confidence that followed the First World War. The Czech writer Franz Kafka (1883–1924) likewise portrayed an incomprehensible, alienating world. Kafka's novels *The Trial* (1925) and *The Castle* (1926) are stories about helpless people crushed by inexplicably hostile forces, as is his famous novella *The Metamorphosis* (1915), in which the main character turns into a giant insect. The German-Jewish Kafka died young, at forty-one, and was spared the horror of seeing the world of his nightmares materialize in the Nazi state. In these and many other works, authors between the wars used new literary techniques and dark imagery to capture the anxiety of the modern age.

Modern Music

Developments in modern music paralleled those in painting and fiction. Composers and performers captured the emotional intensity and shock of modernism in radically experimental forms. The ballet *The Rite of Spring* by Russian composer Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), for example, practically caused a riot when it was first performed in Paris in 1913. The combination of pulsating rhythms and dissonant sounds from the orchestra pit with earthy representations of lovemaking by the strangely dressed dancers on the stage shocked audiences accustomed to traditional ballet.



Modern Dance Dancers in Russian composer Igor Stravinsky's avant-garde ballet *The Rite of Spring* perform at the Paris premiere. The dissonant music, wild sets and costumes, and unpredictable dance movements shocked and insulted the audience, which rioted on the opening night in May 1913. (© Lebrecht/The Image Works)

After the First World War, when irrationality and violence had seemed to pervade human experience, modernism flourished in opera and ballet. One of the most powerful examples was the opera *Wozzeck*, by Alban Berg (1885–1935), first performed in Berlin in 1925. Blending a half-sung, half-spoken kind of dialogue with harsh, atonal music, *Wozzeck* is a gruesome tale of a soldier driven by inner terrors and vague suspicions of infidelity to murder his mistress.

Some composers turned their backs on long-established musical conventions. Just as abstract painters arranged lines and color but did not draw identifiable objects, so modern composers arranged sounds without creating recognizable harmonies. Led

by Viennese composer Arnold Schönberg (SHURN-buhrg) (1874–1951), they abandoned traditional harmony and tonality. The musical notes in a given piece were no longer united and organized by a key; instead they were independent and unrelated. Schönberg's twelve-tone music of the 1920s arranged all twelve notes of the scale in an abstract mathematical pattern, or "tone row." This pattern sounded like no pattern at all to the ordinary listener and could be detected only by a highly trained eye studying the musical score. Accustomed to the harmonies of classical and romantic music, audiences generally resisted atonal music. Only after the Second World War did it begin to win acceptance.

How did consumer society change everyday life?

Fundamental innovations in the basic provision and consumption of goods and services accompanied the radical transformation of artistic and intellectual life. A range of new mass-produced goods, from telephones to vacuum cleaners, and the arrival of cinema and radio, heralded the first steps toward a consumer revolution that would be fully consolidated in the 1950s and 1960s.

Modern Mass Culture

The emerging consumer society of the 1920s is a good example of the way technological developments can lead to widespread social change. The arrival of a highly industrialized manufacturing system dedicated to mass-producing inexpensive goods, the establishment of efficient transportation systems that could bring these goods to national markets, and the rise of professional advertising experts to sell them were all part of a revolution in the way consumer goods were made, marketed, and used by ordinary people.

Contemporaries viewed the new mass culture as a distinctly modern aspect of everyday life. It seemed that consumer goods themselves were modernizing society by changing so many ingrained habits. Some people embraced the new ways; others worried that these changes threatened familiar values and precious traditions.

Critics had good reason to worry. Mass-produced goods had a profound impact on the lives of ordinary people. Housework and private life were increasingly organized around an array of modern appliances, from electric ovens, washing machines, and refrigerators to telephones and radios. The aggressive marketing of fashionable clothing and personal care products, such as shampoo, perfume, and makeup, encouraged a cult of youthful "sex appeal." Advertisements increasingly

linked individual attractiveness to the use of brand-name products. The mass production and marketing of automobiles and the rise of tourist agencies opened roads to increased mobility and travel.

Commercialized mass entertainment likewise prospered and began to dominate the way people spent their leisure time. Movies and radio thrilled millions. Professional sporting events drew throngs of fans. Thriving print media brought readers an astounding variety of newspapers, inexpensive books, and glossy illustrated magazines. Flashy restaurants, theatrical revues, and nightclubs competed for evening customers.

Department stores epitomized the emergence of consumer society. Already well established across Europe and the United States by the 1890s, they had become veritable temples of commerce by the 1920s. The typical store sold an enticing variety of goods, including clothing, housewares, food, and spirits. Larger stores included travel bureaus, movie theaters, and refreshment stands. Aggressive advertising campaigns, youthful and attractive salespeople, and easy credit and return policies helped attract customers in droves.

The emergence of modern consumer culture both undermined and reinforced existing social differences. On one hand, consumerism helped democratize Western society. Since anyone with the means could purchase any item, consumer culture helped break down old social barriers based on class, region, and religion. Yet it also reinforced social differences. Manufacturers soon realized they could profit by marketing goods to specific groups. Catholics, for example, could purchase their own popular literature and inexpensive devotional items; young people eagerly bought the latest fashions marketed directly to them. In addition, the expense of many items meant that only the wealthy could purchase them. Automobiles and, in the 1920s, even vacuum cleaners cost so much that ownership became a status symbol.

The changes in women's lives were particularly striking. The new household items transformed how women performed housework. Advice literature of all kinds encouraged housewives to rush out and buy the latest appliances so they could "modernize" the home. Consumer culture brought growing public visibility to women, especially the young. Girls and young women worked behind the counters and shopped in the aisles of department stores, and they went out on the street alone in ways unthinkable in the nineteenth century.

Contemporaries spoke repeatedly about the new "**modern girl**," an independent young woman who could vote and held a job, spent her salary on the latest fashions, applied makeup and smoked cigarettes, and used her sex appeal to charm any number of modern men. "The woman of yesterday" yearned for marriage and children and "honor[ed] the achievements of the 'good old days,'" wrote one German feminist in 1929. The "woman of today," she continued, "refuses to be regarded as a physically weak being . . . and seeks to support herself through gainful employment. . . . Her task is to clear the way for equal rights for women in all areas of life."⁴

Despite such enthusiasm, the modern girl was in some ways a stereotype, a product of marketing campaigns dedicated to selling goods. Few young women could afford to live up to this image, even if they did have jobs. Yet the changes in women's roles associated with the First World War and the emergence of consumer society did loosen traditional limits on women's behavior. (See "Viewpoints: The Modern Girl: Image or Reality?" page 816.)

The emerging consumer culture generated a chorus of complaint from cultural critics of all stripes. On the left, socialist writers worried that its appeal undermined working-class radicalism, because mass culture created passive consumers rather than active, class-conscious revolutionaries. On the right, conservatives complained that money spent on frivolous consumer goods sapped the livelihood of industrious artisans and undermined proud national traditions. Religious leaders protested that modern consumerism encouraged rampant individualism and that greedy materialism was replacing spirituality. Many bemoaned the supposedly loose morals of the modern girl and fretted over the decline of traditional family values.

Despite such criticism — which continued after World War II — consumer society was here to stay. Ordinary people enjoyed the pleasures of mass consumption, and individual identities were tied ever more closely to modern mass-produced goods. Yet the Great Depression of 1929 soon made actual participation in the new world of goods elusive. The promise of prosperity would only truly be realized during the economic boom that followed the Second World War.

The Appeal of Cinema

Nowhere was the influence of mass culture more evident than in the rapid growth of commercial entertainment, especially cinema and radio. Both became major industries in the interwar years, and an eager public enthusiastically embraced them, spending their hard-earned money and their leisure hours watching movies or listening to radio broadcasts. These mass media overshadowed and began to replace the traditional amusements of people in cities, and then in small towns and villages, changing familiar ways of life.

Cinema first emerged in the United States around 1880, driven in part by the inventions of Thomas Edison. By 1910 American directors and business people had set up "movie factories," at first in the New York area and then in Los Angeles. Europeans were quick to follow. By 1914 small production companies had formed in Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, among others. World War I quickened the pace. National leaders realized that movies offered distraction to troops and citizens and served as an effective means of spreading propaganda. Audiences lined up to see *The Battle of the Somme*, a British film released in August 1916 that was frankly intended to encourage popular support for the war. For the audience, watching this early example of cinematic propaganda (which now seems quite primitive) could be heart wrenching: "The tears in many people's eyes and the silence that prevailed when I saw the film showed that every heart was full of love and sympathy for our soldiers," wrote one viewer to the *London Times* that September.⁵

Cinema became a true mass medium in the 1920s, the golden age of silent film. The United States was again a world leader, but European nations also established important national studios. Germany's Universal Film Company (or UFA) was particularly renowned. In the massive Babelsberg Studios just outside Berlin, talented UFA directors produced classic Expressionist films such as *Nosferatu* (1922), a creepy vampire story, and *Metropolis* (1927), about a future society in the midst of a working-class revolt. Such films made use of cutting-edge production techniques, thrilling audiences with fast and slow motion, montage sequences, unsettling close-ups, and unusual dissolves.

Film making became big business on an international scale. Studios competed to place their movies on foreign screens, and European theater owners were sometimes forced to book whole blocks of American films to get the few pictures they really wanted. In response, European governments set quotas on the number of U.S. films they imported. By 1926 U.S. money was drawing German

"modern girl" The somewhat stereotypical image of the modern and independent working woman popular in the 1920s.

VIEWPOINTS

The Modern Girl: Image or Reality?



A Typical Café Scene in Berlin, 1924 (Bildagentur/Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY)

A young woman enjoys a dessert at the Romanesque Café in Berlin in 1924. The independence of this "modern girl," wearing fashionable clothes with a revealing hemline and without a male escort, transgressed familiar gender roles and shocked and fascinated contemporaries. Images of the modern girl appeared in movies, illustrated magazines, and advertisements, such as this German poster promoting "this winter's perfume."



A German Perfume Advertisement, ca. 1925 (Lordprice Collection/Alamy)

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Why would the appearance and behavior of the "modern girl," as reflected in these images, challenge conventional understandings of women's gender roles?
2. Look closely at the images. How would you characterize the relationship between advertising and individual behavior?
3. Did the emerging consumer society of the 1920s open doors to liberating behavior for women, or did it set new standards that limited women's options?

directors and stars to Hollywood and consolidating America's international domination. These practices put European producers at a disadvantage until "talkies" permitted a revival of national film industries in the 1930s, particularly in France.

Motion pictures would remain the central entertainment of the masses until after the Second World

War and the rise of television. People flocked to the gigantic movie palaces built across Europe in the mid-1920s, splendid theaters that could seat thousands. There they viewed the latest features, which were reviewed by critics in newspapers and flashy illustrated magazines. Cinema audiences grew rapidly in the 1930s. In Great Britain in the late 1930s, one in every

four adults went to the movies twice a week, and two in five went at least once a week. Audience numbers were similar in other countries.

As these numbers suggest, motion pictures could be powerful tools of indoctrination, especially in countries with dictatorial regimes. In the Soviet Union, Lenin encouraged the development of the movie industry, believing that the new medium was essential to the social and ideological transformation of the country. Beginning in the mid-1920s, a series of epic films, the most famous of which were directed by Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948), brilliantly dramatized the Communist view of Russian history. In Nazi Germany, the film maker Leni Riefenstahl (REE-fuhn-shtahl) (1902–2003) directed a masterpiece of documentary propaganda, *Triumph of the Will*, based on the 1934 Nazi Party rally at Nuremberg. Riefenstahl combined stunning aerial photography with mass processions of young Nazi fanatics and images of joyful crowds welcoming Adolf Hitler. Her film, released in 1935, was a brilliant yet chilling documentary of the rise of Nazism.

The Arrival of Radio

Like film, radio became a full-blown mass medium in the 1920s. Experimental radio sets were first available in the 1880s; the work of Italian inventor

Guglielmo Marconi (1874–1937) around 1900 and the development of the vacuum tube in 1904 made possible primitive transmissions of speech and music. But the first major public broadcasts of news and special events occurred only in the early 1920s, in Great Britain and the United States.

Every major country quickly established national broadcasting networks. In the United States such networks were privately owned and were financed by advertising, but in Europe the typical pattern was direct control by the government. In Great Britain, Parliament set up an independent public corporation, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), supported by licensing fees. Whatever the institutional framework, radio enjoyed a meteoric growth in popularity. By the late 1930s more than three out of every four households in both democratic Great Britain and dictatorial Germany had at least one radio. (See “Thinking Like a Historian: The Radio Age,” page 818.)

Like the movies, radio was well suited for political propaganda. Dictators such as Hitler and Italy’s Benito Mussolini could reach enormous national audiences with their dramatic speeches. In democratic countries, politicians such as American president Franklin Roosevelt and British prime minister Stanley Baldwin effectively used informal “fireside chats” to bolster their popularity.

What obstacles to lasting peace did European leaders face?

The Versailles settlement had established a shaky truce to end World War I, not a solid postwar peace. In the 1920s, leaders faced a gigantic task as they sought to create a stable international order within the general context of social crisis, halting economic growth, and political turmoil.

Germany and the Western Powers

Germany was the key to lasting stability. Yet to Germans of all political parties, the Treaty of Versailles represented a harsh dictated peace, to be revised or repudiated as soon as possible. Germany still had the potential to become the strongest country in Europe, but its future remained uncertain. Moreover, with ominous implications, France and Great Britain did not see eye to eye on Germany.

Immediately after the war, the French wanted to stress the harsh elements in the Treaty of Versailles. Most of the war in the west had been fought on French soil, and the expected costs of reconstruction, as well as of repaying war debts to the United States, were staggering. Thus French politicians believed that massive reparations from Germany were vital for economic recovery. After having compromised with President Wilson only to be betrayed

by America’s failure to ratify the treaty, many French leaders saw strict implementation of all provisions of the Treaty of Versailles as France’s last best hope. Large reparation payments could hold Germany down indefinitely, ensuring French security.

The British soon felt differently. Before the war Germany had been Great Britain’s second-best market in the world; after the war a healthy, prosperous Germany appeared to be essential to the British economy. Many British agreed with the analysis of the English economist John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946), who eloquently denounced the Treaty of Versailles in his book *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919). According to Keynes, astronomical reparations and harsh economic measures would impoverish Germany, encourage Bolshevism, and increase economic hardship in all countries. Only a complete revision of the treaty could save Germany—and Europe. Keynes’s influential critique engendered much public discussion and helped create sympathy for Germany in the English-speaking world.

In addition, British politicians were suspicious of both France’s army—the largest in Europe, and authorized at Versailles to occupy the German Rhineland until 1935—and France’s expansive foreign policy.

THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN

The Radio Age

In the late 1920s and 1930s radio became a mass medium that reached millions of people around the world. How did the arrival of radio change the way Europeans and others experienced everyday life?

1 **John Reith, *Broadcast over Britain*, 1924.** In a spirited defense of public radio, published shortly after the BBC's first official broadcast, the corporation's founding director championed the potential of wireless broadcasting.

Broadcasting brings relaxation and interest to many homes where such things are at a premium. It does far more; it carries direct information on a hundred subjects to innumerable men and women who will after a short time be in a position to make up their own minds on many matters of vital moment, matters which formerly they had either to receive according to the dictated and partial versions and opinions of others, or to ignore altogether. . . .

As we conceive it, our responsibility is to carry into the greatest possible number of homes everything that is best in every department of human knowledge, endeavour and achievement, and to avoid the things which are, or may be hurtful. It is occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need—and not what they want, but few know what they want, and very few what they need. There is often no difference. . . .

I expect the day will come when, for those who wish it, in the home or office, the news of the world may be received in any quarter of the globe. . . .

Because we broadcast certain items with no permanent value, ethical or educational, it does not follow that we have failed in an ideal to transmit good things, and such as will tend to raise the general ethical or educational standard. There is no harm in trivial things; in themselves they may even be unquestionably beneficial for they may assist the more serious work by providing the measure of salt which seasons. . . .

The whole service which is conducted by wireless broadcasting may be taken as the expression of a new and better relationship between man

and man. . . . The genius and the fool, the wealthy and the poor listen simultaneously, and to the same extent, and the satisfaction of the one may be as great as that of the other. . . . There need be no first and third class. . . .

Broadcasting may help to show that mankind is a unity and that the mighty heritage, material, moral, and spiritual, if meant for the good of any, is meant for the good of all, and this is conveyed in its operations.

2 **The Broadcaster, ca. 1925.** Radio transformed the way millions of listeners spent their leisure time and organized their households, and fan magazines like *The Broadcaster* helped broaden its appeal. As this cover illustration suggests, excited listeners would often install a radio set in a prominent location in the family living room.



(The Advertising Archives)

ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

1. What, according to director John Reith in Source 1, are the main goals of the BBC?
2. What do Sources 2–5 reveal about radio's impact on everyday life? Does this evidence help explain the larger impact of modern consumer culture on Western society?
3. How would listening to radio change the experience of a "traditional" Christmas (see Source 3)? Who is the target audience for the holiday broadcast?
4. Consider the figures in Source 5. Do these numbers accurately represent the number of listeners in the radio audience? Can historians use them to estimate the popularity of radio in the 1920s and 1930s?

3 **Christmas Day radio programming in western Germany, 1928.** By the late 1920s the radio audience in the Münster-Cologne-Aachen region could enjoy a full day of Christmas Day programming.

Tuesday, 25 December

- 6:00 Broadcast of the Christmas Mass from the [Protestant] Mother Church in Unterbarmen. [Includes community and choir singing, a Christmas sermon, and organ music by J. S. Bach.]
- 9:00 Ringing Church Bells from St. Gereon's Basilica, Cologne.
- 9:05 Catholic Morning Service. [Includes sermon on the "Christmas Message," solo and choir performances of Christmas music.]
- 11:00 University Professor Dr. J. Verwegen: On the Origins of the Christmas Holiday....
- 12:35 Hanns Brauckmann, Christmas in the Holy Lands....
- 2:40 Pastor Dr. Girkon Soest: Christmas in the Fine Arts....
- 3:30 Children's Hour. "The Christ Child's Way Home."...
- 4:40 Broadcast of the Glockenspiel Concert from St. John's Cathedral in Hertogenbosch [Holland]. [Includes performances of church and family Christmas carols.]
- 5:40 Christmas Songs.... [Performance by a trio of vocalists includes "Oh Christmas Tree" and other carols.]
- 7:00 "Holy Night." A Christmas legend by Ludwig Thoma recited in Upper Bavarian dialect ... with zither.
- 8:00 Christmas Concert. [Includes a variety of classical Christmas music.] ...
- Intermission: An Hour for the Betrothed.** [Includes wedding music by famous composers; it was customary for Germans to get engaged on Christmas Eve and Day.]
- Until
- 1:00 A.M. Evening Music and Dance Music. [Includes waltz, foxtrot, slowfox, tango, and one-step ballroom dance music.]



(akg-images)

4 **Listening to the radio in a Romanian village, ca. 1935.**

Radio took some time to penetrate Europe's less wealthy, rural areas. Eventually, however, broadcasting's transformative effects reached the European hinterlands.

5 **Official listening numbers, Germany, 1923–1938.**

Number of Radios Registered in Germany, 1923–1938

1923	467	1931	3,509,509
1924	1,580	1932	3,981,000
1925	548,749	1933	4,307,722
1926	1,022,299	1934	5,052,607
1927	1,376,564	1935	6,142,921
1928	2,009,842	1936	7,192,000
1929	2,635,567	1937	8,167,975
1930	3,066,682	1938	9,087,454

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

According to BBC director John Reith, radio broadcasts embodied a "new and better relationship between man and man." Radio, for Reith, had the potential to level social differences by bringing the "material, moral, and spiritual" heritage of Western society to broad groups of ordinary people. Using the sources above, along with what you have learned in class and in this chapter, write a short essay explaining whether or not you agree. Did radio fulfill its democratic promise?

Sources: (1) John Reith, *Broadcast over Britain* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), pp. 19, 34, 212–213, 217–218; (3) "Die Rundfunkwoche," *Die Sendung*, December 21, 1928, p. 12, translated by Joe Perry; (5) Kate Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio, and the Public Sphere, 1923–1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 32, 247.

Since 1890 France had looked to Russia as a powerful ally against Germany. But with Russia hostile and Communist, and with Britain and the United States unwilling to make any firm commitments, France turned to the newly formed states of central Europe for diplomatic support. In 1921 France signed a mutual defense pact with Poland and associated itself closely with the so-called Little Entente, an alliance that joined Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia against defeated and bitter Hungary.

While French and British leaders drifted in different directions, the Allied commission created to determine German reparations completed its work. In April 1921 it announced that Germany had to pay the enormous sum of 132 billion gold marks (\$33 billion) in annual installments of 2.5 billion gold marks. Facing possible occupation of more of its territory, the young German republic—generally known as the Weimar Republic—made its first payment in 1921. Then in 1922, wracked by rapid inflation and political assassinations and motivated by hostility and arrogance as well, German leaders announced their inability to pay more. They proposed a moratorium on reparations for three years, with the clear implication that thereafter the payments would be either drastically reduced or eliminated entirely.

The British were willing to accept a moratorium, but the French were not. Led by their tough-minded prime minister, Raymond Poincaré (1860–1934), they decided they had to either call Germany's bluff or see the entire peace settlement dissolve to France's great disadvantage. If the Germans refused to pay reparations, France would use military occupation to paralyze Germany and force it to accept the Treaty of Versailles. So, despite strong British protests, in early January 1923 French and Belgian armies moved out of the Rhineland and began to occupy the Ruhr district, the heartland of industrial Germany, creating the most serious international crisis of the 1920s.

Strengthened by a wave of German patriotism, the German government ordered the people of the Ruhr to stop working, a way to passively resist the French occupation. The coal mines and steel mills of the Ruhr fell silent, leaving 10 percent of Germany's population out of work. The French responded by sealing off the Ruhr and the Rhineland from the rest of Germany, letting in only enough food to prevent starvation. German public opinion was incensed when the French sent over forty thousand colonial troops from North and West Africa to control the territory. German propagandists labeled these

troops the “black shame,” warning that the African soldiers were savages, eager to brutalize civilians and assault German women. These racist attacks, though entirely unfounded, nonetheless intensified tensions.

By the summer of 1923 France and Germany were engaged in a great test of wills. French armies could not collect reparations from striking workers at gunpoint, but the occupation was paralyzing Germany and its economy. To support the workers and their employers, the German government began to print money to pay its bills, causing runaway inflation. Prices soared as German money rapidly lost all value. People went to the store with bags of banknotes; they returned home with handfuls of groceries. Catastrophic inflation cruelly mocked the old middle-class virtues of thrift, caution, and self-reliance as savings were wiped out. Many Germans felt betrayed. They hated and blamed the Western governments, their own government, big business, the Jews, and the Communists for their misfortune. Right-wing nationalists—including Adolf Hitler and the newly established Nazi Party—eagerly capitalized on the widespread discontent.

In August 1923, as the mark lost value and unrest spread throughout Germany, Gustav Stresemann (SHTRAY-zuh-mahn) (1878–1929) assumed leadership of the government. Stresemann tried compromise. He called off passive resistance in the Ruhr and in October agreed in principle to pay reparations, but asked for a re-examination of Germany's ability to pay. Poincaré accepted. His hard line had become unpopular in France, and it was hated in Britain and the United States. In addition, power in both Germany and France was passing to more moderate leaders who realized that continued confrontation was a destructive, no-win situation. Thus, after five long years of hostility and tension, culminating in a kind of undeclared war in the Ruhr in 1923, Germany and France both decided to try compromise. The British, and even the Americans, were willing to help. The first step was to reach an agreement on the reparations question.



French Occupation of the Ruhr, 1923–1925

Hope in Foreign Affairs

In 1924 an international committee of financial experts headed by American banker Charles G. Dawes met to re-examine German reparation payments from a broad perspective. The resulting **Dawes Plan** (1924) was accepted by France, Germany, and Britain. Germany's yearly reparation payments were reduced and linked to the level of German economic output. Germany would also receive large loans from the United States to



"Mothers of the World, Did Your Sons Die For This?"

In 1923 the French army occupied the industrial district of the Ruhr in Germany in an effort to force reparation payments. The occupying forces included colonial troops from West Africa, and Germans responded with a racist propaganda campaign that cast the West African soldiers as uncivilized savages intent on ravaging German women. (Kharbine-Tapabor/Shutterstock)

In response, France reaffirmed its pledge of military aid to those countries if Germany attacked them. The refusal to settle Germany's eastern borders angered the Poles, and though the "spirit of Locarno" lent some hope to those seeking international stability, political tensions deepened in central Europe.

Other developments suggested possibilities for international peace. In 1926 Germany joined the League of Nations, and in 1928 fifteen countries signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact, initiated by French prime minister Aristide Briand and U.S. secretary of state Frank B. Kellogg. The signing states agreed to "renounce [war] as an instrument of international policy" and to settle international disputes peacefully. The pact made no provisions for disciplinary action in case war actually broke out and would not prevent the arrival of the Second World War in 1939. In the late 1920s, however, it fostered a cautious optimism and encouraged the hope that the United States would accept its responsibilities as a great world power by contributing to European stability.

promote economic recovery. In short, Germany would get private loans from the United States in order to pay reparations to France and Britain, thus enabling those countries to repay the large war debts they owed the United States.

This circular flow of international payments was complicated and risky, but for a while it worked. With continual inflows of American capital, the German republic experienced a shaky economic recovery. Germany paid about \$1.3 billion in reparations in 1927 and 1928, enabling France and Britain to repay the United States. In this way the Americans belatedly played a part in the general settlement that, though far from ideal, facilitated precarious economic growth in the mid-1920s.

A political settlement accompanied the economic accords. In 1925 the leaders of Europe signed a number of agreements at Locarno, Switzerland. Germany and France solemnly pledged to accept their common border, and both Britain and Italy agreed to fight either France or Germany if one invaded the other. Stresemann reluctantly agreed to settle boundary disputes with Poland and Czechoslovakia by peaceful means, although he did not agree on permanent borders to Germany's east.

Hope in Democratic Government

Domestic politics also offered reason to hope. During the occupation of the Ruhr and the great inflation, republican government in Germany had appeared on the verge of collapse. In 1923 Communists momentarily entered provincial governments, and in November an obscure politician named Adolf Hitler leaped onto a table in a beer hall in Munich and proclaimed a "national socialist revolution." But the young republican government easily crushed Hitler's Beer Hall Putsch (a violent attempt to overthrow a government), and he was sentenced to a short term in prison. In the late 1920s liberal democracy seemed to take root in Weimar Germany. Elections were held regularly, and republican democracy appeared to have growing support among a majority of Germans. A new currency was established, and the economy stabilized. The moderate businessmen who tended to

Dawes Plan War reparations agreement that reduced Germany's yearly payments, made payments dependent on economic growth, and granted large U.S. loans to promote recovery.

dominate the various German coalition governments were convinced that economic prosperity demanded good relations with the Western powers, and they supported parliamentary government at home.

Sharp political divisions remained, however. Throughout the 1920s Hitler's Nazi Party attracted support from fanatical anti-Semites, ultranationalists, and disgruntled ex-servicemen. Many unrepentant nationalists and monarchists supported the far right. On the left, members of Germany's recently formed Communist Party were noisy and active. The Communists, directed from Moscow, reserved their greatest hatred and sharpest barbs for their cousins the Social Democrats, whom they accused of betraying the revolution. Though the working class was divided, a majority supported the nonrevolutionary Social Democrats.

The situation in France was similar to that in Germany. Communists and Socialists battled for workers' support. After 1924 the democratically elected government rested mainly in the hands of coalitions of moderates, with business interests well represented. France's great accomplishment was the rapid rebuilding of its war-torn northeastern region. The expense of this undertaking led, however, to a large deficit and substantial inflation. By early 1926 the franc had fallen to 10 percent of its prewar value, causing a severe crisis. Poincaré was recalled to office, while Briand remained minister for foreign affairs. Poincaré slashed spending and raised taxes, restoring confidence in the economy. The franc was stabilized at about one-fifth of its prewar value, and the economy remained fairly stable until 1930.

Britain, too, faced challenges after 1920. The great problem was unemployment. In June 1921 almost 2.2 million people—or 23 percent of the labor force—were

out of work, and throughout the 1920s unemployment hovered around 12 percent, leading to a massive general strike in 1926. Yet the state provided unemployment benefits and supplemented the payments with subsidized housing, medical aid, and increased old-age pensions. These and other measures kept living standards from seriously declining, helped moderate class tensions, and pointed the way toward the welfare state Britain would establish after World War II.

Relative social harmony was accompanied by the rise of the Labour Party, founded in 1900 as a determined champion of greater social equality and the working class. Committed to the kind of moderate revisionist socialism that had emerged before World War I, the Labour Party replaced the Liberal Party as the main opposition to the Conservatives. This shift reflected the decline of old liberal ideals of competitive capitalism, limited government control, and individual responsibility. In 1924 and from 1929 to 1931, the Labour Party under Ramsay MacDonald (1866–1937) governed the country with the support of the smaller Liberal Party. Yet Labour moved toward socialism gradually and democratically, so as not to antagonize the middle classes.

The British Conservatives showed the same compromising spirit on social issues. In 1922 Britain granted southern, Catholic, Ireland full autonomy after a bitter guerrilla war, thereby removing a key source of prewar friction. Despite conflicts such as the 1926 strike by hard-pressed coal miners, which led to an unsuccessful general strike, social unrest in Britain was limited in the 1920s and 1930s. Developments in both international relations and the domestic politics of the leading democracies across western Europe gave some cause for optimism in the late 1920s.

What were the causes and consequences of the Great Depression?

This fragile optimism was short-lived. Beginning in 1929, a massive economic downturn struck the entire world with ever-greater intensity. Recovery was slow and uneven, and contemporaries labeled the economic crisis the **Great Depression**, to emphasize its severity and duration. Only with the Second World War did the depression disappear in much of the world. The prolonged economic collapse shattered the fragile political stability of the mid-1920s and encouraged the growth of extremists on both ends of the political spectrum.

The Economic Crisis

Though economic activity was already declining moderately in many countries by early 1929, the crash of

the stock market in the United States in October of that year initiated a worldwide crisis. The American economy had prospered in the late 1920s, but there were large inequalities in income and a serious imbalance between actual business investment and stock market speculation. Thus net investment—in factories, farms, equipment, and the like—actually fell from \$3.5 billion in 1925 to \$3.2 billion in 1929. In the same years, as money flooded into stocks, the value of shares traded on the exchanges soared from \$27 billion to \$87 billion. Such inflated prices should have raised serious concerns about economic solvency, but even experts failed to predict the looming collapse.

This stock market boom—or “bubble” in today’s language—was built on borrowed money. Many wealthy investors, speculators, and people of modest means bought stocks by paying only a small fraction of the total purchase price and borrowing the remainder from their stockbrokers. Such buying “on margin” was

■ Great Depression A worldwide economic depression from 1929 through 1939, unique in its severity and duration and with slow and uneven recovery.

extremely risky. When prices started falling in 1929, the hard-pressed margin buyers had to either put up more money, which was often impossible, or sell their shares to pay off their brokers. Thousands of people started selling all at once. The result was a financial panic. Countless investors and speculators were wiped out in a matter of days or weeks.

The consequences were swift and severe. Stripped of wealth and confidence, battered investors and their fellow citizens started buying fewer goods. Prices fell, production began to slow down, and unemployment began to rise. Soon the entire American economy was caught in a spiraling decline.

The financial panic triggered an international financial crisis. Throughout the 1920s American bankers and investors had lent large amounts of capital to many countries. Once the panic broke, U.S. bankers began recalling the loans they had made to foreign businesses. Gold reserves began to flow rapidly out of European countries, particularly Germany and Austria, toward the United States. It became very hard for European businesses to borrow money, and panicky Europeans began to withdraw their savings from banks. These banking problems eventually led to the crash of the largest bank in Austria in 1931 and then to general financial chaos. The recall of loans by American bankers also accelerated a collapse in world prices when businesses dumped industrial goods and agricultural commodities in a frantic attempt to get cash to pay their loans.

The financial crisis led to a general crisis of production: between 1929 and 1933 world output of goods fell by an estimated 38 percent. As this happened, each country turned inward and tried to manage the crisis alone. In 1931, for example, Britain went off the gold standard, refusing to convert banknotes into gold, and reduced the value of its money. Britain's goal was to make its goods cheaper and therefore more salable in the world market. But more than twenty other nations, including the United States in 1934, also went off the gold standard, so few countries gained a real advantage from this step—though Britain was an exception. Similarly, country after country followed the example of the United States when in 1930 it raised protective tariffs to their highest levels ever and tried to seal off shrinking national markets for domestic producers. Such actions further limited international trade. Within this context of fragmented and destructive economic nationalism, a recovery did not begin until 1933 and it was a halting one at that.

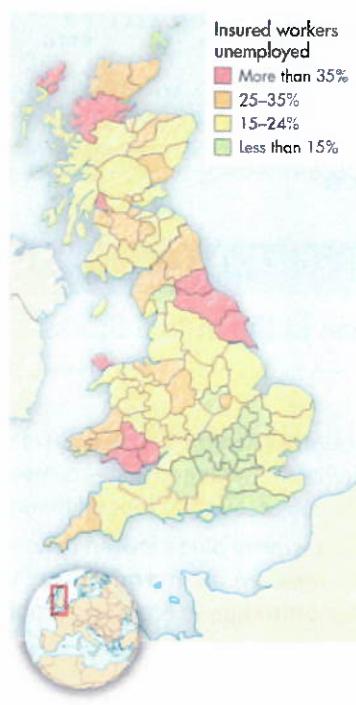
Although opinions differ, two factors probably best explain the relentless slide to the bottom from 1929 to early 1933. First, the international economy lacked leadership able to maintain stability when the crisis came. Neither Britain nor the United States—the world's economic leaders at the time—successfully stabilized the international economic system in 1929. The American decisions to cut back on international lending and erect high tariffs, as we have seen, had damaging ripple effects.

The second factor was poor national economic policy in almost every country. Governments generally cut their budgets when they should have raised spending and accepted large deficits in order to stimulate their economies. After World War II, this "counter-cyclical policy," advocated by John Maynard Keynes, became a well-established weapon against downturn and depression. But in the 1930s orthodox economists who believed balanced budgets to be the key to economic growth generally regarded Keynes's prescription with horror.

Mass Unemployment

The lack of large-scale government spending contributed to the rise of mass unemployment. As the financial crisis led to production cuts, workers lost their jobs and had little money to buy goods. In Britain, where unemployment had averaged 12 percent in the 1920s, it averaged more than 18 percent between 1930 and 1935. Far worse was the case of Germany, where in 1932 one in every three workers was jobless. In the United States, unemployment had averaged only 5 percent in the 1920s. In 1933 it soared to about 30 percent: almost 13 million people were out of work (Map 26.1).

Mass unemployment created great social problems. Poverty increased dramatically, although in most countries unemployed workers generally received some kind of meager unemployment benefits or public aid that prevented starvation. Millions of people lost their spirit, condemned to an apparently hopeless search for work. Homes and ways of life were disrupted in millions of personal tragedies. Young people postponed marriages, and birthrates fell sharply. As poverty or the threat of poverty became a grinding reality, cases of suicide and mental illness increased. In 1932 a union official in Manchester, England, called on city officials to do more to provide work and warned that "hungry men are angry men."⁶ Only strong government action could deal with mass unemployment, a social powder keg preparing to explode.



British Unemployment, 1932



MAPPING THE PAST

MAP 26.1 The Great Depression in the United States and Europe, 1929-1939

These maps show that unemployment was high almost everywhere but that national and regional differences were also substantial.

ANALYZING THE MAP Which European countries had the highest rate of unemployment? How do the numbers of people on unemployment relief in the United States compare to the percentage of unemployed workers in Europe? How do you account for those differences?

CONNECTIONS What tactics of reform and recovery did European nations use to combat the deprivations of the Great Depression? How did events and government policies associated with the Great Depression in the United States contribute to economic problems in Europe?



Unemployment in Manchester The Great Depression of the 1930s disrupted the lives of millions across Europe and the United States. The frustration and pain of being without work and “on the dole” are evident in the faces of these unemployed men in Manchester, England, receiving free coffee from representatives of the Salvation Army. (Mirrorpix/Getty Images)

The New Deal in the United States

The Great Depression and the government response to it marked a major turning point in American history. President Herbert Hoover (U.S. pres. 1929–1933) and his administration initially reacted to the stock market crash and economic decline with dogged optimism but limited action. When the full force of the financial crisis struck Europe in the summer of 1931 and boomeranged back to the United States, people’s worst fears became reality. Banks failed; unemployment soared. Between 1929 and 1932 industrial production fell by about 50 percent.

In these dire circumstances, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (U.S. pres. 1933–1945) won a landslide presidential victory in 1932 with grand but vague promises of a “New Deal for the forgotten man.” Roosevelt’s goal was to reform capitalism in order to save it. Though Roosevelt rejected socialism and government ownership of industry, he advocated forceful government intervention in the economy and instituted a broad range of government-supported social programs designed to stimulate the economy and provide jobs.

In the United States, innovative federal programs promoted agricultural recovery, a top priority. Almost half of the American population still lived in rural areas, and the depression hit farmers hard. Roosevelt took the United States off the gold standard and devalued the dollar in an effort to raise American

prices and rescue farmers. The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 also aimed at raising prices—and thus farm income—by limiting agricultural production. These measures worked for a while, and in 1936 farmers repaid Roosevelt with overwhelming support in his re-election campaign.

The most ambitious attempt to control and plan the economy was the National Recovery Administration (NRA). Intended to reduce competition among industries by setting minimum prices and wages, the NRA broke with the cherished American tradition of free competition. Though participation was voluntary, the NRA aroused conflicts among business people, consumers, and bureaucrats and never worked well. The program was abandoned when declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1935.

Roosevelt and his advisers then attacked the key problem of mass unemployment. The federal government accepted the responsibility of employing as many people as financially possible. New agencies like the **Works Progress Administration (WPA)**, set up in 1935, were created to undertake a vast range of projects. One-fifth of the entire U.S. labor force worked for the WPA at some point in the 1930s, constructing public buildings, bridges, and highways. The WPA was enormously popular, and the opportunity

■ **Works Progress Administration (WPA)** An American government agency, designed as a massive public jobs program, established in 1935 as part of Roosevelt’s New Deal.

of taking a government job helped check the threat of social revolution in the United States.

In 1935 the U.S. government also established a national social security system with old-age pensions and unemployment benefits. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 gave union organizers the green light by guaranteeing rights of collective bargaining. Union membership more than doubled from 4 million in 1935 to 9 million in 1940. In general, between 1935 and 1938 government rulings and social reforms tried to help ordinary people and chipped away at the privileges of the wealthy.

Programs like the WPA were part of the New Deal's fundamental commitment to use the federal government to provide relief welfare for all Americans. This commitment marked a profound shift from the traditional stress on family support and community responsibility. Embraced by a large majority in the 1930s, this shift in attitudes proved to be one of the New Deal's most enduring legacies.

Despite undeniable accomplishments in social reform, the New Deal was only partly successful in responding to the Great Depression. At the height of the recovery in May 1937, 7 million workers were still unemployed—better than the high of about 13 million in 1933 but way beyond the numbers from the 1920s. The economic situation then worsened seriously in the recession of 1937 and 1938, and unemployment had risen to a staggering 10 million when war broke out in Europe in September 1939. The New Deal never pulled the United States out of the depression; it took the government spending associated with the Second World War to do that.

The Scandinavian Response to the Depression

Of all the Western democracies, the Scandinavian countries under Social Democratic leadership responded most successfully to the challenge of the Great Depression. Having grown steadily in the late nineteenth century, the Social Democrats had become the largest political party in Sweden and then in Norway after the First World War. In the 1920s they passed important social reform legislation that benefited both farmers and workers and developed a unique kind of socialism. Flexible and nonrevolutionary, Scandinavian socialism grew out of a strong tradition of cooperative community action. Even before 1900 Scandinavian agricultural cooperatives had shown how individual peasant families could join together for everyone's benefit. Labor leaders and capitalists were also inclined to cooperate with one another.

When the economic crisis struck in 1929, socialist governments in Scandinavia built on this pattern of cooperative social action. Sweden in particular pioneered in the use of large-scale deficits to finance public works and thereby maintain production and employment. In ways that paralleled some aspects of Roosevelt's New Deal, Scandinavian governments also increased public benefit programs such as old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, subsidized housing, and maternity allowances. All this spending required a large bureaucracy and high taxes, first on the rich and then on practically everyone. Yet both private and cooperative enterprise thrived, as did democracy. Some observers saw Scandinavia's welfare socialism as an appealing middle way between sick capitalism and cruel communism or fascism.

Recovery and Reform in Britain and France

In Britain, MacDonald's Labour government and then, after 1931, the Conservative-dominated coalition government followed orthodox economic theory. The budget was balanced, spending was tightly controlled, and unemployed workers received barely enough welfare to live. Nevertheless, the economy recovered considerably after 1932. By 1937 total production was about 20 percent higher than in 1929. In fact, for Britain the years after 1932 were actually somewhat better than the 1920s had been, the opposite of the situation in the United States and France.

This good but by no means brilliant performance reflected the gradual reorientation of the British economy. After going off the gold standard in 1931 and establishing protective tariffs in 1932, Britain concentrated increasingly on the national, rather than the international, market. The old export industries of the Industrial Revolution, such as textiles and coal, continued to decline, but new industries, such as automobiles and electrical appliances, grew in response to demand at home. Moreover, low interest rates encouraged a housing boom. By the end of the decade, there were highly visible differences between the old, depressed industrial areas of the north and the new, growing areas of the south.

Because France was relatively less industrialized and thus more isolated from the world economy, the Great Depression came to it late. But once the depression hit France, it persisted. Decline was steady until 1935, and a short-lived recovery never brought production or employment back up to predepression levels.

Economic stagnation both reflected and heightened an ongoing political crisis. The French parliament was made up of many political parties that could never cooperate for long. While divisions between the Socialist and Communist Parties undermined any successful leadership from the left, French Fascist organizations agitated against parliamentary democracy and turned to Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany for inspiration.

■ **Popular Front** A short-lived New Deal-inspired alliance in France led by Léon Blum that encouraged the union movement and launched a far-reaching program of social reform.



Oslo Breakfast Scandinavian Social Democrats championed cooperation and practical welfare measures, playing down strident rhetoric and theories of class conflict. The "Oslo Breakfast" program portrayed in this pamphlet from the mid-1930s exemplified the Scandinavian approach. It provided every schoolchild in the Norwegian capital with a good breakfast free of charge. (Courtesy, Directorate for Health and Social Affairs, Oslo)

In 1933 alone, for example, five coalition cabinets formed and fell in rapid succession. In February 1934 a loose coalition of right-wing groups rioted in Paris and threatened to take over the republic. Moderate republicanism was weakened by attacks from both sides.

The February riot encouraged politicians on the left to join forces in defense of a democratic reform program. Frightened by the growing strength of the Fascists at home and abroad, and encouraged by a new line from Moscow that encouraged Socialists and Communists to join together to face the fascist threat, the French Communist and Socialist parties formed an alliance—the **Popular Front**—for the national elections of May 1936. Their clear victory reflected the trend toward polarization. The number of Communists in the parliament jumped dramatically from 10 to 72, while the Socialists, led by Léon Blum, became the strongest party in France, with 146 seats. The Radicals—who were actually quite moderate—slipped badly, and the conservatives lost ground to the far right.

In the next few months, Blum's Popular Front government made the first and only real attempt to deal

with the social and economic problems of the 1930s in France. Inspired by Roosevelt's New Deal, it encouraged the union movement and launched a far-reaching program of social reform, complete with paid vacations and a forty-hour workweek. Supported by workers and the lower middle class, these measures were quickly sabotaged by rapid inflation and accusations of revolution from Fascists and frightened conservatives. Wealthy people sneaked their money out of the country, labor unrest grew, and France entered a severe financial crisis. Blum was forced to announce a "breathing spell" in social reform.

Political dissent in France was encouraged by the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), during which authoritarian Fascist rebels overthrew the democratically elected republican government. French Communists

demanded that the government support the Spanish republicans, while many French conservatives would gladly have joined Hitler and Mussolini in aiding the Spanish Fascists. Extremism grew, and France itself was within sight of civil war. Blum was forced to resign in June 1937, and the Popular Front quickly collapsed. An anxious and divided France drifted aimlessly once again, preoccupied by Hitler and German rearmament.

NOTES

1. G. Greene, *Another Mexico* (New York: Viking Press, 1939), p. 3.
2. C. E. Jeanneret-Gris (Le Corbusier), *Towards a New Architecture* (London: J. Rodker, 1931), p. 15.
3. From *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot. Used by permission of Faber and Faber Ltd.
4. E. Herrmann, *This Is the New Woman* (1929), quoted in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. A. Kaes, M. Jay, and E. Dimendberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 206–208.
5. Quoted in R. Smither, ed., *The Battles of the Somme and Ancre* (London: Imperial War Museum, 1993), p. 67.
6. Quoted in S. B. Clough et al., eds., *Economic History of Europe: Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), pp. 243–245.
7. S. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), p. 112.



LOOKING BACK LOOKING AHEAD

The decades before and especially after World War I brought intense intellectual and cultural innovation. The results were both richly productive and deeply troubling. From T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* to Einstein's theory of special relativity to the sleek glass and steel buildings of the Bauhaus, the intellectual products of the time stand among

the highest achievements of Western arts and sciences. At the same time, mass culture, embodied in cinema, radio, and an emerging consumer society, transformed everyday life. Yet the modern vision was often bleak and cold. Modern art and consumer society alike challenged traditional values, contributing to feelings of disorientation and

pessimism that had begun late in the nineteenth century and were exacerbated by the searing events of the war. The situation was worsened by ongoing political and economic turmoil. The Treaty of Versailles had failed to create a lasting peace or resolve the question of Germany's role in Europe. The Great Depression revealed the fragility of the world economic system and cast millions out of work. In the end, perhaps, the era's intellectual achievements and the overall sense of crisis were closely related.

Sigmund Freud captured the general mood of gloom and foreboding in 1930. "Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that . . . they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man," he wrote. "They

know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness and their mood of anxiety."⁷ Freud's dark words reflected the extraordinary human costs of World War I and the horrific power of modern weaponry. They also expressed his despair over the growing popularity of repressive dictatorial regimes. During the interwar years, many European nations—including Italy, Germany, Spain, Poland, Portugal, Austria, and Hungary—would fall one by one to authoritarian or Fascist dictatorships, succumbing to the temptations of totalitarianism. Liberal democracy was severely weakened. European stability was threatened by the radical programs of Soviet Communists on the left and Fascists on the right, and Freud uncannily predicted the great conflict to come.

Make Connections

Think about the larger developments and continuities within and across chapters.

1. How did trends in politics, economics, culture, and the arts and sciences come together to create a general sense of crisis but also opportunity in the 1920s and 1930s?
2. To what extent did the problems of the 1920s and 1930s have roots in the First World War (Chapter 25)?
3. What made modern art and intellectual thought "modern"?

26 REVIEW & EXPLORE

Identify Key Terms

Identify and explain the significance of each item below.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| logical positivism (p. 803) | Dadaism (p. 811) |
| existentialism (p. 804) | stream-of-consciousness technique (p. 812) |
| theory of special relativity (p. 806) | "modern girl" (p. 815) |
| id, ego, and superego (p. 807) | Dawes Plan (p. 820) |
| modernism (p. 809) | Great Depression (p. 822) |
| functionalism (p. 809) | Works Progress Administration (WPA) (p. 825) |
| Bauhaus (p. 810) | Popular Front (p. 827) |

Review the Main Ideas

Answer the section heading questions from the chapter.

1. How did intellectual developments reflect the ambiguities of modernity? (p. 802)
2. How did modernism revolutionize Western culture? (p. 809)
3. How did consumer society change everyday life? (p. 814)
4. What obstacles to lasting peace did European leaders face? (p. 817)
5. What were the causes and consequences of the Great Depression? (p. 822)