



## European Thought and Culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

### Part I

- Lecture 1: The Origins of 20<sup>th</sup>-Century European Thought
- Lecture 2: Universities, Cities, and the Modern "Culture Industry"
- Lecture 3: Naturalism in *Fin-de-Siècle* Literature
- Lecture 4: The New Avant-Garde Literary Culture
- Lecture 5: Rethinking the Scientific Tradition
- Lecture 6: The Emergence of Modern Art
- Lecture 7: Émile Durkheim and French Social Thought
- Lecture 8: Max Weber and the New German Sociology
- Lecture 9: The Great War and Cultural Pessimism
- Lecture 10: Sigmund Freud and Psychoanalytic Theory
- Lecture 11: Freud, Jung, and the Constraints of Civilized Life
- Lecture 12: Poetry and Surrealism After the Great War

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European Thought and Culture  
in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Part I  
Professor Lloyd Kramer



## European Thought and Culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Professor Lloyd Kramer

*The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

### Part I



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Lloyd Kramer was born in Maryville, Tennessee, and grew up in Benton, Arkansas, and Evansville, Indiana. He received a B.A. from Maryville College and an M.A. in history at Boston College before going to Hong Kong to teach for two years at Lingnan College. After traveling widely in Asia and studying French in Paris, he pursued graduate studies in European intellectual history at Cornell University, where he received his Ph.D. in 1983.

Following completion of his graduate work, Professor Kramer taught for one year in the history department at Stanford University and for two years in the history department at Northwestern University. Since 1986, he has been a history professor at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, teaching courses on European intellectual history, the history of Western civilization, and modern global history. He has received two awards for distinguished undergraduate teaching at the University of North Carolina.

Professor Kramer's historical research has focused mainly on French intellectual history after 1800, with particular emphasis on cross-cultural intellectual exchanges. He has written numerous articles and books, including *Threshold of a New World: Intellectuals and the Exile Experience in Paris, 1830–1848* (1988), *Lafayette in Two Worlds: Public Cultures and Personal Identities in an Age of Revolutions* (1996), and *Nationalism: Political Cultures in Europe and America, 1775–1865* (1998). His book on Lafayette received the Gilbert Chinard Prize from the American Society for French Historical Studies and the Annibel Jenkins Biography Prize from the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies.

Professor Kramer has also edited or co-edited several books, including one on historical education in America and (with Sarah Maza) the Blackwell *Companion to Western Historical Thought* (2002). He is also co-author (with R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton) of the ninth edition of *A History of the Modern World* (2002).

He has been a member of the School of Historical Studies at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and has served as president of the Society for French Historical Studies.

Professor Kramer lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, with his wife, Gwynne Pomeroy, and their two children.



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**European Thought and Culture**  
**in the Twentieth Century**

**Scope:**

This course of twenty-four lectures examines major intellectual themes and debates in twentieth-century European culture. Our discussion will draw on the methods of intellectual history and refer to the evolving contexts in which leading writers and theorists developed their ideas. This approach to the history of ideas rests on the assumption that ideas shape and influence all other aspects of the historical process, but it also stresses the importance of social, political, and economic realities in the formation and diffusion of all ideas.

We will interpret twentieth-century European thought as an ongoing dialogue between advocates of different philosophical or theoretical perspectives and as an intellectual response to complex cultural traditions and disturbing European events, including: (1) rationalist scientific forms of knowledge and the optimistic belief in progress; (2) classical realist representations and accounts of the external world; (3) the traumatic violence and massive costs of two destructive world wars; (4) the political history and conflicts of fascism, communism, and liberalism; (5) the social and economic changes that resulted from urbanization, imperialism, warfare, the Great Depression, and late twentieth-century globalization.

The course does not provide detailed descriptions of these contexts, but it suggests that all these historical realities (and others) affected the changing themes of European literature, social science, philosophy, psychology, art, political theories, and intellectual identities. Important texts or artistic creations do not simply reflect the contexts in which they appear, but this course will argue that creative thinkers are always interpreting, redefining, criticizing, and influencing the historical world in which they live.

The lectures look at three general chronological periods or cultural eras in modern European history, and each era is discussed in roughly eight lectures: (1) the cultural innovations during the three decades before 1914, (2) the responses to World War I and the new cultural themes of what historians call the “interwar” era, and (3) the responses to World War II and the new forms of thought that emerged in the decades after 1945.

We begin the first section of the course with two lectures on the dominant ideas and cultural institutions of the late nineteenth century, because modern intellectual movements evolved out of the cultural assumptions and urban “culture industry” of this era. We then devote two lectures to the contrasting literary movements of naturalism and symbolism, noting that both these movements would influence later novels and poetry. The following two lectures look at new departures in philosophy, science, and art that would contribute to a general twentieth-century trend toward relativism and subjectivism in European

thought. We conclude this pre-1914 section of the course with two lectures on the emergence of modern sociology and social theory in France and Germany.

The next section of the course starts with a lecture on how the First World War contributed to a new cultural pessimism and made Europeans more receptive to psychological theories that stressed human irrationality. We examine the ideas and diverging schools of psychoanalysis in the next two lectures before turning to postwar literary themes in three lectures on pessimistic poets, surrealist writers, and influential authors who developed the narrative style and psychological themes of modernist novels. We then conclude the discussion of interwar European culture with two lectures on philosophy and social theory, stressing the new interest in language and the political anxiety about fascism, communism, and the economic crisis of the 1930s.

The final section of the course begins with a lecture on different intellectual responses to Nazism in Germany. We will then look at other responses to the events of World War II in a lecture on postwar existential philosophy and a lecture on literary attempts to remember or interpret the horrors of the Holocaust and totalitarianism. The next four lectures describe new “isms” that gained wide cultural influence in the period between 1950 and 1990, including feminism, structuralism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism. We conclude with a lecture on the revival of various Enlightenment themes among late twentieth-century intellectuals who criticized cultural “isms,” such as postmodernism, and rejected political “isms,” such as fascism and communism.

Our objective throughout this course is to understand the ideas of influential twentieth-century European thinkers, to reflect on the interactions between ideas and historical contexts, and to think critically about how the ideas of creative twentieth-century writers continue to raise questions for our own time. Intellectual history analyzes the evolving dialogues among the people of other places and times, but it also emphasizes the importance of sustaining a critical dialogue between the present and the past. This course seeks to expand our dialogue with the intellectual world of twentieth-century Europe and to show how the challenging ideas of that historical era are still vital components of the world’s contemporary cultural life.

## Lecture One

### The Origins of Twentieth-Century European Thought

**Scope:** This lecture introduces the overall themes of the course and summarizes the main trends of intellectual life in late nineteenth-century Europe. The lecture discusses the way in which intellectual history uses interdisciplinary and contextual methods to analyze ideas. It then provides a brief summary of the late nineteenth-century cultural context. To describe this context, the lecture includes a broad overview of Western cultural conceptions of reason and revelation before turning to specific cultural themes of the era: the faith in scientific knowledge, the belief in progress, and the political and economic ideas of classical liberalism. Finally, the lecture notes some critiques of the era’s dominant cultural assumptions and suggests that twentieth-century events would provoke new questions about the meaning of progress in the modern world.

#### Outline

- I. This course will examine the evolution of twentieth-century European thought and cultural debates, using the methods of intellectual history.
  - A. Intellectual history differs from most other forms of historical study in that it focuses on the history of ideas, influential writers or artists, and important books or creative work in the arts.
    1. Most historians give more attention to the history of social institutions, politics, economics, wars, diplomacy, or famous events.
    2. Intellectual history emphasizes the shaping role of ideas in all spheres of human history and looks especially at the people who debate ideas.
  - B. Intellectual history also differs from philosophy, literary criticism, or political theory in that it usually stresses the historical context in which creative thinkers live and new ideas develop.
    1. Intellectual history often looks at the relation between texts and contexts; this is the approach that we’ll use in this course.
    2. We’ll often note the general cultural context in which influential thinkers were working, and we’ll refer to the influence of major events, such as wars, revolutions, or political and economic conflicts.
  - C. Intellectual history is also an interdisciplinary field, which means that it typically analyzes intellectual work in what academics like to call the “disciplines” of knowledge.



1. These different forms of thought or knowledge include social theory, literature, psychology, philosophy, and cultural criticism—all of which we'll discuss in this course.
  2. The broad survey of intellectual history in this course is designed to introduce the main themes of twentieth-century European thought and to suggest how this thought evolved and gained wide cultural influence.
- II. First, I would like to describe some broad cultural patterns in late nineteenth-century European intellectual life because the cultural debates of this period clearly shaped the context in which early twentieth-century intellectuals worked.
- A. Intellectual life in the so-called *fin-de-siècle* era reflected the latest stage in an ongoing debate between those who believed deeply in science, in modern progress, and in classical liberalism and those who questioned these ideas.
    1. The dominant cultural paradigm among most intellectuals and educated people stressed the belief in science and progress.
    2. Some skeptical writers and critics, however, challenged this dominant paradigm; their voices would become increasingly influential in the twentieth century.
  - B. We need to summarize both the confident themes of Europe's modern scientific, liberal culture and a few themes of this culture's critics.
- III. Before we look specifically at this *fin-de-siècle* debate, I think it's helpful to place its themes in a much wider historical framework.
- A. In some respects, this debate expressed the tension between the two oldest strands of thought in the Western cultural tradition.
  - B. Historians have often described Western civilization as a complex fusion of two ancient cultural traditions: the Greek culture that developed especially in Athens and the Hebrew culture that developed in ancient Palestine.
    1. The Greeks developed the philosophical understanding of reason, stressed the rational pursuit of knowledge, and (in such thinkers as Aristotle) emphasized the observation or study of nature.
    2. Although the Greeks talked about the gods and a higher metaphysical realm, they were fascinated by the human body and the material world.
    3. The Hebrews, in contrast, developed the idea of monotheism, stressed the unique human ability to communicate with God, and (in such thinkers as the prophets) emphasized God's role in human history.
    4. Although the Hebrews wrote about political events and real people acting in the world, they gave great attention to spiritual issues and to divine powers or ethical injunctions.

5. To summarize these distinctions in very broad terms, the Greeks saw reason as the path to truth and the Hebrews saw divine revelation as the path to ultimate truth.
- C. These two important strands of ancient thought came together in the great theological synthesis of medieval Christianity.
    1. The famous medieval works of such thinkers as Saint Thomas Aquinas basically argued that Aristotelian conceptions of reason could be reconciled with the spiritual conceptions of divine revelations.
    2. God and ultimate truth could be known through reason *and* faith; the two forms of human understanding led to the same transcendent point.
  - D. But this medieval synthesis of reason and revelation gradually broke down during the following centuries of the Protestant Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment.
    1. Many intellectuals lost the belief that theology or divine revelation could lead to secure truths, especially when the new science offered the appealing model of observable, universal laws of nature.
    2. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment embraced the classical belief in reason as the only secure path to truth (though it rejected most of the Aristotelian science and metaphysical dualism in Greek thought).
    3. The new faith in reason and science continued to spread in the nineteenth century.
    4. It gained more supporters as intellectuals accepted the new evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin and the new scientific positivism of social theorists, such as Auguste Comte.
  - E. Yet, the other, more spiritual strand of Western thought by no means disappeared; the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment, for example, expressed in more secular terms the ancient faith in revelation.
    1. The Romantic poet—like the ancient religious mystic—gained special knowledge of human life or nature through nonrational experiences.
    2. Throughout the nineteenth century, such writers as Fyodor Dostoevsky questioned the belief that science offered the best or the only reliable form of human knowledge and understanding.
  - F. The late nineteenth-century cultural debates can be seen as the modern expression of those long-existing tensions between the “Greek” and “Hebrew” traditions in Western intellectual life.
  - G. Note, however, that nothing in history ever stays exactly the same; of course, the debate between what we might call “reason” and “revelation” took new forms as society, science, and culture evolved in the late nineteenth century.

IV. As I noted earlier, the dominant cultural belief system at the end of the nineteenth century included a strong faith in science, progress, and classical liberal ideas.

A. The faith in science grew out of the belief that scientists had explained the laws of nature, which could be seen in both the Newtonian descriptions of gravity and motion and the Darwinian descriptions of biological evolution.

1. Science offered reliable, rational explanations for what happened in the natural world, but it also offered a model for all true knowledge.
2. It was based on reason and empirical observation; it could be trusted.
3. Science also led to the great technological advances of the age: new machines, transportation, and communications; better health care; more efficient production of food; and countless other economic advances.
4. In short, science appealed to most intellectuals (and to many others, too) because it produced material benefits, as well as new knowledge.

B. The confident faith in science contributed also to the pervasive belief in the idea of progress, which had been one of the most characteristic themes of European thought since the late seventeenth century.

1. The belief in progress rested on the assumption that modern people had surpassed all previous generations in their knowledge, wealth, technology, and social institutions.
2. Of course, plenty of real-world evidence supported this assumption, and most late nineteenth-century intellectuals confidently believed that progress would inevitably continue in all directions.
3. Progress seemed to have no limits—an idea that created a sense of superiority toward the past, as well as optimism about the future.
4. This notion of progress also influenced European beliefs about the superiority of their own culture. In this era of European imperialism, most Europeans assumed that people in other parts of the world could only become “modern” and join in modern progress by adopting European knowledge and ideas.

C. The foundation of modern progress as most intellectuals viewed it, however, went beyond science and technology to include the modern liberal forms of government, legal rights, and economic organization.

1. The late nineteenth century also saw the spread of faith in democratic governments, the expansion of voting rights, and the extension of rights for individual religious and intellectual freedom.
2. It was also generally a period of laissez-faire economic policies in which liberal governments allowed and encouraged the rapid

growth of capitalist corporations, both in Europe and colonized areas.

3. The ascendancy of European civilization was interpreted as evidence of the superiority of European economic and political institutions, as well as a sign of Europe’s superior knowledge and cultural values.

D. The dominant ideas in European cultural life at the end of the nineteenth century took for granted the social value of modern science, the inevitability of progress, and the expansion of liberal political and economic institutions.

E. These assumptions could be found in universities, in the press, and in many spheres of political culture, and they influenced religious life.

V. Yet, some critics questioned all these reigning assumptions and, thus, set the terms for intellectual debates that would continue throughout the twentieth century.

A. Some thinkers and creative writers challenged the belief that science provided the only important truths about nature or human beings.

B. At the same time, some thinkers challenged the confident belief in progress; they worried about social relations or traditions that were disappearing.

C. Meanwhile, other thinkers challenged the liberal confidence in modern political and economic institutions.

D. All these critiques, however, remained somewhat marginalized until the traumatic events and wars of the twentieth century provoked a general critique of late nineteenth-century ideas—especially the optimistic belief in human progress.

#### Supplementary Reading:

James J. Sheehan, “Culture,” in T. C. W. Blanning, ed., *The Nineteenth Century*, pp. 126–157.

James A. Winders, *European Culture Since 1848*, pp. 37-74.

#### Questions to Consider:

1. Does the systematic use of human reason provide the best path to truth, or should humans look to various forms of divine or spiritual revelation to understand the nature of truth?
2. Do the nineteenth-century beliefs in scientific knowledge and human progress still shape the dominant cultural assumptions in our own era?



## Lecture Two

### Universities, Cities, and the Modern "Culture Industry"

**Scope:** In this lecture, we examine the institutional and urban context that shaped many of the patterns in modern European thought: the emergence of modern universities and the expansion of "Bohemian" cultural life in modern cities. A tension often existed in modern universities because these institutions were expected to provide professional certifications and to protect or transmit cultural traditions. Intellectuals increasingly worked at universities, which tended to support the social or cultural status quo. Radical, experimental forms of thought and culture were more likely to develop in avant-garde circles that flourished outside universities in large cities. This lecture describes modern intellectual life as an ongoing exchange between universities and avant-garde cultural groups. These patterns of intellectual exchange and conflict were particularly important in cities such as Paris and Vienna.

#### Outline

- I. The history of European thought and culture has always evolved in the context of cultural institutions; cultural life involves a sociological dimension.
  - A. Every modern society has institutions that shape a dominant culture.
    1. In totalitarian states, the government or governing party usually has final controlling power over all the main cultural institutions.
    2. In the modern democratic nation-states, however, the system of cultural control or cultural organization has been more complex.
    3. The governments in such states are usually much less overt or explicit in controlling cultural institutions, though most major cultural institutions foster identification with the nation-state.
  - B. At the same time, however, modern culture has become a commodity that is bought and sold; people accumulate forms of cultural capital, much as they accumulate financial capital (as the social theorist Pierre Bourdieu has noted).
    1. People gain their cultural capital in certain institutions and places.
    2. One source of cultural "capital" or influence is the education system, which in modern societies, culminates in the universities.
    3. A second source of cultural capital or influence can be found in the social-cultural networks of modern cities; people gain cultural status through connections with institutions such as museums or orchestras.

4. A third source of cultural capital is the modern culture industry, which consists of newspapers, books, journals, commercial art galleries, and advertising.
  5. In the twentieth century, this culture industry expanded to include films, radio, and television; the culture industry is also based in large cities.
- C. The culture industry and urban cultural institutions (e.g., museums) are linked to universities because the people who work in these cultural systems are almost always trained in universities.
- II. These cultural patterns developed their typical modern forms during the later decades of the nineteenth century, and they continue today in the institutions of the modern media.
    - A. The main traits of modern cultural life have, therefore, been shaped by the mutual dependence of universities, cities, the culture industry, and state-supported cultural institutions; this is the context in which intellectuals work.
      1. By the beginning of the twentieth century, cultural life was becoming systematically organized, professionalized, and linked to credentials.
      2. People needed a university degree to work in the culture industry or a Ph.D. to teach in universities, but cultural life flourished and expanded in many different directions outside the universities.
    - B. Modern intellectual history has often evolved as a dialogue between people in different parts of the culture system.
      1. Debates occur, for example, between people in universities or newspapers and their critics outside those institutions.
      2. The curious paradox here is that the universities have been key institutions for debates about ideas, but the most original writers, artists, and thinkers have often worked outside universities.
      3. The bureaucratization of intellectual life tended to exclude the most unconventional forms of thought from universities.
      4. This dichotomy was never absolute, of course; some original ideas and thinkers emerged from universities and other official institutions.
      5. But avant-garde critical thinkers and artists were often critics of universities; they saw universities as guardians of cultural traditions.
    - C. In this lecture, I want to discuss a general pattern of modern intellectual history in which universities established the limiting structures or norms of intellectual life—norms that were often challenged by urban cultural outsiders.

**III.** Although universities had been part of European culture since the Middle Ages, they gained new influence as their student enrollments grew in the late nineteenth century.

- A.** The numbers were still small compared to today's enrollments (still less than 100,000 in Germany, for example, in 1920), but the steady growth increased the number of faculty and led to the development of research universities.
- B.** The number of intellectual disciplines grew, and professors became researchers as well as teachers, revealing the influence of science.
- C.** The model for the modern university came from Germany; disciplines were organized for research, with scientific labs and seminars in the humanities.
  - 1.** There was a new emphasis on "practical" modern subjects.
  - 2.** The older instruction in the classics declined, in part because most new students came from the middle class and sought professional training.
- D.** The university thus served two major functions in the modern social and cultural system; these dual functions are still at the center of university life.
  - 1.** One of the university's purposes was to train and certify the credentials of people who were entering modern professions; this social function was closely related to the growth of industrial, bureaucratic societies.
  - 2.** Professional training produced the experts and bureaucrats that all modern economies and nation-states required.
  - 3.** The other function of the university was to protect and explain the cultural traditions of European civilization. This was the traditional humanistic purpose of universities and was linked to aristocratic ideals.
  - 4.** Cultural education had long produced the literate, cultural upper class, but this cultural mission was challenged and even displaced by the demands for complex professional training.
- E.** Both of these functions, however—professional training and instruction in cultural traditions—carried basically conservative implications.
  - 1.** The goal was to train and acculturate young people so that they could fit into established professions or the traditions of cultural life.
  - 2.** Tension existed between the contrasting functions of the university, which is still present today.
  - 3.** The professional certification process trained students in the latest practices of professional life; the humanistic education taught the classics with little interest in practical uses or consequences.

- F.** The professionalization of society gave universities a new social purpose because the academic degree offered a ticket to professional careers.
  - 1.** These new links to economic and professional institutions tied universities more closely to the urban industrial economic system.
  - 2.** Yet, many professors also argued that universities must teach about cultural traditions; education must convey great ideas from the past.
  - 3.** These people feared that older subjects and cultural values would be discarded; therefore, they became even more protective of traditions.
  - 4.** These conflicts produced the "culture wars" of the era around 1900; the issue was especially intense in Germany, where professors formed a privileged cultural elite.
- G.** This academic aristocracy depended on the German state, and it tended to be nationalistic; it did not question official ideas, which suggests why late nineteenth-century critics, such as Nietzsche, became so hostile to academic culture.
  - 1.** Universities defended traditional philosophy, but they were also closed to socialist ideas, and they barred Jews from professorships.
  - 2.** They provided cultural capital, however, and gave students the cultural and professional credentials for social advancement.
  - 3.** But the integration of the university into the bureaucratic and professional status system offered little space for true creativity.
  - 4.** Many intellectuals and artists resented the university's cultural power.

**IV.** An unofficial alternative cultural life thus developed in cities where large numbers of writers, artists, and journalists lived on the margins of universities.

- A.** Cultural experimentation and new social critiques emerged outside academic circles in the "Bohemian cultures" of cities such as Paris, Berlin, and Vienna.
  - 1.** All these cities had major universities, but it was not easy for unconventional thinkers to find a place in them.
  - 2.** Such cities were also large enough to support an independent "culture industry" that needed creative writers and artists.
- B.** Paris and Vienna were especially notable for bringing together people of diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds.
  - 1.** Paris had a tradition of attracting outsiders and exiles who created an international intellectual community; both Paris and Vienna were filled with cafés and bookstores where people could meet.
  - 2.** Both of these cities supported networks of intellectual life outside the formal academic disciplines; people went to the same cafés or worked for the same journals or newspapers.



3. A Bohemian intellectual and artistic society defined itself by standing against both bourgeois social life and the official universities.
  4. Paris had a well-established reputation for political and cultural radicalism that continued to attract creative outsiders.
- C. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Vienna had become the cultural rival of Paris in attracting a diverse community of intellectuals.
1. Vienna had a cosmopolitan intellectual life that linked West European and German culture to East European and Slavic cultures.
  2. Although the Austro-Hungarian Empire faced a number of political problems, Viennese culture offered a meeting place for intellectuals from all parts of central Europe.
  3. In fact, the political problems and diversity of Austria-Hungary may have helped to foster more critical thought there.
  4. The Viennese public supported a culture industry that included art galleries, book publishers, newspapers, theaters, and concerts.
- D. Viennese cultural life resembled Parisian culture in that many of Vienna's intellectuals worked outside the university.
- V. But the descriptions or defense of traditional cultures in universities helped to create an experimental culture among outsiders in Vienna and elsewhere.
- A. This recurring cultural pattern is an example of the interaction between texts and contexts in intellectual history; the intersecting contexts of universities and cities influenced many of Europe's most influential modern texts.
  - B. We see a dialectical cultural process in which ideas that emerged outside the university eventually influenced academic life, and the universities defended traditions that all modern critics had to confront.

#### Supplementary Reading:

Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933*, chapter 2, pp. 81–127.

Jerrold Seigel, *Bohemian Paris: Culture, Politics, and the Boundaries of Bourgeois Life, 1830–1930*, chapters 10 and 12, pp. 269–291, 336–365.

Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, introduction and chapter 1, pp. xvii–xxvii, 3–23.

#### Questions to Consider:

1. What do you see as the purpose of a university? Is it possible to resolve the tensions in the modern university's objectives?
2. Do you agree with critics who see the university as a conservative cultural institution? Do universities ever have a radical role in modern societies?

## Lecture Three

### Naturalism in *Fin-de-Siècle* Literature

**Scope:** European writers developed new forms of literary realism at the end of the nineteenth century, creating both the new genre of “naturalism” and new critical portraits of modern society. After summarizing some characteristics of literary naturalism, the discussion turns to three writers who exemplified this kind of literature or pushed its themes in new directions: Émile Zola, Henrik Ibsen, and Joseph Conrad. Despite important differences in their literary styles, all these authors rejected sentimental, optimistic views of modern society and human beings, thereby calling into question popular liberal assumptions about the progress of modern European culture.

#### Outline

- I. The widespread European confidence in science, progress, and the civilizing benefits of Europe's enlightened political institutions attracted critical attention from creative writers at the end of the nineteenth century.
  - A. These writers worked outside the universities, but they were highly aware of Darwinian science and of the general cultural faith in progress, which flourished in both the popular press and academic culture of the era.
    1. Like other intellectuals in this period, creative writers often wanted to draw on the knowledge and prestige of science.
    2. Novelists and playwrights could not discover new laws of nature, but they frequently sought to show how deep social realities lay beneath the surface of European society, as deep biological realities do in nature.
  - B. Many of the most influential works of late nineteenth-century European literature extended and revised the earlier traditions of literary realism.
    1. A new generation of writers embraced certain aspects of the dominant cultural belief in science, yet they turned aspects of the new science into a social and literary critique of modern Europe.
    2. Some later writers would see late nineteenth-century novels or plays as models for how literature could deliver a social critique (often with greater effect than a social treatise).
    3. Other writers would condemn this kind of literary social critique as one-dimensional and insufficiently aware of psychological complexity.
    4. The late nineteenth-century novel exemplified the kind of “realist” writing that many twentieth-century writers tried to reject by probing the inner psychological world of memory and imagination.

C. It is difficult to understand modern literature, however, without looking first at the evolving realism or “naturalism” of late nineteenth-century writers.

1. We will summarize the themes of literary naturalism, then note how three writers used and transformed these themes to challenge reigning European ideas of the era.
2. These three writers—Émile Zola, Henrik Ibsen, and Joseph Conrad—had many differences and did not belong to a coherent literary movement, but they all tried to portray deep flaws in European culture.
3. Zola’s novels showed the class tensions and corruption that spread everywhere beneath the glittering surface of modern European cities.
4. Ibsen used drama to portray the anxieties in middle-class families and the constraints that women still faced in modern marriages.
5. Conrad wrote novels about European encounters with other cultures to show the brutal realities of the imperialism that was supposed to be spreading civilization and enlightenment to non-European peoples.
6. For all these writers, literature offered the linguistic means to use and criticize the assumptions of modern European civilization.

II. Literary historians have often described naturalism as a distinctive approach to literature in the late nineteenth century, but like all such movements, it is not easy to define.

- A. Naturalism resembled literary realism in trying to escape Romantic sentimentalism and Romantic images of the isolated, melancholy poet.
1. Naturalist literature attempted to depict the hard realities of life, especially those realities that respectable people didn’t like to discuss.
  2. In this respect, it went beyond an earlier literary realism in focusing on the most unpleasant aspects of modern life—crime, corruption, disease, poverty, prostitution, mental illness, alcoholism, bad marriages, and so on.
  3. Like realists, the naturalists wanted art to represent an external reality, but this reality was often shocking, disturbing, or brutal.
- B. Émile Zola developed the most theoretical account of this approach to literature in a commentary called “The Experimental Novel” (1879).
1. For Zola, this new kind of writing “arises out of the scientific advance of our century; it is a continuation and a completion of physiology.”
  2. Naturalism thus went beyond realism in its claimed relation to biological science—it evinced a kind of post-Darwinian emphasis on nature.

3. Such writing brought science to literature; it stressed the power of biological heredity, the shaping force of the environment, and the influence of a social milieu on people who lived in it.
4. Little emphasis was placed on the autonomous self-creation of the individual (a classic liberal theme); much more emphasis was placed on how people’s actions and identities reflected biology or a social place.

C. The scientific themes of European culture thus contributed to literary images of people coping with the decisive power of nature or the external world. Naturalist literature frequently isolated a specific problem and showed how people were forced to deal with it (e.g., poverty or illness).

III. We can see the specific themes of such writing by looking at the influential work of Zola, Ibsen, and Conrad; they represent different national literatures, but they all gained a wide international audience.

A. Émile Zola (1840–1902) grew up in the southern French city of Aix-en-Provence; his father died when Émile was only seven years old, but he was close to his mother.

1. Paul Cézanne, the subsequently famous post-Impressionist artist, was one of his best friends in Aix; in 1858, Zola moved to Paris.
2. Because he failed the baccalauréat exam that was required for admission to the university, his education did not go beyond the *lycée*.
3. Zola threw himself into the Parisian literary world, working at a publishing house and writing stories and articles for newspapers.
4. He also became an advocate for the new Impressionist painters. The controversial artist Edouard Manet painted a famous portrait of Zola.

B. Zola eventually married, but his life was devoted mostly to writing. He never had children with his wife, though he did have two children with one of his wife’s servants, Jeanne Rozerot, with whom he had a long relationship.

1. He also entered decisively into late nineteenth-century political debates when he charged that the French government had wrongly convicted Jewish army officer Alfred Dreyfus of spying for the Germans.
2. Zola became one of the most famous “public intellectuals” in France.

C. His literary theories emerged out of his interest in the early Impressionist attempt to convey the complexity of light and reality without sentiment.



1. As he developed his writing, he sought to follow similar principles, but he became steadily more interested in physiology and in the ways that heredity shaped families and individuals.
  2. These themes emerged as central ideas in his famous twenty-novel series about a family living in France during the Second Empire (1851–1870).
  3. The novels were called the *Rougon-Macquart* series because all the main characters were descendants of this family, which had a hereditary history of madness and alcoholism.
  4. Some of the novels (e.g., *Nana*) showed the corruption of French elites; others (e.g., *L'Assommoir*) showed the debilitating effects of poverty.
- D. The famous novel *Germinal* (1885) most memorably showed the misery of workers who labored to make the modern economy possible.
1. This novel tells the story of a young miner named Etienne who joins a strike and struggles against the owners of the mine; the strike fails, but Etienne learns from his difficult environment.
  2. A new social movement is growing (germinating) in this miserable social world, and Etienne—despite the hereditary problems of his family—gradually comes to understand it; he learns from his milieu.
  3. Zola's novel isn't exactly a socialist work, but it suggests that deep social problems lie (like a mine) beneath the wealth of French society.
- IV. Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) also wrote about social problems, but he used drama as the literary form to convey his themes, which included an interest in environments.
- A. Ibsen was from a Norwegian merchant family that fell on hard times and moved to a farm; like Zola, Ibsen failed the exam to enter a university.
1. He worked for several years in Norwegian theaters; he was married and had a son but was not happy with his life in Norway.
  2. He left Norway in 1864 and lived for the next twenty-seven years in Italy and Germany; his major works were written during this period.
- B. Ibsen wrote plays and poetry on many themes, but he became most well known for such plays as *A Doll's House* (1879) and *Ghosts* (1880), which depicted unhappy middle-class families living in a stifling social milieu.
1. Beneath the surface of bourgeois respectability, Ibsen suggested, were secret problems, denials, and lots of unhappy women.
  2. The wife in *A Doll's House*, Nora Helmer, comes to realize that her marriage is empty and that she must leave to live a more honest, free life; the play ends as she slams the door behind her.

- C. The play *Ghosts* comes closer to literary naturalism because the family in this drama is haunted by hereditary “ghosts” from the past, including a disease.
1. The son, Oswald Alving, inherits physical problems from his father, but the mother is haunted after her husband's death by the “ghosts” of dead beliefs, old lies, and old social conventions.
  2. Such works as *Ghosts* provoked vehement cultural opposition.
- V. The works of Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) were also unsettling, especially when they depicted the brutality of European imperialism.
- A. Conrad was born into a Polish family (called Korzeniowski) in Ukraine; his parents were fervent Polish nationalists who named their son Konrad after a character in a famous poem by the Polish nationalist poet Adam Mickiewicz.
- B. Under the pen name Joseph Conrad, he wrote a number of stories about Europeans traveling beyond Europe, but his most famous work of this type was *Heart of Darkness* (1899)—a story about European traders in Africa.
1. Some modern critics condemn Conrad for being a racist, but his images of European imperialists (including the power-hungry character Kurtz) in this story suggest that Europeans are brutal, greedy, and barbarous.
  2. As Conrad noted, “the conquest of the earth...is not a pretty thing when you look into it”; Europeans ignored a grim reality beneath the imperialist propaganda in their claims to spread “civilization.”
- C. Conrad did not view himself as a naturalist like Zola, but his work can be compared to Zola's and Ibsen's in its emphasis on ugly, hidden realities.

#### Essential Reading:

Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, pp. 3–71 in the Everyman Edition.

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*.

#### Supplementary Reading:

Frederick Brown, *Zola: A Life*, pp. 520–546.

Robert Ferguson, *Henrik Ibsen, A New Biography*, pp. 227–269.

#### Questions to Consider:

1. What makes literature different from science? Does literature provide a different kind of knowledge about the world?
2. Are human beings ultimately shaped more by their hereditary characteristics and social environments than by their individual will?

## Lecture Four

### The New Avant-Garde Literary Culture

**Scope:** A new generation of poets and creative writers rejected much of the scientific philosophy that shaped academic institutions at the end of the nineteenth century. They argued that creative artistic work should portray inner visions and symbolic meanings rather than objective representations of the external world. This lecture discusses the subjective themes in this kind of writing, which would influence writers and artists throughout the twentieth century. The lecture refers specifically to avant-garde authors who shaped the new literary themes: Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. In contrast to naturalist writers, these authors wrote about personal symbols and artistic imagination instead of the social problems of modern societies.

#### Outline

- I. A wide variety of new cultural movements challenged the popular late nineteenth-century European faith in science, social progress, and rational liberalism.
  - A. Philosophical radicals, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, challenged religious and ethical traditions and questioned democratic political assumptions.
    1. Many other writers, including those who wrote the kind of realist or naturalist works that we discussed in the last lecture, developed critical narratives about social problems that affected European civilization.
    2. Most naturalist writers, however, drew on European science to develop their descriptions of the modern social world.
    3. Other literary movements developed more radical cultural critiques of the faith in science, positivism, and rational liberalism.
    4. Such movements also challenged university culture and Enlightenment traditions of rationality and reason that shaped academic cultures.
  - B. Avant-garde movements outside the university extended earlier critiques of the Enlightenment and the ideas of writers such as Dostoevsky.
    1. They tended to stress the nonrational components of human experience and aesthetic ideas that made art a kind of religion.
    2. Avant-garde writers expanded on Romantic ideas about the importance of personal imagination; they saw personal visions as

sources of artistic truth, and they celebrated inner knowledge or subjectivity.

3. Such artists and writers rejected or ignored the positivist claim that truth came from objective descriptions of the external world.
- C. We can see this new emphasis on subjective insights by looking at its emergence in what became known as symbolist literature and poetry.
  1. This kind of writing suggested that reality is not simply what you see or understand through sensory observation; there's more to the world than meets the scientific eye.
  2. This was a key theme in "modernism" in literature and the arts, which emerged in a late nineteenth-century rejection of positivism.
  3. The symbolist movement represented an alternative to the literary naturalism of writers such as Émile Zola, but it reached a smaller audience than the novels of Zola and the plays of Ibsen.
  4. The symbolist themes appeared most clearly in the work of Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, all of whom explored the meaning of internal worlds.
- II. The origins of the symbolist movement and the emergence of numerous modernist literary themes can be traced to the work of Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867).
  - A. Baudelaire was a poet who suggested that everything we see around us may be taken as a symbol for something else; there are no simple meanings.
    1. To reach the deeper truth of symbolic meanings, Baudelaire said that people must imagine or recognize the fantastic or even grotesque aspects of objects and of the social world.
    2. He complained that people living in respectable bourgeois society were unable to see the complexity of the world around them.
    3. Poets differed from other people because they explored the symbolic meanings of language and personal experience.
    4. Baudelaire admired and translated the works of the American poet Edgar Allan Poe; he viewed Poe as an exemplary poet who knew how to use symbols and avoid the clichés of everyday language.
  - B. These themes were picked up and extended after Baudelaire's early death by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898).
    1. Mallarmé came from a family of conventional, middle-class government officials, but he began writing poetry in his teens.
    2. His mother had died when he was only five years old, and his younger sister died when he was only fifteen. His sister's death affected him deeply and his memory of her became a theme in his early poems.
    3. After reading the poems of Baudelaire and Poe, he began to develop his own theories about how poems should convey complex experiences.



4. In contrast to Baudelaire and many other poets, Mallarmé did not live an unconventional Bohemian life; he married a German woman (Maria Gerhard) as a young man and had two children (his son died at age eight).
  5. He was very close to his daughter, Genviève Mallarmé, and he spent thirty years working as an English teacher in French *lycées*.
- C. Mallarmé's real passion, however, was poetry and the arts; by the early 1880s, he had become the leading figure in a group of poets and artists in Paris.
1. He hosted a gathering of writers and artists at his home on Tuesday evenings for over twenty years; he did most of the talking at these famous gatherings and often stressed the links between different art forms.
  2. Mallarmé was interested in the opera of Richard Wagner, the paintings of the Impressionists (Edouard Manet painted his portrait), modern music, the theater, and ballet.
  3. He believed that each of these arts could convey distinctive personal visions; this was his view of poetry as well.
  4. Mallarmé wrote complex poems for small audiences; few people understood them because they used intricate language and symbols.
- D. But this was the theme of symbolism: Poetry must convey inner sensations and emotions in the poet's personal language.
1. The goal was to use the imagination and symbols rather than literal representations of external reality, which meant that the poet could not use language in the same ways that most people use it in daily life.
  2. Poetic language described the internal reality of experience or desire or imagination, all of which was as "real" as external reality.
  3. Mallarmé's famous poem "*L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*" (1876), for example, described a *faune's* vivid encounter with two nymphs, but it's never clear if the nymphs were real or something the *faune* imagined.
  4. The issue doesn't really matter because the imagination is ultimately as real as any other reality, and poems portray all levels of reality.
  5. As Mallarmé described it, the goal was "to describe not the thing, but the effect it produces"; this theory was carried into other arts.
  6. Claude Debussy's famous "*Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*" (1894) put Mallarmé's themes into music. The great choreographer Nijinsky created a modern ballet (1912) for this music and theme.
- E. Romantics had stressed personal experience, scientific positivists stressed observable facts, and symbolists stressed imagination or personal symbols.

1. In this view, imagination offers escape from boring, materialist reality and becomes a vehicle for expressing subjective visions.
2. Some poets and artists viewed the inner experience as more real than an illusory external world; the desire to escape modern realities led some artists to a radical escapism from everyday life.
3. Some symbolists turned to hashish or alcohol to stimulate their imaginations—but they often lost their poetry and died young.
4. Others turned back toward the Romantic fascination with exotic places and chose to leave Europe for pre-modern cultures.

- III. The most well known example among the poets was Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891), who wrote brilliant poems before age twenty, defied the conventions of bourgeois life, fell into a passionate affair with the poet Paul Verlaine, and wandered around Europe.
- A. Rimbaud wanted to show the poet's personal vision, which he managed to do in poems such as "The Drunken Boat" (1871). This work tells the story of a boat that breaks free from its crew and sails off freely and beyond all controls.
1. This theme of voyages and personal liberation was a recurring one in Rimbaud's poetry and life; he grew up with a religious mother in a small town in northeast France (his father abandoned the family).
  2. Rimbaud soon fled from both his writing and his life in Europe; he stopped writing poetry after he was about twenty years old.
  3. He later went to Africa for mysterious reasons and lived for more than a decade in east Africa, working as a trader and arms dealer; he struggled to make money and survive.
  4. He turned his back on Europe, though he still corresponded with his family and sometimes sent money to his mother (despite a long struggle against her throughout his youth).
  5. Rimbaud eventually fell ill with gangrene and cancer, returned to France, had his leg amputated, and died in Marseilles.
- B. Meanwhile, Rimbaud's poems had been collected by ex-friends, such as Paul Verlaine, and they began to be published in the 1880s and 1890s.
1. His images of the radical poetic quest for personal visions attracted attention, but his life also became a cultural legend.
  2. His search for a reality outside the social and cultural system of modern France suggested the most radical rejection of conventional ideas.
  3. Rimbaud represented the alternative to positivism and rational forms of knowledge; his description of poets created a lasting image.
- C. "The poet makes himself a *visionary*," young Rimbaud wrote in a letter, through a long, difficult, and "rational *derangement of all the senses*."

D. The goal of this process is to reach the “unknown”; the attempt is dangerous, but even if “he should end by losing his grasp of his visions, he has seen them!” The poet uses language to express personal visions.

IV. Rimbaud’s flight from Europe and his account of the poet’s personal visions had parallels in the play of Villiers de l’Isle-Adam (1838–1889), *Axel*.

A. Villiers came from an impoverished old noble family in Brittany, but he went to Paris as a young man to become a writer; he was always poor.

1. He wrote novels, plays, and mysterious stories; he met Baudelaire and became a good friend of Mallarmé.

2. His stories finally attracted attention in the 1880s, but he was plagued by bad health and died shortly after finishing *Axel* (1886).

B. The play deals with the common symbolist theme, which suggests that reality is less satisfying than what the imagination can create. Villiers’s themes gave dramatic form to the symbolist emphasis on the superiority of internal visions and imagination.

C. Such works did not reach large audiences, but they had a strong influence on modern literature and art. The poet W. B. Yeats admired *Axel*, and the famous American critic Edmund Wilson called his book on modernism *Axel’s Castle*.

D. Avant-garde literary themes also influenced wider critiques of positivism.

#### Essential Reading:

Arthur Rimbaud, “The Drunken Boat,” and selected letters, in Wallace Fowlie, editor and translator, *Rimbaud: Complete Works, Selected Letters*, pp. 114–121, 296–329.

*Mallarmé in Prose*, edited by Mary Ann Caws, “Language, Literature and Aesthetics,” pp. 15–19; “Poets, Painters, Thinkers,” pp. 63–76; “Performance,” pp. 101–124.

Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, *Axel*, translated by Marilyn Gaddis Rose, part IV, pp. 143–175.

#### Supplementary Reading:

Rosemary Lloyd, *Mallarmé: The Poet and His Circle*, pp. 77–155.

#### Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think that poetry should convey personal experiences in languages that defy common sense or ordinary usage?
2. Was Villiers wrong to suggest that the external world and daily life can never match the world that people envision in their personal imagination?

## Lecture Five

### Rethinking the Scientific Tradition

**Scope:** The critique of post-Enlightenment scientific thought spread beyond various literary movements into philosophy and even into certain forms of science itself. This lecture explores some influential critiques and revisions of the positivist tradition, noting especially Henri Bergson’s intuitionist philosophy and Albert Einstein’s special theory of relativity. Bergson and Einstein challenged Newtonian scientific accounts of the world, though they worked in the different intellectual cultures of philosophy and theoretical physics. They both questioned Newtonian descriptions of universal laws and stressed the observer’s role in the construction of all knowledge about the world. The lecture concludes with a brief discussion of how the new views of knowledge and science began to undermine the earlier cultural confidence in objective knowledge and truths.

#### Outline

- I. The emphasis on individual experiences and inner perceptions that developed in the avant-garde literary movements of the late nineteenth century can be compared to some similar trends in the intellectual spheres of philosophy and scientific theories.
  - A. Philosophy and science differed from literature, but these fields of study resembled various literary ideas in calling attention to the complex inner world that existed beneath the surface that positivist science had described.
    1. A new philosophical movement, represented most prominently by Henri Bergson in France, stressed the importance of “intuition” in the search for an understanding of reality and human knowledge.
    2. Meanwhile, a new “scientific revolution” altered important aspects of the long-established Newtonian conception of the natural world.
    3. The scientists in this movement, represented most prominently by Albert Einstein, showed that Newtonian laws and conceptions of time and space didn’t work in subatomic and cosmic spheres of nature.
  - B. Although the new scientific themes were difficult to understand, they became popularized in more general cultural redefinitions of time and space. The concept of “relativity,” like earlier scientific ideas about the law of gravity or biological evolution, helped to reshape European intellectual life, raising questions about the nature of truth and knowledge.



- C. These influential developments in philosophy and science further challenged the late nineteenth-century European faith in scientific positivism and stable, universal truths. Relativism began to have the aura of advanced scientific thought.
- II. The challenge to positivism in French culture gained philosophical influence through the work of Henri Bergson (1859–1941); Bergson differed from symbolist poets and most of the literary avant-garde in that he had a prestigious academic job.
- A. Bergson was appointed to the chair of modern philosophy at the Collège de France in 1900, a position that showed his distinguished academic standing.
1. He was born in Paris, but his father was a musician from Poland and his mother was English; both came from Jewish families.
  2. Bergson came into French culture from a somewhat marginal family position, but he excelled in school. He won academic prizes and graduated with high honors from the École Normale Supérieure.
  3. He taught philosophy in various provincial *lycées* and in Paris before his appointment at the Collège de France.
  4. He lived a conventional academic life; he married a French woman (Louise Neuberger) in 1891, and they had one daughter.
- B. Bergson was a popular lecturer; he spoke without notes, drew large crowds, and raised questions about the positivist orthodoxy of French academic life.
1. His lectures and writings reinforced the symbolist emphasis on inner or intuitive understandings and appealed to nonacademic audiences.
  2. He traveled to New York to lecture at Columbia University in 1912–1913 and later published a dialogue with Einstein on the meaning of the theory of relativity (1922).
  3. In 1927, Bergson won the Nobel Prize for literature, but by that time, he had retired from the Collège de France because of health problems.
- C. Bergson was a positivist in his youth, but by 1900, he had become a critic of positivism and the positivist conceptions of truth. He wanted to establish intuition as a form of knowledge that was as valid as science; he wrote with metaphors, somewhat like Nietzsche, and he especially sought to redefine the meaning of time.
- D. Bergson's key argument was that the categories of rational conceptual thought do not really describe reality or experience.
1. Reality is a continuum that flows and evolves but never actually exists in the categories that science uses to describe it.
2. According to Bergson, the true meaning of reality comes from inner perceptions or from experience, not from external objects or categories.
  3. This was the theme of his most influential works: *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903) and *Creative Evolution* (1907).
  4. He said in *Creative Evolution* (the title suggests Darwin's continuing influence) that human life depends on an *elan vital*, which is constantly unfolding and evolving.
- E. People come to understand this *elan vital* through inner perceptions, rather than by the methods of objective science; they learn from their experience.
1. "There is one reality... which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis," Bergson explained. "It's our own personality in its flowing through time."
  2. But this deep reality is fluid, changing, and accessible only through that "*intellectual sympathy* which we call intuition."
  3. Intuition carries people into the inward realm of life, where the intellect cannot go; it offers a higher form of knowledge.
- F. Bergson illustrated the meaning of inward intuition by referring often to the problem and experience of time.
1. Rational thought organizes time into seconds, minutes, hours, and days—all of exactly the same length.
  2. Clocks are rational calculating machines that measure time in this way, but this is not the way we experience or remember time.
  3. Some minutes go quickly; others drag by very slowly. Breaking all time into the same categories falsifies its nature and meaning.
  4. The true meaning of time for humans depends on the unconscious that experiences it; this resembles the poetic conception of time.
- G. This conception of time influenced writers such as Marcel Proust, who knew Bergson and drew somewhat indirectly on some of his theories.
1. Proust's famous novel *Remembrance of Things Past* began to appear in 1913. It explored themes of inner experience and time.
  2. Bergson's conception of inner realities also contributed to a revival of religious and mystical values among some intellectuals, including Charles Péguy, who wrote about inner spiritual mysteries.
  3. Péguy went off to die in the First World War (acting on a kind of spiritual identification with France), but Bergson's influence pushed others toward the Catholic Church.
  4. Bergson's critics said he undermined reason, but Bergson said that he simply noted the limits of the knowledge reason could provide.

III. Bergson's notion of deeper realities beneath the surface of external appearances and his redefinitions of time had a curious parallel in the era's new scientific culture.

A. Physics saw a reevaluation of the relation between external appearances and the inner realities of matter and light.

1. New discoveries showed that atoms, which had long been viewed as solid (like billiard balls), were actually composed of smaller particles: electrons and protons, orbiting an atomic nucleus.
2. This suggested that ultimate reality had more complex levels of fragmentation than people had assumed. Eventually, scientists recognized that Newtonian physics didn't explain the subatomic world.

B. The limits of Newtonian physics became a particular concern of the early twentieth century's most well known scientist, Albert Einstein (1879–1955).

1. Einstein was born into a Jewish family in southern Germany; his father ran a plumbing and electrical company in Munich, but it failed.
2. Young Einstein went through school in Munich but dropped out of the *gymnasium* (high school); he didn't like school and was "disruptive."
3. He later finished high school in Switzerland and attended the Swiss Federal Polytechnical School, which trained science teachers.
4. Einstein didn't get a teaching job after graduation; he was finally hired in a Swiss government patent office.

C. Amid many changes in his personal life, Einstein pursued the scientific research that made him famous and led to various academic appointments; he finally joined the University of Berlin and the Prussian Academy of Sciences (1913).

1. Einstein's greatest scientific contributions came in 1905, when he wrote a series of famous papers (leading to a Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921).
2. Some of this work described the nature of particles of light, and some described the nature of molecular motion, but his "special theory of relativity" and his accounts of mass and energy became most famous.

D. The theory of relativity appeared in a paper "On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies," which argued that time and space are not absolute but are relative to the observer's position and movement in space.

1. Einstein explained that time passes more slowly as the speed of an object increases; time on a spaceship moving close to the speed of light passes very slowly compared to the way time passes on earth.

2. This changed the classical Newtonian view of time, as well as the meaning of motion; the motion of all objects is relative to that of other objects—there is no fixed, motionless reference point.

E. Einstein went on to argue in another paper (also in 1905) that mass and energy are not totally different realities; in fact, they are convertible.

1. Mass can be changed into energy; this idea is the point of his famous equation:  $E = mc^2$ —energy equals mass times the speed of light squared.
2. This showed that a huge amount of energy could be produced from even small amounts of mass; this idea became the starting point for the understanding and creation of atomic energy and weapons.

F. The culture of the twentieth-century world would evolve in the scientific context that Einstein's theories produced.

1. For scientists and non-scientists who learned about it, the theory of relativity (as elaborated in 1916 in Einstein's general theory of relativity) seemed to question the possibility of final truths.
2. The implications of both subatomic studies and the theory of relativity soon led to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle (1927).
3. The German scientist Werner Heisenberg showed that one could not determine at the same time the precise speed and position of an electron; one could only describe its "probable" speed or position.
4. Einstein himself wanted to challenge this uncertainty and to show that some objective reality might ultimately be established.

IV. But Einstein couldn't refute Heisenberg, whose uncertainty principle became linked with relativity in popular twentieth-century ideas about the limits of human knowledge. The arts developed similar ideas about the limits of representation.

#### Essential Reading:

Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by T. E. Hulme, pp. 21–62.

*The Expanded Quotable Einstein*, edited by Alice Calaprice, comments about himself and his family, pp. 5–48; comments about science, pp. 225–264.

#### Supplementary Reading:

Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918*, chapter 1, "The Nature of Time", pp. 10–35.

#### Questions to Consider:

1. Would you agree with Bergson's claim that the fluidity of time must be understood by intuitive, personal insights that go beyond the rational measurements of science?
2. What do you think explains the popular interest in the theory of relativity?



## Lecture Six

### The Emergence of Modern Art

**Scope:** The growing cultural emphasis on the unique visions of creative people appeared in the visual arts as it was spreading in literary and philosophical circles. A new “modern” art gained wide influence because its themes overlapped with anti-realist trends in other spheres of cultural life. Artists explored their personal visions, turning away from representations of objective external realities. This new approach to art first became apparent in late nineteenth-century Impressionism, but the most radical new work emerged in early twentieth-century movements, such as Fauvism, Cubism, and abstract expressionism. This lecture discusses these new art forms with specific reference to Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Wassily Kandinsky, all of whom contributed to the new nonrepresentational artistic style that would both express and shape many of the themes in twentieth-century European culture.

#### Outline

- I. The avant-garde cultural revolt against European positivism and realism in the arts strongly influenced painting and the visual arts in the period between 1870 and 1914.
  - A. We have seen how the challenge to realism developed in literary movements, such as symbolist poetry, and played a role in modern philosophy.
    1. The different spheres of European culture often overlapped at the beginning of the twentieth century; people working in the different art forms of literature, music, dance, and painting had extensive contacts.
    2. We’ve noted earlier, for example, that the painter Edouard Manet was close to the novelist Émile Zola and the poet Stéphane Mallarmé. Mallarmé was also a friend of the composer Claude Debussy.
    3. Henri Bergson knew the writers Marcel Proust and Charles Péguy, and everyone in the artistic community was aware of Richard Wagner.
  - B. The challenge to traditional conceptions of knowledge and representation was a common theme in all avant-garde cultural circles.
    1. The cultural avant-garde included creative adherents in early twentieth-century Italy, Germany, Austria, and England, but Paris remained the center for many of the era’s most experimental “isms.”

2. This pattern appeared in painting as well as literature, and many of the most well known themes of twentieth-century art—including the emphasis on the artist’s personal vision—developed in France after about 1870.
  3. This lecture discusses the emergence of modern “isms” in art, with particular attention to the evolution from Impressionism to post-Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, and abstract expressionism.
  4. These later “isms” were famously identified with Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Wassily Kandinsky, each of whom exemplifies key ideas that we’ll summarize by referring briefly to their lives and works.
- C. More generally, however, I want to stress that the visual arts helped to establish and popularize leading themes of twentieth-century cultural life. Painters showed the fragmentation of identities and the relativity of human perspectives on reality.
- II. Painting in the mid-nineteenth century had expressed some of the same realist tendencies that emerged in the novels of that era.
    - A. The French artist Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), for example, depicted common people in nonheroic situations or relationships, thus moving away from both the mythological and heroic themes of much Romantic art.
      1. Courbet’s famous painting *Burial at Ornans* (1849–1850) portrayed common people at a graveside funeral, but the painting did not show the formality or the upper classes that usually appeared in such works.
      2. This kind of irreverent realism angered most art critics of the day.
    - B. Courbet’s approach to painting was soon followed by the even more radical work of Edouard Manet (1832–1883), who represents the transition toward Impressionism.
      1. Manet portrayed unconventional scenes, such as a partially nude woman at a picnic with two men (*Luncheon on the Grass* [1863]), but he also began to experiment with light and brushwork in his paintings.
      2. His portraits (for example, of Mallarmé) had a certain “blurring” in comparison to the traditional delineation of figures in older portraits.
    - C. Because Manet’s work was generally rejected in the annual Salon exhibitions at the official Art Academy, he began to organize a “*Salon des refusés*” at which excluded artists could exhibit their works.
      1. Critics made fun of this work (the term Impressionism was pejorative), but artists such as Claude Monet and Pierre Auguste Renoir persisted in their attempts to move beyond literal representations of reality.

2. They wanted to portray the subtle play of light that they observed in nature, in people's faces, on rivers, or in fields of flowers.
  3. Monet showed how the same object—a haystack, a church, a person—looked very different in the light of early day or noontime or dusk.
  4. The Impressionists were not concerned with realistic images; they assumed that photographs could now provide those images.
  5. Painting would portray what artists saw through their own eyes.
- D.** These themes were expanded further in the so-called post-Impressionist works of such artists as Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Paul Cézanne.
1. Van Gogh and Cézanne worked in Provence in southern France and Gauguin went off to work in Tahiti, but all these artists gave new attention to colors, shapes, and the play of light on objects.
  2. Cézanne worked especially at representing the almost geometric relation between objects in his landscapes, portraits, and still lifes.
- III.** The work of Cézanne became important for the new artistic “isms” that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially “Fauvism” and “Cubism.”
- A.** The term “*fauves*” (meaning wild beasts) was used by an art critic to ridicule the work of artists who had gathered around Henri Matisse about 1905.
1. Matisse (1869–1954) was from a small town in northern France. He had worked in a law office as a young man, but he became interested in painting as he recuperated from an illness and abandoned law for art.
  2. He went to Paris to study art and began producing conventional imitations of classical works; then he encountered the work of more recent artists, including Cézanne (he bought some Cézanne paintings).
- B.** Matisse married a woman from Toulouse, Amélie Parayre, and settled into a non-Bohemian lifestyle, but his art led the way to the new Fauve style.
1. He lost interest in the literal representation of people or objects; he sought instead to convey meaning with color and shapes.
  2. He often juxtaposed colors in strange ways; a portrait of his wife had a long green line running down her nose and showed her hair as blue.
  3. Matisse said that art should convey the feeling or instinct of the artist; he showed these feelings with color and distorted shapes.
- C.** He also described his view of art in an essay, “Notes of a Painter,” which stressed the importance of the painter's personal vision.

1. “There is an inherent truth,” he argued, “which must be disengaged from the outward appearance of the object to be represented... Exactitude is not truth.”
2. The purpose of art was to reach a reality that could not be defined or represented by logic; Matisse's quest to portray his truths led to famous works, such as *The Joy of Life* (1906) and *Dance* (1909).
3. He was interested in music and dance, and he wanted his paintings to convey some of the fluidity of those other art forms.
4. He portrayed the meaning of movement rather than realistic details. By 1910, he was gaining attention (and sales) from art collectors, such as the Americans Leo Stein and his sister, Gertrude Stein.

- IV.** The themes of Matisse's Fauvism also attracted the attention of other painters, who began pushing their work in new directions.
- A.** Pablo Picasso and the early Cubists were especially interested in exploring the meaning of forms and space; Wassily Kandinsky and the early abstract expressionists focused on the expression of feelings through the use of color.
- B.** Picasso (1881–1973) became the most famous artist of the twentieth century; he was the Albert Einstein of the visual arts—a well-known symbol of modern art.
1. He was born in southern Spain but moved to Barcelona in his early teens. His father was an art teacher, and young Pablo learned the skills of classical painting at an early age.
  2. After moving around for several years, Picasso settled permanently in Paris in 1904. He was just emerging from his “Blue Period,” during which (facing personal problems) he worked mostly with blue paint.
- C.** In Paris, however, Picasso found a congenial artistic network in Montmartre, came to know Matisse and Gertrude Stein, had a series of romantic involvements with women, and began to develop the style of Cubist art.
1. He worked closely with his artist friend Georges Braque, who was then trying to depict the shapes of objects in increasingly geometric forms.
  2. Braque and Picasso were both influenced by the work of Cézanne and by the example of sculpture from Africa.
  3. Picasso's new Cubism began to appear in such paintings as *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1911), a reference to women at a brothel in Barcelona; the women were portrayed in distorted angular shapes.
  4. Picasso wanted to alter nature to fit the eye of the artist rather than have his art fit the reality of an external world.



- D. Picasso and Braque did not use as many vivid colors as Matisse, but they went further in exploring the lines and spaces and shapes of material objects.
  1. The same person or object would be represented in a painting from multiple angles or perspectives, suggesting the multiplicity of vision.
  2. Some Cubist paintings became so angular or geometric that the objects in the painting were virtually impossible to discern.
- V. But the Cubists still alluded to objects in their work, thus separating themselves from abstract expressionism, which conveyed personal visions with color alone.
  - A. The abstract expressionists pushed beyond Matisse by stressing the ways in which color could express emotions, even without reference to specific forms. Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) was probably the most influential early advocate for this position.
  - B. Kandinsky argued for the spiritual meaning of art, which he believed was best conveyed by abstract works that spoke to a viewer’s spirit.
    1. He began to produce completely abstract works with such titles as *Composition VII* (1913); he said that color expressed the artist’s feelings.
    2. He wrote about this in his influential book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912). He said that painting should be like music in conveying a feeling without representation; painting would be a “color music.”
- VI. The artistic emphasis on inner visions, personal experience, and multiple perspectives expressed and helped shape the theme of indeterminacy in twentieth-century culture. The arts set the tone for modern culture, especially outside universities.

**Essential Reading:**

Henri Matisse, “Notes of a Painter,” in *Matisse on Art*, edited by Jack Flam, pp. 30–43.

**Supplementary Reading:**

Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe, 1900–1916*, pp. 25–78.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. How does the visual representation of ideas or personal realities differ from the description of ideas or experience in writing?
2. Why did once-radical art movements, such as Impressionism and Cubism, come to be so popular and accepted in twentieth-century European culture?

**Lecture Seven**

**Émile Durkheim and French Social Thought**

**Scope:** Sociology had emerged as a modern social science among French theorists, such as Auguste Comte, but the older sociological assumptions seemed inadequate to early twentieth-century French theorists who were responding to the disorienting social context of modern industrial cities and bureaucracies. These theorists wanted to understand the dynamic force of nonrational cultural activities, such as religion, crowd behaviors, or social rituals. The key figure in the redefinition of French sociology was Émile Durkheim, whose ideas influenced the social sciences throughout the twentieth century. This lecture discusses Durkheim’s life, his interest in religion, and his analysis of social dislocation in modern societies. It also notes his influence on the emergence of modern anthropology.

**Outline**

- I. The early twentieth-century artistic and scientific desire to move beneath appearances to deeper levels of reality coincided with the emergence of new social sciences in the growing university system.
  - A. Although intellectuals in the universities had turned strongly toward the positivist faith in science and the quest for accurate descriptions of the external world, they were also affected by the evolving social context.
    1. New social theorists responded to the growth of cities and industrial capitalism and to the expansion of governments and bureaucracies.
    2. In this changing social world, some academic social theorists (like the poets, artists, and physicists) decided that traditional academic accounts of social life did not really portray the complexity of social experience.
  - B. Physicists discovered the particles of atoms and the relation between energy and matter that existed deep within the apparent order of the natural world.
    1. Poets and artists explored the symbolic meanings of language or space or color that existed within the apparent order of words and objects.
    2. Sociologists also tried to explain deep structures and symbols that existed within or beneath the apparent order and disorder of social life.
    3. Sociology became the most dynamic early twentieth-century social science, along with the new field of cultural anthropology.

- C. Sociologists examined the impact of urbanization and the new global economic system on social relations and communities.
    1. Some of this work expressed nostalgia for an older social world that had disappeared in modern cities; this may explain the new anthropological interest in pre-modern societies (an interest many artists also shared).
    2. The older integrated community and the rituals that held it together were breaking down in urban centers and in the crowds of big cities.
    3. Social theorists asked why this was happening and how it should be dealt with; they were engaged with their own world and time.
  - D. We see an element of moral intensity in the sociology of such writers as Émile Durkheim and Max Weber—a moral intensity that carried them beyond positivism—but these theorists went beyond positivism in other ways, too.
    1. They stressed the nonrational elements of social life. For example, the sociologist Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) described the irrational, emotional frenzy of crowd behavior, which defied logic or reason.
    2. Le Bon and many others looked beyond Auguste Comte’s positivist account of external behaviors to describe deep beliefs and structures.
  - E. Sociologists still stressed empirical studies, but they wanted to use empiricism to understand interactions of the rational and nonrational. The social meaning of religion became one of the key themes in their work.
    1. We will examine the evolution of French social thought by looking at how Durkheim and his followers analyzed the intricate connection between nonrational cultural forms or behaviors and modern societies.
    2. This interest in the deep structures of society led anthropologists (including Durkheim’s nephew Marcel Mauss) to compare the deep structural similarities of modern and pre-modern societies.
- II. Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) is often described as the key figure in the emergence of modern sociology. He was born in eastern France, in Lorraine, the son of a rabbi.
- A. He was one of the many prominent European thinkers who came from strongly religious families; his Jewish religious heritage was important to him.
    1. But Durkheim rethought religious problems in secular terms; he saw society as the source of social meaning (in contrast to God).
    2. He studied philosophy as a student, but finished next to last in his class at the École Normale Supérieure. He began his career as a philosophy teacher in provincial *lycées*.

3. He became increasingly interested in social issues, however, and began to teach sociology at the University of Bordeaux; he read the works of Henri Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte.
  4. He lived in Bordeaux for fifteen years (from 1887 to 1902) and married Louise Dreyfus there; they had a son and a daughter.
- B. Durkheim was appointed to the first French chair of sociology, which was established at the University of Bordeaux. In 1902, he was offered a position in Paris at the Sorbonne; he spent the rest of his career there.
    1. He was a strong supporter of the Third French Republic; his own native region had been taken over by Germany after the Franco-Prussian War, but this seemed only to intensify his identification with France.
    2. Durkheim believed that social science supported democracy, and he strongly supported Alfred Dreyfus, the French Jewish army officer who was wrongly convicted of spying for Germany.
    3. During the Dreyfus affair, the modern term “intellectual” came into common usage; it referred to pro-Dreyfus writers, like Zola.
  - C. In Paris, Durkheim became active in the French education system; he also became deeply involved in the French war effort during World War I. His son died in the war (1916), and Durkheim never recovered from this loss. He fell into depression and illness and died in 1917.
- III. Durkheim always thought of himself as a rationalist in the tradition of the French Enlightenment; he identified with the scientific tradition and criticized the abstractions of philosophy and metaphysics. This is the reason he turned to social analysis.
- A. To avoid metaphysics, Durkheim stressed the value of empirical research and the need to gain information on actual social conditions.
    1. This emphasis on empiricism led Durkheim to condemn socialism; he thought socialism was a theory that lacked sufficient data.
    2. He viewed Marxism as a kind of moral value system rather than an objective analysis of social life.
    3. “Socialism is not a science,” he wrote, “...it is a cry of pain.” For Durkheim, it was an example of a (secularized) religious impulse in social life.
    4. His own goal was to work out a non-Marxist science of science that would be rational and beyond metaphysics.
  - B. But in pursuing this new science of society, Durkheim focused repeatedly on the nonrational social processes that held society together.
    1. He believed that the great problem of modern society was the loss of social community, which was caused by the transition from rural to urban culture and the decline of traditional religious beliefs.



2. In more traditional rural societies, the individual members were integrated into the social order through shared values.
  3. This social integration was one of the great functions of religion; it gave coherence and enabled individuals to find meaning outside the self—meaning came from identification with social values.
  4. Traditional societies affirmed these values in ritualized religious ceremonies, social punishments, and the collective scapegoating of persons who didn't conform to the shared religious values.
- C. Durkheim sought to explain how religion created integrated social values in his influential book *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912).
1. He argued that modern urban societies steadily eroded social integration and the religious values that sustained it.
  2. The result of the urbanizing process was that individuals belonged to large groups in cities, factories, and so on, but they were no longer integrated into a community.
  3. The typical modern person in cities experienced what he called “anomie”; the individual has little connection to the social authority that guides people in traditional religious societies.
  4. People under conditions of urban anomie feel few connections to others or to social communities; they are disconnected or rootless.
- D. Durkheim assumed that anomie was the modern urban experience; it was part of the anonymity of modern life, but he thought that sociology might explain the anomie, then find alternative forms of social integration.
1. This may have been part of the appeal of the idea of the “nation”; it offered isolated persons a sense of belonging to a social community.
  2. Sociology could analyze social issues by looking objectively at social problems and explaining their social characteristics.
- E. Durkheim used the problem of suicide as an example; he analyzed this problem as a kind of social fact in *On Suicide* (1897).
1. Suicide may seem like an individual phenomenon, but Durkheim argued that it was actually a reflection of social issues.
  2. High suicide rates reflected either a high level of anomie or excessive levels of social integration; lower suicide rates indicated a more balanced society or an appropriate level of social integration.
  3. He said that you can't predict who will commit suicide, but you can establish and predict rates of suicide in a society.
- F. Suicide rates reflected the structural anomie of the modern urban world; well-integrated, smaller communities had fewer suicides.

1. Durkheim's books used extensive empirical evidence and careful research, but they didn't explain historical changes, nor did they focus on non-European cultures.
2. His concepts of social facts, social integration, anomie, and other analytical categories became basic themes of modern sociology.

IV. Meanwhile, other theorists began to apply Durkheim's ideas to other societies and to develop the themes of cultural anthropology.

- A. Durkheim founded a journal called the *Année sociologique*, and many of his intellectual allies, including Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939), were affiliated with the journal.
- B. Other anthropologists were more interested in the structural similarities between pre-modern and modern cultures; they disliked the word “primitive.”
- C. One of the analysts of the “social facts” that crossed cultural boundaries was Durkheim's nephew Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), who also worked in Paris. Mauss shared Durkheim's interest in religious rituals and ideas, which he saw reappearing in many different forms in modern societies.
- D. Mauss extended his analysis to other rituals, including a famous account of how gift giving shapes social life; he described this practice in *The Gift* (1925).
- E. This emphasis on the deep structures and symbolic meanings in all human actions and cultures became a recurring theme in much modern social science.
- F. Like the poets, social theorists found symbolic meanings everywhere.

#### Essential Reading:

Émile Durkheim, “Forms of Social Solidarity,” “Anomie and the Moral Structure of Industry,” and “Religion and Ritual,” in *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*, edited and translated by Anthony Giddens, pp. 123-140, 173-188, 219-238.

Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*.

#### Supplementary Reading:

Dominick La Capra, *Emile Durkheim*, pp. 1-64, 235-272.

#### Questions to Consider:

1. Was Durkheim correct when he argued that modern urban life produces a sense of anomie for most people?
2. Do you think that traditional religious rituals have been secularized in modern societies?

## Lecture Eight

### Max Weber and the New German Sociology

**Scope:** Social theorists in Germany attempted to move beyond positivist descriptions of the social world by stressing the historical development of modern social consciousness. This concern with human consciousness appeared in such theorists as Wilhelm Dilthey, but it became most influential in the sociology of Max Weber. This lecture discusses Weber's life and career, examines his interest in the nonrational aspects of social behavior, and describes his view of modern bureaucratic societies. Weber tried to explain what he saw as the links between Protestant Christianity and modern capitalism, thus providing a famous example of what came to be known as historical sociology. Other sociologists, including Georg Simmel, shared Weber's interest in the impersonal rationalism of modern social life, but they focused more on current conditions than on history.

#### Outline

- I. Modern social science and social theory emerged in Germany at the same time it was developing in the French works of Durkheim and his allies at the *Année sociologique*.
  - A. Most German theorists shared in the wider European attempt to rethink the positivist tradition of social analysis; they argued that human societies could not be analyzed in the same way that scientists analyzed nature.
    1. They challenged August Comte's belief that sociology should focus (like natural science) only on the external behavior of human beings.
    2. They also questioned the extensive use of biological, evolutionary themes in the English sociology of writers such as Herbert Spencer.
  - B. In general, German sociology showed more interest in human consciousness (an old theme in German Idealist philosophy) and in the historical emergence of modern social life (history had great influence in German universities).
    1. German social theorists resembled Durkheim and most French writers in that they wanted to understand the distinctive traits of modernity.
    2. The German concern with history, however, created a new kind of historical sociology, which gained its greatest influence in the work of Max Weber—another “founding father” of modern social science.

- C. This lecture discusses how Weber's work grew out of a German interest in “consciousness,” then summarizes Weber's career and key ideas. We also note that Weber's “historical sociology” was not the only form of German social theory; the work of Georg Simmel, for example, analyzed the modern world with less emphasis on the past.
- II. The German interest in consciousness (as compared to the positivist stress on external behavior) can be seen earlier in the influential ideas of Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911).
  - A. Dilthey was a philosopher and historian who studied Romantic poets and Hegel, as well as the Enlightenment and early positivism.
    1. Dilthey believed that positivism did not recognize the irrational side of human beings, but this aspect of human culture also required attention.
    2. He argued, therefore, that a distinction should be made between the human sciences and the natural sciences; he said that human actions involve freedom, whereas activity in nature expresses natural laws.
  - B. Dilthey stressed that humans have a consciousness that is different from, and more complex than, the instinctual processes of lower animals.
    1. Humans differed from other parts of nature, and their distinctive consciousness differs in various cultures and historical periods.
    2. Dilthey said that the consciousness of each historical era—what he called the *Weltanschauung*—changes across time in ways that the natural world does not change.
  - C. This emphasis on the changing consciousness of human beings in different historical cultures became an important theme in much German thought.
    1. It also gave rise to questions about what made modern consciousness different from the consciousness of earlier eras.
    2. Max Weber examined this issue in his accounts of modern capitalist society.
- III. The work of Max Weber (1864–1920) emphasized what Durkheim called the search for social facts, but Weber developed more historical analysis than Durkheim did.
  - A. Weber shared Durkheim's deep interest in the role of religion in social life and in the ways that modern rationalism had altered earlier religious beliefs.
    1. Weber himself was divided between the conflicting views of his parents, which seemed to reflect opposing views of religion.
    2. Weber grew up mostly in Berlin as the oldest of eight children, but his parents had an unhappy marriage.



3. Weber's mother was religious and involved with charitable causes. His father was nonreligious, authoritarian, and active in politics; he was a deputy in the German Reichstag, and he supported Bismarck's policies.
  4. Weber seemed closer to his mother, but like his father, he was also interested in politics and did not share his mother's religion.
- B.** Weber became a university professor, teaching the history of law and economics; he wrote on German economic issues and agriculture.
1. He eventually settled at the University of Heidelberg, where he began to study the relation between rational actions and nonrational beliefs.
  2. He read some of Marx's writings, but he did not accept Marx's idea that economic relations were the decisive shaping force in human history.
- C.** After establishing himself as a professor, Weber suffered a severe nervous collapse in 1898; this collapse took place after a violent argument with his father, who died shortly after this confrontation (without seeing his son again).
1. Weber was so depressed that he essentially stopped working for the next four years; he couldn't write or teach, and he often couldn't read.
  2. Most historians trace the crisis to the guilt and anger he felt toward his father, but others note his pattern of grueling work before this crisis.
  3. His work dominated his life. He had married a cousin, but the marriage was an intellectual partnership; they had no intimacy and no children.
  4. He knew a great deal about what he called "Protestant asceticism."
- D.** Weber eventually began reading again, but he could not face the stress of a regular teaching schedule; he lived off an inheritance after 1907.
1. He worked outside the university in later years, though he edited an important sociological journal and knew many professors.
  2. He became more involved in politics during and after World War I; he generally supported Germany during the war, but he was also a critic of German nationalism by this time. He died of pneumonia in 1920.
- IV.** Much of Weber's work in the development of historical sociology appeared as essays, because he could not face the strain of writing longer books.
- A.** He argued repeatedly that modern society despiritualizes the world and causes a process of disenchantment; the mystery goes out of urban industrial life.

1. The most general tendency of the modern world, according to Weber, was the bureaucratization of all aspects of public activity; this reflected the increasing rationalization in Western societies.
  2. Other cultures in the pre-modern era or in societies outside the West did not develop rationalization to this extent; they did not try to organize and categorize all spheres of human life.
- B.** This conception of the rationalizing bureaucracy differed somewhat from Marx's view of alienation as a consequence of modern capitalism.
1. Weber argued that any modern bureaucratic society would be equally alienating or disenchanting; socialist bureaucracies and rational categories would not really differ from those of modern capitalism.
  2. In this respect, Weber seemed more pessimistic about the modern world; he called the bureaucratic, rationalizing system an "iron cage."
- C.** Despite the rationalism of modernity, Weber believed that this modern system of capitalism and bureaucracy could be traced to distinctive religious beliefs.
1. His most famous book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), argued that the religious ideas of Protestantism had created modern cultural patterns of hard work and economic discipline.
  2. Weber was not personally religious, but he argued that religious faith showed how nonrational motivations operated in societies.
  3. He found what he saw as crucial links (or "elective affinities") between a Protestant work ethic and the capitalist need to accumulate money.
- D.** He said that Protestants developed the idea of a "calling," in which they viewed their work as an expression of their faith in God, and the reward from their work—their wealth—was viewed as a sign of God's judgment.
1. Wealth replaced poverty (the medieval sign of virtue) as the sign of divine grace; the poor were seen as lazy and, hence, immoral.
  2. The original religious aspect of this value system had been secularized in the modern world, but work and wealth remained the signs of virtue.
  3. "The spirit of religious asceticism" had been secularized into a pursuit of wealth that used rational means for irrational ends.
- E.** Weber said that sociology must analyze these kinds of processes objectively and with rigorous scientific categories, many of which he developed himself.
1. He suggested, for example, that such explanations must depend on what he called "Ideal Types"; he wanted to describe the ideal types of Protestants or Catholics or capitalists or bureaucrats.

2. The “ideal type” was a kind of theoretically pure category that could be used for research and to test hypotheses about social life.
- F. Weber used the concept especially in analyzing religion but also in discussing the despiritualized, bureaucratic modern world; mystery disappears from the world, but a desire for nonrational links to mysterious forces, including leaders with exceptional charisma, persists.
  - G. Ultimately, of course, the problem that Weber described became most acute in Germany, but long before Hitler or other such leaders gained power in Europe, Weber noted that rational means could support irrationality. The social sciences tried to explain this kind of problem.
- V. Although Weber stressed the historical approach to social realities, other sociologists, such as Georg Simmel (1858–1918), focused more on the immediate social situation.
- A. Simmel did not gain a regular professorship until the last four years of his life, yet he became an important social theorist in Berlin.
  - B. Simmel analyzed the anonymity of modern social relations, which he did not see as simply a story of loss; he noted that the impersonal city provided a kind of freedom that small towns did not allow.
  - C. This kind of sociology described contemporary social life without the typical historical emphasis of most German social theory; this may explain why Simmel had trouble getting an academic job (anti-Semitism was also a factor).
  - D. Weber supported Simmel, however, and argued that his accounts of money and social life accurately described the modern social world.

#### Essential Reading:

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons, pp. 13–92, 155–183.

Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” in Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, edited by Donald N. Levine, pp. 324–339.

#### Supplementary Reading:

Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber*, pp. 148–180.

#### Questions to Consider:

1. Was Weber correct to argue that rationalizing, bureaucratic legal and economic systems dominate modern social life?
2. Do you think there is a link between a Protestant “work ethic” and the values of modern capitalist societies?

## Lecture Nine

### The Great War and Cultural Pessimism

**Scope:** The Great War of 1914–1918 was one of the greatest catastrophes in European history. Europe never regained the dominant global position that it held before 1914. Government war policies moved away from classical liberalism, and the horrors of the war challenged classical liberal beliefs in progress, science, and the superiority of democratic political institutions. This lecture summarizes the characteristics of World War I and stresses the idea that the war contributed to a crisis in classical liberalism and to a new wave of cultural pessimism—which can be seen in the popular postwar works of such writers as Robert Graves and Oswald Spengler. More generally, this lecture argues that the First World War shaped the context for much of twentieth-century European intellectual life, producing a sense of crisis and disorientation that persisted long after the war had ended.

#### Outline

- I. The two decades before 1914 were an exceptionally creative period in modern thought. New themes in the arts, natural science, and the social sciences created a new cultural context that would influence intellectuals throughout the twentieth century.
  - A. Much of this new work questioned the positivism, realism, and science that dominated late nineteenth-century cultural life.
    1. It also challenged the belief in stable, universal truths and the idea that human reason and science produced the highest forms of knowledge.
    2. But these ideas did not gain much attention or support beyond the circles of avant-garde artists and elite scientists and social theorists.
    3. The horrors of World War I, however, helped to transform the critical, disorienting ideas of advanced prewar thinkers into a popular, postwar culture of pessimism, relativism, and fascination with irrationality.
  - B. World War I was one of the biggest catastrophes in European history; it can be compared to the Black Death of the late Middle Ages or to World War II.
    1. A whole generation was profoundly affected by the great loss of life.
    2. The war also destroyed three large empires of Eastern Europe (Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and German), consumed vast amounts of European wealth, and weakened all the European empires.



3. It opened the way for America's economic and political ascendancy and stimulated anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa; Europe never again dominated the world as it had before 1914.
  4. The war also led to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the later rise of fascism and Nazism, all of which soon produced World War II.
- C. The Great War of 1914–1918 was one of the decisive events in modern world history, but I want to focus on how the war affected intellectual life.
1. This war became one of those experiential contexts that shapes the intellectual life of an entire era—in this case, most of the twentieth century.
  2. In most general terms, the war undermined many of the key ideas of classical liberalism, including laissez-faire economic policies, the sanctity of individual rights or freedom, and the belief in progress.
- D. I want to discuss how the war challenged these traditions and led especially to a cultural pessimism that emphasized the losses and decline in modern Europe rather than the long-established faith in inevitable progress.
1. The English poet Robert Graves and the German philosopher and historian Oswald Spengler offer notable examples of this pessimism. We'll look at their works to see how these themes reached a large audience.
  2. The older Enlightenment, liberal confidence in human reason seemed to lose credibility. Sigmund Freud's description of unconscious, irrational drives (a prewar theory) had its greatest influence after 1918.
- II. The dominant characteristic of World War I for many of its European participants was its lack of meaning or purpose; it seemed to become a meaningless war.
- A. It was difficult for many people to see why it was being fought, though at first, most Europeans responded to the war with enthusiasm. The most tangible event that people could identify was the murder of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria by a Serbian terrorist in June 1914.
- B. Most Europeans knew nothing about this archduke (heir to the Austrian throne), and they cared nothing about the nationalist conflicts that led to his death.
1. Yet, within a month of this assassination, a complex alliance system dragged all the major European powers into a huge, destructive war.
2. The war broke out because no diplomatic solutions were developed to deal with a crisis in the Balkans and because alliances (Germany-Austria and Serbia-Russia-France) pushed governments to mobilize.
  3. Britain declared war on Germany after the German army invaded neutral Belgium as part of its massive military attack on France.
- C. After the first surge of patriotic excitement, many people couldn't see the purpose; the war took on its own rationale—nobody wanted to admit defeat, and it was seen as a kind of Darwinian struggle for survival.
1. This war was the first modern war in which defensive weapons had superiority over the offense; the machine gun exemplified this development.
  2. The Germans launched a major offensive in August 1914, but neither side could achieve a decisive breakthrough in the early weeks of the war. Fighting settled into a pattern of trench warfare that lasted four years.
- D. The fighting produced huge numbers of casualties because the generals assumed that they could break through opposing defenses.
1. The battle of Verdun, for example, lasted more than 300 days, from February to December 1916; both the French and Germans lost about a half million men, but neither side gained any military advantage.
  2. The British attack in the battle of the Somme in the same year cost about 60,000 casualties on the first day; the attack continued for 140 days, cost 600,000 men, and made an advance of 6 miles.
- E. There had never been a European war with violence on this scale; the vast numbers of casualties and a growing sense that the war lacked clear purpose fostered a kind of pervasive cynicism and despair.
1. Germany ultimately lost the war, but no country emerged from the war with a belief in clear victory—except, perhaps, the United States.
  2. About 10 million people were killed in the war and almost three times that number were wounded. The war left a generation of maimed men.
  3. Germany lost 6 million dead or wounded; France lost 5.5 million; everyone lost family members or friends. The prewar governments collapsed in Russia, Austria, and Germany in 1917 and 1918.
- III. One consequence of the war was a crisis in classical liberalism.
- A. This crisis appeared in economic life and politics, as well as in intellectual life. Liberalism had always stressed the reason and autonomy of individuals and the rational progress of modern society, but all these ideals seemed to be disappearing.

1. The economic ideal of classical liberalism was a system of laissez-faire policies in which a free market operated without government controls.
  2. During the war, however, all national economies were brought under strict government controls. Governments managed both the production and distribution of goods to promote the war effort.
  3. Individuals could not pursue their own economic plans. Some government management of the economy also continued after the war.
  4. The old laissez-faire policies never fully returned.
- B.** The war also expanded the political power of national governments and gave the state more power over most aspects of individual lives.
1. Governments told individuals where to work, set wages and prices, and forced millions of men into their armies.
  2. Liberal ideals, such as free speech, free press, and freedom to dissent, lost their sanctity; there was little tolerance for individual opinions.
  3. The control over soldiers was, in effect, almost absolute control over an individual's life and death (given the mortality rates).
  4. Some women gained more economic rights because they were needed in factories and the war may have strengthened support for women's voting rights—a postwar reform in several nations, including the United States.
- C.** More generally, however, the war seemed to enhance the sense of alienation or anomie that prewar social theorists had already been writing about.
1. It created large groups of alienated soldiers and veterans who felt little connection to civilian society. Many of these men came away from the war with no respect for governments or political institutions.
  2. This pattern was most apparent in such places as Germany and Italy (where such persons were attracted to fascism), but the pattern also appeared in other places and in the general cultural attitude of the era.
- IV.** Almost all intellectuals viewed the war as a symptom of deep problems in modern European societies; it suggested that something in this culture had gone very wrong.
- A.** The most common theme in postwar writing was a deep pessimism.
1. Intellectuals, like almost everyone else in Europe, were obsessed with the extraordinary loss—the feeling that a generation had disappeared.
  2. Survivors wrote about their sense of separation from the past and from a more optimistic time that had vanished from their lives.

- B.** This was a key theme of Robert Graves's best-selling autobiography, *Good-Bye to All That* (1928), an unsentimental account of lost illusions.
1. Graves (1895–1986) had been educated at an elite school and had begun to write poetry before he went into the army in 1914.
  2. He participated in the British offensive at the battle of Somme and was wounded in July 1916; his family was told that he died.
- C.** But Graves survived and later wrote his account of how he and those in his generation had said “good-bye” to prewar beliefs and social values. His old life of privilege, culture, and order seemed far away after the war; he rejected both patriotism and religion.
- D.** Graves wrote poetry and successful books but spent most of his later life on the Spanish island of Majorca; he could never really go home. His famous good-bye to all that he had once known was a common theme in postwar writing; the old faith and certitudes were gone.
- V.** This sense of loss could be found in all postwar national cultures, but it may have been most severe in Germany, which lost so many lives and the war.
- A.** The idea that Europe had fallen ill—the point made by Nietzsche earlier—was almost a cultural cliché in German society, which may explain why the cultural pessimism of Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) became so popular there.
1. Spengler had studied ancient philosophy as a university student and had taught at a *gymnasium* after getting his doctorate. By 1914, he was a freelance writer in Munich.
  2. His health was too poor for military service, but he was able to write a philosophical history, *Decline of the West* (1918).
- B.** Spengler's book challenged the liberal view of historical progress by arguing for a cyclical view of history. He said that civilizations go through phases of growth and decay, like organisms, and that Europe had entered its decay; faith in progress became one of the war's many casualties.

#### Essential Reading:

Robert Graves, *Good-bye to All That*, pp. 67–165, 181–191, 209–225, 245–278.

#### Supplementary Reading:

John Farrenkopf, *Prophet of Decline: Spengler on World History and Politics*, pp. 17–76.

#### Questions to Consider:

1. Did the First World War have a greater effect on intellectuals than most other wars?
2. Why did theories of cultural decline attract so much interest in twentieth-century European culture?



## Lecture Ten

### Sigmund Freud and Psychoanalytic Theory

**Scope:** New psychological theories about the unconscious mind and instinctual drives may have had more influence on modern culture than any other specific twentieth-century intellectual theme. The main ideas of psychoanalysis spread widely in popular culture, giving people an intellectual framework to explain their families, anxieties, dreams, sexuality, loves, and hatreds. This lecture discusses Freud's life and the themes of his psychoanalytic theory. It summarizes his description of the human mind, his ideas for the treatment of depression, and his tendency to link science and literature in his theoretical works. It also places Freud in the historical context of early twentieth-century Vienna and suggests the influence of that context on his ideas. The lecture notes the dualities in Freud's work as a clinician and a social theorist and his fusion of science and the arts.

#### Outline

- I. The postwar intellectual generation that sought to understand the irrationality and horrors of the Great War found new psychological explanations for nonrational human behaviors in the theories of psychoanalysis.
  - A. We've seen how the prewar literary and artistic avant-garde often tried to portray the complex inner thoughts, fantasies, and symbols of the human mind.
    1. This approach to the mind, however, usually showed little interest in the work of modern science, which was seen as narrow positivism.
    2. Early twentieth-century psychoanalysis, however, set about exploring the inner workings of the mind in a scientific framework; this early exploration occurred in the same years that avant-garde artists were depicting personal visions.
  - B. Some intellectual historians have argued that the new psychological emphasis on the unconscious mind and the power of irrational drives may be the most distinctive and influential theme in twentieth-century Western thought.
    1. The other major theme of twentieth-century thought was the new emphasis on the shaping role of language in all spheres of culture and social life.
    2. Both the interest in psychology and the new emphasis on language began to develop in the decades before World War I, but the crisis and horrors of the war gave these ideas wider popularity.

3. Neither the old belief in human rationality nor the belief that language transparently described reality seemed persuasive after the Great War.
    - C. The most influential new psychological theories appeared in the work of Sigmund Freud. This lecture focuses on Freud's life and theories.
      1. Freud always claimed that psychoanalysis was a science that described the human mind; he also claimed direct links to the positivist tradition.
      2. He believed that he was carrying on the tradition of Newtonian physics or Darwinian biology, and he assumed that the laws of psychological development were universal (like gravity or evolution).
      3. Such claims about the deepest reality of the human mind attracted great popular interest after 1918. "Freudianism" soon joined Marxism and Darwinism as a form of thought that reached far beyond cultural elites.
    - D. Psychoanalysis took as its object of investigation the unconscious mind, which could never be directly observed, as natural phenomena can.
      1. Because modern science is based on methods of empirical observation, the opponents of psychoanalysis rejected the claim that it was a science; critics said that the unconscious mind could not be observed.
      2. The difficulty in giving scientific accounts of the unconscious led later academic psychology toward studies of observable behaviors.
    - E. Psychoanalysis became extremely influential, however, in modern literature, literary criticism, and the study of human societies; some historians also drew on it.
      1. The interest in psychoanalysis grew partly from the fact that its themes repeated some of the oldest themes in Western literature (human desire, family conflicts, anger, aggression); the theory used literary metaphors.
      2. There was often a tension in psychoanalytic thought between the desire for science and the use of literary imagery and speculation.
      3. The tensions in psychoanalysis expressed some of the wider tensions in European culture: positivist and anti-positivist ideas.
      4. These tensions may account for much of its appeal and creativity.
- II. The tensions between science and literary imagination were apparent in the work and writings of Freud (1856–1939). Psychoanalysis reflected the imprint of his personality and the range of his intellectual ambitions.
  - A. Freud was born into a Jewish family in Moravia (now part of the Czech Republic) but moved to Vienna when he was four years old.

1. His mother was twenty years younger than his father (this was his third marriage), and Freud grew up closer emotionally to his mother.
  2. Young Freud was a brilliant student; he first planned to study law but turned to medicine when he entered the University of Vienna.
  3. He studied physiology with outstanding professors and wanted to become a scientific researcher, but there were no university posts.
  4. He worked in a hospital, then went to Paris in 1885 to work with the famous French psychologist Jean-Martin Charcot.
- B.** Charcot was known for his work on the problem of hysteria and for his use of hypnosis as a method for treating patients with such mental illnesses.
1. This work pushed Freud toward his emerging interest in psychology. He returned to Vienna and, still unable to get a university position, began a private medical practice, focusing on treatment of hysteria.
  2. He also married Martha Bernays (1886); they soon had six children (three sons and three daughters).
- C.** Most historians have stressed that Freud must be understood in the context of Viennese society around the turn of the twentieth century.
1. Feminist historians have argued that his ideas about gender reflected the dominant gender ideologies of late nineteenth-century Viennese society.
  2. Other historians have emphasized that his ambitions to advance in Viennese professional life were blocked because of anti-Semitism.
  3. His appointment to a professorship was delayed for years (until he was forty-five), in part because the Culture Ministry wouldn't act when the faculty at the University of Vienna finally sought to give him a position.
- D.** Freud encountered the problem of personal and social repression in his personal and professional life. We also see other aspects of Viennese culture in his theoretical work.
1. He was preoccupied with the power of fathers and described his own dreams about his father in some of his first work on dreams.
  2. His theories also focused mainly on men—another aspect of his own cultural milieu. Women often functioned in his theories as objects of male psychological dramas and desire, for example, in their role as mothers.
  3. Finally, Freud's cultural origins were reflected in his deep faith in science; although Freud criticized Enlightenment assumptions about human reason, he also strongly identified with the Enlightenment.
  4. He wanted to give scientific, rational explanations for irrationality.

- E. Perhaps Freud's long exclusion from official positions helped him to take the intellectual risks that emerged in his creative new account of the human mind.
- F. In any case, he lived in Vienna until almost the end of his life; he went to London after the Nazis took control of Vienna in 1938.

**III.** Freud's work can be approached as a series of overlapping or sometimes conflicting intellectual tendencies, which might be described as a series of "dual objectives."

- A.** He was (1) a clinical therapist and (2) a social theorist; he applied his theories to (1) individuals and (2) broad cultural patterns; and he drew on both (1) scientific evidence and (2) literary examples to support his ideas.
- B.** Freud's work as a clinical therapist led him to develop a method that encouraged patients to make free mental associations as they talked with the psychoanalyst about their anxieties or dreams.
1. This method was designed to free individuals from neuroses. It rested on Freud's great insight that psychological problems are not a simple function of physiological problems (the older view).
  2. He argued that psychological problems developed out of unconscious psychological desires, frustrations, and fantasies.
  3. These desires, which were blocked in various ways, led to mental illness and unhappiness, but therapy could explain the repression and help free patients from their depression, hysteria, or anxieties.
- C.** This was the therapeutic component of psychoanalysis, and in his clinical work, Freud tried to help individuals fit into society and function normally.
1. The therapeutic work focused mainly on abnormal persons, though Freud found in such persons the same tendencies that could be found in everyone, such as sexual fantasies and repressed childhood memories.
  2. This therapeutic work and the description of individual psychology was the main theme of his early books, *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905). Freud stressed sex drives and symbols.
- D.** Freud's second objective led him to the work of a social critic; he sought to explain and analyze social processes, especially after World War I.
1. Freud compared societies to neurotic persons; he said that societies repress certain desires, needs, or memories, much as individuals do.
  2. These repressed desires come back to haunt societies much as they come back to haunt individuals; the repressed desire resurfaces.



4. This theme became most prominent in his postwar book, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930).

IV. In addition to Freud's dual objectives of therapist and social critic, he also developed a dual method that combined scientific positivism and literature.

- A. The positivism appeared in his scientific model of causality in the workings of the human mind. This model stressed the primacy of unconscious drives, which he located in the "libido" or "id."
- B. Freud stressed the sexual drive as the most basic force in the unconscious mind, but after World War I, he began to describe a death instinct.
  1. He portrayed the psychological battle of Eros (sex) vs. Thanatos (death) within the id itself.
  2. Neither the individual nor the society could survive in a civilized form with the id alone; id is driven by a pleasure principle.
  3. The "superego" of civilization disciplines and controls the id, and the individual's ego emerges at the intersection of these two forces.
  4. The ego develops a "reality principle" (drawing on cultural training) that moderates, restrains, and represses the pleasure principle of the id.
- C. This system can never be completely analyzed in any individual, but the scientific claim suggests that it operates universally, like a natural law.
  1. The evidence for the human unconscious and the repression of the id, according to Freud, can be found in our dreams.
  2. The images of dreams reveal repressed desires or wishes.
- D. To interpret dreams, Freud often drew on literature, such as Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, for examples that would convey his themes.
- E. Freud's theories gained wide attention because they gave people an explanation for irrationality and aggression after World War I.
- F. They "made sense" to people because they claimed scientific status and drew on familiar literary themes; they also provoked strong critiques.

#### Essential Reading:

Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, pp. 155–195, 221–253, 588–660.

#### Supplementary Reading:

Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, pp. 103–149.

Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, pp. 181–203.

#### Questions to Consider:

1. Is psychoanalysis a reliable science that is based on observable evidence?
2. Does Freud overstate the importance of sex drives or the "death instinct"?

## Lecture Eleven

### Freud, Jung, and the Constraints of Civilized Life

**Scope:** Freud's description of the human mind expanded from accounts of the individual's psychological development into a wider analysis of how social institutions and cultural values affect personal happiness. Freud believed that civilized social life requires the repression of human instincts, thus creating both guilt and unhappiness for human beings, who must inevitably deny their own desires. This lecture discusses Freud's social theories and suggests that the events of World War I deepened Freud's interest in irrational collective behaviors and the aggressive drives that shape the "death instinct." Finally, the lecture looks briefly at the psychological theories of Carl Jung, who challenged Freud's emphasis on sex drives and his accounts of religion. The lecture concludes with a summary of the intellectual differences that separated Jung and Freud.

#### Outline

- I. Freud's descriptions of the unconscious mind, the irrational or instinctual drives, the symbolic, sexual meaning of dreams, and the processes of repression focused at first on the psychological experiences of individuals.
  - A. He wanted to explain the origins of psychological neuroses and to show how repressed childhood relationships, memories, or fantasies affected adults.
    1. His theories began to attract attention before 1914 in Vienna and in other intellectual communities; in fact, Freud even went to America in 1909 to receive an honorary doctorate at Clark University.
    2. He was beginning to achieve recognition as a scientist, but his theories also attracted critiques and strong opposition.
  - B. Some critics attacked his emphasis on childhood sexuality; others claimed that he denied the importance of human reason or overemphasized deep instincts.
    1. He was criticized for allegedly favoring uninhibited sexual activity.
    2. None of these criticisms altered Freud's confidence in the basic truths of his theories. If anything, the critiques seemed to push him to extend his ideas from individuals to social analysis.
  - C. This was the "dual" tendency in his work (as I noted in the last lecture), which carried his themes from individual cases to the whole culture.
    1. He claimed that the "process of human civilization" and the developmental "process of individual human beings" were actually "similar in nature"; both required mechanisms of repression.

2. The social dimension of Freud's thought became more prominent after World War I. This level of the theory also interested many intellectuals, especially as they tried to make sense of the Great War.
- D. Meanwhile, Freud had also begun to organize his medical and intellectual allies in an international psychoanalytic movement. For Freud and his allies, psychoanalysis offered a comprehensive account of human nature and society.
1. In this lecture, I'll summarize Freud's key ideas about social life, then note the conflicts between Freud and Carl Jung.
  2. The complex relation between science and literature in Freud's work can be seen more generally in the Freud/Jung disputes.
  3. The conflicts among different groups of psychologists, however, did not destroy the influence of psychoanalytical theory.
  4. The language of modern psychology became the dominant "paradigm" for understanding human behavior; we still use Freud's language.
- II. Freud began to apply his psychological theories to the whole social order as he explored the implications of that basic psychological triangle, the Oedipus complex.
- A. According to Freud, each boy experiences sexual desire for his mother and the frustrating humiliation of not being able to compete with his father; the boy wants what the father has (a pattern Freud analyzed in his own family life).
1. The father has the power, so the son can only fantasize about destroying the father and acting out his desires with his mother.
  2. In individuals, this psychological struggle is resolved when the young man displaces desire from the mother to other women.
  3. The young man then takes the place of the father in a new relationship and overcomes his frustration by the transfer of desire to a new woman.
  4. But Freud said that the young man often maintains a lingering anger or resentment toward the father—or a transfer of this anger toward other "substitute" fathers.
- B. This theory was a controversial account of emotionally charged relationships, yet for Freud, it offered a means for understanding all of human society.
1. Freud believed that a similar Oedipal struggle developed in the early stage of human history, as he explained in his book *Totem and Taboo* (1913).
  2. In the earliest human communities, the sons actually killed their father, who (as the chief) had controlled all the women.
  3. This primal crime was the origin of civilization, because the sons felt guilt and remorse; they compensated by paying homage to the father.
  4. Worshipping the memory of the father became the origin of religion; this was the beginning of the "totem," or worship of an idealized father.
  5. Even advanced religions expressed this relation, as for example in Christianity ("Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be his name").
- C. To avoid such crimes in the future, the sons created certain taboos about sexual conduct, especially incest taboos that repressed desire in families.
1. These restrictions became the origins of civilized social restraints and the source of both human guilt and human unhappiness.
  2. The Oedipal theory gave Freud a conceptual framework to explain both social and individual repression.
- D. These ideas were extended further in his well known book, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), which described an endless psychological struggle.
1. He said that individuals have basic drives for sexual pleasure and aggression (both enhance survival), but neither of these drives can be fully expressed in civilized social life.
  2. Civilization "is built upon the renunciation of instinct," thus setting up a permanent "frustration" in human relationships; therefore, we are all unhappy on some level—we can't do what our instincts tell us to do.
- E. Civilization tells people not to have certain desires, but the desires don't go away; they are repressed and controlled by "an ever-increasing reinforcement of the sense of guilt," which makes people unhappy but able to live in society.
1. People find various ways to cope with this unhappiness, including alcohol, romantic love, and sublimation of desire into work or art.
  2. Freud said that work was an effective way to channel repressed desires; it offered a way to displace "narcissistic, aggressive or even erotic" drives onto professional activity and "human relations connected with it."
- F. In general, though, Freud was pessimistic about the chances for finding real happiness in modern civilized life; he thought that people could express their drives only in neurotic behaviors or in collective aggressive actions like war.
1. He saw the Great War as a confirmation of his theory that "our intellect is a feeble and dependent thing, a plaything and tool of our impulses and emotions"; he also saw religion as an extension of emotions.



2. Freud's view of religion was another example of his Enlightenment heritage. As he argued in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), he saw religion as an illusion covering deep psychological processes.
  3. He compared religion to a dream—the fulfillment of a wish for a deep reconciliation with the father.
- G. Such theories about social and religious life made Freud's ideas controversial, but they also opened whole new areas of cultural and intellectual debate.
1. His account of individual psychological neuroses and unconscious drives seemed more persuasive to many people than his account of social relations, but his concept of repression had wide influence.
  2. His view of civilization and the need for repression of drives also posed a problem for radical advocates of social reform (including socialists).
  3. If the unhappy repression of human drives was inevitable in civilized life, even the most radical social reform could not bring happiness.
- III. The social implications of Freud's thought attracted criticism from socialists, religious thinkers, and many other intellectual groups, but his emphasis on sexuality and his views of religion also provoked criticism among other psychologists.
- A. Freud tried to develop a coherent psychoanalytic movement, beginning with a Vienna Psychoanalytic Society and moving on to the establishment of an International Psychoanalytic Association, which was founded in 1910.
1. The first president of the International Association was the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung (1875–1961), but Jung soon broke with Freud and became his most famous critic among psychologists.
  2. Jung grew up in a Protestant Swiss family; his father was a pastor in the Swiss Reformed Church and his mother's family included many Protestant pastors. His early environment was religious.
  3. He decided to study medicine instead of theology and graduated from the University of Basel with a medical degree. He went on to work in a famous psychiatric clinic in Zurich and studied schizophrenia.
- B. Jung became interested in Freud's work and, in 1906, sent Freud an article he had written on schizophrenics; the two men began corresponding and became friends.
1. Jung praised Freud's theories as a breakthrough in understanding the human mind and the complexities of the unconscious.
  2. Jung was also important to Freud, in part because Freud wanted to find supporters outside Vienna and in non-Jewish medical circles.
  3. Freud saw Jung as an excellent person to succeed him as the leader of the psychoanalytic movement, which suggests why Jung became

the first president of the International Psychoanalytic Association in 1910.

- C. The Freud/Jung friendship had its own emotional complexity because Freud viewed Jung as a kind of “son” and Jung saw Freud as a kind of “father.” But by 1914, the two men had a complete falling out. Jung challenged Freud's theories in an essay, “On the Psychology of the Unconscious.”
- D. Basically, Jung decided that Freud overemphasized sexuality as the source of all neuroses, and he claimed that Freud's mechanistic theories did not really explain religion. Jung put less emphasis on childhood experiences. He began to look for other components of the unconscious mind, focusing increasingly on the history of myths, mysticism, and religions as sources of psychological truths.
- E. This focus was not altogether different from Freud's use of literature as a source of psychological truths, but Freud could not accept Jung's sympathy for religion. Jung became especially interested in the symbolism of Asian religions; he said that they expressed universal archetypes, which carry the insights of a collective human unconscious.
- F. The Freudians and other scientifically oriented psychologists attacked Jung for being unscientific. They said that his theory of the collective unconscious lacked scientific evidence (in contrast to their own theories of sexual drives).
- G. The tensions between science and literary imagination that ran throughout psychoanalysis reappeared in the Freud/Jung debate, which continues today.
- H. Other psychological critics of Freud also emerged; they contributed to the further development of a psychological language that became the common discourse in much of modern European and American culture.

#### Essential Reading:

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp. 10–112.

*The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung*, edited by William McGuire, pp. 3–63, 476–527.

#### Supplementary Reading:

Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, pp. 197–243, 523–553.

#### Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think an Oedipal triangle exists in parent-child relationships? Does this idea have any value for the analysis of human societies?
2. Do you agree with Freud's account of the origins of religion? Did Jung develop a more convincing account of human religions?

## Lecture Twelve

### Poetry and Surrealism after the Great War

**Scope:** This lecture continues the discussion of intellectual responses to World War I by examining postwar poetry and the emergence of the radical, experimental movements that became known as “Dada” and “surrealism.” Such poets as W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot expressed a postwar sense of loss or emptiness, which had already begun to appear during the war in the works of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen. This poetry differs from the more nonsensical Dada movement and from the significant surrealist movement, both of which were influential on the Continent in the 1920s. The lecture concludes with a discussion of André Breton, the most prominent theorist in the surrealist movement. Surrealism would have a lasting influence in many spheres of twentieth-century literature and art.

#### Outline

- I. We have seen how the Great War of 1914–1918 contributed to a new European cultural pessimism and led to a new interest in Freud’s theories about irrational drives and human aggression; the war seemed to prove the fragility of human reason.
  - A. More generally, the war led to a wider cultural acceptance of prewar avant-garde literary and artistic movements that had challenged the belief in science and progress and academic positivism.
    1. The war encouraged a pervasive belief that European society had fallen into a deep political and cultural crisis.
    2. This theme also appeared in the postwar poetry that expressed and shaped the influential ideas of literary modernism.
  - B. The pervasive sense of “loss” in postwar culture suggested that the old cultural order had lost its coherence, along with the prewar political and social order.
    1. This was the theme of Robert Graves’s postwar memoir, *Good-bye to All That*, but it was already the dominant idea in poems that English poets had written during the war.
    2. The poetry of Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967) and Wilfred Owen (1893–1918) gained a wide audience after the war and helped to produce a postwar skepticism about patriotic or military ideals in Britain.
  - C. Owen’s work was particularly poignant because he was killed in France only a week before the war ended in November 1918.

1. His poetry challenged all patriotic views of wartime deaths, including his own. The poem “Dulce et Decorum Est,” denied patriotic ideals.
  2. “In all my dreams, before my helpless sight/” Owen wrote, “He [a dying man] plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.”
  3. But Owen says that anyone who sees such a sight cannot “tell with such high zest/To children ardent for some desperate glory,/The old Lie: Dulce et Decorum est/Pro patria mori.”
  4. In other words, Owen makes the point that it is a lie to say (as Horace did in ancient Rome) that it is sweet and glorious to die for your country.
- D. This poetic perspective may have been understandable among writers who had seen the horrors of trench warfare, but the sense of loss and emptiness appeared also among poets who never served in the trenches.
1. The theme of loss and disorientation can be seen in the poems of W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot in postwar Britain, and it emerged clearly in the literary movements of Dadaism and surrealism.
  2. These poets and poetic movements all exemplified pessimistic postwar literary patterns.
  3. The poets resembled the psychologists and the social theorists in seeing diverse forms of irrationality in European culture. This theme remained a prevailing literary perspective throughout the twentieth century.
- II. The sense of crisis was acute in the postwar poems of T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) and W. B. Yeats (1865–1939), both of whom won the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- A. Eliot was originally from America; he grew up in St. Louis and graduated from Harvard, but he was drawn to Europe.
    1. He spent a year in Paris, where he heard Bergson at the Collège de France.
    2. Eliot went on to receive a doctorate in philosophy at Harvard; he was living in England by the time he finished his graduate work and decided to settle there permanently.
    3. He married an English woman, Vivien Haigh-Wood, and got a job at Lloyd’s Bank in London, but his real passion was writing and poetry.
    4. Eliot became a British citizen in 1927; he felt separated from America.
  - B. Eliot identified with European traditions (Dante was one of his favorite authors), and he was, in many respects, a cultural conservative.
    1. He believed that European culture was in a period of transition, crisis, and even collapse. Many readers interpreted his poem *The Waste Land* (1922) as the expression of this postwar attitude.



2. The meaning of the poem is still debated, but the title suggests fragmentation and despair. The poem has multiple voices and perspectives.
  3. Eliot's own intentions were somewhat unclear; the term "waste land" may have referred mainly to his own despair, but it became a poetic metaphor for the postwar world: a waste land of death or loss.
- C. The sense of emptiness or of a world gone out of control remained important in Eliot's poetry through much of the 1920s.
1. This perspective emerged most clearly in his famous poem "The Hollow Men," which also summarized the feeling of death.
  2. "Those who have crossed/With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom/Remember us—if at all—not as lost/Violent souls, but only/As the Hollow men/The Stuffed Men."
  3. In this world, Eliot suggested, conversations seemed "quiet and meaningless"; there was nothing to lift people beyond this crisis.
  4. As he noted in the poem, "This is the way the world ends/This is the way the world ends/Not with a bang but a whimper." Such themes gave Eliot his reputation for pessimism.
- III. The feeling of postwar loss was perhaps expressed even more memorably, however, in the famous poem of W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming" (1921).
- A. Yeats was from Ireland, but his father was an aspiring artist who took the family to London. Yeats lived much of his life moving between Dublin and London. He was an advocate of Irish culture and political independence.
1. He was also skeptical of modern scientific civilization; he was drawn to various forms of mysticism throughout his life. He fell deeply in love with an Irish woman (Maud Gonne), but she would never marry him.
  2. He proposed to her many times and later proposed to her daughter, but he finally married another woman, Georgie Hyde-Lees.
- B. Yeats was deeply disturbed by the repression of the Irish national movement during World War I and more generally by the chaos and deaths of the war.
1. He wrote about the tragedy of European civilization in the famous lines of "The Second Coming," which summarized his postwar despair.
  2. "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,/The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere/The ceremony of innocence is drowned;/The best lack all conviction, While the worst/Are full of passionate intensity."

- C. Yeats did not have a solution for these problems, but he found his consolation in the literary effort to describe a culture that needed a rebirth.
1. His mystical inclinations also led him to a fascination with "automatic writing," which he worked on with his wife in a book called *A Vision*.
  2. He wanted to convey the thoughts that came spontaneously into the mind through dreams or trance-like visions.
  3. Such approaches to writing became popular in the postwar era, though Yeats himself was not really part of the new postwar generation.
- IV. Among members of that younger generation, the First World War provoked further development of the most extreme tendencies of the prewar avant-garde.
- A. This radical bohemian culture was not exactly the world of Eliot or Yeats, but for many radicals on the Continent, the experimental prewar arts now seemed to convey the most accurate view of human reality.
1. Because the reality of the war experience seemed to be wholly irrational, it could only be known through irrational art forms.
  2. This was the theme of the so-called Dada movement that arose in Switzerland during the war and flourished briefly in Paris afterward.
  3. The key leader was a poet named Tristan Tzara (1896–1963).
  4. Tzara wrote poems by clipping words from newspapers, putting them in a sack, and drawing them out to make a poem.
  5. The point was to suggest that modern civilization, art, literature, science, and other endeavors were now absurd; everything had been said and done and the culture itself had led to the horrors of destruction.
- B. Typical Dada meetings around 1919 had people giving nonsense speeches or reading poems that lacked meaning. The only response to a world that lacked meaning was to mock all attempts at meaning.
1. The point was to contest the traditional categories of logic, meaning, knowledge, and reality.
  2. A typical nonsense Dada poem reads: "At the rendezvous of the coachmen the aperitif is orange/But the locomotive mechanics have blue eyes./The lady has lost her smile in the woods."
  3. Dada was mostly destructive or nihilistic in its effects and its popularity did not last long, but it gave rise to other movements.
- C. The most well known of these other movements was surrealism, which also arose partly in response to the horrors of World War I.
1. The most influential leader of surrealism in the 1920s was the French writer André Breton (1896–1966), who was much affected by the war.

2. Breton was a medical student when the war began and served in the French army as a medical assistant in military hospitals; he worked with soldiers who suffered from psychological traumas.
- D. From this wartime experience, Breton developed a deep interest in psychology and the unconscious mind; he read Freud and studied the French psychiatrist Pierre Janet, who analyzed the “free associations” of patients. In his ideas of surrealism, Breton emphasized the internal realities of the mind—somewhat like symbolist poets—and tried to convey the unconscious mind in art.
  - E. This emphasis led Breton to the exploration of dreams and to experiments in “automatic writing,” in which the writer simply wrote out whatever came into his head.
    1. Breton laid out his theories in two famous “Surrealist Manifestoes” (1924, 1930); he argued that the “reign of logic” was over.
    2. Surrealism used “pure psychic automatism” and was concerned with the “omnipotence of the dream” and the “disinterested play of thought.”
  - F. This theory had an important influence on poets and visual artists in the 1920s and 1930s; Freud could not accept it because it seemed to embrace and revel in the irrational mental processes that Freud wanted to analyze scientifically.
  - G. Breton’s “Manifesto” claimed that surrealist art and writing transformed the way that people saw the world: “This summer the roses are red; the wood is made of glass.” He was affirming the vision of the artist.
  - H. Some surrealists embraced communism as an alternative to the bourgeois view of reality, but more generally, surrealism flowed into experimental art.

#### Essential Reading:

Poems by W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Wilfred Owen, in *20<sup>th</sup>-Century Poetry and Poetics*, edited by Gary Geddes, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 2–19, 59–80.

André Breton, *What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, edited and introduced by Franklin Rosemont, pp. 17–28, 112–141.

#### Supplementary Reading:

Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, pp. 3–35, 311–335.

#### Questions to Consider:

1. Can poetry convey disillusionment and emotional despair more vividly than other forms of writing? What gives poetry its cultural power?
2. Why did the surrealist interest in dream images and nonrational thought become so influential in twentieth-century culture?

## Timeline

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 1876 .....      | Stéphane Mallarmé writes “ <i>L’Après-Midi d’un Faune</i> ,” which exemplifies the emerging themes of symbolist poetry.  |
| 1879 .....      | Émile Zola publishes “The Experimental Novel,” calling for a new “naturalist” fiction.   |
| 1899 .....      | Joseph Conrad’s novel <i>Heart of Darkness</i> portrays the brutal consequences of European imperialism in Africa.   |
| 1903 .....      | Henri Bergson summarizes his intuitionist philosophy in <i>An Introduction to Metaphysics</i> .  |
| 1905 .....      | Albert Einstein publishes a paper on the “Special Theory of Relativity.”   |
| 1905 .....      | Max Weber publishes <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i> .   |
| 1905 .....      | Sigmund Freud publishes <i>Three Essays on Sexuality</i> .   |
| 1907 .....      | Pablo Picasso paints <i>Les Femmes d’Alger (O. J. Version O)</i> , an early work of Cubist art.  |
| 1907 .....      | Edmund Husserl summarizes his conception of consciousness in <i>The Idea of Phenomenology</i> .  |
| 1908 .....      | Henri Matisse argues in “Notes of a Painter” that modern artists should not paint literal representations of reality.  |
| 1912 .....      | Wassily Kandinsky’s publishes <i>Concerning the Spiritual in Art</i> .   |
| 1912 .....      | Émile Durkheim’s publishes <i>Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i> .   |
| 1913 .....      | The first volume of Marcel Proust’s novel <i>Remembrance of Things Past</i> appears in France.   |
| 1914–1918 ..... | World War I kills 10 million people; causes the collapse of imperial governments in Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia; and leads to the Communist Revolution in Russia. |
| 1918 .....      | Oswald Spengler publishes <i>Decline of the West</i> , an account of European decay and cultural crisis.   |



- 1922 ..... T. S. Eliot publishes *The Waste Land*
- 1922 ..... The first complete edition of James Joyce's modernist novel *Ulysses* is published in Paris.
- 1922 ..... Ludwig Wittgenstein publishes his philosophical study of the limits of human language, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.
- 1922 ..... Benito Mussolini seizes power in Italy.
- 1924 ..... André Breton writes the first "Surrealist Manifesto."
- 1924 ..... Thomas Mann publishes *The Magic Mountain*.
- 1925 ..... The posthumous publication of Franz Kafka's nightmarish novel *The Trial*.
- 1927 ..... Werner Heisenberg's "Uncertainty Principle" shows the limits of knowledge about electrons, thus suggesting that science cannot produce a total knowledge of nature.
- 1927 ..... Martin Heidegger publishes *Being and Time*.
- 1929 ..... Virginia Woolf describes the social and cultural constraints on women in *A Room of One's Own*.
- 1929 ..... Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch found the historical journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*.
- 1930 ..... Sigmund Freud publishes *Civilization and Its Discontents*.
- 1930–1937 ..... Antonio Gramsci writes his *Prison Notebooks* in Italian jails.
- 1933 ..... Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party gain power in Germany and establish the Third Reich.
- 1936 ..... John Maynard Keynes publishes *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, which argues for an active state role in modern economies.
- 1938 ..... Jean-Paul Sartre summarizes the early themes of his existential philosophy in his novel *Nausea*.
- 1939–1945 ..... The Second World War causes roughly 60 million deaths around the world, including the Nazi regime's systematic genocidal murder of 6 million Jews.
- 1944 ..... Friedrich Hayek condemns government interventions in economic life in his book *The Road to Serfdom*.

- 1945 ..... The Nazis execute the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer for his involvement in a resistance group.
- 1947 ..... Albert Camus publishes *The Plague*, which portrays the human need to take action during times of crisis.
- 1947 ..... Primo Levi describes his experiences as a prisoner in a Nazi death camp, in *Survival in Auschwitz*.
- 1949 ..... George Orwell provides a fictional representation of a totalitarian state and political party in his novel *1984*.
- 1949 ..... Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* contributes influential historical and theoretical arguments to the postwar campaign for women's rights.
- 1951 ..... Hannah Arendt publishes her influential study of authoritarian regimes, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.
- 1959 ..... A novel by Günther Grass, *The Tin Drum*, challenges Germans to confront the memory of Nazism.
- 1961 ..... Claude Lévi-Strauss publishes *Structural Anthropology*.
- 1962 ..... Jürgen Habermas publishes *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.
- 1966 ..... Jacques Lacan describes his unconventional psychoanalytical and linguistic theories in a collection of essays called *Ecrits*.
- 1967 ..... Jacques Derrida develops his poststructuralist method of literary deconstruction in *Of Grammatology*.
- 1975 ..... Michel Foucault's analysis of power and knowledge appears in his historical study of modern institutions, *Discipline and Punish*.
- 1985 ..... Jürgen Habermas publishes *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.
- 1986 ..... Jean Baudrillard publishes his account of a postmodern society in a work called *America*.
- 1989 ..... Communist regimes in Eastern European nations collapse in a "velvet revolution."
- 1992–1999 ..... The European Union reshapes the context of intellectual life by promoting the political, economic, and cultural integration of European nations.

## Biographical Notes

**Adorno, Theodor** (1903–1969). A member of the Frankfurt School of critical theorists in Germany, Adorno tried to reconcile the theories of Freud and Marx as he wrote about the cultural legacy of the Enlightenment, “authoritarian” personalities, music, and Nazism.

**Algren, Nelson** (1909–1981). American writer who lived in Chicago, entered into a relationship with Simone de Beauvoir in the late 1940s, and contributed at least indirectly to some of the themes and American information in Beauvoir’s book *The Second Sex* (which she wrote during the time of her relationship with Algren).

**Arendt, Hannah** (1906–1975). German political theorist and philosopher who opposed the Nazi regime, went into exile in the United States, wrote an influential critique of totalitarian political systems, and developed a controversial account of the Holocaust in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963).

**Ayer, A. J.** (1910–1989). British philosopher and a leading figure in the philosophical school of logical positivism.

**Barthes, Roland** (1915–1980). French literary and cultural theorist who wrote on semiotics (the study of cultural signs), photography, novels, and popular cultural forms, such as advertising and fashion.

**Baudelaire, Charles** (1821–1867). French poet who lived in the Bohemian culture of Paris and developed the early themes of the symbolist movement. He said that the world is full of symbols that often carry strange meanings and call for imaginative interpretations.

**Baudrillard, Jean** (1929–). A postmodern French social theorist whose writings discuss the cultural influence of television, simulated images of reality, consumerism, advertising, and the fragmentation of contemporary personal and social identities.

**Beauvoir, Simone de** (1908–1986). Existential philosopher in France who wrote novels, political commentaries, and an influential study of woman’s position in social and cultural life, *The Second Sex*—a book that helped to shape a new wave of modern feminism.

**Bergson, Henri** (1859–1941). French philosopher who lectured at the Collège de France, criticized positivism, favored an “intuitionist” approach to knowledge, and emphasized the interior realities of thought, time, and personal experience rather than scientific approaches to the observable external world.

**Bloch, Marc** (1886–1944). Historian of medieval Europe who co-founded the influential French historical journal *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale*. Bloch examined long-term, deep structures in French social history and was

executed by the German Gestapo because of his work for the French Resistance during World War II.

**Bonhoeffer, Dietrich** (1906–1945). German Protestant theologian and staunch opponent of Nazism who criticized German Christians for supporting Hitler and joined the underground anti-Hitler resistance in Germany during the Second World War. He was imprisoned in 1943 and executed in the last month of the war.

**Braque, Georges** (1882–1963). French painter and innovative contributor to the new Cubist art that emerged in early twentieth-century Paris. Braque’s work represented geometric shapes, explored spatial relations, and portrayed objects from multiple perspectives.

**Braudel, Fernand** (1902–1985). Influential historian and leader of the “second generation” of *Annales* historians in France after the Second World War. Braudel argued that history was shaped more by geography and long-developing social structures than by individual actions or political events.

**Breton, André** (1896–1966). The most well known French advocate for the literary and artistic ideas of surrealism. Breton wrote two “Surrealist Manifestos” in the 1920s, calling for new artistic explorations of the unconscious mind, dreams, and fantasies.

**Camus, Albert** (1913–1960). French writer whose novels expressed existential themes, including the importance of taking action in the social world, and whose belief in human freedom led him into the anti-Nazi French Resistance during World War II and into a critique of Eastern Europe’s communist regimes during the Cold War.

**Cézanne, Paul** (1839–1906). A post-Impressionist artist who lived in southern France and developed a distinctive, colorful style in which he painted the shapes he saw in objects, landscapes, and human bodies. Cézanne had a wide influence on twentieth-century art.

**Cixous, Hélène** (1937–). One of the third-wave feminist writers in France. Cixous urged women to draw on their distinctive physical and reproductive experiences as they developed forms of “feminine writing” that would differ from the writing of men.

**Comte, Auguste** (1798–1857). The French social theorist who developed the ideas of positivism, a sociological theory that promoted the scientific description and solution of modern social problems.

**Conrad, Joseph** (1857–1924). A Polish-born writer who settled in England and wrote about European encounters with non-Western peoples. His descriptions of European imperialists and economic policies were often critical, but he also implied that the evils he described came from human nature, as well as from the nature of imperialism.



**Courbet, Gustave** (1819–1877). French artist and critic of Romanticism. Courbet developed a new artistic “realism” by painting common people in non-heroic situations and by rejecting the formalism or elite themes that often defined traditional European art.

**Darwin, Charles** (1809–1882). English scientist who developed the theory of biological evolution after traveling in South America and after many years of research in England.

**Debussy, Claude** (1863–1918). French composer who wrote music that evoked the poetic themes of the symbolist movement (he was a friend of Stéphane Mallarmé) and the artistic themes of Impressionist art.

**Derrida, Jacques** (1930– ). A poststructuralist theorist in France whose critique of Western metaphysics and binary oppositions had a wide influence on literary theory and cultural studies.

**Dilthey, Wilhelm** (1833–1911). German philosopher and historian who stressed that human consciousness makes people different from nature and plays a crucial role in historical change. He said that each era has its own consciousness, or *Weltanschauung*.

**Dostoevsky, Fyodor** (1821–1881). Russian novelist whose literary works portrayed the complex desires and nonrational drives of the human mind. He defended Russia’s distinctive cultural traditions and criticized the optimistic nineteenth-century faith in science.

**Dreyfus, Alfred** (1859–1935). The French Jewish army captain who was wrongly convicted of spying for Germany in 1894. Many French intellectuals joined a campaign to overturn this conviction (Dreyfus was exonerated in 1906).

**Durkheim, Émile** (1858–1917). French sociologist whose method of analyzing religion, urban social life, individual isolation (“anomie”), and suicide helped shape the modern social sciences. Durkheim used “social facts” to support his account of a declining social integration of modern societies.

**Eichmann, Adolf** (1906–1962). German bureaucrat who organized the deportation of Jews to the death camps during the Second World War. He came to represent the “banality of evil” by claiming at his postwar trial that he was simply doing a job in his government office.

**Einstein, Albert** (1879–1955). The German scientist whose Special Theory of Relativity (1905) revolutionized modern physics and contributed to a modern cultural emphasis on the “relativity” of knowledge. A Jewish exile from Nazi Germany (1933), he lived the rest of his life in America as the most well known figure in twentieth-century science.

**Eliot, T. S.** (1888–1965). English writer and poet, originally from the United States, whose poetry after World War I described a crisis or hollowness in modern Western culture.

**Febvre, Lucien** (1878–1956). A co-founder of the French historical journal *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale*. Febvre promoted new forms of social and cultural history and argued that shared cultural assumptions shape the limits of human thought.

**Fichte, J. G.** (1762–1814). Idealist German philosopher who argued that the human mind shapes rather than simply reflects what it encounters in the external world. Fichte contributed to German nationalism by stressing the distinctive traits of German culture.

**Foucault, Michel** (1926–1984). French social theorist and historian who analyzed the evolving “discourses” of Western knowledge, described scientific or medical truths as expressions of specific cultural systems, emphasized the relation between knowledge and power, and viewed individuals as exemplars of widely diffused structures of thought.

**Freud, Sigmund** (1856–1939). The physician and scientist who founded psychoanalysis in early twentieth-century Vienna. Freud wrote detailed descriptions of dreams and the unconscious mind (with particular attention to sexual drives), analyzed the conflicting desires and aggressions in human relationships, and extended his theory from the individual mind to the repressive processes that shape civilization.

**Gauguin, Paul** (1848–1903). French artist who moved to Tahiti, became fascinated with the pre-modern cultures of the South Pacific, and developed a distinctive, colorful style of painting to represent the people and scenes that he encountered there.

**Gramsci, Antonio** (1891–1937). Italian Marxist journalist and political theorist who spent the last eleven years of his life in fascist prisons. Gramsci’s *Prison Notebooks* (published after World War II) revised Marxist theory by arguing that ruling groups exercise power through their “cultural hegemony,” as well as their control of economic and political institutions.

**Grass, Günther** (1927– ). German writer who challenged his compatriots to face the painful meaning and legacy of the Nazi era in novels such as *The Tin Drum* (1959).

**Graves, Robert** (1895–1986). English writer whose account of his experiences in the army during World War I (*Good-Bye to All That*) expressed a typically ironic postwar disillusionment with many of the cultural and political values in British society.

**Habermas, Jürgen** (1929– ). German philosopher and social theorist who criticized Romantic cultural traditions, praised Enlightenment conceptions of reason, rejected postmodernist accounts of “culturally constructed” truths, and advocated a democratic public sphere in which rational debates would shape enlightened laws and public action.

**Harvey, David** (1935–). Geographer and social theorist who has discussed the themes of postmodern thought and the characteristics of postmodern societies in such works as *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989).

**Havel, Václav** (1936–). Czech writer who wrote plays in the 1960s, became a leader of the movement for democracy in communist central Europe during the 1970s and 1980s, and served as president of the post-communist Czech government in the 1990s.

**Hayek, Friedrich** (1899–1992). Austrian-born economist and political theorist who worked in Britain during the 1930s and 1940s. Hayek defended classical free-market ideas, arguing that government planning undermined both democracy and the economy.

**Hegel, G. W. F.** (1770–1831). German philosopher who described history as the unfolding expression of a transcendent Spirit. Hegel said that this Spirit could be seen in the progressive development of reason and freedom, which advanced through the dialectical conflicts of world history.

**Heidegger, Martin** (1889–1976). German philosopher whose work examined the nature of Being—the deep, fluid reality that underlies human existence and makes philosophical thought possible.

**Heisenberg, Werner** (1901–1976). German scientist and author of the “Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle,” which argued that it is impossible to know at the same time both the precise speed and position of an electron. The principle attracted much attention, especially when it was linked to theories of relativity and a general cultural skepticism.

**Hitler, Adolf** (1889–1945). Leader of Germany’s Nazi Party and dictator in the Nazi regime (1933–1945) that launched the Second World War, conquered most of Europe, and murdered millions of Jews and other European civilians. Hitler’s extreme form of nationalism included a hatred for democratic political traditions, as well as a virulent anti-Semitism, and his policies provoked an enduring intellectual search to understand how such barbarism could appear at the center of modern European civilization.

**Horkheimer, Max** (1895–1973). One of the leaders of the Frankfurt School of German social theorists. Horkheimer tried to explain why Nazism gained power in Germany, but he also wrote critically about the culture industry in America and Europe.

**Husserl, Edmund** (1859–1938). German philosopher who developed the key ideas of twentieth-century phenomenology (a philosophy that later influenced existentialism).

**Ibsen, Henrik** (1828–1906). Norwegian playwright whose portrayals of bourgeois family life exemplified aspects of literary naturalism. Ibsen’s plays

suggested that most families were haunted by hidden conflicts and that women still faced difficult constraints in modern societies.

**Jaspers, Karl** (1883–1969). German philosopher whose emphasis on the disturbing human awareness of one’s own inevitable death, on free will, and on the choices of an active life had an important influence on twentieth-century existential thought.

**Joyce, James** (1882–1941). Irish novelist who lived most of his life as an exile in European cities and used innovative literary methods, such as indirect interior monologues and stream of consciousness, to convey the complexity of human thoughts and experience.

**Jung, Carl** (1875–1961). Swiss psychologist and designated successor to Sigmund Freud in the Psychoanalytical Association until the two men fell into conflict over various psychological issues, including the role of sexuality, the nature of religion, and what Jung called a “collective unconscious.” Jung later developed his own “analytical psychology.”

**Kafka, Franz** (1883–1924). German-language Jewish writer who lived in Prague, worked in an insurance office, and wrote short stories and novels about the alienating, disorienting experiences of modern life. He described a threatening social world and nightmarish limitations on human communications and personal freedom.

**Kandinsky, Wassily** (1866–1944). Russian-born artist who worked mainly in Germany and France. Kandinsky developed an abstract expressionist style of painting that used vivid colors rather than recognizable objects to convey his personal vision; he said that painting should be viewed as “color music.”

**Keynes, John Maynard** (1883–1946). English economist and advocate for government spending in times of economic crisis. Keynes argued that the government’s deficit spending could revive a weak economy because it put more money into circulation, thus fueling demand for more goods and services (and for more workers to produce them).

**Kristeva, Julia** (1941–). Bulgarian-born literary and cultural theorist who moved to France in 1966. Kristeva called for a new kind of “dialogical” language that would move beyond “phallogocentric” linguistic traditions and lead to a more open-ended understanding of all human identities, including the identities of male and female.

**Lacan, Jacques** (1901–1981). French theorist who sought to unite psychoanalysis and linguistics by describing connections among the body, the unconscious mind, and language.

**Le Bon, Gustave** (1841–1931). French social psychologist whose analysis of the emotional, violent behavior of crowds exemplified the late nineteenth-century



social scientific attempt to understand the nonrational components of human behavior.

**Levi, Primo** (1919–1987). Italian chemist and one of the rare Jewish survivors of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz. Levi wrote about the camp and his own painful memories in postwar books that described the horrors of Auschwitz.

**Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien** (1857–1939). One of the French “founding fathers” of anthropology. Lévy-Bruhl sought to explain the different ways in which modern and pre-modern people think about nature and human beings.

**Mallarmé, Stéphane** (1842–1898). French poet whose poems and aesthetic theories conveyed the themes of the symbolist movement.

**Manet, Edouard** (1832–1883). An early French Impressionist painter, Manet portrayed unconventional scenes, experimented with the representation of light and the “blurring” of human figures, and organized exhibitions of such works with other like-minded artists.

**Mann, Thomas** (1875–1955). German writer whose novels pointed to various forms of “illness” in European culture. His books, such as *The Magic Mountain* (1924), suggested that Europeans had embraced death over life—a critique that was confirmed for him by the rise of Nazism (from which he fled into exile in America).

**Matisse, Henri** (1869–1954). French artist who sought to represent the “inherent truth” rather than the literal images of people and objects. He pursued this idea by juxtaposing colors and shapes in unexpected combinations, portraying the movement of human bodies, and encouraging an innovative group of artists called the “Fauves.”

**Mauss, Marcel** (1872–1950). French anthropologist who examined structural similarities in European and non-European societies.

**Monet, Claude** (1840–1920). French painter whose distinctive brushwork and explorations of light and color helped to shape the methods and themes of the influential Impressionist movement in late nineteenth-century French art.

**Mussolini, Benito** (1883–1945). Leader of the Italian Fascist Party and the first fascist dictator to gain power in Europe (1922).

**Niebuhr, Reinhold** (1892–1971). American theologian at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Niebuhr wrote on the social and ethical dimensions of Christianity and had close connections with European religious activists, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

**Nietzsche, Friedrich** (1844–1900). German philosopher and social critic who challenged Western philosophical conceptions of reason and truth and stressed what he called the human “will to power.”

**Nijinsky, Vaslav** (1889–1950). Russian-born dancer whose interpretations of music, such as Claude Debussy’s “The Afternoon of a Faun,” brought a controversial choreography into modern dance and expressed the unconventional attitudes of modernist art.

**Orwell, George** (1903–1950). English journalist, novelist, and critic of totalitarian governments. Orwell developed his political arguments in popular fictional works, most notably his post-World War II novels *Animal Farm* and *1984*.

**Owen, Wilfred** (1893–1918). An English “war poet” during the First World War, Owen became an angry critic of what he saw as a naïve and dangerous patriotism on the British home front. He was killed in France one week before the end of the war.

**Pankhurst, Emmeline** (1858–1928). English feminist and political activist who led the campaign for women’s voting rights in early twentieth-century Britain.

**Péguy, Charles** (1873–1914). French poet and writer whose mystical inclinations and intense patriotism led him into the French army and an early death at the beginning of World War I.

**Picasso, Pablo** (1881–1973). Spanish-born artist who lived mainly in France after 1904. Picasso developed an influential new Cubist style that portrayed the author’s personal vision of angular, geometric shapes and provided multiple perspectives on the objects, people, and scenes that he painted.

**Pound, Ezra** (1885–1972). American poet and critic who promoted modernist literature, befriended numerous writers in modernist literary circles, wrote influential experimental poems, and gained public notoriety because of his support for the fascist regime in Italy.

**Proust, Marcel** (1871–1922). French writer whose six-volume novel *Remembrance of Things Past* explored the meaning of time, memory, love, desire, and solitude. Proust’s work helped to shape the widespread modern literary interest in the psychology and inner experiences of human beings.

**Renoir, Pierre-Auguste** (1841–1919). French Impressionist painter. Renoir used contrasting colors to represent subtle shadings of light and shadows and to portray the non-heroic everyday lives and leisure activities of middle-class people.

**Rimbaud, Arthur** (1854–1891). Avant-garde French poet who wrote his famous poems before he was twenty years old, then traveled around Europe and Africa for the rest of his life. Rimbaud’s poetic images of personal liberation and his description of the poet as a lonely visionary influenced cultural “rebels” and writers throughout the twentieth century.

**Russell, Bertrand** (1872–1970). English philosopher who contributed to the early development of logical positivism. Russell opposed metaphysical thought

and sought a philosophical language that would be as precise and verifiable as mathematics.

**Saint-Simon, Henri, Comte de** (1760–1825). French social theorist who argued that modern societies should be managed by scientific experts and social planners.

**Saussure, Ferdinand de** (1858–1913). Swiss linguist who developed structural linguistics. Saussure argued that all linguistic meanings depend on a system of deep grammatical structures and on linguistic processes that link a “signifier” (word or symbol) with a “signified” (the object, idea, or referent that the signifier represents).

**Sartre, Jean-Paul** (1905–1980). French philosopher and advocate of existentialism. Sartre said that human beings have no fixed essence or eternal spirit, but he insisted that they have the consciousness and freedom to define the meaning of their own existence—if they act on their freedom and refuse to let others define who they are.

**Sassoon, Siegfried** (1886–1967). English “war poet” and critic of British government policies during the First World War. He wrote about his military experiences and the horrors of trench warfare in numerous postwar poems, memoirs, and novels.

**Simmel, Georg** (1858–1918). German sociologist who analyzed the impersonal aspects of modern urban life, examined the influence of cities on intellectual work, and described how money mediates the anonymous relations between strangers in modern societies.

**Spencer, Herbert** (1820–1903). British social theorist and proponent of Social Darwinism. He believed that human progress evolves out of struggles in which the “fittest” people survive (if governments avoid intervention in the process).

**Spengler, Oswald** (1880–1936). German philosopher and historian whose *Decline of the West* (1918) expressed a popular cultural pessimism that spread across Germany and much of Western Europe after the First World War.

**Stalin, Joseph** (1879–1953). Communist leader who gradually gained power in the Soviet Union after the death of Vladimir Lenin, promoted the state-organized “five-year plans” for economic development, and imposed a brutal, repressive dictatorship on the communist party and the people of Soviet society.

**Stein, Gertrude** (1874–1946). American writer who lived in Paris after 1903. Stein collected the paintings of innovative artists, such as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso, and tried to apply the nonlinear or Cubist styles of modern art in her complex prose.

**Tzara, Tristan** (1896–1963). Romanian-born poet and leader of the Dada movement in Switzerland and Paris after World War I. Tzara claimed that

European cultural traditions had lost meaning; he mocked traditional culture by writing nonsense poems and staging strange literary performances in cafés.

**Van Gogh, Vincent** (1853–1890). Dutch-born artist who spent his later years in France. He used bright colors and distinctive swirling shapes to express strong emotions and a personal vision that would influence the later development of expressionist art.

**Verlaine, Paul** (1844–1896). French poet who had a turbulent relationship with Arthur Rimbaud, associated with the symbolist writers in Paris, and promoted new forms of poetry (including the poems of Rimbaud) in literary journals.

**Villiers de l’Isle-Adam** (1838–1889). French author whose work exemplified typical themes of the symbolist literary movement.

**Wagner, Richard** (1813–1883). German composer whose innovative operas combined music and art to produce all-encompassing dramatic experiences. His aesthetic theories had wide influence, but his strong German nationalism provoked political criticisms.

**Weber, Max** (1864–1920). German social theorist and historical sociologist who analyzed possible links between religion and economic behavior, complained about the “iron cage” of modern bureaucracies, and warned that people might turn to charismatic leaders as they searched for magical powers in the “despiritualized” modern world.

**Wittgenstein, Ludwig** (1889–1951). Austrian-born philosopher who lived and worked for many years at Cambridge University in England. He contributed to the modern philosophical interest in language, criticized philosophers for using imprecise language, and claimed that many crucial problems must be passed over in silence because language could not always speak truthfully or precisely about the questions that philosophy raises.

**Woolf, Virginia** (1882–1941). English writer and novelist. Woolf contributed to modernist literature in novels that explored the complexities of time, personal experience, and human communication.

**Yeats, William Butler** (1865–1939). Irish poet and playwright who supported literary and political movements for Irish independence. His poems expressed a fascination with various mystical symbols and a pessimistic view of culture and politics in modern European societies.

**Zola, Émile** (1840–1902). French novelist who tried to apply scientific theories about heredity and the influence of environments in a literary genre called naturalism. Zola wrote popular novels about social problems and social classes in French society.