

COURSE GUIDEBOOK



European Thought and Culture in the 20th Century

Part II

- Lecture 13: The Modern Novel—Joyce and Woolf
- Lecture 14: The Continental Novel—Proust, Kafka, Mann
- Lecture 15: Language and Reality in Modern Philosophy
- Lecture 16: Revisiting Marxism and Liberalism
- Lecture 17: Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust
- Lecture 18: Existential Philosophy
- Lecture 19: Literature and Memory in Postwar Culture
- Lecture 20: Redefining Modern Feminism
- Lecture 21: History, Anthropology, and Structuralism
- Lecture 22: Poststructuralist Thought—Foucault and Derrida
- Lecture 23: European Postmodernism
- Lecture 24: Changes and Traditions at Century's End


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Professor Lloyd Kramer

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in the 20th Century, Part II

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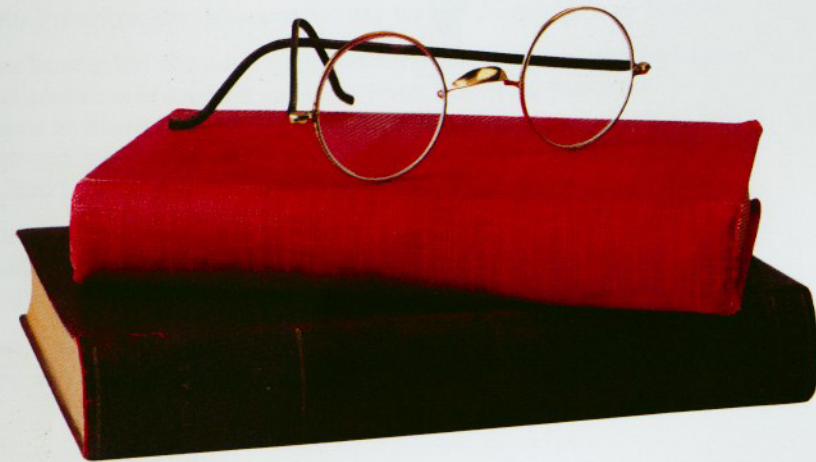


European Thought and Culture in the 20th Century

Professor Lloyd Kramer

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Part II



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4. The truths of art were described as internal truths and often linked to the unconscious. This theme resembled Freud's themes, but Freud preferred classical literature and science to the cultural avant garde.
- C. The modern novel, however, sought to challenge realistic modes of representation and to defamiliarize the familiar external world.
1. This modernist literary pattern appeared on the Continent in such writers as Marcel Proust and Franz Kafka and in the English novelists James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, whom we will discuss in this lecture.
 2. The new postwar English novels reshaped much twentieth-century literature.
- II. To challenge or rethink the meaning of the "familiar" world, modern novels redefined time and space. The goal for many novelists was to alter the empirical view of social reality and the logical order of events.
- A. Empiricism stresses logical cause-and-effect relations.
1. The classical realist novel usually narrated stories in an empirical mode by using horizontal narratives: beginning, middle, end.
 2. This is the classical narrative pattern in Western literature, and it assumes a coherent external reality of time and space.
- B. Modernist novels, by contrast, explore events vertically rather than horizontally; events in these novels do not happen in simple sequential order.
1. The characters often encounter an external world of random or repetitious events; their thoughts move backward and forward in time.
 2. The most important events usually take place inside the individual and are described with narratives about the internal world.
 3. The narrative of external events is fragmented; it also focuses on individual internal experience and develops multiple voices or perspectives—in contrast to earlier novels, such as the work of Balzac.
 4. The inner event may not last very long in terms of external time, but an inner event may be so complex that it requires extended narration.
- C. Time, therefore, is portrayed as unstable or diverse (as Bergson had suggested in his philosophical arguments); the novelist examines the inner time and space of characters rather than the time and space of classical science.
1. In describing this inner space, many modern novelists also suggest that the human "self" has no stable center or absolute identity.

2. This view could be compared to themes in Dadaism or surrealism, but the novelists provided more sustained explorations of time and space.
 3. Narrators in modern novels describe subjective inner realities, but unlike Dada poems, the novels rarely lapse into nonsense.
 4. At the same time, though, many modern novels are not easy to read; they differ from the linear style of popular novels and they challenge the desire for a commonsense understanding of experience.
- D. The new narrative techniques and the attempt to defamiliarize both the external and personal world can be seen in James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.
1. T. S. Eliot said that Joyce's novel *Ulysses* created a new artistic language for the modern world and made previous novels obsolete.
 2. Critics at the time and later said that Joyce's work was obscure, vulgar, and confusing, yet critics also noted that it changed literature.
- III. James Joyce (1882–1941) was born into a family of ten children near Dublin; he was educated in Jesuit schools and at University College in Dublin, but he was unhappy in Ireland.
- A. After meeting Nora Barnacle in 1904, he and Nora left for the Continent; they lived together in Italy, Switzerland, and after 1920, in Paris. They did not officially marry until 1931.
1. Joyce was determined to be a writer, but he could not get his early works published. He and Nora soon had two children and lived in poverty while he struggled to write.
 2. Joyce became a bitter critic of Ireland. He made several trips back to Dublin as he tried to publish his early stories, but after 1912, he never again visited his native country—he was the permanent exile.
- B. The image of the struggling exile artist became part of the cultural legend that gradually accumulated around Joyce; he faced great hardships.
1. He had problems with his vision and underwent more than ten operations on his eyes; his daughter was mentally ill and was placed in a sanitarium.
 2. Joyce himself was often self-absorbed and obsessed with his own literary reputation, but his work was embraced by literary modernists, such as Eliot and Ezra Pound. He became famous in Paris.
 3. Excerpts from *Ulysses* began to appear in literary journals at the end of World War I; the whole novel was published in 1922 by Sylvia Beach, an American who owned a bookstore in Paris.
 4. The book was banned as pornographic in America until 1933. Joyce meanwhile worked for eighteen years on his final book,

Finnegans Wake, which was published in 1939, but generally left readers baffled.

- C. Joyce tried to portray the complex connection between interior life and external events in *Ulysses*. The novel focused on three main characters: Leopold and Molly Bloom and Stephen Dedalus.
1. The meaning of time is transformed in the novel; the book's 800 pages describe events and thoughts of the three main characters on June 16, 1904 (the date Joyce met Nora).
 2. The story has the structure of Homer's *Odyssey*, but this is the day-long "odyssey" of unexceptional people in a modern city.
 3. Stephen Dedalus is an artist, Leopold Bloom is a Jewish businessman, and Molly is his wife, who is having an extramarital affair.
 4. Stephen and Bloom move around Dublin, encounter various random events, meet each other, and talk, but much of the action consists of internal reflections on bodily functions, death, and tedious daily life.
- D. There is nothing heroic about the characters, but Joyce tried to portray how people actually think; he used indirect interior monologues and showed how thought processes skip around from subject to subject.
1. As Joyce shows in the style of his novel, thought is neither logical nor chronological; it skips around in time and moves between complex ideas and the most mundane bodily processes.
 2. The novel culminates in a long interior monologue in which Molly Bloom's thoughts flow in a famous "stream of consciousness."
 3. Joyce filled his novel with literary and cultural allusions and various forms of humor that were not easy for readers to understand.
- E. But his experiments with stream of consciousness and interior monologues became an innovative, distinctive narrative style in twentieth-century literature. This style had wide influence, because it offered a new way to portray interior life.
- IV. This style of writing was also used by Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), who was not an exile. She criticized much of Joyce's work but felt separated from various aspects of British life and wrote modernist narratives with interior monologues.
- A. Woolf was born into an upper-class English family with two strong-willed parents: Leslie and Julia Stephen. Her father was a prominent author and editor, and young Virginia Stephen seemed to have a happy early childhood.
1. But her mother died when she was thirteen, her father went into prolonged mourning, and he died when Virginia was twenty-two.

2. Her older brother died two years later. Virginia began to suffer from manic depression, which caused mental breakdowns and depression at repeated intervals throughout her life.
- B. She married Leonard Woolf in 1912; he was part of her brothers' social and intellectual circle at Cambridge University.
- C. She was also part of the famous Bloomsbury circle in London—a term that referred to writers and artists who lived in the Bloomsbury neighborhood; it also attracted political and economic thinkers, such as John Maynard Keynes.
- D. In Woolf's novels, the external events typically receive less attention than the complex inner thought processes; like Proust, Woolf wrote about memory. She said that there are only a few essential hours in life, crucial moments of self-recognition, that are a kind of shock on the mind and emotions. Identities emerge from these rare moments.
- E. These themes appear in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), a novel that explores the meaning of time, memory, and language. It is also a portrait of Woolf's parents in the fictional characters of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay.
1. The interior monologues in the novel refer to the rare moments of insight that come amid the long stretches of daily routine.
 2. "The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little...miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark."
- F. Woolf often felt inadequate to describe these little "illuminations," ("words fluttered sideways and struck the object inches too low"), and her own mental anxieties led her finally to commit suicide by drowning in a river.
1. Yet she succeeded in creating a literary style that conveyed the complex thoughts and emotions of the human mind.
 2. This kind of writing was one of the great modern literary innovations.

Essential Reading:

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*.

Supplementary Reading:

Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, revised edition, pp. 485–552.

Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, vol. 2, pp. 109–140.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think that your own thought processes could be described as a stream of consciousness?
2. Do you agree with Virginia Woolf's idea that self-recognition or knowledge comes only at rare moments over a lifetime?

Lecture Fourteen

The Continental Novel: Proust, Kafka, Mann

Scope: The new literary interest in memory, identity, and personal experience could be found in all European cultures. This lecture continues the discussion of the modern novel with examples from French and German literature, focusing specifically on the work of Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, and Thomas Mann. All these writers sought to portray the complexity of personal lives and desires in modern Europe. Proust explored the isolation of the self, often stressing a personal alienation from the social world and examining the nature of memory and time. Franz Kafka described the anonymity and the nightmarish impersonal experiences of modern society. Thomas Mann portrayed the personal struggle to survive the “illness” of the modern social world. Like most modern writers, these authors all wrote about the individual’s separation from other people.

Outline

- I. Cultural and intellectual historians often note that literary modernism emerged at about the same time in numerous European cultures; we have seen how “modernist” themes emerged in the English-language works of Joyce, Woolf, and various poets.
 - A. Meanwhile, the typical modernist ideas—emphasis on inner experiences, memory, time, and the ambiguity of language—were also influencing the work of writers on the Continent, and Freud’s ideas spread across Europe.
 1. The First World War did not create the literary fascination with the complex inner self, but it suggested that the external world was ill.
 2. The writers who gained the greatest cultural influence in the decades after 1920 all analyzed the “self” in relation to a disorienting world.
 - B. They wanted to portray the psychology of human desire, but they also stressed the “strangeness” of the social world; they had little interest in, or hope for, political solutions to the alienating experiences of modern life.
 1. These literary themes can be seen most notably in the influential works of Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, and Thomas Mann.
 2. I want to discuss each of these authors and emphasize their common modernist tendency to “defamiliarize” personal and social experience.

3. This is the modern literary pattern that made twentieth-century European literature both difficult and emblematic of the era in which it appeared.
- II. Marcel Proust’s novel *Remembrance of Things Past* has frequently been described as the first great modern novel; it has attracted endless attention from literary critics.
 - A. Although Proust (1871–1922) wrote his most famous work in the twentieth century, he emerged from the late nineteenth-century context of upper-class French culture; his own family reflected different strands of that culture.
 1. His father was a successful doctor from a Catholic family with deep roots around the old cathedral city of Chartres. His mother was from a well-to-do Jewish family in Paris. Marcel grew up in a “mixed” world.
 2. He was closer to his mother, who had strong interests in music and literature. He suffered from asthma throughout his life.
 - B. He began to write as a young man, but he was at first mostly interested in the social life of upper-class Parisian salons; he gradually withdrew from society, especially after his mother died in 1905.
 1. He settled into a Parisian apartment in which his bedroom was lined with cork to keep out noise, distractions, and germs.
 2. His most intense emotional relations were with men, yet these relationships were stymied in various ways, leaving him emotionally frustrated. The theme of frustrated love appeared often in his novel.
 3. He was deeply attracted to a man named Alfred Agostinelli, for example, but Agostinelli was married and refused to stay with Proust. He was killed in a plane crash while learning to fly (1914).
 - C. Working in his isolated environment (he rarely went out of his apartment during the day) and supported by inherited money, Proust wrote his huge novel, which was translated into English as *Remembrance of Things Past*.
 1. The first volume was published in 1913 at his own expense; by the time of his death in 1922, Proust had written six volumes.
 2. While France suffered through the horrors of World War I, Proust sat alone in his cork-lined room, exploring his personal memories and describing the social world that he had known in his youth.
 3. Although the novel included long descriptions of social events and even public conflicts, such as the Dreyfus Affair, the book’s main theme stressed the isolation of the self and the difficulty of communication.
 - D. Proust described the mysteries of “involuntary memory”—the experience in which an encounter with some object or place in the

present provokes a vivid memory of a past experience, object, or person.

1. This is the experience of the narrator who remembers his childhood yearning for his mother when he eats a small *madeleine* biscuit.
 2. He describes the way that memories come involuntarily into one's mind and how this inner experience changes the meaning of time; a brief moment's encounter in the present carries the mind to the past.
 3. This past becomes part of the present; time is not just "here and now." This was the theme in Proust's depiction of how time is experienced.
- E. Proust also tried to show how human interactions (and love) are blocked by the inability to communicate feelings or share reciprocal feelings.
1. There is a deep loneliness or isolation at the heart of human life; yet this isolation gives art its special role, because only through art can isolated persons recognize some part of themselves in others.
 2. "The book is only a sort of optical instrument which the writer offers to the reader to enable the latter to discover in himself what he would not have found but for the aid of the book"; art leads people to themselves.
 3. The artist who offers portraits of the self offers a vehicle for human communication and a means for moving beyond solitude. In this view, art is a private act rather than a public or political act.
- F. Proust began to be famous in the early 1920s (he did not have to pay for publication of later volumes); however, he died before he could play any kind of public intellectual role, which in any event, he was too reclusive to pursue.
1. His work told the story of inner anxieties, memories, and obsessions, and some critics would always find it too self-referential and obscure.
 2. Yet Proust helped to create a new style of modern writing that used first-person narration, "flashbacks" in time, and endless exploration of selfhood, desire, or social disorientation.
- III. This sense of disorientation can also be found in the German literature of the postwar era, much of which portrayed a crisis in modern life.
- A. Nobody developed this vision of a decentered world more starkly than Franz Kafka (1883–1924), who grew up in a German Jewish family in Prague.
1. Kafka's father was a merchant whom his son came to view as tyrannical and deeply hostile to Franz's cultural and literary interests.
 2. The young Kafka was part of a small minority (German Jews) in a large Czech city and was aware of his own marginal position.

3. He studied law and, after receiving his law degree, worked in the Prague offices of a large Italian insurance company. He hated the work and began to write novels and short stories in his limited spare time.

B. Kafka felt alienated from his professional life and was unhappy in his relations with women. He became engaged three times (twice to the same woman) but always broke off the relationships.

1. He also developed tuberculosis and died at the early age of forty; later, his three sisters and two of his close women friends died in Nazi camps.
2. Drawing on his personal experiences, his problems with his father, and his social and professional life in Prague, Kafka wrote stories in which the characters seem to be totally alone or in uncontrollable situations.

C. Like Proust, Kafka suggests that solitude is an inescapable part of the human condition, yet Kafka's social world seems to be even more threatening.

1. Kafka's name has been turned into an adjective—Kafkaesque—that conveys a specific cultural meaning: people (like the characters in his stories) live in a social world that has lost meaning.
2. People who live in this world experience neither order nor coherence.
3. Everyone has become alienated, and the lifeless, bureaucratic world that Weber described has taken over all of life.
4. Social and political processes seem to operate without meaning; they have no discernable goals or purpose.

D. The official world seems to exist mainly as a mechanism for keeping people permanently frustrated or for turning them into objects to control.

1. Such themes appear in Kafka's novel *The Trial* (1925), which tells the story of Joseph K., who is arbitrarily arrested, put on trial, and put to death for no discernable reason—though he feels inner guilt.
2. The theme of guilt might be compared to Freud's concept of how people feel guilty in their families and in civilized life, but Kafka places this theme in a social context that denies people their humanity.

E. This theme seems to anticipate all kinds of twentieth-century horrors (which is why some view Kafka as a writer who anticipated the worst features of modern history).

1. The nightmare is perhaps best summarized in "The Metamorphosis."
2. This story (published in 1916) describes a person who wakes up to find himself transformed into a large bug. He has no way to control

or even to understand the external world, including the office where he works.

- IV. Kafka's work had a major influence on twentieth-century literature, but the nightmarish vision was not as extreme in the work of the German writer Thomas Mann (1875–1955). Nonetheless, Mann believed that Europe was in a crisis.
- A. His father was a grain merchant and young Thomas was at first destined for this career. The father died when Thomas was fifteen years old and the son moved toward writing.
 - B. Unlike Proust and Kafka, Mann got married as a young man (to Katia Prinsheim) and had six children; yet Mann was also interested in the problems of frustrated desire and social crisis.
 - C. His short prewar novella, *Death in Venice* (1911), suggested that European traditions faced exhaustion and decline.
 - D. Mann believed that official cultures and governments had stripped away the vital sources of modern Europe's creativity.
 - 1. At first, Mann seemed to view World War I as an opportunity to renew German society and culture, but he later changed his mind.
 - 2. He believed that the war destroyed Europe's confidence in its past and faith in its future.
 - E. He analyzed all of these ideas symbolically in his great novel *The Magic Mountain* (1924), which is set in a sanitarium for tuberculosis patients in Switzerland.
 - F. Mann himself seemed to believe that the West had embraced death, and some scholars think he wanted to defend aspects of the Enlightenment.
 - G. Mann did not share the modernist emphasis on the internal mind, but he shared literary pessimism about social relations and clichéd language.

Essential Reading:

Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, translated by G. K. Scott Moncrieff, pp. 3–36.

Franz Kafka, "Metamorphosis," in *Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, translated and edited by Malcolm Pasley, pp. 76–126.

Supplementary Reading:

Anthony Heilbut, *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature*, pp. 401–434.

Jean-Yves Tadié, *Marcel Proust*, translated by Euan Cameron, pp. 563–599.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you have "involuntary memories" that are set off by encounters with certain smells, sights, objects, or people?
2. What meanings do you associate with the word "Kafkaesque"?

Lecture Fifteen

Language and Reality in Modern Philosophy

Scope: Modern philosophers moved in two new directions. One group focused on the linguistic foundation of human knowledge and developed ideas that became known as logical positivism or analytic philosophy. Another group emphasized human consciousness and the encounter with phenomena in the material world, thus developing a philosophy called phenomenology. This lecture discusses these two trends in European philosophy with special reference to Ludwig Wittgenstein and Edmund Husserl. Wittgenstein influenced the linguistic turn in Austrian and English philosophical circles, though he differed from many of the logical positivists. Husserl, by contrast, influenced German and French philosophers who examined the relation between consciousness and the material world.

Outline

- I. Philosophers in twentieth-century Europe generally challenged philosophical traditions; like the writers, poets, artists, and scientists, the philosophers looked for new ways to describe human knowledge and the human mind.
 - A. In most general terms, philosophers rejected the systems of earlier "metaphysical" philosophers; the metaphysical tradition went back to Plato in ancient Greece and remained important through most of the nineteenth century.
 1. For example, Hegel had developed a comprehensive metaphysical theory about the unfolding Idea in human history.
 2. Metaphysical philosophies often proposed a comprehensive system for explaining human knowledge or existence, and they often assumed that reality existed on dual levels (e.g., body and mind, material and spiritual).
 - B. Most twentieth-century philosophers, by contrast, wanted to make philosophy more scientific by getting beyond metaphysical dualisms.
 1. They decided that metaphysical systems did not provide a reliable basis for truth, a theme that also appeared in modern social sciences, psychology, historical studies, and even literary studies.
 2. Yet this search for new forms of philosophical knowledge led in two different directions during the first half of the century.
 - C. Some philosophers argued that language was the foundation for all true statements about the world; therefore, language should be the object of analysis.

1. Language could be studied objectively, in the same way that scientists studied nature.
 2. This form of thought evolved into the movements of logical positivism or the related school of analytical philosophy.
 3. The Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein contributed to this new linguistic approach to philosophy, which became influential in both Vienna and England; it analyzed what language could truthfully say.
- D. Other philosophers, however, argued that a new scientific philosophy must examine the human consciousness and how it encounters the world.
1. This second trend in philosophy became known as phenomenology.
 2. The key early figure in this group was Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher who tried to explain the interaction of consciousness and objects in the world.
 3. Husserl's theories had wide influence in Germany and France and became important for existential philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre.
- E. This lecture discusses the themes of logical positivism and phenomenology by summarizing the ideas of Wittgenstein and Husserl.
1. Although their approaches to philosophy differed, they both wanted to give philosophy a more reliable foundation for what might be called post-metaphysical truth claims.
 2. But philosophy had less cultural influence than literature or the arts.
- II. Intellectual historians have often located the emergence of logical positivism among Viennese philosophers in the 1920s, but the movement also had links to England.
- A. One of these links was Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), who studied with Bertrand Russell in Cambridge before the First World War.
1. Wittgenstein was born into a wealthy Viennese family, the youngest of eight children; his father was an engineer in the steel and iron industry.
 2. The elder Wittgenstein was one of the richest people in Vienna, and he put great pressure on his children to pursue similar careers. Young Ludwig at first studied engineering and long had an interest in machines.
 3. But the pressures on the children were difficult; three of Ludwig's brothers committed suicide, and he had to fight his own depressions.
- B. He eventually left Vienna to study in Germany, then at Cambridge, where he was influenced by Bertrand Russell's interest in mathematics and logic.

1. Wittgenstein met a number of creative thinkers at Cambridge (the economist John Maynard Keynes was one of his friends), but he also liked to withdraw from social contacts; he built a hut in Norway.
 2. During the First World War, he went back to Austria and served throughout the war in the Austrian army; he also read philosophy.
 3. He was captured in the last months of the war and sent to an Italian prison camp. In this camp, he wrote his only philosophical text that was published in his lifetime: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922).
- C. He sent the manuscript to Russell, who arranged for it to be published; then Wittgenstein became a high school teacher in Austria for about six years.
1. During that time, he met occasionally with members of the “Vienna School”—the philosophers who were developing logical positivism.
 2. He eventually returned to Cambridge (1929) and lived in England for the rest of his life (with sojourns in Ireland and Norway).
 3. He taught small classes at Cambridge University, worked in medical centers during World War II, and wrote numerous texts that were finally published after his death as *Philosophical Investigations*.
- D. Throughout his career, Wittgenstein criticized traditional philosophy; he said that philosophers used language in nonrigorous or imprecise ways.
1. He wanted philosophical language to follow the most precise, logical structure to give logical, truthful pictures of reality.
 2. But most philosophical statements did not provide this kind of truth; they expressed opinions or feelings or propositions that lacked meaning because they were not grounded in reality (as true science should be).
 3. Wittgenstein, therefore, ended the *Tractatus* with the sobering claim that philosophers should recognize their clear linguistic limits.
 4. “What we cannot speak about,” he said, “we must pass over in silence.”
- E. This statement meant that because philosophy did not have the language to speak truthfully about the world, it really could not say much. Wittgenstein thought he proved his case by not publishing more philosophy.
1. He said that his philosophy was like a ladder that carried him up to a truth about philosophical language, then the ladder had to be thrown away. After 1929, however, he began to write philosophy again.

2. He became more interested in the uses of ordinary language; he wanted to show how philosophical meaning was part of a linguistic system.
 3. He disliked abstract theorizing, but he also developed an almost mystical interest in how languages and linguistic systems could achieve meaning. He moved away from the theme of verifiable language uses.
- III.** Meanwhile, the development of logical positivism and analytical philosophy pushed some of Wittgenstein's earlier themes in even more radical directions.
- A.** Writers such as A. J. Ayer (1910-1989) argued that philosophy should deal only with issues that can be verified through empirical observation; this theme of nineteenth-century positivism was now carried into philosophy.
 1. Such ideas meant that philosophers could not deal with metaphysical questions (e.g., "Do humans have souls?" "Is there a God?") because there is no meaningful, truthful way to establish truth or falsehood.
 2. This view also eliminated all questions about ethics, morality, or aesthetics. For logical positivists, the answers to these kinds of questions simply expressed feelings, not philosophical truths.
 - B.** Ayer said that philosophers who tried to answer these questions went beyond "the limits of all possible sense-experience" and, thus, their work was "devoted to the production of nonsense."
 1. Philosophy for the logical positivists had the task of analyzing precise claims about the world to see if they could be verified.
 2. The goal was to clarify linguistic confusions and to support the claims of science; there was no interest in moral questions or "higher truths."
- IV.** The linguistic emphasis of logical positivism or analytical philosophy had wide influence on English (and American) academic philosophy.
- A.** But a number of Continental philosophers took a different, phenomenological approach to the quest for a new scientific philosophy.
 1. The key figure in early phenomenology was Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), who was born in Moravia in what is now the Czech Republic.
 2. Husserl was from a liberal German Jewish family; he became a Protestant at age twenty-seven and studied mathematics in Germany.
 3. Husserl's real interest, however, was philosophy, especially after he also studied psychology; he wanted to make philosophy scientific.

- B.** He taught philosophy at several German universities. After 1916, he was at the University of Freiburg, but after 1933, he was barred from the university.
 - C.** Husserl laid out his theory of phenomenology in various works and lectures, including a concise summary in *The Idea of Phenomenology* (1907). Husserl was more concerned with the structure of human consciousness than with specific problems of language.
 - D.** For Husserl, meaning emerged from the ways in which a conscious subject responded to daily life in what he called the "life-world." His philosophy emphasized the intentions or the actions of active, conscious persons, as compared to the linguistic structures that analytic philosophers described.
 - E.** Husserl argued that the consciousness and the experience of the knowing human subject makes the world meaningful.
- V.** The themes of phenomenology, like the main ideas of logical positivism or analytical philosophy, thus contributed to a wider cultural rejection of metaphysical traditions.
- A.** In this view, human beings had no recourse to a transcendent realm or higher being that would give a secure foundation to knowledge and ethics.
 - B.** Philosophy could examine language or human consciousness, both of which gave meaning to the world, but it could not show any other meaning in knowledge or history (as Hegel found in the Spirit).
 - C.** Linguistic philosophers saw limits on what philosophy could know; phenomenology soon found limits in communicating consciousness.

Essential Reading:

Edmund Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, translated and introduced by Lee Hardy, pp. 15-55.

Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, 2nd ed., pp. 23-81.

Supplementary Reading:

Barry Smith and David Woodruff Smith, editors, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, pp. 1-37.

Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, pp. 13-32, 167-201.

Questions to Consider:

1. Did the "linguistic turn" in analytical philosophy destroy the classical philosophical aspiration for transcendent wisdom?
2. Do you think consciousness gives meaning to the objects of the world?

Lecture Sixteen

Revisiting Marxism and Liberalism

Scope: The rise of Stalinism, the development of fascism and Nazism, and the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s pushed many writers toward a new engagement with public issues. In this lecture, we look at several theoretical responses to the crises that had become so apparent by the 1930s: the emergence of (1) a revisionist (less economic) Marxist theory in the works of writers such as Theodor Adorno and Antonio Gramsci and (2) a revisionist liberal (less laissez-faire) theory in the works of John Maynard Keynes and his critic Friedrich Hayek. Both the Marxists and the liberals challenged important aspects of their respective theoretical traditions, but they held very different views about how Europeans might best move beyond the crisis of the 1930s.

Outline

- I. We have discussed the cultural effects of World War I, especially the war's impact on literature and the arts, but the war also transformed the social and political world.
 - A. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia led, by the early 1930s, to a new kind of Marxist state—the dictatorial communism of Joseph Stalin.
 1. Meanwhile, in response to the war, Russia's communist revolution, and economic problems, the Fascist and Nazi movements gained power in Italy (1922) and Germany (1933).
 2. The dictatorships of Benito Mussolini and Adolph Hitler forced European intellectuals to rethink liberal political and economic ideas.
 - B. These political events in Russia, Italy, and Germany coincided also with the great economic crisis that began in 1929 and continued throughout the 1930s.
 1. The political and economic problems of the 1930s pushed many intellectuals toward a new concern with social issues.
 2. The postwar literary and artistic fascination with the internal life did not completely disappear in the 1930s; for example, Joyce was writing *Finnegans Wake* during the 1930s.
 3. But the 1930s have generally been portrayed in intellectual history as a time of intense political engagements; writers chose sides among fascism and communism and liberalism.
 - C. Classical liberalism was on the defensive. Liberalism had always stressed the autonomy of individuals and the role of individual rights in modern societies.

1. By the 1930s, these ideas had been widely challenged by World War I and by the rise of communism and fascism.
2. Intellectuals in the 1930s were, thus, concerned with the relation between individuals and society.
3. Most intellectual critics challenged traditional liberalism, or fascism, or communism—or they supported one of these political doctrines; they felt obliged to take more political positions.
4. Although many intellectuals criticized classical liberalism, they also could not fit easily into fascism or communism; they often stressed individual creativity in ways that challenged fascism and communism.

D. The challenge for intellectuals was to work out a new analysis of the relations between individuals and society in the conditions of the modern world.

1. This kind of social analysis required a theoretical response to Stalinism, fascism, and the Great Depression.
2. In many cases, intellectuals had no choice but to make political choices in the 1930s: Would they support or oppose fascism; would they leave Russia or Italy or Germany?
3. Ideological conflicts of the era forced people to take sides.

E. The influence of this new context appears most notably in the new Marxists and the new liberal theorists of the 1930s.

1. Although some intellectuals, such as the poet Ezra Pound and the philosopher Martin Heidegger, were attracted to fascism, most writers (outside Italy and Germany) became hostile to fascism.
2. Fascism tended to be strongly anti-intellectual and to celebrate action over thought and the crowd over the ideas of individuals.

F. Yet many social theorists were also disenchanted with orthodox Marxism, especially as they learned about the Stalinist repression in the Soviet Union.

1. One common intellectual response was to work out a new kind of Marxism or liberalism that rejected both Stalinism and fascism.
2. Classical Marxism and liberalism stressed the rationality of human beings and economic knowledge, but this was revised in the 1930s.
3. Some Marxists wanted to combine Marx and Freud or to rethink the role of culture in social and political life. We can see these themes in the German "Frankfurt School" and in the works of Antonio Gramsci.
4. At the same time, liberals debated the value of classical laissez-faire economic theory—a debate that divided John Maynard Keynes and Friedrich Hayek in England.

G. We will discuss both of these "revisionist" patterns and emphasize the idea that the revision of "classical" social or economic theories was as

important as the revisions in all other intellectual fields; it was also a response to the context.

II. One important strand of Marxist social theory attempted to revise Marx by analyzing the influence of Hegelianism on Marx's early work and by linking Freud to Marx.

A. Such themes emerged among theorists at the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research; this group, known in intellectual history as the Frankfurt School, eventually included such theorists as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

1. The Institute was founded in 1923, but it was dissolved after the Nazis came to power in 1933; its members fled into exile (most to the United States).
2. The thinkers wanted to create a new kind of critical Marxism or critical theory that rejected Stalinism and classical liberalism.

B. The leaders of the Frankfurt School often stressed the Hegelian origins of Marxism; they believed that the Hegelian view of historical change was lacking both in Stalinism and liberal political theories.

1. Frankfurt School theorists criticized the excessive positivism of modern communism and criticized Marxists for losing sight of noneconomic aspects of human activity and culture.
2. Adorno (1903–1969), for example, wrote about music and the nonrational aspects of human identity. Marx had not understood the unconscious, and Freud had not understood economics.
3. The goal was to link psychology and economics, and Nazism offered plenty of material to analyze. What was the appeal of such movements?

C. The critical theory of the Frankfurt School drew on the young Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (rediscovered in the early 1930s).

1. These texts were more Hegelian than his later work; they stressed the problem of alienation in mass societies, which seemed as relevant for conditions in the Soviet Union as for conditions in capitalist factories.
2. How could alienation and repression be overcome in both capitalist and communist societies? Freud could be useful for answering this question because he showed how repression shaped civilization itself.

D. For Frankfurt School theorists such as Adorno, social reformers had to deal with economic institutions *and* with the influence of the unconscious mind.

III. The problem of alienation and the influence of culture were also important to the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937); he was a

member of the communist party who was jailed by the fascists and died in prison.

A. His most important writings were collected in a work called *Prison Notebooks*, which was published after World War II.

1. Gramsci criticized fascism and orthodox Marxism; his goal was to develop a nontotalitarian communism based on broad local social movements and on intellectuals who supported the lower classes.
2. He thought the “economism” of most Marxists blinded them to the reciprocal relation between culture and political or economic life.
3. Culture created the “hegemony” of ruling ideas and groups; therefore, Marxists should challenge the cultural hegemony of capitalism—a task that required a cultural movement that differed from Lenin's Bolshevism.
4. Instead of top-down communism, Gramsci wanted intellectuals and the masses to be “organically” connected in popular social movements.

B. Gramsci's objective (like the goal of Frankfurt School theorists) was to find a nontotalitarian form of socialism; this would resist new oppressions.

1. It also emphasized an open-ended dialectical process in which individuals would continue a critical analysis of culture and society.
2. These new Marxisms, however, still called for a new socialist system.

IV. The liberals had a different response to the economic and social crisis of the 1930s; the ideas of John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) revised classical liberalism.

A. Keynes was the son of an economist; he grew up in Cambridge and became a close friend of writers and artists in the Bloomsbury circle.

1. He married a Russian ballerina (Lydia Lopokova) in 1925; he was also well known for his journalism, and his investments made him wealthy.
2. Keynes became famous after writing a short book about the dangers of demanding excessive reparations from Germany in 1919.
3. He said that Germany needed to participate equally in Europe's economy.

B. Keynes strongly opposed socialism, but he began to argue that the capitalist market system needed to be managed by government interventions.

1. This was his response to the crisis of the 1930s; he explained his ideas in *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936).

2. This book rejected the classical laissez-faire view of the economy and argued that people did not invest enough money during economic downturns; the market could not guarantee employment or stability.
 - C. Keynes thus revised classical economics by calling for governments to provide the investments that private capital alone would not produce.
 - D. Keynes's theory quickly became the dominant approach to economics and government policy; economists at Cambridge promoted these ideas.
 - E. This theory did not call for government ownership of the means of productive enterprises, but it assumed that government must play an active role in the economy, especially to deal with unemployment.
- V. Keynes's revision of classical liberal economic theory also elicited strong criticism from economists at the London School of Economics.
- A. The most important critic was Friedrich Hayek (1899–1992), who was from Vienna. In such works as *Prices and Production* (1931) Hayek argued that the market itself could resolve economic problems; even unemployment would be overcome if the economy were able to “unwind” freely.
 - B. More generally, Hayek argued that government planning of the economy would lead to the demise of democracy. This was the argument of his famous book *The Road to Serfdom* (1944).
 - C. Hayek stood apart from the leading social and economic theories of the 1930s; he condemned all forms of Marxism and Keynes's revised liberalism. He shared the widespread theoretical interest in relations between the individual and society but defended older liberal economic ideas.

Essential Reading:

Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings, 1916–1935*, edited by David Forgacs, sections on “Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc” and “Intellectuals and Education”, pp. 189–221, 300–322.

Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, pp. 1–71.

Supplementary Reading:

Robert Skidelsky, *Keynes*, pp. 1–12, 70–90.

Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, pp. 86–112.

Questions to Consider:

1. Can the economic theories of Marx and the psychological theories of Freud be combined in a coherent social theory?
2. Whose economic ideas have greater influence today—those of Keynes or Hayek?

Lecture Seventeen

Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust

Scope: The rise of Nazism created a new political context for European intellectuals and provoked a wide range of responses in the 1930s and 1940s. This lecture discusses three contrasting examples of the intellectual response to Adolph Hitler and the actions of Germany's Nazi regime. It first summarizes the ideas of Martin Heidegger and describes his support for the Nazi movement. It then notes the intellectual resistance to the Nazi regime, with special reference to the actions of the philosopher Hannah Arendt and the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Their lives and writings became eloquent statements of opposition to totalitarianism and to what Arendt called the “banality of evil.” Both these writers described the struggle to resist totalitarian regimes and defend human morality against modern uses of power and technology.

Outline

- I. We have seen how intellectuals responded to the First World War and to other political and economic problems of the 1930s. Some writers could perhaps ignore these problems, but almost nobody could avoid the consequences of Nazism.
 - A. By the early 1940s, every major European nation was at war (except for Spain, and the Spanish had just gone through a devastating civil war).
 1. The question for all intellectuals came down to the issue of Nazism: How should one respond to this new totalitarian regime?
 2. Like other Europeans, the intellectuals were divided. This division offers a remarkable example of how every intellectual's life and work are connected to the historical context in which he or she lives.
 - B. I'll discuss this relation between intellectuals and the political-military context of the 1930s and 1940s by looking at three notable German intellectuals: Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.
 1. These people represent three different responses to Nazism: affiliation, exile, and internal resistance (leading to death).
 2. Their actions exemplify the modern intellectual's struggle to deal with powerful, violent political regimes.
- II. The history of Nazi Germany is a vast, much debated subject, but the key problems of opposition or support for the regime emerged quickly and

remained in place from 1933 to 1945. Hitler came to power (legally) in late January 1933.

A. He almost immediately gained “emergency powers” and soon launched the persecution of Jews, outlawed all political parties and trade unions (except Nazi organizations), and established police control over the whole society.

1. The Nazis militarized German culture, established concentration camps for people they disliked, and prepared for a new war.
2. The war began in September 1939, and the Nazi conquests led to the systematic genocidal plan to create a “new European order.”
3. The culmination of the Nazi campaign was, of course, the Holocaust, the deadly outcome of Nazism that led to the deaths of at least six million Jews and other so-called “non-Aryan” people.

B. Nazism was the unavoidable issue of the era, and its impact was felt in Europe and elsewhere long after the Nazis were finally defeated.

III. Martin Heidegger became one of the most well known intellectuals to embrace the Nazi regime; his actions remain a major blight on his intellectual reputation.

A. Heidegger (1889–1976) came from a pious lower-middle class Catholic family in southern Germany; he planned to become a priest.

1. He studied philosophy instead and became an assistant of Edmund Husserl at the University of Freiburg (1919–1923). He married Elfriede Petri, who was Protestant, and renounced his Catholicism in 1919.
2. He went to teach at the University of Marburg, where he worked on his most important book, *Being and Time* (1927). He then succeeded Husserl as a philosophy professor at the University of Freiburg.

B. Heidegger argued that Western philosophy did not give adequate attention to the problem of Being. Even Husserl, whose account of consciousness was important for Heidegger, did not explain how to be conscious of Being.

1. Heidegger referred to the idea of Being as “*dasein*”; it is the core of human existence—the reality that enables one to say, “I am.”
2. Heidegger said most people do not want to think about Being or about the way in which one’s Being is located in time.
3. If one becomes aware of Being, then it is possible to see how others have imposed on this Being—and one can resist this imposition.

C. Heidegger challenged the Western scientific and positivist tendency to reduce Being to rigid categories or simple identities; he said that Being was more fluid.

1. He became interested in more mystical forms of thought. His critique of Western philosophy, as well as his emphasis on Being, had a great influence on later thinkers, including existentialists, such as Sartre.

2. But Heidegger also came to believe that the German people could find ways to revitalize their organic Being in the Nazi movement.

3. He saw Nazism as an alternative to modern industrial society, which he condemned for its indifference to Being, and he praised the “inner truth and greatness of the [Nazi] movement.”

D. His sympathy for the Nazi movement led to his appointment as rector at the University of Freiburg in April 1933. He revised the curriculum to serve the “organic unity” of the German spirit and linked his philosophy to Nazism.

1. He also supported the removal of Jewish faculty and staff from the university; he joined the Nazi Party, remaining a member until 1945.

2. He resigned as rector of Freiburg University in 1934 (apparently unhappy with the delays in his proposed reforms).

3. He did not play an active role in the Nazi movement after this time, but he never renounced his actions or affiliations, even after 1945.

E. Heidegger’s links with Nazism have been used to discredit his philosophy; others say that his ideas should be separated from those actions, but even those who defend his philosophy see his actions as an intellectual blindness.

IV. At the time Heidegger was promoting the Nazi program of national renewal at Freiburg, one of his most brilliant students, Hannah Arendt, was fleeing into exile.

A. Arendt (1906–1975) was born into a Jewish family in Hanover; her father died when she was only seven, but her mother encouraged her education.

1. She studied philosophy with Heidegger at the University of Marburg; they became lovers when she was eighteen, and she admired his work.

2. He was then thirty-five and played the role of an intellectual “father.”

B. But the affair eventually broke off, Heidegger settled in Freiburg, and Arendt went to Berlin; she began to face the pressure of anti-Semitism.

1. She became active in Zionist political circles. After the Nazis seized power, she was arrested (she was doing research on anti-Semitism).

2. She was released from jail after eight days, but the experience convinced her that she must leave Germany (August 1933); she moved to Paris.

- C. Arendt criticized intellectuals, such as her old mentor and lover Heidegger, who were supporting the Nazis; she believed that intellectuals must resist.
1. When the Germans occupied France, Arendt and her husband, Heinrich Blücher, managed to escape; they reached New York in May 1941.
 2. From her exile base in New York, Arendt tried to understand why a totalitarian regime had gained absolute power in Germany.
- D. This intellectual project led eventually to publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), an influential analysis of modern totalitarian systems. Arendt tried to explain how these systems held power.
1. Arendt stressed that racism, imperialism, and anti-Semitism prepared the way for totalitarian movements, but she did not see this situation as a specific or unique aspect of German culture.
 2. She emphasized that people joined the “crowds” of a nationalist, racist movement because such crowds gave lonely people a place to belong.
 3. Totalitarian movements were not simply dictatorships; they had strong support from much of the population, who embraced the “leader.”
 4. Such regimes also sustained their power by the use of terror.
- E. Where Heidegger had seen Nazism as an expression of revitalized national Being, Arendt saw the movement as a terrorizing form of modernity.
1. She also analyzed the peculiar modernity of the Holocaust in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963), which discussed the trial of a bureaucratic manager of genocide.
 2. This book became controversial because critics said that Arendt ignored Eichmann’s own guilt; she portrayed him as a vacuous cog in a system.
 3. This is what she meant by the banality of evil—ordinary people doing murderous work that was simply a job in a modern office building.
- F. In this respect, Nazism and the Holocaust were part of a modern, impersonal process in which individuals abdicated moral and political responsibility.
1. In other works, Arendt advocated a commitment to classical (Greek) ideals of a republican public sphere of political life.
 2. Her wider theme, however, suggested that intellectuals must act against totalitarian systems.
 3. Arendt later reestablished a friendship with Heidegger, but the old friends would never come to a common understanding of Nazism.

- V. While Arendt was developing her analysis of totalitarianism in New York, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was working for the German Resistance, then sitting in prison cells.
- A. Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) was part of a well-to-do German Protestant family. His father was a professor of psychiatry at the University of Berlin.
1. Despite his father’s objections, the young Bonhoeffer studied theology at the University of Berlin. After receiving a doctorate, he spent a year at Union Theological Seminary in New York.
 2. He became a friend of the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr in New York, then returned to teach theology at the University of Berlin.
- B. Bonhoeffer’s career was advancing until the Nazis came to power in 1933. He said that Christians must support the Jews and argued that Nazism was completely at odds with Christian teachings.
- C. In 1939, Bonhoeffer decided to accept an invitation to return to New York, where he could teach some courses at Union Theological Seminary. After he arrived in America, however, he felt uncomfortable about his separation from Germany; he returned to Berlin in July.
- D. Soon after the war began, Bonhoeffer joined a secret resistance group and participated in a plan to get Jews out of Germany.
1. He was arrested in April 1943 and was executed about a month before the end of the war (April 9, 1945).
 2. His prison letters and other writings became an eloquent testimony to the modern struggle against totalitarian violence.

Essential Reading:

Hannah Arendt, *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, edited with an introduction by Peter Baehr, excerpts in sections on “Totalitarianism,” and “Banality and Conscience: Eichmann Trial and Its Implications,” pp. 75–140, 313–365.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Writings*, selected and with an introduction by Robert Coles, excerpts from “The Cost of Discipleship” and “Letters and Papers from Prison,” pp. 53–64, 115–127.

Supplementary Reading:

Martin Heidegger, “The Self-Assertion of the German University,” and Hannah Arendt, “For Martin Heidegger’s Eightieth Birthday,” both in Gunther Neske and Emil Kettering, editors, *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*, pp. 5–13, 207–217.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why is it difficult for intellectuals to defy their national governments?
2. Do you think a writer’s political actions and personal behavior can discredit his or her writings in other spheres, such as philosophy and literature?

Lecture Eighteen

Existential Philosophy

Scope: The horrifying, disorienting events of the Second World War influenced the postwar philosophical themes of existentialism. The existentialists wrote books that nonspecialist readers could understand, in part because they often used literature to portray their views of human experience, freedom, and personal choices. This lecture discusses existential philosophy in France, focusing on the lives and ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Both these writers were affected by experiences in World War II, both wrote novels about the “absurdity” of existence, and both believed that individuals must use their freedom to take self-defining action in the social world. They took different political positions during the Cold War, however, and their emphasis on individual freedom elicited criticism from those who stressed the social constraints on personal actions.

Outline

- I. The ideas and themes of twentieth-century philosophy can never be explained as simply a “reflection” of the era’s terrible military and political events, yet the philosophers (like everyone else) were forced to respond to the world in which they were living.
 - A. We’ve seen how German philosophers and social theorists made difficult choices during the Nazi era, but their situation was not unique.
 1. Nazi armies and occupation forces took control of other European nations, forcing intellectuals in France and elsewhere to choose sides.
 2. If flight became impossible, writers (and everyone else) had to decide between collaboration, resistance, or the silence of “internal exile.”
 - B. This was the context in which French existential philosophy emerged during the early 1940s. Stressing the absurdity of human existence and the human freedom to make choices, existentialism seemed to fit in the postwar context.
 1. The most important existentialist writers—Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Simone de Beauvoir—responded to the German occupation of France and stressed the importance of taking personal action.
 2. This lecture discusses existential thought with reference to this context and suggests why it gained so much attention in the decade after 1945.

- C. The broad cultural interest in existential philosophy far exceeded the public interest in the technical linguistic themes of Britain’s logical positivism.
 - D. The public response to existentialism grew in part from the literary skill of existentialist authors, who often wrote novels, but the philosophy was also popular because it affirmed the value of human action.
 - II. In contrast to the British linguistic philosophical concern with epistemology, Continental philosophy stressed the problems of being and consciousness.
 - A. These ontological issues had gained prominence in the writings of Husserl and Heidegger, both of whom analyzed the nature of existence.
 1. Husserl had explored the ways that a conscious subject becomes aware of the objects and the world around it; Heidegger had said that people must act to define their own Being in the realm of time.
 2. Similar issues emerged in the work of the German philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), who argued that people must act with free will.
 3. Jaspers said that awareness of death creates anxiety, but it is out of this anxiety that people choose to pursue an active life.
 - B. French existentialists, especially Sartre, drew on these ideas to develop their own ideas about free human action.
 1. They explored the phenomenological question of how one becomes conscious of “being” in the world; then they linked consciousness to free actions that would affirm the individual’s existence.
 2. German influences were crucial, both in the realm of thought and in the painful realm of war, repression, and military occupation.
 - III. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) was the key figure in French existential philosophy. He was born into a well-to-do, highly educated family, the son of a French naval officer.
 - A. Sartre’s father died when Jean-Paul was only fifteen months old. He was raised by his mother and mother’s parents, Protestants from Alsace. The family was the Schweitzers, which included the famous Dr. Albert Schweitzer.
 1. Sartre was a bookish but happy child—at least until his mother remarried when he was eleven (he detested his stepfather).
 2. He was educated at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, where he studied philosophy, graduated first in his class, and met Simone de Beauvoir, the brilliant fellow student who became his life partner.
 3. Sartre and Beauvoir agreed to live a totally “transparent” relationship, to travel together, and to accept multiple sexual relations with others.

4. This relationship endured to the end of their lives (with tensions); they never married and the friendship survived all their many affairs.
- B.** After completing his studies, Sartre taught philosophy at a *lycée* in Le Havre. He began to write fiction and developed a plan to illustrate philosophical themes through literature, which was an unusual approach to philosophy.
1. In 1933–1934, he had a fellowship to work at the French Institute in Berlin; he was in Germany during Hitler’s first year in power.
 2. But Sartre was not interested in politics at this time; he studied the philosophy of Husserl and other German authors.
 3. His first published novel, *Nausea* (1938), showed a phenomenological quest for consciousness. The main character, Antoine Roquentin, explores both his physical and mental being, like an object to observe.
 4. The pain of this exploration (it induces feelings of nausea) became a literary example of the existential crisis that leads toward the self.
- C.** Sartre had difficulty getting his work published and remained little known when France went to war with Germany in 1939. He was conscripted into the French army, then captured with his unit in June 1940.
1. He spent nine months in a German prisoner of war camp before being released in March 1941; he remained in France during the occupation.
 2. Before the war, he had shown little interest in public action of any kind, but the war and German occupation pushed him in a new direction; he joined (as a writer) in the Resistance and began to write about choices.
 3. After the liberation, he made a four-month trip to America (1945), then became an extremely famous public intellectual in Paris—like Voltaire.
 4. He wrote in many genres, including fiction, drama, philosophy, and essays; his famous essay “Existentialism Is a Humanism” (1945) was an example of his ability to popularize ideas for a broad public.
- D.** Sartre argued that the world has no intrinsic meaning because there is no God or higher reality to give meaning or truth to human beings.
1. Sartre was an atheistic existentialist (i.e., closer to Nietzsche than to Kierkegaard on this issue), and he stressed that individuals are both alone and alienated from one another.
 2. There is no essence; there is only existence or, as Sartre puts it, “existence precedes essence,” which means that there is no eternal soul.

3. Individuals must pass through an existential crisis in which they recognize the absurdities of existence: inevitable death, solitude, difficulty of communicating with others (Kierkegaard’s theme).
- E.** Yet the painful confrontation with the absurd, meaningless human condition need not lead to complete despair; the individual can see that human consciousness exists in spite of the absurdity.
1. Human beings have the freedom to act, and the human mind and human acts can give meaning to individual lives and to the social world.
 2. The meaning of individual life comes through actions that each person takes; there is no fixed essence, but there is human action.
 3. In other words, you are what you do, and you define yourself by your acts. In Sartre’s words, “Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself,” and “full responsibility” for his existence rests on him.
- F.** Because human beings have no essence, they are always in a process of becoming; they have a radical freedom to become what they choose to be.
1. But most people refuse to act with this freedom; they have “bad faith” because they let others define who they are.
 2. To be an authentic human being, Sartre said, you must use your freedom. You are not an artist unless you create or a political person unless you act politically—you cannot just talk in the café.
 3. Your actions will always define your existence; you must make choices—and even refusing to make choices is a choice.
 4. In the early postwar period, Sartre was critical of communism, but in the early 1950s, he tried to link Marxism and existentialism. This angered many of his friends and allies; it seemed to violate his themes.
- G.** Sartre became an advocate for anti-colonial revolutions; he stopped writing fiction and gradually lost influence in the later 1950s.
1. Yet his account of how human beings must create meaning through free, decisive actions and choices retained cultural influence.
 2. He also had cultural influence through his journal, *Le Temps Modernes*.
- IV.** This emphasis on the need to take action in an otherwise absurd world appeared also in the work of Albert Camus (1913–1960), who nevertheless denied that he was an existentialist and eventually had a bitter falling out with Sartre.
- A.** Camus was born in Algeria; he had a Spanish mother and a French father, but his father was killed at the battle of the Marne in 1914.
1. Like Sartre, he grew up close to his mother; she lived in poverty and supported herself by cleaning houses in Algiers.

2. Camus was an outstanding student who won scholarships and was able to attend the University of Algiers.
 3. He married (1934), but the marriage dissolved within two years. He set off on travels and began to write; he later married again (to Francine Faure) and had two children.
- B.** He suffered from tuberculosis and did not serve in the military, but during the war and German occupation, he was an active journalist.
1. Camus wrote for Resistance publications and eventually became an editor of *Combat*, a newspaper that continued after the liberation.
 2. In the midst of his journalism, however, he was also writing novels and drama. His first novel, *The Stranger* (1942), portrayed an alienated character, Meursault, who murders an Arab man.
 3. Meursault never seems to find anything that is important to him; even his own mother's death evokes no feeling from him, and he goes to his own death with a strong sense of the absurdity of life.
- C.** Yet Camus moved on in his work to affirm that human choices could make a difference in the world, as he suggested in *The Plague* (1947).
1. This novel used the metaphor of a plague in a north African city to evoke the experience of World War II and the Occupation.
 2. The main character, Dr. Rieux, struggles to act against forces he cannot control; he must work "to fight the plague."
- D.** Camus believed that "plagues" took many forms, but the greatest dangers emerged when human beings could not be free.
- V.** Despite their differences, Sartre and Camus came out of the Second World War with a shared belief that human freedom could make a difference in an absurd world. This idea of human action in a senseless world was appealing after 1945.

Essential Reading:

Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism Is a Humanism," in *European Existentialism*, edited by Nina Langiulli, pp. 391–416.

Albert Camus, *The Plague*, part II, pp. 63–155.

Supplementary Reading:

Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre: A Life*, pp. 159–205, 247–269.

Herbert R. Lottman, *Albert Camus: A Biography*, pp. 425–438, 481–507.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you agree with Sartre's claim that "you are what you do"?
2. Is existentialism ultimately an optimistic or pessimistic view of human life?

Lecture Nineteen

Literature and Memory in Postwar Culture

Scope: The traumatic events of twentieth-century European history provoked responses in every literary genre as writers struggled with the same problem: How could one make sense of brutal totalitarian regimes, modern warfare, and the Holocaust? This lecture looks at three authors who explored the modern European crisis from different cultural and personal perspectives: Primo Levi, George Orwell, and Günther Grass. All these writers sought to understand how lies and dehumanizing, irrational mass murder had shattered modern European civilization. Responding to what they had seen in their own lives, Levi, Orwell, and Grass wanted to remind readers of recent horrors and help prevent the recurrence of such deadly events in the future.

Outline

- I. The violence and mass murder of the Second World War went far beyond anything that modern Europeans had ever seen, especially among civilians; some estimates place the total number of war-related deaths at 60 million (including deaths in Asia).
 - A. The number of civilians killed in Europe alone can never be known, but at least 6 million died in the Holocaust and millions more died in bombed-out cities, forced labor camps, and brutal military reprisals.
 1. Postwar intellectuals faced painful, almost unanswerable questions about the sources of this mass violence and cruelty in modern history.
 2. Obviously, militarism, racism, and extremist ideologies had led to the war, but how could so many people cooperate in such policies?
 - B. The attempt to describe and understand the scale of the tragedy became one of the most important themes in subsequent European cultural history.
 1. The war, the Holocaust, and the terrible "banality of evil" (as Hannah Arendt described it) remain even now inescapable problems for anyone who tries to understand twentieth-century European history.
 2. The search for understanding can begin, among other places, in the writings of people who managed to survive the war's terrible events.
 - C. These literary responses to the war appear in the works of every postwar European culture, but I want to focus on three writers: Primo Levi, George Orwell, and Günther Grass.

1. These authors had very different experiences, yet all were determined to make their readers remember and analyze the meaning of the war.
 2. They came from different societies (Italy, England, Germany), but their books attracted readers across all national boundaries.
 3. They all show how writing was an essential tool for cultural memory.
- II. The struggle to make sense of the recent violence was especially painful for those few people who actually survived imprisonment in a Nazi death camp.
- A. This was the story of the Jewish Italian writer Primo Levi (1919–1987), who spent ten months in the death camp at Auschwitz.
1. Levi grew up in a Jewish family in Turin, but he apparently felt little specific awareness of his Jewish identity as a young man.
 2. He studied chemistry at the University of Turin and received a doctorate, though while he was there, the fascists banned Jewish students from future admissions to the university.
- B. He began to work as a chemist, then joined an anti-fascist partisan group after the Germans occupied northern Italy to protect Mussolini.
1. Levi was soon arrested, however, and sent to a prison camp in Italy; he was held with more than 600 other Jewish prisoners who were deported to Auschwitz in February 1944.
 2. Levi was one of the very few deportees to survive Auschwitz. As a chemist, he was put to work in a laboratory that the chemical company I. G. Farben operated at Auschwitz.
- C. Levi always described himself as a random survivor; he was in the infirmary as the Russian army approached (in January 1945) and the German guards fled.
1. After his liberation from the camp, he wandered around Eastern Europe for almost ten months before reaching Turin in October 1945.
 2. He soon began writing about his experiences and produced a book called *If This Is a Man* (1947); it was later republished and translated into English as *Survival in Auschwitz*.
 3. He also wrote an account of his long trip home (*The Reawakening* [1963]) and other important works in the 1970s and 1980s.
 4. He worked for more than thirty years as a chemist for a paint company and struggled with depression until committing suicide in 1987.
- D. Levi's description of what he saw at Auschwitz is one of the most powerful memoirs ever written; he wrote in the dispassionate style of a scientist.

1. He seems to have lived always with a sense of guilt about his own survival, but he was also determined to tell the story of Auschwitz to ensure that the dead would never be forgotten.
 2. He wrote about the humiliating treatment of prisoners, struggles to find food, the brutality of the guards, and prisoner betrayals.
 3. Levi described the dehumanizing, brutal processes of genocide as a complete breakdown of human rationality. Survival was a matter of blind fate, and prisoners were stripped of all human dignity.
 4. The images evoked the nightmares of Dante's *Inferno*—a place in which the damned must live without hope and without escape.
- E. Reduced to nothing but a number (174517) that was tattooed on his arm, Levi felt that all human feeling, reason, and solidarity were taken from prisoners.
1. "Here the struggle to survive is without respite," he wrote, "because everyone is desperately and ferociously alone."
 2. The horror of this experience emerged from Levi's remarkable book, yet he also wanted to show (by the act of writing) that memory and moral judgments could survive, so long as someone told the story.
 3. Levi's books, along with the memoirs of others, expressed the deep desire to pull human meaning and life from the ruins of the war.
- III. Few writers could relate the horrific experiences of a death camp, but George Orwell found other themes and miseries to describe in his postwar novels.
- A. Orwell (1903–1950), whose real name was Eric Blair, grew up in southern England and attended the famous "public school" at Eton.
1. He then went off to serve in the imperial police in Burma, avoiding the typical privileged education at Cambridge or Oxford.
 2. After five years in Asia, he decided to become a writer, returned to England, lived for a time in Paris, and began to worry about politics.
 3. He went to Spain during the Spanish Civil War and joined the anti-fascist troops in Catalonia; he was wounded in the throat in May 1937.
 4. Before leaving Spain, he witnessed a communist crackdown on other anti-fascist groups, including the socialists and anarchists.
- B. The encounter with communists in Spain provoked concerns about political ideologies that produce repression. Orwell himself was a firm democratic socialist.
1. Orwell learned before World War II that he had tuberculosis and was unable to serve in the British army during the war; he wrote about the war for newspapers and found himself deeply involved in events.

2. He was in London during the massive bombing of the city. He and his wife (Eileen O'Shaughnessy) were even bombed out of their home.
 3. In February 1945, he went to France as a war correspondent and pushed on to Germany. Meanwhile, his wife died after surgery in England.
- C. Orwell emerged from the war with a deep sense of anxiety about the direction of modern society; he worried that totalitarianism would persist in new ways.
1. His satirical novel *Animal Farm* (1945) warned about the dangers of communist dictatorships (he remained a democratic socialist).
 2. He wanted to make his warnings about totalitarianism even more pointed in his later novel, *1984* (1949), which gained a large audience.
- D. Orwell wrote the book while he was, essentially, dying from tuberculosis; it has been criticized for its lack of artistic subtlety and nuance.
1. Yet the book expressed a deep fear of totalitarianism that Orwell had drawn from his encounters with fascism and communism.
 2. The book portrays a society controlled by a single political party, the "Inner Party," whose leader is known as Big Brother. The party controls all definitions of truth and uses a kind of "doublethink."
 3. Thought Police keep track of everyone and promote such ideas as "War Is Peace," and "Ignorance Is Truth." Individuals have no autonomy.
 4. The main character, Winston Smith, learns that "Big Brother is watching" all the time and defending the "higher good."
- E. The party also controls all information about the past so that "history" serves only the interest of the ruling group. For Orwell, this was the modern danger.
1. Orwell's story differed from Levi's, but he, too, was worried about the loss of reason, judgment, memory, and individual dignity.
 2. The end of World War II did not mean that the problem had gone away; Orwell's book soon joined the Cold War literary canon.
- IV. The literary attempt to represent the experience and memory of totalitarianism and war could also be found in the postwar German writing of Günther Grass.
- A. Grass (1927–) grew up in a Catholic family in the German city of Danzig, which is now the city of Gdansk in Poland. He was five years old when Hitler came to power and his education was strongly affected by Nazism.
1. Danzig became part of the Third Reich in September 1939, and young Grass soon enrolled in the Hitler Youth.

2. He entered the German army in the last phase of the war and was wounded in late fighting; he ended up in an American POW camp.
- B. Out of this disorienting experience, he began to reevaluate all his earlier life; he learned about the death camps and heard stories that he disbelieved at first. But he later reported that his whole view of Germany was altered.
- C. He decided that he must keep the memory of what Germans had done (and not done) during the Nazi years in view of the German public.
1. Grass became active in a new association of writers, the Group 47, which had been founded in 1947 to revive German literature after the war and to defend the traditions of Enlightenment tolerance.
 2. He settled in West Germany, married a Swiss woman (Anna Schwarz), and started to write a novel that would become *The Tin Drum* (1959).
- D. This novel told the story of a boy named Oskar who, at age three, stopped growing, but played a drum and watched his society during the rise of Nazism, World War II, and the postwar era.
1. He is not exactly a hero, but unlike the adults, he refuses to join the frenzy for Nazism. His best friend is a Jewish toy merchant who kills himself because of Nazi anti-Semitism.
 2. Oskar (and Grass) rejects dogmatic language and actions.
 3. The novel shows the danger of conformity, simple clichés, and refusal to take responsible actions; the style is somewhat surreal.
- E. Grass wrote other novels on these issues (*The Tin Drum* was part of a Danzig Trilogy), but he also threw himself into political action in the Socialist Party.
- F. But Grass's postwar works are not about democratic socialism; they are, like the books of Levi and Orwell, part of the literary response to modern horrors.
- G. Grass wanted Germans to remember what they had done and to defend reason, tolerance, and patient reformism in a world that must be rebuilt.

Essential Reading:

Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, pp. 9–173.

George Orwell, *1984*, pp. 5–87.

Supplementary Reading:

Julian Preece, *The Life and Work of Günter Grass*, pp. 34–67.

Questions to Consider:

1. Were the events of the Holocaust unique in human history?
2. Does Orwell's *1984* portray dangers that exist only in totalitarian states?

Lecture Twenty

Redefining Modern Feminism

Scope: Intellectual and political interest in human freedom and personal choices contributed to a new wave of feminist thought that sought to describe and change traditional restrictions on the rights of women. As women gradually gained the right to vote, feminists developed a more general assessment of other social, cultural, and economic constraints that women faced in both their private and public lives. This lecture notes three “waves” of twentieth-century feminist thought, giving particular attention to the ideas of Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir. European feminism drew many of its subsequent cultural themes from Beauvoir’s influential book *The Second Sex* (1949), but her existential account of human identity also provoked criticisms from theorists who argued that language and the unconscious mind shape gender identities.

Outline

- I. The struggle to define and defend human dignity and autonomy amid constraining or destructive modern social contexts extended also to movements for women’s rights.
 - A. Feminism became one of the most successful modern “isms” in that many of the traditional restrictions on women’s voting rights, economic rights, education, and personal freedom disappeared in the twentieth century.
 1. But changes in some spheres of political and economic life also created new awareness of the cultural limits that still shaped women’s lives.
 2. The movement for women’s rights evolved through what are often called three “waves” of modern feminist thought.
 - B. The first wave was the (generally) successful campaign for voting rights; it was led by feminist activists, such as Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928).
 1. Pankhurst was one of the English suffragists who participated in a sometimes violent campaign for women’s voting rights before World War I. English women got the right to vote at the end of that war.
 2. Women also gained voting rights in Germany at that time, but they could not vote in France and Italy until the end of World War II.

- C. The acquisition of voting rights did not end the debate about women’s role in public life; it was a long time before they began to hold government offices.
 1. In the aftermath of the successful campaign for voting rights, however, some women started to develop a second wave of feminist writing that stressed the social, economic, and cultural constraints on women.
 2. This new phase of feminism developed in various national contexts, but it gained particular influence in England and France through the work of such writers as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir.
 3. This lecture focuses on this second phase of twentieth-century feminist thought and emphasizes the wide influence of Beauvoir’s book *The Second Sex*.
 4. Both Woolf and Beauvoir urged women to pursue a new cultural liberation that would extend beyond the realm of political rights.
 - D. By the late twentieth century, however, a third wave of feminist thought criticized Beauvoir for ignoring the deeper structures of language and unconscious thought that continued to impede women’s liberation. This third wave of feminist thought has splintered in many directions, but it also builds on earlier feminist themes.
- II. We have seen how Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) made important contributions to the literary style and themes of the modern English novel.
 - A. She tried to represent the complexity of women in her fictional works, but she developed her most notable commentary on women and society in her short book *A Room of One’s Own* (1929).
 1. Published soon after women gained the right to vote, Woolf’s book turned to the question of why women’s cultural productions in art, literature, and scholarship had never matched the productions of men.
 2. She said that women never had enough money to support artistic work, nor enough time away from family obligations to write books.
 3. The independent, creative woman needed “a room of one’s own” and some financial autonomy; she also needed to resist the deep cultural message that said “women cannot create as well as men.”
 - B. No wonder that women had not yet written plays like those of Shakespeare; if Shakespeare had had a sister, she could never have pursued literary work.
 1. Women were blocked from the personal freedom (e.g., travel, love affairs, risk taking) and education that made creative work possible.
 2. Woolf argued that this situation was changing in the modern era, though women should not write or create exactly like men.

3. Women must find their own cultural voices to represent their own experiences, friendships, and views of reality.
 4. Women must also recover the history of women—a history that remained invisible in history books and official cultural memory.
- III.** Woolf's imaginative, concise description of the quest for a woman's voice and an independent "selfhood" offered a starting point for the work of Simone de Beauvoir.
- A.** Beauvoir (1908–1986) was an important existentialist philosopher in France whose early published works were mostly novels and short stories.
 1. She grew up in a bourgeois Catholic family and went to Catholic schools until she entered the Sorbonne, where she studied philosophy.
 2. Although few women at that time had ever taught philosophy, she decided to become a philosophy teacher. In studying for the qualifying exam, she met Jean-Paul Sartre.
 3. They took the exam in the same year (1929); he placed first, and she placed second, but she was the youngest person ever to pass the exam.
 - B.** The relationship with Sartre, as we've noted earlier, became an enduring, complex emotional component of Beauvoir's life. They struggled to have a completely "honest" relationship, but this carried emotional costs.
 1. Beauvoir taught philosophy in provincial *lycées*, then settled in Paris during the Second World War.
 2. She wrote novels (e.g., *She Came to Stay* [1943] and *The Blood of Others* [1945]) that explored relationships and personal choices.
 3. Beauvoir used literature to portray her existential philosophical ideas; she also wrote philosophical essays.
 - C.** After the war, she traveled in America, where she began a long affair with the American writer Nelson Algren, but she would not marry him, in large part because of her deep link with Sartre (who was involved with others).
 1. In the late 1940s, Beauvoir became more interested in politics and social issues; this influenced her decision to write on gender relations.
 2. She also became an activist who opposed the continued French occupation of Algeria.
 3. Meanwhile, her writing moved from fiction and philosophy into a four-volume autobiographical work that also illustrated her ideas.
 4. She was one of the editors of the journal *Les Temps Modernes*. This position was part of the relationship with Sartre, though she also lived for a number of years with another writer, Claude Lanzmann.

- D.** Beauvoir's life became as important as her writings for younger generations of women; she represented the woman who had created her own life as a writer and independent intellectual.
 1. Later feminists often criticized her uncritical allegiance to and apparent emotional dependence on Sartre.
 2. But her book *The Second Sex* (1949) remains one of the foundational works of modern feminist thought. Beauvoir did not call herself a feminist until the 1970s and kept her distance from women activists.
 3. In later years, though, she was active in campaigns for abortion rights, contraception, and the defense of women who faced domestic violence.
- IV.** *The Second Sex* is a long book (over 700 pages in the English translation), and it ranges very widely in its description of patriarchal societies.
- A.** The overall point of the book is to show how women have been defined and restricted by the history and myths that place them in an inferior position.
 1. This long cultural history has prevented women from understanding and acting on their freedom, but women can begin to act freely when they reject the prevailing cultural myths and redefine themselves.
 2. The argument built on the ideas of existential philosophy. It stressed that there is no "essence" or "woman's nature" that sets limits to what women might do; they can define themselves by their actions.
 - B.** Yet women cannot act freely because they allow men and cultural traditions to define who they are. Beauvoir rejects biological, psychological, and materialist arguments about the traits of women that are beyond cultural control.
 1. The culture views women as the "other" of men, and women take this perception into their own identities. Men are active; women are passive.
 2. As Beauvoir described it, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." From earliest childhood, girls are given their cultural roles.
 3. Men are better able to act on their freedom ("the male is called upon for action"), but a woman is enclosed "within the circle of herself."
 - C.** Given these cultural structures, Beauvoir argues that women have no chance for freedom or equality in the reigning structures of marriage, motherhood, and male-female relationships; the structures deny her freedom.
 1. But Beauvoir remained an optimist; she assumed that women could find the means to liberate themselves.

2. They could challenge the cultural myths; they would find ways to gain more economic autonomy (the point Woolf had also developed) and could overcome their sense of inferiority in the arts and literature.
 3. Most important, they could insist on equality in relations with men—an equal relation between two independent consciousnesses.
 4. “On the day when it will be possible for woman to love not in her weakness but in her strength,” she wrote, “...love will become for her, as for man, a source of life and not of mortal danger.”
- V. Beauvoir’s vision of women’s identity and modern social position built on a classical Enlightenment-style definition of the self.
- A. The free woman (like the free man) could recognize her social position, define her opposition to oppressive forces outside herself, and claim her freedom as she rejected the ways in which others described her.
 1. These assumptions led to the criticisms of a third wave of feminists.
 2. In France, this critique emerged in writers such as Luce Irigaray (1932–), Hélène Cixous (1937–), and Julia Kristeva (1941–).
 - B. These writers placed more emphasis on the distinctiveness of the female body, suggesting that people like Beauvoir still wanted women to be like men. Beauvoir had not gone far enough in analyzing masculine language. She had not seen how language limits freedom.
 - C. Other critics claimed that Beauvoir did not grasp the complexity of motherhood; she devalued women’s distinctive experiences.
 - D. Amid these critiques, other feminists praised Beauvoir for showing how woman’s social position is culturally constructed rather than natural.
 - E. This emphasis on the redefinition of the self offered alternatives to other theories about cultural structures that limit and define everyone.

Essential Reading:

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*.

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, pp. xix–xxxvi, 139–198, 679–732.

Supplementary Reading:

Toril Moi, *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*, pp. 1–72, 179–213.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do the experiences of women and men differ in ways that require different literary voices?
2. Was Beauvoir naïve when she argued that women could reject traditional cultural definitions of womanhood?

Lecture Twenty-One

History, Anthropology, and Structuralism

Scope: Although the existential account of human freedom attracted wide interest among postwar intellectuals, the social sciences tended to stress the controlling power of historical systems and cultural traditions that limit the individual’s ideas and actions. This lecture examines the emphasis on social “structures” and cultural “systems” that reshaped historical studies and anthropology after the Second World War. It discusses the so-called “*Annales* School” of historians in France, noting the role of its early leaders, Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, and Fernand Braudel. Meanwhile, anthropology also took a “structural” turn in the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who developed influential theories about the deep structures and rituals that give cultural meaning to all forms of social life.

Outline

- I. Descriptions of the “human condition” in the twentieth century often moved in contrasting directions.
 - A. Some intellectuals, including the existentialists, stressed the autonomy of individual consciousness and action and emphasized the reality of human freedom.
 - B. Many others, however, stressed that individuals inevitably live in social and cultural structures that limit their thought and actions.
 - C. This emphasis on the structures that define what people can think or do became a common theme in the social sciences, including history, sociology, and anthropology. It drew on earlier thinkers, such as Durkheim.
 1. Among the “limiting structures” of human thought, the social scientists noted the importance of cultural traditions, language, and religion.
 2. People learn how to think and act within these structures; therefore, as many theorists argued, most individuals are only “free” within narrow limits.
 - D. These themes became especially influential in structural anthropology, which emerged most notably in works by the French theorist Claude Lévi-Strauss.
 1. Similar structural themes had appeared earlier in the new social history of writers such as Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch.
 2. Febvre and Bloch founded a famous historical journal in the late 1920s; their approach to history led to the work of Fernand Braudel.

3. In this lecture, we'll look at the new social history in France, then note how its themes also evolved into structural anthropology.
 4. The themes in all this work challenged the existential belief in free individual consciousness and shaped a powerful critique of traditional (liberal) ideas about the autonomy of the individual subject.
- E. Such ideas gained wide influence in postwar European intellectual life, especially among intellectuals who worked in the universities.
- II. The new attempt to understand the constraining social and cultural components of human action and thought showed up in the study of history during the 1930s.
- A. Modern professional historical studies had developed in Germany during the nineteenth century in the works of historians such as Leopold von Ranke.
1. Ranke (1795–1886) and his followers generally saw state institutions or leaders as the decisive actors in human history; they used government documents as the key sources for historical narratives.
 2. These research methods gave political elites and government policies the greatest significance in the whole narrative of human history.
- B. By the 1930s, however, there was a growing dissatisfaction with historical work that focused mainly on government leaders or political events.
1. Younger historians, who were influenced by sociology, preferred to emphasize social processes and the cultural aspects of human history.
 2. Individuals were seen as the products of long-term social forces that they do not control and often do not fully recognize.
 3. This conception of historical experience became important in the work of the so-called “*Annales*” historians in France.
- C. The key figures in this historical “school” were Lucien Febvre (1878–1956) and Marc Bloch (1886–1944); they were co-founders of the *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, which began publication in 1929.
1. Both Febvre and Bloch studied sociology and geography at the École Normale Supérieure before World War I; they served throughout that war in the French army.
 2. They met in 1920 in Strasbourg, where they were both appointed to teach history at the University of Strasbourg.
- D. Febvre worked on sixteenth-century French history and Bloch studied the Middle Ages. They were close friends, but their lives differed in important ways.

1. Febvre was from a French Catholic family, he was older than Bloch, and he moved up the academic hierarchy more quickly, becoming a professor at the Collège de France in 1933.
 2. Bloch was from an Alsatian Jewish family; he lagged behind Febvre in academic appointments, finally reaching Paris in 1936 with a position at the Sorbonne. Bloch joined the French army again in 1939; after the Germans occupied France, he could not resume his academic work.
- E. Bloch tried to go to America with his wife and six children, but he was unable to get visas for his family; he later joined the French Resistance.
1. In 1944, Bloch was arrested by the Gestapo and, after several months in jail, was executed near Lyon (June 1944).
 2. His life story, as well as his work, made him one of the most important historians in twentieth-century France.
- III. The main objective of the *Annales* historians was to analyze the enduring structures of social life and thought across long periods of time.
- A. Febvre wrote, for example, about the structures of religious thought in sixteenth-century culture, showing how it was then impossible for one to be an atheist.
- B. Bloch wrote about the social relations and ideas in medieval feudal society; he described the layout of fields, conceptions of time, and social relations.
1. Bloch's most famous book, *Feudal Society* (1939–1940), examined the “collective consciousness” of people in that culture.
 2. He did not write about the kings fighting heroic battles; he discussed the social experience of everyday life in villages or fields.
 3. He showed social and cultural structures that defined what a person could do or think in the “mentality” of the medieval world.
- C. This approach to history emphasized that social processes evolve slowly over time and suggested that the natural and social world limit human action.
1. Bloch himself (as we've seen) tried to act within the limiting structures of his world, but his emphasis on structures influenced later historians.
 2. The books of Fernand Braudel became the most well known examples of later works in the *Annales* tradition.
- D. Braudel (1902–1985) became an editor of the *Annales* journal after World War II and a professor at the Collège de France. He lived in Algeria and Brazil before the war and spent most of World War II in a German POW camp.
1. Isolated in that camp, Braudel wrote a first draft of his famous book *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age*

of Philip II (1949). He drew only on his memory of his prewar research.

2. Perhaps influenced by the sense that events were beyond his control, Braudel portrayed history on three levels: geographic time, social time, and the time of events—and the events are the least significant.
 - E. Braudel devoted most of his book to descriptions of natural environments and impersonal social structures; these seem to be the decisive historical forces.
 1. He described specific historical events as “surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs.”
 2. The individual is like foam on the waters of a vast sea, tossed about by great waves of history that a person can never control.
 3. Following this perspective, the new social history in France set out to describe enduring structures rather than specific persons or events.
- IV. A similar interest in the deep, shaping structures of human culture appeared also in the new structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–).
- A. Lévi-Strauss came from a family of artists. He was born in Belgium but grew up in France and attended the Sorbonne, where he studied philosophy.
 1. Simone de Beauvoir was one of his classmates at the university.
 2. His interests shifted to anthropology, however, when he moved to Brazil in 1934. He taught at the University of São Paulo (1934–1939).
 3. During these years, he traveled into the interior of Brazil and met remote Indian tribes; these people lived entirely pre-modern lives.
 4. He studied ethnology and went back to France to pursue this subject.
 - B. He served in the French army in 1940, but after the Germans occupied France, he escaped to America (Lévi-Strauss was Jewish and at great risk).
 1. He made his way to New York, where he lived among exiles, worked at the New School for Social Research, and studied linguistics.
 2. He became a good friend of the Czech linguist Roman Jakobson; this connection led him to a new linguistic understanding of culture.
 3. Lévi-Strauss remained in the United States until 1947; he taught at Barnard College and served after 1945 as a French cultural attaché.
 4. But his intellectual roots were in France, and he returned there to publish numerous anthropological works. He later became a professor of social anthropology at the Collège de France (1960–1982).

- C. Lévi-Strauss was influenced by Durkheim’s influential successor, Marcel Mauss, and wrote a long introduction to an edition of Mauss’s writings. He also described his Brazilian experiences in a famous book called *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) and later published *Structural Anthropology* (1961) and *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964).
- D. Lévi-Strauss understood culture in terms he borrowed from structural linguistics. He said that cultures are like languages in that they are built on underlying structures, which are invariable and create meaning.
 1. Structural linguistics had been developed earlier in the century by Ferdinand de Saussure, who emphasized the unchanging deep structure or grammar of language.
 2. He noted that individual words can be arranged into an infinite combination of specific sentences, but all these sentences (to make sense) will use a common underlying grammar.
- E. Lévi-Strauss drew on this idea to argue that a primitive Brazilian society and an advanced urban society share various underlying structures.
- F. The meaning of these structures, according to Lévi-Strauss, depends on dichotomies, or binary oppositions. These oppositions include such categories as nature and culture, raw and cooked, spoken and written, male and female, and so on.
- G. Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist theory thus carried a strong relativist element. It said that cultures are not good or bad; they simply differ in their rituals. The theory also carried a strong sympathy for pre-modern cultures; they were seen as less alienated from nature.
- H. Lévi-Strauss’s emphasis on the value of pre-modern cultures and the influence of cultural structures had wide influence in the 1960s.
- I. Like most social historians, structuralists assumed that individuals cannot free themselves from deep cultural systems.

Essential Reading:

Marc Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, pp. 3–47.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, pp. 42–53, 275–358.

Supplementary Reading:

Peter Burke, *The French Historical Revolution: The Annales School, 1929–89*, pp. 12–53.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do cultures, languages and historical contexts define the limits of what any individual can think, say, or do?
2. Do all cultures have the same deep structures and rituals?

Lecture Twenty-Two

Poststructuralist Thought: Foucault and Derrida

Scope: In the 1960s, a new generation of French social and cultural theorists developed an important critique of both the existential philosophical tradition and the structuralist ideas that had become important in cultural anthropology. This new critical movement became known as poststructuralism—a term that suggests the attempt to move beyond structuralist ideas. This lecture examines the lives and poststructuralist theories of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, both of whom had wide international influence. Foucault was especially concerned with the relation between power and knowledge. Derrida was more concerned with the metaphysical philosophical traditions that remain embedded in all forms of language. This lecture summarizes the main themes of these complex authors and notes their international influence.

Outline

- I. The key ideas of post-World War II social history and structural anthropology portrayed individuals as embodiments of cultural discourses that they could neither transform nor escape; these themes rejected the belief in radical existential freedom.
 - A. Structuralist views of language and culture also challenged the idea that an artist or author expresses a distinctive personal vision.
 1. There was, instead, a tendency to describe the “death of the author” or the “death of the subject”; everyone simply expresses a cultural system.
 2. Such views seemed to suggest that social or cultural change would be unlikely; at the very least, such change would be very slow because the structures of language, culture, and social life endure for long periods of time.
 - B. Critics began to complain, however, that this view would foster a passivity or an abandonment of social critique; structures would simply be accepted.
 1. Meanwhile, there was a growing disillusionment with Marxism, in part because of Stalinism and in part because economic analysis alone did not seem to account for the realities of social and cultural life.
 2. Both Marxism and structuralism suggested rigid views of social life; they defined social relations in terms of binary oppositions.
 - C. In this cultural and political context, a new group of poststructuralists began to challenge the “binary” thinking of structuralism, Marxism, and philosophy.

1. The poststructuralists remained interested in deep structures of thought, but they saw these structures as complex, overlapping forms of language, power, and discourse that went beyond binary oppositions.
 2. This critique of structuralist thought and (more generally) of the whole modern structure of knowledge emerged most notably in the works of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida.
- D. Foucault examined the relation between power and knowledge, while Derrida was more concerned with the relation between truth claims and language.
 1. They shared a critique of traditional conceptions of truth, however, and their critique gained wide international influence.
 2. To understand the complexity of the poststructuralist critique, we need to look more closely at the ideas of Foucault and Derrida.
 3. They sought alternatives to the dominant “discourses” of modernity to sustain post-Marxist, poststructuralist forms of cultural critique.
- II. Foucault (1926–1984) was from the French city of Poitiers, where his father was a prominent surgeon; he wanted his son Michel to be a surgeon, too.
 - A. The young Foucault attended Catholic schools, then moved away from the idea of studying medicine. He entered the École Normale Supérieure in Paris and studied philosophy; he became skeptical of Sartre’s existentialism.
 1. He turned from philosophy to the history of medicine, psychiatry, and hospitals and worked in a psychiatric hospital.
 2. He later taught French for six years in Sweden, Poland, and Germany. He then became a professor of philosophy at the University of Clermont-Ferrand (1960), though his research dealt with medicine.
 3. He began to publish widely acclaimed books in the 1960s, but he still worked abroad often (he taught in Tunisia between 1966 and 1968).
 4. His writings on medicine and on the nature of scientific knowledge attracted public attention. He was appointed professor of the “History of Systems of Thought” at the Collège de France in 1970.
 - B. Foucault also became a public intellectual; he was active in campaigns for prison reform and a critic of various government health care policies.
 1. His lectures at the Collège de France drew large crowds. He had a dramatic personal appearance; he was bald, wore glasses, and spoke in complex and even lyrical language.
 2. He was an unconventional philosopher, historian, and literary critic.

3. He was also a homosexual who was drawn to gay culture in San Francisco. He lived in California at various times in the 1970s and 1980s while lecturing at Berkeley; he died of AIDS.
 4. Some historians have stressed these personal and contextual aspects of Foucault's life. This experience may have intensified his concern with repression, cultural discourses, and the language of scientific experts.
- C. Foucault's work is difficult to categorize, but in most general terms, he repeatedly emphasized the relation between power and knowledge.
1. This theme appears in his major books, including *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), *The Order of Things* (1966), and *Discipline and Punish* (1975).
 2. Similar issues emerge in a three-volume history of sexuality, which was his last major work.
 3. In these books, Foucault argued that modern society relies on structures of dominance, control, and surveillance.
 4. Power is diffused throughout society through institutions of social control, such as schools, prisons, hospitals, and armies. What Foucault called the "discourse" of control expressed the authority of experts.
- D. The knowledge of scientists, doctors, and teachers is, thus, linked to power; therefore, knowledge is neither neutral nor benign—it is a method of social management.
1. Foucault said that this connection between power and knowledge has shaped modern rationalizing societies since the Enlightenment.
 2. His work examined historical issues, such as modern reforms in asylums, prisons, and schools—the culture of rational humanitarians.
 3. He argued that the late Enlightenment created "man" as an object of analysis, much as an earlier era had created "nature."
 4. His book *Madness and Civilization*, for example, claimed that modern experts created "madness" as a category of knowledge, then took control of the "mad" by placing them in asylums.
- E. In other books, such as *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault stressed that experts transformed individuals into objects whose behavior could be categorized and brought under the gaze of science.
1. He took the example for this from Jeremy Bentham's dream of a perfect prison that would have a system of constant surveillance.
 2. Guards watch the prisoners from a tower (a "panopticon"), but the prisoners can't see the guards; this is Foucault's image of modernity.

3. We are all being watched and categorized, and we internalize these categories into the ways we describe ourselves. We discipline ourselves with the language our culture gives us.
- F. For Foucault, power does not come from an economic class or from specific government officials, as Marxists or political historians argue.
1. Instead, power is diffuse and internalized. Power "doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no," he argues; "...it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse."
 2. Foucault's ideas on such subjects were influenced by Nietzsche, who had argued that thought is linked to the will to power.
 3. Nietzsche had also described truth as a cultural construction and as a concept that is linked to relations of power.
 4. Nietzsche's claim that healthy instincts and drives were condemned and distorted by civilization was also important to Foucault.
- G. Foucault's response to the historical patterns he described also drew on Nietzsche's precedent. He wanted to "think outside the tradition," to explore transgressions, challenge values, and move beyond limits.
1. He also argued that it was impossible ever to achieve a complete escape from traditions, though he wrote in unconventional ways.
 2. Foucault offered a new critique of the Enlightenment, and he may have offered theoretical justification for spontaneous acts of rebellion.
 3. Yet his thought also contributed to a more general pessimism about what individuals can actually do in modern societies.
- H. Like Lévi-Strauss and many other theorists, he suggested that the constraints of culture are everywhere; the autonomous "self" seems to be a myth. The "self" is a construction of multiple discourses.
- III. A similar emphasis on the multiplicity of language and the cultural construction of the "self" appears in the poststructuralist theories of Jacques Derrida (1930–).
- A. Derrida was born in Algeria and lived there until he went to Paris to study philosophy at the *École Normale Supérieure* in the early 1950s.
1. He came to French culture from the margins, a position that was intensified because his family was Jewish.
 2. Perhaps this influenced his interest in questions about the relation between the center and margins of culture, thought, and language.
- B. Derrida eventually became a philosophy professor at the *École Normale* (1964–1984) and at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*. He often visited American universities and especially influenced literary criticism.
1. His important early books included *Of Grammatology* (1967) and *Writing and Difference* (1967); he developed ideas of "deconstruction."

Lecture Twenty-Three

European Postmodernism

Scope: “Postmodernism” is difficult to define, but it has deeply affected contemporary art, literature, architecture, and social theory. This lecture notes how postmodern thinkers describe the fragmentation and contingency of social life and personal experience. Postmodernism questions universalisms and the belief in “objective reality,” thus developing a new critique of Enlightenment traditions. This lecture discusses three authors who have contributed to postmodernist thought: Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva. These French theorists—especially Lacan—revised Freud’s psychoanalytic theory and claimed that it is impossible to achieve a fully coherent or unified identity.

Outline

- I. A wide range of influential tendencies in European intellectual life over the last thirty or forty years are often lumped together under the general term “postmodernism.”
 - A. The term is vague and people disagree about both its meaning and significance. It has been important in the arts, advertising, and the study of cultures.
 1. The term suggests that we have moved beyond modernity, which is usually linked to the legacy of the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution; this tradition assumed the existence of an objective reality.
 2. The modern Enlightenment tradition also assumed that we can know this reality through the use of science and reason.
 - B. We’ve seen how modernism in literature and the arts reacted against these Enlightenment ideas. “Modernist” literature appeared most notably in the works of writers such as Proust, Joyce, and Woolf.
 1. Modernism questioned and rejected the idea that there is simply a reality “out there” that can be known and described.
 2. Yet modernist artists and writers often stressed the specific vision or insights of creative persons; the artist has a unique vision.
 3. Modernism tended to emphasize the unique language, memory, and internal life of the individual artist (an old Romantic theme).
 - C. Postmodernism has moved beyond both Enlightenment modernity and literary modernism. It claims that objects are never simply “there” as the Enlightenment assumed; objects are “constructed” by cultural discourses.

2. Derrida’s principal theoretical objective was to challenge the Western philosophical belief in the clarity and rational distinctions that constitute conceptions of truth.
3. According to Derrida, we can’t have ideas or categories that are pure and distinct from other ideas or categories; we can’t get to what philosophers used to call the “Thing Itself.”
4. He argued that our accounts of reality depend on metaphors, and our binary oppositions can never be pure dichotomies.

- C. Every idea requires supplements, or otherness, to establish meaning. For example, it’s impossible to think of nature without culture or day without night. These ideas are never simply binary oppositions. Every idea or concept is already carried by the other, by a supplement that is part of the idea; the other is always in the self.
- D. What does this mean? There can never be a fully coherent, autonomous identity or idea that has full presence or meaning in and of itself.
1. Language shows this because no claim about reality or truth can simply stand alone; truth claims are always relational.
 2. This becomes the theme of postmodernism. Derrida argues that everything we encounter in the world—material objects, as well as ideas—is always already embedded in language and thought.
 3. There is no way to get outside of language to some deeper reality; in other words, “there is nothing outside the text.”

- IV. Derrida’s themes led him more often to philosophers and literary figures than to the social “experts” whom Foucault describes.
- A. Yet their “poststructuralist” project shared a critical interrogation of the metaphysical conception of stable truths and the transparency of language.
 - B. This emphasis on the multiple levels and power of language shaped a new analysis of how cultural systems define truth and social order and fostered a postmodern interest in fragmentation and difference.

Essential Reading:

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1.

Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, pp. 6–26, 101–164.

Supplementary Reading:

Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, pp. 212–332.

Questions to Consider:

1. Does the language or “discourse” of experts define people’s identities in the modern world?
2. Do you think all ideas need “supplements” to acquire meaning?

1. Foucault's accounts of sexuality or madness, for example, showed how these "realities" were created by modern scientific experts.
 2. Postmodernism also challenges the belief in a distinctive vision of authors or artists; it sees authors as exemplars of cultural discourses.
- D.** In place of the Enlightenment's unified, coherent world and modernist art's autonomous creative work, postmodernism stresses fragmentation.
1. Postmodernist culture is said to lack unity or coherence; it's a world of constant movement, change, contingency, and flux.
 2. One analyst of postmodernism, David Harvey, says, "Postmodernism swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change, as if that is all there is."
 3. This view assumes there are no stable identities or truths, only shifting cultural constructions that evolve through the dialogic interaction of different languages, cultures, and discourses.
- E.** Postmodernism rejects the desire for a systematic master narrative or universalizing theory, such as Enlightenment rationalism, Marxism, or religion.
1. Unlike Enlightenment thinkers (e.g., Voltaire), the postmodern writer cannot claim to defend social or legal reforms in the name of reason.
 2. The postmodern writer can only interpret cultures or discourses in relation to other cultures because there are no fully coherent cultures or persons.
 3. This theory accepts and promotes the idea of fragmentation as an alternative to the hierarchies and unities of inherited cultural truths.
- F.** Postmodernist themes can be found in the works of the French theorists Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva.
1. Each of these authors pointed to the contingency of ideas, the fluidity of identities, and the relational nature of truth.
 2. But their ideas, like the work of all other theorists, has evolved out of a particular historical and cultural context; what is this context?
- II.** Baudrillard (1929–) described the contemporary world as a fragmented cultural and economic system that produces what Durkheim had described as anomie.
- A.** Baudrillard studied German philosophy and literature in the 1950s and began his career as a sociology teacher, but even his earliest works showed a deep interest in the characteristics of modern consumer culture.
1. Like many late twentieth-century European intellectuals, he spent time in America, lectured in American universities, and interpreted American culture as the advanced example of a postmodern social world.

2. He discussed American culture in such works as *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) and *America* (1986).
 3. America represents the culmination of a social process in which consumerism, anonymity, and visual images define social experience.
- B.** For Baudrillard, the postmodern world is a "simulation" of reality; it is constructed in television images or imitations of reality (e.g., Disneyland).
1. It is also a world of "virtual reality" or what Baudrillard calls "hyperreality," in which the simulation becomes what we know best.
 2. This is a world of public and personal fragmentation into subcultures. The freeways of big cities are examples of this world of vast movement in all directions by anonymous people in cars.
 3. Economic life is dominated by consumer culture and massive advertising. In this world, you are what you buy.
 4. Consumption rather than production is the theme of postmodern economies. Television and visual culture are the media for our time; people consume images with little interest in deeper complexities.
- C.** In this kind of world, we can have no faith in master narratives of political progress or political action; people watch TV and shop till they drop.
1. Baudrillard's themes build on the assumption that there is no unified or coherent self; the person (like other realities) is fragmented.
 2. This idea was also one of the key themes of Jacques Lacan.
- III.** Lacan (1901–1981) was born into a prosperous family of vinegar merchants in Paris. He attended a Jesuit school and lived virtually his entire life in Parisian culture.
- A.** He renounced Catholicism, studied medicine, and became a practicing psychiatrist with a special interest in criminality and paranoia.
1. He was active in various Freudian psychoanalytic groups, but he was eventually expelled from all orthodox psychoanalytic associations.
 2. He became closely connected to surrealism (André Breton was a good friend) and studied the linguistic theories of Saussure.
 3. He was always something of a "rebel," but he also married twice and had four children. He wanted intellectual acclaim.
 4. In his later years, he taught famous seminars in such places as the École des Hautes Études and the École Normale Supérieure.
 5. He hesitated to publish his ideas (fearing misinterpretation), and his writings were often almost impossible to understand.

- B.** Lacan's most well known book was a collection of essays called simply *Ecrits* (*Writings*, 1966), but his seminar lectures were also transcribed and published.
1. Lacan gained great influence by developing several key themes; he especially wanted to bring together linguistics and psychoanalysis.
 2. He sought to revise psychoanalysis by stressing the role of language in the unconscious ("the unconscious is structured like a language").
 3. He also sought to revise linguistics by stressing the role of desire, the body, sexuality, and pleasure in the workings of all language.
- C.** Lacan also argued that both the language and the unconscious prevent people from achieving a fully coherent self; everyone has multiple selves.
1. People often deny this multiplicity, however, and pathologies emerge when people fail to understand the multiple levels of the ego or the self.
 2. The problem evolves from what Lacan called "The Mirror Stage of Development" that each child goes through between the ages of six and eighteen months, when people begin seeing themselves as coherent beings.
- D.** This discovery of the self occurs literally when we see ourselves reflected in a mirror, but more generally, this mirror experience occurs for all people in our relations with other people.
1. Parents and others respond to the child and confirm his or her identity as an autonomous being.
 2. But Lacan argued that this sense of coherence cannot last as we grow older because we learn through symbolic languages and interactions that we are really many different people; we have no single self.
 3. Each of us is a set of multiple selves, depending on contexts, relations, and interactions with others. Lacan called this process the "splitting of the ego" and said that you must see your multiple selves in order to mature.
- E.** If you go on believing in or yearning for that sense of full unity or presence that you had at the mirror stage of development, you will be unhappy.
1. This unity cannot be achieved; yet the desire for this complete unity can lead to anger or violence if people demand full recognition of their unity or coherence.
 2. People need to learn symbolic languages that enable them to see themselves and others as people with multiple identities.
- F.** For the child, the strongest desire for unity comes in the desire to be united with the mother, but the healthy person learns to see the mother as "other."

1. This identity—this separation from the mother—is described with language that comes from the father because that is also his relation to the child's mother: She is "other" to him.
 2. The language of identity is, therefore, "gendered" male. Woman is the other of language and identity, and language is "phallogocentric."
- G.** Lacan's work has two crucial themes: People must give up the desire for full unity or coherence, and they should recognize the connection between (phallogocentric) language and the body.
- IV.** Lacan's arguments had a wide influence on postmodernist thought, which has stressed the importance of language and the fragmentation of identities.
- A.** These themes were picked up and revised by Julia Kristeva (1941–), who came from Bulgaria to study in France in 1966.
- B.** She was interested in the relations between margins and the "center" of language and culture; this issue was part of her own experience as a Bulgarian and a woman in French society (she married the writer Philippe Sollers).
1. Kristeva accepted Lacan's idea that the self comes to identity through reflections of others. She agreed that the language people use to define their identities comes from fathers (for whom women are "others").
 2. Unlike Lacan, Kristeva thought that one did not have to go on repeating the language of the father. It is possible to find the voice of the mother and move beyond gendered male language.
- C.** Kristeva argued that pure identities cannot exist; the mother and father are already interdependent, and identities are "dialogic."
- D.** French theorists led the cultural challenge to (French) Enlightenment conceptions of identity and knowledge; they influenced postmodern thought everywhere by showing the fluid interrelations of all identities and ideas.

Essential Reading:

Jean Baudrillard, *America*.

Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," in Toril Moi, editor, *The Kristeva Reader*, pp. 188–211.

Supplementary Reading:

Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, pp. 260–290, 319–348.

Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think that "virtual reality," images, and simulations have become the dominant shaping forces in contemporary social and cultural life?
2. Do you agree with Lacan's claim that all people have multiple selves?

Lecture Twenty-Four

Changes and Traditions at Century's End

Scope: European societies were deeply affected by late twentieth-century events, including the Cold War, the “Americanization” of cultural life, the arrival of large immigrant populations, the demise of communist regimes, and the expansion of the new global economy. Although Europe was uniting in a new “European Union,” no single European intellectual culture existed at the end of the twentieth century. Yet there was a renewed interest in Enlightenment conceptions of reason and the critically engaged intellectual, and elements of classical liberalism reappeared in new intellectual support for “neo-liberal” ideas. This lecture summarizes these cultural patterns, with specific reference to the German thinker Jürgen Habermas and the Czech writer Václav Havel. It also notes that European intellectual life remained a center of lively debate at the end of the twentieth century.

Outline

- I. We are coming to the end of a survey of twentieth-century European intellectual history, but there is no simple way to summarize European thought in the late twentieth century.
 - A. The fragmentation of European cultural life in the modern era precludes the possibility of final synthesis; there is rarely a closure to historical processes.
 - B. There were, however, a number of important changes in the late twentieth-century historical context, and this changing context (as always) affected intellectuals.
 - C. During more than four decades (1947–1989), Europe was deeply affected by the Cold War and the growing influence of the United States in European economic, political, and cultural life.
 1. The American economic and cultural influence appeared in fashion, films, television, music, politics, and even universities.
 2. European intellectuals often expressed concern about the impact of “Americanization” on Europe’s cultural traditions and social life.
 - D. At the same time, those traditions seemed to be changing as millions of new immigrants streamed into Europe from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.
 1. A new debate about “multiculturalism” emerged in all the major European nations. How would the languages, religions, and cultural values of non-European peoples be assimilated into European life?

2. Such questions redefined the meaning of European nations; the creation of the European Union was also redefining nation-states.
- E. Finally, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of communist regimes in central Europe, and the new global economy all changed the context for intellectual debate in Europe, as in all other parts of the world.
 1. Such changes surely contributed to the popularity of postmodernism, the emphasis on fragmented identities, and the decline of Marxism.
 2. Marxism seemed an inadequate social theory in this context, as did the nationalist belief in coherent, unique national identities.
 3. As we’ve seen, modern capitalist advertising, consumerism, entertainment, and travel all suggested a breakdown of older traditions.
- F. Late twentieth-century European intellectual life did not, however, turn entirely to postmodernism. In fact, postmodernist critiques of the autonomous “subject” and liberal definitions of reason provoked new defenses of the Enlightenment.
 1. This lecture concludes our survey of twentieth-century thought with a discussion of what might be called the challenges to postmodernism.
 2. These challenges include a new affirmation of two key Enlightenment ideas: the critical importance of reason in public life and the critical role of intellectuals in political and cultural debates.
 3. These trends can be seen in two representative intellectual figures, the German social theorist Jürgen Habermas and the Czech writer Václav Havel; both of these intellectuals have reaffirmed Enlightenment ideas.
- G. Critics have attacked postmodernist thought for promoting an excessive emphasis on the shaping power of language. Habermas and Havel recognize the importance of language, but they argue that language is not just arbitrary.
 1. They come back to the Enlightenment belief that language can convey general and even universal truths that can be defended in public life.
 2. They also argue (like most Enlightenment intellectuals) that personal freedom requires an engagement with public life and public issues.

II. The challenge to poststructuralism and postmodernism has been particularly notable in Germany; this is perhaps ironic because postmodernist thought in France and elsewhere drew on German thinkers, such as Nietzsche, Husserl, and Heidegger.

A. Many intellectuals in post-Nazi Germany, however, wanted to recover the positive aspects of the Enlightenment and worried about the nonrational themes of Romanticism and anti-Enlightenment thought.

1. A skeptical view of Romanticism was particularly evident in the work of Jürgen Habermas (1929–). Habermas grew up near Cologne in western Germany; his father directed a local chamber of commerce.
2. Habermas was too young to be in the German army during World War II, but he was much affected by postwar revelations of Nazi atrocities.
3. He studied philosophy and sociology and became affiliated with the reorganized Frankfurt School of critical theory in the 1950s.
4. He spent most of his later career as a professor in Frankfurt but also participated widely in public debates; he wrote often in newspapers.

B. Habermas was disturbed by the failure of German intellectuals and political leaders to come to terms with the Nazi past.

1. He believed that intellectuals in Germany had wrongly turned away from reason and Enlightenment ideals of public debate. (Heidegger was, for Habermas, a prominent example of this error.)
2. Habermas sought to revise aspects of Kantian philosophy, to warn against the dangers of Romanticism; he favored democratic socialism.

C. He developed many of his major themes in his first book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962).

1. This book argued that the Enlightenment had created a model for a public sphere in which debates flourished on the basis of reason.
2. He admired the Enlightenment but argued that the Enlightenment ideal of a rational public sphere had declined in the modern world.

D. Habermas argued that intellectuals and everyone else who cared about democratic public life should defend the use of reason and rational criticism.

1. This defense of Enlightenment reason led to his strong critique of such thinkers as Foucault and Derrida, whom he saw as too hostile to the values of reason.
2. He laid out his critique of postmodern theories in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1985) and other works.
3. Habermas argued repeatedly that it was impossible to fight the residue of Nazism or the distortions of radical ethnic, national, and

religious movements by using philosophies that challenge rationalism.

4. He said that various forms of “instrumental” reason were dangerous or insufficiently critical, but “communicative” reason offered essential tools for critical judgment, analysis, and debate.

E. He criticized the philosophical legacy of Nietzsche and insisted that postmodernism had abandoned the all-important belief in rational criticism.

1. Habermas resembled Kant in arguing that the critical use of reason could bring about cross-cultural agreements on truth and public actions.
2. His own goal was to develop a democratic public life in which communication could take place without coercion or domination.
3. Arguments would develop through clear speech, and rational debaters would reach agreement on reasonable, just forms of action.

F. Habermas shared the common modern concern with language but rejected the postmodern emphasis on the indeterminacy of linguistic meaning.

G. His critique of postmodernism has been influential in historical studies, philosophy, and political theory; it also promotes Enlightenment ideas about the public role of intellectual work.

III. Habermas defended aspects of the Marxist intellectual tradition in his work on the flaws of the modern “public sphere.” Other intellectuals shared his sympathy for the Enlightenment but moved much further away from Marxist ideas.

A. This other pattern of the non-Marxist public intellectual can be seen in the life and career of Václav Havel (1936–).

1. Havel was born in Prague; his father was an architect and building contractor. Young Václav grew up during the Nazi occupation and was later excluded from a university education during the communist era.
2. His family was deemed too bourgeois, so Havel made his own way on the margins of Czech cultural and intellectual life.
3. He became a writer and, by the early 1960s, was producing absurdist plays for theaters in Prague.

B. Havel became much more concerned with political issues after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

1. He wrote a series of dissenting political commentaries, including a famous essay called “The Power of the Powerless” (1978).
2. He also became a founding leader of a human rights group called Charter 77, which demanded protection for democratic civil rights.

3. In his writings, Havel argued that the people could reshape public life, even if they appeared to be “powerless” under dictatorial regimes.
 - C. Havel argued that “people power” could, in effect, overcome the dead hand of authoritarianism. Intellectuals had a crucial role to play in this process. Havel was arrested and imprisoned for his writings; he spent four years in prison (1979–1983) but did not turn away from his ideas.
 - D. When the nonviolent, “velvet revolution” overthrew the communist regime in Czechoslovakia (1989), it seemed that Havel’s ideas had been confirmed. He was, in fact, chosen to be president of the new Czech government and went on to a prominent, sometimes controversial political career.
- IV. Did European thought at the end of the twentieth century come back to the point where modern intellectual life began: the rationalist themes of the Enlightenment?
- A. Many intellectuals clearly expressed a renewed appreciation for classical Enlightenment beliefs in tolerance, reason, and human rights. The horrors of twentieth-century history pushed many writers to reaffirm the important eighteenth-century roots of modern cultural life.
 - B. These same events also made it impossible to return to any simple faith in the absolute virtues of science, rationality, progress, or technology.
 - C. Yet the dialogue with the Enlightenment will surely continue, and modern European art, literature, social theory, philosophy, and intellectuals will continue to influence people around the world.

Essential Reading:

Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, pp. 1–88, 141–180.

Václav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” and “A Word about Words,” in Havel, *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965–1990*, pp. 127–214, 377–389.

Supplementary Reading:

Craig Calhoun, “Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere,” and Jürgen Habermas, “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere,” both in Calhoun, editor, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, pp. 1–42, 421–457.

Questions to Consider:

1. Does the “public sphere” in contemporary democratic nations consist of rational public debate or manipulation by powerful private interests?
2. Are the ideas of the European Enlightenment the best foundation for cultural and political life in an age of multicultural and global exchanges?

Glossary

Abstract expressionism: A form of early twentieth-century art that used color rather than recognizable forms to convey personal visions of the artist. Wassily Kandinsky and others argued that the colors of nonrepresentational art could express spiritual and emotional truths.

Analytical psychology: The term used by Carl Jung to separate his psychological work from the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud. Breaking with Freud’s emphasis on sexual drives and the Freudian views of religion, Jung stressed the importance of adult experiences and a “collective unconscious.”

Annales historians: A group of French historians associated with the journal *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale* (founded in 1929). Under the early leadership of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, the *Annales* historians emphasized long-term social processes, collective mentalities, and deep structures rather than political events or individuals.

Anomie: The sociological term that Emile Durkheim used to describe the modern urban social experience in which persons feel disconnected from social communities or any sense of shared social values (in contrast to the integrated social life of small villages).

Bloomsbury circle: The writers, artists, and intellectuals who congregated in the London neighborhood of Bloomsbury during the 1920s. They shared a commitment to modern cultural and literary innovations, thus forming a “circle” that included prominent English authors, such as Virginia Woolf and John Maynard Keynes.

Bohemian culture: An imprecise term that refers to unconventional artists, writers, café performers, and others who lived in modern cities but criticized the orderly, routine life of modern workers and bourgeois professionals. Bohemian culture tended to mock respectable behaviors, yet its art and writing could also fascinate the people it criticized.

Bolsheviks: The communists who took power in the Russian Revolution of 1917. They followed Vladimir Lenin in advocating a centralized communist party, state control of the economy, a single-party government, and international opposition to capitalism.

Cubism: An influential approach to art that emerged in early twentieth-century Paris among such painters as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. The Cubists portrayed objects or people from multiple perspectives that revealed geometric shapes and relations rather than literal images—thus emphasizing subjective visions over objective truth.

Cultural hegemony: The Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci developed this term to describe the process by which dominant social groups control the education, media, and leading ideas of a society. According to this theory, “hegemonic” cultural power becomes as important as economic power in sustaining the position of ruling groups.

Cultural pessimism: A widespread intellectual response to twentieth-century events, such as the two world wars, economic crises, and political upheavals, all of which led many writers and artists to believe that European civilization was in decline and that the earlier confidence in human progress was naïve.

Culture industry: This “industry” consists of the institutions that produce and sell cultural products in modern societies, including publishing houses, newspapers, advertising media, theaters, art galleries, film studios, and even universities. Artists and intellectuals depend on the culture industry rather than the patronage system of older aristocratic societies to support themselves in modern cities.

Dadaism: A radical avant-garde movement that developed in Switzerland and France at the end of World War I. It claimed that Western civilization had lost all rational meaning and that absurd, nonsense literature and art were the only appropriate cultural responses to modern European society.

Empiricism: The philosophical and scientific approach to knowledge that stresses the crucial importance of observable evidence and argues that all reliable truths are based on the collection, analysis, or measurement of such evidence.

Enlightenment: An intellectual and cultural movement in eighteenth-century Europe led by writers called *philosophes*. The main themes of Enlightenment thought included optimistic beliefs in reason, science, natural laws, or natural rights; religious tolerance; the free exchange of ideas; and the rational advance of human progress.

Epistemology: The term used by philosophers to describe the study of the fundamental structures or categories of human knowledge. The key epistemological question is “How do we know what we know?” This question appears implicitly or explicitly in most intellectual debates (and defies simple answers).

Existentialism: The philosophical movement associated with Jean-Paul Sartre and other twentieth-century thinkers who argued that human life has no inherent meaning or essence (except consciousness), that human beings are free to act as they choose, and that the meaning of each individual’s “existence” is defined by his or her actions in the world.

Fascism: A right-wing political philosophy that rejects democratic political processes, celebrates the authoritarianism of a powerful leader or political party, praises a mythic national past, represses free speech, endorses violence or

warfare as essential expressions of national life, and promotes economic or social hierarchies rather than personal freedom or equality.

Fauves: The term meaning “wild beasts” that critics used to describe early twentieth-century Parisian artists who juxtaposed colors and shapes in unconventional images to represent the personal vision of the painter and the fluidity of human movement. Henri Matisse became the most well known member of the Fauves.

Feminism: The political, social, and cultural movement that challenges traditional male privileges, advocates equal legal and political rights for women, and attempts to improve the position of women in education, family relationships, and economic life.

Frankfurt School: Revisionist Marxist social theorists who attempted to link Marx’s ideas with other theorists, such as Hegel and Freud. They were affiliated with the “Frankfurt Institute of Social Research” in Germany during the 1920s and early 1930s, but they all went into exile after the Nazis gained power in 1933.

Heisenberg “Uncertainty Principle”: The German scientist Werner Heisenberg showed in 1927 that it was impossible to know both the position and speed of an electron at the same time, thus pointing to the limits of scientific knowledge.

Historical sociology: A method of studying society that examines historical patterns and long-developing social values to explain modern social institutions or values. Max Weber and other Germans led the way in developing this sociological method.

Holocaust: The term now used to describe the Nazis’ systematic genocidal murder of approximately 6 million Jews and other “non-Aryan” people during the Second World War. Many of these people died in specially constructed death camps, such as Auschwitz.

“Ideal Type”: A sociological concept that Max Weber used to designate the traits of persons who shared certain recognizable values (e.g., a typical “capitalist” or “bureaucrat”), even though no single person would embody all these characteristics.

Imperialism: The political, military, economic, and cultural process by which European nations gained control over people in other regions of the world. All major European nations pursued imperialist policies in Africa and Asia during the early twentieth century, thereby spreading European institutions and ideas but also provoking anti-imperialist movements that later challenged and displaced the European ascendancy.

Impressionism: The influential artistic movement in late nineteenth-century France that sought to convey the painter’s own vision of people or landscapes or the subtle shadings of light. Artists such as Claude Monet turned away from

literal images of reality and used new brushwork and colors to depict their distinctive impressions of what they painted.

Intellectual: A person who writes about ideas, the creative arts, or society. The term “intellectual” emerged during the Dreyfus Affair in late nineteenth-century France, but the social role developed much earlier. Intellectuals produced (1) new knowledge and (2) new social critiques, thus becoming “experts” or “critics” or both.

Intellectual history: A branch of historical studies that examines systematic statements of human ideas and the people who produce or interpret ideas. In contrast to social or cultural history, intellectual history tends to emphasize the ideas of complex and original thinkers rather than the intellectual themes of popular culture or daily life.

Intuitionism: The philosophical theory of Henri Bergson and others who argued that science alone cannot provide a complete understanding of the fluid realities of personal experience or time. Such realities must be approached through an “intellectual sympathy” or intuition that exists in the human mind.

Involuntary memory: The experience that Marcel Proust described when he wrote about the ways in which an encounter with a specific smell, taste, sight, or person can provoke a sudden, unexpected remembrance of past experiences or people.

Liberalism: A nineteenth-century political theory that stressed individual rights, constitutional government, rational legal reforms, religious tolerance, and a free-market economy. Liberals generally favored institutional reforms to protect or enhance equal civil rights and personal freedom—themes that reappeared in twentieth-century European “neo-liberalism.”

Logical positivism: The twentieth-century philosophical movement (centered in England) that attempted to make philosophy more scientific by ignoring metaphysical or ethical questions and focusing instead on the rigorous clarification of language and empirically verifiable truths.

Medieval synthesis: A term used to describe the thirteenth-century theological fusion of Aristotle’s conception of reason with the Christian theological belief in divine revelation. This synthesis argued that there was no conflict between faith and reason.

Metaphysics: The philosophical term used to describe the study of realities or ideas that go beyond the physical world. The metaphysical tradition, which emerged in ancient Greek philosophy, seeks to show the higher meaning of material existence or being.

Modernism: A movement in early twentieth-century literature and art that emphasized the inner vision of individual writers or artists; challenged older Enlightenment-era beliefs in a stable, objective external world; experimented

with nonlinear narratives or artistic representations; and explored multiple perspectives on time and thought.

Naturalism: A late nineteenth-century approach to literature that depicted the hard realities of life (e.g., poverty, disease, corruption, bad marriages) through an almost scientific emphasis on the biological hereditaries and social environments that shaped human actions.

Newtonian science: The late seventeenth-century scientific theories of Isaac Newton that explained the universal law of gravitation and led to confident modern European beliefs in scientific knowledge, universal truths, and human progress.

Oedipus complex: Sigmund Freud’s term for what he described as a psychological triangle in which sons yearn to displace their fathers and love their mothers. Freud used this theory to explain the origin of general social taboos (e.g., the incest taboo), as well as the unconscious tensions in families.

Ontology: A philosophical term that refers to the nature or theory of “being.” Such beliefs in a reality or grounding that underlies human existence and thought are often not made explicit in language and daily life, but they shape our understanding of the world.

Phenomenology: The twentieth-century philosophical “school” that emphasized the complex relation between human consciousness and objects, phenomena, or experiences in the world. It is the interaction of consciousness and the world around it that creates meaning and human understanding (which are not intrinsic in the world itself).

Positivism: An intellectual movement that developed in nineteenth-century France and spread across modern Europe. Positivism viewed science as the only “positive” form of knowledge and as the stable foundation for human progress.

Postmodernism: A late twentieth-century view of the contemporary world that stresses the fragmentation of social and political life, the relativism or cultural contingency of truth, the multiplicity rather than the unity of human identities and cultures, and the flaws of universal social theories. Postmodernism influenced both the arts and cultural studies.

Poststructuralism: A critical approach to literature, philosophy, and the social sciences that stresses the powerful role of language or discourse in the construction of cultural truths and questions concepts of “unity” in Western thought.

Psychoanalysis: The psychological theory and clinical practice that emphasizes the decisive importance of the unconscious mind and drives in all forms of human activity and conflict. Emerging primarily in the works of Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis widely influenced twentieth-century views of human identities, relationships, and creativity.

Realism: A mid-nineteenth-century cultural trend that rejected the sentimentality of Romantic literature and the arts. It sought to portray life as it is rather than life as it should be, and its critique of the greed and clichés in modern social life continued to influence modern literature.

Relativism: The belief that truth can never be absolute or universal, because all human knowledge emerges in specific cultures, languages, and historical contexts that shape its meaning.

Relativity: The scientific theory that explains why time and space are relative to an observer's position and movement in space. Albert Einstein developed this theory, which stressed that there is no fixed reference point for the study of motion, changed Newtonian physics, and contributed to new cultural beliefs in the relativity of all knowledge.

Romanticism: An influential movement in the arts and philosophy (developing between 1780–1840) that challenged Enlightenment beliefs in reason and science. Romanticism praised human feelings, the mysteries of nature, and the unique creativity of artists, thus contributing to modern beliefs in art as a source of personal or cultural salvation.

Stalinism: The dictatorial form of communist rule that Joseph Stalin (1879–1953) used to control the Soviet Union from the late 1920s until his death. More generally, the term refers to any highly authoritarian or rigid form of communist thought or party.

Stream of consciousness: A literary innovation in the early twentieth-century novels of James Joyce and others, who tried to convey the different thoughts, memories, and anxieties that flow almost unconnectedly through the human mind during even the briefest periods of time.

Structural linguistics: An approach to human language that was developed by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in the early twentieth century. It examines the grammatical systems that enable speakers to make meaningful statements, and it stresses that infinitely diverse, specific sentences always rely on the same underlying structures.

Structuralism: An influential theory in post-World War II social sciences and literary studies. It drew on structural linguistics to describe human cultures as systems of deep structures that organize human relationships, shape the limits of human thought or action, and create social meaning through binary oppositions.

Surrealism: The literary and artistic movement that emphasized the often disjointed images of dreams, mental “free associations,” and automatic writing.

Symbolism: A late nineteenth-century literary movement that explored the complex symbols in cultures, languages, literatures, and human minds.

Weltanschauung: The German word that refers to the distinctive consciousness of a historical era or culture.

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