CHAPTER 40

Twentieth-Century European Civilization

TIME LINE

1913-1927	Marcel Proust publishes *Remembrance of Things Past*
1919	The Bauhaus is established in Weimar Germany
1920	H. G. Wells publishes *The Outline of History*
1922	John Galsworthy publishes *The Forsyte Saga*
	T. S. Eliot publishes *The Waste Land*
	James Joyce publishes *Ulysses*
1924	Thomas Mann publishes *The Magic Mountain*
1925	George Bernard Shaw wins the Nobel Prize for literature
1926	André Gide publishes *The Counterfeiters*
1928	D. H. Lawrence publishes *Lady Chatterley's Lover*
1929	Erich Maria Remarque publishes *All Quiet on the Western Front*
1942	Albert Camus publishes *The Stranger*
1943	Jean Paul Sartre publishes *Being and Nothingness*
1948	The World Council of Churches is established
1949	George Orwell publishes 1984
1950	Simone de Beauvoir publishes *The Second Sex*
1958	John XXIII becomes pope
1959	Gunter Grass publishes *The Tin Drum*
1962-1965	The Second Vatican Council meets
1978	John Paul II becomes pope

The two world wars of the twentieth century. with their accompanying horrors. did much to undermine the faith in the inevitability of human progress that was an influential legacy of the Enlightenment. Furthermore. while advances in science and technology greatly improved the material quality of life. they also increased the uncertainties and threats confronting humanity. As a consequence of these experiences of the twentieth century, philosophy and religion – and literature and the arts as well – became increasingly more diverse in their consideration of the human experience in a troubled age.

Philosophy and Religion

Existentialism

Existentialism emerged as one of the twentieth century's most influential movements in philosophy. A complex movement, existentialism focused its

attention on the helpless and alienated individual seeking his identity and salvation in an unreasonable and apparently meaningless universe.

Kierkegaard

An outgrowth of the revolt against reason that began in nineteenth-century philosophy, existentialism numbered the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (see Chapter 26) and the Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) among its forerunners. While Kierkegaard wrote in the early nineteenth century, he did not win wide attention until after World War 1. Deeply religious, Kierkegaard stressed the need for isolated human beings to make a leap of faith and establish a relationship with God. He believed, however, that the truths of the Christian faith are not revealed so much in doctrinal formulas and in the organized church as they are in the experience of human beings facing the crises of their lives.

Sartre

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), a French philosopher, novelist, and playwright, emerged as a significant spokesman for existentialism following World War II. *Being and Nothingness* (1943) is Sartre's major philosophical work, but he also expressed existentialist ideas in his novels, plays, and other writings. An atheist, Sartre believed that human existence has no transcendent significance and that it is, therefore, fundamentally absurd. This absurdity, however, means that human beings are free to make choices. In their choices, they can give meaning and purpose to their lives.

De Beauvoir

Simone de Beauvoir (b. 1908), a close friend of Sartre's, examined the existential dilemma in several novels, including *The Mandarins* (1955). She also wrote *The Second Sex* (1950), a ground-breaking work on the condition of women.

Camus

The French novelist and playwright Albert Camus (1913-1960) is regarded as an existentialist, although he was more a literary man and moralist than a formal philosopher. Camus expressed existentialist views in his novels, including *The Stranger* (1942), *The Plague (1947),* and *The Fall* (1956). In *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), he set forth his concept of the absurdity of human existence. Although viewing the world as a place of absurdity, Camus nevertheless had great confidence in the human spirit. In *The Rebel* (1951), he extolled spiritual rebellion as a means for human beings to transcend their existential predicament.

Roman Catholicism

A new era in the history of the Roman Catholic Church began with the pontificate of Pope John XXIII (r. 1958-1963). In his 1961 encyclical *Mater et Magistra* ("Mother and Teacher"), the pope strongly reaffirmed the commitment of the Catholic Church to the cause of economic and social improved relations with other Christian denominations). In his 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris* ("Peace on Earth"), the pope called on people of different religious and political persuasions to cooperate in promoting the cause of peace and social justice throughout the world.

Vatican II

Pope John XXIII initiated a movement for the renewal of the Catholic Church. To promote this renewal, what he called *aggiornamento* (bringing the church up-to-date), the pope convened the Second Vatican Council. Vatican II, meeting in four sessions from 1962 to 1965, was composed of archbishops, bishops, and other high-ranking churchmen from around the world. The council enacted a reform of the church's liturgy, introducing the use of vernacular languages in place of Latin and encouraging more active participation by the laity. It endorsed the ecumenical movement and promoted an improvement in relations with non-Christians, issuing a strong condemnation of anti-Semitism. Vatican II created a new atmosphere in the Catholic Church, where different points of view could more openly be expressed.

Pope Paul VI

Pope Paul VI (r. 1963-1978) supported the program of renewal introduced by Vatican II, although he maintained the traditional authority of the pope as head of the Catholic Church. In the controversial 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae* ("Of Human Life"), Paul VI reaffirmed the church's opposition to artificial contraception.

Pope John Paul II

Following Paul VI's death in 1978, John Paul I became pope, dying suddenly after a pontificate of only thirty-four days. The cardinals then elected the first non-Italian pope since the sixteenth century. Karol Wojtyla, who became Pope John Paul II, had been the cardinal archbishop of Cracow, Poland. Elected at the age of fifty-six, John Paul II was the youngest man to become pope in over one hundred years.

John Paul II was a strong advocate of social justice and of ecumenism, although he pursued a moderately conservative course in governing the

Catholic Church. He emphasized papal authority on matters of religious doctrine and practice, encouraged the traditional Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary, and discouraged views and practices that he regarded as either excessively liberal or overly conservative. The pope reaffirmed the Catholic Church's requirement that the clergy be celibate and opposed the ordination of women to the priesthood. He was critical of liberation theology promoted by some Catholic radicals, especially in Latin America, and he condemned the traditionalist movement, which rejected many of the reforms instituted by Vatican II.

Protestantism

Barth

Neoorthodoxy emerged as one of the most important movements in Protestant Christianity in the twentieth century. Karl Barth (1886-1968), a Swiss theologian, was one of the most prominent neoorthodox thinkers. Barth rejected religious modernism and reaffirmed Reformation theology, emphasizing the word of God set forth in the Bible, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and the dependence of humanity on God. Barth's major writings include *Church Dogmatics* (4 vols., 1922-1962).

Tillich

Another powerful Protestant spokesman was Paul Tillich (1886-1965), a German theologian. For Tillich, God was ultimate truth, the "Ground of Being," and such traditional Christian doctrines as original sin, atonement, and immortality were not so much realities as symbols. Tillich's major works include *Systematic Theology* (3 vols., 1951-1963).

A growing ecumenical spirit among Protestants resulted in the establishment in 1948 of the World Council of Churches.

Literature

British Literature

Three British writers of the pre-World War I generation remained prominent in the postwar era: George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), H. G. Wells (1866-1946), and John Galsworthy (1867-1933).

Shaw

The Dublin-born Shaw won popularity for a number of witty plays, including *Man and Superman* (1905) and *Pygmalion* (1913). *St. Joan* (1923) was among Shaw's successful plays produced in the 1920s. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1925.

Wells

Wells's popular prewar science fiction included *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). In the postwar era, *The Outline of History* (1920) won a wide readership, as did the futuristic novel *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933).

Galsworthy

John Galsworthy, who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1933, is best-known for his trilogy *The Forsyte Saga* (1922), which dealt with the decline of the English upper-middle class.

Lawrence

D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930) shocked his contemporaries with his frankness about sexuality. His novel *Sons and Lovers* (1913) appeared on the eve of World War I. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* {I928) , Lawrence's best-known novel, was widely condemned as pornographic and was banned in the United States and Great Britain for many years.

Huxley

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) is best known for his novel *Brave New World* (1932), which presented a grim picture of a future "ideal" society.

Eliot

The American-born T. S. Eliot {I888-1965) was among Britain's best-known poets, playwrights, and critics. In *The Waste Land* (1922), Eliot wrote of the barrenness of modern life. In his verse drama *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), he told the story of the murder of Thomas à Becket, a twelfth-century archbishop of Canterbury.

Orwell

Among English writers of the post-World War II period, the satirist George Orwell (1903-1950) was among the most prominent. Orwell assaulted totalitarianism in his novels *Animal Farm* (1946) and *1984* (1949), which presented a vision of a sinister totalitarian society of the future.

French Literature

Gide

André Gide (l869-1951) demonstrated his ability as a keen observer of human nature in a series of novels, including *Lafcadio's Adventures* (l9l4) and *The Counterfeiters* (l926). Highly controversial, Gide was condemned both for his defense of homosexuality and his support of Communism, which he later repudiated. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1947.

Proust

Marcel Proust (1871-1922) presented a sharp psychological analysis of the old, decaying aristocracy and the new, ambitious bourgeoisie in the sixteen volumes of his novel *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913-1927).

Mauriac

François Mauriac (1885-1970), the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1952, reflected his strong Catholic faith in a series of novels, including *The Desert of Love (1925).*

German Literature

Mann

Thomas Mann (1875-1955), who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1929, is widely recognized as Germany's greatest twentieth-century writer. *The Magic Mountain* (1924), his best novel, is set in a sanitarium that served as a metaphor for what Mann regarded as the sickness of contemporary civilization. His other well-known works include *Buddenbrooks* (1901); *Joseph and His Brothers* (1933-1943), a series of four novels; and *Doctor Faustus* (1947). Strongly anti-Nazi, Mann left Germany in 1933.

Kafka

Franz Kafka (1883-1924), a German Jew living in Prague, wrote haunting novels and short stories dealing with the alienation of modem man. *Metamorphosis* (1912), a collection of stories, was published during Kafka's lifetime, but his major novels were published posthumously.

Hesse

The poet and novelist Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) also dealt with the theme of alienation in *Steppenwolf* (1927), his best-known novel.

Remarque

Erich Maria Remarque (1898-1970) is most famous for his powerful antiwar novel *All Quiet on the Western Front (1929).*

Böll and Grass

The horrors of the Nazi era and World War II exerted a powerful influence on postwar German literature. Heinrich Böll (1917-1985) criticized what he regarded as the degeneration of postwar German society in his novels and stories, including *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* (1975). In his first novel, *The Tin Drum* (1959), Günter Grass (b. 1927) confronted the viciousness of the Nazi years. His other novels include *Cat and Mouse* (1961) and *Dog Years* (1963).

Other Major Writers

Joyce

James Joyce (1882-1941), an Irish writer, achieved early recognition for *The Dubliners* (1924), a collection of short stories, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), an autobiographical novel. In *Ulysses* (1922), Joyce broke new ground, experimenting with the stream-of-consciousness technique and long interior monologues. Criticized for obscenity, *Ulysses* was banned in several countries. Joyce continued his literary experimentation in the complex novel *Finnegans Wake (1939).*

Moravia

The Italian neorealist Alberto Moravia (b. 1907) is best known for his novels, including *The Women of Rome* (1947) and *Two Women* (1957), dealing with social alienation.

Art, Architecture, and Music

Painting

Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso remained major artists in the years after World War I (see Chapter 26), while other artists developed the new movements of expressionism and surrealism.

Expressionism

Expressionism, which emphasized the artist's free expression of emotion, flourished in Germany in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of World War I. Georges Rouault (1871-1958), a French painter, is also regarded as an expressionist.

Surrealism

In the 1920s, the movement known as surrealism emerged. Influenced by Freudian psychology, the surrealists sought to portray subconscious fantasies. Max Ernst (1891-1976), a German painter, and the Spanish-born Salvador Dali (1904-1989) were among the best-known surrealists.

Modigliani

Amedeo Modigliani (1884-1920), an Italian painter, developed a unique style marked by the elongation of forms.

Sculpture

Twentieth-century sculpture moved away from the representation of reality toward more experimental styles.

Barlach

Ernst Barlach (1870-1938) introduced expressionism into German sculpture. His work, emphasizing bold and simple lines, conveyed a powerful sense of emotion.

Brancusi

Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957). a Rumanian. emphasized simplicity of form in his abstract shapes.

Epstein

The Russian-American sculptor Jacob Epstein (1880-1959), who lived in England for most of his career. produced massive and powerful figures, of ten inspired by personalities in the Bible, in stone and bronze.

Architecture

Twentieth-century architecture was characterized by an emphasis on function, rather than form, and by the use of structural steel and other modern construction materials, including concrete and glass. In addition, it tended to avoid decorative details that served no function.

The Bauhaus

In Germany, the Bauhaus was founded in Weimar in 1919, under the leadership of Walter Gropius (1883-1969). Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) became its head in 1930. The Bauhaus played a major role in the development of modem architecture prior to its dissolution after Hitler took power in 1933.

Le Corbusier

The Swiss-French architect Charles E. Jeanneret, better known as Le Corbusier (1887-1965), was one of the twentieth century's most innovative and influential architects. He is known for his dictum "a house is a machine to live in."

Music

The twentieth century produced a number of major composers, although few achieved the widespread popularity of their leading nineteenth-century counterparts.

Ravel

The French composer Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) wrote primarily piano and orchestral works. *Bolero* (1928) is his best-known composition.

Respighi

Ottorini Respighi (1879-1936), an Italian, composed romantic orchestral works, including the graceful *Fountains of Rome* (1917) and *Pines of Rome (1924).*

Bartok

Bela Bartok (1881-1945) found inspiration in the folk melodies of his native Hungary. He is best known for his compositions for piano, violin, and orchestra, as well as his choral works.

Hindemith

The German Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) wrote for the piano and other solo instruments and also composed orchestral and choral works.

Vaughan Williams and Britten

Among British composers, Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958) and Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) are the best known. Vaughan Williams is widely regarded as the leading English composer of the early twentieth century. Influenced by English folk music, his compositions include song cycles, symphonies, and operas. Britten composed both instrumental and choral works, as well as operas.

Russian Composers

Igor Stravinsky remained active in the years following World War I (see Chapter 26). Other major twentieth-century Russian composers included Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953) and Dmitri Shostakovich (1906--1975). A musical innovator, Prokofiev was inspired by traditional Russian folk music. His most popular work is *Peter and the Wolf* (1936). Shostakovich wrote symphonies and operas, as well as string quartets and concertos for violin, piano, and cello. His Fifth Symphony (1937) is particularly well-known.

In the late nineteenth century, Europeans of ten elevated their faith in science and technology to an almost religious level and expressed their belief in the inevitability of human progress. "Glory to man in the highest," the English poet Algernon Charles Swinburne proclaimed, "the maker and master of things."

The experience of the twentieth century has been a sobering one. Nevertheless, while the unbridled optimism so of ten expressed in the nineteenth century has proved unwarranted, so, too, is the intense sense of pessimism that has permeated so much of contemporary thought. The French writer Albert Camus made an eloquent statement of the intellectual temper of many in the twentieth century on the occasion of his acceptance of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1958. Expressing his sober belief in humanity's ability to prevail, Camus told his audience:

As the heir of a corrupt history that blends blighted revolutions, misguided techniques, dead gods, and worn-out ideologies, in which second-rate powers can destroy everything today, but are unable to win anyone over; in which intelligence had stooped to becoming the servant of hatred and oppression, our generation, starting from nothing but its own negations, has had to reestablish both within and without itself a little of what constitutes the dignity of life and death. Faced with a world threatened with disintegration.... our generation knows that, in a sort of mad race against time, it ought to reestablish among nations a peace not based on slavery, to reconcile labor and culture again. and to reconstruct with all men an Ark of the Covenant. Perhaps it can never accomplish that vast undertaking. but most certainly throughout the world it has already accepted the double challenge of truth and liberty, and on occasion. has shown that it can lay down its Life without hatred. This generation deserves to be acclaimed wherever it happens to be, and especially wherever it is sacrificing itself.