

Mass Society and Democracy 1870-1914

THE STORY MATTERS...

The industrialization that began transforming Europe in the late 1700s had largely matured by a century later. Starting around 1850, the Second Industrial Revolution produced goods on a much larger scale. It created largely urban societies and a growing working class. This phase of industrialization also saw new advances in communications technology. A key figure was physicist and inventor Guglielmo Marconi.

Lesson 24-3

Modern Ideas and Uncertainty

READING HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

abstract intensity

Content Vocabulary

Modernism psychoanalysis
Social Darwinism pogroms Zionism

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How can industrialization affect a country's economy?
- How are political and social structures influenced by economic changes?

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, people moved toward a modern consciousness. Their changing worldview was expressed in new art movements, while developments in the sciences also changed how people saw themselves and their world.

The Culture of Modernity

GUIDING QUESTION How did innovation change literature, the visual arts, and music in the late 1800s and early 1900s?

Between 1870 and 1914, many writers and artists rebelled against the traditional literary and artistic styles that had dominated European cultural life since the Renaissance. The changes they produced have since been called **modernism**.

Literature

Western novelists and poets who followed the naturalist style believed that literature should be realistic and address social problems. Henrik Ibsen and Emile Zola, for example, explored the role of women in society, alcoholism, and urban slums in their work. The symbolist writers had a different idea about what was real. They believed the external world, including art, was only a collection of symbols reflecting the true reality – the human mind. Art, the symbolists believed, should function for its own sake, not criticize or seek to understand society.

Painting and Architecture

Since the Renaissance, Western artists had tried to represent reality as accurately as possible. By the late 1800s, artists were seeking new forms of expression to reflect their

changing worldviews. Impressionism was a movement that began in France in the 1870s, when a group of artists rejected indoor studios and went to the countryside to paint nature directly. One important impressionist was Claude Monet (mo • NAY), who painted pictures that captured the interplay of light, water, and sky.

In the 1880s, a new movement, known as postimpressionism, arose in France and soon spread. For Vincent van Gogh, art was a spiritual experience. He was especially interested in color and believed that it could act as its own form of language. Van Gogh maintained that artists should paint what they feel.

By the early 1900s, artists were no longer convinced that their main goal was to represent reality. This was especially true in the visual arts. One reason for the decline of realism in painting was photography, which became popular after George Eastman created the Kodak camera in 1888.

Artists tended to focus less on mirroring reality, which the camera could do, and more on creating reality. Painters and sculptors, like the symbolist writers of the time, looked for meaning in individual consciousness. Between 1905 and 1914, this search for expression created modern art.

By 1905, Pablo Picasso, an important figure in modern art, was beginning his career. Picasso created a new artistic style – cubism. Cubism used geometric designs to re-create reality in the viewer's mind.

Abstract painting emerged around 1910. Wassily Kandinsky, a Russian, was one of the first to use an abstract style. Kandinsky sought to avoid visual reality altogether. He believed that art should speak directly to the soul. To do so, it must use only line and color.

Modernism in the arts revolutionized architecture and gave rise to functionalism. Functionalism was the idea that buildings, like the products of machines, should be functional, or useful. All unnecessary ornamentation should be stripped away. Architects, led by Louis H. Sullivan, used reinforced concrete, steel frames, and electric elevators to build skyscrapers virtually free of ornamentation.

Music

At the beginning of the twentieth century, developments in music paralleled those in painting. The music of the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky exploited expressive sounds and bold rhythms.

Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring* revolutionized music. When it was performed in Paris in 1913, the sounds and rhythms of the music and dance caused a near riot by an outraged audience.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining Why did modern artists turn away from realism?

Uncertainty Grows

GUIDING QUESTION *How did scientific discoveries in the late 1800s impact the way people saw themselves and their world?*

Science was one of the chief pillars supporting the worldview of many Westerners in the nineteenth century. Many believed that by applying scientific laws, humans could understand the physical world and reality.

Curie and the Atom

Throughout much of the 1800s, Westerners believed in a mechanical conception of the universe that was based on the ideas of Isaac Newton. The universe was viewed as a giant machine. Time, space, and matter were objective realities existing independently of those observing them. Matter was thought to be made of solid material bodies called atoms.

These views were seriously questioned at the end of the nineteenth century. The French scientist Marie Curie discovered that an element called radium gave off energy, or radiation, that apparently came from within the atom itself. Atoms were not just material bodies but small, active worlds.

Einstein and Relativity

In the early twentieth century, Albert Einstein, a German-born scientist, provided a new view of the universe. His special theory of relativity stated that space and time are not absolute but are relative to the observer.

According to this theory, neither space nor time has an existence independent of human experience. Moreover, matter and energy reflect the relativity of time and space. Einstein concluded that matter is just another form of energy. The vast energies contained within the atom were explained. To some, however, a relative universe was one without certainty.

Freud and Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud (FROYD), a doctor from Vienna, proposed theories regarding the nature of the human mind. His major theories were published in 1900 in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

According to Freud, human behavior was strongly determined by past experiences and internal forces of which people were largely unaware. Repression of such experiences began in childhood, so he devised a method – known as

psychoanalysis – by which a therapist could probe deeply into the patient's memory. In this way, they could retrace the repressed thoughts all the way back to their childhood origins. If the patient's conscious mind could be made aware of the unconscious and its repressed contents, the patient could be healed.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining According to Freud, what determines much of human behavior?

Extreme Nationalism

GUIDING QUESTION *What role did nationalism play in the late 1800s?*

Nationalism became more intense in many countries in the late 1800s. Social Darwinism was the radical belief that Darwin's theory of natural selection could be applied to modern human societies. A British philosopher, Herbert Spencer, argued that social progress came from "the survival of the fittest" – that is, the strong advanced while the weak declined. This kind of thinking allowed some people to reject the idea that they should take care of the less fortunate.

Extreme nationalists also used **Social Darwinism**. They said that nations, too, were engaged in a "struggle for existence" in which only the fittest nations would survive. This idea was also used to justify racism, or the belief that some peoples were superior to others.

The growth of extreme nationalism and racism also led to the growth of anti-Semitism, or hostility toward and discrimination against Jews. The intensity of anti-Semitism was evident from the Dreyfus affair in France. In 1894, a military court found Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish captain in the French general staff, guilty of selling army secrets. After the trial, evidence emerged that proved Dreyfus innocent. A wave of public outcry finally forced the government to pardon Dreyfus in 1899.

The worst treatment of Jews at the turn of the century occurred in Russia. Persecutions and **pogroms**, or organized massacres, were widespread. Hundreds of thousands of Jews decided to emigrate to escape the persecution. Some Jews, probably about 25,000, immigrated to Palestine in the Ottoman Empire, which became home for a Jewish nationalist movement called **Zionism**.

For many Jews, the land of ancient Israel had long been the land of their dreams. A key figure in the growth of political Zionism was Theodor Herzl, who stated in his book *The Jewish State* (1896), "The Jews who wish it will have their state." Settlement in the Palestine region was difficult, however, because it was then part of the Ottoman Empire, which was opposed to Jewish immigration. Although 3,000 Jews went annually to Palestine between 1904 and 1914, the Zionist desire for a homeland remained only a dream on the eve of World War I.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Analyzing How did the Dreyfus affair illustrate anti-Semitism in France?

REVIEWING VOCABULARY

- modernism** a movement in which writers and artists between 1870 and 1914 rebelled against the traditional literary and artistic styles that had dominated European cultural life since the Renaissance
- psychoanalysis** a method by which a therapist and patient probe deeply into the patient's memory; by making the patient's conscious mind aware of repressed thoughts, healing can take place
- Social Darwinism** theory used by Western nations in the late nineteenth century to justify their dominance; it was based on Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, "the survival of the fittest," and applied to modern human activities pogrom the organized massacre of a minority group, especially Jews
- Zionism** an international movement originally for the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine, where ancient Israel was located, and later for the support of modern Israel