

Chapter 28: The Age of Anxiety

1. Uncertainty in modern thought
 - a. The effects of World War I on modern thought
 - i. Western society began to question values and beliefs that had guided it since the Enlightenment.
 1. Before 1914, people believed in progress, reason, and the rights of the individual.
 2. Critics rejected the general faith in progress and the power of the rational mind.
 - ii. Many people rejected the long accepted beliefs in progress and the power of the rational mind to understand a logical universe and an orderly society.
 1. **Valéry** wrote about the crisis of the cruelly injured mind; to him the war ("storm") had left a "terrible uncertainty."
 2. New ideas and discoveries in philosophy, physics, psychology, and literature encouraged this general intellectual crisis.
 - b. Modern philosophy
 - i. The traditional belief in progress and the rational human was attacked by Nietzsche, Bergson, and Sorel before 1914.
 1. **Nietzsche** believed that Western civilization was in decline because of Christian humility and an overstress on rational thinking at the expense of emotion and passion; he believed that a few superior supermen had to become the leaders of the herd of inferior people.
 - a. God no longer really exists; "God is dead" so the only hope is to accept the meaningless of human existence and then make that meaningless a source of self-defined personal integrity and hence liberation.
 2. **Bergson** added to that immediate experience and intuition are as important as rational and scientific thinking.
 3. **Sorel** argued that socialism, led by an elite, would succeed through a great violent strike of all working people.
 - a. Marxian socialism is impossible; we must use Leninish (?) socialism.
 - ii. The two main developments in philosophy were logical empiricism (logical positivism) in English speaking countries, and existentialism on the Continent.
 1. **Logical empiricism**, as defined by **Wittgenstein**, claimed that philosophy was nothing more than the logical clarification of thoughts--the study of language; it could not answer the great issues of the ages such as the meaning of life. Statements about such topics are only personal opinions.
 - a. "Of what one cannot speak, of that one must keep silent."
 2. **Existentialism**, first developed in Germany by **Heidegger** and **Jaspers**, and then by **Sartre** and **Camus** in France, stressed that humans can overcome the meaninglessness of life by individual action.
 - a. "The [humans] turn up, appear on the scene."
 - b. "Man is condemned to be free."
 3. Existentialism was popular in France after the Second World War because it advocated positive human action at a time of hopelessness.
 - a. It was also popular among disillusioned postwar university students.
 - c. The revival of Christianity
 - i. Before 1914, Protestant theologians, such as **Schweitzer**, stressed the human

- nature of Jesus and turned away from the supernatural aspects of his divinity; they sought to harmonize religious belief with scientific findings.
- ii. Christian existentialists stressed human beings' sinful nature, the need for faith and the mystery of God's forgiveness.
 - iii. A revitalization of fundamental Christianity took place after World War I.
 1. **Kierkegaard** was rediscovered; he had criticized the worldliness of the church and stressed commitment to a remote and majestic God.
 2. **Barth** stressed the imperfect and sinful nature of man (our logic is imperfect) and the need to accept God's truth through trust, not reason.
 3. Catholic existential theologians, such as **Marcel** and **Maritain**, found new hope in religion by emphasizing the need for its hope and piety in a broken world.
 - a. "One began to believe in heaven because one believed in hell."
- d. The new physics
- i. Prior to the 1920s, science was one of the main supports of Western society's optimistic and rational (secular too!) worldview.
 - ii. The challenge to Newtonian physics by scientists such as **Planck** and **Einstein** undermined belief in constant natural laws.
 1. **Marie Curie** discovered that radioactive atoms do not have constant atomic weights.
 2. **Planck** showed that subatomic energy is emitted in uneven little spurts, and not in a steady stream. His work with subatomic energy showed that atoms were not the basic building blocks of nature.
 3. **Einstein** postulated that time and space are relative, the universe is infinite, and matter and energy are interchangeable.
 - iii. The 1920s were the "heroic age of physics."
 1. **Rutherford** split the atom.
 2. Subatomic particles were identified, notably the **neutron**.
 3. The new physics described a universe that lacked absolute objective reality; Heisenberg claimed that instead of Newton's rational laws, there are only tendencies and probabilities.
 4. Instead of Newton's dependable, rational laws, there seemed to be only tendencies and probabilities in an extraordinarily complex and uncertain universe. In short, science seemed to have little to do with human experience and human problems.
 - a. "Science is not qualified to speak to this question [value conflicts]."
- e. Freudian psychology
- i. Prior to Freud, it was assumed that the conscious mind processed experiences in a rational and logical way.
 - ii. According to Freud, human behavior is basically irrational.
 1. The key to understanding the mind is the irrational unconscious (the id), which is driven by sexual, aggressive, and pleasure seeking desires.
 2. Behavior is a compromise between the needs of the id and the rationalizing conscious (the ego), which mediates what a person *can* do, and ingrained moral values (the superego), which tell what a person *should* do.
 - iii. Instinctual drives can easily overwhelm the control mechanisms; yet rational thinking and traditional moral values can cripple people with guilt and neuroses.
 - iv. Many interpreted Freudian thought as an encouragement of an uninhibited sex life.
- f. Twentieth century literature

- i. The postwar moods of pessimism, relativism, and alienation influenced novelists.
 - ii. Instead of describing realistic yet rational scenes through an all-knowing narrator, literature focused on the complexity and irrationality of the human mind
 - iii. Writers such as **Proust** embraced psychological relativity--the attempt to understand oneself by looking at one's past. (*Remembrance of Things Past*)-**stream of consciousness technique**
 - iv. Novelists such as **Woolf**, **Faulkner**, and **Joyce** adopted the stream-of-consciousness technique, in which ideas and emotions from different time periods bubble up randomly.
 - 1. *Jacob's Room, The Sound and the Fury, Ulysses**
 - v. Some literature, such as that of **Spengler**, **Kafka**, and **Orwell**, was anti-utopian--it predicted a future of doom.
 - 1. *The Decline of the West, The Waste Land, The Trial, The Castle, 1984*
2. Modern art and music
- a. "Modernism" in art and music meant constant experimentation and a search for new forms of expression.
 - b. Architecture and design
 - i. The new idea of functionalism in architecture, exemplified by **Le Corbusier**, emphasized efficiency and clean lines instead of ornamentation.
 - 1. "A house is a machine for living in."
 - ii. The Chicago school of architects, led by **Sullivan**, pioneered in the building of skyscrapers.
 - iii. **Frank Lloyd Wright** designed truly modern houses featuring low lines, open interiors, and mass-produced building materials.
 - iv. Germany was the leader in modern architecture.
 - 1. The **Bauhaus** school under **Gropius** became the major proponent of functional and industrial forms.
 - 2. It combined the study of fine art with the study of applied art.
 - 3. The Bauhaus stressed good design for everyday life.
 - v. **Van der Rohe** brought European functionalism to Chicago--and hence steel frame and glass wall architecture.
 - c. Modern painting
 - i. **Impressionist** artists like **Monet**, **Renoir**, and **Pissarro** sought to capture the momentary overall feeling, or impression, of light falling on a real-life scene before their eyes.
 - ii. French impressionism yielded to nonrepresentational **expressionism**, which sought to portray the worlds of emotion and imagination, as in the works of **van Gogh**, **Gauguin**, **Cézanne**, and **Matisse**.
 - 1. Expressionism concentrated on form rather than light.
 - 2. Critics called them *les fauves*- "the wild beasts"
 - iii. **Cubism**, founded by Picasso, concentrated on zigzagging lines and overlapping planes.
 - iv. **Nonrepresentational** art turned away from nature completely; it focused on mood, not objects.
 - 1. "The observer must learn to look at my pictures as form and color combinations, as a representation of mood and not as a representation of objects."-Kadinsky
 - v. Dadaism and surrealism became prominent in the 1920s and 1930s.
 - 1. **Dadaism** delighted in outrageous conduct.

2. **Surrealists**, inspired by Freud, painted wild dreams and complex symbols.
- d. Modern music
 - i. The concept of expressionism also affected music, as in the work of **Stravinsky** and **Berg**.
 - ii. Some composers, led by **Schönberg**, abandoned traditional harmony and tonality.
3. Movies and radio
 - a. The general public embraced movies and radio enthusiastically.
 - b. The movie factories and stars such as Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish, Douglas Fairbanks, Rudolph Valentino, and Charlie Chaplin created a new medium and a new culture.
 - c. Moviegoing became a form of escapism and the main entertainment of the masses.
 - d. Radio, which became possible with Marconi's "wireless" communication and the development of the vacuum tube, permitted transmission of speech and music, but major broadcasting did not begin until 1920.
 - i. Then every country established national broadcasting networks; by the late 1930s, three of four households in Britain and Germany had a radio.
 - ii. Dictators and presidents used the radio for political propaganda.
 - e. Movies also became tools of indoctrination.
 - i. **Eisenstein** used film to dramatize the communist view of Russian history.
 - ii. In Germany, **Riefenstahl** created a propaganda film for Hitler.
4. The search for peace and political stability
 - a. The search for peace was difficult: Germany hated the Treaty of Versailles, France was fearful and isolated, Britain was undependable, and the United States was isolationist. Besides, Eastern Europe was in ferment (communist Russia) and the international economy was disrupted and poor.
 - b. Yet, from 1925 to late 1929, it appeared that peace and stability were within reach. But the collapse of the 1930s ended that quest.
 - c. Germany and the Western powers
 - i. Germany was the key to lasting peace, and the Germans hated the Treaty of Versailles.
 1. The treaty was too harsh for a peace of reconciliation, yet too soft for a peace of conquest.
 - ii. France believed that an economically weak Germany was necessary for its security and wanted massive reparations to repair devastated northern France.
 - iii. Britain needed a prosperous Germany in order to maintain the British economy.
 1. **J. M. Keynes**, an economist, argued in ***Economic Consequences of the Peace*** that the Versailles treaty crippled the European economy and needed revision.
 2. His attack on the treaty contributed to guilt feelings about Germany in Britain.
 3. As a result, France and Britain drifted apart.
 - iv. When Germany (Weimar Republic) refused to continue its heavy reparations payments, French and Belgian armies occupied the Ruhr (1923).
 - v. The Germans stopped work in the factories (passive resistance), and France occupied the German Rhineland; this left many Germans unemployed.
 1. Inflation skyrocketed; prices soared and savings were wiped out.
 - a. The German government printed money to pay its bills.
 2. Resentment and political unrest among the Germans grew; many blamed the Western governments, their own government, big business, the Jews, the workers and the communists.
 - vi. Under **Stresemann**, Germany agreed to revised reparations payments, and France

agreed to re-examine Germany's ability to pay.

1. Stresemann represented a new compromising mood in both Germany and France.

d. Hope in foreign affairs (1924-1929)

- i. The **Dawes Plan** (1924) provided a solution to the reparations problem: the United States lent money to Germany so Germany could pay France and Britain so they could pay the United States.
- ii. In 1929, the **Young Plan** further reduced German reparations.
- iii. The **treaties of Locarno** (1925) eased European disputes.
 1. Germany and France accepted their common border.
 2. Britain and Italy agreed to fight either France or Germany if either country invaded the other.
 3. Stresemann agreed to settle boundary disputes w/ Poland and Czechoslovakia peacefully
 4. France promised P and C defensive military aid if Germany was to ever attack them
- iv. Germany joined the League of Nations in 1926.
- v. The **Kellogg-Briand Pact** (1928) condemned war, and the signing states agreed to settle international disputes peacefully.
 1. Seen as idealistic nonsense because it made no provisions for action in case war actually occurred, the pact still fostered the cautious optimism of the late 1920s.

e. Hope in democratic government

- i. The **Ruhr crisis** saw the emergence of the radical right under Hitler; his beer hall plot failed, but he set out his theories in *Mein Kampf*.
- ii. But after 1923, democracy took root in Germany as the economy boomed.
- iii. However, there were sharp political divisions in the country.
 1. The right consisted of nationalists and monarchists.
 2. The communists remained active on the left.
 3. Most working class people supported the socialist Social Democrats.
- iv. In France, the democratically elected government rested in the hands of the middle class oriented moderates, while communists and socialists battled for the support of the workers.
- v. Northern France was rebuilt, and Paris became the world's cultural center.
 1. Rebuilding Northern France led to a large deficit and substantial inflation; the franc had fallen to 10 percent of its prewar value. However, the **Poincaré** government slashed spending and raised taxes, "saving" the franc.
- vi. Britain's major problem was unemployment, and the government's efforts to ease it (subsidized housing, medical aid, and increased old-age pensions) led the country gradually toward state-sponsored welfare plans.
 1. Britain's Labour party, committed to revisionist socialism, replaced the Liberals as the main opposition party to the Conservatives.
 2. Labour, under **MacDonald**, won in 1924 and 1929, yet moved toward socialism gradually.
 3. Catholic Ireland was granted autonomy.

5. The Great Depression (1929-1939)

- a. The depression of 1929-1939 was worldwide and long lasting--and it caused many to turn to radical solutions.
- b. The economic crisis

- i. The depression began with the American stock market crash (October 1929).
 1. Net investment in factories and farms fell while share prices soared.
 2. Many investors and speculators had bought stocks on margin (paying only a small part of the purchase price and borrowing the rest from their stockbrokers).
 3. When prices started to fall, thousands of people had to sell their shares at once to pay their brokers, and a financial panic started.
 - ii. Financial crisis led to a decline in demand, then a decline in production, first in the United States and then in Europe, and an unwise turn to sky high protective tariffs.
 - iii. America demanded its short-term loans to Europe back in a panic, speeding the collapse in world prices.
 - iv. Governments cut their budgets and reduced spending when they should have run large deficits in an attempt to stimulate their economies in a “counter-cyclical policy” advocated by Keynes. This policy was later used against depression after World War II.
- c. Mass unemployment
- i. As production decreased, workers lost their jobs and had no money to buy goods, which cut production even more.
 - ii. Mass unemployment also caused great social and psychological problems; birth rates fell and suicide and mental illness incidences increased.
- d. The New Deal in the United States
- i. Roosevelt's goal was to reform capitalism--especially by giving aid to farmers by raising agricultural prices and restricting production (via **Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933**).
 - ii. Government intervention and regulation took place through the **National Recovery Administration (NRA)**--designed to reduce competition, fix prices and wages.
 - iii. The NRA was declared unconstitutional (1935), and Roosevelt attacked the problem of mass unemployment by government employment of as many people as possible.
 1. The popular **Work Projects Administration** (1935) employed millions of people in the construction of public buildings, bridges and highways.
 2. Other social measures, such as social security and government support for labor unions, also eased the hardships of the depression.
 - iv. Although the New Deal helped, it failed to pull the United States out of the depression.
 1. Some believe Roosevelt should have nationalized industry so that national economic planning could have worked.
 2. Many economists argued that the New Deal did not put enough money into the economy through deficit financing.
- e. The Scandinavian response to depression
- i. Backed by a strong tradition of community cooperation, socialist parties were firmly established in Sweden and Norway by the 1920s.
 - ii. Deficit spending to finance public works and create jobs was used to check unemployment and revive the economy after 1929.
 - iii. Scandinavia's welfare socialism, though it depended on a large bureaucracy and high taxes, offered an appealing middle way between capitalism and communism or fascism in the 1930s.
- f. Recovery and reform in Britain and France
- i. Britain's concentration on its national market aided its economic recovery--so that by 1937 production had grown by 20 percent.

- ii. Government instability in France prevented recovery and needed reform.
 - 1. The **Socialists**, led by **Blum**, became the strongest party in France, and his **Popular Front government** attempted New Deal-type reforms.
 - a. The Popular Front was an alliance of the Communists, the Socialists and the Radicals.
 - 2. France was drawn to the brink of civil war, and Blum was forced to resign (1937), leaving the country to drift aimlessly.
 - a. The Spanish Civil War also fueled unrest.