

CHAPTER 20

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL RESPONSES TO A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD



As European economies were being transformed by the Second Industrial Revolution, states faced organized challenges from political movements that rejected the economic, social, and political bases of those states and demanded sweeping changes. Government officials, social reformers, and politicians had to confront the difficult conditions of many workers and their families—"the problem of problems," as it was called in Britain. Some states began to enact social reforms to improve the quality of life for workers and other poor people.

At the same time, the growth of large socialist parties that wanted to capture control of the state was one of the salient signs of the advent of mass political life. Marxist socialists believed that inevitably a working-class revolution would bring down capitalism. Reform socialists, in contrast, believed that electoral victories could lead to a socialist state, and that along the way to ultimate victory socialists could exert pressure on states to improve conditions of life for ordinary people. Anarchists did not want to seize the state, but rather to abolish it. Believing that violent acts would provide a spark that would unleash a social revolution, a number of anarchists launched a campaign of terrorism at the turn of the century, carrying out political assassinations. In parts of Europe, trade unionists known as syndicalists (from the French word *syndicats*, trade unions) believed that trade unions would provide not only the means by which workers could take control of the state but also a blueprint of how society would be organized after a successful revolution.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also brought remarkable cultural achievement in Europe from Britain to Russia, as writers and artists reacted to and against changes in the world they saw around them. Beneath the tangible progress and increased prosperity of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe lurked cultural pessimism and artistic rebellion, a modernist critique of the idea of progress itself. In 1904, the German sociologist Max Weber wrote that "at some time or another the color changes, the importance of uncritically accepted viewpoints is put in doubt, the path is lost in the twilight." To some, the *fin de siècle* seemed to be such a time.

STATE SOCIAL REFORM

In general, Karl Marx's gloomy prediction that workers' wages and overall conditions of life would continue to decline had not been borne out in late-nineteenth-century Europe. Yet economic uncertainty and grinding poverty seemed to have engendered a social crisis of unmatched proportions. Descriptions of the dreary slums of blackened manufacturing towns reached many readers through novels and surveys of working-class life. Beginning in about 1870, as a result of the far-reaching, visible impact of large-scale industrialization, states gradually began to intervene to assist the poor. States and charitable organizations increasingly came to consider poverty a social and not a moral problem. The political left in Western European states demanded measures of social reform. In France and Italy, programs of subsidies for unwed mothers overcame the opposition of the Catholic Church. Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Sweden then implemented short paid maternity leaves for women who had insurance. Unpaid maternity leaves were made possible in some other places. Organized assistance for the elderly lagged behind, in part because of the traditional assumption that families were responsible for their care.

Confronted with the increased militancy of workers, some Western European employers sought to maintain worker loyalty through paternalistic policies. They encouraged workers to form savings associations by matching whatever small sums the working-class families could put aside for the future. A minority of manufacturers started funds for insurance and pension plans, or provided basic company housing (especially in mining communities). Yet such paternalistic policies, largely confined to Western Europe, were far from being generalized. Some social reformers, many politicians, and most workers demanded state intervention to protect workers from some of the uncertainties and hardships of their labor.

Imperial Germany, not republican France or parliamentary Britain, first provided workers some protection against personal and family disaster stemming from work-related accidents. Germany's domineering Chancellor Otto von Bismarck sought to outbid the Catholic Center Party and the

Social Democrats for working-class support. Determined to preserve his own power and the autocratic structure of the empire, Bismarck carried out domestic policies based upon compromise and conciliation between middle-class political interests and working-class demands. The German chancellor thus placed socialists in the delicate position of either opposing bills that would benefit workers or appearing to compromise their ideologically based refusal to collaborate with the autocratic imperial government. The Sickness Insurance Law of 1883 covered all workers for up to thirteen weeks if their income fell below a certain level. Deductions withheld from workers' wages provided most of the funds. A year later Bismarck announced a state-run insurance program that would incorporate existing voluntary plans. It would compensate workers for injury and illness, as well as provide some retirement funds. Other laws required that all workers be insured against accidents and disability, with half of the funds paid by employers, and provided pensions for workers who lived until seventy years of age. By the turn of the century, many German workers received medical care, small payments when they were ill or injured, and, if worse came to worse, a decent burial. By 1913, 14.5 million German workers had insurance.

In comparison to Germany, Britain's social policies were out of an earlier era. Workhouses, which had been created by the Poor Law of 1834, still carried a social stigma, even if conditions had somewhat improved by the end of the century. Families were separated, and inmates were forced to wear uniforms, attend chapel, participate in group exercises, and sustain periods of silence, all with the goal of learning "discipline." A contemporary surveyor of working-class life noted that "aversion to the 'House' is absolutely universal, and almost any amount of suffering and privation will be endured by the people rather than go into it." The vast majority of the inmates of the workhouses were not the able-bodied unemployed, but were children, the infirm, single mothers, the aged, or the insane. But although public opinion had already turned against workhouses, the Poor Law, slightly reformed, remained on the books until 1929.

The first Victorian social reforms had been largely limited to establishing minimum health standards. The Factory Act (1875) then reduced the workweek in large factories to fifty-six hours. The Artisans' Dwelling Act, passed the same year, defined unsanitary housing and gave the state the right to order the demolition of slum buildings that fell below a minimum standard. However, these laws were only very randomly enforced.

By the turn of the century, many Conservatives, most Liberals, and virtually all members of the new Labour Party (founded in 1900, but taking its name only six years later) accepted the right and the obligation of government to undertake reforms, thus ending classic liberal government non-interference in the working of the economy. The Workmen's Compensation Law (1897) made employers responsible for bearing the cost of industrial accidents; another act extended the same protection to agricultural workers. Liberal governments provided lunches to poor children and passed the Old



Dinnertime in an English workhouse, which provided relief for unemployed workers experiencing the dislocation and social transformation accompanying the Second Industrial Revolution.

Age Pension Act (1908), which provided some income for workers over seventy years of age whose incomes fell below a paltry sum per week. In 1908 the “deserving” poor in Britain could receive small old-age pensions. As a result of the National Insurance Bill (1911), workers’ friendly societies administered insurance payments based on voluntary (and thus unlike the German case) employee wage deductions. The law’s most salutary effect was to provide more workers and their families with direct medical treatment. Yet a third of the British poor still received no assistance of any kind. Moreover, government assistance to unemployed workers in Britain was less well organized and less generous than that in France.

In France, pushed by Radicals and Socialists, the Chamber of Deputies between 1890 and 1904 passed laws that eliminated obligatory special identity papers, or internal passports, for workers, created a system of arbitration for strikes, banned female night work, established employers’ legal liability for industrial accidents, reduced the workday to ten hours for women and children, established a minimum age for industrial workers, and mandated an obligatory weekly day of rest. It also affirmed the right of the state to monitor conditions of work and hygiene in factories (although inspection was in many areas nonexistent), passed a workmen’s compensation law with modest pension benefits, and provided limited medical care for working-class families. With the exception of Belgium, Sweden, and a smattering of other countries, in most of Europe workers could only dream of such reforms.

The Trade Union Movement

The trade union movement grew rapidly in Western Europe, above all among male skilled workers. The goals of unions were to raise wages and improve conditions, while increasing the number of members. By 1914, 3 million workers had joined unions in Britain, 1.5 million in Germany, and 1 million in Italy. The number of white-collar unions also increased, such as those organizing schoolteachers and postal clerks. In 1913, there were more than 400,000 union members in Austria, a country of only 6 million inhabitants. French unions proliferated after they were legalized in 1884. In 1895, French unions formed the General Confederation of Labor (C.G.T.), with the goal of unifying the trade union movement. The C.G.T., to which about a third of French unions belonged, renounced participation in politics and espoused revolutionary principles. Union membership in France reached 2.6 million in 1914. May Day demonstrations and festivals, with red flags flying, vigorous political debates, consumer cooperatives, and informal networks provided by factory work and cafés, also helped maintain solidarity among workers.

However, most European workers did not belong to unions, although many supported strikes and believed in union goals. The 1875 Trade Union Act ended many limitations on unions in Britain, but by the turn of the century only about 25 percent of British workers were organized, 10 percent were in France, and even less in Italy. Several factors limited the expansion of union membership. Considerable gaps remained between the work experience, salary, organizations, and expectations of skilled and unskilled workers. Many workers moved from place to place, following employment opportunities. Those with urban roots were far more easily organized than recently arrived migrants from smaller towns or villages. Differences and tensions between workers of different national groups also served to divide workers, such as between Irish and English workers in London, German and Czech workers in Prague, or Belgian and French workers in northern France.

The union organization of female workers lagged far behind that of men. Women made up 30 percent of the British labor force, but only about 7 percent of union members. Almost all female workers were relegated to relatively unskilled and low-paying jobs and confronted chronic vulnerability to being dismissed. Most women worked in unskilled jobs, such as making boxes, knotting fish nets, making buttonholes, and doing food-processing work. Furthermore, many male workers refused to accept women as equals and claimed that they were taking jobs away from men (a French union that admitted women as members included the following regulation: "Women may address observations on propositions to the union only in writing and by the intermediation of two male members"). Women also had to take responsibility for their children, something male union members often failed to recognize. Yet women workers also struck in the face of tougher working conditions, low wages, and, occasionally, sexual harassment.

Between 1890 and 1914, strikes increased dramatically, particularly in Western Europe, becoming a social fact of modern life. Workers hoped that they could force government officials to pressure employers to bargain with them. They struck when employers seemed most vulnerable; for example, when they had recently received relatively large orders for products. The vast majority of strikes were undertaken by skilled, organized workers in large-scale sectors such as textiles, mining, and metallurgy, whose unions had resources upon which to fall back. Strike movements reflected a more generalized sense of class consciousness among many—but hardly all—workers.

Strikes reflected not only growth in union membership but also changes in the organization of industrial work. In addition to low wages and the length of their workday, workers also resented factory foremen. Representing the company's interests, the foremen sought to impose industrial discipline on workers, some of whom had worked on farms or in domestic industry and had more or less controlled their own time. Now they were forbidden to enter and leave the factory as they wished when they had nothing to do, or in some cases even to talk on the job.

Techniques of scientific management of assembly-line production—"Taylorism," after Frederick W. Taylor (1856–1915), the American engineer who developed them—included careful counting of the number of units assembled by each worker in an hour. Many workers objected. Such industrial discipline placed factory workers more directly under the control of factory managers by measuring worker performance, tying pay scales to the number of units produced, which put more pressure on workers. Taylorism wore out workers. Noting that virtually all the factory workers employed by a Philadelphia manufacturer who had become enamored of scientific management were young, a British visitor asked repeatedly where the older workers were. Finally, the owner replied, "Have a cigar, and while we smoke we can visit the cemetery."

Socialists

The Socialist First International Workingmen's Association was founded in 1864 in London. Members represented a bewildering variety of experiences and ideologies. Karl Marx emerged as the dominant figure in the International. He was convinced that the unprecedented concentration of capital and wealth meant that the final struggle between the bourgeoisie and the working class was relatively close at hand. Marx's inflexible beliefs ran counter to the views of the majority of French members, some of whom were anarchists, and to the moderate, reformist inclinations of the more prosperous British workers, as well as their German colleagues.

The First International was dissolved in 1876 amid internal division, having been weakened by repression in many countries. Nonetheless, socialism emerged as a major political force in every major European nation. In 1889, at the centennial of the French Revolution in Paris, delegates to a socialist

congress founded the Second International. At its congresses, socialists discussed strategies for pushing governments toward reform and for coordinating international action (for example, to achieve a shorter workday), while debating differences over doctrine and strategy.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, mass socialist parties developed in France, Germany, Italy, and Belgium. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, every Western European state had working-class representatives in their national assemblies.

Socialists proclaimed themselves internationalists. Contending that workers in different nations shared common interests, they believed a revolution would put the working class in power. But socialists remained divided. For Marxist adherents of his "scientific socialism," emancipation of the workers from capitalism could only be achieved by the conquest of the state through revolution and the subsequent establishment of a socialist society. Reform socialists believed that political participation could win concrete reforms that would improve conditions of life for workers until socialists could take power. Reformists participated in the political process, even at the cost of being accused by revolutionary socialists of propping up "bourgeois" regimes by doing so. Legislation in many countries had brought improvement in conditions of work, however unevenly felt. The extension of the franchise also offered hope that progress might come without a revolution that, given the strength of states, seemed to even some revolutionaries to be increasingly unlikely.



A gathering of members of the British Independent Labour Party, founded by James Keir Hardie in 1893.

The emergence of socialists as contenders for political power reflected economic, social, and political changes in individual countries and had relatively little to do with the influence of the Second International. Yet the debates and divisions that obsessed European socialists revolved around common questions. What should be the relationship between socialism and nationalist movements? Could socialists, proclaiming international solidarity among workers, support demands for Polish independence from the Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian Empires, or those by Czechs and other nationalities for independence from the latter? Czech socialists with national aspirations for their people challenged the domination of the Austrian Social Democrats by German speakers who seemed oblivious to Czech demands. Should socialists oppose imperialism in all its forms (see Chapter 21), or should they hope that the colonial powers might gradually improve the conditions of life of Africans and Asians, who might become adherents to socialism? Finally, amid rising aggressive nationalism, socialists were divided on what response they should take in the event of the outbreak of a European war.

In the Russian Empire, Marxists were “Westernizers,” in that they looked to “scientific socialism” as a model for political change in their country (see Chapter 18). They counted on Russia’s industrial workers to launch a revolution, but only after Russia had undergone a bourgeois revolution anticipated to bring the middle class to power. In the 1880s, socialists formed reading groups of intellectuals and students—and at least one that was made up of workers—in the imperial capital of Saint Petersburg. Exiles began to publish socialist newspapers abroad, smuggling them into Russia.

Reformism dominated socialist movements in much of northern Europe. Great Britain’s handful of socialists were virtually all intellectuals and reformists. In 1884, a group of intellectuals formed the Fabian Society, which took its name from the Roman dictator Fabius, known for his delaying tactics. Committed to gradualism, the Fabians took the tortoise as their emblem. The Fabians were influenced by an American writer, Henry George. The author of the best-selling *Progress and Poverty*, George argued that the great gulf in Britain between rich and poor could be lessened by the imposition of a “single tax” on land, which would force wealthy landowners to pay more taxes. The “single taxers” believed that socialism could be gradually implemented through reform.

Most German socialists did not accept Marx’s contention that the working class could only take power through revolution. In 1863, Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–1864), the son of a Prussian merchant, had formed the first (very small) independent workers’ party in any of the German states. Lassalle only lived a year more—killed in a duel at age thirty-nine by the fiancé of the woman he loved. In 1875, the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), was founded. Despite official proscription in 1878, it slowly grew into a mass political party. The SPD’s program included reformist demands such as proportional representation, political rights for women, and the

eight-hour workday for workers. Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932), the son of a Berlin plumber who became a railway engineer, helped the reformists carry the day by forcefully rejecting in his *Evolutionary Socialism* (1898) the Marxists' insistence that capitalist society was on the verge of final collapse. He thus became a leading socialist "revisionist" who believed that the party should continue to push for reforms, not revolution. The SPD became a major reform socialist party.

The SPD's popular vote in the elections for the Reichstag rose from less than 10 percent in 1884 to almost 35 percent in 1912, and the SPD was the largest German political party in 1914. Women, who could join the party following the passage of a national law on associations in 1908 but who still were not permitted to vote, added to the ranks of the SPD, which had more than a million members in 1914. The SPD worked to build cradle-to-grave social institutions that would give members a sense that they belonged to a special culture, establishing consumer cooperatives, choral societies, and cycling clubs. Unlike French socialists, the SPD not only developed a close alliance with the trade union movement but also helped found some unions.

The SPD became the largest and best-organized socialist party in Europe; it published more than a hundred newspapers and magazines, and it held regular political meetings and social events. The party's organization and reformism influenced the evolution of similar parties in Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland. The SPD remained, however, caught in the paradox of struggling for social and political reform in a society—that of imperial Germany—that remained in many ways undemocratic.

In France, that country's revolutionary tradition and, above all, the memory of the Paris Commune of 1871, encouraged some French socialists to believe that revolution would bring them to power. The Parisian socialist Jules Guesde (1845–1922), rigid, humorless, and doctrinaire—he was known as "the Red Pope"—espoused Marxist socialism. In 1883, Guesde formed a defiantly Marxist political organization, the French Workers' Party, the first modern political party in France. Guesde viewed electoral campaigns as an opportunity to propagate Marxian socialism, although his followers joined the battle for an eight-hour workday and other reforms. The rival reform socialists espoused political pressure to win all possible social reforms through the ballot box. During elections, revolutionary and reform socialists often put their differences behind them, winning control over the municipal governments of several industrial cities. But the results in France of "municipal socialism," while subsidizing some services for ordinary people, were limited by the strongly centralized state.

When the reform socialist Alexandre Millerand (1859–1943) accepted a cabinet post in 1899, the split between revolutionary and reform socialists again lay bare. In 1905, Jean Jaurès (1859–1914), a former philosophy professor whose energy, organizational skills, and stirring oratory swept him to national prominence, achieved the unification of French socialists with the formation of the French Section of the Working-Class International (SFIO),

although the differences between Guesdists and reformists could not be swept under the rug. The socialists became the second largest party in France, holding in 1914 a fifth of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies.

In Italy, socialists had to overcome the entrenched power of local elites, repression (including the jailing in 1887 of the first Italian socialist deputies), and the strong attraction of anarchism, particularly in southern Italy. The Italian Socialist Party, founded in 1892, made few inroads in Italy's impoverished south. By 1912, the revolutionary faction had gained control of the party.

In Spain, real power still lay in the hands of powerful local government officials and landowners, men of great local influence (the *caciques*) who rigged elections to the Cortes, backed by the Catholic Church and the army. The Spanish Socialist Party, founded in 1879, gained a sizable following only in industrial Asturias and the Basque region. In contrast to Germany, France, and Italy, the first Spanish socialists were not elected to Parliament until 1909.

Christian Socialism

In Catholic countries, the Church still provided an alternative allegiance to the nation-state. However, the secularization of state and social institutions, along with nationalism itself, reduced the Church's influence in some Catholic countries. Papal pronouncements seemed to stand steadfastly against social and political change, and particularly against the emergence of the nation-state and parliamentary forms of government. In a papal encyclical, the *Syllabus of Errors* of 1864, Pope Pius IX had condemned the very idea that "the Roman Pontiff can and ought to reconcile himself and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization." In 1870, the Church proclaimed the doctrine of papal infallibility, which stated that in matters of faith and morals the pope's pronouncements would have to be taken as absolute truth. The Church backed monarchical regimes in Spain and Portugal, opposed the newly unified state in Italy, and, at the beginning of the French Third Republic, lent tacit support to monarchist movements in France.

Breaking with his predecessors, Pope Leo XIII (pope 1878–1903) accepted the modern age. His encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) called attention to social injustice, recognizing that many workers were victimized by "the inhumanity of employers and the unbridled greed of competitors." One of the unintended effects of *Rerum Novarum* was the development of "Christian Socialist" movements in France, Germany, Belgium, and Italy in the 1890s, although the Church itself generally repudiated them. Christian Socialists hoped to bring employers and workers back to the Church. Some clergy and laymen and -women organized clubs, vacation colonies, sporting clubs, and charities, and helped workers rent gardens so that they could grow vegetables and fruit. And many Catholics took the

pope's encyclical as authorization to participate in national political life. Catholic unions tried to counter socialist influence by bringing together workers, employers, and honorary members drawn from local elites. These "mixed" or "yellow" unions drew the unrestrained opposition of most trade unions.

The Anarchists

While socialists wanted to take over the state, anarchists wanted to destroy it. Anarchism was never more than a minority movement. Yet the dramatic increase in the reach of European states in the nineteenth century encouraged the development of anarchism, a philosophy with few roots in earlier periods. Anarchism was the very antithesis of a philosophy of political organization because anarchists associated politics itself with a tacit recognition of the state's existence.

While many anarchists like Michael Bakunin (see Chapter 18) believed in the violent overthrow of the state, others believed that voluntary mutualism would eventually make the state superfluous. Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), a geographer and the son of a Russian prince, held a vision of a gentle society of equals living in harmony without the strictures of the state. Kropotkin's desire for anarchist communism was rooted in his first-hand views of the misery of the Russian masses and his own experience living in the Jura Mountains of Switzerland and France in the 1860s, where watchmakers and peasants seemed to coexist in relative prosperity and the state seemed distant. Kropotkin, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, espoused the primitive as a natural end in itself. He believed that each person was born a *tabula rasa* (blank slate)—an idea theorized by John Locke—and then corrupted by society and, above all, by the state.

Anarchism gained some adherents in France, the most centralized state in Europe, but above all in Italy and Spain, two countries in which the nation-state appeared to many people as a foreign intruder, and in Argentina, influenced by Spanish and Italian immigrants. Improvements in transportation and increased immigration brought anarchists, including some exiles, to new countries, with London serving as a particular place of refuge for continental anarchists. Anarchists were among recent immigrants in the United States during the last decades of the century, four of whom were hung after the Haymarket riots in Chicago in 1886. In contrast, anarchism found very few followers in Germany, where socialists as well as supporters of the imperial monarchy respected the state, and in Great Britain, the least centralized but also one of the most nationalist states in Western Europe.

A loose organization of anarchists, the International Working-Class Alliance, known as the "Black International" because of the color of the anarchist flag, maintained contacts among anarchists in France, Spain, Italy, and the United States. But, for the most part, anarchists formed small groups or struck out on their own. Among poor peasants in the rugged



(Left) The assassination of French President Sadi Carnot by an Italian anarchist, 1894. (Right) Peter Kropotkin's publication *The Spirit of Revolt*.

southern Spanish province of Andalusia, anarchism took on a millenarian character stripped of most of the trappings of religion. Andalusian anarchists told the story of one of their own who, as he lay dying, whispered to one of his religious relatives to summon a priest and a lawyer. Relieved that the anarchist seemed at the last moment to be accepting the conventions of religion by accepting the last rites of the Church and drawing up a will, relatives sent for both. When they arrived, the anarchist beckoned them to stand on either side of his deathbed. As they leaned forward, one to hear his confession, the other to write down his will, the anarchist proclaimed, "Now, like Christ, I can die between two thieves."

In the 1880s and 1890s, a wave of anarchist assassinations and bombings shook Europe. To violent anarchists, the goal of "propaganda by the deed" was to spark a revolution. Bakunin's Italian disciple Enrico Malatesta (1853–1932), who had a following in Italy, Spain, and Argentina, expressed the bitter frustration of anarchists who had virtually nothing: "Do you not know that every bit of bread they [the wealthy] eat is taken from your children, every fine present they give to their wives means the poverty, hunger, cold and even perhaps the prostitution of yours?" Bakunin had believed that a single violent act might shock people into a chain-reaction revolution. "A single deed," Kropotkin once said, "is better propaganda than a thousand pamphlets." Barcelona became the "capital of bombs" in the 1890s. Anarchists killed six heads of states beginning in 1881, when members of

People's Will assassinated Tsar Alexander II. Other victims included King Umberto I of Italy, who was killed in 1900 (not long after saying that assassination was "a professional risk"), and President William McKinley of the United States, gunned down the following year.

From 1892 to 1894, a wave of bombings terrified Paris. "One does not kill an innocent person in striking the first bourgeois one sees," an anarchist told a shocked judge. François Claudius Ravachol, an impoverished worker, threw one of the bombs. "See this hand," Ravachol told the horrified judge and jurors, "it has killed as many bourgeois as it has fingers!" More attacks followed. In March 1893, an unemployed worker unable to feed his family threw a small bomb into the Chamber of Deputies, slightly injuring several members. He wanted to call attention to the plight of the poor. French President Sadi Carnot (1837–1894) turned down an appeal for mercy for the perpetrator. Next, Émile Henry, a young intellectual, tossed a bomb into a café near the Saint-Lazare railroad station, killing one man and injuring about twenty other people. In June 1894, an Italian anarchist assassinated Carnot. The wave of anarchist attacks subsided in France, but continued in Spain, where the government tortured and executed militant anarchists. In France, Italy, and Spain, harsh government repression itself brought a reaction against such policies, and soon the state gave anarchists fewer martyrs to avenge. With the rise of mass socialist parties and unions, anarchism faded further into the fringes of popular protest, except in Italy and, above all, Spain.

Syndicalists

At the turn of the century, syndicalism emerged as an ideology that held that union organization could provide a means for workers to seize control of their industries. Reflecting some anarchist influence, free associations of producers would eventually replace the state. Like revolutionary socialists and anarchists, syndicalists rejected participation in political life. Syndicalism, which was centered in France, Spain, and Italy, was sometimes called anarcho-syndicalism, because of its opposition to the existence of the state.

A retired engineer who proudly wore the prestigious legion of honor awarded by the French state, Georges Sorel (1847–1922) seemed an unlikely candidate to plan any revolution. But Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* (1908) encouraged direct syndicalist action against capitalism and the state, until a "general strike" by workers would bring both to their knees. By the general strike, Sorel meant a series of simultaneous walkouts that would shut down factories and lead to revolution.

The period 1895–1907 is sometimes referred to as "the heroic age of syndicalism" in France because so many strikes spread through so many industries there, as elsewhere in Europe. More than 1,000 strikes in France occurred in 1904 alone. During the "revolt of the south" in 1907, vineyard owners and vine-tenders aggressively protested the state tax on drink. In

Italy, Italian anarchists participated in the waves of strikes and insurrections in Sicily in 1893–1894. In Milan in 1898, fighting pitted the industrial suburbs against soldiers, and nearly 200 workers were killed and hundreds were wounded. Violent disturbances during “Red Week” shook the Italian Adriatic town of Ancona in June 1914 after police shot two people to death while preventing a crowd leaving an anti-militarist demonstration from marching into the downtown area. Even the normally peaceful Swedish capital of Stockholm was stirred by a general strike in 1909. It failed.

Anarcho-syndicalists dominated the labor movement in Barcelona, particularly among dockworkers, who confronted brutal police repression orchestrated from Madrid. Waves of strikes took place in Catalonia in 1902, 1906, and 1909, the latter followed by a bloody insurrection (“Tragic Week”). But gradually, revolutionary rhetoric gave way to the pursuit of concrete economic gains, particularly in Italy and France. In the end, at least in Western Europe, reformism won out.

The Quest for Women's Rights

Everywhere in Europe, women remained subordinate to men in legal rights. They were excluded from most universities, could not vote (in contrast, several U.S. states gave women the vote before 1914), and had limited or no control over family financial resources. Women made very little progress entering the professions because some men feared the advent of the “new woman,” who demanded the same access to education and opportunity as men. The term “new woman” came from the title of a lecture given by the Italian feminist Maria Montessori (1870–1952), a doctor and originator of innovative schools (which still exist) that stress the encouragement of creativity in children. Still, the beginnings were difficult. When a female Greek scientist gave her inaugural lecture at the University of Athens, male students disrupted her lecture with shouts of “Back to the kitchen!” Women demanding equal rights faced daunting opposition. Queen Victoria of England called demands by women for equal rights “on which her poor feeble sex is bent . . . a mad, wicked folly . . . forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety.” The biologist T. H. Huxley (1825–1895) insisted that women were less intelligent than men. The claims of such bad science bolstered opposition to the women’s movement.

Right-wing political parties opposed women’s suffrage on principle. Moderate republicans claimed that women could not understand political issues. Socialists in Catholic countries feared that if women had the right to vote, they would support clerical candidates, although socialist parties and unions threw their support to women workers laboring for better wages and conditions. However, some women contended that social reforms would be inadequate as long as women were without the right to enter universities or vote.

The feminist movement (a name that only gradually took hold in Europe and the United States) developed very slowly in Europe. It was most active

in Britain. There the first women's political organizations were created in the 1860s, and women gained the right to vote in municipal elections in 1864 and for county and parish councils six years later. Women also gained the right to enter university and made headway in achieving property rights for married women, child custody, and the right to initiate divorce. The movement for women's rights in Britain coincided with the "new imperialism" that began in the 1880s (see Chapter 21). Concern among feminists with the condition of indigenous women in the empire, particularly in India, where British women had more occasion to meet their counterparts and viewed them as backward victims of barbaric religious and cultural practices, helped shape British feminism. British feminists came to see themselves as the saviors of women in the colonies, while identifying themselves with the good of their empire, a special place in the "civilizing mission." As one put it, "We are struggling not just for English women alone, but for all the women, degraded, miserable, unheard of, for whose life and happiness England has daily to answer to God."

In 1889, the first International Congresses on Women's Rights and Feminine Institutions took place in Paris. By 1900, more than 850 German associations were working for women's rights, including improved educational and employment opportunities and equal wages. Near the end of the nineteenth century, British women's groups presented to Parliament a peti-

In 1913, the suffragette Emily Davison throws herself before the king's horse at the Derby at Epsom Downs and is killed.



tion with more than a quarter of a million signatures calling for reform. As more occupations opened up to women, the campaign for women's suffrage widened. The International Women's Suffrage Alliance encouraged organizations in a number of countries. A more militant group of feminists undertook a campaign of direct action. Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928) founded the Women's Social and Political Union in 1903. Members protested the lack of female suffrage by breaking shop windows on London's fashionable Oxford Street, tossing acid on golf putting greens (a sport then identified with aristocratic British males), and bombing the house of Liberal Party leader David Lloyd George (1863–1945). Other "suffragettes," as they were called, went on hunger strikes upon being arrested. In 1907, British women gained the right to serve in local government. In the most dramatic incident, a suffragette carrying a banner proclaiming "Votes for Women" hurled herself in front of a horse owned by King George V at the 1913 Derby at Epsom Downs and was killed.

CULTURAL FERMENT

Europeans had many reasons to be optimistic at the turn of the century. Since the fall of Napoleon in 1815, Europe had enjoyed a relatively long period of peace broken only by short wars with limited goals, including the bloody Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871). Literacy had risen rapidly, particularly in western and northern Europe. Nation-states, increasingly secular in character, commanded the loyalty of their populations. Advances in science and technology were transforming the way people lived. The standard of living had generally risen, and, at least in most of Europe, white-collar jobs provided hope of better things for more people. Furthermore, somewhat shorter working hours for employees, including many workers, left more time for leisure activities.

During the 1850s and 1860s, scientific progress and social change was reflected in the emergence of realism as the dominant cultural style for artists and writers. Then, beginning in the last decade of the nineteenth century, more technological advances and the emergence of a more urban world brought both a cultural crisis of previously unparalleled dimensions and remarkable achievements in the arts. More scientific discoveries and new theories about the functioning of the universe continued to tear away some of the old certainties. Social scientists tried to find explanations for the working of society and the inner world of the individual. At the same time, some writers and artists began to turn away from rationalism, materialism, and positivism. In France, Henri Bergson (1859–1941) emerged as the philosopher of irrationality. Challenging materialism and positivism, Bergson popularized the idea that each individual and each nation had a creative "dynamic energy," or vital force (*élan vital*), waiting for release. The "modernist" culture of the avant-garde turned against the century-old acceptance of rationality as

one of the dominant values of Western culture. The notion of an avant-garde, a term taken from military tactics, implies a small group of people who see themselves in the forefront of artistic expression and achievement. Intellectuals and artists began to insist on the irrational basis of human nature, their work reflecting both uncertainty and cultural rebellion.

Realism

Influenced by the widening interest in science and the quickening pace of social change, some writers had in the middle decades of the century broken with literary traditions. Realism had emerged as the dominant European cultural style during the 1850s and 1860s. Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) once described himself as the poet of modern life. Best known for his volume of poems *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857; *The Flowers of Evil*), Baudelaire believed that art had to be the product of an exchange between the individual artist and contemporary society. The artist's own experience and self-discovery became critical in the emergence of modern literature. Baudelaire was fined in 1857 for “obscene and immoral passages or expressions.” *Les Fleurs du Mal* became even more popular as his decadence and overt eroticism—he died of syphilis in 1867—angered officials and critics alike. Baudelaire was the consummate dandy and “*flâneur*,” the observer of modern urban life. Dressed in what modest elegance his small inheritance permitted, the *flâneur* strolled through Paris, finding beauty in its modern boulevards but also gazing at its hideous, even frightening aspects with objective detachment, both reacting to and reflecting modern urban life. Baudelaire rebelled against bourgeois culture and conventional assumptions about artistic subjects and style. Rejecting the notion that absolute aesthetic values exist, Baudelaire was a crucial figure in the emergence of modern culture in the middle of the century.

In the 1850s, the Barbizon painters—so called because they gathered in a village of that name southeast of Paris—emphasized the painting of peasants, harvests, animals, and other symbols of village life. In doing so, they broke sharply with many of the long-accepted styles of painting, including romanticism. The development of photography during the 1840s may have contributed to the inter-



Charles Baudelaire, “the poet of modern life,” in a photograph by Félix Nadar.



Jean-François Millet's *The Gleaners* (1857).

est in portraying artistic subjects with a vivid sense of actuality. Jean-François Millet (1814–1875), a Barbizon painter, painted peasants at work in such pieces as *The Gleaners* (1857) and *The Angelus* (1859), giving peasants a dignity that repelled many middle-class viewers who thought them unworthy of being painted.

Artistic style evolved far more rapidly than did official views of what constituted good art. Gustave Courbet (1819–1877) abandoned the idealization that still characterized painting. “Show me an angel,” he scoffed at his critics, “and I will paint one.” Taking as a compliment the assessment that he was “a democratic painter,” he startled viewers by choosing ordinary workers as his subjects. Like Millet, Courbet shocked with his realism. *Burial at Ornans* (1849) portrays a family of some means looking rather unattractive, bored, or even indifferent as the body of a relative is being lowered into a grave in Courbet’s hometown. *The Bather* (1853) shows a stout naked woman rising from a forest pool. Nudity did not bother many viewers—it was, after all, a staple of classical painting. Rather, viewers were upset by the fact that Courbet portrayed an ordinary-looking woman holding herself up very awkwardly. The artist seemed to be mocking the kind of classical scene painters had been expected to treat with reverence. When Napoleon III saw the exhibited painting, he struck the canvas with a riding-crop. Courbet, a political radical, believed that art should have a social purpose. He exacted some revenge in a later painting by depicting the emperor as a shabby poacher.

Realists continued to ruffle official feathers. The French police hauled the novelist Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880) into court, charging him with obscenity. His novel *Madame Bovary* (1857) evokes with flawless attention to detail the affair of a bored bourgeois housewife living in a small, dreary Norman town. Flaubert revealed the bohemian underside of bourgeois life. But like most writers and artists at the time, he also depended upon middle-class patronage for his work.



Gustave Courbet's *The Bather* (1853) in which the subject strikes an awkward pose.

The escapist science fiction fantasies of the French author Jules Verne (1828–1905) reflected contemporary fascination with developing sciences like geography, science, astronomy, and physics, as well as improvements in transportation and communication. Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, first published in 1873, became a best seller. In Britain, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character of Sherlock Holmes emerged in the late 1880s as fiction's first truly scientific detective. The Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) drew admiration and protest alike with works of unrelenting realism and concern with women's lives. His forceful dramas, such as *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, offer realistic descriptions of the psychology and interaction of complex characters. Considered in some ways the father of modern drama, Ibsen privileged the themes of guilt and hypocrisy as he presented families in small-town life.

The French novelist Émile Zola (1840–1902) shocked critics with his evocation of working-class life, not only because the subject itself challenged traditional assumptions about literary worthiness but also because of his unabashed realism in depicting ordinary people as he saw them. Zola believed that naturalistic writing was a form of science. He went down into mine shafts in northern France so that he could offer a realistic depiction of the work there in his novel *Germinal* (1885).

Artists and writers who espoused the new realism confronted censorship in France. Napoleon III prohibited the historian Joseph Ernest Renan (1823–1892) from lecturing. Renan considered himself a proponent of "progressive ideas"—above all, a faith in science. His *Life of Jesus* (1863) offended the Catholic Church by presenting Christ as a historical figure,

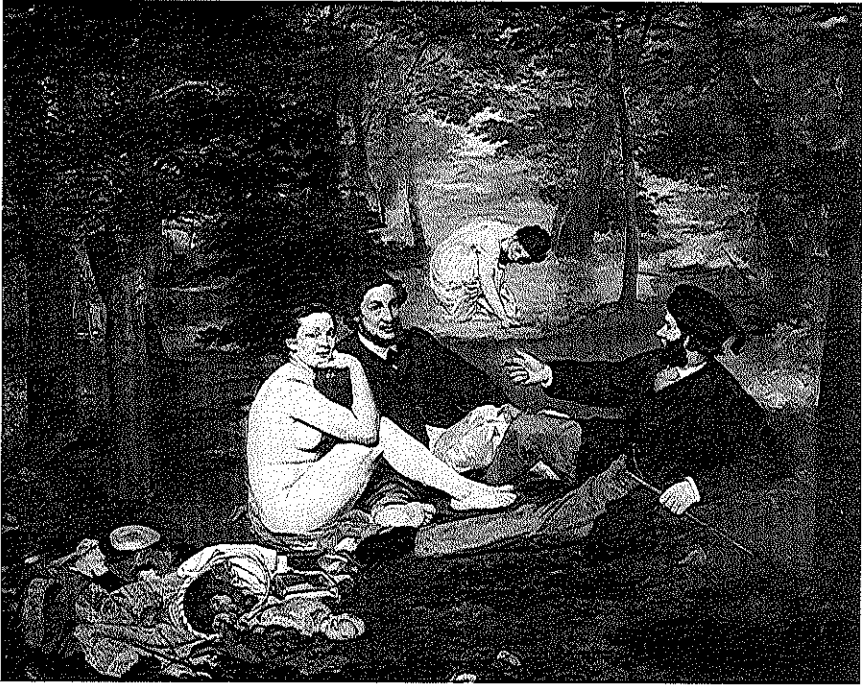
seemingly casting doubt upon his divinity. More than this, Renan argued that the Scriptures had to be studied like any other historical document.

Impressionism

During the French Second Empire, a group of artists developed impressionism, a remarkable artistic movement that lasted until the end of the century. Like the realists of the Barbizon school, impressionist painters rejected traditional religious and historical subjects and formal presentation. Instead, they depicted rural and urban landscapes, offering scenes from everyday existence, but generally integrated individual figures into landscapes. Embracing subjectivity, the impressionists preferred direct observation and the study of nature's effects to studio composition and imitation of classic styles. Édouard Manet (1832–1883), another dandy and flâneur, aspired to create what a contemporary called an art “born of today.” The impressionists painted what they saw, and how they saw it at first glance, such as the way sunlight falls on inanimate objects (thus reflecting their interest in science). They put lighter and brighter colors on large canvases (which previously had usually been reserved for historical themes), applying many small dabs of paint to convey an impression of spontaneity, energy, and movement.

Although the impressionists did not begin to exhibit their paintings with the self-consciousness of an artistic group until 1874, their movement was shaped by official rejection. The Salon was a state-sponsored exhibition upon which artists depended in order to attract purchasers. In 1863, the jury for the official Salon turned down several canvases by Manet. After certain complaints reached the emperor, he allowed some of the paintings to be shown in other rooms. The “Salon of the Refused” included works by Manet, Auguste Renoir, and Paul Cézanne. Some critics raged against what they saw, but at least the public could now make up its own mind. Manet's *Olympia* (1863) generated a chorus of complaint. This study of a nude shocked public opinion—the outraged Empress Eugénie, not to be outdone by her husband, Napoleon III, who had attacked a Courbet canvas with a riding-crop, struck Manet's painting with her fan. Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863) drew scathing commentary because it showed a nude female sharing a picnic with two fully dressed, upper-class males. Here, Manet, even more than the realists, challenged the hierarchy of subjects imposed by classicism.

Manet chose provocatively contemporary subjects, including very ordinary people, clients, and café waitresses enjoying themselves. He and his younger friend Claude Monet (1840–1926) painted the Gare Saint-Lazare, the point of entry each day for thousands of commuters, vacationers, and other visitors. Berthe Morisot (1841–1895), Manet's sister-in-law, placed her subjects, most of whom were women, in private gardens, in the Bois de Boulogne, boating on the Seine, and at the resorts of the Norman coast, which had been “discovered” by wealthy Parisians.



Édouard Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863).

The rebuilding of Paris opened up new possibilities for the understanding of modernity. Impressionists found the great boulevards fitting subjects for their portrayal of modern life. The early impressionists were also influenced by the growing commercialization of leisure in Paris. Edgar Degas (1834–1917) followed wealthy Parisians to theaters, racetracks, cafés, and café-concerts, which offered entertainment that included vaudeville acts, poetry readings, comedians, and singers renowned for bawdy lyrics. Degas frequently chose female entertainers, most of whom were drawn from the popular classes, as his subjects. In the shadows of his ballet paintings lurk wealthy gentlemen awaiting their prey, like Napoleon III himself, who occupy the loges closest to the stage at the opera or stand in the shadows of the dressing rooms of the dancers, ready to claim their prizes. Degas, whose banking family had lost its money early in an economic depression, presented unflattering, dark stereotypes of Parisian speculators in *At the Stock Exchange* (1879). The increasing anonymity of the burgeoning city was also a frequent impressionist theme. Degas's *L'Absinthe* (1876–1877) shows two disconnected figures in a café. Such encounters with strangers seemed an intrinsic part of modern life.

Monet also manifested an uneasy ambivalence toward large-scale industry. In the 1870s, he lived in the industrializing Paris suburb of Argenteuil.



Edgar Degas's *L'Absinthe* (1876–1877) shows a woman and her companion with a glass of absinthe. Note how the lack of a table support helps draw the viewer's attention to the glass of absinthe.

His paintings of the town reflect a balance between leisure and industry (seen, for example, in a painting of sailboats on the Seine River with factory smokestacks in the background). Monet eventually tired of the hustle and bustle of urban life and moved down the Seine to the village of Giverny. There his garden and its pond and lily pads provided an ideal rural setting for his work. He never painted the railway tracks that ran through his property.

Social Theorists' Analyses of Industrial Society

Scientific advances contributed to the diffusion of the belief that human progress was inevitable and that it moved in a linear manner. This optimistic view became known as positivism. Auguste

Comte (1798–1857) had already spread faith in the promise of science. Believing that scientific discovery had passed through three stages of development—the theological, the metaphysical, and the “positive” (or scientific)—Comte concluded that what he called “the science of society” could do the same. Society itself, he reasoned, like nature could be studied in a scientific manner and its development charted. Comte’s positivism called for the accumulation of useful knowledge that would help students of society to understand the laws of social development.

Positivists challenged some of the central tenets of the established churches, particularly those of the Catholic Church, whose theologians held fast to a view of humanity as essentially unchanging. Darwinism (see Chapter 18) denied the literal biblical description of God creating the world in seven days. Clergy of many denominations, and many other people as well, were aghast to think that humanity could have descended from apes.

Now, in the face of rapid social change, intellectuals attempted to understand the structure of the society they saw changing around them. They did so by adopting the model of natural science and undertaking objective systematic analysis of observable social data. They gradually developed sociology, the science of society, which asked: How do societies hold together when confronted by economic and social forces that tend to

pull them apart? The question itself expressed the cultural crisis of the fin de siècle. In 1887, the German Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936) published a groundbreaking work, *Community and Society* (*Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*), which sought to synthesize and apply historical experience to understand the development of modern Western civilization.

Influenced by Tönnies and fascinated by the emergence of industrial society and the growth of the state, Max Weber (1864–1920), one of the fathers of modern social thought and sociology, sought to create an objective and thus “value-free” science of society that he thought held the key to guiding the future. Trained as a professor of law in Heidelberg, Weber became interested in the relationship between religion and society. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–1905) defined the “spirit of capitalism” to be the assumption that whoever works hard in the pursuit of gain fulfills a moral obligation. He identified the origins of capitalism with Calvinist entrepreneurship in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Weber observed the contemporary trend toward larger structures of government and the bureaucratization of state, business, and political structures, which he believed marked the victory of Enlightenment rationalism, as well as increased social stratification. But he worried that in the advancing impersonal age of bureaucracy, state officials would ignore political and social ideals. Weber’s modern man seemed to be trapped in what he called “the iron cage of modern life.” Theorist of a nervous age, Weber had a nervous breakdown before the turn of the century.

Doctors diagnosed more cases of hypochondria, “melancholy,” and hysteria, paralyzing nervous disorders that many blamed on the complexities of modern life, which seemed to be overwhelming the nervous system. In particular, neurasthenia seemed to be a sign of the times, with its symptoms of extreme sensitivity to light and noise—two characteristics of urban life—fatigue, worry, and digestive disorders.

Alcoholism was ravaging many countries. In England, the “habitual soaking” of workers in beer worried reformers. A contemporary investigator claimed that it was not uncommon for some workers to spend a quarter of their earnings on drink. The dramatic increase in the production of wine in France (with the exception of the 1880s and 1890s, when the phylloxera disease ravaged vineyards), Italy, Spain, and Portugal flooded markets, greatly reducing its price. In parts of France, the average person (and thus the figure for adults would be even higher) consumed well more than sixty gallons of wine a year, in addition to beer, brandies, and absinthe, a licorice-tasting drink made from wormwood that is highly addictive. There were almost half a million establishments licensed to serve drink in France at the turn of the century—one for every 54 people, compared to one British “public house” for every 843 inhabitants.

French temperance movements were swept aside like tiny dikes by the torrent of drink. Nationalists, worried about the plunging birthrate, joined some doctors and reformers in claiming that France faced “racial degenera-

tion" since its population might cease to reproduce itself because of the ravages of alcoholism. Some doctors blamed women for not doing their part to increase the French population, their attacks complementing surging resistance to the rise of feminism. For their part, some women began to put forward their role as republican mothers to bolster demands for more rights. Nationalists insisted that only by rallying around patriotic values could France avoid total collapse. In Britain, the temperance movement began earlier and was far stronger than in France. It was also much more closely tied to churches, as was the movement in Sweden, where in 1909 temperance societies had almost half a million members who signed pledges promising not to drink alcohol at all.

The use of opium and its derivatives—morphine (the popularity of which increased with its use as an anesthetic), laudanum (a mixture of wine and opium), and heroin—as well as cocaine and hashish, unfortunately became common among the artistic avant-garde, well before most people were aware of their devastating effects. These drugs arrived from Turkey, Persia, and India, with coca (from which cocaine is derived) brought from Peru and Bolivia. The painter Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) was for a period a hashish user, which may have influenced his dreamy rose-colored paintings of 1905–1908. Only in the latter years did the French government ban such drugs, in the wake of a number of drug-related suicides. Less dangerous, exoticism, mysticism, spiritism (including attempts to contact the souls of deceased people during séances), and a fascination with the occult became more popular than ever before, another sign of the rejection of science and the associated preoccupation with the irrational.

Modern life seemed to provide evidence that industrialization and urban growth had uprooted traditional values. Crimes seemed to be increas-

ing. Seeking an explanation, the French social theorist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) believed that the rapid, seemingly uncontrollable growth of large cities had destroyed the moral ties that had sustained the individual in traditional society. Durkheim believed that the waning of religious practice had undermined authority and therefore social cohesiveness. Durkheim's quantitative study of suicide led him to conclude that the stresses and strains of increasingly urban, industrial life were becoming more debilitating. He concluded that individuals lost in the faceless urban and



Two elegant morphine addicts, 1891.

industrial world suffered "alienation" (*anomie* in French). Yet he optimistically believed that social problems could be solved by studying them in a systematic, scientific manner.

Durkheim was hardly alone in thinking that urban growth, spurred on by the arrival of rural migrants, generated social pathology of which criminality was but one manifestation. In 1895, Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) published *The Crowd*, in which he worried that modern life submerged the individual in the "crowd." Riots and strikes, he warned, were becoming part of the political process. He described crowds as lurching erratically, and sometimes dangerously, like drunks, at a time of a growing awareness of the ravages of alcoholism. Some nationalists now worried that their peoples were being undermined by "racial degeneration," which might compromise the natural process of evolution by hereditary debasement. Certain scientists claimed that significant racial differences could be identified within specific peoples, and that they accounted for soaring rates of crime, alcoholism, insanity, syphilis, and even popular political action. An Italian anthropologist believed that criminals showed inferior physical and mental development and contended that they could be identified by measuring their skulls.

Nietzsche's Embrace of the Irrational

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) emerged in this period as the most strident philosophical critic of Enlightenment rationalism. The son of a strict Protestant German minister who died when Nietzsche was young, he was raised by his domineering mother. He became a professor of classics in Basel, Switzerland. The tormented Nietzsche, forced by illness to leave the university, moved to the Swiss Alps and thereafter lived by his pen, but with little success. He suffered a mental collapse at the age of forty-five, after sending off telegrams to some of his friends signed "The Crucified." Nietzsche was briefly confined in an asylum toward the end of his life, leading one wag to comment, "At last, the right man in the right place."

Nietzsche hated all religions equally, believing that they had



Friedrich Nietzsche, philosopher of the irrational.

destroyed the individual's capacity for natural development and fulfillment by imposing uniformity. He became an atheist, proclaiming, "God is dead . . . and we have killed him." He claimed strenuously that religion was incapable of providing ethical guidance and that no single morality could be appropriate to all people.

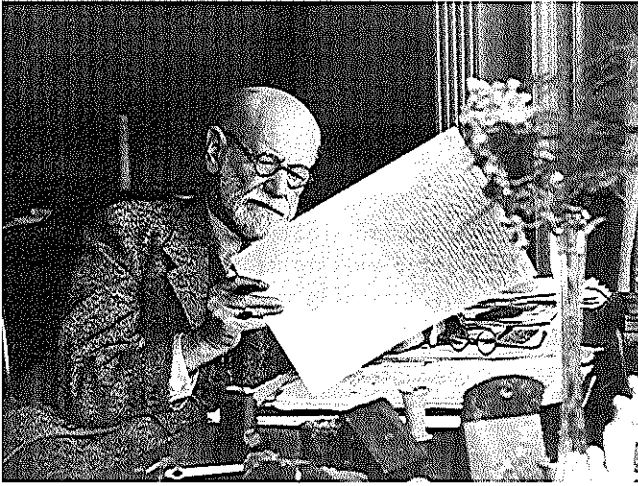
Espousing "philosophy with the hammer," Nietzsche awaited the heroic superman who, as part of a natural nobility of "higher humanity," would rule through the "will to power." Although indirectly influenced by the contentions of Hegel and Darwin that mankind could continue to develop to a higher stage, Nietzsche's thought marked a total rejection of all previous philosophy. His "vital" force, which he believed could be found only in new philosophers like himself, would be morally ambivalent, idealizing power and struggle. The free man, wrote Nietzsche, "is a warrior." Yet for all of his talk about "master races" and "slave races" in a period marked by a growth of racism, he castigated the herd-like instincts of frenetic German nationalists and anti-Semites.

Freud and the Study of the Irrational

The Viennese doctor Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) stressed the power of the irrational, which he placed in the human unconscious. Freud was born in the small Moravian town of Freiberg (now in the Czech Republic) in the Habsburg monarchy, the son of a struggling Jewish wool merchant and his much younger wife. When Sigmund was three, his father's business affairs went from bad to worse, forcing the family to leave its tranquil, small-town existence for Vienna. The younger Freud never felt comfortable in the imposing imperial capital. But he benefited from the period of liberal ascendancy in Austria, where Jews had received full civil rights only in 1867. The Viennese middle class had helped make their city a cultural capital of Europe. That reassuring atmosphere changed with the stock-market crash in 1873, which began a period of economic depression and culminated in the election of an anti-Semite, Karl Lueger ("I decide who is a Jew," Lueger insisted), as mayor of Vienna in 1895.

After beginning his career as a research scientist in anatomy, Freud fell under the influence of the French neurologist Jean Charcot (1825–1893). From his scientific laboratory, Freud moved to the study of the irrational, or the "unconscious," convinced that it could be studied with the same systematic rigor as human anatomy. In the spring of 1886, he opened a small office in Vienna, treating patients with nervous disorders.

Freud developed the method of psychoanalysis, a term coined in 1896. It was based on the premises that the mind is orderly and that dreams offer codes that can unlock the unconscious. To Freud, a dream represented "the fulfillment of a [suppressed] wish"; it was the expression of an unconscious conflict. Freud encouraged patients to dream and to "free associate" in order to break down their defense mechanisms (the means by which



The Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud in his study.

individuals repress painful memories from childhood or even infancy). Sexuality, specifically the repression of sexual urges, formed the basis of Freud's theory of the unconscious. One of Freud's followers described the role of his mentor's "dream-work": "The mind is like a city which during the day busies itself with the peaceful tasks of legitimate commerce, but at night when all the good burghers sleep soundly in their beds, out come these disreputable creatures of the psychic underworld to disport themselves in a very unseemly fashion; decking themselves out in fantastic costumes, in order that they may not be recognized and apprehended." Psychoanalysis became both an investigative tool and a form of therapy, in which, very gradually—from several months to many years and at considerable financial cost—the patient could obtain self-awareness and control over his or her symptoms, such as hysteria.

Freud's theories of human development established the irrational as an intrinsic and sometimes even determining part of the human psyche. Psychoanalytic theory, which Freud claimed as a new science, emerged, along with Darwin's evolutionary theory and Marx's writings on capitalist development and revolution, as one of the foundations of twentieth-century thought.

Avant-Garde Artists and Writers and the Rapid Pace of Modern Life

Progress seemed to have a price. At the Paris Exhibition of 1900, which celebrated the dawn of a new century, an uneasy visitor noted, "Life seethes in this immense reservoir of energy . . . a too violent magnificence." In *The Wind in the Willows*, published in 1908 by Kenneth Grahame (1859–1932), the motor car threatens stability. Behind the wheel, Toad, the amphibian

protagonist, turns into "the terror . . . before whom all must give way or be smitten into nothingness and everlasting night . . . fulfilling his instincts, living his hour, reckless of what might come to him." The airplane, rapidly rising and then swooping dangerously, seemed not only a soaring symbol of scientific advances but also of the uncertainty that unsettled some fin-de-siècle Europeans.

During the last ten years of the career of the French impressionist painter and anarchist Camille Pissarro (1830–1903), perhaps the preeminent painter of the countryside, he took up urban subjects, painting bridges, riverbanks, and boulevards, crowding myriad forms and figures into his panoramic views. Emphasizing the motion of transportation, walking, riding, loading, and unloading, he depicted the light, color, nervous movement, and energy of the city and its seemingly uncontrollable throngs, calling one series of paintings "Social Turpitudes."

Other painters also presented urban scenes in a harsh, jarring light that suggested chaos. The German expressionist painter Ludwig Meidner (1884–1966) insisted that painters ought to abandon the gentle, almost rural style that characterized impressionist urban scenes: "A street," he wrote, "is rather a bombardment of hissing rows of windows, of blustering cones of lights between vehicles of all kinds and thousands of leaping globes, human rags, advertising signboards and masses of threatening, formless colors."

Avant-garde writers and artists loathed the culture of the public, or what the English aesthete Oscar Wilde called the "profane masses." Popular culture seemed to be eroding the ability of high culture to survive the assault of mass manufacturing and teeming cities. Sharp reactions against the seeming uniformity of the machine age permeated the arts. The English craftsman and designer William Morris (1834–1896) believed that mass production was in the process of eliminating the aesthetic control craftsmen had maintained over production. Describing capitalism as a "defilement" and Victorian England as the "age of shoddy," Morris argued that the machine had become the master of both workers and design, instead of the other way around. Only a revolution in aesthetics could save art and architecture. Morris spearheaded the "arts and crafts movement" in Britain, espousing craft production that would create useful but artistic objects for the general public, thereby elevating taste to a new level.

The Avant-Garde's Break with Rationalism

Symbolism, which began as a literary movement in the early 1870s but had origins a decade earlier—the symbolists revered Baudelaire as a founding father—also reflected the discontent of writers with the materialism of the industrial age. Symbolists sought to discover and depict aesthetically the reality of human consciousness and identity. They believed that analogies existed between the human mind and the external world, and thus between the spiritual and natural worlds. They held that the links could be

discovered through the exploitation of symbols, particularly through poetry. Thus some continuity existed between symbolism and the romanticism of the early nineteenth century, as symbolists sought to bring emotions to the surface through dreamlike states of consciousness.

In May 1913, the Russian aristocrat Sergey Diaghilev's ballet *The Rite of Spring* opened in Paris. For Diaghilev (1872–1929), who organized major art expositions and outraged conventional society by flaunting male lovers, art and life went hand in hand—they imitated each other. Diaghilev sought liberation in erotic ballets. Hitherto, ballet had retained absolute loyalty to classical subjects and presentation, immune to avant-garde challenge. Aesthetes in the audience hissed at the men and women of Parisian high society filing into the theater wearing tails and evening gowns. When the curtain went up, the dancers were jumping up and down, toeing inward in defiance of conventional ballet. The majority of the audience reacted with catcalls, hisses, and then screams of anger. An elderly countess scoffed that it was the first time that anyone—in this case, the dancers with their provocative performance—had ever made fun of her. The audience was shocked by the jarring, primitive music of the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971), who dispensed with the sentimental music that had invariably accompanied ballet. The avant-garde, however, cheered. Art and life had merged.

Thus, rejecting the idea that rationalism should underlie the arts and that objective standards could exist by which to assess literature, painting, and music, the writers, painters, and composers of the avant-garde rebelled against accepted cultural forms. They believed that these threatened to render the individual insignificant and powerless. Mass-circulation newspapers,

Scene from Sergey Diaghilev's *The Rite of Spring*, 1913.



the popular theater inevitably playing Gilbert and Sullivan in London or soapy popular operas in Paris, music halls, military band concerts in Hyde Park, and the cinema were the stuff of popular culture. The avant-garde wanted none of it.

Avant-garde artists accepted nothing as absolute, certainly not the traditional forms of cultural expression or morality. Showing Nietzsche's influence, some sought to transcend the limits of reason and moral purpose. Far more than even impressionist painters, the turn of the century avant-garde artists broke with the past. This was, to an extent, a revolt of the young—because of the rise in population, a larger percentage of the population was indeed young—and self-consciously so. In Austria, the avant-garde called themselves "The Young Ones." They were defiantly "modern," a term they embraced with passion. They paid less attention to their subjects than the response their work would elicit in their audiences. The French playwright Alfred Jarry (1873–1907) staged the play *King Ubu*, a mockery of an authority figure. The story of an avaricious oaf in desperate search of a crown, the farce ran one tumultuous night in December 1896; it began with one of the characters pretending to hurl human waste at the outraged audience.

The avant-garde did not write or paint for everybody. In Paris, a group of artists and writers called themselves "Bohemians"—gypsy wanderers. These avant-garde young men gloried in the condition of being outsiders, rebels against the dominant culture in the way that romanticism had been a revolt against the classical tastes of court and château, even rebels against the strictures of their own middle-class social origins. They sought to surprise with their spontaneity and creativity, and even to offend by creating a scandal. However, although the proponents of cultural modernism may have mocked bourgeois "respectability" and popular culture by sporting long hair, wearing strange clothes, and behaving erratically, they nonetheless sought public acceptance and patronage of their work.

Many, including a number who were homosexual, celebrated their individuality and tried to keep themselves in the public eye. The flamboyant Irish-born poet and dramatist Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), whose witty dialogues greatly improved British comedy, became a symbol of contemporary "decadence." When asked by a customs official if he had anything to declare on arriving in France, Wilde replied, "Only my genius." He faced prosecution in 1895 for his sexual orientation and was sentenced to two years' hard labor for "immoral conduct." He died a lonely, premature death in a small Parisian hotel in 1900.

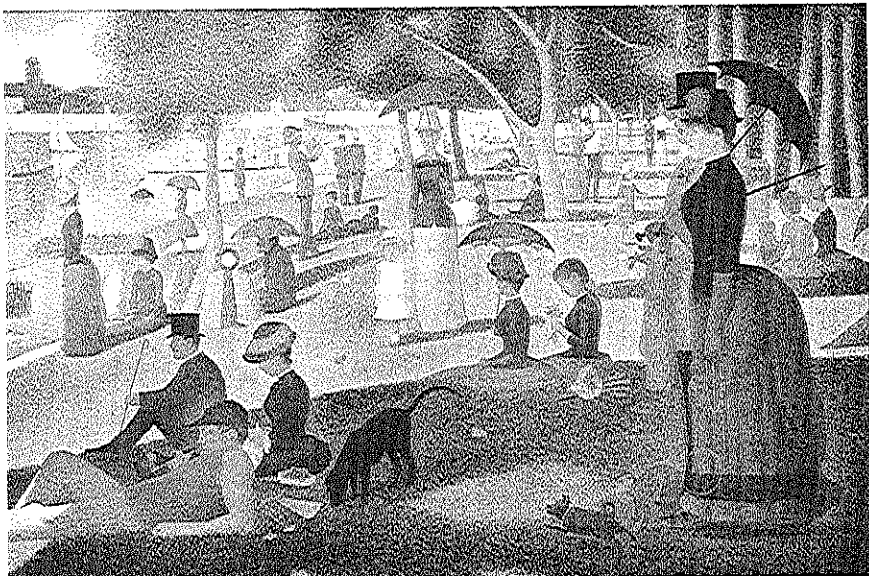
New musical composition also reflected the contemporary discovery of the unconscious, as avant-garde composers moved defiantly away from traditional forms. Many abandoned the ordered hierarchical scale, in which certain tones held precedence. The composer Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) sought to release in his audience dreams and fantasies, which he believed could not be distinguished from real life, just as Freud sought to elicit them from the patients on his office couch. The French pianist and composer

Erik Satie (1866–1925) composed music by the dim light of lampposts as he returned in an alcoholic haze from his favorite cafés, where he would eat only foods white in color. Both Satie and his countryman Claude Debussy (1862–1918) set out to free music from all constraints. Satie's compositions, with fanciful titles like *Three Pieces in the Form of a Pear*, explored new relationships between chords that surprised listeners, outraging some while delighting others with their humor. The Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) began to break the patterns of traditional harmonies to write free atonal music, beginning with his String Quartet No. 2 (1908). He believed atonality realistically and subliminally followed the dictates, instincts, and sometimes suffering of his psyche: "What counts is the capacity to hear oneself, to look deep inside oneself. . . . Inside, where the man of instinct begins, there, fortunately, all theory breaks down." For Schoenberg, the self became a refuge from the outside world.

The artists, writers, and composers of the avant-garde believed that art could reveal what is hidden in the unconscious, and thus open up new vistas of experience that could be communicated to viewers and audiences. The poet Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918), whose work defied stylistic convention, wrote reviews of books that only existed in his mind. Master of ambiguity, he abandoned direct statement and even punctuation and conventional word order to encourage readers to find new meanings in his work. One contemporary, affirming the particularly close link between symbolism and music, urged writers to "drop a syllable into a state of pure consciousness and listen for the reverberations."

Postimpressionists painted subjects in ways that even more consciously than impressionism distanced the artist from the subject. Georges Seurat (1859–1891) claimed that painters could evoke emotions through the visual suggestions of discontinuous lines, colors, and tones. Symbolist writers, who believed that symbols would stimulate memory through free association, were intrigued by Seurat's paintings because they consisted of thousands of dots of color forming figures and landscapes. This bold style, called "pointillism," influenced by the development of photography, left Seurat's figures appearing strangely mechanical and separate from each other. This may suggest the alienation, social division, and isolation of modern urban life. Yet in *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* (1884), Seurat may have sought to portray social cohesion through the social mix of bourgeois and workers enjoying a Sunday afternoon along the Seine River in Paris.

Expressionist painters used daring distortions, curious juxtaposition, and bold, unfamiliar color schemes to express what lay deep inside them and to obtain an emotional response in viewers. They were greatly influenced by the art of "primitive" societies. The French painter Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) abandoned a comfortable living as a stockbroker for the uncertainty of a career as a painter. His lengthy stay on the Pacific Ocean island of Tahiti shaped the appearance of his painting. Edvard Munch (1863–1944), a Norwegian artist who came to Paris in 1893, demon-



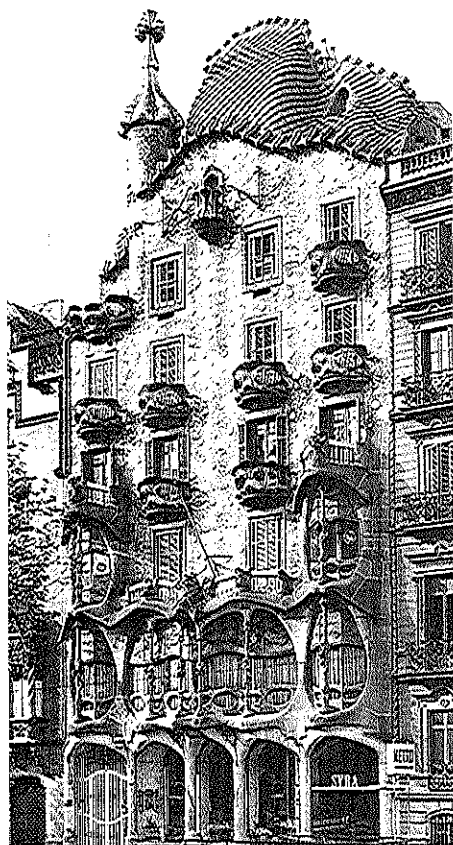
Georges Seurat's *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* (1884).

strated Gauguin's influence. Munch's *The Scream* (1893) evokes the viewer's alarm and fear, because the subject's scream seems to fill the entire canvas. In Munich, which along with Dresden was the center of the German expressionist movement, the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) had by 1910 moved expressionism even farther away from surface reality, portraying the inner being in a simplified form with lines, dots, and intense colors.

Art Nouveau, a sinuous decorative style offering a synthesis between traditional and modern art, also reflected the anxiety and moodiness of the *fin de siècle*. Art Nouveau evinced contemporary fascination with psychiatry. Charcot, the French neurologist, had opened up the unconscious to investigation through hypnosis. The dreamlike flowing forms and shapes of Art Nouveau, then, complemented the growing awareness of the contours and fluidity of the mind and its dreams and fantasies.

Although drawing upon past decorative traditions in furniture, jewelry, glasswork, and ceramics, Art Nouveau also influenced architecture, seen in the houses and sweeping entrances to subway stations that Hector Guimard (1867–1942) designed in Paris, and in apartment buildings and the beginnings of a cathedral undertaken (and still unfinished) in Barcelona by Antonio Gaudí (1852–1926).

Leading cultural figures in France identified Art Nouveau's style with the republic, seeing in its highly crafted luxury products something that was very French. At the same time, it could be associated with the conservative republic because the style's rococo origins were rooted in an aristocratic



(Left) Antonio Gaudí's Casa Batlló in Barcelona. (Right) Gustav Klimt's *Judith II (Salome)* (1909).

tradition and, perhaps as well, seemed to affirm women's traditional role in household decoration at a time when more feminists were stepping forward to demand equal rights for women.

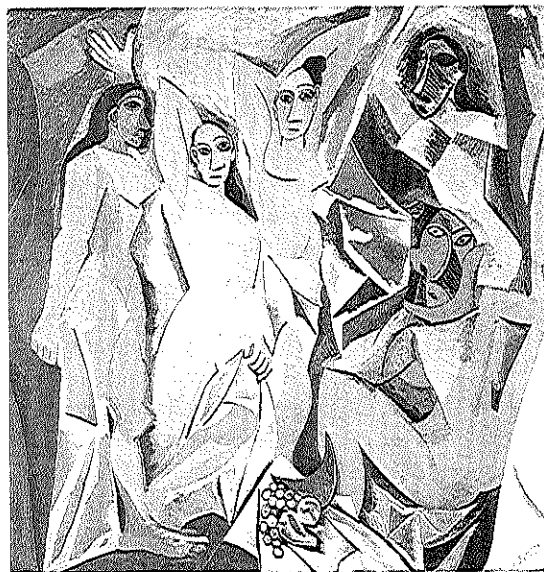
Vienna became a vital center of avant-garde cultural experimentation at the turn of the century. But after first enjoying state sponsorship of their art, the painters and writers of the avant-garde faced rejection in a climate of intolerance. Some intellectuals and painters then embraced aestheticism, which emphasized form and beauty as a way of surviving in an increasingly irrational, hostile world. The painter Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), among other Viennese artists, retreated into subjectivism, attaching primary value to individual experience. Yet in Vienna the aestheticism of the avant-garde was not a reaction against the resilient cultural values of the middle class. It was a reaction against political intolerance. Klimt and the "secessionists," like their counterparts in Munich, rebelled against what Klimt

considered the unsatisfactory values and dangers of mass society. He sought to stimulate and shock viewers by using, for example, classical images in strange, unprecedented juxtapositions, presenting erotic fantasies and other representations of utopian escape.

In Paris, a disparate but supremely talented group of younger modern painters exhibited their work in 1905. A critic dismissed the show as “touches of crude colorings juxtaposed haphazardly; barbaric and naive games of a child who is playing with the ‘box of colors.’” Another dubbed them the “fauvists,” or wild beasts. The name stuck. The fauvists remained committed to experimentation with colors and lines on canvas in their quest for the liberation of both subject and painter. They also painted landscapes, including coastal resorts, with bright colors and open spaces. One hostile critic in 1905 described a fauvist’s brush as having been “dipped in dynamite,” affirming the perceived association between artistic and social, and even anarchist, rebellion in some minds.

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) is widely considered to be the first painter of the modern movement. Influenced by his Spanish homeland, Picasso’s work (especially the paintings of his “blue period”) revealed the gloomy obsession with death that had characterized earlier Spanish painters. Picasso drew on his own intense subjectivity. His work was rarely shown in Paris, where he spent most of his career, in part because he mistrusted art dealers. His great influence came later.

(Left) The young Pablo Picasso in his studio. (Right) Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger* (O.J. version O).



Picasso's daring *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907), depicting five nudes, may mark the beginning of modernist art. Abstract painting is a subjective form of expression. "I paint objects as I think them, not as I see them," Picasso asserted. Above all, abstract art abandoned the artist's system of perspective that had endured since the Renaissance. In Picasso's work, one finds a fragmentation of perception and dismantling of realistic depiction in favor of products of the imagination—flat, distorted, and highly simplified geometric patterns of solid forms, and space divided by sharp angles.

Critics called the Spanish painter's style "cubism" because of his preoccupation with basic shapes, particularly the three-dimensional prism. Picasso considered the prism the fundamental component of reality. The influence of Georges Braque (1882–1963) on the cubist style contributed to the development of a second, "analytical" phase of cubism with an even greater emphasis on geometric shapes, now constructed from inanimate, pasted materials. The cubists became a more cohesive "school" than the fauvists, and relied more on light and shade than color to represent forms.

Futurist artists, most of them Italian, were inspired by technological change. In 1910, a futurist wrote, "All subjects previously used must be swept away in order to express our whirling life of steel, of pride, of fever and of speed." *Dynamism of a Cyclist* (1913) by Umberto Boccioni (1882–1916) depicts the frenetic energy of pedaling without actually showing the cyclist. The poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's "Manifesto of Futurism," which was published in 1909 in the aftermath of Wilbur Wright's triumphant airplane flights in France (following his first controlled airplane flight in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in 1903), proclaimed, "We want to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and rashness. . . . Beauty exists only in struggle. There is no masterpiece that has not an aggressive character. . . . We want to glorify war—the only cure for the modern world."

CONCLUSION

Artists in the early twentieth century suffered the shrill denunciations of chauvinists. In France, the nationalist press denounced the cubists, several of whom, like Picasso, were not French, for artistic decadence, specifically for importing "foreign perversions" with the goal of weakening French morale. Insisting on eclecticism and experimentation, some Munich artists affronted German nationalists by insisting that art ought to be international in character and by bringing French and Russian artists—including Kandinsky—into their circle. The turn of the avant-garde toward irrationality came at a time when the rational structures that governed domestic political life and international relations seemed to be breaking down amid aggressive nationalism and militarism in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and other European capitals.

Aggressive nationalism was closely linked to the "new European imperialism." Between the mid-1880s and 1914, the European powers raced each

other to increase their domination of the globe. The European imperial powers included Great Britain and France, old rivals for colonies, as well as Germany and Italy, which also sought to extend what each considered its national interests. Imperial rivalries helped solidify international alliances, dividing Europe into two armed camps. The avant-garde had good reason, as it turned out, to be anxious.