

## POST-WAR AGE OF ANXIETY

### Probing cultural frontiers

- A. Postwar pessimism
  - 1. The "lost generation"
    - a. Term used to describe pessimism of U.S. and European thinkers after the war
    - b. Postwar poetry and fiction reflected disillusionment with western culture
    - c. Scholars--Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee--lamented decline of the west
  - 2. Religious thought reflected uncertainty and pessimism
  - 3. Attacks on the ideal of progress
    - a. Science tarnished by the technological horrors of World War I
    - b. Most western societies granted suffrage to all men and women
    - c. Many intellectuals disillusioned with democracy
    - d. Conservatives decried "the rule of inferiors"
- B. Revolutions in physics and psychology
  - 1. Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, 1906
    - a. Space and time relative to the person measuring them
    - b. Implication: reality or truth merely a set of mental constructions
  - 2. Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, 1927
    - a. Impossible to state the position and velocity of a subatomic particle at same time
    - b. Atomic universe indeterminate; can only speak of probabilities
    - c. Challenged long-held assumptions about truth, cause and effect
  - 3. Freud's psychoanalytic theory, 1896
    - a. Sought psychological causes of mental illness
    - b. Conflict between conscious and unconscious mental processes
    - c. Sexual repression frequent cause of neuroses
    - d. Freud's ideas shaped psychiatric profession, influenced literature and arts
- C. Experimentation in art and architecture
  - 1. Modern painting: when photography can reproduce nature, why should painting?
    - a. Painters like Pablo Picasso sought freedom of expression, emotional expression
    - b. Borrowed from artistic traditions of Asia, Pacific, and Africa
    - c. No widely accepted standards of good or bad art
  - 2. Modern architecture: the Bauhaus school started in Germany, 1920
    - a. An international style for twentieth-century urban buildings
      - 1. Walter Gropius: form should follow function; combined engineering and art
      - 2. Simple shapes, steel frames, and walls of glass
    - b. International style dominated urban landscapes well after 1930s

### Global depression

- A. The Great Depression
  - 1. The weaknesses of global economy
    - a. The tangled financial relationships: Germany and Austria borrowed money from United States, used it to pay reparations to Allies, who used the money to pay war debt to United States
    - b. 1928 U.S. lenders withdrew capital from Europe; financial system strained
    - c. Industrial innovations reduced demand for raw materials--rubber, coal, cotton
    - d. Postwar agriculture depressed in Europe, United States, Canada, Argentina, and Australia
  - 2. The crash of 1929
    - a. U.S. economic boom prompted many to speculate, invest beyond their means
    - b. Black Thursday (24 October 1929): stock prices dropped, investors lost life savings
    - c. Lenders called in loans, forcing investors to keep selling
  - 3. Economic contraction in U.S. economy and the world

- a. Overproduction and reduced consumer demand
- b. Widespread business failure and unemployment
- c. By 1932 U.S. industrial production and national income dropped by half
- 4. Industrial economies felt banking crisis, unemployment
  - a. Germany and Japan unable to sell manufactured goods to purchase fuel and food
  - b. Germany by 1932: 35 percent unemployment, 50 percent decrease in industrial production
  - c. European industrial states and Japan unable to sell to United States because of tariffs
- 5. Primary producing economies especially vulnerable
  - a. Export prices declined sharply after 1929: sugar, coffee, beef, tin, nitrates, and so on
  - b. Latin American states enacted import tariffs that actually helped domestic industry
  - c. Brazil under dictator Getulio Dornelles Vargas built up steel and iron production
  - d. Impact on colonial Africa varied: exports hurt, but not local markets
  - e. China not integrated into world economy, less affected
  - f. Philippines was a U.S. colony; its sugar production protected by the United States
- 6. Economic nationalism favored over international cooperation
  - a. High tariffs, import quotas, and prohibitions to promote economic self-sufficiency
  - b. U.S. trade restrictions provoked retaliation by other nations
  - c. International trade dropped 66 percent between 1929 and 1932
- B. Despair and government action
  - 1. Government policies to reduce female employment, especially of married women
  - 2. Great Depression caused enormous personal suffering
    - a. Millions struggled for food, clothing, and shelter
    - b. Marriage and birthrates declined, suicide increased
    - c. Intensified social divisions and class hatreds
    - d. John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* criticized U.S. policy of "planned scarcity"
- C. Economic experimentation
  - 1. John M. Keynes challenged classical economic theory
    - a. Classic theory: capitalism self-correcting, operated best if unregulated
    - b. Keynes argued the depression was a problem of inadequate demand, not supply
    - c. Governments should play active role in stimulating economy, consumer demand
  - 2. The New Deal of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt anticipated Keynes's ideas
    - a. After 1932, protected banking system, massive public works, farm subsidies
    - b. Also, legislation established minimum wage, social security, workers' unions
    - c. Military spending in WWII ultimately ended the depression in United States
  - 3. The global quality of the depression made it impossible for any purely national policy to restore prosperity and contributed to the second international world war.

***New governmental policies emerged to meet the crisis.  
So did extremist political groups.***