

# Studies in World History Vol. 3

DR. JAMES STOBAUGH

The Modern Age  
to Present  
{1900 A.D. to Present}

HISTORY GEOGRAPHY GOVERNMENT ECONOMICS RELIGION HISTORY GEOGRAPHY



ECONOMICS RELIGION HISTORY GOVERNMENT GEOGRAPHY ECONOMICS

Jr. High  
**STUDENT**

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First Iwo Jima Flag Raising.  
Small flag carried ashore  
by the 2d Battalion, 28th  
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The Sony canari (formerly AT&T building) in New York City, 1984, by Philip Johnson, illustrating a “Postmodern” spin with the inclusion of a classical broken pediment on the top that diverged from the boxy functional office towers common in Modern Architecture (CCA-SA3.0).



President Ronald Reagan (far left) and First Lady Nancy Reagan pay their respects to the caskets of the 17 US victims of the April 18, 1983 attack on the United States Embassy in Beirut (PD).

# Preface

---

I visited the old tire swing that hangs from a huge, aged maple tree that grows in my yard. It is like any old tire swing. I imagine you have swung on one. Perhaps you still do. Now empty of bouncing children, this discarded tire was once a wild bucking horse, a twirling UFO, a charming Timbuktu prince. It was whatever my four children wanted it to be. My children were introduced to the universe on this old Michelin radial. They learned that they could soar to the end of the sky, yet return safely back to the sedentary loam of the ground. From that old tire they moved into history.

They gracefully wriggled their toes at passing mourning doves and plowed diminutive furrows through sensual pasture. They laughed at passing thunderstorms and frowned at interloping grasshoppers. They dodged maple leaves and smiled at rainbows.

At first they relied on me to launch them into their dreams, but as they matured and their legs grew longer and stronger they invaded the twilight below the tire on their own. They took control of their history and, in a way, my history. For we share history. We are one. My life and dreams that were stimulated on that tire swing go with them. On my swing they took solo trips to the horizon. They differentiated themselves from time, and pushed away from certainty and poise into a reckless iconoclasm.

They tried to twirl but could not. They still needed me to twirl them; that gave me silent pleasure. Something of their youth was captured in that old tire swing. It is there still. Something of them is resurrected as I walk to that tire swing and for one fleeting moment our halcyon souls kiss again. The grass grows wildly underneath the tire swing; there are no protruding appendages plowing my pasture. Where once pudgy starfighters attacked the cosmos, caterpillars wriggle through worn tire threads. I do not need the pasture but I still need the toes. If you drive by my farm you will see the tire swing. Stop and listen. Think of my children and their father who twirled his children into adulthood.

You know, history is that way. It is about people and time and differentiation (breaking away). It is not therapeutic — it is not something that exists to serve us. It is a glance back to the past and a road map into the future. But these are dangerous times.

America, in the beginning of the 21st century, is spinning out of control. We are stretching our wings adventurously but drifting further away from our God. We are in trouble.

As part of the symposium at the dedication of the Presbyterian Center, Louisville, Kentucky, October 28, 1988, the theologian Walter Brueggemann surprised the Presbyterian Church (USA) — as well as all Americans — by calling them to repentance. “We religionists [evangelicals] are caught in an odd endorsing and legitimating, when in our knowing, we may want to talk about the sovereign absence of God, an absence evident in the secularization of a society which seems to manage very well by itself.” Brueggemann further suggests that we evangelical Christians are in exile and need to act accordingly.

Okay. We live in a post-Christian era. So what?

Deborah lived in a post-Jewish era, a time where worship of Yahweh was no longer practiced by her society. There was a great falling away — like now — and God called Deborah to make things right — like God is calling you now.



Deborah was a prophetess and the fourth judge of Israel. She was a warrior mom, a culture creator. The only female judge mentioned in the Bible, Deborah led a successful counter-attack against the forces of Jabin, king of Canaan, and his military commander Sisera.

In the days of Shamgar son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were abandoned; travelers took to winding paths. Villagers in Israel would not fight; they held back until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel. (Judges 5:6–7)

I want you to be Deborahs to this generation. I want you to capture the high culture of this land, and I want you to do that by being very smart. Be very, very smart!

I am persuaded that Deborah was not merely a great warrior — she was that — but she was much more. She won military victories, true, but she won a cultural war too.

You who ride on white donkeys, sitting on your saddle blankets, and you who walk along the road, consider the voice of the singers at the watering places. They recite the victories of the Lord, the victories of his villagers in Israel. (Judges 5:10)

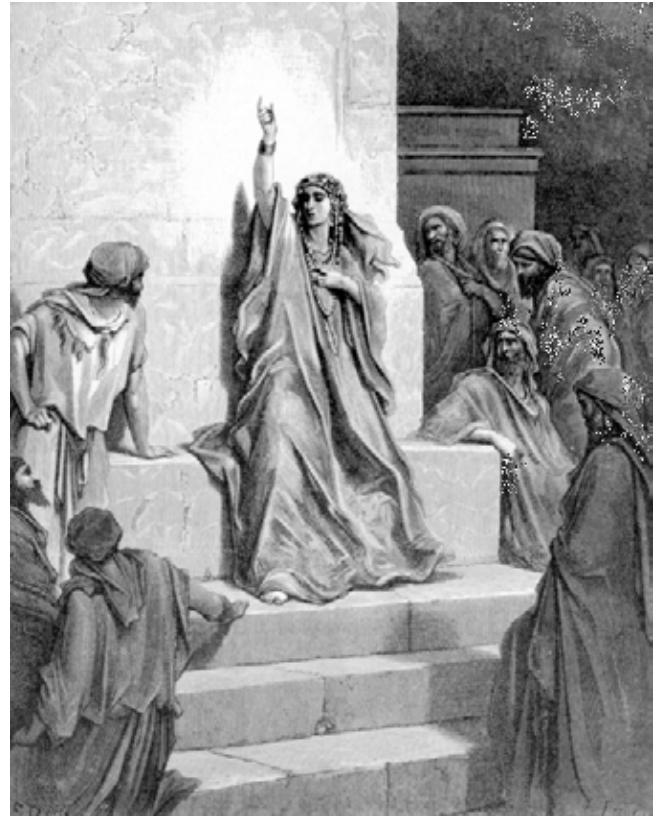
It was at the “watering places” that culture was created and maintained. The “watering places” were places of sustenance for body, mind, and spirit. It was the place where one came for gossip, for water, and for spiritual insight. In other words, the “watering places” were the universities of Deborah’s time. There, insight was shared and policy was debated. This was the epistemological center of Jewish life.

I want you to go the place God is calling you, perhaps the universities, and make some high culture!

The term “high culture” was introduced into English largely with the publication in 1869 of *Culture and Anarchy* by Matthew Arnold. Arnold defined high culture as “the disinterested endeavour after man’s perfection” and argued that having culture meant to “know the best that has been said and thought in the world.” Arnold saw high culture as a force for moral and political good. I do, too. Arnold saw culture as that which promotes and creates the way of life that a civilization enjoys — the art that it views; the movies it enjoys; the books it reads. I am not talking about fads and superfluous external minutiae. I am talking about the things that determine the way we think, govern, and worship. The term is contrasted with popular or mass culture, as well as with traditional cultures. I want you to create a new, high culture — a wholesome, godly high culture.

You need to be the best you can be for our God. I want you to put the high culture creation epicenters of education, government, entertainment, health, law, and religion in your sights, go to those spheres, and be the best you can be.

I am excited! “Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour, and caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping” — Rupert Brooke (who died in WWI in 1915)



Deborah’s Song, Judges 5.  
Wood engraving, circa 1866  
(PD).

# Using Your Student Textbook

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## **How this course has been developed**

1. Chapters: This course has 34 chapters (representing 34 weeks of study).
2. Lessons: Each chapter has five lessons, taking approximately 20 to 30 minutes each. There will be a short reading followed by discussion questions. Some questions require a specific answer from the text, while others are more open-ended, leading students to think “outside the box.”
3. Weekly exams: The Teacher Guide includes two optional exams for the chapter.
4. Student responsibility: Responsibility to complete this course is on the student. Students are to complete the readings every day, handing their responses in to a parent or teacher for evaluation. This course was designed for students to practice independent learning.
5. Grading: Students turn in assignments to a parent or teacher weekly.

## **Throughout this book are the following components:**

1. First thoughts: Background on the historical period.
2. Discussion questions: Questions based generally on Bloom’s Taxonomy.
3. Concepts: Terms, concepts, and theories to be learned that are bolded for emphasis. Most are listed on the first page of the chapter.
4. History makers: A person(s) who clearly changed the course of history.
5. Historical debate: An examination of historical theories surrounding a period or topic.

## **What the student will need:**

1. Notepad: For writing assignments.
2. Pen/pencil: For answers and essays.
3. The Teacher Guide for weekly exams and/or to record daily assignments.





As the *Titanic* sank, lifeboat No. 15 was nearly lowered onto lifeboat No. 13 (depicted by Charles Dixon in *The Graphic*) (PD).

# Chapter 1

## Modernism: To Rule the Earth

### First Thoughts

British writer Virginia Woolf's assertion that "on or about December 1910, human character changed"<sup>1</sup> is all so true. About that time, modernism emerged as the primary social and worldview in human history. Modernism aims at that radical transformation of human thought in relation to God, man, the world, life, and death, which was presaged by humanism and 17th-century philosophy (e.g., Immanuel Kant), and violently practiced in the French Revolution. French philosopher J.J. Rousseau was the first to use the term, but it would not blossom fully until the 20th century.

### Chapter Learning Objectives

Chapter 1 examines the social, religious, and intellectual movement called modernism. We will define the movement and discuss its genesis. Then we will look at examples in art and in literature. Finally, we will examine a tragic example of the limitations of modernism: the sinking of the *Titanic*.

As a result of this chapter you should be able to:

1. Understand the essence of modernism
2. Explain why the transatlantic cable was the ultimate representation of modernism
3. Analyze modernism in literature
4. Analyze modernism in art
5. Discuss why the sinking of the *Titanic* was an example of the limits of modernism.

#### CONCEPTS

Deism  
Pragmatism  
Epistemology  
Avant-garde  
Surrealism  
Moral relativism

1. Dr. Bryony Randall, University of Glasgow, "'On or about December 1910 human character changed' Centenary reflections and contemporary debates: modernism and beyond," December 10–12, 2010, University of Glasgow, UK, <http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/node/34848>.

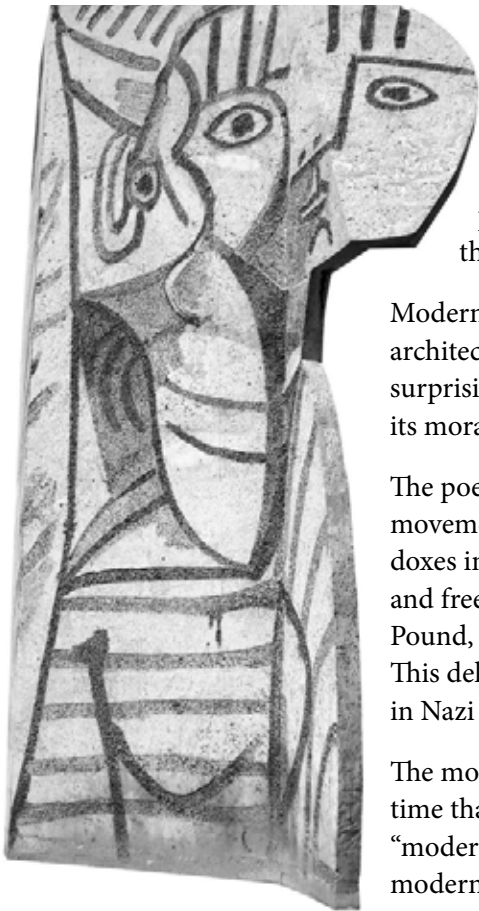
# Lesson 1

## Modernism

**Epistemology** is the study of knowledge.

If the worldview **deism** suggested that God was out to lunch, modernism, a cousin of naturalism, suggested that God was absent altogether.

Modernism, in its broadest definition, is a cultural tendency originally arising from wide-scale and far-reaching changes to Western society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The world, including America, had rapidly changed from an agrarian to an urban society in one short generation.



A sculpture called "Sylvette" by Pablo Picasso, an intriguing painter and sculptor of the modern period (PD).

Modernism fervently believed in science and technology. It was an optimistic vision of the future. It was also a revolt against the conservative values of limitation and **pragmatism**. The trademark of modernism was its rejection of tradition. Modernism rejected the lingering certainty of Enlightenment **epistemology** and also rejected the existence of a compassionate, all-powerful Creator God in favor of human progress. The first casualty of this quixotic thinking was Judeo-Christian morality.

Modernism was universal in its rejection of everything conventional. Literature, art, architecture, religious faith, social organization, and daily life were all targets of this surprisingly arrogant movement. Perhaps no social movement has been as confident in its moral ambiguity as modernism was.

The poet Ezra Pound's 1934 injunction to "Make it new!"<sup>2</sup> was paradigmatic of the movement's approach toward the obsolete. And Pound is a good example of the paradoxes inherent in modernism. Pound embraced a new understanding of human liberty and free expression while also embracing nascent totalitarianism and anti-Semitism. Pound, like so many modernists, felt he could separate his ethics from his worldview. This delusion would have disastrous consequences. Adolf Eichmann had a similar view in Nazi Germany and designed and implemented the Holocaust.

The modernist movement, at the beginning of the 20th century, marked the first time that the term "**avant-garde**," which the movement was labeled until the word "modernism" prevailed, was used for the arts. Surrealism was the "the **avant-garde** of modernism."

### Discussion Question

Art historian Clement Greenberg states, "The essence of modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. The philosopher Immanuel Kant used logic to establish the limits of logic, and while he withdrew much from its old jurisdiction, logic was left all the more secure in what there remained to it."<sup>3</sup> Modernism, in its attempt to attack everything traditional, created an autocratic liberalism. Explain.

2. [www.stanford.edu/dept/DLCL/cgi.../make\\_it\\_new\\_stanford.docx](http://www.stanford.edu/dept/DLCL/cgi.../make_it_new_stanford.docx).

3. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," <http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/modernism.html>.

# The Transatlantic Cable

To modernism, science and technology assured the ultimate unity of mankind and the ultimate salvation of mankind. No technological feat of the late 19th and early 20th century evidenced this more than the transatlantic cable. Twenty-two years after the completion of the first telegraph line between Washington and Baltimore, in 1844, the first transatlantic cable was stretched to Europe. It only lasted a few weeks, but it was soon replaced.

American historian and poet Rossiter Johnson wrote the following poem to celebrate this momentous event.

## The Victory

When Man, in his Maker's image, came  
To be the lord of the new-made earth,  
To conquer its forests, its beasts to tame,  
To gather its treasures and know their worth,  
All readily granted his power and place  
Save the Ocean, the Mountain, and Time, and Space;  
And these four sneered at his puny frame,  
And made of his lordship a theme for mirth.

Whole ages passed while his flocks he tended,  
And delved and dreamed, as the years went by  
Till there came an age when his genius splendid  
Had bridged the river and sailed the sky,  
And raised the dome that defied the storm,  
And mastered the beauties of color and form;  
But his power was lost, his dominion ended,  
Where Time, Space, Mountain, or Sea was nigh.

The Mountains rose in their grim inertness  
Between the peoples, and made them strange,  
Save as in moments of pride or pertness  
They climbed the ridge of their native range,  
And, looking down on the tribe below,  
Saw nothing there but a deadly foe,  
Heard only a war-cry, long and shrill,  
In echoes leaping from hill to hill.

The Ocean rolled in its mighty splendor,  
Washing the slowly wasting shore,  
And the voices of nations, fierce or tender,  
Lost themselves in its endless roar.  
With frail ships launched on its treacherous surge,  
And sad eyes fixed on its far blue verge,  
Man's hold of life seemed brittle and slender,  
And the Sea his master forevermore.



The new transatlantic cable was laid by the ship *Great Eastern* captained by Sir James Anderson. Her immense hull was fitted with three iron tanks for the reception of 2,300 nautical miles of cable (PD).





Communication across the ocean opened up endless possibilities for the modern age (PD).

And Space and Time brought their huge dimensions  
To separate man from his brother man,  
And sowed between them a thousand dissensions,  
That ripened in hatred and caste and clan.  
So Sea and Mountain and Time and Space  
Laughed again in his lordship's face,  
And bade him blush for his weak inventions  
And the narrow round his achievements ran.

But one morning he made him a slender wire,  
As an artist's vision took life and form,  
While he drew from heaven the strange, fierce fire  
That reddens the edge of the midnight storm;  
And he carried it over the Mountain's crest,  
And dropped it into the Ocean's breast;

And Science proclaimed, from shore to shore,  
That Time and Space ruled man no more.

Then the brotherhood lost on Shinar's plain  
Came back to the peoples of earth again.  
"Be one!" sighed the Mountain, and shrank away.  
"Be one!" murmured Ocean, in dashes of spray.  
"Be one!" said Space; "I forbid no more."  
"Be one!" echoed Time, "till my years are o'er."  
"We are one!" said the nations, as hand met hand  
In a thrill electric from land to land.<sup>4</sup>

### Discussion Question

Why did a transatlantic cable have such importance to modernists?

## Lesson 3

### Modernism and Literature

The ordered, stable, and inherently meaningful worldview of the 19th century could not, wrote T.S. Eliot, connect with "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."<sup>5</sup> Modernism created a profound break with Victorian stable morality. This break led to **moral relativism**, a worldview no more evident than in the literary arts.

4. <http://history-world.org/Laying%20Of%20The%20Atlantic%20Cable.htm>.

5. This comment is related to T.S. Eliot's criticisms of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, [people.virginia.edu/~jdc3t/eliotulysses.htm](http://people.virginia.edu/~jdc3t/eliotulysses.htm).

In literature, the movement is associated with the works of (among others) T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, Albert Camus, Franz Kafka, and Jean Paul Sartre. As literary critic John Barth explains, “In their attempt to throw off the aesthetic burden of the realist novel, these writers introduced a variety of literary tactics and devices: the radical disruption of linear flow of narrative; the frustration of conventional expectations concerning unity and coherence of plot and character and the cause and effect development thereof; the deployment of ironic and ambiguous juxtapositions to call into question the moral and philosophical meaning of literary action; the adoption of a tone of epistemological self-mockery aimed at naive pretensions of bourgeois rationality; the opposition of inward consciousness to rational, public, and objective discourse; and an inclination to subjective distortion to point up the evanescence of the social world of the 19th century bourgeoisie.”<sup>6</sup>



Elizabeth Barrett Browning (PD).

Modern authors would generally abandon content in order to investigate new forms. Essentially, novelists and poets revolutionized literature as completely as artists revolutionized orthodox art forms. Nothing like this had ever happened to literature.

Modernism, however, in its headlong pursuit of the “unusual” or “avant-garde” views took adherents in to nihilism and worse. Many of the chief Modernists either flirted with **fascism** or openly supported it (e.g., Eliot, Yeats, Hamsun, and Pound). There was a sort of inherent elitism in literature that bothered many critics. For instance, most readers can’t make heads or tails of James Joyce. This obscure elitism was a way to save literature, in their minds, from mediocrity.

It could be argued that the achievements of the modernists have had little impact on world literature in general. Arguably, very few people read these novelists and poets. The problem is, the people who mostly read them, and were influenced greatly by them, were university students who quite literally formed the next emerging elite in the world and more or less made social and political policies for the world for the 20th century.<sup>7</sup>

## Discussion Question

Which passage has modernist tendencies and why?

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of my Being and ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of everyday’s  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;  
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood’s faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints—I love thee with the breath,

6. John Barth, *The Friday Book: Essays and Other Non-Fiction*, “The Literature of Replenishment” (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1984.), p. 68.

7. <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/elab/hf10255.html>.

Smiles, tears, of all my life! And, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.  
— Elizabeth Barrett Browning

That is the worst moment, when you feel you have lost  
The desires for all that was most desirable,  
Before you are contented with what you can desire;  
Before you know what is left to be desired;  
And you go on wishing that you could desire  
What desire has left behind. But you cannot understand.  
How could you understand what it is to feel old?  
— From T.S. Eliot, “The Cocktail Party” (1949)

## Lesson 4

### Modern Art: Tamed by the Middle Class

**Art For Art’s Sake** is a view that art should not be analyzed or judged for its composition, form, or worldview.

Perhaps the most radical departure from traditionalism occurred in the arts.

The roots of modern art lie in the 16th century, initiating what is called the Early Modern Period, which extends up to the 18th century. The intellectual underpinnings of modernism emerged during the Renaissance when, through the study of the art, poetry, philosophy, and science of ancient Greece and Rome, humanists revived the notion that the pleasure of man is the goal of all things, and promoted this notion through education and government. Art was soon to follow. It then, should also be created to please man, not God.

The Renaissance also gave rise to utopian visions of a perfect society, beginning with Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia*, written in 1516, in which is described as a perfect island community. In retrospect, Renaissance humanism was an expression of that modernist confidence in the potential of humans to shape their future and the future of the world. Also present is the belief that humans can understand and control natural forces, and even grasp the nature of the universe.

By the early 20th century, modernism dominated the art scene in Europe. Early modern artists presented images that contained or reflected good, conservative moral values, served as examples of virtuous behavior, or offered inspiring Christian sentiment. In this sense they were traditional in their subject matter.

Jean-Paul Laurens’s painting, *Last Moments of Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico* (1882; Hermitage, St. Petersburg), for example, shows the emperor before his execution by firing squad. This depiction is in contrast to Manet’s broadly painted, “unfinished” picture, which depicts the event in unheroic terms. Laurens presents the emperor as a noble hero calmly consoling his distraught confessor while a faithful servant on his



knees clings to his left hand. His Mexican executioners stand waiting at the door admiring the emperor's composure.

“Art for Art’s Sake” was a rallying cry, a call for art’s freedom from the demands that it possess meaning and purpose. From a progressive modernist’s point of view, it was a further exercise of freedom.

In his book *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, published in 1890, modernist painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler, argued, “Art should be independent of all claptrap —should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye and ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism, and the like. All these have no kind of concern with it.”

However, “Art for Art’s Sake” backfired. The same middle class to whom Whistler was selling his art quickly turned the call of “Art for Art’s Sake” into a formal art. From now on, art was to be discussed in formal terms — color, line, shape, space, and composition. This effectively removed the question of meaning and purpose from consideration but also put limits on modern art to the extent that it would now be discussed and analyzed by professionals and amateurs alike.

This approach became pervasive to the extent that artists were as tyrannical about their modernist style as earlier traditionalists (e.g., Baroque artists) were about theirs!

Eventually there emerged the notion that modernist art is to be practiced entirely within a closed formalist sphere. The formalist critic Clement Greenberg, in an article first published in 1965 entitled “Modernist Painting,” saw modernism as having achieved a self-referential autonomy. The work of art came to be seen as an isolated phenomenon governed by the internal laws of stylistic development. Art stood separate from the materialistic world and from the mundane affairs of ordinary people. And very quickly no one liked it and no one bought it.<sup>8</sup>

## Discussion Question

The underlying assumptions at work in modern art represent, in microcosm, the problem with modernism in general. Modern art insists that the artist, by virtue of special dispensation, should express the finer things of humanity through a purely abstract and entirely personal understanding and mode of expression. This purely visual art made it an autonomous sphere of activity, completely separate from the everyday world of social and political life. Also, it was separate from history and the lessons learned from history. The self-determining nature of visual art meant that questions asked of it could be properly put, and answered, only in its own terms. Modernism’s “history” was constructed through reference only to itself. Why did this spell trouble for modernism?



*Last Moments of Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico*, a painting by Jean-Paul Laurens, shows him moments before his death by firing squad (PD).

8. <http://arthistoryresources.net/Modernism/artsake.html>.

## The Sinking of the *Titanic*

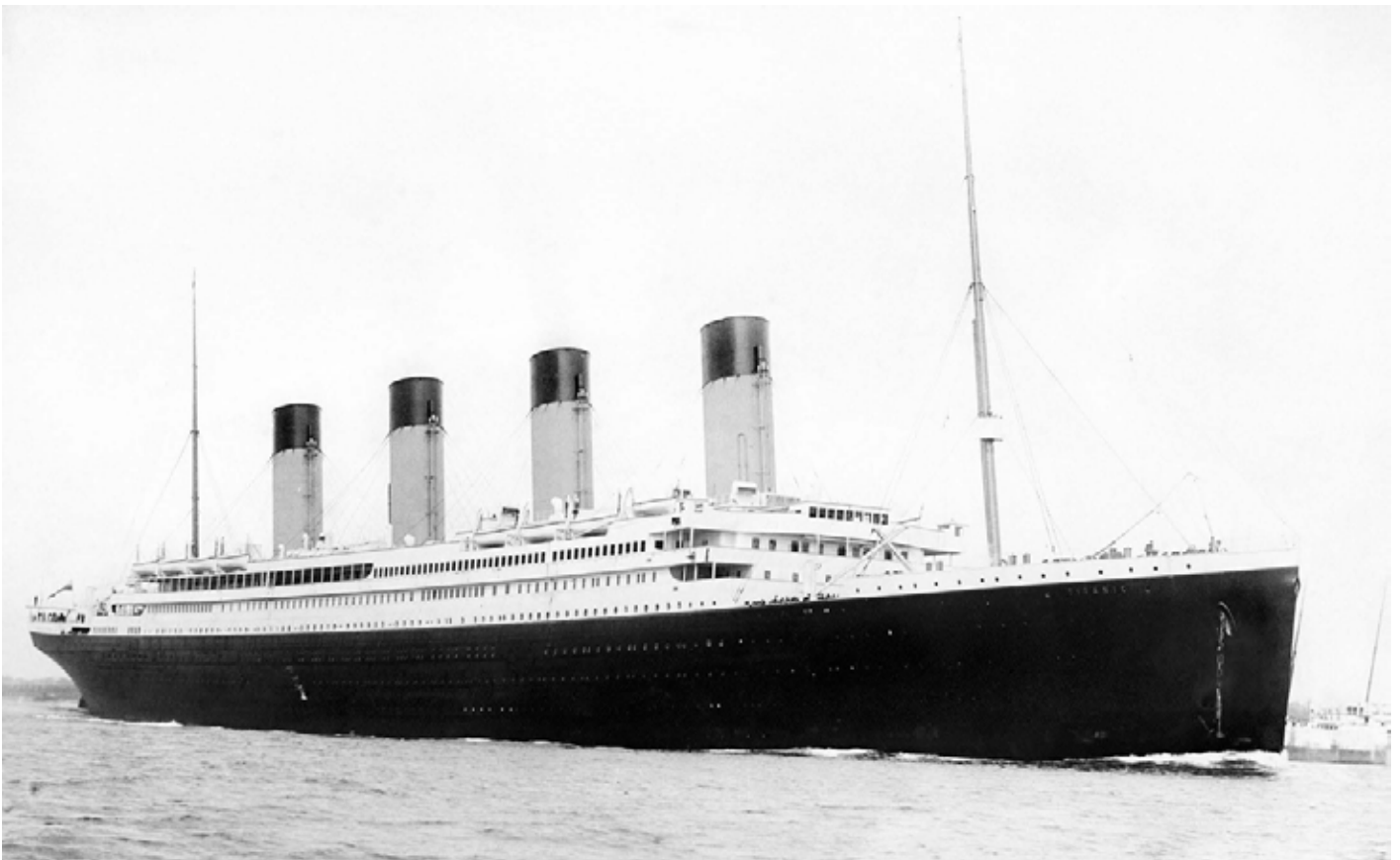
### Secondary Source: *New York Times*, April 15, 1912

CAPE RACE, N.F., April 15. — The White Star liner Olympic reports by wireless this evening that the *Cunarder Carpathia* reached, at daybreak this morning, the position from which wireless calls for help were sent out last night by the *Titanic* after her collision with an iceberg. The *Carpathia* found only the lifeboats and the wreckage of what had been the biggest steamship afloat.

The *Titanic* had foundered at about 2:20 A.M., in latitude 41:46 north and longitude 50:14 west. This is about 30 minutes of latitude, or about 34 miles, due south of the position at which she struck the iceberg. All her boats are accounted for and about 655 souls have been saved of the crew and passengers, most of the latter presumably women and children. There were about 1,200 persons aboard the *Titanic*.

The Leyland liner *California* is remaining and searching the position of the disaster, while the *Carpathia* is returning to New York with the survivors.

It can be positively stated that up to 11 o'clock to-night nothing whatever had been received at or heard by the Marconi station here to the effect that the *Parisian*, *Virginian* or any other ships had picked up any survivors, other than those picked up by the *Carpathia*.



RMS *Titanic* departing Southampton on April 10, 1912 (PD).

The first news of the disaster to the *Titanic* was received by the Marconi wireless station here at 10:25 o'clock last night (as told in yesterday's *New York Times*.) The *Titanic* was first heard giving the distress signal "C. Q. D.," which was answered by a number of ships, including the *Carpathia*, the *Baltic* and the *Olympic*. The *Titanic* said she had struck an iceberg and was in immediate need of assistance, giving her position as latitude 41:46 north and longitude 50:14 west.

At 10:55 o'clock the *Titanic* reported she was sinking by the head, and at 11:25 o'clock the station here established communication with the Allan liner *Virginian*, from Halifax to Liverpool, and notified her of the *Titanic's* urgent need of assistance and gave her the *Titanic's* position.

The *Virginian* advised the Marconi station almost immediately that she was proceeding toward the scene of the disaster.

At 11:36 o'clock the *Titanic* informed the *Olympic* that they were putting the women off in boats and instructed the *Olympic* to have her boats read to transfer the passengers.

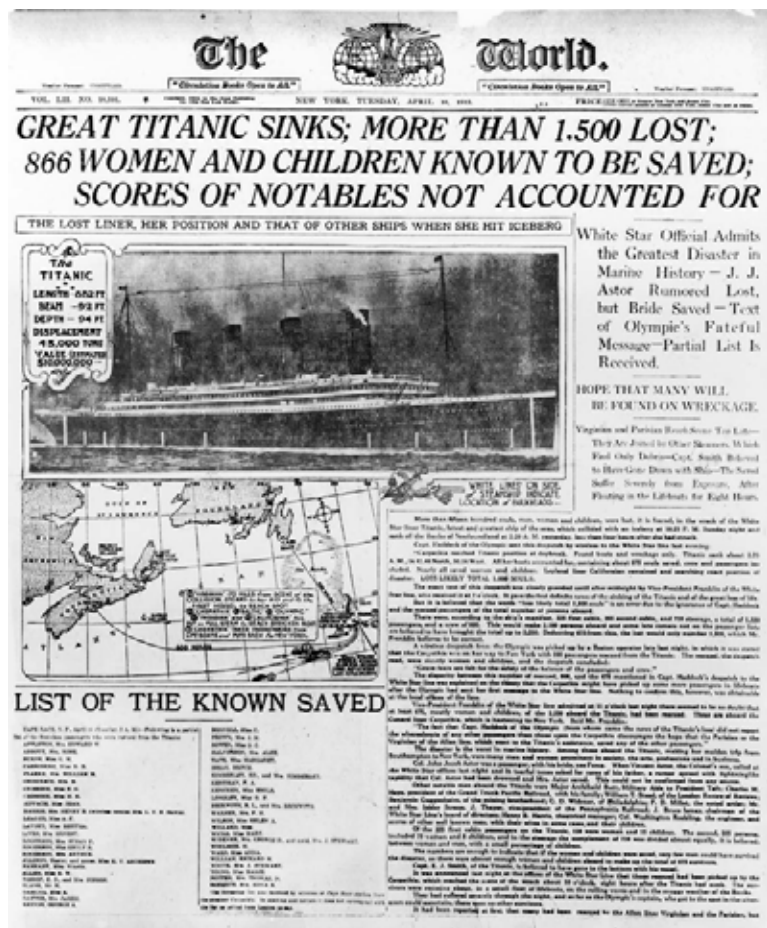
The *Titanic*, during all this time, continued to give distress signals and to announce her position.

The wireless operator seemed absolutely cool and clear-headed, his sending throughout being steady and perfectly formed, and the judgment used by him was of the best.

The last signals heard from the *Titanic* were received at 12:27 A.M., when the *Virginian* reported having heard a few blurred signals which ended abruptly.<sup>9</sup>

## Discussion Question

The sinking of the *Titanic* was a severe blow to modernism. The engineering feat of the 20th century, the unsinkable *Titanic*, was the poster boy of modernism. It combined the latest technological advances of the age and the exorbitant luxuries of the same age. On the *Titanic*, one traveled in luxury in technology unrivaled in human history. Yet, ironically, in a little over two hours it sank with the loss of thousands of lives. What lessons can we learn from such a tragedy?



Photograph of the front page of *The World*, April 16, 1912 headlining the sinking of the *Titanic* (LOC).

9. <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0415.html>.





Edward J. Smith, captain of the *Titanic* who died at sea (PD).

## Acts of Honor and Dishonor

Honor is a theme for many involved in the *Titanic* disaster. The ship's captain, Edward Smith, who despite ignoring the dangers sent the ship full speed toward its doom, did not seek shelter on the lifeboats but instead spent his final moments aboard the vessel he commanded. Beyond his encouragement of the crew to "be British," Captain Smith's last moments are unknown, yet his decision to stay onboard is remembered as one of honor.

Even today, his decision is cited as a rebuke to those more recent examples of the *MS Costa Concordia* and the *MTS Oceanos*, both cruise liners in peril of sinking that had their captains, and even some of the crew, take to the lifeboats while abandoning passengers to uncertain fates.

History also records the honor of Captain Rostron of the *RMS Carpathia*, applauded as without hesitation, he bravely sent his ship rushing through the dangerous waters beyond what was thought its top speed into the darkness in a desperate race to rescue as many as possible despite the distance it had to overcome to reach *Titanic*.



Mrs. J.J. "Molly" Brown presenting trophy cup award to Capt. Arthur Henry Rostron, for his service in the rescue of the *Titanic* (LOC).

History has also not forgotten what many rightly or wrongly felt was the dishonor of Captain Stanley Lord and the crew of the *SS Californian*. As the scope of the *Titanic* disaster became known, it was revealed that a ship nearby failed to come to its aid. Despite initial denials and claims of being too far away, investigations over the last 100 years have done little to change the perception of their dishonor, and the missed opportunity to save perhaps hundreds more of *Titanic's* passengers. As one author noted "the crime of Stanley Lord was not that he may have ignored the *Titanic's* rockets, but that he unquestionably ignored someone's cry for help."<sup>1</sup>



Collision of *Costa Concordia*, 2012 (CCA-SA3.0).

<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS\\_Californian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SS_Californian)