

Cultural changes in the Weimar Republic

A variety of factors led to an upsurge in cultural experimentation in Weimar Germany.

Interpretation 3

From *Weimar and Nazi Germany*, by Stephen Lee published in 1996.

The 1920s saw a huge cultural revival in Germany. Indeed, these years have been seen as the greatest period of experimentation in the whole of Germany's history. As things settled down politically, writers and artists had more of a chance to try out new ideas. The results were impressive and spread across all areas of the Arts.

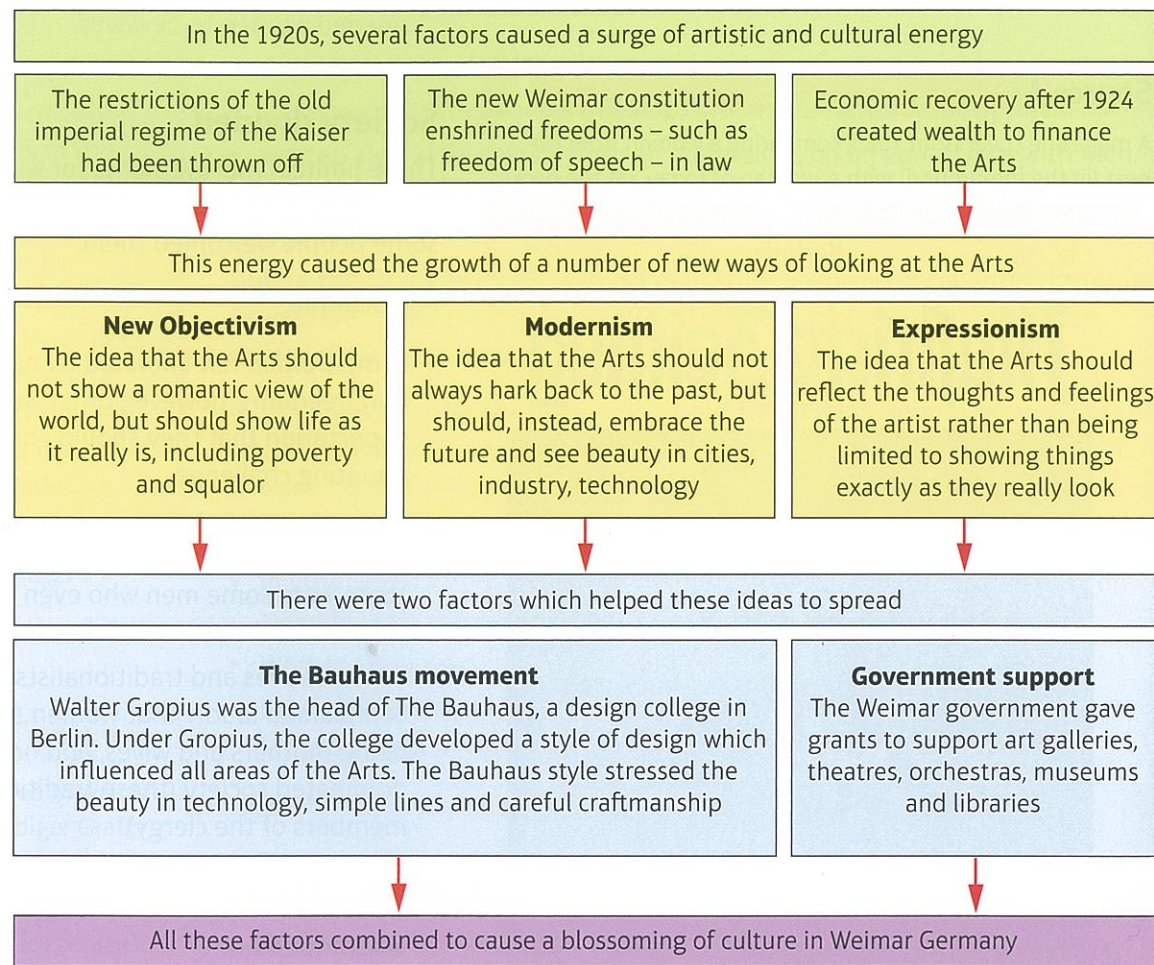


Figure 1.7 The Arts in the Weimar Republic.

Art

In art, painters like **Otto Dix** (see Source B) often painted expressionist versions of scenes from German life which were very critical of German society.

Source C

A poster for *Metropolis* (1926). It shows an artist's view of the wonders of life in the 20th century.



Source B, the painting by Otto Dix, is expressionist in style and shows the harsh life of war veterans and falling standards of behaviour in Germany's night life during the Weimar Republic. George Grosz also painted scenes that were critical of German life. For example, he painted 'Grey Day', which used expressionist images of people to show the boredom of most people's lives.

Architecture

Some architects, like **Erich Mendelsohn**, were influenced by the **Bauhaus** school of design. When Mendelsohn was asked to design the **Einstein Tower**, an observatory in Potsdam, he designed a futuristic tower which looks like a rocket. It was unlike anything seen before.

Cinema

Films became popular all over the world in the 1920s. Some German films were very innovative. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, for example, was one of the world's first horror films. *Metropolis*, directed by **Fritz Lang** and released in 1926, was a science fiction film about life and technology in the 20th century. It was financed by a government-funded agency called UFA. Germany's first sound film was made in 1930, and by 1932, there were 3,800 German cinemas showing films with sound.

Source B

A painting by Otto Dix, showing a Berlin street scene, from 1927. It is expressionist in style and shows the harsh life of war veterans and falling standards of behaviour in Germany's night life during the Weimar Republic.



Extend your knowledge

First World War literature

Erich Remarque wrote a gritty, realistic anti-war novel called *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Published in 1929, it sold 500,000 copies in three months and was adapted into a film. How was this book similar to work in other areas of the Arts in Germany in the 1920s?