

Romantic Historiography

Kant, Hegel, Macaulay & Marx

HST 300

Fall 2009

Professor Lavender

Romantic Historiography

- The Romantic Period:
 - Reaction to Enlightenment focus on “reason and science”
 - as well as aristocratic social and political norms
 - rejection of monarchy in favor of the “hero”
- Identified with the French Revolution and the later reign of Napoleon and the Napoleonic wars of conquest (so, 1789 and 1812-ish)
- For historiography, mostly focused on a belief in the ability of the heroic individual to alter society and determine the fate of an entire nation.

Romanticism, culturally

- Emphasized the importance of
 - Imagination
 - Feeling
 - Strong emotion
 - (trepidation, awe, and horror as aesthetic experiences),
- Focus on the artist and the viewer of art as the arbiter of art rather than the Academy

Inevitability and Fate

- Romantics had a strong belief in historical and natural inevitability
 - the fate of the nation
 - the birthright of the nation
 - “national character”

Joke about National Character

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| • In Heaven: | • In Hell: |
| • The Swiss = bankers | • The Swiss = lovers |
| • The Germans = bureaucrats | • The Germans = policemen |
| • The Italians = lovers | • The Italians = bureaucrats |
| • The English = policemen | • The English = cooks |
| • The French = cooks | • The French = bankers |

Romanticism and Nature

- Romanticism stressed holding nature in awe
- Posited that humans who connected with nature or the natural world (or “natural fate”) would experience the sublime

Romanticism in Music

- Mozart
- Beethoven
- Chopin
- Wagner

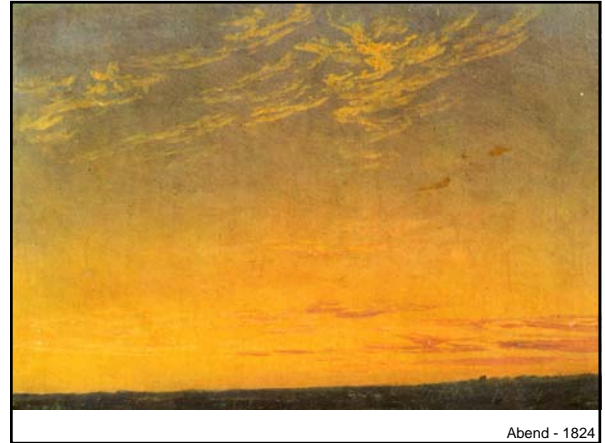
Romanticism in Art

- Caspar David Friedrich
- Théodore Géricault
- Eugène Delacroix
- John Singleton Copley
- William Blake
- Pre-Raphaelites
 - John William Waterhouse
 - John Everett Millais

Caspar David
Friedrich
(German, 1774 –
1840)



Der Wanderer über dem
Nebelmeer - 1817-1818



Abend - 1824



Abtei im Eichwald - 1810



Bäume im Mondschein



Frau vor untergehender Sonne - 1818



Junotempel in Agrigent



Mann und Frau den Mond betrachtend - 1830-1835



Jean Louis
Théodore
Géricault

(French, 1791 –
1824)

*Cuirassier blessé quittant le
feu - 1814*



Le Chasseur de la Garde - 1812



The Raft of the Medusa - 1817-1818

Ferdinand Victor
Eugène
Delacroix

(French, 1798 -
1863)



Massacre at Chios - 1824



Liberty Leading the People - 1830



Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi - 1826



Frédéric Chopin - 1838



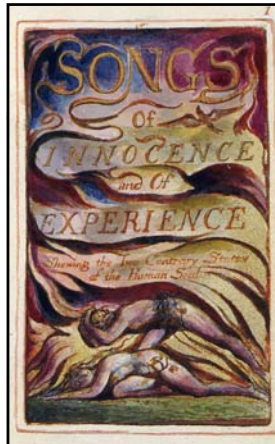
John Singleton
Copley

(American, 1738 -
1815)

Paul Revere - 1776



Watson and the Shark - 1778



William Blake
(English, 1757 - 1827)



Songs of Innocence and Experience - 1794



Daughters of Albion

Pre-Raphaelites



John William Waterhouse

(English, 1849 - 1917)

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may - 1909



Hylas and the Nymphs - 1896



The Lady of Shalott - 1888 -- Based on The Lady of Shalott by Alfred Lord Tennyson

The Lady of Shalott - Alfred, Lord Tennyson

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And through the field the road run by
To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

...

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

(1909-14)



Ophelia - 1889



John Everett Millais
(English, 1829 - 1896)

The Blind Girl - 1856



Ophelia - 1852

Romanticism in Letters

- Several forms: elegiac poetry, Gothic, evocations of the Folk
 - Lord Byron
 - Percy Bysshe Shelley
 - John Keats
 - Mary Shelley
 - Bram Stoker
 - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
 - Edgar Allan Poe
 - Victor Hugo
 - Alexander Pushkin
 - James Fenimore Cooper
 - Emily Dickinson
 - Herman Melville
 - Nathaniel Hawthorne
 - Walt Whitman

Romantic History

- The French Revolution of 1898
 - and the Reign of Terror
- The ascendancy of Napoleon
 - and the Napoleonic Wars,
- The 1821 revolutions led by Simon Bolivar all over Latin America
- The 1848 Revolutions
 - attempts to create nations in the German and Italian city-states
- The Paris Commune (1871)

The Romantic Period in Historiography

- Struggle between two opposing forces:
- Rankean empiricism
 - the only fact is that which can be observed and experienced by the historian
 - all facts are in primary documents
- Romantic Nationalism
 - the state derives its political legitimacy as an organic consequence of the unity of those it governs.
 - language,
 - race,
 - culture,
 - religion and
 - customs of the "nation"
 - reaction against dynastic or imperial hegemony
 - which assessed the legitimacy of the state from the "top down"
 - emanating from a monarch or other authority
 - such as "Divine Right of Kings"

Rankean Empiricism

- Attempt to define history as a scientific endeavor
 - So in this way a hangover of Enlightenment-period valorization of scientific inquiry
- Deeply influenced even its opposition tradition of Romantic Nationalism
 - See in attempts to make theories about nation (and race) "scientific"

Intellectual Origins of Romantic Nationalism

- Rousseau
 - the concept of the Noble Savage = idea that in all individuals (even "savage" ones) lie the roots of the nation
- Johann Gottfried von Herder
 - In 1784 argued that
 - geography formed the natural economy of a people
 - customs and society would develop dependent on what their natural environment favored.

Romantic Nationalism and Creating Historical Ethnicities 1

- Attempts to create historical ethnic cultures through folklore and history
- Folklore
 - The Brothers Grimm collect tales thought to be "authentically German"
 - "Mother Goose" for England
 - Pericault for France
 - Washington Irving for U.S.

Romantic Nationalism and Creating Historical Ethnicities 2

- History
- Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England*
 - explaining what it means to be English
 - Esp. in the context of the British Empire
 - but also important as a politician
- Served on the Supreme Council of India between 1834 and 1838
 - ended education in Sanskrit and Arabic in Indian schools
 - created "Macaulay's Children"
 - people born of Indian ancestry who adopt Western Culture as a lifestyle.

"Macaulay's Children"

- Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education," 1835:
- "It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population."

Romantic Nationalism and Creating Historical Ethnicities 3

- History:
- Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*
 - the development of national feelings in the 19th century.

Historical Origins of Romantic Nationalism 1

- Napoleon's Empire
 - Romantics had embraced the French Revolution in the beginning
 - because it overthrew a Divine Right Monarch
 - and because it was the uprising of the romanticized people
 - think of Delacroix's depiction of "Liberty Leading the People"
 - and the continuation of a revolutionary moment that started with the US and spread to Latin America in the 1820s and back to Europe in the 1840s



Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix, *Liberty Leading the People* - 1830

Historical Origins of Romantic Nationalism 2

- Napoleon's Empire
 - But they then resisted Napoleon's Imperial system.
 - A sense of self-determination
 - and national consciousness
 - that had enabled Revolutionary forces to defeat aristocratic regimes in battle
 - became rallying points for resistance against the French Empire.

Romantic Nationalism and Historiography

- Look at the reading list for today:
 - Three of the four are Germans
 - Immanuel Kant
 - Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel
 - Karl Marx
- What's up with Germany?

Resistance to Napoleon's system

- "Spiritual renewal" became a means to engage in the struggle against Napoleon
 - ex: Johann Gottlieb Fichte (disciple of Kant)
 - coins word *Volkstum* (nationhood) as part of this resistance to French hegemony

Fichte's "To the German Nation" (1806)

- expressed the unity of language and nation
 - "The first, original, and truly natural boundaries of states are beyond doubt their internal boundaries. Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins; they understand each other and have the power of continuing to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together and are by nature one and an inseparable whole.
 - "Only when each people, left to itself, develops and forms itself in accordance with its own peculiar quality, and only when in every people each individual develops himself in accordance with that common quality, as well as in accordance with his own peculiar quality-then, and then only, does the manifestation of divinity appear in its true mirror as it ought to be; and only a man who either entirely lacks the notion of the rule of law and divine order, or else is an obdurate enemy thereto, could take upon himself to want to interfere with that law, which is the highest law in the spiritual world!"

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

- Kant is a bridge between the Rationalist and Empiricist traditions of the 18th century.
 - and decisively shaped the Romantic and German Idealist philosophies of the 19th century.
 - In part through the idea of a "universal history."



Kant

- Kant argues that history is determined by physical and chemical laws.
- The "Universal History" opens with the assertion:
 - "Whatever metaphysical theory may be formed regarding the freedom of the will, it holds equally true that the manifestation of the will in human actions are determined, like all other external events, by universal natural laws."

Kant, Fate, and Free Will

- Fate (or natural law) is stronger than individual free will:
 - Free will seems to bear on such matters as marriages, births, deaths, so we think they cannot be predicted in detail;
 - BUT, Kant argues, "the annual statistics of great countries prove that these events take place according to constant natural laws."
- Thus, according to Kant:
 - "Each [man], according to his own inclination, follows his own purpose, often in opposition to others; yet each individual and people, as if following some guiding thread, go toward a natural but to each of them unknown goal; all work toward furthering it, even if they would set little store by it if they did know it."
- Kant believes: nature will eventually bring forth a Kepler or a Newton to work out these natural statistical laws in history, thus giving us a "universal history"

Kant's Universal History 1

1. All natural capacities of a creature are destined to evolve completely to their natural end.
2. In man (as the only rational creature on earth) those natural capacities which are directed to the use of his reason are to be fully developed only in the race, not in the individual.
3. Nature has willed that man should, by himself, produce everything that goes beyond the mechanical ordering of his animal existence, and that he should partake of no other happiness or perfection than that which he himself, independently of instinct, has created by his own reason.
4. The means employed by Nature to bring about the development of all the capacities of men is their antagonism in society, so far as this is, in the end, the cause of a lawful order among men.

Kant's Universal History 2

5. The greatest problem for the human race, to the solution of which Nature drives man, is the achievement of a universal civic society which administers law among men.
6. This problem is the most difficult and the last to be solved by mankind.
7. The problem of establishing a perfect civic constitution is dependent upon the problem of a lawful external relation among states and cannot be solved without a solution of the latter problem.
8. The history of mankind can be seen, in the large, as the realization of Nature's secret plan to bring forth a perfectly constituted state as the only condition in which the capacities of mankind can be fully developed, and also bring forth that external relation among states which is perfectly adequate to this end.

Kant's Universal History 3

- 9. A philosophical attempt to work out a universal history according to a natural plan directed to achieving the civic union of the human race must be regarded as possible and, indeed, as contributing to this end of Nature.

Kant as a bridge figure

- Kant was both an empiricist and an idealist
 - As an empiricist, he demanded scientific accuracy (the use of statistics, for instance, and a reliance on documents)
 - As an idealist he believed that a concept could shift natural laws
 - We can see things in a new way (revision of the idea)
- His followers would embrace Romantic Nationalism to make sense of history.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 - 1831)

- Romantic nationalism as a key strand in the philosophy of Hegel
 - argued that there was a "spirit of the age" or *Zeitgeist*
 - that inhabited a particular people at a particular time,
 - and that, when that people became the active determiner of history,
 - it was simply because their cultural and political moment had come.



The Fate of the German Nation

- Hegel, being German, argued that the *Zeitgeist* of his age had settled on the German-speaking peoples
 - so Germany had an obligation to shape world history

Hegel's "dialectic"

- History is a progression in which each successive movement emerges as a solution to the contradictions inherent in the preceding movement
 - Thesis
 - Antithesis
 - Synthesis (New Thesis)
- The "end of history" (meaning the *point* of it all) is to reach a completely rational state of stasis
 - this would be "REALITY."

Dialectic

- For example: The French Revolution
 - 1. Introduction of real freedom for first time in history
 - 2. This absolute novelty is absolutely radical
 - a. required an upsurge of violence which could not be stopped
 - b. but the object of that violence is gone.
 - 3. The hard-won freedom is consumed by a brutal Reign of Terror.
 - 4. History progresses by learning from its mistakes
 - 5. Another spurt of freedom replaces the Reign of Terror: Napoleon, the Great liberator
 - 6. But Napoleon learned how to be a tyrant to overthrow tyranny, and so must become a tyrant
 - 7. So Napoleon must fall through a new revolution, etc.

Hegel's historical actors

- Hero
- Citizen
- Person
- Victim

Hegel's Historical Actors (in Which Small Fluffy Animals from a Children's Book Are Made to Stand in For Hegel's Historical Actors in Order to Make Them Easier to Understand) (with illustrations by E.H. Sheppard)

- Hero = Pooh
- Citizen = Rabbit and Piglet
- Person = Christopher Robin
- Victim = Eeyore



In Which Piglet is Entirely Surrounded By Water

- "It's a little Anxious," [Piglet] said to himself, "to be a Very Small Animal Entirely Surrounded by Water. Christopher Robin and Pooh could escape by Climbing Trees, and Kanga could escape by Jumping, and Rabbit could escape by Burrowing, and Owl could escape by Flying, and Eeyore could escape by - by Making a Loud Noise Until Rescued, and here am I, surrounded by water and I can't do anything."

The Hero (Pooh)

- The Hero embodies the *Weltgeist* (world-spirit, the conduit for the *Zeitgeist*, or time-spirit)
- But also driven, unhappy, and fated to a tragic and horrible demise
 - this dissatisfaction drives the hero to accomplish his or her greatest deeds
 - that sets him apart from his fellow men
 - this pain and need to find meaning stimulates creative individual action.
- However, it is the time that creates the hero, not the hero who creates his time.



Winnie-the-Pooh
Lived In A Forest
All By Himself
Under The Name
Of Sanders



"Oh bear!" said
Christopher Robin.
"How I do love you!"
"So do I," said Pooh.



E.H. Sheppard

"For I am a Bear of Very Little Brain, and long words Bother me."

Napoleon and Pooh as a Hero



Napoleon (according to Hegel) = "The *Weltgeist* on Horseback"

Pooh in "In Which Piglet is Entirely Surrounded by Water" (according to Lavender = The *Weltgeist* on a Honeypot

"For a little while Pooh and *The Floating Bear* were uncertain as to which of them was meant to be on the top, but after trying one or two different positions, they settled down with *The Floating Bear* underneath and Pooh triumphantly astride it, paddling vigorously with his feet."

Edward H. Shepherd
1966



He Pushed His Head Right In

"I ought to say," explained Pooh as they walked down to the shore of the island, "that it isn't just an ordinary sort of boat. Sometimes it's a Boat, and sometimes it's more of an Accident. It all depends." "Depends on what?" "On whether I'm on the top of it or underneath it."

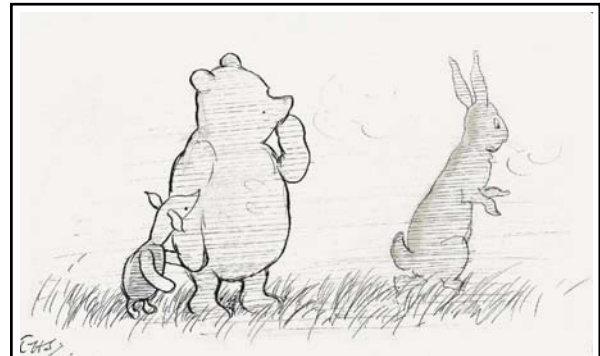
The Citizen (Rabbit and Piglet)

- someone who is subjugated to the state, whose morality is conventional, customary
- makes history only in the smallest of ways as a part of the collective State
- And happy only if they live in a peaceable State

"Hallo, Rabbit," he said, "is that you?" "Let's pretend it isn't," said Rabbit, "and see what happens."



"Then would you read a Sustaining Book, such as would help and comfort a Wedged Bear in Great Tightness?"



"Rabbit," said Pooh to himself. "I like talking to Rabbit. He talks about sensible things. He doesn't use long, difficult words, like Owl. He uses short, easy words, like 'What about lunch?' and 'Help yourself, Pooh!'"

Then They Went On To Kanga's House, Holding On To Each Other.



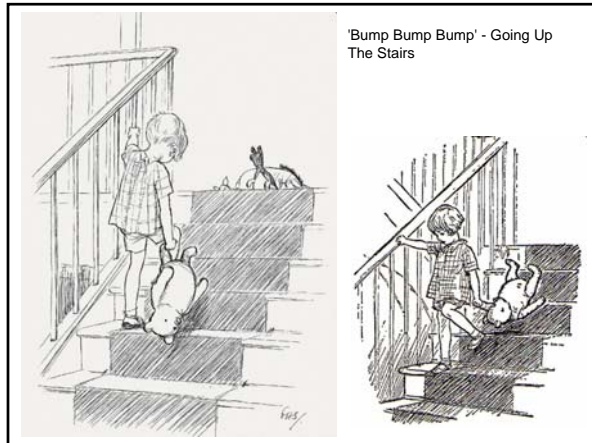
"Supposing a tree fell down, Pooh, when we were underneath it?" "Supposing it didn't," said Pooh after careful thought. Piglet was comforted by this.



He Went on Tracking, and Piglet ... Ran After Him.

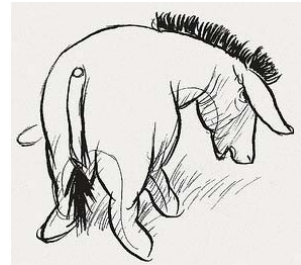
The Person (Christopher Robin)

- the individual who can transcend conventional morality and, like Socrates, act on ideas, not just following the herd.
- -and thus capable of REAL happiness in the world

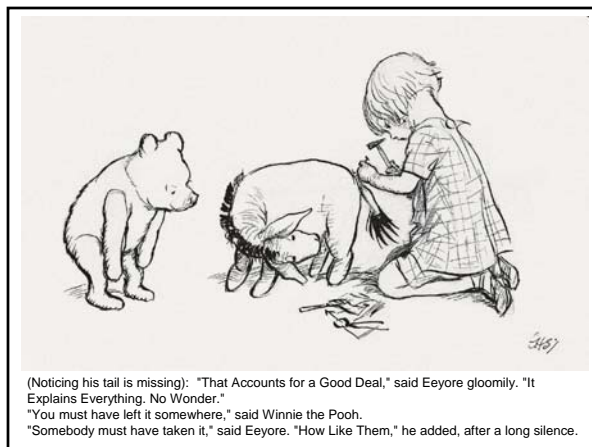


The Victim (Eeyore)

- the person who acts only for personal gain with no regard for customary morality or principle or World Spirit.
- and so becomes, like most, "victims on the slaughter bench of history"
 - the turf upon which history is made
- Victims don't make history, but just suffer its consequences.



"Good morning, Pooh Bear," said Eeyore gloomily. "If it is a good morning," he said. "Which I doubt," said he. "Why, what's the matter?" "Nothing, Pooh Bear, nothing. We can't all, and some of us don't. That's all there is to it."



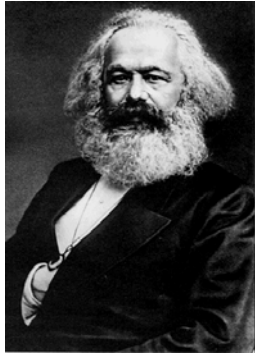
(Noticing his tail is missing): "That Accounts for a Good Deal," said Eeyore gloomily. "It Explains Everything. No Wonder." "You must have left it somewhere," said Winnie the Pooh. "Somebody must have taken it," said Eeyore. "How Like Them," he added, after a long silence.

Hegel and Marx

- Hegel contributed to Marx's "Materialist" approach to History
 - In part with these figures (the concept that history has victims)
 - In part by focusing on the dialectical process by which historical change happens

Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883)

- "The Materialist Conception of History"
- "The Inevitable Victory of the Proletariat"
- (and, of course, with Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto")



Marx's Empiricism

- Marx believed history and society could be studied scientifically
 - to discern tendencies of history
 - and the resulting outcome of social conflicts.
- To understand this would allow the philosopher to **CHANGE** the outcome of History
 - so the purpose of studying history is to change to future.

Marx's view of history

- The "materialist conception of history"
 - developed further as dialectical materialism
- Grew out of Hegel's dialectic model
 - but Marx sought to trace material, rather than idea-oriented (idealist), causations
 - So, rather than focus on the dialectic as tracing the change in ways people thought,
 - Focused instead on how the material aspects of life (such as the capitalist economy) changed dialectically

Marx and God

- Marx was inspired by Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*
 - Feuerbach argued that God is really a creation of man
 - and that the qualities people attribute to God
 - are really qualities of humanity.
- Marx argued that it is the material world that is real
- and our ideas of it are consequences, not causes, of the world.
- and largely, philosophy prevents us from seeing the material conditions of our lives clearly.

Marx's partnership with Engels

- Engels's book, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844)
 - led Marx to argue that the historical dialectic
 - and thus the engine of history was class conflict
- and to see the modern working class as the most progressive force for revolution: the **HEROES** of history.



Marx & Engels, from "the revolution will not be lego-sized"
(<http://knackeredhack.com/2007/12/09/the-revolution-will-not-be-lego-sized/>)

Marx's concept of labor

- Fundamental to Marx's thought:
- It is human nature to transform nature
 - called the process of transformation = "labor"
 - capacity to transform nature = "labor power"
- both a natural capacity for physical activity but also tied to human rationality and imagination
 - "A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality." (*Capital*, Vol. I, Chap. 7, Pt. 1)

Marx on "Work"

- Humans are the outcomes of their contexts
 - not just a collection of cells and natural impulses
 - otherwise, how could humans adapt?
- Social context takes precedence over innate behavior
 - and one of the main features of human nature is adaptability.
- Thus, work is a social activity
 - the conditions and forms under and through which people work are socially determined
 - and change over time.

Marx on Historical Narrative

- Marx's historical narrative is an analysis of the distinctions between
 - the means of production
 - things (such as land, natural resources, and technology), that are necessary for the production of material goods
 - and the relations of production
 - the social and technical relationships people enter into as they acquire and use the means of production.
- means of production + relations of production = mode of production

Mode of Production and Change

- Marx's historical narrative focuses on the change in the mode of production
- In any given society the mode of production changes
 - EX: European societies
 - feudal mode of production
 - replaced by a capitalist mode of production.
- The means of production change more rapidly than the relations of production
 - we have new machines, and only later develop laws to deal with their impact
 - cars make smog; but anti-smog laws come later.
- This mismatch is a source of major social disruption and conflict.

Marx on Social Relations

- The story of the social relations of production covers relations
 - between individuals
 - and between classes
- Classes are not just subjective (people identified with one another)
 - but also objective (a class shares access to resources, or limits)
- And different classes have divergent interests
 - another source for social disruption and conflict

History IS Class Conflict

- According to Marx (and Engels), all human history entails class conflict
- "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." (*The Communist Manifesto*, Chap. 1)

Marx and alienation

- Marx was concerned about how people relate to their own labor-power (their capacity to transform nature)
 - when people give up ownership of this, this is “alienation”
 - this is spiritual loss, loss of humanity, and to be avoided.
 - and yet, alienation is also a chosen fate.
 - Why would anyone choose alienation?
 - Marx would say because of trickery (“opiates of the masses,” etc.) and lack of consciousness
 - This is central question for the moderns to address.

Alienation as the basis for Capitalism

- Prior to capitalism, producers and merchants bought and sold commodities.
- But with capitalism, labor itself became a commodity to be bought and sold
 - peasants no longer own their land or tools, and can only sell their working hours.
- This is not the same as selling a product you have made
 - Those who must sell their labor = proletarians
 - Those who buy the labor, and thus have land and technology to produce things = capitalists or bourgeoisie

Merchants and industrial capitalists are not the same

- Merchants buy (low) in one market and sell (high) in another market
 - either geographically or temporally
 - so they are engaging in arbitrage
 - and hope to profit on the difference between two markets
- Industrial capitalists make their profit by taking advantage of the difference between the labor market and the market for their commodity.
 - thus input costs are lower than output prices
 - Marx calls this “surplus value”
 - which depends on paying workers less than they are “worth”

The volatility of capitalism

- Capitalists grow by re-investing in technology
 - which requires profit to grow
 - but market saturation cuts into profits
 - so they pay workers less
- Eventually, there is no more squeeze room
 - this results in a crisis
 - layoffs lower labor costs
 - and technology requires fewer workers
 - this makes new technology possible
 - and the cycle repeats, with growing intensity
 - growth, collapse, growth, etc.,
 - and each time, with fewer workers
- This would concentrate power and wealth in the hands of an increasingly smaller bourgeois class
- and impoverish the proletariat, which would get bigger.

The solution?

- The proletariat must seize the means of production
 - (which would require violence)
- and thus gain a voice in society
 - to create a more just system
 - to benefit everyone equally.
 - a socialist system (a dictatorship of the proletariat)
 - a period where the needs of the working-class, not of capital, will be the common deciding factor
 - but this would be temporary
- and only during THIS stage can we imagine the system that will allow us to create that new age.

Marx’s impact on historiography

- materialism
- economic determinism
- class struggle as the engine of history
- the reason for doing history is to shape the future – made this project explicit