

Chapter 3: Political Ideologies and Movements

After the Revolution

The French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars profoundly shook Europe. The French Revolution was seen by the European great powers as both threatening and, increasingly as it progressed, morally repulsive, but at least it had largely stayed confined to France. From the perspective of elites, Napoleon's conquests were even worse because everywhere the French armies went the traditional order of society was overturned. France may have been the greatest economic beneficiary, but Napoleon's Italian, German, and Polish subjects (among others) also had their first taste of a society in which one's status was not defined by birth. The kings and nobles of Europe had good cause to fear that the way of life they presided over, a social order that had lasted for roughly 1,000 years, was disintegrating in the course of a generation.

Thus, after Napoleon's defeat, there had to be a reckoning. Only the most stubborn monarch or noble thought it possible to completely undo the Revolution and its effects, but there was a shared desire among the traditional elites to re-establish stability and order based on the political system that had worked in the past. They knew that there would have to be *some* concessions to a generation of people who had lived with equality under the law, but they worked to reinforce traditional political structures while only granting limited compromises.

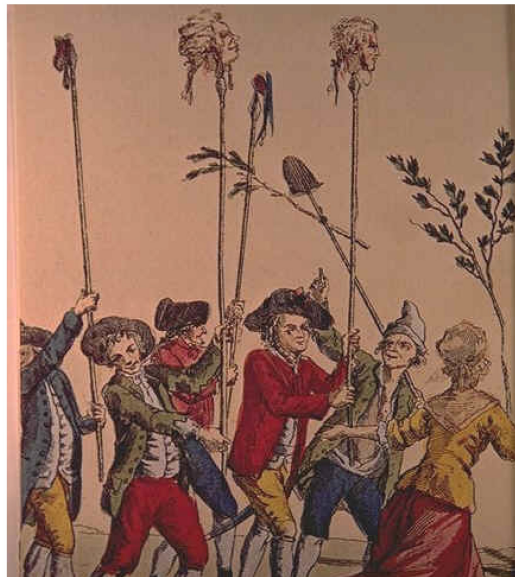
Conservatism

That being noted, how did elites understand their own role in society? How did they justify the power of kings and nobles over the majority of the population? This was not just about wealth, after all, since there were many non-noble merchants who were as rich, or richer, than many nobles. Nor was it viable for most nobles to claim that their rights were logically derived from their mastery of warfare, since only a small percentage of noblemen served in royal armies (and those that did were not necessarily very good officers!) Instead, European elites at the time explained their own social role in terms of peace, tradition, and stability. Their

ideology came to be called conservatism: the idea that what had worked for centuries was inherently better at keeping the peace both within and between kingdoms than were the forces unleashed by the Revolution.

Conservatism held that the old traditions of rule were the best and most desirable principles of government, having proven themselves relatively stable and successful over the course of 1,000 years of European history. It was totally opposed to the idea of universal legal equality, let alone of suffrage (i.e. voting rights), and it basically amounted to an attempt to maintain a legal political hierarchy to go along with the existing social and economic hierarchy of European society.

The fundamental argument of conservatism was that the French Revolution and Napoleon had already proved that too much change and innovation in politics was *inherently* destructive. According to conservatives, the French Revolution had started out, in its moderate phase, by arguing for the primacy of the common people, but it quickly and inevitably spun out of control. During the Terror, the king and queen were beheaded, French society was riven with bloody conflict, tens of thousands were guillotined, and the revolutionary government launched a blasphemous crusade against the church. Napoleon's takeover - itself a symptom of the anarchy unleashed by the Revolution - led to almost twenty years of war and turmoil across the map of Europe. These events *proved* to conservatives that while careful reform might be acceptable, rapid change was not.



Images like the above (from the French Revolution) were used by conservatives to illustrate the violence and bloodshed they claimed were an intrinsic part of revolutionary change.

Many conservatives believed that human nature is basically bad, evil, and depraved. The clearest statement of this idea in the early nineteenth century came from Joseph de Maistre, a conservative French nobleman. De Maistre argued that human beings are not enlightened, not least because (as a staunch Catholic), he believed that all human souls are tainted by original sin. Left unchecked, humans with too much freedom would always indulge in depravity. Only the allied forces of a strong monarchy, a strong nobility, and a strong church could hold that inherent evil in check. It is worth noting that De Maistre wrote outside of France itself during the revolutionary period, first in the small Italian kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia (he was a noble in both France and Piedmont) and then in Russia. His message resonated strongly with the arch-conservative Russian Tsar Alexander I in particular.

A more pragmatic conservative take was exemplified by a British lord, Edmund Burke. He argued that, given the complexity and fragility of the social fabric, only the force of tradition could prevent political chaos. As the French Revolution had demonstrated, gradual reforms had the effect of unleashing a tidal wave of pent-up anger and, more to the point, foolish decisions by people who had no experience of making political decisions. In his famous pamphlet *Reflections On The Revolution in France*, he wrote "It is said, that twenty-four millions ought to prevail over two hundred thousand. True; if the constitution of a kingdom be a problem of arithmetic." To Burke, the common people were a mob of uneducated, inexperienced would-be political decision-makers, the last people you wanted running a country. Instead, it was far wiser to keep things in the basic form that had survived for centuries, with minor accommodations as needed.

Burke was an eminently practical, pragmatic political critic. De Maistre's ideas may have harkened back to the social and political thought of past centuries, but Burke was a very grounded and realistic thinker. He simply believed that "the masses" were the last people one wanted running a government, because they were an uneducated, uncultivated, uncivilized rabble. Meanwhile, the European nobility had been raised for centuries to rule and had developed both cultural traditions and systems of education and training to form leaders. It was a given that not all of them were very good at it, but according to Burke there was simply no comparison between the class of nobles and the class of the mob – to let the latter rule was to invite disaster. And, of course, conservatives had all of their suspicions confirmed during the Terror, when the whole social order of France was turned upside down in the name of a perfect society (Burke himself was particularly aggrieved by the execution of the French queen Marie Antoinette, whom he saw as a perfectly innocent victim).

Conservatism at its best was a coherent critique of the violence, warfare, and instability that had accompanied the Revolution and Napoleonic wars. In practice, however, conservatism all too often degenerated into the stubborn defense of corrupt, incompetent, or oppressive regimes. In turn, despite the practical impossibility of doing so in most cases, there were real attempts on the part of many conservative regimes after the defeat of Napoleon to completely turn back the clock, to try to sweep the reforms of the revolutionary era under the collective rug.

Ideologies

Following Napoleon's final defeat in 1815, conservatives faced the daunting task of not just creating a new political order (considered in the next chapter), but in holding in check the political ideologies unleashed during the revolutionary era. Enlightenment thinkers had first proposed the ideas of social and legal equality that came to fruition in the American and French Revolutions. Likewise, the course of those revolutions along with the work of thinkers, writers, and artists helped create a new concept of national identity that was poised to take European politics by storm. Finally, the political, social, and economic chaos of the turn of the nineteenth century (very much including the Industrial Revolution) created the context out of which socialism emerged.

An "ideology" is a set of beliefs, often having to do with politics. What is the purpose of government? Who decides the laws? What is just and unjust? How should economics function? What should be the role of religion in governance? What is the legal and social status of men and women? All of these kinds of questions have been answered differently from culture to culture since the earliest civilizations. In the nineteenth century in Europe, a handful of ideologies came to predominate: conservatism, nationalism, liberalism, and socialism. In turn, briefly put, three of those ideologies had one thing in common: they opposed the fourth. For the first half of the nineteenth century, socialists, nationalists, and liberals all agreed that the conservative order had to be disrupted or even dismantled entirely, although they disagreed on how that should be accomplished and, more importantly, what should replace it.

Romanticism

Even before the era of the French Revolution, the seeds of nationalism were planted in the hearts and minds of many Europeans as an aspect of the Romantic movement.

Romanticism was not a political movement – it was a movement of the arts. It emerged in the late eighteenth century and came of age in the nineteenth. Its central tenet was the idea that there were great, sometimes terrible, and literally “awesome” forces in the universe that exceeded humankind’s rational ability to understand. Instead, all that a human being could do was attempt to pay tribute to those forces – nature, the spirit or soul, the spirit of a people or culture, or even death – through art.

The central themes of romantic art were, first, a profound reverence for nature. To romantics, nature was a vast, overwhelming presence, against which humankind's activities were ultimately insignificant. At the same time, romantics celebrated the organic connection between humanity and nature. They very often identified peasants as being the people who were "closest" to nature. In turn, it was the job of the artist (whether a writer, painter, or musician) to somehow gesture at the profound truths of nature and the human spirit. A "true" artist was someone who possessed the real spark of creative genius, something that could not be predicted or duplicated through training or education. The point of art was to let that genius emanate from the work of art, and the result should be a profound emotional experience for the viewer or listener.

Quite by accident, Romanticism helped plant the seeds of nationalism, thanks to its ties to the folk movement. The central idea of the folk movement was that the essential truths of national character had survived among the common people despite the harmful influence of so-called civilization. Those folk traditions, from folk songs to fairytales to the remnants of pre-Christian pagan practices, were the “true” expression of a national spirit that had, supposedly, laid dormant for centuries. By the early eighteenth century, educated elites attracted to Romanticism set out to gather those traditions and preserve them in service to an imagined national identity.

The iconic examples of this phenomenon were the Brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, who were both expert philologists and avid collectors of German folk tales. The Brothers Grimm collected dozens of folk (“fairy”) tales and published them in the first definitive collection in German. Many of those tales, from Sleeping Beauty to Cinderella, are best known in American culture thanks to their adaptation as animated films by Walt Disney in the twentieth century, but they were famous already by the mid-nineteenth. The Brothers Grimm also undertook an

enormous project to compile a comprehensive German dictionary, not only containing every German word but detailed etymologies (they did not live to see its completion; the third volume *E – Forsche* was published shortly before Jacob's death).

The Grimm brothers were the quintessential Romantic nationalists. Many Romantics like them believed that nations had spirits, which were invested with the core identity of their "people." The point of the Grimm brothers' work was reaching back into the remote past to grasp the "essence" of what it meant to be "German." At the time, there was no country called Germany, and yet romantic nationalists like the Grimms believed that there was a kind of German soul that lived in old folk songs, the German language, and German traditions. They worked to preserve those things before they were further "corrupted" by the modern world.

In many cases, romantic nationalists did something that historians later called "inventing traditions." One iconic example is the Scottish kilt. Scots had worn kilts since the sixteenth century, but there was no such thing as a specific color and pattern of plaid (a "tartan") for each family or clan. The British government ultimately assigned tartans to a new class of soldier recruited from Scotland: the Highland Regiments, with the wider identification of tartan and clan only emerging in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. The point was instilling a nationalist pride in a specific group of military recruits, not celebrating an "authentic" Scottish tradition. Likewise, in some cases folk tales and stories were simply made up in the name of nationalism. The great epic story of Finland, the *Kalevala*, was written by a Finnish intellectual in 1827; it was based on actual Finnish legends, but it had never existed as one long story before.



British soldiers of the Highland Regiments in government-issued kilts in 1744.

The point is not, however, to emphasize the falseness of the folk movement or invented traditions, but to consider *why* people were so intent on discovering (and, if necessary, inventing) them. Romanticism was, among other things, the search for stable points of identity in a changing world. Likewise, folk traditions - even those that were at least in part invented or adapted - became a way for early nationalists to identify with the culture they now connotated with the nation. It is no coincidence that the vogue for kilts in Scotland, ones now identified with clan identity, emerged for the first time in the 1820s rather than earlier.

Nationalism

Romantic nationalism was an integral part of actual nationalist political movements, movements that emerged in earnest in the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. Those movements would ultimately succeed in seeing their goals realized almost without exception, although that process took over a century in some cases (like those of Poland and Ireland). Central to nationalist movements was the concept that the state should correspond to the identity of a "people," although who or what defines the identity of "the people" proved a vexing issue on many occasions.

The discussion of nationalism starts with the French Revolution, because more than any other event, it provided the model for all subsequent nationalisms. The French revolutionaries declared from the outset that they represented the whole "nation," not just a certain part of it. They erased the legal privileges of some (the nobles) over others, they made religion subservient to a secular government, and when threatened by the conservative powers of Europe, they called the whole "nation" to arms. The revolutionary armies sang a national anthem, the *Marseillaise*, whose lyrics are as warlike as the American equivalent. Central to French national identity in the revolutionary period was fighting for *la patrie*, the fatherland, in place of the old allegiance to king and church.

The irony of the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, however, was that the countries invaded by the French eventually adopted their own nationalist beliefs. The invaded countries turned the democratic French principle of self-determination into a sacred right to defend their own national identities, shaped by their own particular histories, against the universalist pretensions of the French. That was reflected in the Spanish revolt that began in 1808, the revival of Austria and Prussia and their struggles of "liberation" against Napoleon, Russia's leadership of the anti-Napoleonic coalition that followed, and fierce British pride in their defiance to French military pretensions.

Nationalisms Across Europe

As the Napoleonic wars drew to a close for the first time in 1814, the great powers of Europe convened a gathering of monarchs and diplomats known as the Congress of Vienna, discussed in detail in the next chapter, to deal with the aftermath. That meeting lasted months, thanks in part to Napoleon's inconvenient return from Elba and last stand at Waterloo, but in 1815 it concluded, having rewarded the victorious kingdoms with territorial gains and restored conservative monarchs to the thrones of states like Spain and France itself. Nothing could have mattered less to the diplomatic representatives present at the Congress of Vienna than the "national identity" of the people who lived in the territories that were carved up and distributed like pieces of cake to the victors - the inhabitants of northeastern Italy were now subjects of the Austrian king, the entirety of Poland was divided between Russia and Prussia, and Great Britain remained secure not only in its growing global empire, but in its possession of the entirety of Ireland.

Thus, many of Europe's peoples found themselves without states of their own or in states squeezed between the dominant powers of the time. Among the notable examples are the Italians and the Poles. Italy had suffered from the domination of one great power or another since the Renaissance; after 1815 it was the Austrians who were in control of much of northern Italy. Poland had been partitioned among the Austrians, the Prussians, and the Russians in the eighteenth century, simply vanishing from the map in the process. Germany, of course, was not united; Prussia and Austria vied with each other for dominance of the German lands, but both were fundamentally conservative powers uninterested in "German" unification until later in the century.

What had changed, however, was that the language of nationalism and the idea of national identity had come into its own by the late Napoleonic period. For example, German nationalism was powerful and popular after the Napoleonic wars; in 1817, just two years after the end of the Congress of Vienna, German nationalists gathered in Wartburg where Martin Luther had first translated the Bible into German, waving the black, red, and gold tricolor flag that would (over a century later) become the official flag of the German nation. Two years later, a nationalist poet murdered a conservative one, and the Austrian Empire passed laws that severely limited freedom of speech, specifically to contain and restrict the spread of nationalism. Despite this effort, and the Austrian secret police, nationalism continued to spread, culminating in a large and self-consciously nationalistic movement seeking German unity.

The 1830s were a pivotal decade in the spread of nationalism. The Italian nationalist leader Giuseppe Mazzini founded Young Italy in 1831, calling for a “springtime of peoples” in which the people of each “nation” of Europe would topple conservative monarchs and assert their sovereignty and independence. That movement would quickly spread beyond Italy: “young” became the rallying word and idea of nationalism. In addition to Young Italy, there was a Young Germany and a Young Ireland, among others - the idea was that *all* people should and would eventually inhabit nations, and that this new “youthful” manner of politics would lead to peace and prosperity for everyone. The old, outdated borders abandoned, everyone would live where they were supposed to: in nations governed by their own people. Nationalists argued that war itself could be rendered obsolete. After all, if each “people” lived in “their” nation, what would be the purpose of territorial conflict? To the nationalists at the time, the emergence of nations was synonymous with a more perfect future for all.

Central to the very concept of nationalism in this early, optimistic phase was the identity of “the people,” a term with powerful political resonance in just about every European language: *das Volk, le peuple, il popolo*, etc. In every case, “the people” was thought to be something more important than just “those people who happen to live here.” Instead, the people were those tied to the soil, with roots reaching back centuries, and who deserve their own government. This was a profoundly romantic idea because it spoke to an essentially *emotional* sense of national identity - a sense of camaraderie and solidarity with individuals with whom a given person might not actually share much in common.

When scrutinized, the “real” identity of a given “people” became more difficult to discern. For example, were the Germans people who speak German, or who lived in Central Europe, or who were Lutheran, or Catholic, or who think that their ancestors were from the same area in which they themselves were born? If united in a German nation, who would lead it - were the Prussians or the Austrians more authentically German? What of those “Germans” who lived in places like Bohemia (i.e. the Czech lands) and Poland, with their own growing senses of national identity? The nationalist movements of the first half of the nineteenth century did not need to concern themselves overmuch with these conundrums because their goals of liberation and unification were not yet achievable. When national revolutions of various kinds did occur, however, they proved difficult to overcome.

Liberalism

Nationalism's supporters tended to be members of the middle classes, including everyone from artisans to the new professional class associated with commerce and industry in the nineteenth century. Many of the same people supported another doctrine that had been spread by the Napoleonic wars: liberalism. The ideas of liberalism were based on the Enlightenment concepts of reason, rationality, and progress from the eighteenth century, but as a movement liberalism came of age in the post-Napoleonic period; the word itself was in regular use by 1830.

Nineteenth-century liberals were usually educated men and women, including the elites of industry, trade, and the professions as well as the middle classes. They shared the conviction that freedom in all its forms—freedom from the despotic rule of kings, from the obsolete privilege of nobles, from economic interference and religious intolerance, from occupational restrictions and limitations of speech and assembly—could only improve the quality of society and the well-being of its members.

In something of a contrast to the abstract nature of national identity among nationalists, liberalism had straightforward concrete beliefs, all of them reflecting not just abstract theories but the concrete examples of the liberal American and French Revolutions of the prior century. Perhaps liberalism's most fundamental belief was that there should be equality before the law, in stark contrast to the old "feudal" (almost a slur to liberals) order of legally-defined social estates. From that starting point of equality, the very purpose of law to liberals was to protect the rights of each and every citizen rather than enshrine the privileges of a minority.

Whereas "rights" had meant the traditional privileges enjoyed by a given social group or estate in the past, from the king's exclusive right to hunt game in his forests to the peasants' right to access the common lands, rights now came to mean a fundamental and universal privilege that was concomitant with citizenship itself. Liberals argued that freedom of speech, of a press free from censorship, and of religious expression were "rights" that should be enjoyed by all. Likewise, most liberals favored the abolition of archaic economic interference from the state, including legal monopolies on trade (e.g. in shipping between colonies) and the monopolies enjoyed by those craft guilds that remained - the "right" was part of the liberal paradigm as well.

Just as had the French revolutionaries in the early phase of the revolution, most liberals early nineteenth-century liberals looked to constitutional monarchy as the most reasonable and stable form of government. Constitutions should be written to guarantee the fundamental rights

of the citizenry and to define, and restrict, the power of the king (thus staving off the threat of tyranny). Liberals also believed in the desirability of an elected parliament, albeit one with a restricted electorate: almost universally, liberals at the time thought that voting should be restricted to those who owned significant amounts of property, thereby (they thought) guaranteeing social stability.

Unlike nationalists, liberals saw at least some of their goals realized in post-Napoleonic Europe. While its Bourbon monarchy was restored in France, there was now an elected parliament, religious tolerance, and relaxed censorship. Britain remained the most “liberal” power in Europe, having long stood as the model of constitutional monarchy. A liberal monarchy emerged as a result of the Belgian Revolution of 1830, and by the 1840s limited liberal reforms had been introduced in many of the smaller German states as well. Thus, despite the opposition of conservatives, much of Europe slowly and haltingly liberalized in the period between 1815 and 1848.

Socialism

The third and last of the new political ideologies and movements of the early nineteenth century was socialism. Socialism was a specific historical phenomenon born out of two related factors: first, the ideological rupture with the society of orders that occurred with the French Revolution, and second, the growth of industrial capitalism. It sought to address both the economic repercussions of the industrial revolution, especially in terms of the living conditions of workers, and to provide a new moral order for modern society.

The term itself is French. It was created in 1834 to contrast with individualism, a favorite term among liberals but one that early socialists saw as a symptom of moral decay. Right from its inception, socialism was contrasted with individualism and egoism, of the selfish and self-centered pursuit of wealth and power. Socialism proposed a new and better moral order, one in which the members of a society would care not only for themselves, but for one another. For the first decades of its existence socialism was less a movement with economic foundations than with ethical ones. It had economic arguments to make, of course, but those arguments were based on moral or ethical claims.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the word socialism came to be used more widely to describe several different movements than had hitherto been considered in isolation from one another. Their common factor was the idea that material goods should be held in common and that producers should keep the fruits of their labor, all in the name of a better,

happier, more healthy community and, perhaps, nation. The abiding concern of early socialists was to address what they saw as the moral and social disintegration of European civilization in the modern era, as well as to repair the rifts and ameliorate the suffering of workers in the midst of early industrial capitalism.

There was a major shift in socialism that occurred over the course of the century: until 1848, socialism consisted of a movements that shared a concern with the plight of working people and the regrowth of organic social bonds. This kind of socialism was fundamentally *optimistic* – early socialists thought that almost everyone in European society would eventually become a socialist once they realized its potential. Following the later work of Friedrich Engels, one of the major socialist thinkers of the second half of the nineteenth century, this kind of socialism is often referred to as "utopian socialism."

In turn, after 1848, socialism was increasingly *militant* because socialists realized that a major restructuring of society could not happen peacefully, given the strength of both conservative and liberal opposition. The most important militant socialism was Marxism, named after its creator Karl Marx.

Three early socialist movements stand out as exemplary of so-called "utopian" socialism: the Saint-Simonians, the Owenites, and the Fourierists. Each was named after its respective founder and visionary. The binding theme of these three early socialist thinkers was not only radical proposals for the reorganization of work, but the idea that economic competition was a moral problem, that competition itself is in no way natural and instead implies social disorder. The Saint-Simonians called egoism, the selfish pursuit of individual wealth, "the deepest wound of modern society."

In that, they found a surprisingly sympathetic audience among some aristocratic conservatives who were also afraid of social disorder and were nostalgic for the idea of a reciprocal set of obligations that had existed in pre-revolutionary Europe between the common people and the nobility. In turn, the early socialists believed that there was nothing inherent in their ideas threatening to the rich – many socialists expected that the privileged classes would recognize the validity of their ideas and that socialism would be a way to bridge the class divide, not widen it.

The Saint-Simonians, named after their founder Henri de Saint-Simon, were mostly highly educated young elites in France, many from privileged backgrounds, and many also graduates of the *École Polytechnique*, the most elite technical school in France founded by Napoleon. Their ideology, based on Saint-Simon's writings, envisaged a society in which industrialism was harnessed to make a kind of heaven on earth, with the fruits of technology

going to feed, clothe, and house, potentially, everyone. They were, in a word, the first "technocrats," people who believe that technology can solve any problem. The Saint-Simonians did not inspire a popular movement, but individual members of the movement went on to achieve influential roles in the French industry, and helped lay the intellectual foundations of such ventures as the creation of the Suez Canal between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean.

The Owenites were initially the employees of Robert Owen, a British factory owner. He built a community for his workers in New Lanark, Scotland that provided health care, education, pensions, communal stores, and housing. He believed that productivity was tied to happiness, and his initial experiments met with success, with the New Lanark textile mill realizing consistent profits. He and his followers created a number of cooperative, communalist "utopian" communities (many in the United States), but those tended to fail in fairly short order. Instead, the lasting influence of Owenism was in workers organization, with the Owenites helping to organize a number of influential early trade unions, culminating in the London Working Men's Association in 1836.

The Fourierists were part of a very peculiar movement, because their founder Charles Fourier was a *very* peculiar man. Fourier, who may have been at least partially insane, believed that he had unlocked a "science of the passions." According to Fourier, the reason that most people detested what they did to survive was that they were not doing the right kind of work. There were 810 specific kinds of personalities in the world, each of which was naturally inclined toward a certain kind of work. Thus, if 1,620 people (one man and one woman of each type) were to come together in a community, and each did the kind of work they "should" do, perfect happiness became possible. For example, according to Fourier, murderers were just people who should have been butchers, and children should be trash collectors, because they loved to play in the dirt. These planned communities would be called "Phalanxes," after the fighting formations of ancient Greece.

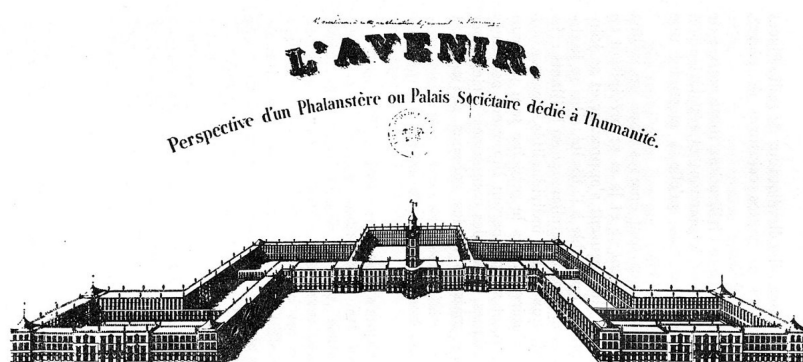


Illustration of a Fourierist phalanx. The heading simply reads "The Future."

Fourier was far more radical than most other self-understood socialists. For one, he advocated complete gender equality and even sexual liberation - he was very hostile to monogamy, which he regarded as unnatural. Regarding marriage as an outdated custom, he imagined that in his phalanxes children would be raised in common rather than lorded over by their parents. Above and beyond forward-thinking ideas about gender, some of his concepts were a bit more puzzling. Among other things, he claimed that planets mated and gave birth to baby planets, and that once all of humanity lived in phalanxes the oceans would turn into lemonade.

Practically speaking the importance of the fourierists is that many phalanxes were actually founded, including several in the United States. While the more oddball ideas were conveniently set aside, they were still among the first real experiments in planned, communal living. Likewise, many important early feminists began their intellectual careers as Fourierists. For instance, Flora Tristan was a French socialist and feminist who emerged from Fourierism to do important early work on tying the idea of social progress to female equality.

In general, the broad "Utopian" socialism of the 1840s was quite widespread leading up to 1848, it was peaceful in orientation, it was democratic, it believed in the "right" to work, and its followers hoped that the higher orders might join it.

Considered in detail in the next chapter, there was an enormous revolutionary explosion all over Europe in 1848. From Paris to Vienna to Prague, Europeans rose up and, temporarily as it turned out, overthrew their monarchs. In the end, however, the revolutions collapsed. The awkward coalitions of socialists and other rebels that had spearheaded them soon fell to infighting, and kings (and in France, a new emperor) eventually reasserted control. Socialists made important realizations following 1848. Democracy did not lead inevitably to social and political progress, as majorities typically voted for established community leaders (often priests or nobles). Class collaboration was not a possibility, as the wealthier bourgeoisie and the nobility recognized in socialism their shared enemy. Peaceful change might not be possible, given the forces of order's willingness to employ violence to achieve their ends. Russia, for instance, invaded Hungary to ensure the continued rule of (Russia's ally at the time) Habsburg Austria. After 1848 socialism was increasingly militant, focused on the necessity of confrontational tactics, even outright violence, to achieve a better society. Two post-Utopian and rival forms of socialist theory matured in this period: state socialism and anarchist socialism.

The first, state socialism, is represented by the French thinker and agitator Louis Blanc. Blanc believed that social reform had to come from above. It was, he argued, unrealistic to

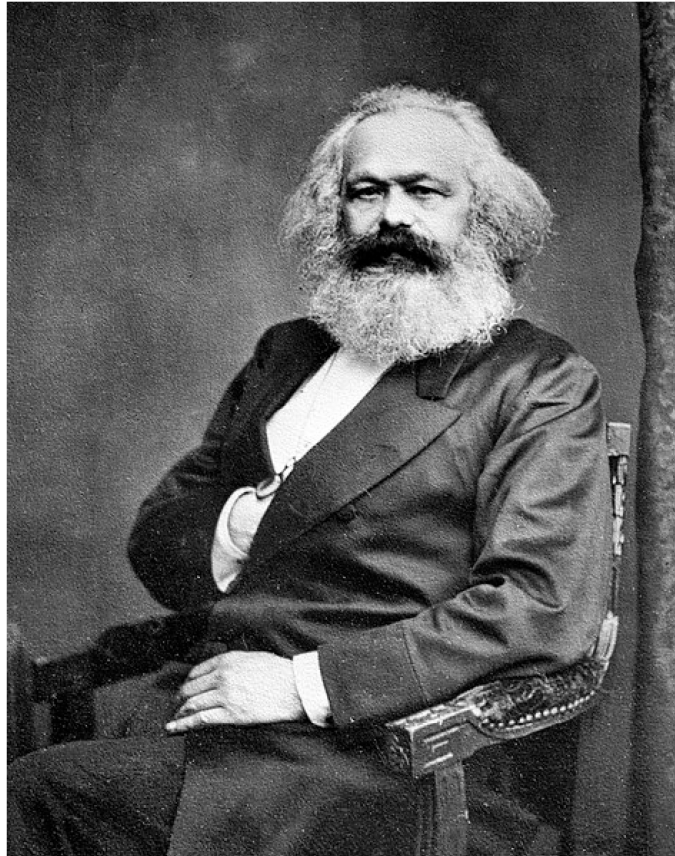
imagine that groups could somehow spontaneously organize themselves into self-sustaining, harmonious units. He believed that universal manhood suffrage should and would lead to a government capable of implementing necessary economic changes, primarily by guaranteeing work for all citizens. He actually saw this happen in the French revolution of 1848, when he briefly served in the revolutionary government. There, he pushed through the creation of National Workshops for workers, which provided paid work for the urban poor.

In stark contrast was anarchist socialism. A semantic point: anarchism means the rejection of the state, not the rejection of all forms of social organization or even hierarchy (i.e. it is perfectly consistent for there to be an organized anarchist movement, even one with leaders). In the case of nineteenth-century anarchist socialism, there were two major thinkers: the French Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Russian Mikhail Bakunin.

Proudhon was the author of a book entitled "What Is Property?" in which he answered unequivocally that "property is theft." The very idea of ownership was vacuous and false to Proudhon, a conceit that ensured that the wealthy maintained their hold on political and legal power. Unlike his rival Louis Blanc, Proudhon was skeptical of the state's ability to effect meaningful reform, and after the failure of the French revolution of 1848 he came to believe that all state power was inherently oppressive. Instead of a state, Proudhon advocated local cooperatives of workers in a kind of "economic federalism" in which cooperatives would exchange goods and services between one another, and each cooperative would reward work with the fruits of that work. Simply put, workers themselves would keep all profit. He believed that the workers would have to emancipate themselves through some kind of revolution, but he was not an advocate of violence.

The other prominent anarchist socialist was Mikhail Bakunin, a contemporary, sometimes friend, and sometimes rival of Proudhon. Briefly, Bakunin believed in the necessity of an apocalyptic, violent revolution to wipe the social slate clean for a new society of free collectives. He loathed the state and detested the traditional family structure, seeing it as a useless holdover from the past. Bakunin thought that if his contemporary society was destroyed, the social instincts inherent to humanity would flower and people would "naturally" build a better society. He was also the great champion of the outcasts, the bandits, and the urban poor. He was deeply skeptical about both the industrial working class, who he noted all wished could be middle class, and of western Europe, which was shot-through with individualism, egoism, and the obsession with wealth. He ended up organizing large anarchist movements in Europe's "periphery," especially in Italy and Spain. By about 1870 both countries had large anarchist movements.

In the end, the most influential socialist was a German: Karl Marx. Marx was born in 1818 in the Rhineland, the son of Jewish parents who had converted to Lutheranism (out of necessity - Marx's father was a lawyer in conservative, staunchly Lutheran Prussia). He was a passionate and brilliant student of philosophy who came to believe that philosophy was only important if it led to practical change – he wrote “philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however, is to change it.”



The best-known portrait of Marx, dating from 1875.

A journalist as a young man, Marx became an avowed socialist by the 1840s and penned (along with his friend and collaborator Friedrich Engels) the nineteenth century's most famous and influential socialist work, *The Communist Manifesto*. Exiled to Great Britain in the aftermath of the failure of the Revolutions of 1848, Marx devoted himself to a detailed analysis of the endogenous tendencies of capitalist economics, ultimately producing three enormous volumes entitled, simply, *Capital*. The first was published in 1867, with the other two edited from notes and published by Engels after Marx's death. It is worthwhile to consider Marx's theories in

detail because of their profound influence: by the middle of the twentieth century, fully a third of the world was governed by communist states that were at least nominally “Marxist” in their political and economic policies.

All of history, according to Marx, is the history of class struggle. From ancient pharaohs to feudal kings and their nobles, classes of the rich and powerful had always abused and exploited classes of the poor and weak. The world had moved on into a new phase following the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution, however, one that (to Marx) simplified that ongoing struggle from many competing classes to just two: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The bourgeoisie were the rising middle classes, the owners of factories and businesses, the bankers, and all of those with direct control over industrial production. The proletariat was the industrial working class.

Before this, the classes of workers in the pre-modern era generally had direct access to their livelihood: a small parcel of land, access to the common lands, the tools of their trade in the case of artisans. They had, in Marx’s language, some kind of protected access to “the means of production,” which could mean anything from some land, a plow, and an ox to a workshop stocked with a carpenter’s tools. In the modern era, however, those rights and those tools were systematically taken away. The common lands were closed off and replaced with commercial farms. Artisans were rendered obsolete by the growth of industry. Peasants were pushed off the land or owned plots so small their children had to look for work in the cities. The net effect was, generally, that the class of workers who had “nothing to sell but their labor,” the proletariat, grew.

At the same time, the people who did own property, “the bourgeoisie,” were under pressure themselves. In the climate of the new capitalism, of unregulated markets and cutthroat competition, it was terribly easy to fall behind and go out of business. Thus, former members of the bourgeoisie lost out and became proletarians themselves. The net effect was that the proletariat grew and every other conceivable class (including peasants, the owners of small shops, etc.) shrank.

Meanwhile, industry produced more and more products. Every year saw improvements in efficiency and economy in production, arriving at a terrific glut of products available for purchase. Eventually, there was simply too much out there and not enough people who could afford to buy it, as one of the things about the proletariat, one of their forms of “alienation,” was their inability to buy the very things they made. This resulted in a “crisis of overproduction” and a massive economic collapse. This would be unthinkable in a pre-modern economy, where the

essential problem a society faced was the scarcity of goods. Thanks to the Industrial Revolution, however, products need consumers more than consumers need products.

In the midst of one of these collapses, Marx wrote, the members of the proletariat *could* realize their common interests in seizing the unprecedented wealth that industrialism had made possible and using it for the common good. Instead of a handful of super-rich expropriators, *everyone* could share in material comfort and freedom from scarcity, something that had never been possible before. That vision of revolution was very powerful to the young Marx, who wrote that, given the inherent tendencies of capitalism, revolution was inevitable.

In turn, revolutions did happen, most spectacularly in 1848, which Marx initially greeted with elation only to watch in horror as the revolutionary momentum ebbed and conservatives regained the initiative. Subsequently, as he devoted himself to the analysis of capitalism's inherent characteristics rather than revolutionary propaganda, Marx became more circumspect. With staggering erudition, he tried to make sense of an economic system that somehow repeatedly destroyed itself and yet regrew stronger, faster, and more violent with every business cycle.

In historical hindsight, Marx was really writing about what would happen if capitalism was allowed to run *completely rampant*, as it did in the first century of the Industrial Revolution. The hellish mills, the starving workers, and the destitution and anguish of the factory towns were all part of nineteenth-century European capitalism. Everything that could contain those factors, primarily in the form of concessions to workers and state intervention in the economy, had not happened on a large scale when Marx was writing - trade unions themselves were outlawed in most states until the middle of the century. In turn, none of the factors that might mitigate capitalism's destructive tendencies were financially beneficial to any *individual* capitalist, so Marx saw no reason that they would ever come about on a large scale in states controlled by moneyed interests.

To Marx, revolution seemed not only possible but probable in the 1840s, when he was first writing about philosophy and economics. After the revolutions of 1848 failed, however, he shifted his attention away from revolution and towards the inner working of capitalism itself. In fact, he rarely wrote about revolution at all after 1850; his great work *Capital* is instead a vast and incredibly detailed study of how England's capitalist economy worked and what it did to the people "within" it.

To boil it down to a very simple level, Marx never described in adequate detail when the material conditions for a socialist revolution were possible. Across the vast breadth of his books and correspondence, Marx (and his collaborator Friedrich Engels) argued that each nation

would have to reach a critical threshold in which industrialism was mature, the proletariat was large and self-aware, and the bourgeoisie was using increasingly harsh political tactics to try to keep the proletariat in check. There would have to be, and according to Marxism there always would be, a major economic crisis caused by overproduction.

At that point, somehow, the proletariat could rise up and take over. In some of his writings, Marx indicated that the proletariat would revolt spontaneously, without guidance from anyone else. Sometimes, such as in the second section of his early work *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx alluded to the existence of a political party, the communists, who would work to help coordinate and aid the proletariat in the revolutionary process. The bottom line is, however, that Marx was very good at critiquing the internal laws of the free market in capitalism, and in pointing out many of its problems, but he had no tactical guide to revolutionary politics. And, finally, toward the end of his life, Marx himself was increasingly worried that socialists, including self-styled Marxists, would try to stage a revolution “too early” and it would fail or result in disaster.

In sum, Marx did not leave a clear picture of what socialists were supposed to do, politically, nor did he describe how a socialist state would work if a revolution was successful. This only mattered historically because socialist revolutions *were* successful, and those nations had to try to figure out how to govern in a socialistic way.

Social Classes

How much did European society resemble the sociological description provided by Marx? At first sight, nineteenth-century Europe seems more similar to how it was in earlier centuries than it does radically new – most people were still farmers, every country but Britain was still mostly rural, and the Industrial Revolution took decades to spread beyond its British heartland. That being said, European society *was* undergoing significant changes, and Marx was right in identifying the new professional middle class, the bourgeoisie, as the agents of much of that change.

The term “bourgeoisie” is French for “business class.” The term originally meant, simply, “townspeople,” but over time it acquired the connotation of someone who made money from commerce, banking, or administration but did not have a noble title. The bourgeoisie made up between 15% and 20% of the population of central and western Europe by the early 1800s. The male members of the bourgeoisie were factory owners, clerks, commercial and state bureaucrats, journalists, doctors, lawyers, and everyone else who fell into that ambiguous class

of “businessmen.” They were increasingly proud of their identity as “self-made” men, men whose financial success was based on intelligence, education, and competence instead of noble privilege and inheritance. Many regarded the old order as an archaic throwback, something that was both limiting their own ability to make money and society’s possibilities of further progress. At the same time, they were defined by the fact that they did not work with their hands to make a living; they were neither farmers, nor artisans, nor industrial workers.

The growth of the bourgeoisie arose from the explosion of urbanization that took place due to both industrialism and the breakdown of the old social order that started with the French Revolution. Cities, some of which grew almost 1000% in the course of the century, concentrated groups of educated professionals. It was the middle class that reaped the benefits of a growing, and increasingly complex, economy centered in the cities.

While the bourgeoisie was proud of its self-understood sobriety and work ethic, in contrast to the foppery and frivolity of the nobility, successful members of the middle class often eagerly bought as much land as they could, both in emulation of the nobles and because the right to vote in most of western Europe was tied for decades to land-ownership. In turn, nobles were wary of the middle class, especially because so many bourgeois were attracted to potentially disruptive ideologies like liberalism and, increasingly, nationalism, but over the course of the century the two classes tended to mix based on wealth. Old families of nobles may have despised the “nouveau riche,” but they still married them if they needed the money.

The bourgeoisie had certain *visible* things that defined them as a class, literal “status symbols.” They did not perform manual labor of any kind, and insisted on the highest standards of cleanliness and tidiness in their appearance and their homes. In turn, all but the most marginal bourgeois families employed at least one full-time servant (recruited from the working class and always paid a pittance) to maintain those standards of hygiene. If possible, bourgeois women did no paid work at all, serving instead as keepers of the home and the maintainers of the rituals of visiting and hosting that maintained their social network. Finally, the bourgeoisie socialized in private places: private clubs, the new department stores that opened in for the first time in the mid-nineteenth century, and the foyers of private homes. The working classes met in taverns (“public houses” or just “pubs” in Britain), while bourgeois men and women stayed safely inside.



Clothing among the bourgeoisie came to resemble a specific “uniform” of respectability in the nineteenth century - the top hat in particular was an iconic mark of class identity by the middle of the century.

In addition, the members of the bourgeoisie were supposed to live by certain codes of behavior. In contrast to the sexual libertinage of the old nobility, bourgeois men and women were expected to avoid extra-marital affairs (although, practically speaking, bourgeois men regularly took advantage of prostitutes). A bourgeois man was to live up to high standards of honesty and business ethics. What these concepts shared was the fear of *shame* – the literature of the time describing this social class is filled with references to the failure of a bourgeois to live up to these standards and being exposed to vast public humiliation.

What about the nobility? The legal structures that sustained their identity slowly but surely weakened over the course of the nineteenth century. Even more threatening than the loss of legal monopolies over land-owning, the officer corps of the army, and political status was the enormous shift in the generation of wealth away from land to commerce and industry. Relatively few noblemen had been involved in the early Industrial Revolution, thanks in large part to their traditional disdain for commerce, but by the middle of the century it was apparent that industry, banking, and commerce were eclipsing land-ownership as the major sources of

wealth. Likewise, the one thing that the bourgeoisie and the working class had in common was a belief in the desirability of voting rights; by the end of the century universal male suffrage was on the horizon (or had already come to pass, as it did in France in 1871) in almost every country in Europe.

Thus, the long-term pattern of the nobility was that it came to culturally resemble the bourgeoisie. While stubbornly clinging to its titles and its claims to authority, the nobility grudgingly entered into the economic fields of the bourgeoisie and adopted the bourgeoisie's social habits as well. The lines between the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie and the bulk of the nobility were very blurry by the end of the century, as bourgeois money funded old noble houses that had still had access to the social prestige of a title.

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