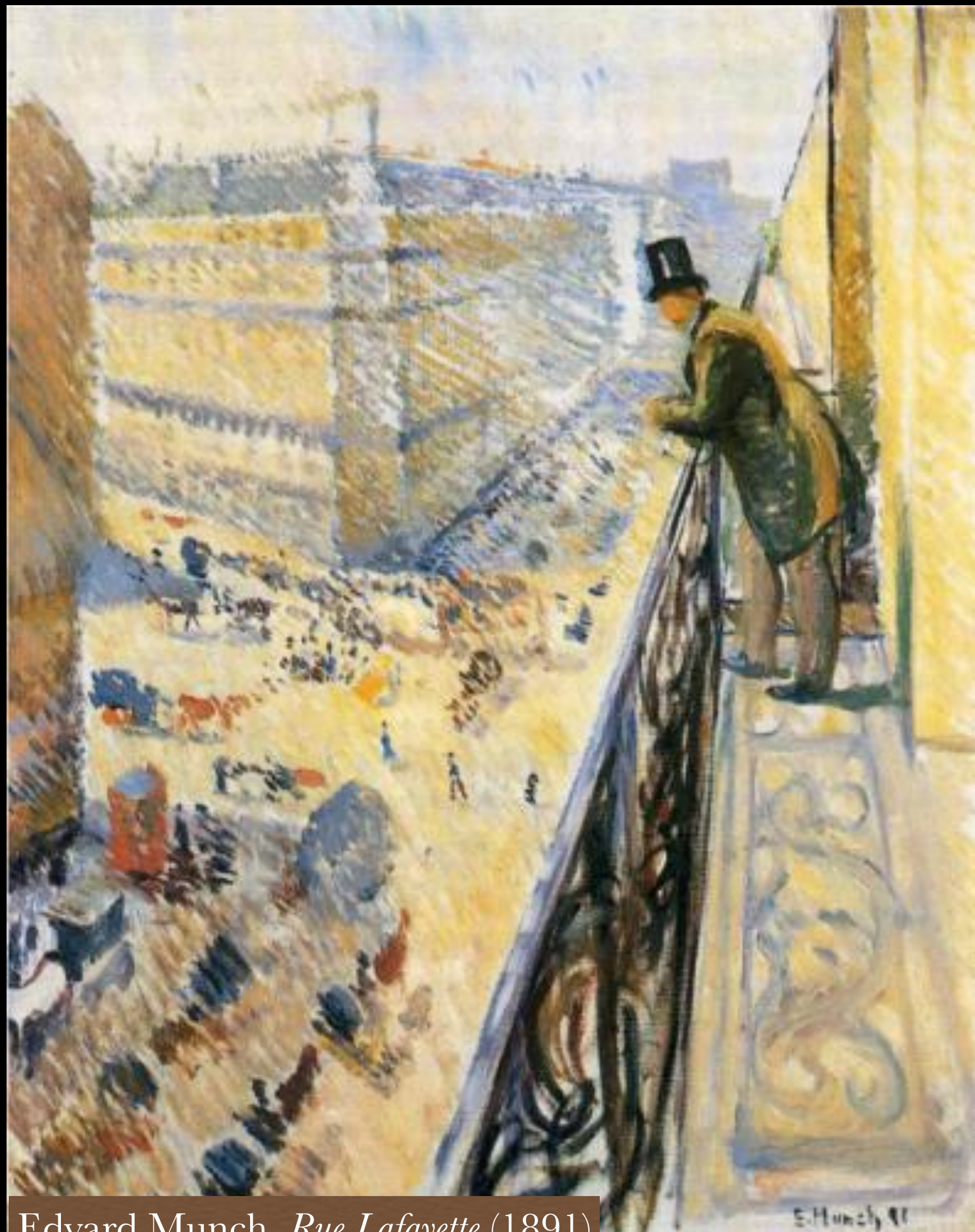


THE FIN- DE-SIÈCLE

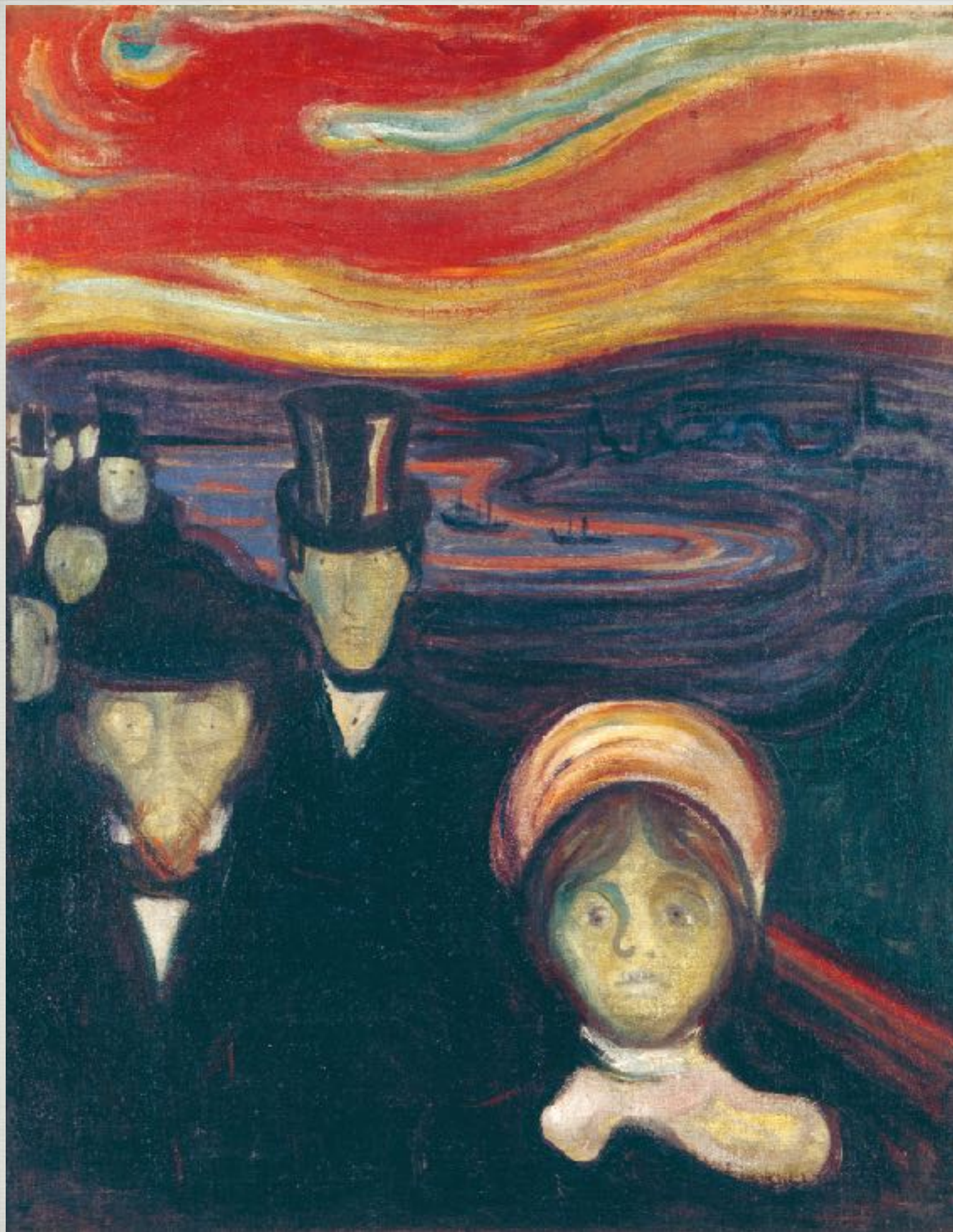
(Belle Époque?)



Edvard Munch, *Rue Lafayette* (1891)

“FIN-DE-SIÈCLE”

- Fin-de-siècle literally means “end of the century” but it has a more nuanced, cultural meaning in the context of the last decades of the 19th century.
- As your textbook describes it:
 - “Since the mid-1870s and accelerating into the 1890s, critiques that had long been implicit or limited to small groups of the skeptical and disenfranchised were more often voiced as **grave doubts about progress and modernity.**” (it goes into further detail about this on page 289-290)
 - “Because this occurred in the 1880s and 1890s, at century’s end, many people in Europe associated moral and physical decline with the sense of an ending ... **Feelings of malaise, dangerous political conflicts, a cultural probing of human irrationality and passions all continued up until the outbreak of war in 1914.**” (page 290)
- There is another term commonly used to describe this same period in European History (1880-1914): **Belle Époque**. What is the difference between these two concepts?



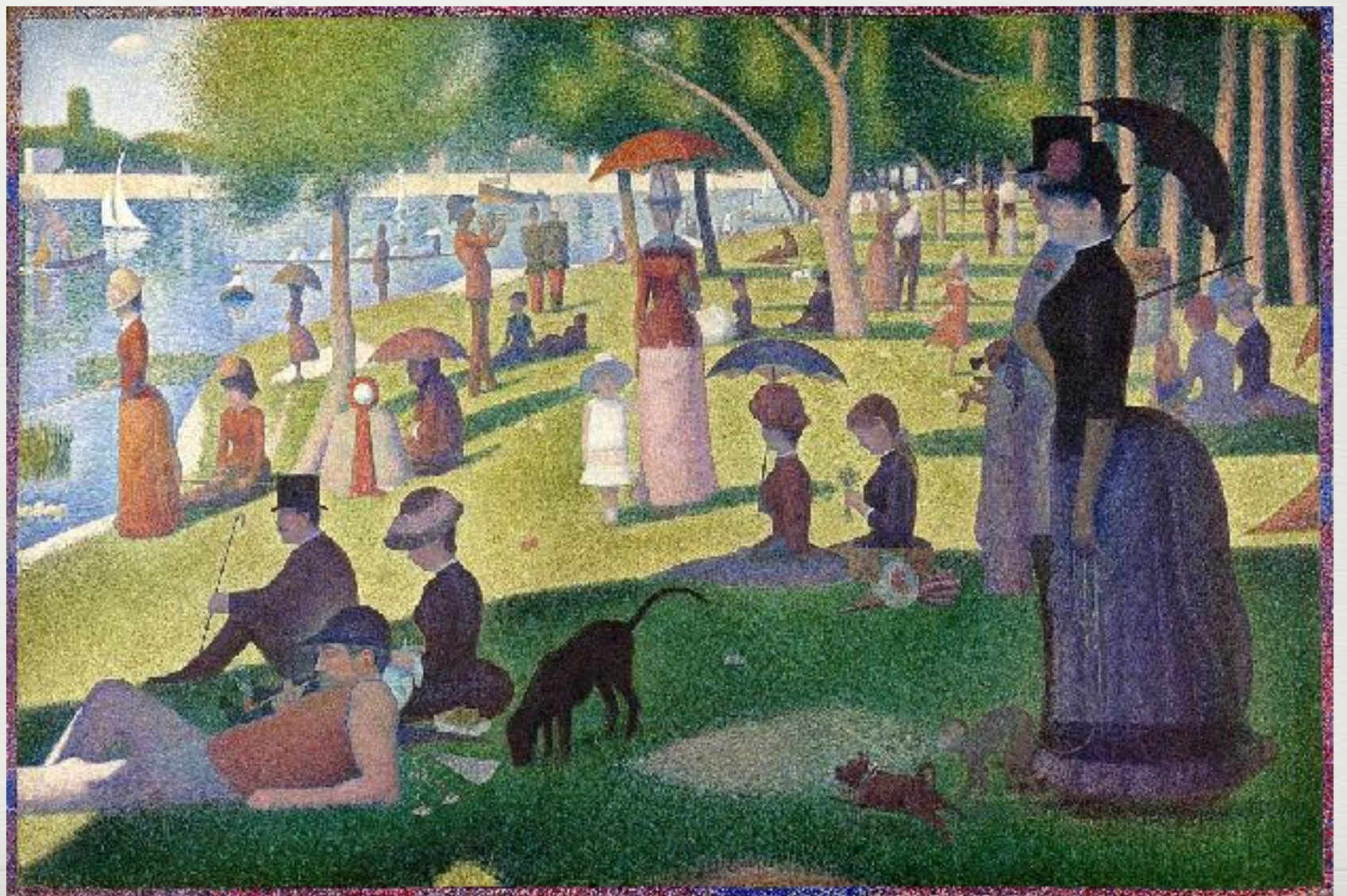
Many of the images I've included in this week slides are from the Norwegian painter Edward Munch. You've probably seen his most famous painting, "The Scream," which kind of looks like this painting. Munch's paintings aren't just captivating and interesting to look at, they do an excellent job conveying the sense of anxiety and uncertainty that really characterizes the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Edvard Munch, *Anxiety* (1894)

On The One Hand, “Modernity” Seems to be Triumphant, Right?

- Everyday life in Europe, and the quality of life for most Europeans was greatly improved by the end of the century. **What are some of the most obvious ways that peoples’ lives were getting better, regardless of social class?**
- This is detailed on pages 290-299 in your textbook.

Georges Seurat, *A Sunday on the Island of La Grande Jatte* (1884)



THE RISE OF ORGANIZED WORKING CLASS POLITICS

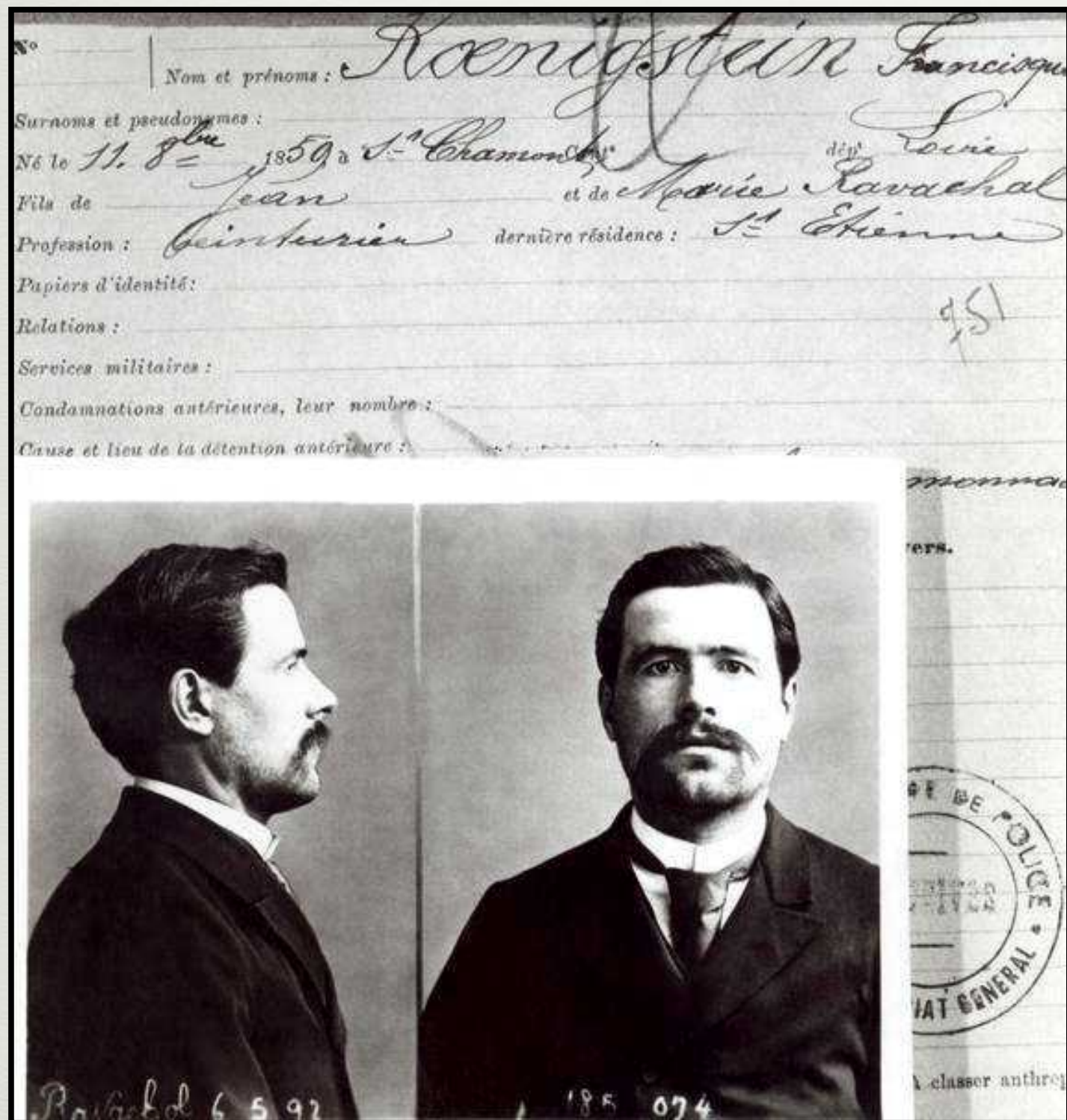


Edvard Munch, *Workers
Returning Home* (1913)

THE RISE OF ORGANIZED WORKING CLASS POLITICS

- Socialism becomes more mainstream by the end of the century. Almost every representative government in Europe includes some socialists/communists.
- Pay attention in the textbook to the descriptions of **The International Workingman's Associations** (pages 299-300) These are (as the name indicates) international organizations of likeminded working class organizations.
 - One of the main conflicts within the International Workingmen's Associations was whether working class political groups should pursue **revolution**, as Marx indicated in *The Communist Manifesto*, or if they should try to change the system from within and work towards **gradual reforms**. Which of these do you think would be most compelling to working class audiences?
- A new working-class political practices emerged during this period: **Syndicalism**, which meant working to establish trade unions across Europe, which would provide workers with a collective voice when dealing with their employers and managers. Syndicalism was more pragmatic and concerned with improving the living and working conditions of the urban worker (and less concerned with outright revolution).

BY CONTRAST: ANARCHISM



The mugshot of the infamous French anarchist who went by the name “Ravachol.” When Ravachol was put on trial for a series of violent anarchist activities he allegedly held up his hand and announced, “See this hand? It has killed as many bourgeois as it has fingers!”

BY CONTRAST: ANARCHISM

- Quite different from syndicalism and even Marxism, a new political ideology began to gain popularity across the globe at the end of the nineteenth century as: **Anarchism**.
 - Anarchists believed in **Extra-parliamentary** action. This means that they weren't interested in pursuing change by democratic reform, by passing laws, or even by writing persuasive pamphlets like Marx.
 - Instead, Anarchists embraced what they called "Propaganda of the Deed"
 - Anarchists were tired of talk, of speeches, of writing: they wanted **action** (i.e., deeds). They believed in **spectacles of violence** that would spur on the people to action. Underlying this belief was a very "modern" understanding of human behavior: they thought that crowds would respond more instinctively and powerfully to dramatic gestures and powerful acts than to complicated theories.
- Anarchists across the globe managed to assassinate six heads of state at the turn of the nineteenth century, including an American president, a Russian tsar, and an Italian king.
- More on the theory and beliefs of anarchists can be found on page 301 of your textbook.

A NEW POLITICAL FORCE: WOMEN



Edvard Munch,
Women on the Bridge (1902)

A NEW POLITICAL FORCE: WOMEN

- By the end of the nineteenth century, Women's groups across Europe were finally emerging, organizing, and lobbying to have political rights extended to them. In other words: they wanted to vote and to be able to hold office. They also wanted to attend universities and have access to all of the opportunities the nineteenth century made available (but not to them).
- The First International Congress on Women's Rights was held in Paris (to coincide with the world's fair!) in 1889
- The most well-know of this first wave of **feminists** were the British **Suffragists** (so-called because they were committed to female suffrage — the right to vote), who coalesced around a woman named **Emmeline Pankhurst**, who founded an organization called the **Women's Social and Political Union** (the **WSPU**)
 - Like Anarchists, the WSPU embraced extra-parliamentary action, and their slogan "**Deeds Not Words**" resembles the Anarchists' "Propaganda of the Deed."
 - The WSPU engaged in small acts of violence like smashing windows, putting bombs in mailboxes, and pouring acid on golfing greens — all designed to bring attention to their cause.



Emmeline Pankhurst being carried away by some angry police and men. When suffragists were arrested for their violent tactics, they engaged in nonviolent protest in jail by going on hunger strikes. The state retaliated by violently force feeding them. Since these were often middle-class ladies, such treatment actually worked in their favor as the public often sympathized with their suffering and found the brutality of their treatment horrifying.

(Once WWI broke out in 1914, most of the WSPU and Suffragists abandoned their cause and threw all of their energy behind mobilizing for war)

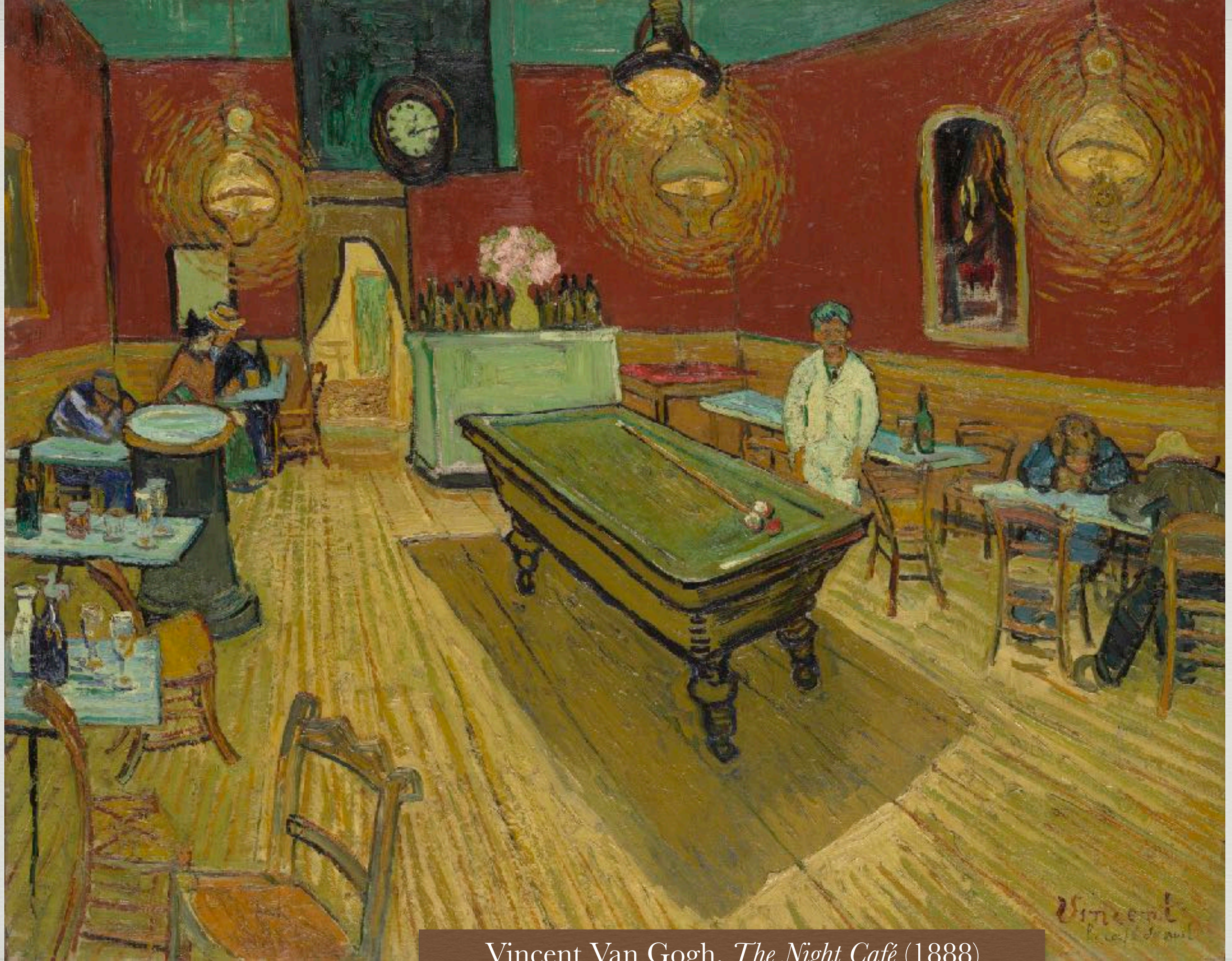
MODERN SOCIETY, MODERN PROBLEMS, AND MODERNISM



Edvard Munch,
Melancholy (1894)

MODERN SOCIETY, MODERN PROBLEMS, AND MODERNISM

- **Modernism** is a cultural genre (like Romanticism before it, and Neoclassicism before that) that really dominated the late 19th century. Practitioners of Modernism (**Modernists**), whether painters, writers, philosophers, or musicians, were very attuned to the double-edged sword of Modernity.
 - Modernists were aware of paradox that modernity had made life *easier*, yet had given birth to a whole host of new problems.
 - As the textbook defines “Modernism” on page 309:
“Modernism was born in a radical critique of bourgeois capitalism and the culture of respectability, which were seen as artificial, banal, superficial, materialistic, crass, and spiritually exhausted. Modernism was motivated in part by a desire to shake up complacent bourgeois society, to ‘throw a bombshell into the joyless provincial street of the generally joyless existence,’ as one Russian modernist put it, or in the words of another: to ‘Slap the Face of Public Taste.’”
- Some of the modernist paintings described in your textbook (pages 311-313 are on the next few slides).



Vincent Van Gogh, *The Night Café* (1888)

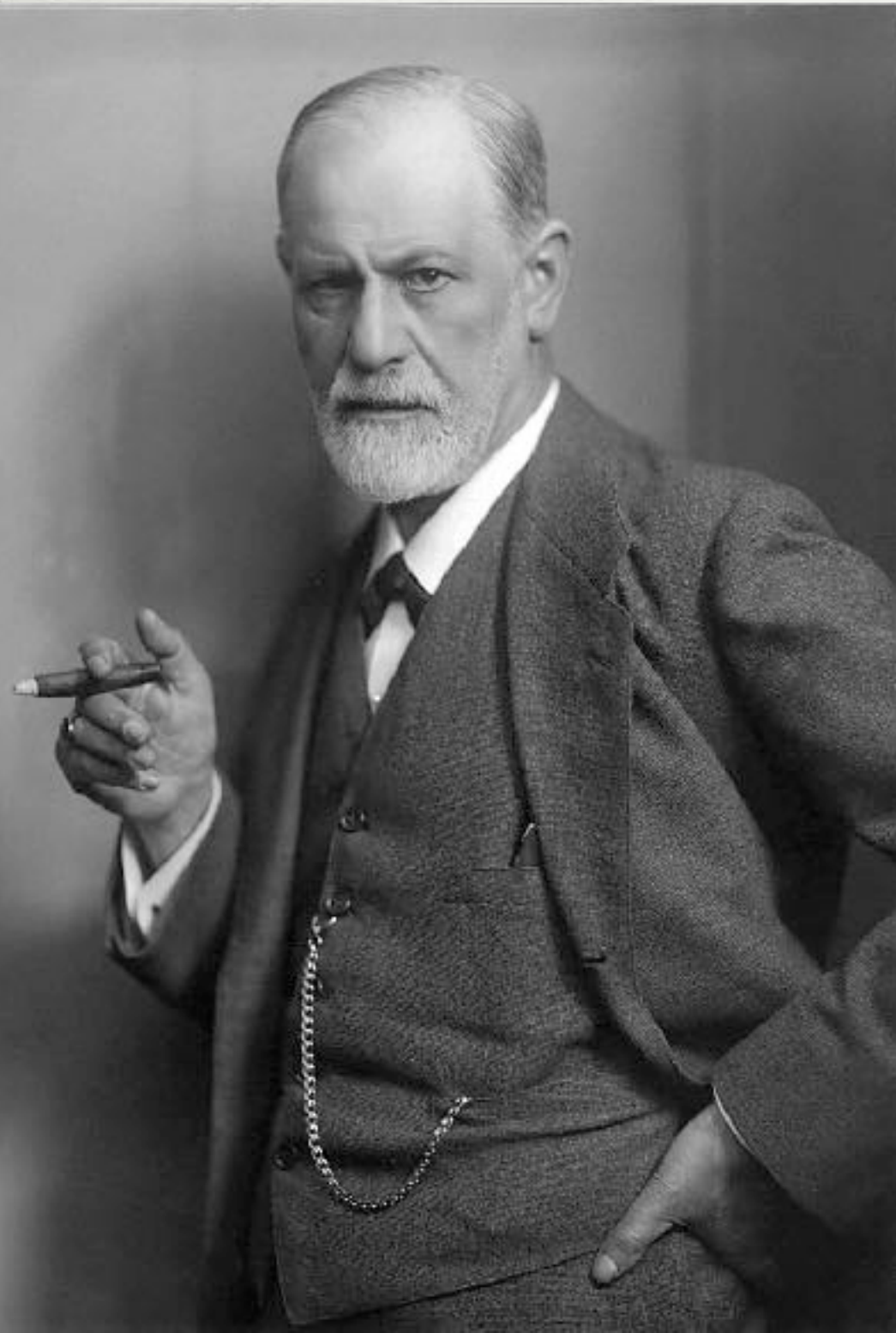


Henri Matisse, *Harmony in Red (The Red Room)*, 1908



Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O Version O)* (1935)

But Modernism is not limited to works of art. This same skepticism about the boundless progress and positivity of modernity also played out among scientists and social scientists, primarily around the theme of **the irrational** and **the unknown**.



Sigmund Freud, photographed in 1921. I know this photo is outside the parameters of our course, but it was too good to pass up. Freud was also writing about the unconscious in the 19th century. One of the (many) things that's so interesting about Freud is how he takes the *methods* of Modernity (of the Scientific Revolution & the Enlightenment) and flips them on their head. He embarks on a rigorous study of the human mind through hypothesis, experimentation, and observation, but ultimately comes to the conclusion that there are so many things hidden inside the human mind that are not immediately obvious. If one of the most important themes of modernity was **reason** and **the rational**, then one of the most important themes of modernism is: **the irrational**.

THE IRRATIONAL

- Describing the human mind, Freud wrote in *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900:

“The mind is like a city which during the day busies itself with the peaceful tasks of legitimate commerce, but at night when all the good burghers sleep soundly in their beds, out come these disreputable creatures of the psychic underworld to disport themselves in a very unseemly fashion: decking themselves out in fantastic costumes, in order that they may not be recognized or apprehended.”

- Where else do we see a celebration of, and appeal to, the irrational in this week's textbook reading?

DON'T FORGET THAT YOU ALSO HAVE AN ARTICLE TO READ FOR THIS WEEK ABOUT VICTORIAN INTERIOR DESIGN. IT'S SO MUCH MORE INTERESTING THAT IT SOUNDS BY THAT DESCRIPTION, I PROMISE!

THE QUIZ WILL COVER CONTENT FROM THE TEXTBOOK *AND* THE ARTICLE.