Raymond Williams

Culture and Society

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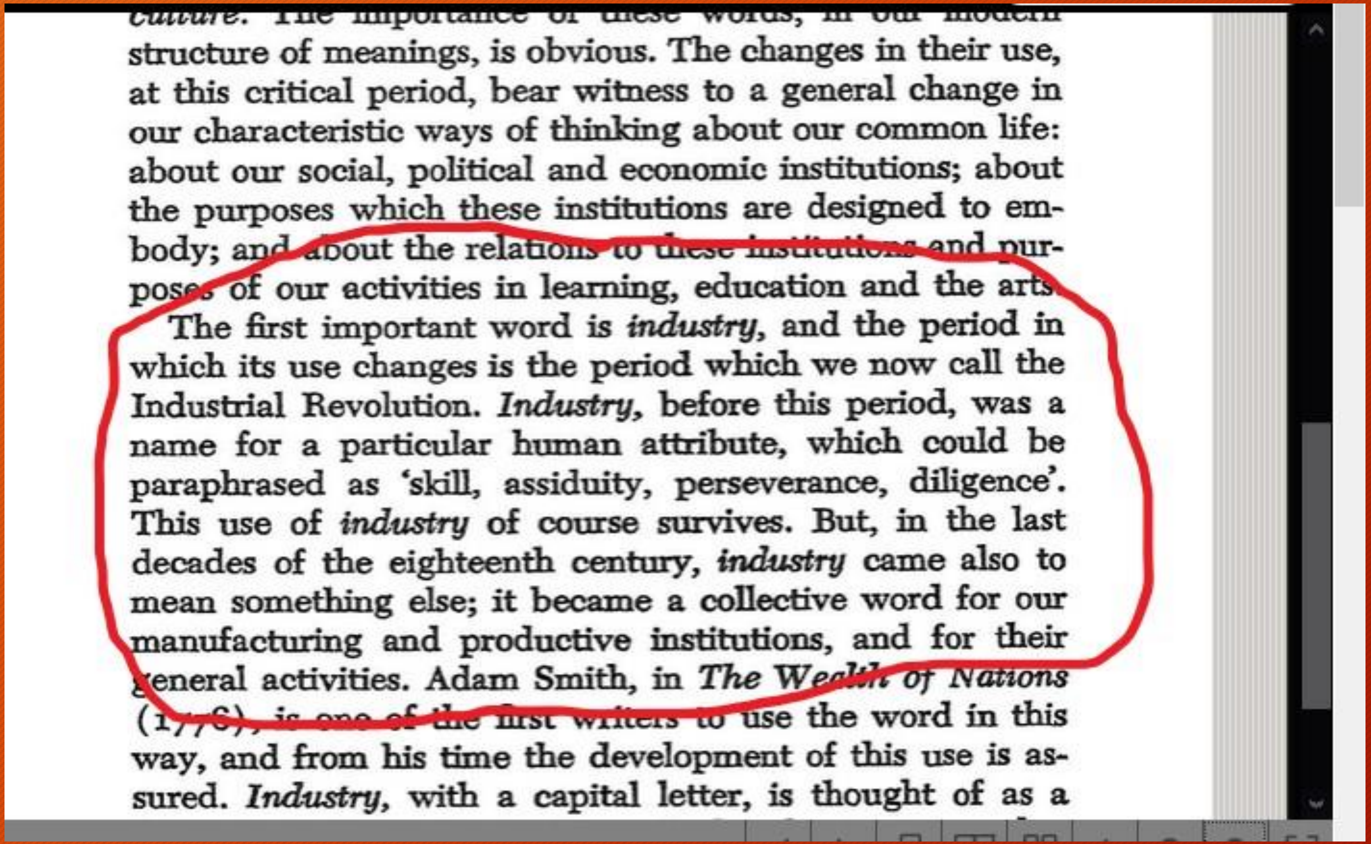
Online Teaching Resource for M.A. English Students

Module One

Raymond Williams’ Introduction

- Williams identifies the end of the eighteenth century as a period of economic and social transition.
- He chooses 5 keywords – industry, democracy, class, art and culture – to chart their semantic shift, and in turn, connect this shift with a larger discursive transition during the late eighteenth century.
- Specifically, Williams wants to show how the Industrial Revolution brings about a fundamental change not only in the economic base but also in the ideological structures.

Keyword: Industry



culture. The importance of these words, in our modern structure of meanings, is obvious. The changes in their use, at this critical period, bear witness to a general change in our characteristic ways of thinking about our common life: about our social, political and economic institutions; about the purposes which these institutions are designed to embody; and about the relations to these institutions and purposes of our activities in learning, education and the arts.

The first important word is *industry*, and the period in which its use changes is the period which we now call the Industrial Revolution. *Industry*, before this period, was a name for a particular human attribute, which could be paraphrased as ‘skill, assiduity, perseverance, diligence’. This use of *industry* of course survives. But, in the last decades of the eighteenth century, *industry* came also to mean something else; it became a collective word for our manufacturing and productive institutions, and for their general activities. Adam Smith, in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), is one of the first writers to use the word in this way, and from his time the development of this use is assured. *Industry*, with a capital letter, is thought of as a

Industry continued

- Williams argues that the word “industry” initially meant skill or diligence, a connotation that still survives today.
- The predominant meaning of industry, however, now means mechanized manufacturing processes and institutions.
- So in other words when we now speak of industry, we usually mean industrial production or industrial unit. That is to say, we understand a specific mechanized means of production. For example the coal industry, the IT industry, or terms such university-industry interface, etc.
- When we speak of industry, we rarely imply personal skill or diligence. Consider for example the related term industriousness.

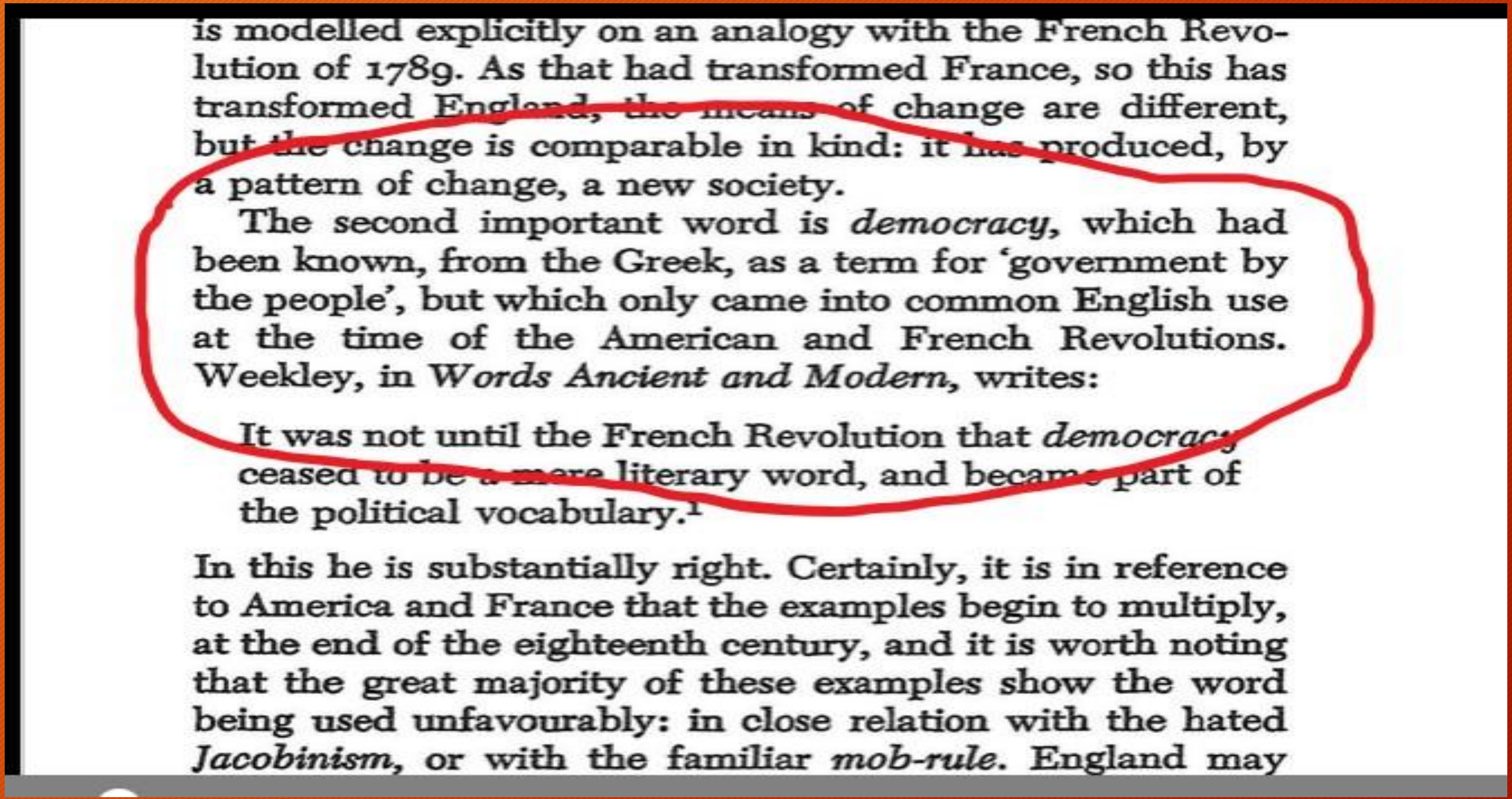
Industry continued

- Williams identifies Adam Smith (1723 –1790), a Scottish economist and philosopher, as one of the first writers to use the term “industry” in this new sense in his *The Wealth of Nations*.
- Of note, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) is a seminal work that attempted to take stock of the changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution, covering topics such as the accumulation od staock, division of labour, etc.
- Smith’s magnum opus had influenced later writers including Karl Marx. (Think back on in-class lectures on Raymond Williams and the New Left).

Industry Continued

- Williams draws attention to the term “Industrial *Revolution.*”
- French writers use it first in 1820.
- Think of the French Revolution
- Industrialization brings about an upheaval, a radical change, therefore the term “revolution”.

Keyword: Democracy



is modelled explicitly on an analogy with the French Revolution of 1789. As that had transformed France, so this has transformed England; the means of change are different, but the change is comparable in kind: it has produced, by a pattern of change, a new society.

The second important word is *democracy*, which had been known, from the Greek, as a term for 'government by the people', but which only came into common English use at the time of the American and French Revolutions. Weekley, in *Words Ancient and Modern*, writes:

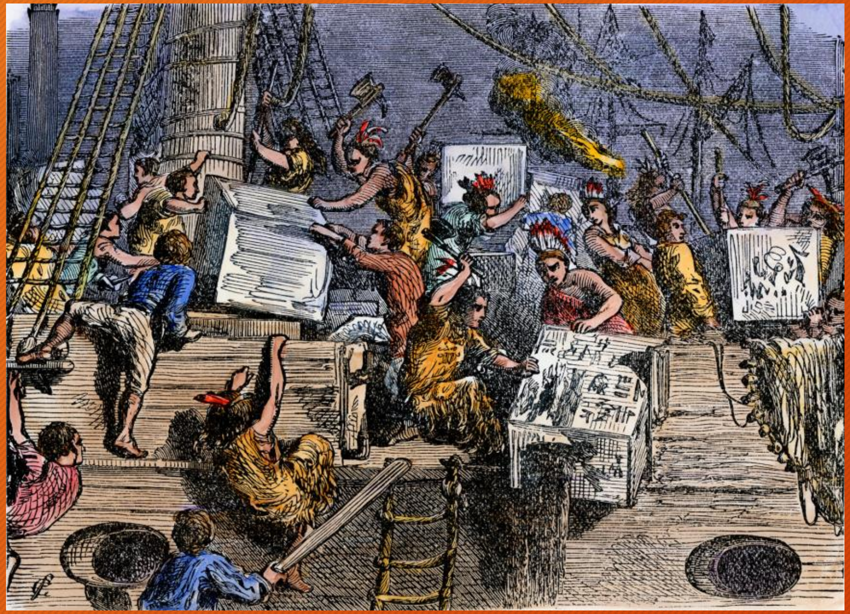
> It was not until the French Revolution that *democracy* ceased to be a mere literary word, and became part of the political vocabulary.[1]

In this he is substantially right. Certainly, it is in reference to America and France that the examples begin to multiply, at the end of the eighteenth century, and it is worth noting that the great majority of these examples show the word being used unfavourably: in close relation with the hated *Jacobinism*, or with the familiar *mob-rule*. England may

Keyword: Democracy

- Etymology - Greek: δημοκρατία dēmokratía. Demos=people, Kratia=rule
- Williams translates as “government by the people”
- In European political history there had been previous moved for autonomy, such as the Magna Carta (c. 1215); however, this did not imply the universal call for political participation that began with the American and French Revolutions
- Further Independent reading and research:
  - https://www.bl.uk/magna-carta/articles/magna-carta-an-introduction

Keyword: Democracy

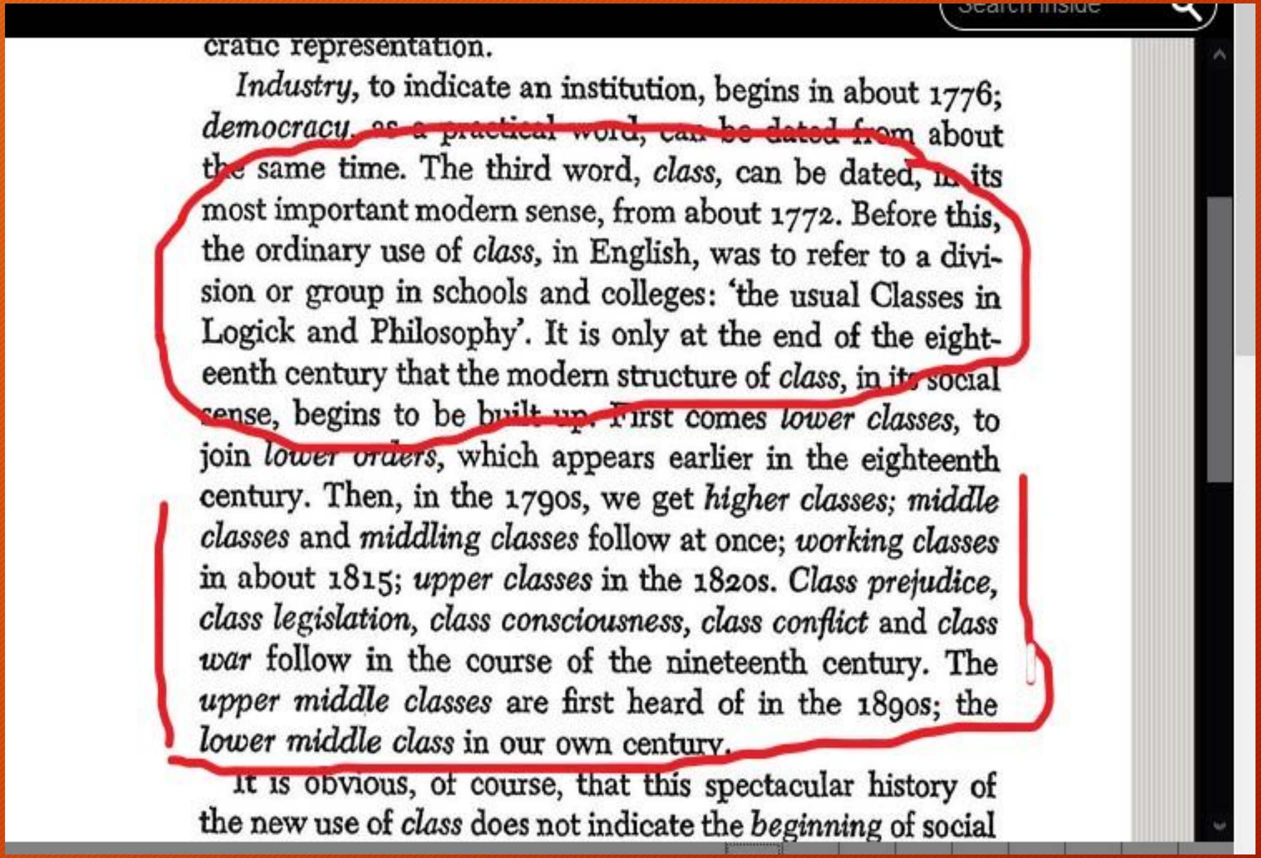


- The American Revolution saw the break away of the thirteen colonies from the British Empire. The events, including the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, the War of Independence occurred between 1763 to 1787.
- Writers looked upon this as a move towards greater rights and political representation for ordinary men.
- Further Independent reading and research:
  - https://www.bl.uk/the-american-revolution/articles/american-revolution-timeline

Keyword: Democracy

- The French Revolution which popularized the ideas of Liberté (liberty), fraternité (fraternity or brotherhood), and égalité (equality) lasted from approximately 1789 to 1799.
- The radical ideas of the French Revolution would greatly influence thinkers and writers across Europe. The British Romantic poets especially would draw upon the new ideas of French philosophers and the spirit of the Revolution in their work.
- Further Independent reading and research:
  - https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-impact-of-the-french-revolution-in-britain

Keyword: Class



cratic representation.

Industry, to indicate an institution, begins in about 1776; *democracy*, as a practical word, can be dated from about the same time. The third word, *class*, can be dated, in its most important modern sense, from about 1772. Before this, the ordinary use of *class*, in English, was to refer to a division or group in schools and colleges: 'the usual Classes in Logick and Philosophy'. It is only at the end of the eighteenth century that the modern structure of *class*, in its social sense, begins to be built up. First comes *lower classes*, to join *lower orders*, which appears earlier in the eighteenth century. Then, in the 1790s, we get *higher classes; middle classes* and *middling classes* follow at once; *working classes* in about 1815; *upper classes* in the 1820s. *Class prejudice, class legislation, class consciousness, class conflict* and *class war* follow in the course of the nineteenth century. The *upper middle classes* are first heard of in the 1890s; the *lower middle class* in our own century.

It is obvious, of course, that this spectacular history of the new use of *class* does not indicate the *beginning* of social

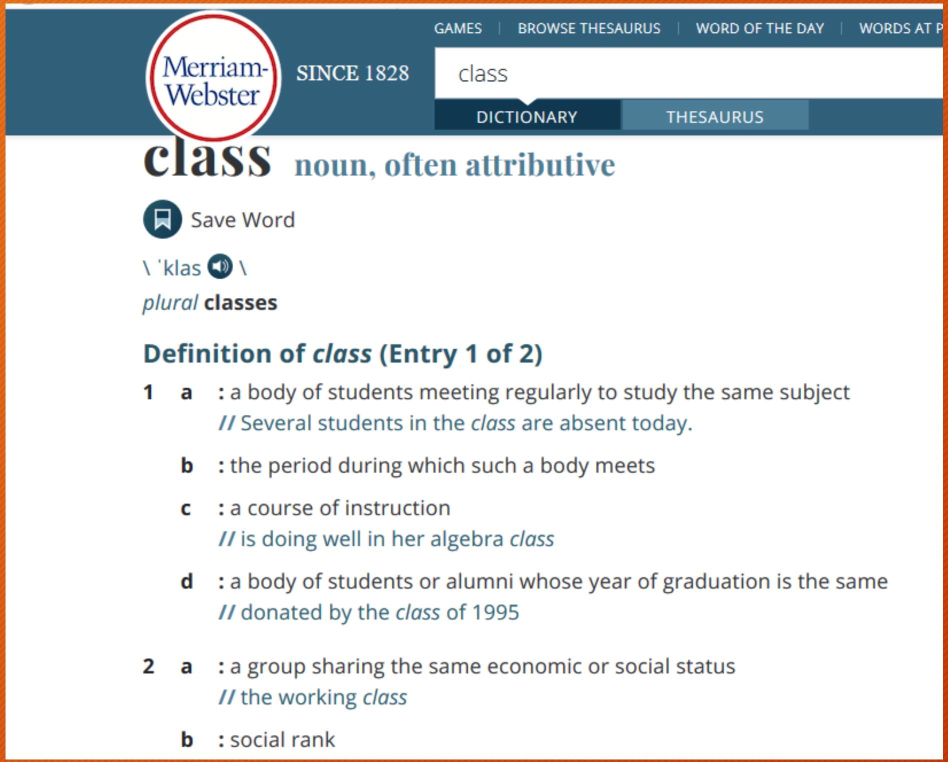
Keyword: Class

- Williams is not arguing that there were no terms or words in the English language that denoted social hierarchy. For instance, the word “rank” was used to signify social difference.
- The term “class” was initially used within a pedagogic context. As Williams says, it meant “division or group in schools and colleges” (xiii).
- The new connotation of “class” as signifier of social hierarchy develops during the late eighteenth century, around the same time that the meanings of the other four terms were changing.

Keyword: Class

- The word “class” is more “indefinite” or flexible that the term rank, which within the English context would imply social divisions based on hereditary titles, and the implicit divisions between the aristocracy the commoners.
- Williams outlines the use of the term class, beginning with “lower class” and moving on to “middle” and “upper class.”
- The term class (and not rank) would play an important role in Marxist critical thinking. Williams gestures towards this by referring to terms such as “class prejudice” and “class consciousness”

Keyword: Class – changing definitions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Save Word

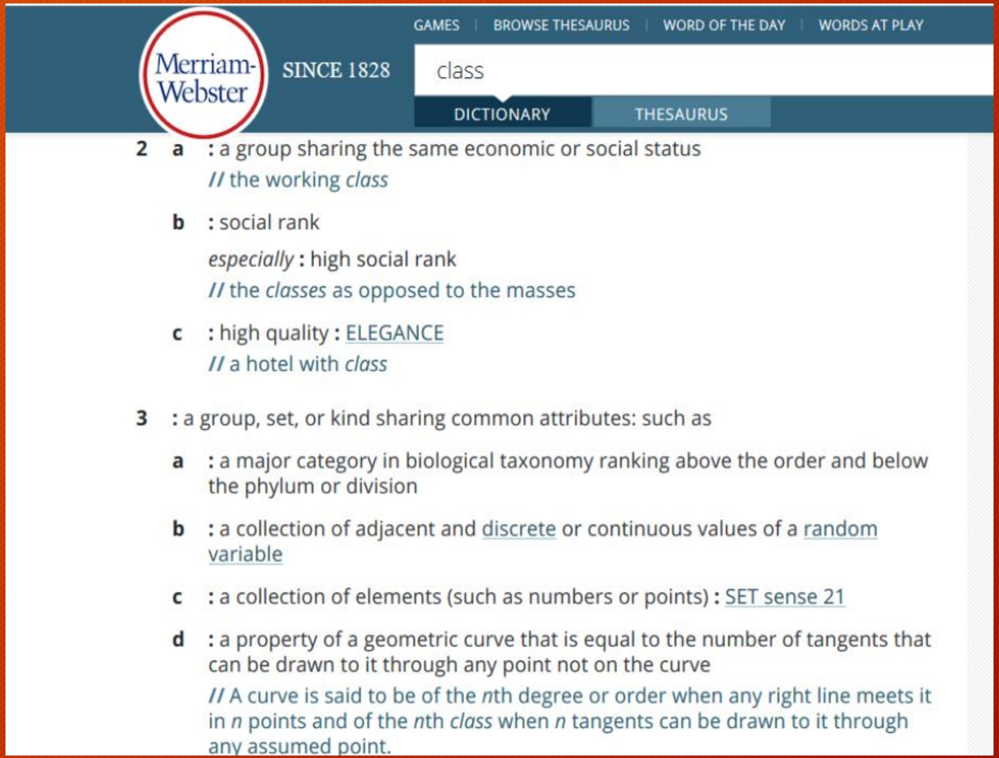
class noun, often attributive

\ ˈklas \
plural **classes**

Definition of *class* (Entry 1 of 2)

1 **a** **:** a body of students meeting regularly to study the same subject
// Several students in the *class* are absent today.
b **:** the period during which such a body meets
c **:** a course of instruction
// is doing well in her algebra *class*
d **:** a body of students or alumni whose year of graduation is the same
// donated by the *class* of 1995

2 **a** **:** a group sharing the same economic or social status
// the working *class*
b **:** social rank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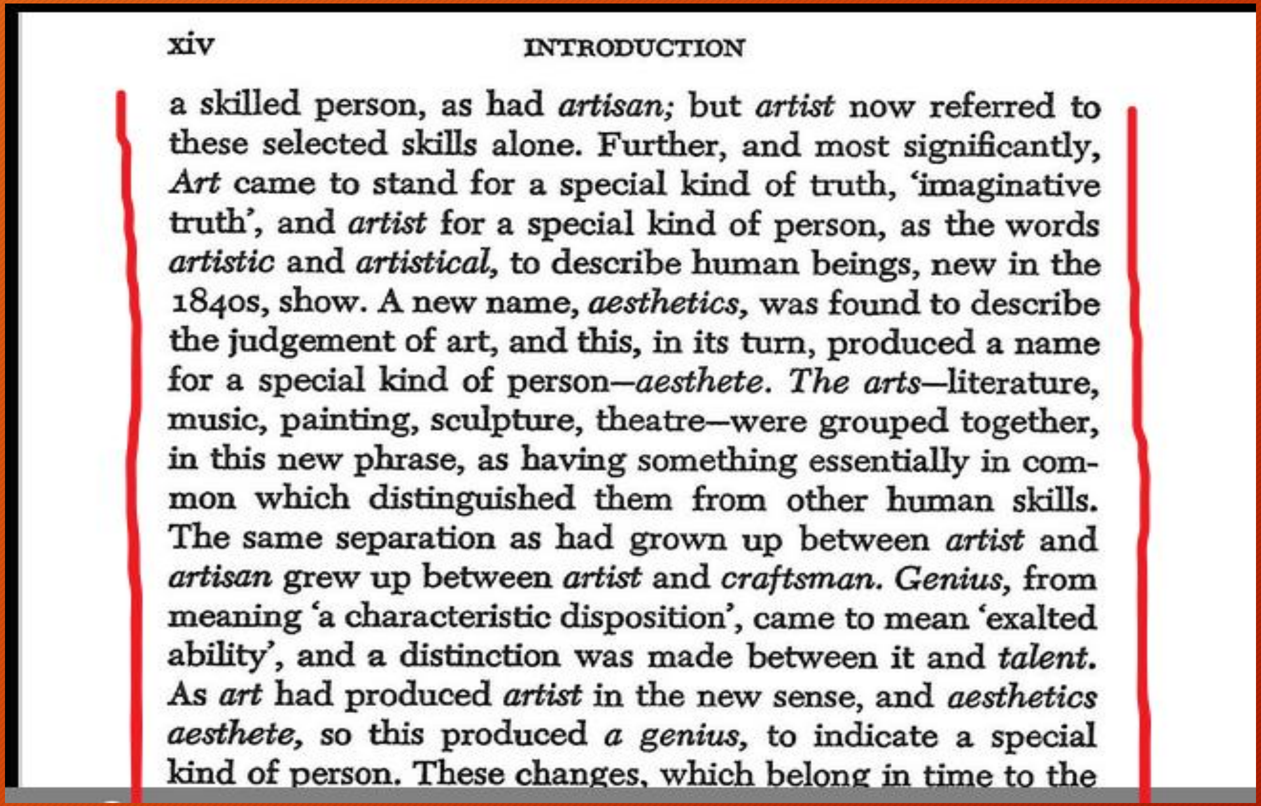
2 **a** **:** a group sharing the same economic or social status
// the working *class*
b **:** social rank
especially **:** high social rank
// the *classes* as opposed to the masses
c **:** high quality **:** ELEGANCE
// a hotel with *class*

3 **:** a group, set, or kind sharing common attributes: such as
a **:** a major category in biological taxonomy ranking above the order and below the phylum or division
b **:** a collection of adjacent and discrete or continuous values of a random variable
c **:** a collection of elements (such as numbers or points) **:** SET sense 21
d **:** a property of a geometric curve that is equal to the number of tangents that can be drawn to it through any point not on the curve
// A curve is said to be of the *n*th degree or order when any right line meets it in *n* points and of the *n*th *class* when *n* tangents can be drawn to it through any assumed point.

Keyword: Art

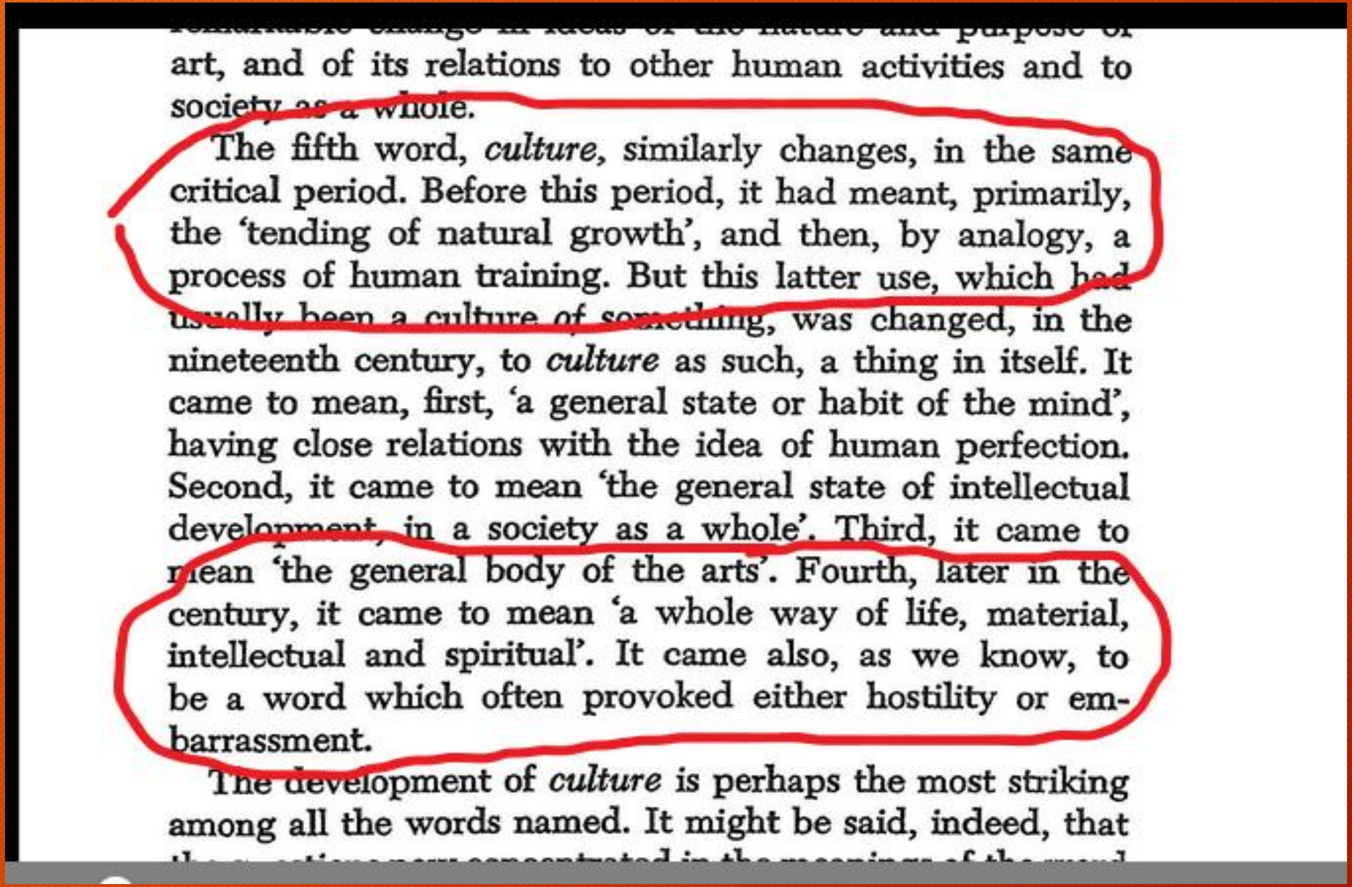


a skilled person, as had *artisan;* but *artist* now referred to these selected skills alone. Further, and most significantly, *Art* came to stand for a special kind of truth, 'imaginative truth', and *artist* for a special kind of person, as the words *artistic* and *artistical*, to describe human beings, new in the 1840s, show. A new name, *aesthetics*, was found to describe the judgement of art, and this, in its turn, produced a name for a special kind of person—*aesthete. The arts*—literature, music, painting, sculpture, theatre—were grouped together, in this new phrase, as having something essentially in common which distinguished them from other human skills. The same separation as had grown up between *artist* and *artisan* grew up between *artist* and *craftsman. Genius*, from meaning 'a characteristic disposition', came to mean 'exalted ability', and a distinction was made between it and *talent*. As *art* had produced *artist* in the new sense, and *aesthetics aesthete*, so this produced *a genius*, to indicate a special kind of person. These changes, which belong in time to the

Keyword: Art

- Like the term “industry,” the word “art” has shifted from the sense of skill to a more specialized meaning.
- The terms artist, genius, and aesthete acquire new individualized meanings.
- An artist now means a person who has a specific aesthetic skill. For example, a painter, a voice artist, etc. The artist now is an individual who possesses unique talent, and the word is closely associated with the term genius. It not longer means a craftsman’s skill.

Keyword: Culture



remarkable change in ideas of the nature and purpose of art, and of its relations to other human activities and to society as a whole.

The fifth word, *culture,* similarly changes, in the same critical period. Before this period, it had meant, primarily, the 'tending of natural growth', and then, by analogy, a process of human training. But this latter use, which had usually been a culture *of* something, was changed, in the nineteenth century, to *culture* as such, a thing in itself. It came to mean, first, 'a general state or habit of the mind', having close relations with the idea of human perfection. Second, it came to mean 'the general state of intellectual development, in a society as a whole'. Third, it came to mean 'the general body of the arts'. Fourth, later in the century, it came to mean 'a whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual'. It came also, as we know, to be a word which often provoked either hostility or embarrassment.

The development of *culture* is perhaps the most striking among all the words named. It might be said, indeed, that the questions now concentrated in the meanings of the word

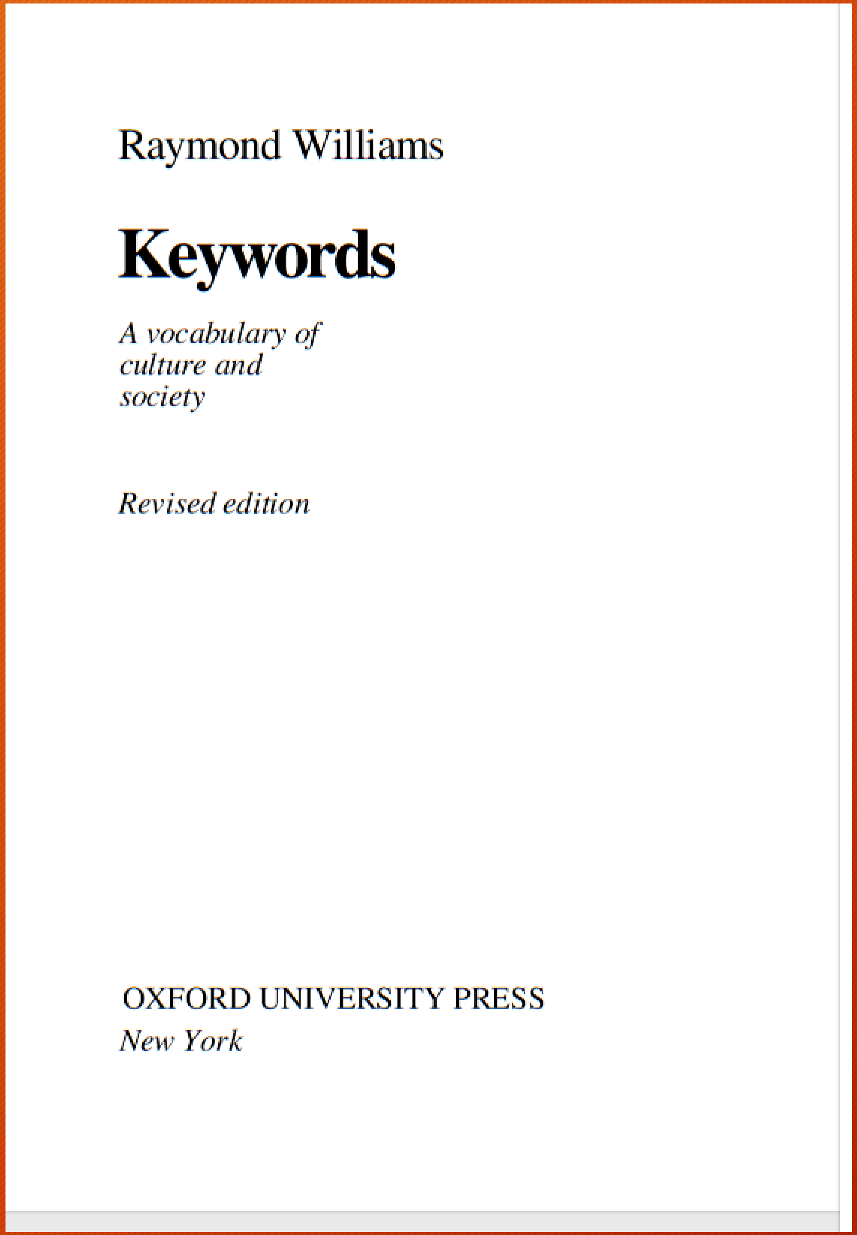
Keyword: Culture

- For Williams, it is the word “culture” that brings together and helps him understand the transitions in the other key words.
- Culture, in other words, is the filter or lens through which art, industry, class and democracy must be understood.
- The word culture has gone through multiple changes in meaning, from “natural growth” to “a whole way of life” (xiv).

Link to online version of text:

- https://archive.org/details/culturesociety17001850mbp/page/n19/mode/2up

- ADDITIONAL MATERIALS



Raymond Williams

Keywords

A vocabulary of
culture and
society

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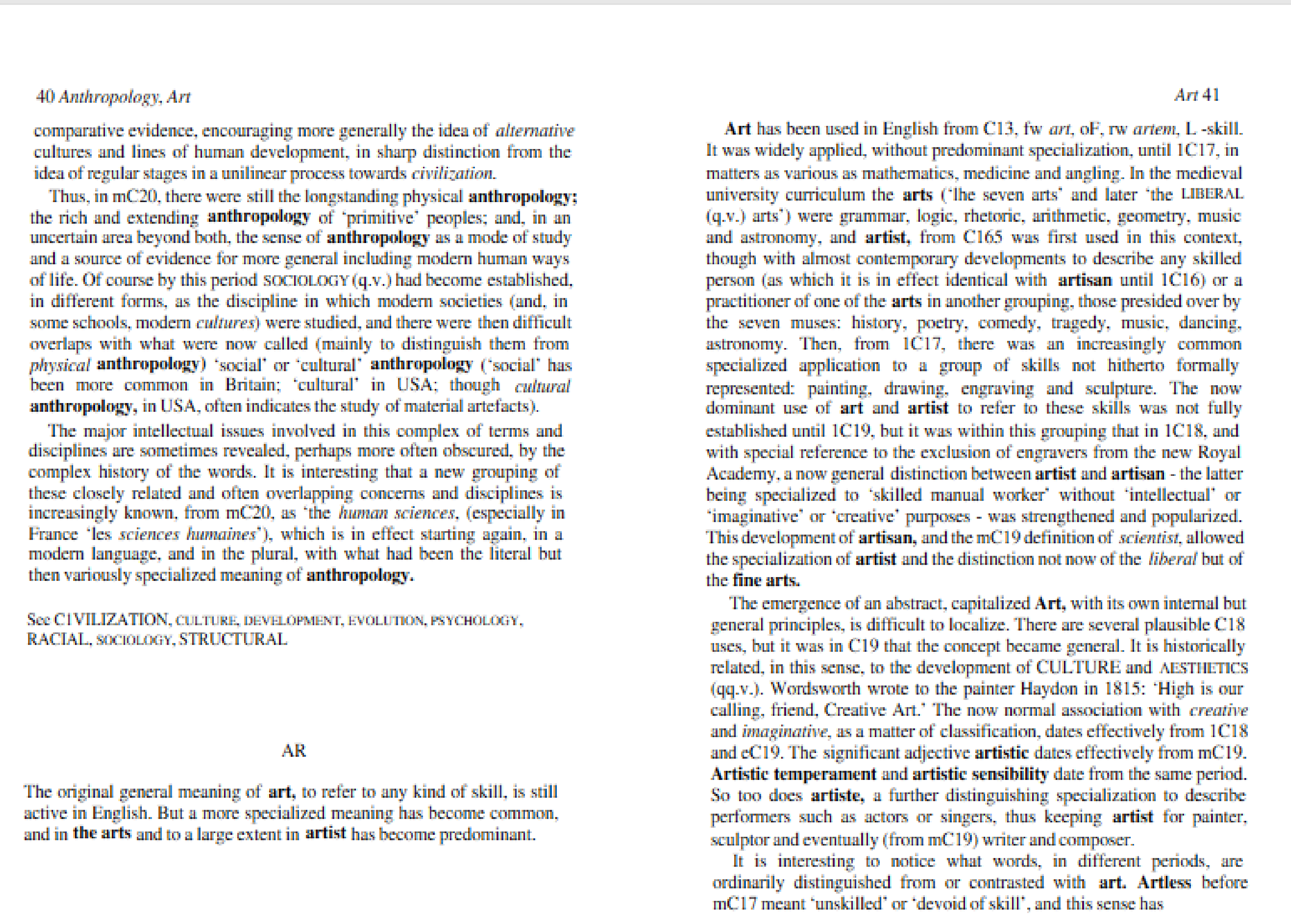


comparative evidence, encouraging more generally the idea of *alternative* cultures and lines of human development, in sharp distinction from the idea of regular stages in a unilinear process towards *civilization.*

Thus, in mC20, there were still the longstanding physical **anthropology;** the rich and extending **anthropology** of 'primitive' peoples; and, in an uncertain area beyond both, the sense of **anthropology** as a mode of study and a source of evidence for more general including modern human ways of life. Of course by this period SOCIOLOGY (q.v.) had become established, in different forms, as the discipline in which modern societies (and, in some schools, modern *cultures*) were studied, and there were then difficult overlaps with what were now called (mainly to distinguish them from *physical* **anthropology)** 'social' or 'cultural' **anthropology** ('social' has been more common in Britain; 'cultural' in USA; though *cultural* **anthropology,** in USA, often indicates the study of material artefacts).

The major intellectual issues involved in this complex of terms and disciplines are sometimes revealed, perhaps more often obscured, by the complex history of the words. It is interesting that a new grouping of these closely related and often overlapping concerns and disciplines is increasingly known, from mC20, as 'the *human sciences*, (especially in France 'les *sciences humaines*'), which is in effect starting again, in a modern language, and in the plural, with what had been the literal but then variously specialized meaning of **anthropology.**

See CIVILIZATION, CULTURE, DEVELOPMENT, EVOLUTION, PSYCHOLOGY, RACIAL, SOCIOLOGY, STRUCTURAL

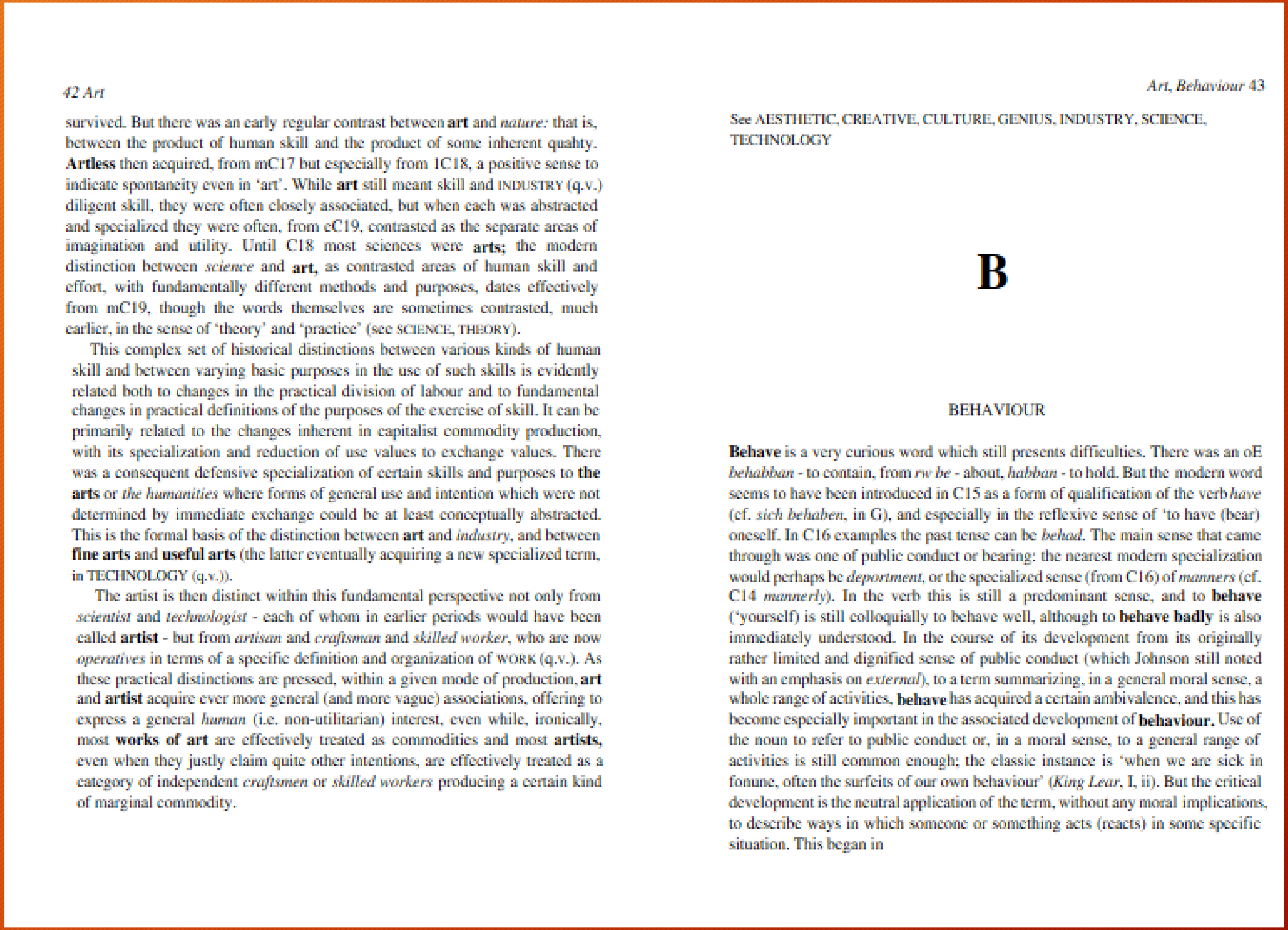
AR

The original general meaning of **art,** to refer to any kind of skill, is still active in English. But a more specialized meaning has become common, and in **the arts** and to a large extent in **artist** has become predominant.

Art has been used in English from C13, fw *art*, oF, rw *artem*, L -skill. It was widely applied, without predominant specialization, until 1C17, in matters as various as mathematics, medicine and angling. In the medieval university curriculum the **arts** ('the seven arts' and later 'the LIBERAL (q.v.) arts') were grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy, and **artist,** from C165 was first used in this context, though with almost contemporary developments to describe any skilled person (as which it is in effect identical with **artisan** until 1C16) or a practitioner of one of the **arts** in another grouping, those presided over by the seven muses: history, poetry, comedy, tragedy, music, dancing, astronomy. Then, from 1C17, there was an increasingly common specialized application to a group of skills not hitherto formally represented: painting, drawing, engraving and sculpture. The now dominant use of **art** and **artist** to refer to these skills was not fully established until 1C19, but it was within this grouping that in 1C18, and with special reference to the exclusion of engravers from the new Royal Academy, a now general distinction between **artist** and **artisan** - the latter being specialized to 'skilled manual worker' without 'intellectual' or 'imaginative' or 'creative' purposes - was strengthened and popularized. This development of **artisan,** and the mC19 definition of *scientist*, allowed the specialization of **artist** and the distinction not now of the *liberal* but of the **fine arts.**

The emergence of an abstract, capitalized **Art,** with its own internal but general principles, is difficult to localize. There are several plausible C18 uses, but it was in C19 that the concept became general. It is historically related, in this sense, to the development of CULTURE and AESTHETICS (qq.v.). Wordsworth wrote to the painter Haydon in 1815: 'High is our calling, friend, Creative Art.' The now normal association with *creative* and *imaginative*, as a matter of classification, dates effectively from 1C18 and eC19. The significant adjective **artistic** dates effectively from mC19. **Artistic temperament** and **artistic sensibility** date from the same period. So too does **artiste,** a further distinguishing specialization to describe performers such as actors or singers, thus keeping **artist** for painter, sculptor and eventually (from mC19) writer and composer.

It is interesting to notice what words, in different periods, are ordinarily distinguished from or contrasted with **art. Artless** before mC17 meant 'unskilled' or 'devoid of skill', and this sense has



survived. But there was an early regular contrast between **art** and *nature:* that is, between the product of human skill and the product of some inherent quality. **Artless** then acquired, from mC17 but especially from lC18, a positive sense to indicate spontaneity even in 'art'. While **art** still meant skill and INDUSTRY (q.v.) diligent skill, they were often closely associated, but when each was abstracted and specialized they were often, from eC19, contrasted as the separate areas of imagination and utility. Until C18 most sciences were **arts;** the modern distinction between *science* and **art,** as contrasted areas of human skill and effort, with fundamentally different methods and purposes, dates effectively from mC19, though the words themselves are sometimes contrasted, much earlier, in the sense of 'theory' and 'practice' (see SCIENCE, THEORY).

This complex set of historical distinctions between various kinds of human skill and between varying basic purposes in the use of such skills is evidently related both to changes in the practical division of labour and to fundamental changes in practical definitions of the purposes of the exercise of skill. It can be primarily related to the changes inherent in capitalist commodity production, with its specialization and reduction of use values to exchange values. There was a consequent defensive specialization of certain skills and purposes to **the arts** or *the humanities* where forms of general use and intention which were not determined by immediate exchange could be at least conceptually abstracted. This is the formal basis of the distinction between **art** and *industry*, and between **fine arts** and **useful arts** (the latter eventually acquiring a new specialized term, in TECHNOLOGY (q.v.)).

The artist is then distinct within this fundamental perspective not only from *scientist* and *technologist* - each of whom in earlier periods would have been called **artist** - but from *artisan* and *craftsman* and *skilled worker*, who are now *operatives* in terms of a specific definition and organization of WORK (q.v.). As these practical distinctions are pressed, within a given mode of production, **art** and **artist** acquire ever more general (and more vague) associations, offering to express a general *human* (i.e. non-utilitarian) interest, even while, ironically, most **works of art** are effectively treated as commodities and most **artists,** even when they justly claim quite other intentions, are effectively treated as a category of independent *craftsmen* or *skilled workers* producing a certain kind of marginal commodity.

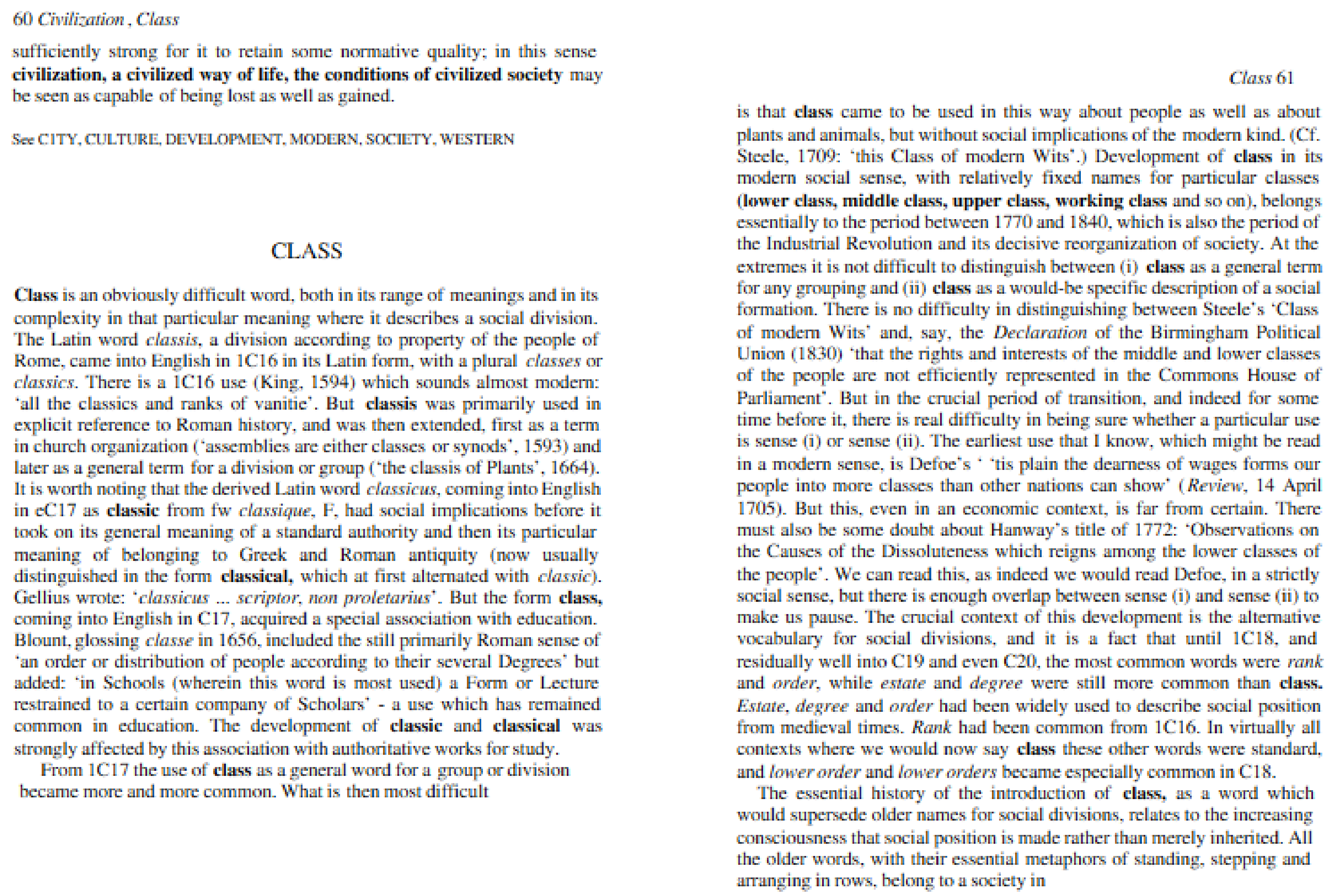
See AESTHETIC, CREATIVE, CULTURE, GENIUS, INDUSTRY, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY

B

BEHAVIOUR

Behave is a very curious word which still presents difficulties. There was an oE *behabban* - to contain, from *rw be* - about, *habban* - to hold. But the modern word seems to have been introduced in C15 as a form of qualification of the verb *have* (cf. *sich behaben*, in G), and especially in the reflexive sense of 'to have (bear) oneself. In C16 examples the past tense can be *behad*. The main sense that came through was one of public conduct or bearing: the nearest modern specialization would perhaps be *deportment*, or the specialized sense (from C16) of *manners* (cf. C14 *mannerly*). In the verb this is still a predominant sense, and to **behave** ('yourself) is still colloquially to behave well, although to **behave badly** is also immediately understood. In the course of its development from its originally rather limited and dignified sense of public conduct (which Johnson still noted with an emphasis on *external*), to a term summarizing, in a general moral sense, a whole range of activities, **behave** has acquired a certain ambivalence, and this has become especially important in the associated development of **behaviour.** Use of the noun to refer to public conduct or, in a moral sense, to a general range of activities is still common enough; the classic instance is 'when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behaviour' (*King Lear*, I, ii). But the critical development is the neutral application of the term, without any moral implications, to describe ways in which someone or something acts (reacts) in some specific situation. This began in

Raymond williams keywords



sufficiently strong for it to retain some normative quality; in this sense **civilization, a civilized way of life, the conditions of civilized society** may be seen as capable of being lost as well as gained.

See CITY, CULTURE, DEVELOPMENT, MODERN, SOCIETY, WESTERN

CLASS

Class is an obviously difficult word, both in its range of meanings and in its complexity in that particular meaning where it describes a social division. The Latin word *classis*, a division according to property of the people of Rome, came into English in 1C16 in its Latin form, with a plural *classes* or *classics*. There is a 1C16 use (King, 1594) which sounds almost modern: 'all the classics and ranks of vanitie'. But **classis** was primarily used in explicit reference to Roman history, and was then extended, first as a term in church organization ('assemblies are either classes or synods', 1593) and later as a general term for a division or group ('the classis of Plants', 1664). It is worth noting that the derived Latin word *classicus*, coming into English in eC17 as **classic** from fw *classique*, F, had social implications before it took on its general meaning of a standard authority and then its particular meaning of belonging to Greek and Roman antiquity (now usually distinguished in the form **classical,** which at first alternated with *classic*). Gellius wrote: '*classicus ... scriptor, non proletarius*'. But the form **class,** coming into English in C17, acquired a special association with education. Blount, glossing *classe* in 1656, included the still primarily Roman sense of 'an order or distribution of people according to their several Degrees' but added: 'in Schools (wherein this word is most used) a Form or Lecture restrained to a certain company of Scholars' - a use which has remained common in education. The development of **classic** and **classical** was strongly affected by this association with authoritative works for study.

From 1C17 the use of **class** as a general word for a group or division became more and more common. What is then most difficult

is that **class** came to be used in this way about people as well as about plants and animals, but without social implications of the modern kind. (Cf. Steele, 1709: 'this Class of modern Wits'.) Development of **class** in its modern social sense, with relatively fixed names for particular classes (**lower class, middle class, upper class, working class** and so on), belongs essentially to the period between 1770 and 1840, which is also the period of the Industrial Revolution and its decisive reorganization of society. At the extremes it is not difficult to distinguish between (i) **class** as a general term for any grouping and (ii) **class** as a would-be specific description of a social formation. There is no difficulty in distinguishing between Steele's 'Class of modern Wits' and, say, the *Declaration* of the Birmingham Political Union (1830) 'that the rights and interests of the middle and lower classes of the people are not efficiently represented in the Commons House of Parliament'. But in the crucial period of transition, and indeed for some time before it, there is real difficulty in being sure whether a particular use is sense (i) or sense (ii). The earliest use that I know, which might be read in a modern sense, is Defoe's ' 'tis plain the dearness of wages forms our people into more classes than other nations can show' (*Review*, 14 April 1705). But this, even in an economic context, is far from certain. There must also be some doubt about Hanway's title of 1772: 'Observations on the Causes of the Dissoluteness which reigns among the lower classes of the people'. We can read this, as indeed we would read Defoe, in a strictly social sense, but there is enough overlap between sense (i) and sense (ii) to make us pause. The crucial context of this development is the alternative vocabulary for social divisions, and it is a fact that until 1C18, and residually well into C19 and even C20, the most common words were *rank* and *order*, while *estate* and *degree* were still more common than **class.** *Estate*, *degree* and *order* had been widely used to describe social position from medieval times. *Rank* had been common from 1C16. In virtually all contexts where we would now say **class** these other words were standard, and *lower order* and *lower orders* became especially common in C18.

The essential history of the introduction of **class,** as a word which would supersede older names for social divisions, relates to the increasing consciousness that social position is made rather than merely inherited. All the older words, with their essential metaphors of standing, stepping and arranging in rows, belong to a society in
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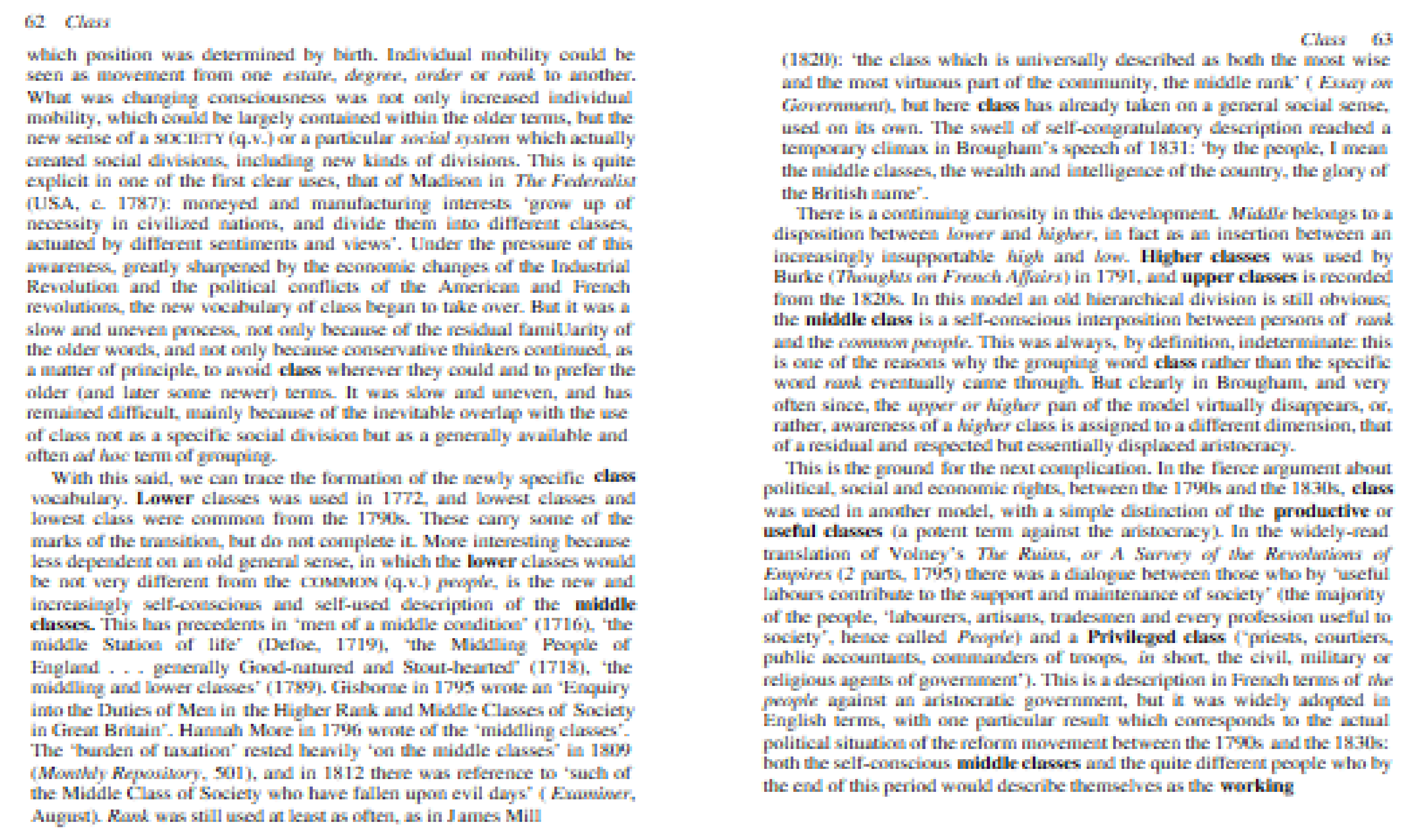


which position was determined by birth. Individual mobility could be seen as movement from one *estate*, *degree*, *order* or *rank* to another. What was changing consciousness was not only increased individual mobility, which could be largely contained within the older terms, but the new sense of a SOCIETY (q.v.) or a particular *social system* which actually created social divisions, including new kinds of divisions. This is quite explicit in one of the first clear uses, that of Madison in *The Federalist* (USA, *c.* 1787): moneyed and manufacturing interests 'grow up of necessity in civilized nations, and divide them into different classes, actuated by different sentiments and views'. Under the pressure of this awareness, greatly sharpened by the economic changes of the Industrial Revolution and the political conflicts of the American and French revolutions, the new vocabulary of class began to take over. But it was a slow and uneven process, not only because of the residual familiarity of the older words, and not only because conservative thinkers continued, as a matter of principle, to avoid **class** wherever they could and to prefer the older (and later some newer) terms. It was slow and uneven, and has remained difficult, mainly because of the inevitable overlap with the use of class not as a specific social division but as a generally available and often *ad hoc* term of grouping.

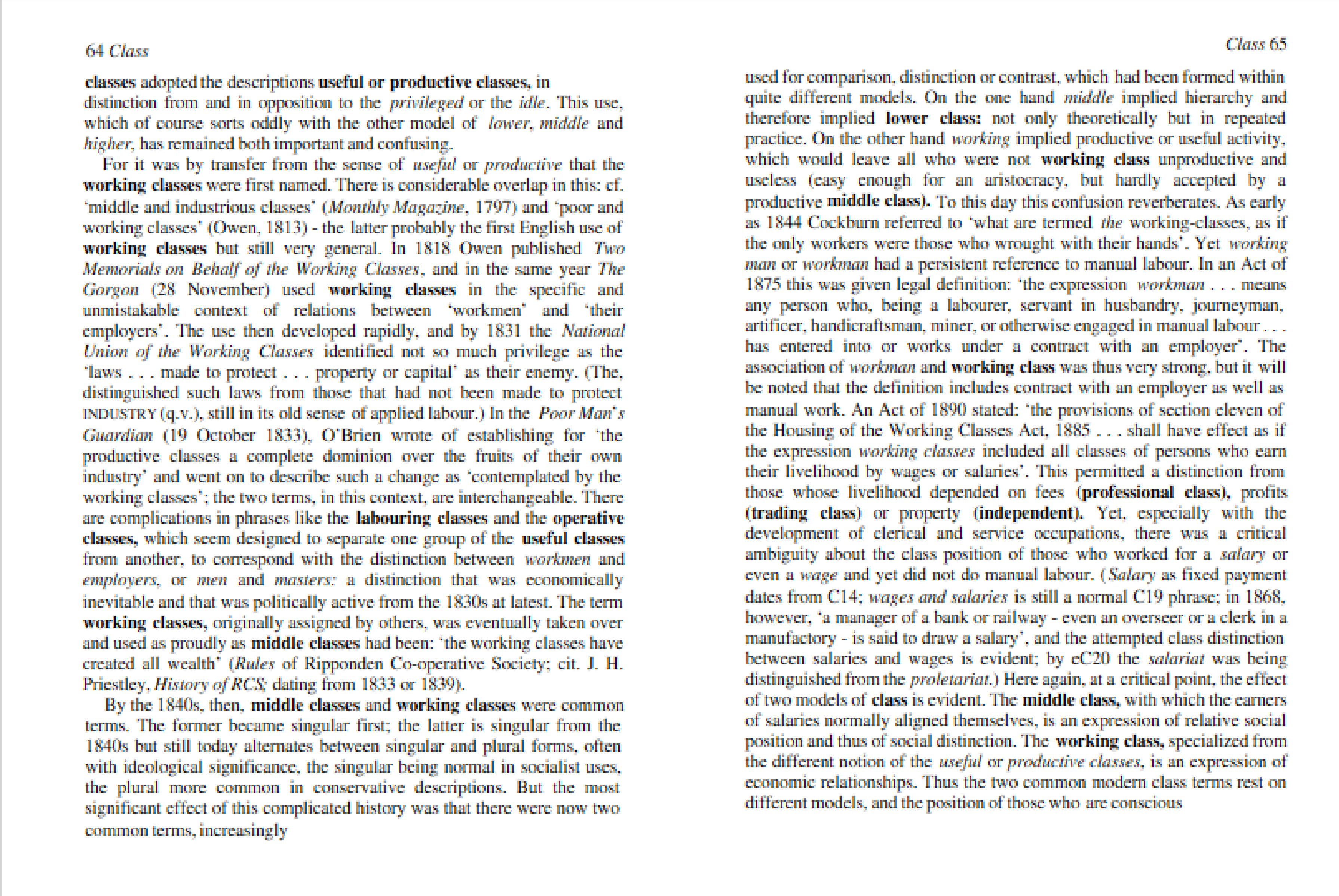
With this said, we can trace the formation of the newly specific **class** vocabulary. **Lower** classes was used in 1772, and lowest classes and lowest class were common from the 1790s. These carry some of the marks of the transition, but do not complete it. More interesting because less dependent on an old general sense, in which the **lower** classes would be not very different from the COMMON (q.v.) *people*, is the new and increasingly self-conscious and self-used description of the **middle classes.** This has precedents in 'men of a middle condition' (1716), 'the middle Station of life' (Defoe, 1719), 'the Middling People of England . . . generally Good-natured and Stout-hearted' (1718), 'the middling and lower classes' (1789). Gisborne in 1795 wrote an 'Enquiry into the Duties of Men in the Higher Rank and Middle Classes of Society in Great Britain'. Hannah More in 1796 wrote of the 'middling classes'. The 'burden of taxation' rested heavily 'on the middle classes' in 1809 (*Monthly Repository*, 501), and in 1812 there was reference to 'such of the Middle Class of Society who have fallen upon evil days' (*Examiner*, August). *Rank* was still used at least as often, as in James Mill

(1820): 'the class which is universally described as both the most wise and the most virtuous part of the community, the middle rank' (*Essay on Government*), but here **class** has already taken on a general social sense, used on its own. The swell of self-congratulatory description reached a temporary climax in Brougham's speech of 1831: 'by the people, I mean the middle classes, the wealth and intelligence of the country, the glory of the British name'.

There is a continuing curiosity in this development. *Middle* belongs to a disposition between *lower* and *higher*, in fact as an insertion between an increasingly insupportable *high* and *low*. **Higher classes** was used by Burke (*Thoughts on French Affairs*) in 1791, and **upper classes** is recorded from the 1820s. In this model an old hierarchical division is still obvious; the **middle class** is a self-conscious interposition between persons of *rank* and the *common people*. This was always, by definition, indeterminate: this is one of the reasons why the grouping word **class** rather than the specific word *rank* eventually came through. But clearly in Brougham, and very often since, the *upper or higher* pan of the model virtually disappears, or, rather, awareness of a *higher* class is assigned to a different dimension, that of a residual and respected but essentially displaced aristocracy.

This is the ground for the next complication. In the fierce argument about political, social and economic rights, between the 1790s and the 1830s, **class** was used in another model, with a simple distinction of the **productive** or **useful classes** (a potent term against the aristocracy). In the widely-read translation of Volney's *The Ruins, or A Survey of the Revolutions of Empires* (2 parts, 1795) there was a dialogue between those who by 'useful labours contribute to the support and maintenance of society' (the majority of the people, 'labourers, artisans, tradesmen and every profession useful to society', hence called *People*) and a **Privileged class** ('priests, courtiers, public accountants, commanders of troops, *in* short, the civil, military or religious agents of government'). This is a description in French terms of *the people* against an aristocratic government, but it was widely adopted in English terms, with one particular result which corresponds to the actual political situation of the reform movement between the 1790s and the 1830s: both the self-conscious **middle classes** and the quite different people who by the end of this period would describe themselves as the **working**

Raymond williams keywords

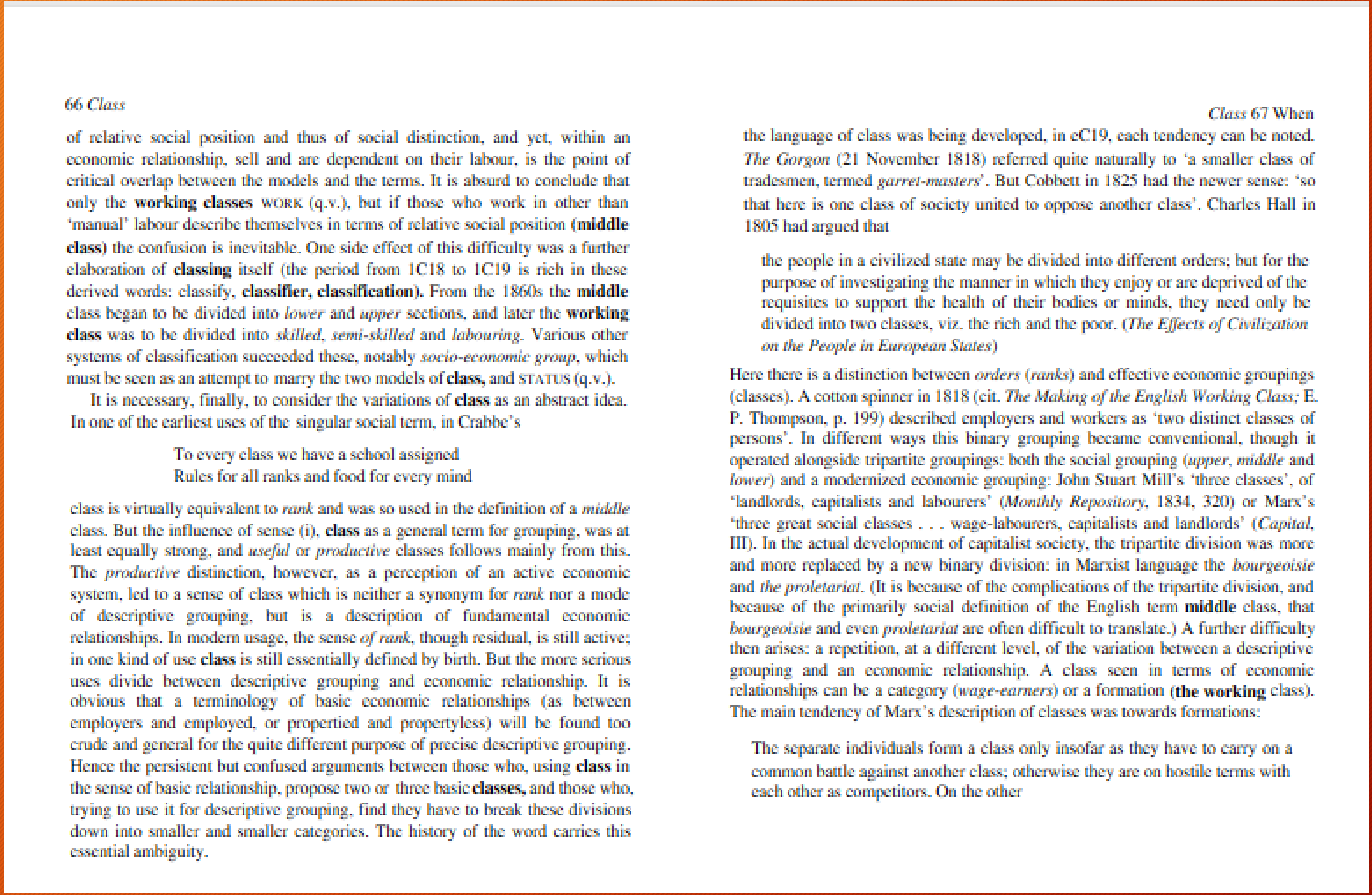


classes adopted the descriptions **useful or productive classes,** in distinction from and in opposition to the *privileged* or the *idle*. This use, which of course sorts oddly with the other model of *lower*, *middle* and *higher*, has remained both important and confusing.

For it was by transfer from the sense of *useful* or *productive* that the **working classes** were first named. There is considerable overlap in this: cf. 'middle and industrious classes' (*Monthly Magazine*, 1797) and 'poor and working classes' (Owen, 1813) - the latter probably the first English use of **working classes** but still very general. In 1818 Owen published *Two Memorials on Behalf of the Working Classes*, and in the same year *The Gorgon* (28 November) used **working classes** in the specific and unmistakable context of relations between 'workmen' and 'their employers'. The use then developed rapidly, and by 1831 the *National Union of the Working Classes* identified not so much privilege as the 'laws . . . made to protect . . . property or capital' as their enemy. (The, distinguished such laws from those that had not been made to protect INDUSTRY (q.v.), still in its old sense of applied labour.) In the *Poor Man's Guardian* (19 October 1833), O'Brien wrote of establishing for 'the productive classes a complete dominion over the fruits of their own industry' and went on to describe such a change as 'contemplated by the working classes'; the two terms, in this context, are interchangeable. There are complications in phrases like the **labouring classes** and the **operative classes,** which seem designed to separate one group of the **useful classes** from another, to correspond with the distinction between *workmen* and *employers*, or *men* and *masters:* a distinction that was economically inevitable and that was politically active from the 1830s at latest. The term **working classes,** originally assigned by others, was eventually taken over and used as proudly as **middle classes** had been: 'the working classes have created all wealth' (*Rules* of Ripponden Co-operative Society; cit. J. H. Priestley, *History of RCS;* dating from 1833 or 1839).

By the 1840s, then, **middle classes** and **working classes** were common terms. The former became singular first; the latter is singular from the 1840s but still today alternates between singular and plural forms, often with ideological significance, the singular being normal in socialist uses, the plural more common in conservative descriptions. But the most significant effect of this complicated history was that there were now two common terms, increasingly

used for comparison, distinction or contrast, which had been formed within quite different models. On the one hand *middle* implied hierarchy and therefore implied **lower class:** not only theoretically but in repeated practice. On the other hand *working* implied productive or useful activity, which would leave all who were not **working class** unproductive and useless (easy enough for an aristocracy, but hardly accepted by a productive **middle class).** To this day this confusion reverberates. As early as 1844 Cockburn referred to 'what are termed *the* working-classes, as if the only workers were those who wrought with their hands'. Yet *working man* or *workman* had a persistent reference to manual labour. In an Act of 1875 this was given legal definition: 'the expression *workman* . . . means any person who, being a labourer, servant in husbandry, journeyman, artificer, handicraftsman, miner, or otherwise engaged in manual labour . . . has entered into or works under a contract with an employer'. The association of *workman* and **working class** was thus very strong, but it will be noted that the definition includes contract with an employer as well as manual work. An Act of 1890 stated: 'the provisions of section eleven of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1885 . . . shall have effect as if the expression *working classes* included all classes of persons who earn their livelihood by wages or salaries'. This permitted a distinction from those whose livelihood depended on fees **(professional class),** profits **(trading class)** or property **(independent).** Yet, especially with the development of clerical and service occupations, there was a critical ambiguity about the class position of those who worked for a *salary* or even a *wage* and yet did not do manual labour. (*Salary* as fixed payment dates from C14; *wages and salaries* is still a normal C19 phrase; in 1868, however, 'a manager of a bank or railway - even an overseer or a clerk in a manufactory - is said to draw a salary', and the attempted class distinction between salaries and wages is evident; by eC20 the *salariat* was being distinguished from the *proletariat.*) Here again, at a critical point, the effect of two models of **class** is evident. The **middle class,** with which the earners of salaries normally aligned themselves, is an expression of relative social position and thus of social distinction. The **working class,** specialized from the different notion of the *useful* or *productive classes*, is an expression of economic relationships. Thus the two common modern class terms rest on different models, and the position of those who are conscious



of relative social position and thus of social distinction, and yet, within an economic relationship, sell and are dependent on their labour, is the point of critical overlap between the models and the terms. It is absurd to conclude that only the **working classes** WORK (q.v.), but if those who work in other than 'manual' labour describe themselves in terms of relative social position (**middle class**) the confusion is inevitable. One side effect of this difficulty was a further elaboration of **classing** itself (the period from lC18 to lC19 is rich in these derived words: classify, **classifier, classification).** From the 1860s the **middle** class began to be divided into *lower* and *upper* sections, and later the **working class** was to be divided into *skilled*, *semi-skilled* and *labouring*. Various other systems of classification succeeded these, notably *socio-economic group*, which must be seen as an attempt to marry the two models of **class,** and STATUS (q.v.).

It is necessary, finally, to consider the variations of **class** as an abstract idea. In one of the earliest uses of the singular social term, in Crabbe's

> To every class we have a school assigned
> Rules for all ranks and food for every mind

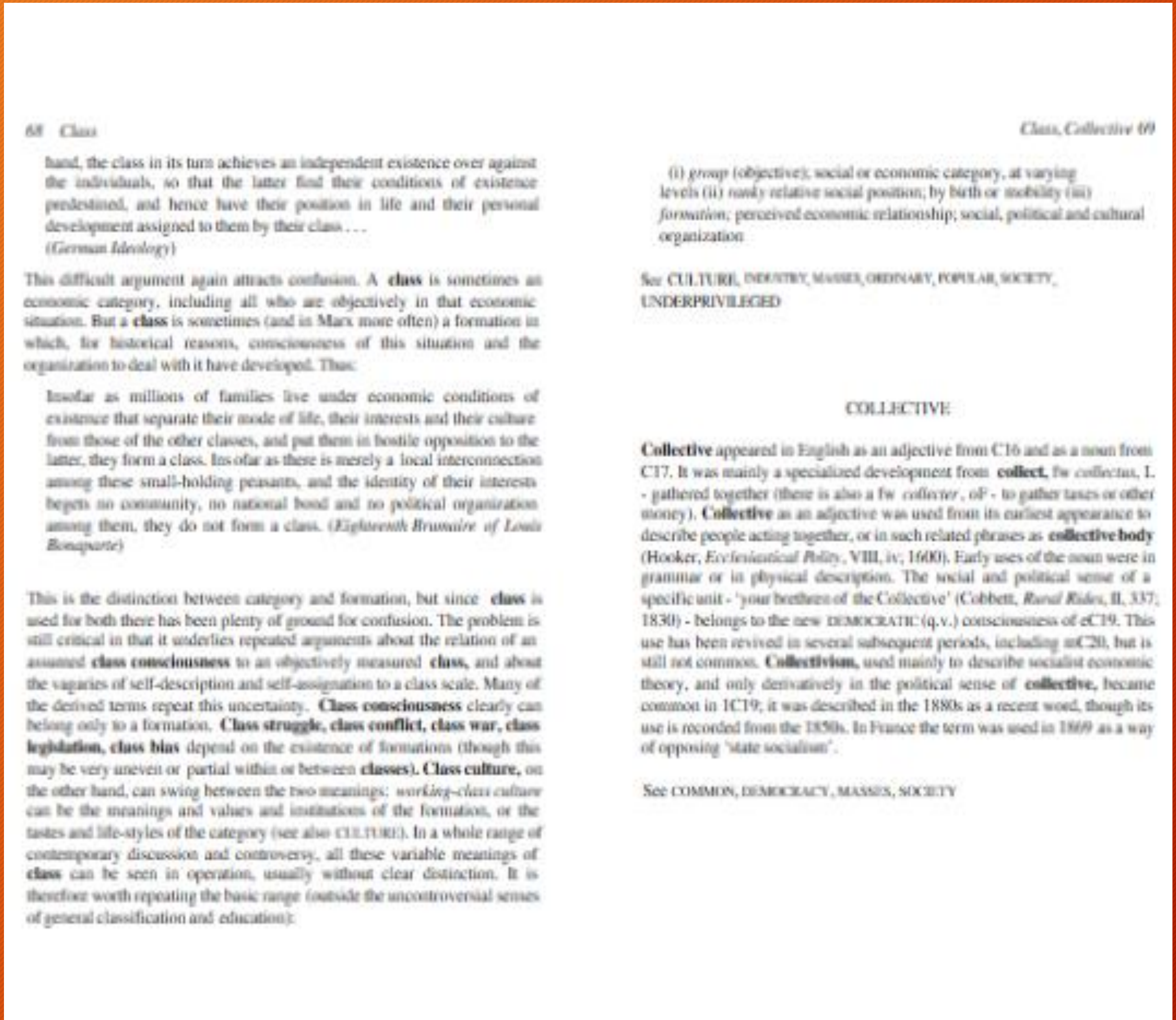
class is virtually equivalent to *rank* and was so used in the definition of a *middle* class. But the influence of sense (i), **class** as a general term for grouping, was at least equally strong, and *useful* or *productive* classes follows mainly from this. The *productive* distinction, however, as a perception of an active economic system, led to a sense of class which is neither a synonym for *rank* nor a mode of descriptive grouping, but is a description of fundamental economic relationships. In modern usage, the sense *of rank*, though residual, is still active; in one kind of use **class** is still essentially defined by birth. But the more serious uses divide between descriptive grouping and economic relationship. It is obvious that a terminology of basic economic relationships (as between employers and employed, or propertied and propertyless) will be found too crude and general for the quite different purpose of precise descriptive grouping. Hence the persistent but confused arguments between those who, using **class** in the sense of basic relationship, propose two or three basic **classes,** and those who, trying to use it for descriptive grouping, find they have to break these divisions down into smaller and smaller categories. The history of the word carries this essential ambiguity.

When the language of class was being developed, in eC19, each tendency can be noted. *The Gorgon* (21 November 1818) referred quite naturally to 'a smaller class of tradesmen, termed *garret-masters*'. But Cobbett in 1825 had the newer sense: 'so that here is one class of society united to oppose another class'. Charles Hall in 1805 had argued that

> the people in a civilized state may be divided into different orders; but for the purpose of investigating the manner in which they enjoy or are deprived of the requisites to support the health of their bodies or minds, they need only be divided into two classes, viz. the rich and the poor. (*The Effects of Civilization on the People in European States*)

Here there is a distinction between *orders* (*ranks*) and effective economic groupings (classes). A cotton spinner in 1818 (cit. *The Making of the English Working Class;* E. P. Thompson, p. 199) described employers and workers as 'two distinct classes of persons'. In different ways this binary grouping became conventional, though it operated alongside tripartite groupings: both the social grouping (*upper*, *middle* and *lower*) and a modernized economic grouping: John Stuart Mill's 'three classes', of 'landlords, capitalists and labourers' (*Monthly Repository*, 1834, 320) or Marx's 'three great social classes . . . wage-labourers, capitalists and landlords' (*Capital*, III). In the actual development of capitalist society, the tripartite division was more and more replaced by a new binary division: in Marxist language the *bourgeoisie* and *the proletariat*. (It is because of the complications of the tripartite division, and because of the primarily social definition of the English term **middle** class, that *bourgeoisie* and even *proletariat* are often difficult to translate.) A further difficulty then arises: a repetition, at a different level, of the variation between a descriptive grouping and an economic relationship. A class seen in terms of economic relationships can be a category (*wage-earners*) or a formation (**the working** class). The main tendency of Marx's description of classes was towards formations:

> The separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors. On the other



> hand, the class in its turn achieves an independent existence over against the individuals, so that the latter find their conditions of existence predestined, and hence have their position in life and their personal development assigned to them by their class . . .
> (*German Ideology*)

This difficult argument again attracts confusion. A **class** is sometimes an economic category, including all who are objectively in that economic situation. But a **class** is sometimes (and in Marx more often) a formation in which, for historical reasons, consciousness of this situation and the organization to deal with it have developed. Thus:

> Insofar as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. Ins ofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class. (*Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*)

This is the distinction between category and formation, but since **class** is used for both there has been plenty of ground for confusion. The problem is still critical in that it underlies repeated arguments about the relation of an assumed **class consciousness** to an objectively measured **class,** and about the vagaries of self-description and self-assignation to a class scale. Many of the derived terms repeat this uncertainty. **Class consciousness** clearly can belong only to a formation. **Class struggle, class conflict, class war, class legislation, class bias** depend on the existence of formations (though this may be very uneven or partial within or between **classes**). **Class culture,** on the other hand, can swing between the two meanings: *working-class culture* can be the meanings and values and institutions of the formation, or the tastes and life-styles of the category (see also CULTURE). In a whole range of contemporary discussion and controversy, all these variable meanings of **class** can be seen in operation, usually without clear distinction. It is therefore worth repeating the basic range (outside the uncontroversial senses of general classification and education):

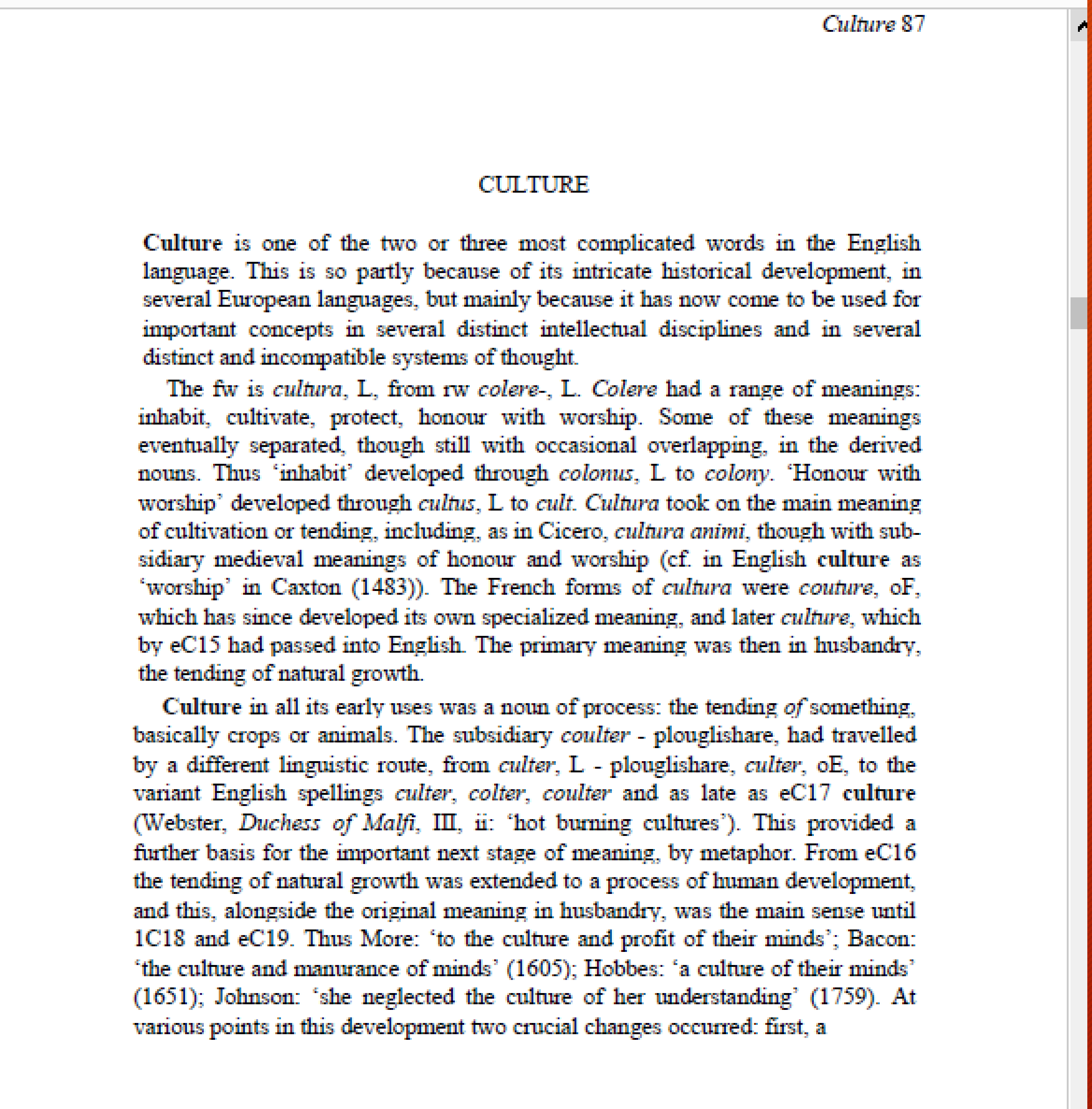
> (i) *group* (objective): social or economic category, at varying
> levels (ii) *rank*: relative social position; by birth or mobility (iii)
> *formation*: perceived economic relationship; social, political and cultural organization

See CULTURE, INDUSTRY, MASSES, ORDINARY, POPULAR, SOCIETY, UNDERPRIVILEGED

COLLECTIVE

Collective appeared in English as an adjective from C16 and as a noun from C17. It was mainly a specialized development from **collect,** fw *collectus*, L - gathered together (there is also a fw *collecter*, oF - to gather taxes or other money). **Collective** as an adjective was used from its earliest appearance to describe people acting together, or in such related phrases as **collective body** (Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, VIII, iv; 1600). Early uses of the noun were in grammar or in physical description. The social and political sense of a specific unit - 'your brethren of the Collective' (Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, II, 337; 1830) - belongs to the new DEMOCRATIC (q.v.) consciousness of eC19. This use has been revived in several subsequent periods, including mC20, but is still not common. **Collectivism,** used mainly to describe socialist economic theory, and only derivatively in the political sense of **collective,** became common in 1C19; it was described in the 1880s as a recent word, though its use is recorded from the 1850s. In France the term was used in 1869 as a way of opposing 'state socialism'.

See COMMON, DEMOCRACY, MASSES, SOCIETY

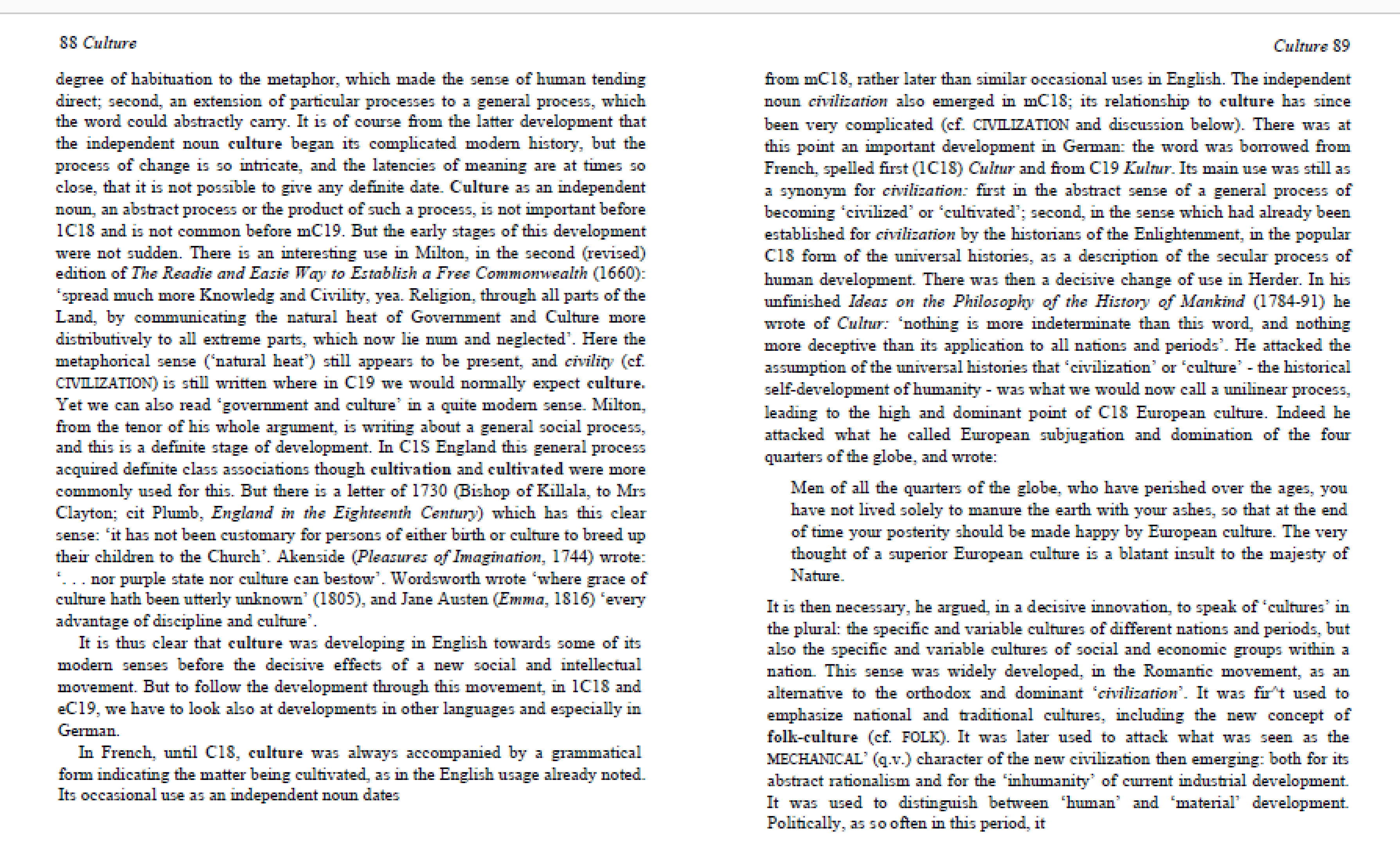


CULTURE

Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. This is so partly because of its intricate historical development, in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought.

The fw is *cultura*, L, from rw *colere*-, L. *Colere* had a range of meanings: inhabit, cultivate, protect, honour with worship. Some of these meanings eventually separated, though still with occasional overlapping, in the derived nouns. Thus 'inhabit' developed through *colonus*, L to *colony*. 'Honour with worship' developed through *cultus*, L to *cult*. *Cultura* took on the main meaning of cultivation or tending, including, as in Cicero, *cultura animi*, though with subsidiary medieval meanings of honour and worship (cf. in English **culture** as 'worship' in Caxton (1483)). The French forms of *cultura* were *couture*, oF, which has since developed its own specialized meaning, and later *culture*, which by eC15 had passed into English. The primary meaning was then in husbandry, the tending of natural growth.

Culture in all its early uses was a noun of process: the tending *of* something, basically crops or animals. The subsidiary *coulter* - ploughshare, had travelled by a different linguistic route, from *culter*, L - ploughshare, *culter*, oE, to the variant English spellings *culter*, *colter*, *coulter* and as late as eC17 **culture** (Webster, *Duchess of Malfi*, III, ii: 'hot burning cultures'). This provided a further basis for the important next stage of meaning, by metaphor. From eC16 the tending of natural growth was extended to a process of human development, and this, alongside the original meaning in husbandry, was the main sense until lC18 and eC19. Thus More: 'to the culture and profit of their minds'; Bacon: 'the culture and manurance of minds' (1605); Hobbes: 'a culture of their minds' (1651); Johnson: 'she neglected the culture of her understanding' (1759). At various points in this development two crucial changes occurred: first, a



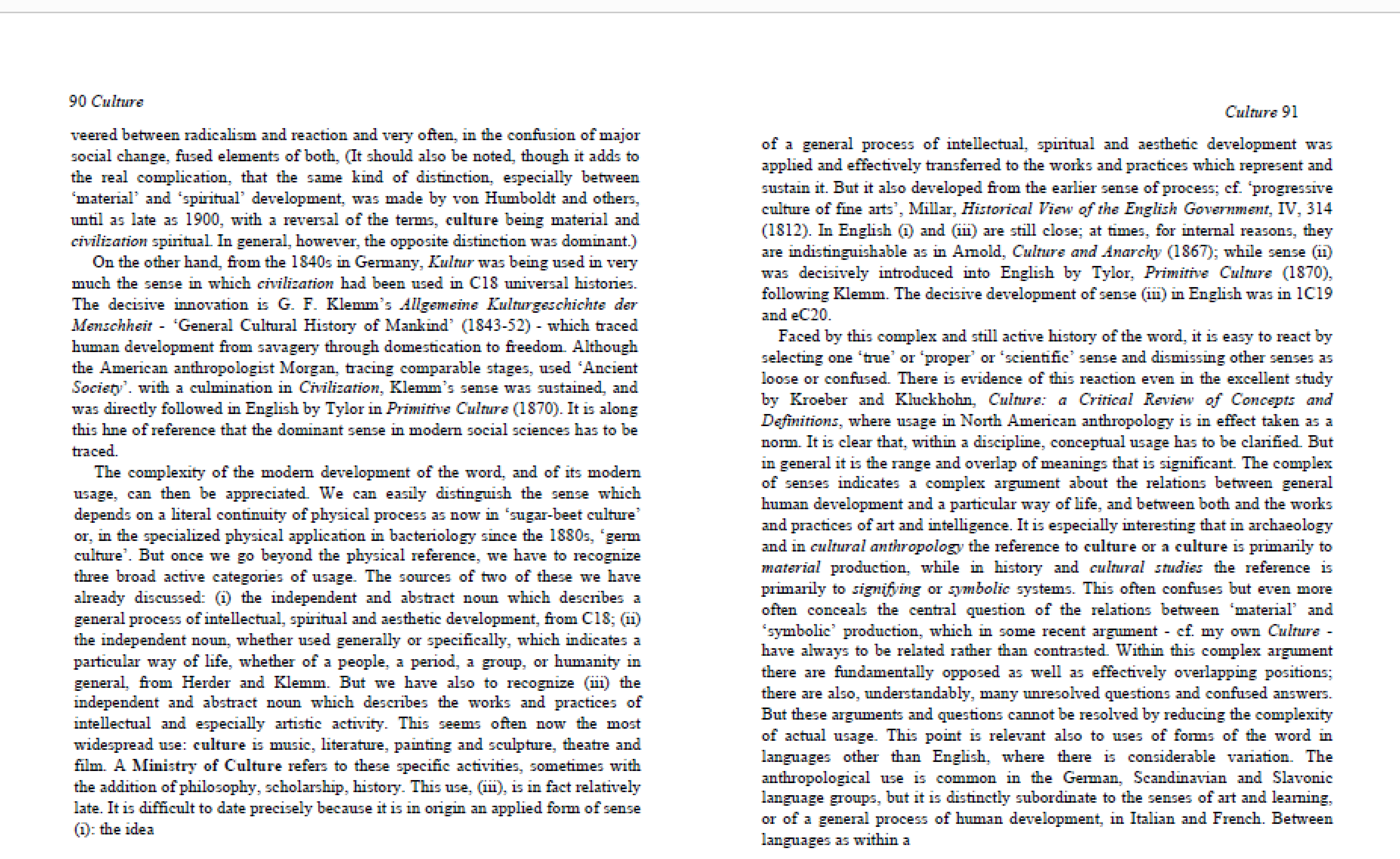
degree of habituation to the metaphor, which made the sense of human tending direct; second, an extension of particular processes to a general process, which the word could abstractly carry. It is of course from the latter development that the independent noun **culture** began its complicated modern history, but the process of change is so intricate, and the latencies of meaning are at times so close, that it is not possible to give any definite date. **Culture** as an independent noun, an abstract process or the product of such a process, is not important before lC18 and is not common before mC19. But the early stages of this development were not sudden. There is an interesting use in Milton, in the second (revised) edition of *The Readie and Easie Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660): ‘spread much more Knowledg and Civility, yea. Religion, through all parts of the Land, by communicating the natural heat of Government and Culture more distributively to all extreme parts, which now lie num and neglected’. Here the metaphorical sense (‘natural heat’) still appears to be present, and *civility* (cf. CIVILIZATION) is still written where in C19 we would normally expect **culture.** Yet we can also read ‘government and culture’ in a quite modern sense. Milton, from the tenor of his whole argument, is writing about a general social process, and this is a definite stage of development. In C1S England this general process acquired definite class associations though **cultivation** and **cultivated** were more commonly used for this. But there is a letter of 1730 (Bishop of Killala, to Mrs Clayton; cit Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century*) which has this clear sense: ‘it has not been customary for persons of either birth or culture to breed up their children to the Church’. Akenside (*Pleasures of Imagination*, 1744) wrote: ‘. . . nor purple state nor culture can bestow’. Wordsworth wrote ‘where grace of culture hath been utterly unknown’ (1805), and Jane Austen (*Emma*, 1816) ‘every advantage of discipline and culture’.

It is thus clear that **culture** was developing in English towards some of its modern senses before the decisive effects of a new social and intellectual movement. But to follow the development through this movement, in 1C18 and eC19, we have to look also at developments in other languages and especially in German.

In French, until C18, **culture** was always accompanied by a grammatical form indicating the matter being cultivated, as in the English usage already noted. Its occasional use as an independent noun dates from mC18, rather later than similar occasional uses in English. The independent noun *civilization* also emerged in mC18; its relationship to **culture** has since been very complicated (cf. CIVILIZATION and discussion below). There was at this point an important development in German: the word was borrowed from French, spelled first (lC18) *Cultur* and from C19 *Kultur*. Its main use was still as a synonym for *civilization:* first in the abstract sense of a general process of becoming ‘civilized’ or ‘cultivated’; second, in the sense which had already been established for *civilization* by the historians of the Enlightenment, in the popular C18 form of the universal histories, as a description of the secular process of human development. There was then a decisive change of use in Herder. In his unfinished *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784-91) he wrote of *Cultur:* ‘nothing is more indeterminate than this word, and nothing more deceptive than its application to all nations and periods’. He attacked the assumption of the universal histories that ‘civilization’ or ‘culture’ - the historical self-development of humanity - was what we would now call a unilinear process, leading to the high and dominant point of C18 European culture. Indeed he attacked what he called European subjugation and domination of the four quarters of the globe, and wrote:

> Men of all the quarters of the globe, who have perished over the ages, you have not lived solely to manure the earth with your ashes, so that at the end of time your posterity should be made happy by European culture. The very thought of a superior European culture is a blatant insult to the majesty of Nature.

It is then necessary, he argued, in a decisive innovation, to speak of ‘cultures’ in the plural: the specific and variable cultures of different nations and periods, but also the specific and variable cultures of social and economic groups within a nation. This sense was widely developed, in the Romantic movement, as an alternative to the orthodox and dominant ‘*civilization*’. It was fir^t used to emphasize national and traditional cultures, including the new concept of **folk-culture** (cf. FOLK). It was later used to attack what was seen as the MECHANICAL’ (q.v.) character of the new civilization then emerging: both for its abstract rationalism and for the ‘inhumanity’ of current industrial development. It was used to distinguish between ‘human’ and ‘material’ development. Politically, as so often in this period, it



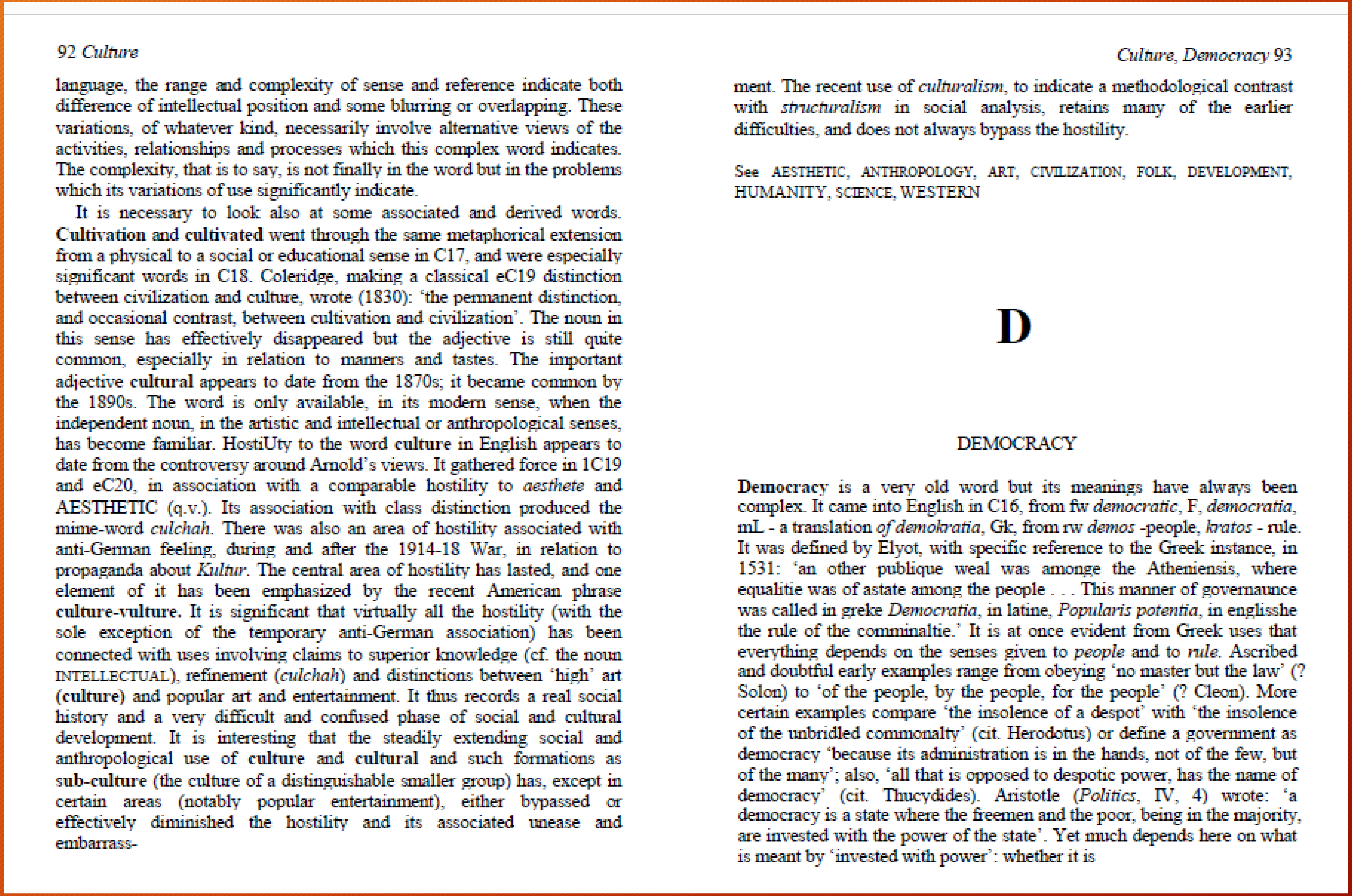
veered between radicalism and reaction and very often, in the confusion of major social change, fused elements of both, (It should also be noted, though it adds to the real complication, that the same kind of distinction, especially between 'material' and 'spiritual' development, was made by von Humboldt and others, until as late as 1900, with a reversal of the terms, **culture** being material and *civilization* spiritual. In general, however, the opposite distinction was dominant.)

On the other hand, from the 1840s in Germany, *Kultur* was being used in very much the sense in which *civilization* had been used in C18 universal histories. The decisive innovation is G. F. Klemm's *Allgemeine Kulturgeschichte der Menschheit* - 'General Cultural History of Mankind' (1843-52) - which traced human development from savagery through domestication to freedom. Although the American anthropologist Morgan, tracing comparable stages, used 'Ancient *Society*'. with a culmination in *Civilization*, Klemm's sense was sustained, and was directly followed in English by Tylor in *Primitive Culture* (1870). It is along this line of reference that the dominant sense in modern social sciences has to be traced.

The complexity of the modern development of the word, and of its modern usage, can then be appreciated. We can easily distinguish the sense which depends on a literal continuity of physical process as now in 'sugar-beet culture' or, in the specialized physical application in bacteriology since the 1880s, 'germ culture'. But once we go beyond the physical reference, we have to recognize three broad active categories of usage. The sources of two of these we have already discussed: (i) the independent and abstract noun which describes a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, from C18; (ii) the independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general, from Herder and Klemm. But we have also to recognize (iii) the independent and abstract noun which describes the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. This seems often now the most widespread use: **culture** is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film. A **Ministry of Culture** refers to these specific activities, sometimes with the addition of philosophy, scholarship, history. This use, (iii), is in fact relatively late. It is difficult to date precisely because it is in origin an applied form of sense (i): the idea

of a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development was applied and effectively transferred to the works and practices which represent and sustain it. But it also developed from the earlier sense of process; cf. 'progressive culture of fine arts', Millar, *Historical View of the English Government*, IV, 314 (1812). In English (i) and (iii) are still close; at times, for internal reasons, they are indistinguishable as in Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (1867); while sense (ii) was decisively introduced into English by Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (1870), following Klemm. The decisive development of sense (iii) in English was in lC19 and eC20.

Faced by this complex and still active history of the word, it is easy to react by selecting one 'true' or 'proper' or 'scientific' sense and dismissing other senses as loose or confused. There is evidence of this reaction even in the excellent study by Kroeber and Kluckhohn, *Culture: a Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, where usage in North American anthropology is in effect taken as a norm. It is clear that, within a discipline, conceptual usage has to be clarified. But in general it is the range and overlap of meanings that is significant. The complex of senses indicates a complex argument about the relations between general human development and a particular way of life, and between both and the works and practices of art and intelligence. It is especially interesting that in archaeology and in *cultural anthropology* the reference to **culture** or **a culture** is primarily to *material* production, while in history and *cultural studies* the reference is primarily to *signifying* or *symbolic* systems. This often confuses but even more often conceals the central question of the relations between 'material' and 'symbolic' production, which in some recent argument - cf. my own *Culture* - have always to be related rather than contrasted. Within this complex argument there are fundamentally opposed as well as effectively overlapping positions; there are also, understandably, many unresolved questions and confused answers. But these arguments and questions cannot be resolved by reducing the complexity of actual usage. This point is relevant also to uses of forms of the word in languages other than English, where there is considerable variation. The anthropological use is common in the German, Scandinavian and Slavonic language groups, but it is distinctly subordinate to the senses of art and learning, or of a general process of human development, in Italian and French. Between languages as within a



language, the range and complexity of sense and reference indicate both difference of intellectual position and some blurring or overlapping. These variations, of whatever kind, necessarily involve alternative views of the activities, relationships and processes which this complex word indicates. The complexity, that is to say, is not finally in the word but in the problems which its variations of use significantly indicate.

It is necessary to look also at some associated and derived words. **Cultivation** and **cultivated** went through the same metaphorical extension from a physical to a social or educational sense in C17, and were especially significant words in C18. Coleridge, making a classical eC19 distinction between civilization and culture, wrote (1830): 'the permanent distinction, and occasional contrast, between cultivation and civilization'. The noun in this sense has effectively disappeared but the adjective is still quite common, especially in relation to manners and tastes. The important adjective **cultural** appears to date from the 1870s; it became common by the 1890s. The word is only available, in its modern sense, when the independent noun, in the artistic and intellectual or anthropological senses, has become familiar. HostiUty to the word **culture** in English appears to date from the controversy around Arnold's views. It gathered force in 1C19 and eC20, in association with a comparable hostility to *aesthete* and AESTHETIC (q.v.). Its association with class distinction produced the mime-word *culchah*. There was also an area of hostility associated with anti-German feeling, during and after the 1914-18 War, in relation to propaganda about *Kultur*. The central area of hostility has lasted, and one element of it has been emphasized by the recent American phrase **culture-vulture.** It is significant that virtually all the hostility (with the sole exception of the temporary anti-German association) has been connected with uses involving claims to superior knowledge (cf. the noun INTELLECTUAL), refinement (*culchah*) and distinctions between 'high' art **(culture)** and popular art and entertainment. It thus records a real social history and a very difficult and confused phase of social and cultural development. It is interesting that the steadily extending social and anthropological use of **culture** and **cultural** and such formations as **sub-culture** (the culture of a distinguishable smaller group) has, except in certain areas (notably popular entertainment), either bypassed or effectively diminished the hostility and its associated unease and embarrassment. The recent use of *culturalism*, to indicate a methodological contrast with *structuralism* in social analysis, retains many of the earlier difficulties, and does not always bypass the hostility.

See AESTHETIC, ANTHROPOLOGY, ART, CIVILIZATION, FOLK, DEVELOPMENT, HUMANITY, SCIENCE, WESTERN

D

DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a very old word but its meanings have always been complex. It came into English in C16, from fw *democratie*, F, *democratia*, mL - a translation *of demokratia*, Gk, from rw *demos* -people, *kratos* - rule. It was defined by Elyot, with specific reference to the Greek instance, in 1531: 'an other publique weal was amonge the Atheniensis, where equalitie was of astate among the people . . . This manner of governaunce was called in greke *Democratia*, in latine, *Popularis potentia*, in englisshe the rule of the comminaltie.' It is at once evident from Greek uses that everything depends on the senses given to *people* and to *rule*. Ascribed and doubtful early examples range from obeying 'no master but the law' (? Solon) to 'of the people, by the people, for the people' (? Cleon). More certain examples compare 'the insolence of a despot' with 'the insolence of the unbridled commonalty' (cit. Herodotus) or define a government as democracy 'because its administration is in the hands, not of the few, but of the many'; also, 'all that is opposed to despotic power, has the name of democracy' (cit. Thucydides). Aristotle (*Politics*, IV, 4) wrote: 'a democracy is a state where the freemen and the poor, being in the majority, are invested with the power of the state'. Yet much depends here on what is meant by 'invested with power': whether it is