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 C1TY, 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

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 famiUarity 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

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 1C18 to 1C19 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. Insofar 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) *ranky* 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