

religion: 'that no man disseyve you bi filosofie and veyn fallace, after the tradicioun of men, affir the elements of the world and not affir Crist' (Wyclif, 1388); and notably during the Enlightenment, in a scepticism noted in Hannah More's comment (1790): 'Philosophy ... (as Unbelief ... has lately been pleased to call itself)'. **Philosophy** has also been a common name for any particular system of ideas, defined by a specific description.

Two contemporary English uses need to be noticed. Academic **philosophy** in England has for some time been largely limited to logic and theory of knowledge, and there is a tendency to confine **philosophy** to this sense and to regard its traditional association with general moral and intellectual systems as an error. This is a powerful but very local habit. More common is the increasing use of **philosophy** in *managerial* and *bureaucratic* talk, where **philosophy** can mean general policy but as often simply the internal assumptions or even the internal procedures of a business or institution: from the **philosophy of selling** through the **philosophy of motorways** to the **philosophy of supermarkets**. This can be traced back to Ure's *Philosophy of Manufactures* (1835) but in mC20 it became very much more widespread, as a dignified name for a local line.

See SCIENCE

POPULAR

Popular was originally a legal and political term, from *popularis*, L. – belonging to the people. An **action popular**, from C15, was a legal suit which it was open to anyone to begin. **Popular estate** and **popular government**, from C16, referred to a political system constituted or carried on by the whole people, but there was also the sense (cf. *COMMON*) of 'low' or 'base'. The transition to the predominant modern meaning of 'widely favoured' or 'well-liked' is interesting in that it contains a strong element of setting out to gain favour, with a sense of calculation that has not quite disappeared but that is evident in a reinforced phrase like **deliberately popular**. Most of the men who have left records of the use of the word saw the

matter from this point of view, downwards. There were neutral uses, such as North's 'more popular, and desirous of the common peoples good will and favour' (1580) (where **popular** was still a term of policy rather than of condition), and evidently derogatory uses, such as Bacon's 'a Noble-man of an ancient Family, but unquiet and popular' (1622). **Popularity** was defined in 1697, by Collier, as 'a courting the favour of the people by undue practices'. This use was probably reinforced by unfavourable applications: a neutral reference to 'popular ... theams' (1573) is less characteristic than 'popular error' (1616) and 'popular sicknesses' (1603) or 'popular disease' (C17–C19), in which an unwelcome thing was merely widespread. A primary sense of 'widely favoured' was clear by IC18; the sense of 'well-liked' is probably C19. A IC19 American magazine observed: 'they have come ... to take popular quite gravely and sincerely as a synonym for good'. The shift in perspective is then evident. **Popular** was being seen from the point of view of the people rather than from those seeking favour or power from them. Yet the earlier sense has not died. **Popular culture** was not identified by *the people* but by others, and it still carries two older senses: inferior kinds of work (cf. **popular literature**, **popular press** as distinguished from *quality press*); and work deliberately setting out to win favour (**popular journalism** as distinguished from *democratic journalism*, or **popular entertainment**); as well as the more modern sense of well-liked by many people, with which of course, in many cases, the earlier senses overlap. The sense of **popular culture** as the culture actually made by people for themselves is different from all these. It relates, evidently, to Herder's sense of *Kultur des Volkes*, IC18, but what came through in English as *folk-culture* (cf. *FOLK*) is distinguishable from recent senses of **popular culture** as contemporary as well as historical. The range of senses can be seen again in **popularize**, which until C19 was a political term, in the old sense, and then took on its special meaning of presenting knowledge in generally accessible ways. Its C19 uses were mainly favourable, and in C20 the favourable sense is still available, but there is also a strong sense of 'simplification', which in some circles is predominant.

Populism, in political discussion, embodies all these variations. In the USA the Populists (People's Party), from 1892, were in a *radical* alliance with labour organizations, though the relations between

populism and socialism were complex. The sense of representing popular interests and values has survived, but is often overridden by either (a) right-wing criticism of this, as in *demagoguery*, which has moved from 'leading the people' to 'crude and simplifying agitation', or (b) left-wing criticism of rightist and fascist movements which exploit 'popular prejudices', or of leftist movements which subordinate socialist ideas to popular (populist) assumptions and habits.

In mC20 popular song and popular art were characteristically shortened to *pop*, and the familiar range of senses, from unfavourable to favourable, gathered again around this. The shortening gave the word a lively informality but opened it, more easily, to a sense of the trivial. It is hard to say whether older senses of *pop* have become fused with this use: the common sense of a sudden lively movement, in many familiar and generally pleasing contexts, is certainly appropriate.

See COMMON, CULTURE, DEMOCRACY, FOLK, MASSES

POSITIVIST

It is now virtually impossible to disentangle a popular sense of *positivist* from general arguments about EMPIRICISM (q.v.) and SCIENTIFIC (q.v.) method, though the actual history of the word should make us wary of some of its vaguer uses. The word was effectively introduced into French by Comte from 1830, and was often used in English in mC19. Its root was *positive* in one of its developing senses, denoting real or actual existence (a shift from the earliest use to denote 'formally laid down' – *for positive*, *L. ponere*, *L.* – laid down; the sense of 'definite' or 'certain', in this formal context, obviously contributed to the sense of 'real'). Comte argued that the human mind passed from a primary stage of theological interpretation through a stage of metaphysical and abstract interpretation to a mature stage of *positive* or *scientific* understanding, based only on observable facts and the relations between them, and the laws discoverable from observing them, all other kinds of inquiry into origin, cause or purpose being pre-scientific. In this sense, *positivist* was widely adopted and was often interchangeable