

Raymond Williams

# Keywords

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C19 this was, often crudely, pushed home: 'that rosepink vapour of Sentimentalism, Philanthropy and Feasts of Morals' (Carlyle, 1837); 'Sentimental Radicalism' (Bagehot on Dickens, 1858). Much that was moral or radical, in intention and in effect, was washed with the same brush that was used to depict self-conscious or self-indulgent displays of *sentiment*. Southey, in his conservative phase, brought the words together: 'the sentimental classes, persons of ardent or morbid sensibility' (1823). This complaint is against people who feel 'too much' as well as against those who 'indulge their emotions'. This confusion has permanently damaged *sentimental* (though limited positive uses survive, typically in *sentimental value*) and wholly determined *sentimentality*.

**Sensibility** escaped this. It maintained its C18 range, and became important in one special area, in relation to AESTHETIC (q.v.) feeling. (Jane Austen, of course, in *Sense and Sensibility*, had explored the variable qualities which the specialized terms appeared to define. In *Emma* she may have picked up one tendency in 'more acute sensibility to fine sounds than to my feelings' (II, vi; 1815).) Ruskin wrote of 'sensibility to colour' (1843). The word seems to have been increasingly used to distinguish a particular area of interest and response which could be distinguished not only from RATIONALITY (q.v.) or *intellectuality* but also (by contrast with one of its C18 associations) from *morality*. By eC20 **sensibility** was a key word to describe the human area in which artists worked and to which they appealed. In the subsequent development of a CRITICISM (q.v.) based on distinctions between *reason* and *emotion*, **sensibility** was a preferred general word for an area of human response and judgment which could not be reduced to the *emotional* or *emotive*. What T. S. Eliot, in the 1920s, called the **dissociation of sensibility** was a supposed disjunction between 'thought' and 'feeling'. **Sensibility** became the apparently unifying word, and on the whole was transferred from kinds of response to a use equivalent to the formation of a particular mind: a whole activity, a whole way of perceiving and responding, not to be reduced to either 'thought' or 'feeling'. EXPERIENCE (q.v.), in its available senses of something active and something formed, took on the same generality. For an important period, **sensibility** was that from which art proceeded and through which it was received. In the latter use, *taste* and *cultivation*, which had been important associates in the original formation, were

generally replaced by *discrimination* and *criticism*. But for all the interest of this phase, which was dominant to c. 1960, the key terms were still predominantly social generalizations of personal qualities or, as became increasingly apparent, personal appropriations of social qualities. **Sensibility** as an apparently neutral term in discussion of the sources of art, without the difficult overtones of *mind* or the specializations of *thought* and *feeling*, proved more durable than as a term of appeal or ratification for any particular response. But, as in the C18 emergence, the abstraction and generalization of an active personal quality, as if it were an evident social fact or process, depended on a consensus of particular valuations, and as these broke down or were rejected **sensibility** came to seem too deeply coloured by them to be available for general use. The word faded from active discussion, but it is significant that in its actual range (which is what is fundamentally at issue) no adequate replacement has been found.

See AESTHETIC, ART, CRITICISM, CULTURE, EXPERIENCE, RATIONAL, SUBJECTIVE, TASTE

## SEX

**Sex** in one of its predominant contemporary senses – indeed at times the dominant everyday sense – has an interesting history, in that in this sense it refers to mainly physical *relations* between 'the sexes', whereas in its early uses it is a description of the divisions between them. It came into English from C14, fw *secus* or *sexus*, L – the male or female *section* of humanity. Thus 'maal sex and femaal' (1382). But it was not commonly used before C16. In this general sense it has of course been regularly used ever since.

There is then a complicated set of developments beyond this general use. Thus there is a certain specialization of the word towards women, as in 'the gentle *sex*' (IC16), 'the weaker *sex*' (eC17), 'the fairer *sex*' (mC17); moreover from C16 '*the sex*' was often used on its own to designate women. Examples of this can be found to C19 and perhaps later. There is also use of 'the second *sex*' from eC19.

**Sexual** is recorded from mC17, in a descriptive physical sense,

and **sexless** had been used with the same reference from IC16.

In an area of speech and writing evidently subject to censorship, self-censorship and embarrassment, it is not easy to trace the subsequent shifts. Thus we can read Donne's *The Primrose* (from before 1630) in an apparently contemporary sense:

Should she be more than woman, she would get above  
All thought of sexe, and think to move  
My heart to study her and not to love.

But on most of the evidence the usual modern sense of **sex** is not intended there. The sense of difference, and then of specificity, is of course widespread, in many kinds of writing, but it seems unlikely that the sense of **sex** as a physical relationship or action is at all common before C19. Indeed this seems to be a case (as with other related words of physical sexual description) of the relatively learned or scientific word being adopted and generalized in the period in which it became more acceptable to speak or write of such matters at all openly. There had previously been a range of relatively formal words, from 'carnal knowledge' to 'copulation', and a vast range of colloquial expressions only occasionally admitted to writing. (There is a wide range of predominantly masculine phrases, possessively centred on 'have', abundantly recorded from C19 but in many cases traceable to C16.) **Sexual** in the more active sense, related not so much to characteristics as to processes and relations, is common in medical writing from IC18: thus 'sexual intercourse' is recorded from 1799; 'sexual passion' from 1821; 'sexual purposes' from 1826; 'sexual instinct' from 1861; 'sexual impulse' from 1863. A sentence from the *Sporting Magazine* of 1815 – 'her looks, her turns, her whole manner of speaking is sexual' – sounds familiar. At the same time the older sense of characteristics was still common: Pater could write of **sexlessness** as 'a kind of impotence' (1873) but this is obviously not what is meant by Elizabeth Pennell in 1893, in 'the new sham sexlessness of emancipation'. **Sex-abolitionists**, in 1887, meant in context those favouring the removal of social and legal *discriminations* against women (at a time when *discrimination* itself was moving from the making of distinctions to a sense of unequal treatment, *discrimination against*, recorded from IC19). **Sex-privilege** in this critical sense is recorded from IC19, but had been preceded by relatively patronizing or ironic uses of *privilege* as some-

thing special to 'the sex', in the old specialization to women. *Feminism* (sometimes *femininism*) indicates 'the qualities of females' through much of C19, but there is reference to 'a "Feminist" group', in Paris, in 1894 and to the 'doctrines of Feminism', now a more general movement, in 1895.

When we now encounter references to, for example, 'sex and violence on television', much of the earlier history of **sex** seems strange. The word is used with an apparent confidence that it means physical sexual acts or their simulation. It seems clear that **sex** in this sense was in colloquial use by eC20, often then as the polite alternative to other and older colloquial terms. Thus 'gave him sex' and 'having sex'. It seems to become common and even commonplace from the 1920s, which also saw the appearance of **sexy**, in British following American journalism, and of **sex appeal**, in which an American contest is recorded from the mid-1920s. It is from the same period that **sex-life** and **sex-repression** are recorded, and also **undersexed**, though **oversexed** is recorded from 1908.

**Sexuality** followed the same line of development. It is scientifically descriptive from IC18, and as late as 1888 there is this distinction in a *Handbook of Medical Science*: 'a man has **sex**, a spermatozoon sexuality'. Yet by 1893 there is a familiar citation of 'chuckling sexualities', 'under the unsteady inspiration of alcohol'. The word has perhaps since moved back to a more general and abstract sense, since at this level there are many polite alternatives.

**Sexuality**, as the science of **sexual** relations, is recorded from 1885, but came to be replaced by the American **sexology** in eC20.

**Sexism** and **sexist**, as critical descriptions of attitudes and practices discriminatory against women, came into general use from the 1960s, originally in USA. The verbal form follows *racism* rather than the earlier *racialism* (cf. RACIAL). The terms were later extended, in some tendencies, as a critique of all or most of the extended characteristics (psychological, cultural, social) of the distinction between **the sexes**. For this reason, but probably more because of the C20 associations now gathered around **sex** (cf. the rejection of views or presentations of women as **sex-objects**), some writers began using the alternative *gender*. This had its root in *generare*, L – to beget, but with the related *genre* and *genus* had acquired a specialized meaning, in the case of *gender* almost exclusively grammatical. Yet the term had occasionally been used

before, outside grammar, as in Gladstone's 'Athene has nothing of sex except the *gender*, nothing of the woman except the form' (1878). This, like so many other uses in this whole area of vocabulary, is ground for a continuing and very important argument, which is already to an exceptional extent having effects in language.

See FAMILY, INDIVIDUAL, LIBERATION, PRIVATE, SUBJECTIVE

## SOCIALIST

**Socialist** emerged as a philosophical description in c19. Its linguistic root was the developed sense of SOCIAL (q.v.). But this could be understood in two ways, which have had profound effects on the use of the term by radically different political tendencies. *Social* in sense (i) was the merely descriptive term for *society* in its now predominant sense of the system of common life; a *social reformer* wished to reform this system. *Social* in sense (ii) was an emphatic and distinguishing term, explicitly contrasted with *individual* and especially *individualist* theories of society. There has of course been much interaction and overlap between these two senses, but their varying effect can be seen from the beginning in the formation of the term. One popular form of sense (i) was in effect a continuation of LIBERALISM (q.v.): reform, including radical reform, of the social order, to develop, extend and assure the main *liberal* values: political freedom, the ending of privileges and formal inequalities, social justice (conceived as equity between different individuals and groups). A popular form of sense (ii) went in a quite different direction: a competitive, *individualist* form of society – specifically, industrial capitalism and the system of wage-labour – was seen as the enemy of truly *social* forms, which depended on practical co-operation and mutuality, which in turn could not be achieved while there was still *private* (*individual*) ownership of the means of production. Real freedom could not be achieved, basic inequalities could not be ended, social justice (conceived now as a just social order rather than equity between the different individuals and groups produced by

the existing social order) could not be established, unless a society based on PRIVATE (q.v.) property was replaced by one based on *social* ownership and control.

The resulting controversy, between many groups and tendencies all calling themselves **socialist**, has been long, intricate and bitter. Each main tendency has found alternative, often derogatory terms for the other. But until c. 1850 the word was too new and too general to have any predominant use. The earliest use I have found in English is in Hazlitt, *On Persons One Would Wish to Have Seen* (1826), reprinted in *Winterslow* (1850), where recalling a conversation from c. 1809 he writes: 'those profound and redoubted socialists, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus'. There is then a more contemporary use in the English Owenite *Cooperative Magazine* of November 1827; its first recorded political use in French is in 1833. On the other hand, *socialisme* seems to have been first used in French in 1831, and in English in 1837 (Owen, *New Moral World*, III, 364). (A use of *socialismo* in Italian, in 1803, seems to have no connection with the later development; its meaning was quite different.) Given the intense political climate, in France and in England in the 1820s and 1830s, the exact dates are less important than the sense of a period. Moreover, it could not then have been known which word would come through as decisive. It was a period of very intense and rapid political argument and formation, and until well into the 1840s other terms stood level with **socialist**, or were indeed more common: *co-operative*, *mutualist*, *associationist*, *societarian*, *phalansterian*, *agrarianist*, *radical*. As late as 1848 Webster's *Dictionary* (USA) defined **socialism** as 'a new term for agrarianism', although in France and Germany, and to a lesser extent in England, **socialist** and **socialism** were by then common terms. The active verbs, **socialize** and *socialiser*, had been current in English and French from around 1830.

One alternative term, COMMUNIST (q.v.), had begun to be used in France and England from 1840. The sense of any of these words could vary in particular national contexts. In England in the 1840s *communist* had strong religious attachments, and this was important since **socialist**, as used by Robert Owen, was associated with opposition to religion and was sometimes avoided for that reason. Developments in France and Germany were different: so much so that Engels, in his *Preface* of 1888 looking back to the *Communist*