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The study of social mobility and the formation of the working class in the 19th century

by Jürgen KOCKA

In the 1960s and 1970s social mobility was a favourite subject of social historians, particularly in North America. While serving many different interests of research, most of these studies also contributed to our knowledge about working class history. It was important to learn more about the changing connection between workers' migrations, occupational change and the chances (and risks) of climbing (and skidding) up (and down) the hierarchy of social positions however defined. It would be difficult to discuss what it means to be a worker — or rather a specific type of worker at a specific place at a certain period of time — without knowing anything about the probable permanence or the temporary character of his — or her — position. It is much easier to say something about the meaning that upward social mobility — in the sense of moving up on a hierarchy of occupationally defined status positions — had for those who moved and those who stayed in their positions, if one knows whether such moves were usually paralleled by improvements of income and property, as well. The study of inter-generational mobility and marriage patterns may tell something about the families workers lived in. The laborious and sophisticated monographs of the so-called « new social history » of the 1960s and 1970s have contributed much to our knowledge about such problems, and continue to do so (1).

But usually historical mobility studies of this kind have not been integrated into the lively debate about the formation of the working class, or classes in general. They usually got along without spending much time on theorizing about class and on exploring the mechanisms

(1) Outstanding examples : St. THERNSTROM, *The Other Bostonians. Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1973 ; M.B. KATZ, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West. Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1975. Most recently : C. and S. GRIFFIN, *Natives and Newcomers : The Ordering of Opportunity in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Poughkeepsie*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1978. One of the few studies of this kind dealing with a German case : D.F. CREW, *Town in the Ruhr. A Social History of Bochum, 1860-1914*, New York, 1979. Cf. the review articles : J. MODELL, « Die "Neue Sozialgeschichte" in Amerika », *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, vol. 1, 1975, p. 155-170 ; J. KOCKA, « Stadtgeschichte, Mobilität und Schichtung », *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, vol. 18, 1978, p. 546-558.

which made or un-made classes (2). On the other hand, recent debates on the making of the working class have tended to stress the importance of common experiences and cultures in the processes of class formation without being really interested in a systematic and largely quantitative study of social mobility (3).

In this article it will be argued that the historical study of social mobility, if adequately conceptualized, can well contribute to the study of the making or un-making of the working class. It will also be argued that imbedding mobility studies in such a conceptual context can make them more meaningful. In the course of this argument a concept of class formation will be sketched which is not

(2) There are however important exceptions : Y. LEQUIN, *Les ouvriers de la région lyonnaise (1848-1914). La formation de la classe ouvrière régionale*, Lyon, 1977, p. 206-237. (He applies questions very similar to those discussed in this article.) — H. Zwahr's studies on Leipzig will be discussed below (p. 107-109). Some recent studies on the English « labour aristocracy » have analyzed mobility and marriage patterns for demonstrating the split, if not the formation, of the working class in English cities before 1914. Cf. below p. 114, n. 38.

(3) Sometimes concern for the reconstruction of workers' perceptions, experiences, and cultures seems to nourish (and be nourished by) a strange anti-quantitative and even — which is of course a different thing — an anti-analytical mood, which cannot be expected to be favourable for the study of social mobility. One reads lamentations about the « cold, abstracting view » which social historians allegedly have when they deal with the labouring poor ; about too much « distance » between the researcher and the concrete experience of human beings who are said to be de-personalized by « objective » historical analysis. Rather we are called up to « reconstruct plebejan and proletarian everyday reality » (*Alltagswirklichkeit*) « from below » ; the main instrument to do this job seems to be sympathy. Quotes from the editor's preface to D. PULS (ed.), *Wahrnehmungsformen und Protesverhalten. Studien zur Lage der Unterschichten im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt, 1979, p. 7-8. In the same mood history is thought to be a « sequence of many every days » (*Abfolge von vielen Alltagen*) which should be reconstructed by sympathetic narration. Cf. M. HENKEL and R. TAUBERT, *Maschinenstürmer. Ein Kapitel aus der Sozialgeschichte des technischen Fortschritts*, Frankfurt, 1979, p. 9. (This book indeed offers little more than the stories of two machine breaking riots in Eupen, April 1821, and Solingen, February 1826, but it seems to be proud of its meagreness.) This is not the place for criticizing these indefensible positions, thoroughly. I just want to mention that there has been in Germany in the last decades a long debate on the fallacies and limits of « historicism » (not in Popper's sense of the word, but in the sense of the dominant paradigm of late 19th and early 20th century historiography, particularly in Germany ; it stressed the reconstruction (« verstehen ») of meanings at the cost of analyzing structures and processes, despised explicit concepts, models and theories, had little sympathy for systematic comparisons and generalizations, and abhorred the social sciences as « mechanistic » and « positivistic »). This approach does not become more convincing if transplanted from political history, traditionally its major field of application, to social and cultural history. In Germany, the soil for *Historicism* in this sense is probably still particularly fertile although large parts of recent German historiography (in West and East) have tried to overcome its limits (without losing its strengths). Cf. two review articles dealing with these problems : J. KOCKA, « Theoretical Approaches to the Social and Economic History of Modern Germany », *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 47, 1975, p. 101-119 ; G.G. IGGERS, *New Directions in European Historiography*, Middletown (Conn.), 1975, p. 80-122 (« Beyond 'Historicism'. Some developments in West German Historiography Since the Fischer Controversy ») (an updated German version in : *id.*, *Neue Geschichtswissenschaft. Vom Historismus zur Historischen Sozialwissenschaft*, München, 1978, p. 91-156). E.P. Thompson is often quoted by those who play this neo-historicist game, but it would be wrong to describe his work as neo-historicist. He has, however, contributed to the anti-analytical mood ; cf. his polemics in the postscript to the 1968 edition of *The Making of the English Working Class* (p. 939), and the quotes put together in : R. JOHNSON, « Edward Thompson, Eugene Genovese, and Socialist-Humanist History », *History Workshop*, Autumn 1978, p. 84-87. On the other hand cf. his largely convincing chapter on the logic of historical inquiry in : *id.*, *The Poverty of Theory & other essays*, London, 1978, p. 229-242.

particularly original, but useful, I hope, for the study of other dimensions of working class history — beyond the study of social mobility — as well. In addition, some empirical results of recent studies on workers' mobility and marriage patterns in 19th century Germany will be reported.

I

Hartmut Kaelble has summarized recent studies on the history of social mobility in different countries, and spelled out how they related to working class history (4). As to the 19th century, one of the main questions has been : did the industrial revolution, i.e. the break-through phase of industrial capitalism (characterized by the increasing importance of market relations and wage labor, centralization and mechanization of production, the separation between household and work place, economic growth and accelerated urbanization) increase or decrease workers' chances of climbing up, and the risks of sliding down ? Of course, this question is closely related to the still ongoing debate on whether the « standard of living », broadly conceived, improved or worsened in the course of the industrial revolution, particularly : whether the lot of the lower classes got better or worse as a consequence of the rise of industrial capitalism.

For a long while most authors held that the industrial revolution produced a clear increase in the rates both of geographic and social mobility. General considerations and several city studies seemed to show that the chances of a lower class person (broadly conceived as a manual worker in a rather dependent position) to move at least in a lower middle class position with some income, autonomy, and esteem increased in the middle decades of the 19th century (5). These results stood against another more « pessimistic » view according to which social barriers got more rigid in the course of the industrial revolution, and that particularly the move from a journeyman's to a master's position became less frequent, while degradation and downward mobility increased (6).

More recent city studies have strongly supported a third view. They seem to show that the early phases of industrialization brought a dramatic increase of migration and occupational mobility (e.g. from the position of a cottage worker or an agricultural worker to a skilled or unskilled factory worker), but no clear rise in the rates of upward mobility (from lower to middle occupational strata) (7). Such results were in harmony with another historiographical trend of

(4) *Historische Mobilitätsforschung. Westeuropa und die USA im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Darmstadt, 1978, p. 40-72.

(5) Cf. the studies by G. Pourcher, G. Kleining, J.C. Goyder/J.E. Curtis, G. Carlsson, H. van Dijk, R. Mayntz and H. Daheim, reported *ibid.*, p. 11-14.

(6) Cf. F.D. MARQUARDT, « Sozialer Aufstieg, Sozialer Abstieg und die Entstehung der Berliner Arbeiterklasse, 1806-1848 », *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, vol. 1, 1975, p. 43-77 ; *id.*, « A Working Class in Berlin in the 1840's ? », in : H.U. WEHLER (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte Heute. Festschrift für Hans Rosenberg zum 70. Geburtstag*, Göttingen, 1974, p. 191-210.

(7) Cf. the studies by P. Knights, St. Blumin, C. Griffen and T. Rishoy, reported by KAEUBLE, p. 14-18.

recent years : it has been increasingly stressed (or stressed again) that one should not overestimate the industrial revolution and the rise of the factory system as a decisive turning-point in the evolution of social relations, of social classes, and of the making of the working class in particular. The more the cottage workers and artisans drew historians' attention — e.g. social groups in a pre- or non-factory setting, but increasingly integrated in capitalist relations and dependencies —, the more doubt was cast on whether the industrial revolution proper (in Germany : from the 1840s to the 1870s) really meant such a new departure as suggested by the term « revolution » and the frequent dichotomy « industrial - pre-industrial » (8).

The merits and limits of this view cannot be discussed here altogether. But as to the question of industrial revolution and social mobility, some new results can be reported which come from a project studying inter-generational social mobility, marriage patterns and the role of the family in three Westphalian places in the 19th century (9).

Quernheim (near Bielefeld) was investigated during the period 1801-1870. This was a large proto-industrial village characterized by medium-sized peasant holdings and a large proportion (more than 50 per cent) of families below peasant status who often had a very small piece of land but mainly lived from market-orientated cottage work (weaving and spinning) and/or from working for the peasants, on whom they were dependent in many respects ; they were called *Heuerlinge*. There were other artisans, tradesmen, merchants and a few professionals as well, but the industrial revolution did not really start in Quernheim in the period under investigation, apart from the founding of some cigar making manufactories in the 1860s.

Quernheim was compared with *Borghorst* (1830-1910), a large village near the Dutch border with a strong proto-industrial tradition (spinning and weaving of linen and cotton) which did experience the industrial revolution, particularly in the textile sector where factories were founded in the 1860s and later.

The third place under investigation was *Bielefeld*, the East Westphalian capital (1830-1910), which had an old commercial and administrative tradition, and was a well established city with 10 000 inhabitants, even before the industrial revolution brought textile and metal work factories, new growth, and much change, from the 1850s on.

We used parish registers as our main source, and compared occupational status of the grooms at the time of marriage with the occupational status of their fathers as indicated by the grooms at the same time. The methodological limits of such an approach are well known (10), but on the other hand this approach made possible

(8) Besides Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* cf. P. KRIEDEL, H. MEDICK and J. SCHLUMBOHM, *Industrialisierung vor der Industrialisierung : Gewerbliche Warenproduktion auf dem Land in der Formationsperiode des Kapitalismus*, Göttingen, 1977 ; W.H. SEWELL, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France. The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848*, Princeton, 1980.

(9) Details and tables in J. KOCKA, K. DITT, J. MOOSER, H. REIF and R. SCHÜREN, *Familie und soziale Platzierung*, Opladen, 1980.

(10) These are the more important limits of this approach : All those who

comparison between different places over long periods of time. We used similar schemes of occupational classification in all three places. For some of our questions, manual workers in dependent positions (including agricultural workers, *Heuerlinge*, cottage workers, servants, journeymen, factory workers of different skills, wage workers in general, but excluding self-employed master-artisans and tradesmen) and the lowest categories of white collar workers (like messengers, watchmen, office helpers) were lumped together in the broad category « working class ». How often had sons from such working class background, at the time of marriage, climbed to an occupation higher up on the social ladder (like master-artisan, merchant, small businessmen, civil servant, salaried employee, teacher or land owning peasant)? How did the rates compare over time and between the three places?

In rural-protoindustrial *Quernheim* — where the industrial revolution did not take hold — only seven per cent of working class sons (usually sons of *Heuerlinge*) proved to be upward mobile, and this rate did not change between 1800 and 1870. The rates of downward mobility were high and relatively stable, as well. 35 per cent of all peasants' sons slid down into the position of *Heuerlinge* (until 1860), and into the position of *Heuerlinge* or cigarmakers after 1860.

In *Bielefeld* the upward mobility rate of working class sons was twice as high : 15 per cent (1830-1911). 6 per cent of the sons of *Heuerlinge* and agricultural workers, 15 per cent of unskilled workers' sons, 16 per cent of cottage workers' sons, 20 per cent of skilled workers' sons and 33 per cent of the sons of lower white collar workers reached a position beyond the working class category (see table 2 on p. 110 below). In spite of the industrial revolution, which here occurred after 1850, there was no overall change of this rate. It is true there were some shifts as to the sub-groups : the chances of the offspring of agricultural workers diminished, the chances of the sons of skilled manual workers slightly increased, and those of the sons of lower white collar workers jumped. Upward mobility of cottage workers' sons, particularly into self-employed artisans and trade positions' increased again in the late 19th century, when cottage work stagnated and shrunk, and the sons in this group *could* not stick to their fathers' position, due to structural change. But taken together there were 15 climbers among hundred working class sons over the whole period between 1830 and 1911. The rates of downward mobility, however, increased during industrialization. The sons of master artisans, merchants and businessmen skidded into the working class, at a rate of 27 % in 1830/50, but 47 and 43 % in 1860/80 and 1890-1910.

Change was different in *Borghorst*. The upward mobility rate was only 6 per cent in 1830-1850, when *Borghorst* was still an agricultural-protoindustrial village, about as low as in *Quernheim*. In the period of the local industrial revolution (1860-1880) the rate jumped to 11 per cent. And it reached *Bielefeld* standards (15 per cent) in the industrial village or town, 1880-1910. Inter-generational upward mobility rates increased in all-categories, but they grew most among cottage workers when their numbers stagnated and shrunk,

and when their sons were compelled to do something else. Over the same period downward mobility from the non-agricultural middle class (master-artisans, self-employed tradesmen, merchants, small business, civil servants etc.) decreased and the inter-generational stability of these groups, which were expanding, grew.

Apparently industrialization had a very different effect on social mobility depending on whether a place was urbanized before, or not. Relative to rural settings upward mobility was high, and downward mobility was modest, in the urban environment. When industrialization occurred, the overall upward mobility rates for working class people did not change much, while skidding became more frequent for those higher up. Most mobility studies so far have explored cities (11). In rural areas, however, climbing was more difficult and skidding more frequent, to start with. Protoindustrialization, in this respect, did not mean much of a change. In Quernheim and Borghorst, extensive market-orientated, merchant-dominated, family-based cottage industry was apparently absorbed without changing much of the traditional pattern of social relations, as much as one can tell from mobility rates, marriage patterns and marriage age (12). When the industrial revolution finally occurred, it meant a different thing than in the town. It brought a dramatic increase of upward mobility for working class people ; and for those higher up, downward mobility slightly decreased.

Of course, one should not overestimate these results. They come from three cases only, and other cases may be different. Rural areas with other inheritance customs — in our cases one of the sons inherited the whole land — and with less protoindustrialization and less population growth may have experienced less downward mobility before the industrial revolution. Towns with a less differentiated and flexible industrial and commercial middle class may have offered fewer chances for upward mobility before the industrial revolution than Bielefeld. In addition, we have not studied the whole complexity

married at other places (because they had moved away or because of other reasons) do not appear in the sources ; neither do those who did not marry at all. The occupational status of the sons is registered rather early in their lives, namely at the time of marriage ; this may lead to an underestimation of their occupational success because they may have climbed or continued to climb after marriage. Social mobility is measured as moves between broadly defined occupational categories, neglecting other criteria ; it is clear, however, that occupation does not tell everything about the status of a person ; somebody may not change occupation but change status as to income, home ownership or even positions. The designations of occupations as given in the sources were sometimes ambivalent. The combination and the ranking of occupations was based on rough assessments. Over long time periods it is likely that the meaning of the social distance between occupational categories changes slightly but this is not reflected by the rank orders and schemes, which are used to measure moves up and down.

(11) An exception in the German literature is : P. BORSCHIED, *Textilarbeiter-schaft in der Industrialisierung. Soziale Lage und Mobilität in Württemberg (19. Jahrhundert)*, Stuttgart 1978. He discusses social mobility, but he uses very different schemes of categorization so that comparison becomes difficult.

(12) For that see the detailed report quoted above in note 9. The average marriage age of the Quernheim working class was not pushed down by the proto-industrial « Heuerling » (working at home, within family units) who married rather late (age 26 to 27), but after 1860 by the new type of cigar production worker (working often in centralized manufactures and marrying per average at the age of 23 to 24).

of class relations, but only one dimension : inter-generational social mobility. The source basis was limited. Still, these results seem to warn against underestimating the fundamental change occurring on the way from protoindustrialization to industrial revolution proper.

It is not easy to relate such findings to the standard-of-living debate which has moved far beyond the investigation of real wages, and which tries to assess what capitalist industrialization meant to the life chances, to the hardship or happiness of the emerging working class. The *meaning* of these mobility patterns to those who climbed, skidded, or stayed where they were, is so hard to discover because of two reasons. First, the broad categories used in this article include so many different social groups and constellations, changing over time, that it is impossible to simply equate upward mobility (measured as moves between broad occupational categories) and improvement of life chances. Second, we have very little knowledge about how those concerned experienced social mobility, and what preferences they had. At least it is hard to generalize about this. In many cases families of cottage workers, journeymen and skilled factory workers may have preferred their sons to stay in the occupational world of their fathers instead of climbing into the world of the middle class. Pride and fear, family concerns and security aims may have motivated such conservative family strategies (13). In many other cases lower class families seem to have worked for placing their children in positions better than their own (14). Without knowing more about the aims and preferences of those families and individuals, it is hard to assess whether certain changes were experienced as improvements and gains, or as threats and losses. Still, if one takes into account the tremendous hardship, dependence, and insecurity of those Quernheim agricultural workers and *Heuerlinge* (15), and if one sees how quickly they sent their sons into the new cigarmakers' positions once such positions became available after 1860, it is hard to resist the impression that moving up on the social ladder, if only a very small step, was, for the increasing minority who managed to do so, more of a relief than a loss or a burden.

II

There is a second way in which social mobility studies can con-

(13) Cf. H. KÄELBLE, « Einführung und Auswertung », in : W. CONZE and U. ENGELHARDT (ed.), *Arbeiter im Industrialisierungsprozess. Herkunft, Lage und Verhalten*, Stuttgart, 1979, p. 29 ; F.D. MARQUARDT, « Sozialer Aufstieg », *art. cit.* ; W.H. SEWELL, « Social Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century European City : Some Findings and Implications », *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 7, 1976, p. 217-233.

(14) R. Schüren has shown for Borghorst (1830-1911) that the chances of sons and daughters from working class families to get into a middle class occupation or marry a middle class man strongly correlated with the wealth of the family from which they came. This would seem to indicate that these workers helped their children to move upward when they could. See above n. 9.

(15) J. MOOSER, *Bäuerliche Gesellschaft im Zeitalter der Revolution 1789-1848. Zur Sozialgeschichte des politischen Verhaltens ländlicher Unterschichten im östlichen Westfalen*, Geschichtswiss. Diss., Bielefeld, 1978.

tribute to the study of the history of the working class. One can try and investigate intra- and inter-generational forms of social mobility in terms of what they contribute to or indicate about the formation or the devolution of a class.

By class formation — or class « structuration » (A. Giddens) (16) — I mean the complicated process in which « economic classes » (multitudes of families (17) and individuals who, due to a common economic position, share structural presuppositions of manifest interests — in other words : latent interests — in contrast to other latent interests, but nothing else) are transformed into « social classes », i.e. social groups of families and individuals who, in addition to sharing a common economic position and common latent interests, share a collective identity as members of the class (including common experiences, mutual communication, common symbols, some sort of class consciousness and solidarity), and who form common organizations and develop the propensity for collective action, in contrast to, and conflict with, other classes and, perhaps, the state (18). In fact it seems useful to analytically differentiate between *three* dimensions : (a) class as a multitude of families and individuals sharing an economic situation and latent interests because of that (« economic class »); (b) class as a group of families and individuals who, in addition to belonging to an « economic class », share a common social identity (some degree of internal cohesion and mutual communication, common experiences, fears, and aspirations, common manifest interests, awareness or consciousness of their common characteristics as a class, loyalties and solidarity) (« social class »); (c) class as a group of families and individuals who, in addition to belonging to an « economic class » in the sense of (a) and to a « social class » in the sense of (b), form common organizations or/and act collectively as members of a class (« class in action »). Of course, there is never one class alone. Classes are results of relations. On dimension (a), class interests are in *contrast* to interests of those belonging to other classes; on dimension (b), *tensions* develop between the members of the class and the members of other classes, and the distinction between one's own class and other classes is present in the peoples' experiences, thoughts, and language; on dimension (c), *conflicts* develop between classes, and, perhaps bet-

(16) *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*, New York (1973), 1975, p. 105.

(17) Cf. J. SCHUMPETER, « Die sozialen Klassen im ethnisch homogenen Milieu », in : *id.*, *Aufsätze zur Soziologie*, Tübingen, 1953, p. 158 : « Die Familie, nicht die physische Person ist das wahre Individuum der Klassentheorie. »

(18) The concepts are similar to those used by Max WEBER, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Köln/Berlin, 1964, vol. 1, p. 223-227; vol. 2, p. 679-682 (who distinguishes between « Marktklasse » and « soziale Klasse »). It would be possible to express the same idea in Marxian language and speak of the transformation of the « Klasse an sich » into the « Klasse für sich ». « Latent interests » is used by R. DAHRENDORF, *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*, Stanford, 1959, p. 173 f. But I do not follow D. in his attempt to de-economize the class concept by stressing power and subordination as the major distinction between the two classes. The stress on symbols as representing the community of a class and distinguishing it from other classes, can be found in P. BOURDIEU, « Klassenstellung und Klassenlage », in : *id.*, *Zur Soziologie der symbolischen Formen*, Frankfurt, 1974, p. 57 f., and *La Distinction*, Paris, 1979, p. 271 f.

ween a class and the state (19). Having a counterpart is essential for the structuration of a class.

Some points should be stressed or made more explicit. It should be clear that « class », defined in this way, is not a « thing » or any other static entity, but a process. Classes are always in the process of becoming or disappearing, in the making or un-making (20). It would be wrong to suppose a causal uni-linearity between the dimensions (a), (b) and (c); nor is there a clear chronological order from (a) to (b) to (c). While common class loyalties, on dimension (b), may serve as a basis for collective class action (c), class conflicts (c) strongly affect the evolution of loyalties and class consciousness (b), and both tensions and conflicts, (b) and (c), influence the economic situation and class relations on dimension (a) : just think of the role of strikes and protests as incentives for early mechanization and rationalization of the work place. It is a task for historical research to find out how the three dimensions of class formation interact (21).

Class structuration is a complicated process. While on a very general level the economic situation — in our case : wage work in a capitalist industrializing system (22) — and the ensuing latent interests may be identical or similar in two cases, e.g. two regions or two nations, the process of class formation may strongly differ in speed, scope, ideological content, forms, and results. For these processes are influenced by many factors : by older surviving structures and traditions, the speed and timing of industrialization, the character of other classes, particularities of culture and politics, etc. So there are many historical and geographical and branch specific variations in the formation of class.

The processes of class formation are not automatic, not irreversible, and never complete (23). Besides different patterns of class, one can have « more » or « less » class. Usually we can only identify tendencies, and counter-tendencies, and shifts of tendencies. Processes of class formation are never finished because there are always *competing* economic structures, affiliations, loyalties and battle fronts which criss-cross the class lines, build bridges across

(19) I have used this « model » for an analysis of German society in World War I : *Klassengesellschaft im Krieg. Deutsche Sozialgeschichte 1914-1918* (1973), Göttingen, 2nd ed. 1978, p. 3-5; references, particularly to the relevant passages in the works of Marx and Engels : *ibid.*, p. 148-150 (notes 13-18).

(20) This notion was stressed by E.P. THOMPSON, *Making*, p. 9 f. Also see Th. GEIGER, « Zur Theorie des Klassenbegriffs und der proletarischen Klasse » (1930), in : *id.*, *Arbeiten zur Soziologie*, Neuwied, 1962, p. 206-259, esp. 225-227.

(21) Cf. E.P. THOMPSON, « Eighteenth-century English society : class struggle without class ? », *Social History*, vol. 3, 1978, p. 149 (thinks that class conflict always precedes class-consciousness and even class itself. But it would be impossible to explain class conflicts without having a notion of a logically and chronologically preceding class-situation or « economic class » in the sense of this article).

(22) See below p. 114-116. There are of course alternative ways of defining the economic basis of classes. Cf. Max Weber's discussion of class (as referred to in note 18 above) in which market position is stressed as the criterion according to which members of classes (in the sense of economic classes) belong together. Also see the articles by H.U. Wehler and J. Kocka in : H.U. WEHLER (ed.), *Klassen in der europäischen Sozialgeschichte*, Göttingen, 1979.

(23) In contrast to those who try to date the finishing point of the making of a working class : H. Zwahr e.g. (see below p. 107-109, and n. 27 below) thinks that the formation of the Leipzig proletariat reached its end in the late 1860s (p. 164).

them, and departmentalize the classes internally, following non-class, e.g. occupational, ethnic, religious etc. lines. Let us give several examples. If we regard contractual wage work and lack of capital ownership as the decisive structural conditions which create a communality of latent interests on the basis of which workers can be regarded as an « economic class », which under certain conditions may more or less develop into some kind of « social class » and « class in action » deserving the name « proletariat », we will find, particularly in the 19th century, that there were competing work structures (non-contractual work with « feudal » controls in agriculture, handicrafts and elsewhere); « mixed » situations like those of the *Heuerlinge* in which persons or families did wage work (for the merchant-capitalist), cultivated a very small piece of land (perhaps on lease), and owned some means of production, e.g. a weaving loom; sometimes they even employed helpers. Wage work is very old, but before becoming the dominant mode, it emerged very slowly out of a complex system of non-wage work relations which continued to co-exist and serve as a basis for latent interests not identical with, but sometimes diffusing or criss-crossing, latent interests common to wage workers (24). Another example: national identities or the common interests of those who belong to a specific industry (in contrast to the interests of those in other industries) tend to counteract the class tensions and conflicts within a nation or within an industry. A third example: skilled workers in a factory may strongly feel to be members of a certain craft, e.g. plumbers; this identity may compete with their identification of a comprehensive working class, and often has done so. Finally: to be an Irish in Troy (up-state New York) in the 1880s may have been more important than being a factory worker; ethnic organizations including people from different classes may have been more important for people's identity, life, collective actions, and political behaviour than the unions or other working class organizations (25). Every person has different types of affiliations. There is no logic or necessity that class affiliation has to be or become the dominant one. There is no doubt that the relative weight of the different affiliations changes over time — how, why, and with which consequences for the individuals involved, and for the system at large, is a problem for empirical research.

If this makes sense we can turn it into a methodological device. How can we empirically describe whether and how class structuration took place in order to then get on to the question why and with which consequences? One way of exploring it would seem to concentrate on two types of related questions:

1. Which are the relevant lines of distinction, tension and conflict segmenting and dividing the emerging working class internally? Are they on the way of becoming sharper and more effective,

(24) Such « mixed » situations are well described in Rudolf BRAUN's monograph on an industrializing region near Zürich: *Industrialisierung und Volksleben* (1960), new ed. Göttingen, 1979; *Sozialer und kultureller Wandel in einem ländlichen Industriegebiet im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Erlenbach-Zürich, 1965.

(25) Cf. e.g. D.J. WALKOWITZ, *Worker City, Company Town. Iron and Cotton-Worker Protest in Troy and Cohoes*, New York, 1855-1884, Urbana (Ill.), 1978.

or are they in the process of becoming less powerful and less effective, in the sphere of work, with respect to income, self-consciousness, « culture », experiences, manifest interests, language, loyalties, organization etc.? Do the different groups within the working class become more or less similar? Are there barriers keeping working-class sub-groups like unskilled and skilled workers or different crafts away from each other? Do they become more rigid or are they permeated by increasing contacts, communication, and even co-operation? To the extent that homogeneity within the working class increases and internal fragmentation recedes, one can say that class formation proceeds. When, on the other hand, differences, tensions, and conflicts within the class become more prominent, this indicates a process of class devolution.

2. What is the relative weight of the « class line », the outer boundary of the working class, in structuring social reality? How visible and rigid is the distinction between workers and those who own and control, and how does this change over time? Do neighbourhoods include people from both sides of the class divide? Do people marry across? Is the recruitment basis of workers' organizations and movements limited to wage workers or are small masters and even small employers included? How does this change over time, and why? Do people identify as « common people » (including wage workers but also small self-employed « workers », and all those who are typologically in-between)? Or do they identify as (wage) workers when they talk about their problems, fears and hopes? Does the official occupational census of a country, by the categories used, reflect distinctions along class lines (like early in Germany) or does it prefer a functional categorization (like in the USA still in the 20th century)? Do the main concepts of the social and political language reflect the experience of class? (26). The clearer the class line emerges as a divide both in « objective » reality and in the minds of the people, in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres (relatively to other lines of differentiation like income, regional background etc.), the more one can say that class formation proceeds — and vice-versa.

III

No doubt, this approach is rather formal and abstract. This is why it can be applied to very different subject areas in order to relate them to one another and to the study of the formation of the working class. Take social mobility.

The East German historian Hartmut Zwahr has published an extremely interesting monograph on the formation of the Leipzig working class, from the 1830s to the 1870s (27). His approach is

(26) Cf. the examples given in E.J. HOBBSAWM, « The Aristocracy of Labour Reconsidered », in : M. FLINN (ed.), *Proceedings of the Seventh International Economic History Congress*, Edinburgh, 1978, vol. 2, p. 458.

(27) H. ZWAHR, *Zur Konstituierung des Proletariats als Klasse. Struktur-*

very similar to the one discussed here. Among other things he analyses the socio-economic situation (employment, work discipline, security, fluctuations, income, etc.) of different working class groups in Leipzig : different types of journeymen, day labourers, agricultural workers, factory workers, printers, cigarmakers and others. He thinks that, as to their socio-economic situation, these groups became more similar to one another, due to the increasing impact of capitalism and the beginnings of the industrial revolution (28). He continues by analysing the social origins of the different groups of workers, and of the godfathers they chose for their children, on the basis of unpublished city and church records, by statistical methods. His data on inter-generational social mobility and godfather selection show a high fragmentation of the Leipzig working class throughout the period. Among type-setters, for example, the sons of type setters were strongly over-represented, among unskilled workers the sons of unskilled workers. But over the decades these inheritance rates slightly declined ; it became more frequent for the sons of skilled and unskilled workers to move out of their father's occupational category, and change into other working class categories. At the same time the proportion of workers who came from a (lower) middle class family (usually master artisan families) declined, and the proportion of those who already came from a working class family (« born proletariat ») increased (29).

Every second printer and type-setter in Leipzig in the 1820s and 1830s selected a godfather from his own occupational group. Other crafts were similarly exclusive. But over the decades it became somewhat more frequent that godfather selection crossed occupational and skill lines ; for example, it became more frequent that printers and type-setters accepted unskilled workers as godfathers of their children. At the same time it became less frequent proportionally that godfathers with a non-working class background (businessmen, pub-keepers, master artisans, teachers, civil servants etc.) served in a working class family.

Not without justification, Zwahr interprets these results as indicators for decreasing social distance between, and increasing social integration of the different sub-groups of the emerging working class of Leipzig ; communication and contacts between different types of workers became more frequent. At the same time, the dividing line between working class and middle class became less permeable. Both in terms of social recruitment and godfather relations the emerging working class became more « self-sufficient » and more separated from the rest of society — whether by choice or repulsion is left open. Zwahr accepts these findings as indicating advancement in the process

untersuchung über das Leipziger Proletariat während der industriellen Revolution, Berlin, 1978.

(28) Whether the results of Zwahr are fully borne out by his evidence cannot be discussed here. See my review of the book in : *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, vol. 20, 1980.

(29) ZWAHR, *Konstituierung*, p. 116, 119 ff., 144 ff., pass. ; the concept « born proletariat » is also used by Klaus TENFELDE in his social history of the Ruhr miners : *Sozialgeschichte der Bergarbeiter an der Ruhr im 19. Jahrhundert*, Bonn-Bad Godesbeg, 1977, p. 513, 577 f.

of the social formation of the Leipzig proletariat. He also tries to show, with less success, that the « born proletarian », i.e. workers coming from working class families, were more involved in the labour movement and in socialist politics than the workers of middle class background, concluding that the economic formation and the social formation of the class were paralleled by a political-ideological formation aiming at class conscious protests, socialist organization and Marxist ideology.

Our parish register based studies on social mobility and marriage patterns in several 19th century Westphalian places (see above p. 100-102) asked similar questions. We differentiated between agrarian workers (including *Heuerlinge*), cottage workers (usually weavers and spinners), unskilled (non-agrarian) workers, skilled (non-agrarian) workers and lower non-manual employees. There were high barriers between these five working class groups. Take Bielefeld as an example. 61 per cent of the sons of the skilled workers, 41 per cent of the sons of the cottage workers, and 37 per cent of the sons of the unskilled workers belonged to the same group as their fathers when they married (in Bielefeld, 1830-1910). Only the highly mobile lower white collar employees, and the agrarian workers (who usually left the agrarian context when they came to Bielefeld and appeared in the Bielefeld registers) had much smaller inheritance rates (see table 2). The marriage patterns were similarly fragmented, but here the barriers between the groups were much more permeable, as table 1 documents.

Table 1 : Intermarriage of working class sons, Bielefeld, 1830-1910
(per cent figures refer to groups of origin) (30)

status of groom's father	status of bride's father							N
	1	2	3	4	5	6*	7**	
1. agrarian worker	43	7	15	16	2	1	16	311
2. cottage w.	19	11	24	19	4	1	22	70
3. unskilled w.	15	3	34	25	4	2	18	271
4. skilled w.	15	5	18	31	4	3	24	348
5. lower white collar w.	10	3	18	25	10	7	27	40

* 6 = other working class.

** 7 = middle/upper classes.

Excepting the sons of cottage workers and lower white collar employees, the sons from every group married girls with the same family background as their own more often than girls coming from any other single group.

(30) Table by K. Ditt from Kocka et al., *Familie*, p. 312. These figures result from comparing the occupational status of the grooms father with the occupational status of the bride's father. This explains why agrarian workers' sons could so frequently marry within their group (43 per cent), while they could not stay within their group occupationally (table 2). The table reads as follows : 43 per cent of the sons of agrarian workers married girls whose fathers were agrarian workers as well. 7 per cent of the sons of agrarian workers married girls whose fathers were cottage workers...

Table 2 : Intergenerational occupational mobility of working class sons, Bielefeld 1830-1910
(per cent figures refer to groups of origin) (31)

status of grooms father	status of groom							N
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. agrarian workers	1830-1850	7,6+	39,4+	12,1—	3,0+	10,6+	9,0—	66
	1860-1880	5,9+	18,2+	35,9+	28,8—	—	5,3+	170
	1890-1910	4,3+	1,1+	45,2+	44,1+	1,1—	1,1+	93
	1830-1910	5,8+	13,4+	39,2+	29,8—	0,9—	5,2+	329
2. cottage workers	1830-1850	—	56,3+	6,3—	12,5—	—	25,1—	26
	1860-1880	—	54,3+	11,4—	17,1—	2,9+	11,5—	35
	1890-1910	—	12,0+	16,0—	52,0+/-	—	—	25
	1830-1910	—	40,8+	11,8—	27,6—	2,6—	1,3—	76
3. unskilled workers	1830-1850	—	8,3—	35,9+	38,5+	—	2,6—	39
	1860-1880	1,3—	5,1—	33,3+	41,0+	1,3—	1,3—	78
	1890-1910	—	0,6—	39,4+	41,7—	4,4+	0,6—	180
	1830-1910	0,3—	2,4—	37,4+	41,1+	3,0+	1,0—	297
4. skilled workers	1830-1850	—	9,1—	6,5—	64,9+	—	19,5—	77
	1860-1880	0,8—	3,1—	10,9—	63,6+	2,3+	0,8—	129
	1890-1910	—	—	16,9—	58,1+	2,3—	1,2+	172
	1830-1910	0,3—	2,9—	12,7—	61,4+	1,9—	0,8—	378
5. lower white collar workers	1830-1850	—	8,3—	16,7—	33,3+	8,3+	25,0—	12
	1860-1880	—	—	18,2—	45,5+	9,1+	27,3+	11
	1890-1910	—	—	9,1—	40,9—	9,1+	40,8+	22
	1830-1910	—	2,2—	13,3—	40,0+	8,9+	2,2—	45

* 6 = other working class.

** 7 = middle/upper classes.

(31) Table by Karl Ditt in *ibid.*, p. 302. (+ means : index of association higher than 1 ; — means : index of association below 1.) In order to differentiate the broad groups « skilled workers », « unskilled workers » etc. one could investigate the exchanges and intermarriages between single occupations. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 309 : 47 per cent of the sons of masons, 46 per cent of the sons of mechanics, 23 per cent of the sons of carpenters, and 16 per cent of the sons of tailors had the same or a very similar occupation as their fathers when they married.

In the course of time, however, it happened more often that these barriers between the working class groups were crossed. A slightly increasing proportion of grooms belonged to another group than their fathers without, however, leaving the working class altogether (see table 2). This is particularly true with respect to sons from groups whose numbers stagnated and shrunk (cottage workers). But the inheritance rates of the other groups went slightly down, too, with the exception of the unskilled workers and the white collar employees. In terms of inter-generational mobility the social distances slightly narrowed between skilled and unskilled workers, between agrarian workers and skilled/unskilled workers (one-way flow), as well as between cottage workers and skilled/unskilled workers (one-way flow, too). On the other hand, the distance between the lower white collar workers and the manual workers grew.

There was no clear trend as to changes in the marriage patterns. But in most cases, inter-marriages between groups were and remained more frequent than occupational exchanges between them. In intensifying contacts, communication and community between different types of workers, marriage relations were more important, it seems, than occupational exchange.

There are similar findings from the case studies on Borghorst and Quernheim. All figures make clear that there remained a remarkable degree of internal class fragmentation. But, to a limited degree, the internal integration of the local working classes in those three places advanced. This was less true for the other aspect of class structuration. As to the line separating the working class from other classes and strata, there was no clear trend towards increasing distinctiveness. As much as one can tell from our indicators, the gulf between the working class and the middle class did not distinctively grow, in Westphalia. Rather, the picture remains ambivalent. In the Bielefeld case downward mobility across the « class line » increased while upward mobility remained rather constant. At Borghorst upward mobility from the working class into non-working class positions grew while skidding down into the working class became less frequent. In Quernheim upward mobility across the « class line » was rare and did not change much; downward moves were much more frequent, but they slightly decreased. In some ways the « class line » became a more rigid barrier for social mobility, in some ways not.

In the cases reported, changes of social mobility, godfather selection and inter-marriage patterns seem to indicate that what had first only been an « economic class » — so to speak : a potential — slowly developed into a « social class » — though within clear limits (32). For it can be assumed that increasing interchange between sub-groups in terms of occupational mobility, marriage relations and godfather selection generated more common interests, intensified

(32) Both Zwahr and the study on Westphalia deal with some presumable causes of the changes in the mobility and marriage patterns : changes of the work organization and of the occupational structure, the role of the family, migrations, the educational system etc.

communication, and facilitated the exchange of experiences and traditions between the different working class group. There should have been a slight tendency towards a more general, more comprehensive, more homogeneous working class experience, which supplemented or perhaps dominated the group-specific experiences and identities each worker held as a member of a specific skill group, craft, ethnic group or industry. Besides increasing exchange through mobility and marriage, there were many other factors which worked in favor of such a comprehensive working class identity : e.g. certain forms of discrimination and repression (like undemocratic electoral and association laws) which concerned workers of different background in similar ways. But of course there was never just a general working class identity ; a specific worker was never just a worker, but at the same time a miner in contrast to other occupations, a skilled craftsman in contrast to the unskilled, an employee of a specific firm, etc. Which of these different dimensions of his self-identity was dominant in that it influenced his practical loyalties, affiliations, and actions most, is an empirical question.

Research on residential patterns can be helpful in this respect. How much segregation was there along the class line ? Did different groups of workers live in the same neighborhoods ? Did the residential patterns support communication between working class groups and separate them from other parts of the local society ? (33). Research on other dimensions could apply similar questions. One can try, e.g. to find out whether certain symbols of self-representation, songs and on other dimensions could apply similar questions. One can try, e.g., specific to a specific craft) or whether they tended to be shared by the members of the emerging class cutting across occupations ? (34). The vocabulary of politics can be analyzed by applying the same type of questions. It means quite a lot when German journeymen in the 1830s and 1840s started to speak of themselves as « Arbeiter » (« workers ») instead of using the craft specific term, like tailor or printer. And it is interesting to observe that the word increasingly after 1848 referred to workers in dependent positions only, while at the start it could include small self-employed masters as well (35).

It should be stressed that increasing communication, interchange, integration and homogeneity on the level of collective experiences and identities, customs and cultures, beliefs and aspirations, fears and hopes, and organization does *not* necessarily mean : increasing radicalization or even increasing adoption of a specific ideology by

(33) On Berlin : I. THIENEL, *Städtewachstum im Industrialisierungsprozess des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin, 1973 ; on Augsburg : I. FISCHER, *Industrialisierung, sozialer Konflikt und politische Willensbildung in der Stadtgemeinde*, Augsburg 1977. On the role of communication structures in the formation of the working class see the important article by K. TENFELDE, « Arbeiterschaft, Arbeitsmarkt und Kommunikationsstrukturen im Ruhrgebiet in den 50er Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts », *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, vol. 16, 1976, p. 1-60.

(34) Cf. on the relative decline of occupational sub-cultures and the increasing awareness of the common position as skilled wage-earners in late 19th century Edinburgh : R.Q. GRAY, *The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh*, Oxford, 1976, p. 91-95.

(35) Cf. W. CONZE, « Arbeiter », in : O. BRUNNER et al. (ed.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politischen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 1, Stuttgart, 1972, p. 216-242, esp. 228 f.

the emerging class. Class formation, as it is here understood, can occur and has occurred with different ideological results, depending on many different factors like cultural traditions, constitutional setting, and the peculiarities of class conflicts in the specific country or region (36). In order to study ideologies and programs, other types of questions are necessary, in addition to those discussed in this article.

In contrast, these questions serve well when applied to the study of collective actions, protests, and organizations. Usually the protests, the strikes, and the demands of 18th and early 19th centuries journeymen were craft-specific. It is important to find out when and why journeymen of different crafts and workers of different skills joined hands in protests, and perhaps entered the same associations, together. It would be equally important to study when and why non-wage workers, particularly master artisans (even the small ones who did not employ helpers) did not (any more) participate in certain protests and associations; when they left the emerging movement, or when they had to leave, and why. It is through the exact and systematic analysis of the social composition of the participants in collective actions (like strikes and other protests), and of the recruitment base of formal organizations (like working men's parties or unions) that we can find out whether a movement becomes a real working class movement — in contrasts to the more traditional movements of single crafts, and in contrast to «crowds» and other movements whose basis crosses class lines, e.g. by including wage workers and self-employed master artisans or peasants as well. Again the programmatic and ideological content may differ, and would have to be studied by asking other types of questions; ideology is an interesting topic for research, but it should not be used as the primary criterion for judging whether a movement is a working class movement or not (37).

IV

This should suffice to show that the approach discussed here, concentrating on the structuration of the working class by looking

(36) In contrast, some Marxist writers maintain that increasing homogeneity and the decrease of internal sectionalism, by themselves, entail revolutionary class consciousness. This is the message in Foster's analysis of Oldham (see next note) and in Zwahr's book of Leipzig (see n. 27 above). In both cases the evidence does not bear out this assertion, and there is no logical justification for it, either. Cf. the convincing comment on Foster by G. STEDMAN JONES, «Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution», *New Left Review*, March/April 1975, p. 35-69, esp. 47-48. On Zwahr: my review quoted in n. 28 above.

(37) Cf. for the German developments, 1830s to 1870s: W. SCHIEDER, *Die Anfänge der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Die Auslandsvereine im Jahrzehnt nach der Julirevolution von 1830*, Stuttgart, 1963, p. 82 ff.; D. BERGMANN, «Die Berliner Arbeiterschaft in Vormärz und Revolution 1830-1850», in: O. BÜSCH (ed.), *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der frühen Industrialisierung vornehmlich im Wirtschaftsraum Berlin/Brandenburg*, Berlin, 1971, p. 456-511; U. ENGELHARDT, «Gewerkschaftliches Organisationsverhalten in der ersten Industrialisierungsphase», in: CONZE/ENGELHARDT, *Arbeiter*, p. 372-402 (on the 1860s); W. RENZSCH, *Arbeiterbewegung zwischen Kleinbürgertum und Proletariat*, Göttingen, 1980 (on the separation between self-employed artisans and workers in Berlin, in the 1860s and 1870s).

on the changing meaning of its internal divisions and outer boundaries, can guide very different questions and apply to very different dimensions of working class history. It brings them together in a flexible way. It is only a partial approach, a rather formal framework which does not replace more specific questions and more concrete approaches, but tries to stimulate and to coordinate them. Since this approach conceives of the rise of labor organizations as of one dimension of the process of working class formation, it brings working class and labor movement history together.

In the German cases discussed in this article, the internal integration and structuration of the working class advanced, although not in every respect, very slowly, and deep internal divisions notwithstanding. Similar questions have been asked and methods applied to some British cases, with different results. Recent studies about the « labour aristocracy » in British 19th century cities have tended to stress that the multi-dimensional gulf between a rather exclusive upper stratum of the skilled workers and the rest of the working class did not tend to narrow before 1914 ; on the contrary, it sometimes broadened and deepened. These studies investigated various dimensions of this gulf which sharply divided the working class in Britain, particularly in the second half of the 19th century : income, ownership, residence, life-styles, cultures, values, union participation, political attitudes etc. They also analyzed mobility and marriage patterns in order to assess the social distances between single occupations (38).

The German studies reported here did not study exactly the same problem. Rather, they were interested in the division between skilled and unskilled workers (which is not identical with the difference between a labour aristocracy in the British sense and the bulk of the working class). Breaking down his data according to occupations, Zwahr should have found such a labour aristocracy if it had existed or developed in Leipzig. But his results point into the contrary direction. The Westphalian studies stayed on a more aggregate level. But in the case of Bielefeld it became quite clear that the social distance between the manual workers and the lower white collar employees (clerks, office helpers, messengers etc.) grew in the late 19th and early 20th century. In Germany the debate on the « labour aristocracy » was always much weaker, the debate on the issue of the white collar employees (*Angestelltenfrage*) much stronger than in Britain. Probably a rather clear distinction between blue collar workers (*Arbeiter*) and white collar employees (*Angestellte*) developed earlier in Germany than in Britain while the gulf between an upper stratum of highly skilled manual workers and the rest of the (manual) working class was less manifest in Germany than in Britain. Comparisons of the social vocabulary and the union structures would seem to support this. One should further explore this hypo-

(38) Cf. J. FOSTER, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, London, 1974 ; GRAY, *Labour Aristocracy* ; G. CROSSICK, *An Artisan Elite in Victorian Society. Kentish London 1840-1880*, London, 1978 ; a review of the literature, in : E.J. HOBBSAWM, « The Aristocracy of Labour Reconsidered », *art. cit.*

thesis because it might reveal a lot about the peculiarities of the processes of class formation in both countries (39).

The approach discussed in this article does not work without a clear definition of what is meant by « working class ». Otherwise one cannot explore the changing meaning of its internal divisions and of its outer boundaries. Of course it is impossible to define which groups belong to the working class in the sense of « social class » or « class in action » (see p. 104-105 above). This is a strictly empirical question which finds different answers in different historical situations since economic classes are never fully transformed into social classes and classes in action. But it is necessary to specify which socio-economic categories, in the author's view, belong to the working class in the sense of « economic class » and why (40). In this article, like in many others, « working class » has been understood as « wage workers' class » (*Lohnarbeiterklasse*). It has been assumed that persons belong to the working class — in the sense of economic class — to the extent that they do not own and control means of production (capital), but sell their labour power as a commodity to somebody who does. Wage work is based on a contractual relationship between legally free and equal partners : it is regulated by market criteria. The status of a wage worker is not a short-time transitory stage in the life-cycle, but more or less permanent. The rank order of occupational groupings we used for describing social mobility corresponded to this definition : it permitted to break down the sample of cases along the class line so defined (41).

There are powerful theories which offer good reasons for such a conceptual choice. One need not accept every aspect of Karl Marx's

(39) Cf. the comparative remarks in E.J. HOBBSAWM, « The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth-century Britain », in : *id.*, *Labouring Men. Studies in the History of Labour*, London, 1968 (Weidenfeld Goldback ed.), p. 296-297 ; the comparisons in the final chapter of J. KOCKA, *Angestellte zwischen Faschismus und Demokratie. Zur politischen Sozialgeschichte der Angestellten : USA 1890-1940 im internationalen Vergleich*, Göttingen, 1977 (english translation, London, 1980).

(40) I miss a clear word on that in THOMPSON, *Making of the English Working Class*. « The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born — or enter involuntarily » (p. 9). But Thompson does not say which aspects of the productive relations, in his view, constituted or rather contributed to constitute the working class he is talking about. Is it lack of ownership of the means of production and surplus producing wage work ? Is it dependence on a capitalist market and loss of autonomy ? Is it something else or all together ? — The book has to pay the price for this conceptual vagueness : For the reader it is difficult to find out which social groups belong to what is described as the working class in the making, and which social groups do not. E.g., what about petty producers and small masters ? Under what conditions, because of which criteria, are they part of the emerging working class or not ? It would be important to have answers to such questions because without them it remains unclear how far the book's many generalizations on « the English working class » are meant to reach, and what really holds the different groups and parts of the emerging class together. Without answers to such questions it is very difficult to distinguish the categories « common people » and « working class », « crowds » and « working class protests », « plebejan » and « proletarian ». I do not find much additional clarification in *id.*, « Eighteenth-century English society », p. 145, 149-150.

(41) In contrast, most American mobility studies ignore the distinction between classes in the sense of this article. They distinguish (different strata of) blue collar and (different strata of) white collar, putting both self-employed and salaried people in the same category, e.g. « lower white collar ». This makes it impossible to interpret their data and results in terms of working class formation as suggested here.

value theory in order to find him, nevertheless, convincing in stressing the basic importance of the commodity form of work and the basic distinction of interest between wage workers and capital owners. Though differing from Marx in many respects, Max Weber's theory of class, by relating class position closely to market position, strongly advocates a clear analytical separation between wage workers and self-employed owners, as well. There have been many other theorists to whom one might refer in this context.

But it is well known that wage work in this sense, in the reality of the industrial revolution, rarely appeared in its pure form. Rather, elements of wage work were often imbedded in non-wage work structures of high complexity. There were remnants of corporate and feudal obligations and rights, particularly in the countryside and in the urban crafts. There was still much work for subsistence instead of work for the market. In the case of many cottage workers it was not quite clear whether they sold their work, or the products of their work. Many of them, in addition, owned some means of production. Sub-contracting was frequent, even in centralized firms, and consequently many workers took part in the system of « co-exploitation » (Hobsbawm) : they were wage workers and employers at the same time. People moved back and forth, not only between agricultural and industrial pursuits, but also between the position of petty producers, family work, and wage work.

But slowly, with the rise of capitalism, and particularly with the industrial revolution, wage work became more important, and finally dominant. This is why the concept « working class » as used in this article does not only correspond to certain aspects *existing* in the reality of the industrial revolution, but also to essential *tendencies* of that reality. The concept selects components of reality which are in the process of becoming more important. After all, concepts do not just mirror historical reality ; they interpret it. They have to be based on reality — of course —, but also on perspectives. They are not identical with, but in a way purer than, historical reality. It belongs to the tasks of historians to keep this changing tension (or distance) between his concepts and historical reality (as it is shown in the sources) in mind, and to communicate it to his audience (42).

Take the concept « working class » as used in this article. It includes industrial, agricultural and service workers, as long as they seem to fulfill the criteria of being a wage worker, sufficiently (43). It also includes lower white collar employees. But excluded are master artisans and self-employed tradesmen, because they cannot be regarded as wage workers. In reality, however, there were many cases without a clear separation between ownership and wage work.

(42) In this respect one can learn from Max Weber who was much less a conceptual nominalist than he is often thought to be. I borrow from his « idealtypical » approach. Idealtypes are not just constructions of the researcher, but they also have to correspond to important moments and tendencies of reality. Cf. Max WEBER, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen, 3rd ed. 1968, p. 191 (for a clear definition of « idealtypes »); on the uses of idealtypes in social history : J. Kocka, *Sozialgeschichte*, Göttingen, 1977, p. 86-88.

(43) This raises thorny problems of categorization which I leave aside for the moment.

There were many « mixed » cases and transitory forms : semi-dependent artisans with or without hired help ; workers within family economies ; temporary wage workers. It is also true that masters and journeymen very often still shared social background, work culture, and other experiences. There were many common interests and forms of cooperation between journeymen and masters and those who were both, especially when threatened by advancing capitalism and sometimes by the dynamics of state power (44). But nevertheless, there was, very early, a growing split between journeymen and masters, wage workers and owners (even when they were small and did not employ workers themselves). On the German scene this split was as old as the labour movement itself. It can be observed in Berlin in the 1840s, all over Germany in the revolution of 1848, in the revival of the labor movement in the early 1860s, and in the wave of strikes of the early 1870s. And it is possible to demonstrate that this emergent split was largely due to different interests and different class positions (45).

This is not a development particular to Germany. In the long run, labour movements became wage workers' movements everywhere in Europe and North America. Movements of self-employed artisans developed apart, very often with a strong anti-proletarian, lower middle-class orientation. But there seem to be important differences between Germany and Britain, in this respect. *Arbeiterbewegung* (workers' movement) and *Handwerkerbewegung* (master artisans movement) separated early in Germany, right at the beginning of industrialization ; 1848 was a decisive year. The line of distinction between wage workers (of all sorts) and self-employed artisans, the « class line » in the sense of this article, was probably earlier and clearer developed in Germany than in Britain — due, perhaps, to the different ways older corporate and absolutist structures and traditions survived and worked in both countries (46). If this turns out to be correct, one might argue that the categories of the political economy of Karl Marx, which is based on a theory of wage work and capital, reflect particularities of the German situation to a larger extent than conceded in Marx's œuvre. This opens up interesting questions for comparative research of which Georges Haupt was a master. It also implies something about the historical nature of systematic concepts and about national differences in the writing of social history.

(44) The study of Renzsch (n. 37 above) has good examples, especially from the sewing industry of the 1860s and 1870s. For the earlier decades : J. BERGMANN, *Das Berliner Handwerk in den Frühphasen der Industrialisierung*, Berlin, 1973.

(45) Cf. the titles in notes 37 and 44 above ; H. MEUSCH, *Die Handwerkerbewegung von 1848-1849*, Alfeld, 1949 ; and most important the chapter « The break between masters and men » (including a short comparison with England) in : S. VOLKOV, *The rise of Popular Anti-modernism in Germany. The Urban Master Artisans, 1873-1896*, Princeton, 1978, p. 123-146. Also : B. MOORE, Jr., *Injustice. The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt*, London 1978, ch. 5.

(46) Besides the book by S. Volkov see for the later period : A. WINKLER, « From Social Protectionism to National Socialism, German Small Business Movement in Comparative Perspective », *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 48, 1976, p. 1-18.