

## Class

The social origins of mankind inevitably impose qualitative distinctions among the members of that species, homo erectus. The search for the qualitatively superior will, from the beginning in the observer of earliest societies, have distinguished among the more or less proficient in running, killing, food preparation, thinking, fighting, or cultivating. The subsequent prioritizing of relatively superior groups is the origin of classes. The evolution of culture leads inevitably to increasingly refined categories of prioritization—faster running, more muscular wrestling, finer cooking—ultimately to the categories of what we might, though with considerable care, want to call the higher culture, the areas of culture in which we differentiate ourselves by the refinement with which we perform societal acts, like behaving, dressing, eating, or making love. Higher class comes to mean subtler, more refined, or better able to shape or plan. To belong to a higher class comes to mean, to do things with superior skill. The arts reflect as mirrors these ascending levels of finesse and skill, which in their turn represent ever more refined narratives and portrayals enshrining such 'classy' representatives of mankind as we find, say, in the fiction of Jane Austen (1775-1817) or Henry James (1843-1916), the diagrammatic portraits of Leonardo da Vinci, or the plays of Shakespeare (1564-1616), whose characters behave in accordance with highly scripted language roles, the least deviance from which detracts from the notion of the *classical*, derived from the sense of what is proud to be seen and views itself as of superior value.