

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q5(e)

William Ogburn and Cultural lag.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Anthropology GS 1 · 10 marks · The Nature of Culture

2.1 The Nature of Culture: The concept and Characteristics of culture and civilization; Ethnocentrism vis-a-vis cultural Relativism.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on William Ogburn and **cultural lag**
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

Ogburn's **Social Change (1922)** distinguished material and **non-material culture**.

Cultural lag is the slower movement of law and morals behind invention.

The concept travelled from sociology into culture-contact and applied anthropology.

It fits new technology before new ethics, including in development settings.

It fails if meaning is treated as a mere lagging part.

Introduction

William F. Ogburn argued that the parts of culture do not change at one speed. **Cultural lag** is the delay of non-material rules behind material invention.

Body**Ogburn's claim**

- In **Social Change (1922)** **William F. Ogburn** split culture into material objects and the non-material field of law, family, and belief.
- **Material culture**, especially technology, often moves first; family ethics, property law, and ritual catch up later, and that gap is **cultural lag**.
- His examples included industry, the automobile, and delayed legal and moral adjustment, a sociology that anthropologists borrowed for culture-contact studies.

Use and criticism

- Lag helps explain why IVF, the internet, or a dam can exist before kinship and compensation rules are ready, including in Indian tribal displacement.
- **Leslie White** and other evolutionists liked the material lead; **Franz Boas** and later interpretive writers warned that meaning is not a slow caboose on a technological engine.
- Lag can sound too mechanical if religion and law are treated as mere leftovers, so the term is a diagnostic, not a whole theory of culture.

Flow diagram

Material technology -> Cultural lag
Law family belief -> Cultural lag
Cultural lag -> Adjustment or strain

Conclusion

Ogburn named **cultural lag** as the delay of norms behind technology. The idea is still useful for law and kinship after new machines, if it is not turned into a one-way material destiny.

Facts & figures

William F. Ogburn

American sociologist whose **Social Change (1922)** defined cultural lag.

Cultural lag

The period when non-material culture has not yet adjusted to a material or technological change.

Material culture

Tools, machines, and objects that Ogburn treated as often changing first.

Non-material culture

Law, family norms, and beliefs that may trail technological change.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. ·

<https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/anthropology-gs-1/2023/william-ogburn-and-cultural-lag/> ·

ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com