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Q2(c)

Is sociology common sense? Give reasons in support of your argument.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2016 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Sociology

Sociology - The Discipline: Modernity and social changes in Europe and emergence of sociology; Scope of the subject and comparison with other social sciences; Sociology and common sense.

Core demand of the question

- Is sociology common sense? Give reasons in support of your argument
- Keep the answer within a 15-mark length

Revision summary

Common sense is everyday maxims; sociology is disciplined comparison and test.

Durkheim, Marx, Weber, and Merton break **prenotions**, appearances, and manifest reasons.

Mead and Schutz keep the **life-world** as the object to interpret.

Gender standpoint and official surveys often overturn household proverb.

- **Argument:** not the same; overlapping object, different method.

Introduction

Common sense is the stock of everyday maxims in a group. Sociology uses that world as data and then breaks its self-evidence. The argument is that sociology is not common sense, though it must start from it.

Body

Why it is not the same

- **Emile Durkheim** demanded that **prenotions** be discarded and social facts treated as things. Suicide rates contradict the maxim that only personal despair matters.
- **Karl Marx** treated appearances of the market as ideology. Common sense of a "fair wage" can hide surplus value.
- **Max Weber**'s ideal types and value-discipline are method, not proverb.
- Robert K. Merton distinguished manifest common reasons from latent functions the actor may not name.

How common sense still enters

- **Alfred Schutz and George Herbert Mead:** the **life-world** is already interpreted. Sociology is second-order, not from nowhere.
- Peter Berger called sociology a school of suspicion toward the obvious, not a replacement of living.

Reasons for the argument

- Common sense is local, contradictory, and tied to a standpoint, as Sandra Harding and Ann Oakley show for gender.
- Sociology compares, historicises, and tests. **Census** and **NFHS** often overturn household common sense about work and nutrition.
- Talcott Parsons's systems language is remote from proverb, for better and worse.
- When sociology merely restates proverb with jargon, it has failed, which proves the standard, not the identity.

Argument in one line

- **Object:** overlapping. Method and accountability: not common sense.

Flow diagram

Common sense -> Starting meanings

Sociology -> Compare test historicise

Starting meanings -> Sociology

Compare test historicise -> Checked account

Conclusion

- **Sociology is not common sense. Durkheim, Marx, Weber, and Merton give reasons:** facts, critique, types, and latent functions. It must still understand common sense as the actors' world, which Mead and Schutz insist on. The discipline begins where the proverb stops being enough.

Facts & figures

Prenotions

Durkheim: everyday ideas that sociology must replace with constructed concepts.

Latent function

Merton: consequences that common sense of the actor may miss.

Life-world

Schutz: the already interpreted everyday that sociology studies at second order.

NFHS

Survey evidence that frequently contradicts local common sense on nutrition and work.