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Q3(a)

Does the collapse of functionalism and bankruptcy of Marxism coincide with the rupture of modernity? Discuss.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 1 · 20 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

- Does the collapse of functionalism and bankruptcy of Marxism coincide with the rupture of modernity? Discuss
- Keep the discussion within a 20-mark length

Revision summary

Parsonian functionalism collapsed under conflict and 1960s critique.

Marxism faced 1989, missing polarisation, and gender-race gaps.

Lyotard named the fall of metanarratives as a postmodern rupture.

Giddens and Beck describe radicalised or reflexive modernity, not an end.

Indian capitalism and caste show modern structures still at work.

Introduction

From the 1960s, Parsonian functionalism lost authority and Marxist certainties split or stalled. Postmodern and late-modern writers called this a rupture of modernity. The coincidence is partial. Institutions of capitalism, state, and science did not end when the two grand theories wobbled.

Body

Collapse of functionalism

- Talcott **Parsons'** system over-integrated conflict and history.
- C. Wright Mills, Ralf Dahrendorf, and later phenomenology accused it of a conservative consensus myth.
- 1960s movements made "system needs" look tone-deaf.

Bankruptcy charges against Marxism

- Actually existing socialism, 1989, and missing polarisation in rich capitalism damaged a textbook sequence.
- The New Left, feminism, and race studies said class did not exhaust domination.
- Cultural Marxists and world-systems theory, after Immanuel Wallerstein, were reconstructions, not a simple death.

Rupture of modernity?

- Jean-François **Lyotard** named incredulity toward metanarratives, including functional progress and Marxist emancipation.
- Zygmunt Bauman's liquid modernity and Ulrich Beck's reflexive modernity describe a changed, not ended, modern.
- **Anthony Giddens**: modernity radicalises, it does not politely close.

Why coincidence is overstated

- **Max Weber**'s iron cage and rationalisation already doubted both consensus and redemptive history.
- Indian liberalisation, informal labour, and caste politics show modern institutions thickening, not a postmodern holiday.
- Feminist and Dalit theory criticised both functionalism and orthodox Marxism without leaving modernity's questions of rights and the state.

Discussion

- Intellectual collapse of two school orthodoxies did coincide with a crisis of modern self-confidence.
- That is not the same as the end of modern structures.

Flow diagram

Functionalism collapse -> Crisis of grand theory
Marxism crisis -> Crisis of grand theory
Crisis of grand theory -> Rupture talk
Capital state science -> Modernity continues
Rupture talk -> Partial coincidence

Conclusion

Functionalism's fall and Marxism's crisis travelled with a rupture in modern self-description. They did not prove that modernity itself ended. **Weber**, **Giddens**, and Indian capitalist-caste modernity show continuity with new risks and voices.

Facts & figures

Parsons

The system theory whose consensus image lost dominance after the 1960s.

Lyotard

The Postmodern Condition: incredulity toward metanarratives.

Giddens

Modernity as a juggernaut that radicalises rather than simply ending.

1989

Political shock used to declare Marxism bankrupt, while reconstructions continued.

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