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Q5(a)

Is the theory of cultural lag valid in present times? Discuss

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 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 the theory of cultural lag valid in present times? Discuss
- Keep the discussion within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

- **Ogburn**: material culture leads, adaptive culture lags.

Gig law, privacy, and bioethics still show that gap.

Marx and **Weber** deny that technology is an uncaused first mover.

Movements can lead or block adoption.

Valid as strain theory, not as determinism.

Introduction

William **Ogburn**'s cultural lag says material culture, especially technology, changes first and adaptive culture of norms, law, and family trails. The theory is still valid as a diagnostic of strain. It is invalid as a one-way law of gadgets over society.

Body**What still holds**

- Digital platforms arrived faster than labour law, privacy, and gig social security.
- Medical technology outran ethics of surrogacy, data, and end-of-life.
- Green Revolution and now climate tools moved faster than agrarian institutions.

Limits in present times

- **Karl Marx** already made relations of production steer which technologies are adopted.
- **Max Weber**'s rationalisation is a cultural engine, not a lagging tail.
- **Social movements can lead**: environmental norms sometimes block a dam or a gene crop before full deployment.
- Gendered unpaid care, after Ann Oakley, may intensify with new gadgets that raise housekeeping standards.

Verdict

- Valid as a middle-range notice of mismatched tempos.
- Invalid as technological determinism.

Flow diagram

Material technology -> Adaptive norms law
Class state movements -> Material technology
Adaptive norms law -> Present strain gig data

Conclusion

Cultural lag remains a useful name for law and norms trailing digital and biomedical change. Present times also show culture and power steering technology. Use **Ogburn** as a warning, not as a master key.

Facts & figures

Ogburn

Cultural lag: adaptive culture trails material invention.

Gig work

A present case of platform technique ahead of labour protection.

Marx

Forces of production develop inside class relations, not in a vacuum.

Weber

Science and law as cultural rationalisation, not mere lagging custom.

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