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Q1(a)

Discuss the historical antecedents of the emergence of Sociology as a discipline

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · 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

- Discuss the historical antecedents of the emergence of Sociology as a discipline
- Keep the discussion within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Sociology emerged when industry, the state, and revolution made society a problem.

Enlightenment comparison and Saint-Simon-Comte positivism supplied permission.

Nisbet's conservative themes of community and authority also fed the field.

Marx, Durkheim, and Weber turned the name into a discipline.

Census offices made method a public craft.

Introduction

Sociology named itself in nineteenth-century Europe when industrial capitalism, the nation-state, and revolution made society a problem. The antecedents are older ideas plus those shocks. Auguste Comte gave the name; the questions were already on the table.

Body

Intellectual antecedents

- Enlightenment reason treated institutions as human products open to criticism, as Montesquieu's comparison of laws already showed.
- Scottish moralists such as Adam Smith studied the division of labour and morals as regularities, not as church mystery.
- Saint-Simon demanded a science of social reorganisation after the French Revolution. Comte turned that programme into a hierarchy of sciences.

Material and political shocks

- The Industrial Revolution created factories, cities, and new classes that parish custom could not explain.
- The French Revolution showed that political order can collapse and be remade. Conservative reaction, which Robert Nisbet stressed, made community and authority into problems.
- Colonial encounters supplied comparison, even when Europe used that comparison to rank others.

From philosophy to a discipline

- **Karl Marx** analysed class and the mode of production. **Emile Durkheim** fixed social facts. **Max Weber** studied social action and rationalisation.
- Universities, statistical bureaux, and the census made a career and a method possible.

Flow diagram

Enlightenment comparison -> Sociology

Industry and revolution -> Sociology

Comte name -> Sociology

Marx Durkheim Weber -> Sociology

Conclusion

Sociology emerged from Enlightenment comparison, industrial and revolutionary crisis, and the later classic trio of **Marx**, **Durkheim**, and **Weber**. **Comte** named the science. The antecedents are both ideas and the factory-state world that made those ideas urgent.

Facts & figures

Comte

Named sociology and placed it as the last positive science of order and progress.

French Revolution

Showed that political order is historical and fragile, a founding shock for social theory.

Nisbet

Stressed community, authority, and the sacred as conservative sources of the sociological tradition.

Weber

Read modernity as rationalisation and disenchantment, an heir and critic of Enlightenment.