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Q2(c)

How is sociology related to common sense ?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · 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

- How is sociology related to common sense?
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Common sense is everyday recipes; sociology studies and breaks them.

- **Durkheim:** discard **prenotions**.
- **Schutz, Garfinkel, Giddens:** science still depends on members' meanings.

Mills links biography and history.

Proof is evidence, not proverb.

Introduction

Common sense is the stock of recipes people use to go on in everyday life. Sociology starts from that stock and then breaks it. The relation is neither identity nor contempt. It is disciplined distance.

Body**Distance from **prenotions****

- **Durkheim** required the sociologist to discard **prenotions**. Suicide as sin or as weather is common sense; the rate as a social fact is not.
- Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann showed that the everyday world is already constructed. Sociology studies that construction instead of repeating it.

Dependence on common sense

- Alfred Schutz and later Garfinkel treated the **life-world** as the condition of any science of action. Without members' meanings, variables are empty.
- **Anthony Giddens's double hermeneutic:** sociology interprets a world that already interprets itself, then returns concepts such as "class" into common talk.

Productive tension

- C. Wright Mills's **sociological imagination** links biography to history, which common sense keeps apart.
- Common sense said lockdown was only a health rule. Sociology asked why migrant workers walked home.

Relation stated

- Sociology uses common sense as topic and as a warning.
- It does not use it as proof.

Flow diagram

Common sense recipes -> Topic for sociology
Common sense recipes -> Prenotions to discard
Sociology -> Double hermeneutic
Topic for sociology -> Sociology
Prenotions to discard -> Sociology

Conclusion

Sociology is related to common sense as critique and as resource. **Durkheim** breaks **prenotions**; Schutz and Giddens show that meaning is already there. The 2020 migrant exodus is a case where common sense of "stay home" hid a structure of informal work.

Facts & figures

Prenotions

Durkheim's term for everyday ideas that must be set aside before social facts are studied.

Double hermeneutic

Giddens: social science interprets lay interpretations and feeds concepts back into lay talk.

Life-world

Schutz: the taken-for-granted world that any interpretative sociology must recover.

Sociological imagination

Mills: the quality of mind that connects personal troubles to public issues.