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Q2(a)

## **What aspects of Enlightenment do you think paved way for the emergence of sociology ? Elaborate.**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · 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**

- What aspects of Enlightenment do you think paved way for the emergence of sociology?  
Elaborate
- Keep the elaboration within a 20-mark length

### **Revision summary**

Enlightenment made institutions worldly, comparable, and criticisable.

Montesquieu, Condorcet, Kant, Rousseau, and Smith prepared comparison, progress, contract, and the division of labour.

Comte and Saint-Simon turned that programme into a science of society.

Revolution and industry supplied the crisis that textbooks of natural law could not hold.

Marx, Durkheim, and Weber are heirs who also criticised Enlightenment optimism.

### **Introduction**

Sociology emerged in nineteenth-century Europe when industrial and political upheaval made society a problem that theology and court history could not settle. The Enlightenment supplied the intellectual permission: reason, science, progress, and a worldly account of order. It did not write sociology by itself. Revolution and factory made the questions urgent.

### **Body**

#### **Reason and a science of society**

- Enlightenment thought treated human institutions as products of history and convention, open to criticism, not as eternal mystery.
- Montesquieu compared climates, laws, and manners, which is already a comparative sociology before the name.
- Condorcet and Turgot pictured progress through stages of knowledge. Auguste Comte later turned that faith into a hierarchy of sciences with sociology at the peak.
- Immanuel Kant's call to use one's own understanding weakened the monopoly of church explanation, even though Kant was not a sociologist.

#### **The individual, contract, and the social**

- John Locke and later utilitarians centred the rights-bearing individual. That made social order a puzzle: how do separate persons hold together?

- Jean-Jacques **Rousseau**'s general will and social contract asked how inequality is instituted. **Karl Marx** would later invert contract into class, but the Enlightenment had already politicised inequality.
- David Hume and Adam Smith studied morals and markets as regularities. Smith's division of labour fed both economics and, through **Comte** and **Durkheim**, a sociology of differentiation.

### Critique of tradition and sacred monopoly

- Voltaire and Diderot attacked privilege and dogma. A space opened for secular explanation of crime, suicide, and worship.
- Saint-Simon, standing at the edge of Enlightenment and industry, demanded a science of social reorganisation after the **French Revolution**.

### What else was needed

- The **French Revolution** showed that order can collapse and be remade. The Industrial Revolution showed new classes and cities.
- **Conservative responses, which Robert Nisbet stressed, also fed sociology:** community, authority, and the sacred as problems, not only as targets.
- **Max Weber** later read Enlightenment rationality as a world-historical process of disenchantment, which is both an heir and a critic of that age.

### Assessment

- **The paving aspects are:** naturalistic explanation, comparison, progress as a research programme, the individual as unit, and the legitimacy of criticising custom.
- Sociology is not Enlightenment cheerleading. **Durkheim** rebuilt moral solidarity; **Marx** criticised bourgeois reason as ideology; **Weber** feared the iron cage.

### Flow diagram

Enlightenment -> Reason comparison progress  
 Enlightenment -> Individual and contract  
 Enlightenment -> Critique of dogma  
 Industry and revolution -> Sociology  
 Reason comparison progress -> Sociology  
 Individual and contract -> Sociology  
 Critique of dogma -> Sociology

### Conclusion

Enlightenment reason, comparison, progress, and critique of sacred privilege made a science of society thinkable. Industry and revolution made it necessary. **Comte** named the science; **Marx**, **Durkheim**, and **Weber** rebuilt it as a study of capitalism, solidarity, and rationalisation, not as a hymn to the eighteenth century.

### Facts & figures

#### Montesquieu

The Spirit of the Laws compared legal and social types, a model for later comparative sociology.

**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**

Argued that community, authority, and the sacred, often from conservative reaction, also founded the sociological tradition.

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