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Fact, Value and Objectivity

LESSON 9 OF 20



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SOCIOLOGY AS SCIENCE



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BOOKS REFERED FOR THIS MODULE

1. Sociology: Anthony Giddens
2. Sociology by Haralambos and Holborn
3. MSO-002 (IGNOU, MA)
4. Internet, and Encyclopaedia.

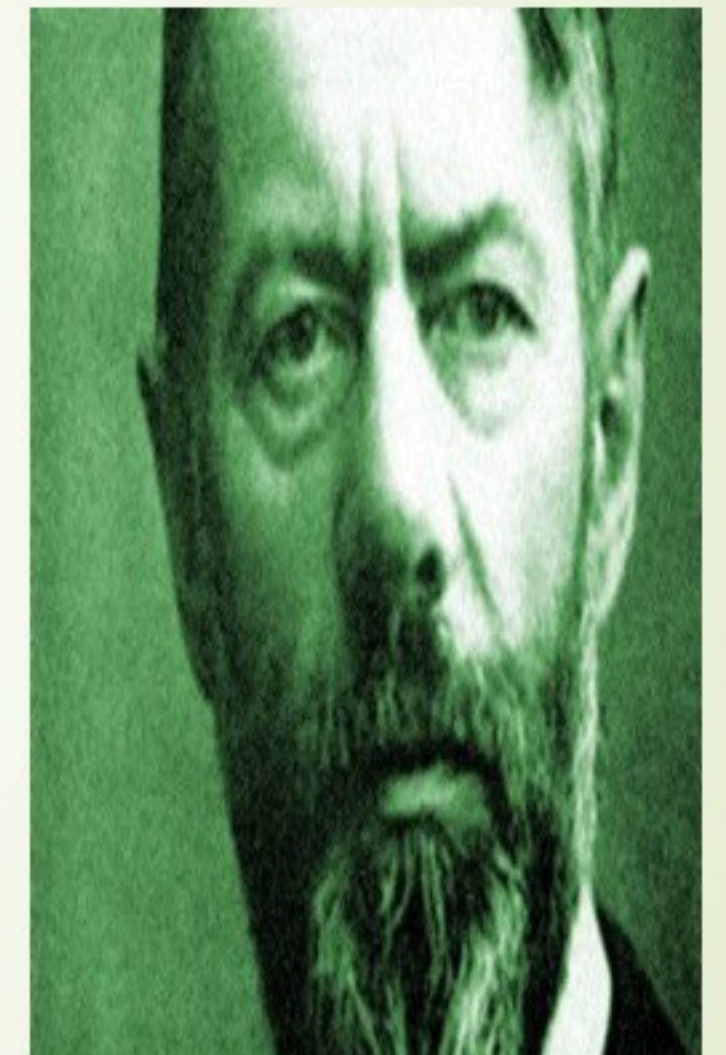
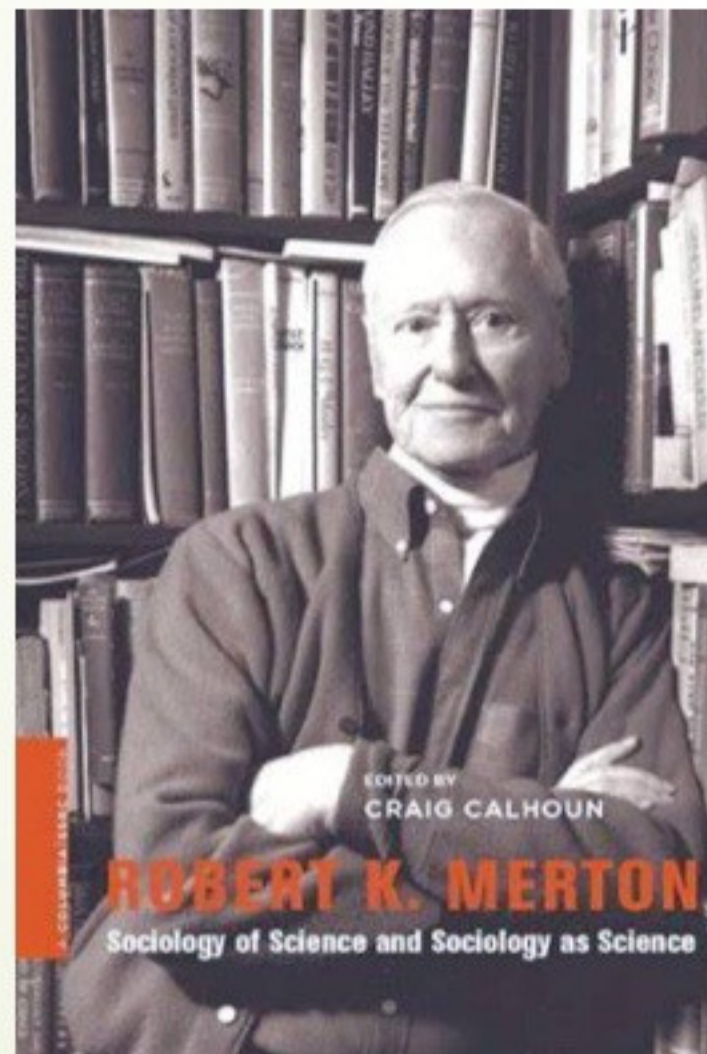
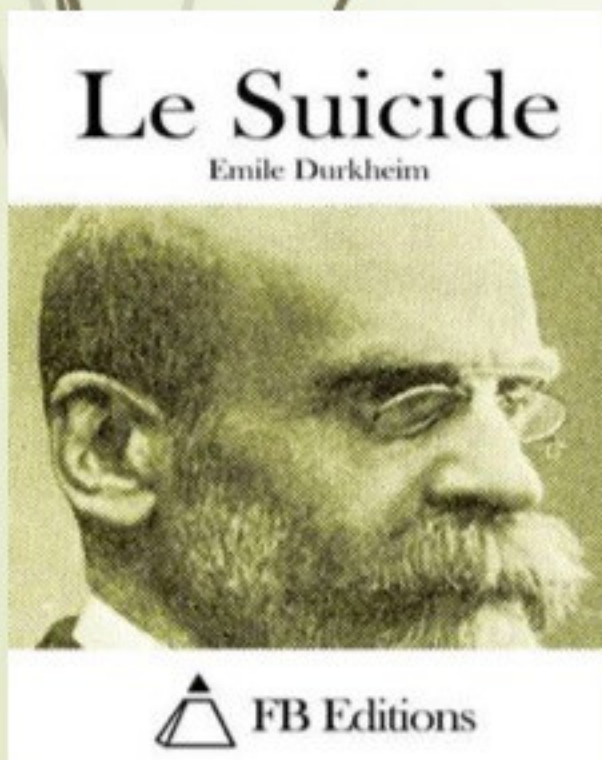


SOCIOLOGY OPTIONALS, SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF PAPER 1

MODULE 2

SOCIOLOGY AS SCIENCE

FACT, VALUE AND OBJECTIVITY

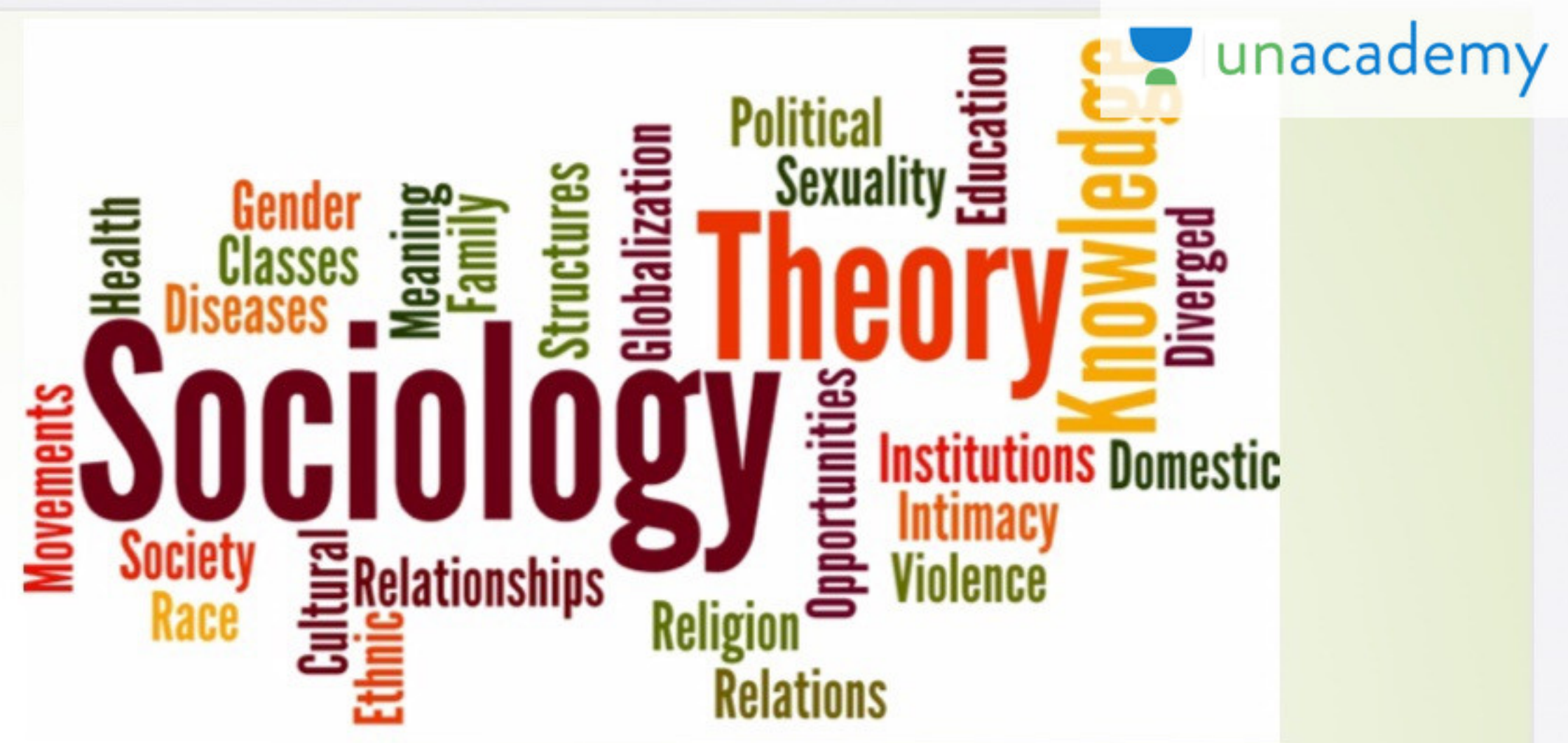


FACT, VALUE AND OBJECTIVITY

- Fact, value and objectivity are the three terms of great debate and significance in Sociology.
- Some Sociologists are of the view that Sociology as a discipline uses facts objectively while others claim that values are deep rooted in any sociological investigation.
- The debate over facts and values and their true place in Sociology makes it important to analyse the meaning and put it in the right perspective in relation to Sociology the discipline.

DISCIPLINE

- A discipline is a body of knowledge which has certain basic components like
 - Facts
 - Concepts
 - Theories etc
- They are like building blocks of the discipline.



FACTS

- Fact is derived from the Latin word *factum* which means something made or done, it is regarded as an empirically verifiable observation or state of affairs that can be agreed upon as real, definite and incontrovertible (beyond dispute).
- It has its own existence and is independent.
- Facts can be perceived by our skills and audio visual senses in a similar manner.
- Facts remain the same in ever situation and for all observers, and objective facts constitute the subject matter of natural sciences.

FEW EXAMPLES OF FACTS



1. POPULATION.

2. URBANISATION

3. CLASS STRUGGLE

4. ROLES

- Sociologists like Emile Durkheim made similar attempts and gave the concept “SOCIAL FACTS”
- Positivists used this concept for the new discipline Sociology which said this subject laid in the bed rock of facts and empirical knowledge.
- According to Durkheim social facts are the subject matter of the discipline, to make Sociology a science attention should be paid only on factual analysis and not on subjective interpretations and individual perceptions.
- However this over emphasis on the use of facts came under criticism, and there is no agreement among Sociologists that which social facts were universal.

CRITICISM AGAINST SOCIAL FACTS

- 1) There is no agreement among Sociologists themselves that which social facts are universal. Eg: Capitalism as a social fact in any Social system can be perceived differently by different scholars.
- 2) There is great difficulty in defining and giving a definite form to social facts.
- 3) Unlike scientific facts, social facts change their shape and meaning as the context changes.
- 4) So it was argued that Sociology cannot be based on facts alone as human consciousness is non physical and cannot be measured.

VALUE

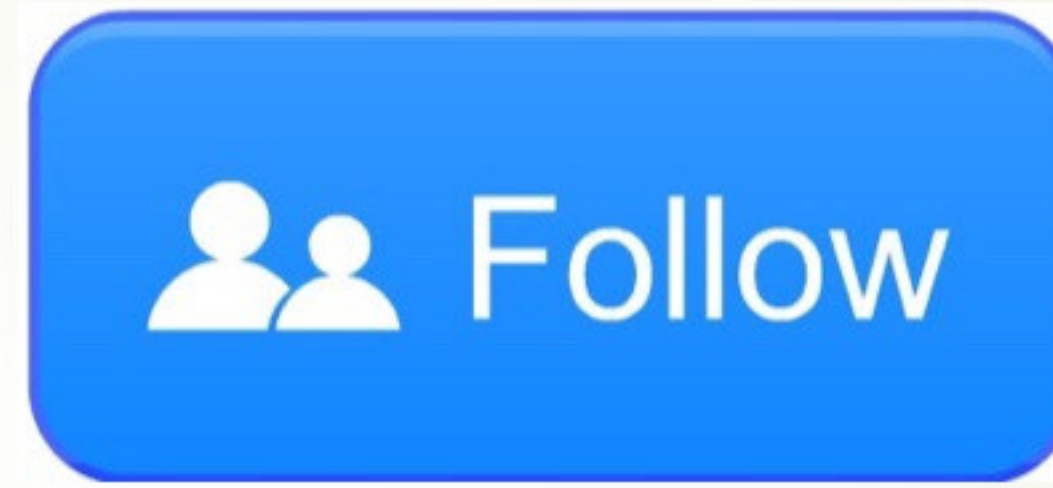
- 1) VALUE in Sociology refers to subjective nature arising out of experience and beliefs.
- 2) Values can be personal, cultural, temporal and situation specific and may not remain the same over a period of time.
- 3) Values represent what one believes and not necessarily what actually is, they refer to socially accepted standards of desirability and undesirability.
- 4) For an individual or a society they define what is important, worthwhile and worth aspiring for.

- 5) Values guide our objectives, goals, means for such goals and our actions.
- 6) Functionalists are of the view that values are for society and not for individuals, because they act as a medium of social control.
- 7) Early Sociologists called for keeping individual values aside while doing social research as it affects an objective evaluation.
- 8) Values are a medium of social control, they are associated with ideological thinking, what is valuable for a communist may not hold worth capitalists.
- 9) Critical theorists argue that values in society are also the dominant values.

- Sociology itself has commitment to specific value orientations, further while studying social action, Sociologists are also interested in people's own reasons for action.

Eg: Recent terrorist attacks which the world the facing, Sociologists try to understand why terrorist use violent means to achieve political ends here the answer lies in the values apart from the facts.

- Howard Becker in his 1967 address "Whose side are we on?" argued that depriving social sciences of values will be like taking the very soul away from the disciplines.
- If Sociologists did not promote social values, Sociology will be dominated by the values of the ruling class.



NEXT LESSON: Objectivity and its analysis.

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