

Free essay on the sociological imagination by c wright mills

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This classic text demonstrates the verve and authority of C Wright Mills who brilliantly espoused all the modern sociological theories in this 1959 book. Wright Mills was conscious of the huge changes which were running through American society in those years and he attempted to take a scientific look at proceedings with the eye of a sociologist.

The book examines what one might term as the ' Power Elite' which are those who command everything in American society. His coinage of the term life chances is also important as it explains what this means in the context of the American society which was, and up to a point, still is run by the very few at the top. Thus the class divisions which had been present since Marx's time and which were perhaps espoused by that great sociologist are being replicated today.

Wright-Mills also distinguishes between one man's personal misfortune and the misfortune of many such as in the case of unemployment. He explains that one man may find himself unemployed due to misfortune or lack of skills but when millions are unemployed, this cannot be solely through coincidence but there is inherently a background of thought behind it all. He attempts to make us understand that certain policies instigated by the rich and powerful create situations which are at an advantage to their own needs and requirements while the poor and unfortunate are downtrodden by these same policies.

Wright-Mills also focuses on certain real life historical situations such as the understanding of what happened to the Jews in Germany in the context of the desperate situation in which these found themselves in. He reflects on the fact that it is useless to attempt to understand their actions without

being in the same situation as this would be a total anachronism. He also attempts to understand the motives and behaviour of others by locating them within a wider and much more meaningful context.

Mills also espouses on the importance of creating assistance to those who find themselves in difficulty due to economic or other similar situations. He reflects on the fact that in the 20th century, alienation has become a much more common theme with several people suffering personal tragedies due to being abandoned by others. All this has to be understood in the wider context of the sociological imagination which allows people to think and reflect on situations before banging out certain high minded theories which lack experience.

Wright-Mills also observes two major trends which removed the social sciences from addressing the problems which would eventually make a difference to humanity. The first was the one which focused on theory which was abstract and so could not define anything of significance while the second was empiricism which was also too restricted and vague. In his book he attempts to make a plea to social scientists to abandon constricted theory and empiricism in favour of a more realistic understanding of the sociological problems which are inherent in our society.

Wright-Mills' book is indeed a classic text and although more than 50 years old, its theories and general arguments still hold through today especially in the context of a wider geo political sphere. It makes a plea for informed acceptance as the basis of society and this is more than hugely successful in this regard.

Works Cited:

Wright-Mills C; The Sociological Imagination; New York; Oxford University Press, USA, 2000, Print