The Promise of Sociology

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Do you want to be one of them? Why?
Do you want to look like him or her?
Personal troubles
- a series of ‘traps’ in private lives

Public issues
- transcend the personal to collective experience / values / interests

- Neither could be understood without understanding both
Sociological imagination (C. Wright Mills 1959)
- biography & history: the relations between the two
- linking private troubles to public issues
- as the task and the promise

Sociology as a perspective
- to see and understand the connections between individuals and the broader social contexts in which we live
- a way of seeing
- a journey of thinking and understanding
What is Sociology?
The systematic study of the relationship between individuals and society

- scope: groups and people
- dynamics: connections and influences
- approach: common sense vs systematic study (as a discipline)
Common sense?
- poor people are more likely to break the law
- new immigrants are lazy people
- men are women are different by nature
- people marry because of love
- we will have a better future if we study hard
- we will be happier if we can buy whatever we want
- Ming Pao (The Guardian) is more objective than Apple Daily (The Sun)

- but… one’s common sense can be other’s nonsense!

Systematic study
- sociology as a scientific discipline
- empirical + theoretical
Culture, structure, and power

Socialisation, life course, and identity

Deviance

Education

Family & intimate relationships

Media

Globalisation

Social inequality

Gender & sexuality

Social change

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How to do sociology??
- be curious, be open-minded, think ourselves away from the familiar routines of life / think outside the box

- Peter Burger (1963):
  “An introduction to sociology is an invitation to a very special kind of passion.”
The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society. This is its task and its promise.

— C. Wright Mills —