Lecture Notes: C. Wright Mills, The Promise


What is the Sociological Imagination?
In Class writing
- Defining “history” and “biography” – The Personal is political.
- Some examples?
- The Three Questions.

History and Biography…together
Calls for awareness of their interconnected nature.

1. What is the structure of this particular society as a whole?"
   A. What are its essential components, and how are they related to one another?
   B. How does it differ from other varieties of social order?
   C. Within it, what is the meaning of any particular feature for its continuance and for its change?

1) 2. Where does this society stand in human history?
   A. What are the mechanics by which it is changing?
   B. What is its place within and its meaning for the development of humanity as a whole?
   C. How does any particular feature we are examining affect, and how is it affected by, the historical period in which it moves?
   D. And this period...what are its essential features?
   E. How does it differ from other periods?
   F. What are its characteristic ways of history making?

2) 3. What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and in this period?
   A. And what varieties are coming to prevail?
   B. In what ways are they selected and formed, liberated and repressed, made sensitive and blunted?
   C. What kinds of "human nature" are revealed in the conduct and character we observe in this society in this period?
   D. And what is the meaning for "human nature" of each and every feature of the society we are examining?