

### Major Works

- *Course of Positive Philosophy* (1830-1842)
- *System of Positive Polity* (1851-54)

### Major Contributions

- Founder of Positivism - **Positivism** is a view of scientific methods and a philosophical approach, theory, or system based on the view that, in the social as well as natural sciences, sensory experiences and their logical and mathematical treatment are together the exclusive source of all worthwhile information
- First philosopher of science
- Founder of the social sciences – coined the terms “sociology” and “altruism”

### *Course of Positive Philosophy*

- Pursues two general goals: 1) A foundation for sociology or ‘social physics’ and 2) the coordination of the whole of positive knowledge
- First three volumes dealt with the physical sciences (mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology) - these volumes were a summation of each science’s main doctrinal and methodological points
- Latter three volumes emphasized the coming of social science – founding a new science

### Positivism or Positive Philosophy

- We have no knowledge of anything except phenomena (appearances and experiences)
- Our knowledge of phenomena is relative (not absolute) - constant resemblances link phenomena together
- Constant sequences unite them as antecedent and consequent are called their “laws”
- Places *Positivism* within a theory of history - claims human culture developed in three stages
  1. Theological: Regards the facts of the universe as governed by single and direct volitions of beings, real or imaginary, possessed of life and also goes through 3 levels
    - Animism: objects have their own will
    - Polytheism: divine wills impose themselves on objects
    - Monotheism: the will of God imposes itself on objects
  2. Metaphysical: accounts for phenomena by ascribing them to realized abstractions - every plant or animal now has a soul
  3. Positive: Understanding the scientific laws that control the world
- The process through the three stages was inevitable and irreversible
- Process is asymptotic – we always approach but never obtain, perfect positive knowledge

Second Pillar of positive philosophy, the law of the classification of the sciences

- Examined the physical sciences (mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, and biology)
- Attempted to demonstrate that each science is dependent on the previous science
- The **positive method** comes in different forms: Astronomy = observation; Physics = experimentation; Biology = comparison
- Discovered a “**final science**”, **sociology** which had not yet entered its positive stage
  - Sociology would give ultimate meaning to all the other sciences - coordinating the development of the whole of knowledge
  - Sociology would reveal that man is a developing creature who moves through three stages in each of his sciences

Sociology

- Divided into two distinct parts
  - Social statics – the study of socio-political systems relative to their existing level of civilization
  - Social dynamics which entailed the study of the three stages
- Believed that there needed to be a synthesis of order and progress in a higher scientific form
  - Once a science of society had been developed, opinions would be shared and society would be stable
  - Once there was true social knowledge, people would not be as willing to fight over religious or political opinions

*System of Positive Polity or Treatise on Sociology, Instituting the Religion of Humanity*

- Purpose to provide a new religion and a new faith
- The main theme was positivism that was transformed into “*Complete Positivism*” which is the “continuous dominance of the heart”
  - Positivism transformed science into philosophy; *complete* positivism now transforms philosophy into religion but does not yield a “religion” of science – gives precedence to Art
- Systematized Positivism as a secular religion
  - Priests and a calendar of positivist saints
  - Scientific-industrial elite would replace the Catholic clergy
  - The *ancient regime* and its destruction by the French Revolution had to be synthesized and made meaningful by a new clergy of elites (technocrats)
  - This insight, religious in nature and intuitive in form was then reformulated by Comte and his followers in terms of a “positive science”
- A non-theistic, atheistic religion – a religion of man and society
- Goal was not an affluent society
  - Positive religion urged everyone “to live for others”
  - Sought to moralize one and all - a cure for humanity not for one class at the expense of another