



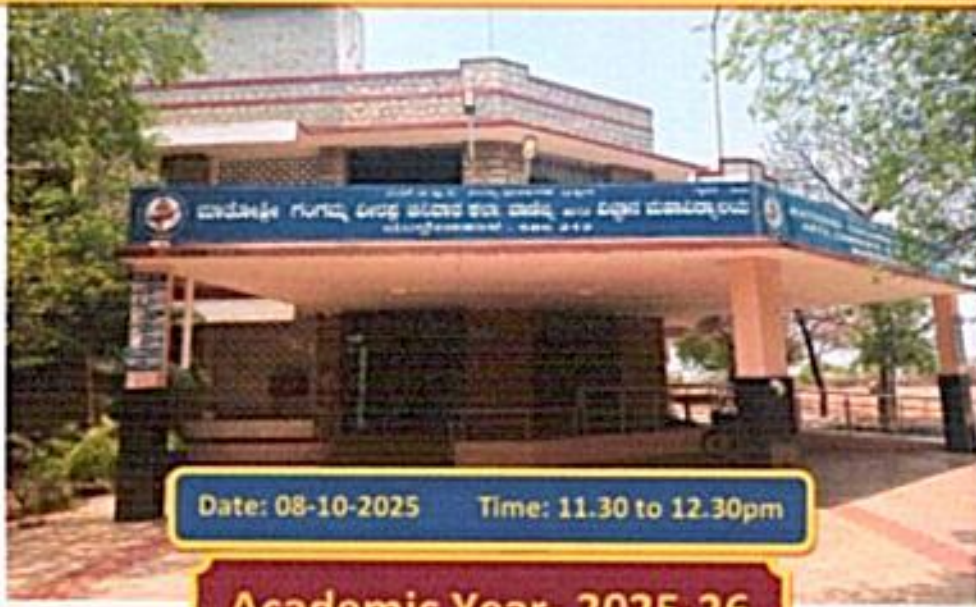
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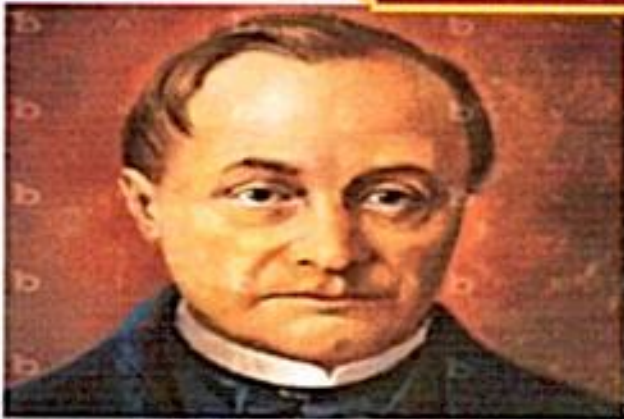
ICT Based Classes- 2025

Topic: Auguste Comte



Date: 08-10-2025 Time: 11.30 to 12.30pm

Academic Year- 2025-26





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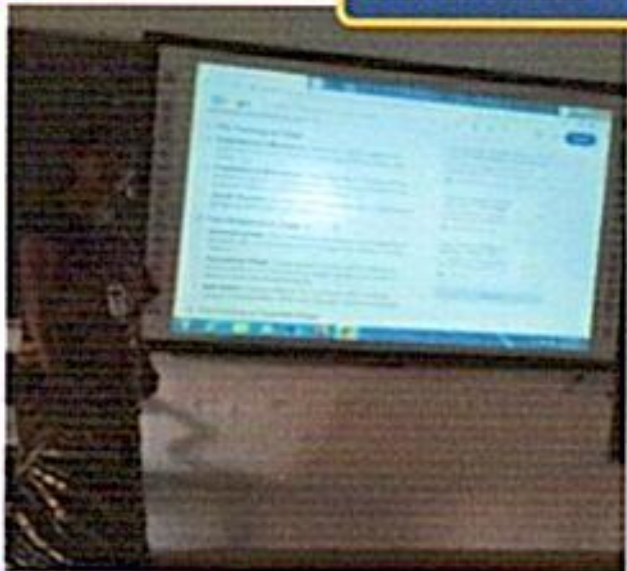


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Topic: Auguste Comte

Auguste Comte

Isidore Auguste Marie François Xavier Comte (19 January 1798 – 5 September 1857) was a French philosopher, mathematician and writer who formulated the doctrine of positivism. He is often regarded as the first philosopher of science in the modern sense of the term. Comte's ideas were also fundamental to the development of sociology, with him inventing the very term and treating the discipline as the crowning achievement of the sciences.

Influenced by Henri de Saint-Simon, Comte's work attempted to remedy the social disorder caused by the French Revolution, which he believed indicated an imminent transition to a new form of society. He sought to establish a new social doctrine based on science, which he labeled positivism. He had a major impact on 19th-century thought, influencing the work of social thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and George Eliot. His concept of Sociology and social evolutionism set the tone for early social theorists and anthropologists such as Harriet Martineau and Herbert Spencer, evolving into modern academic sociology presented by Émile Durkheim as practical and objective social research.

Life

Auguste Comte was born in Montpellier, Hérault, on 19 January 1798, at the time under the rule of the newly founded French First Republic. After attending the Lycée Joffre and then the University of Montpellier, Comte was admitted to École Polytechnique in Paris. The École Polytechnique was notable for its adherence to the French ideals of republicanism and progress. The École closed in 1816 for reorganization, and Comte continued his studies at the medical school at Montpellier. When the École Polytechnique reopened, he did not request readmission.

Following his return to Montpellier, Comte soon came to see unbridgeable differences with his Catholic and monarchist family and set off again for Paris, earning money by small jobs. Comte had abandoned Catholicism under the influence of his first teacher and Protestant pastor Daniel Encontre.

Law of three stages

Theological stage

The first stage, the theological stage, relies on supernatural or religious explanations of the phenomena of human behavior because "the human mind, in its search for the primary and final causes of phenomena, explains the apparent anomalies in the universe as interventions of supernatural agents". The Theological Stage is the "necessary starting point of human intelligence" when humans turn to supernatural agents as the cause of all phenomena. In this stage, humans focus on discovering absolute knowledge. Comte disapproved of this stage because it turned to simple explanation humans created in their minds that all phenomena were caused by supernatural agents, rather than human reason and experience. Comte refers to Bacon's philosophy that "there can be no real knowledge except that which rests upon observed facts", but he observes that the primitive mind could not have thought that way because it would have only created a vicious circle between observations and theories. "For if, on the one hand, every positive theory must necessarily be founded upon observations, it is, on the other hand, no less true that, in order to observe, our mind has need of some theory or other".¹

Metaphysical or abstract stage

The second stage, the metaphysical stage, is merely a modification of the first because a supernatural cause is replaced by an "abstract entity"; it is meant to be a transitional stage, where there is the belief that abstract forces control the behavior of human beings. Because it is a transitional stage between the theological stage and the positive stage, Comte deemed it the least important of the three stages and was only necessary because the human mind cannot make the jump from the theological to the positive stage on its own.

The metaphysical stage is the transitional stage. Because "Theology and physics are so profoundly incompatible", and their "conceptions are so radically opposed in character", human intelligence must have a gradual transition. Other than this, Comte says that there is no other use for this stage.

Positive stage

The last stage – the positive stage – is when the mind stops searching for the cause of phenomena and realizes that laws exist to govern human behavior and that this stage can be explained rationally with the use of reason and observation, both of which are used to study the social world. This stage relies on science, rational thought, and empirical laws. Comte believed that this study of sociology he created was "the science that [came] after all the others; and as the final science, it must assume the task of coordinating the development of the whole of knowledge" because it organized all of human behavior.

The final, most evolved stage is the positivist stage, the stage when humans give up on discovering absolute truth, and turn towards discovering, through reasoning and observation, actual laws of phenomena. Humans realize that laws exist and that the world can be rationally explained through science, rational thought, laws, and observation.