

# Early Thinkers

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Why sociology appeared?

# Modern age brought:

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- **secularization** – new perception of society. It's development is independent from God's will.
- **speeding up all social processes** – now changes were observable within one generation
- **rapid urbanization and industrialization** – working class life standards were miserable

**London** 1700 - 500 000  
1800-1850 - 1 000 000  
1900 - 6 000 000

**Berlin** 1750 - 113 000  
1850 - 419 000  
1910 - 2 071 000

Constant social unrests and revolutions in France

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**What to do?**

**How to cure society?**

# Auguste Comte (Коит)

(1798-1857)

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# Auguste Comte (Коһт)

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- Believed that theoretical science of society and **systematic investigation were needed to improve society**
- He **coined the term sociology** to apply to the science of human behavior and insisted the sociology could make a critical contribution to a new and improved human community.
- In his hierarchy of sciences **sociology was the top.**

# positivism

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Science gets involved only after politics, when Comte suggests calling in scientists to achieve that goal.

So, while science plays a central role in positive polity, positivism is anything but a blind admiration for science.

# Comte

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- ◉ dynamic sociology or theory of social progress
- ◉ Comte's **3 stages of evolution** were (of the human mind ):
  - (1) the *theological*,
  - (2) the *metaphysical*,
  - (3) the *positive*



# Progress in science

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- Method is presented as superior to doctrine: scientific doctrines change (that is what “progress” means), but the value of science lies in its methods.

# Social static

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- 3 key elements of society:  
Family – State – Religion

# Positive religion

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- He proposes a religion with neither God nor the supernatural.
- Religion has two functions:
  - 1) moral - religion should govern each individual;
  - 2) political - it should unite all individuals.
- The principal novelty of Comte's religion resides in worship, which is both private (taking place within the family) and public.
- He demanded the separation of Church and State.

# Role of women and proletarians

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- ◉ He reserved a decisive role in the positive era for women.
  - This aspect of his work is difficult to accept for us today, because it involves the utopian idea of the virgin mother
- ◉ He saw proletarians as spontaneous positivists

# Herbert Spencer (Спенсер)

(1820-1903)



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- The early sociology of Herbert Spencer The early sociology of Herbert Spencer came about broadly as a reaction to Comte; writing after various developments in evolutionary biology, Spencer attempted to reformulate the discipline in what we might now describe as socially Darwinistic terms.

# Herbert Spenser (Спенсер)

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- He used Ch. Darwin's **concept of evolution** of animals to explain **how society changes** over time
- He also adapted Darwin's evolutionary view of the "**survival of the fittest**" by arguing that it is natural that some people are rich and others are poor.

# Evolution

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- ◎ Evolution as the progressive development of the physical world, biological organisms, the human mind, human culture and societies



# Evolution

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- The evolutionary progression from simple, undifferentiated homogeneity to complex, differentiated heterogeneity was exemplified by the development of society.

# Social evolution

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- ⦿ Militant society, structured around relationships of hierarchy and obedience, was simple and undifferentiated;
- ⦿ Industrial society, based on voluntary, contractually assumed social obligations, was complex and differentiated.

# Role of state

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- **Role of the state he reduced to the minimal functions** of the enforcement of contracts and external defense
- Spencer argued that the state was not an "essential" institution and that **it would "decay"** as voluntary market organization would replace the coercive aspects of the state.
- He also argued that the individual had a "right to ignore the state."

# Perfect society

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- ◎ The end point of the evolutionary process would be the creation of 'the perfect man in the perfect society'
- ◎ However, for evolution to produce the perfect individual it was necessary for present generations to experience the 'natural' consequences of their conduct.

# Social darwinist or liberal utilitarian?

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- This way individuals would have the incentives required to work on self-improvement and to pass an improved moral constitution to their descendants.
- Hence anything that interfered with the 'natural' relationship of conduct and consequence was to be resisted and this included the use of the coercive power of the state to relieve poverty, or to require compulsory vaccination.

# Absolute Ethics

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- The code of conduct '**Absolute Ethics**' which provided a scientifically-grounded moral system that could substitute for the supernaturally-based ethical systems of the past.
- Spencer insisted that he was not concerned to undermine religion in the name of science, but to bring about a reconciliation of the two.

# Conceptualization of change

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- Spenser and Comte suggested that **societies are bound to change**
- According to evolutionary theory **society was inevitably progressing to a higher state:**
  - Comte - from mythology to scientific method
  - Spenser - linked society to a living body with interrelated parts that were moving to a common destiny