

## SOCIOLOGY

### GE- 4. SEMESTER -4

#### Positivism –a methodological perspective

Positivism is a way of thinking that seeks explanations of events in order that their underlying laws can be discovered, so in case of future events of the similar kind can be predicted .

Two influential positivists include **Auguste Comte**, who coined the term 'positivism,' and **Emile Durkheim**, who established the academic discipline of sociology. These early thinkers laid the groundwork for a social science to develop that they believed would have a unique place among the sciences. This new field would be distinct and have its own set of scientific facts. Comte hoped sociology would become the 'queen science' that held more importance than the other natural sciences that had come before it.

Positivism is the name for the scientific study of the social world. Its goal is to formulate abstract and universal laws on the operative dynamics of the social universe. A law is a statement about relationships among forces in the universe. In positivism, laws are to be tested against collected data systematically. Auguste Comte(1798–1857)—who saw Newton's law of gravity as the exemplar—advocated positivism as a means to legitimate the new discipline of sociology.

Positivism in the very general sense refers to an aspiration to the “scientific” and to the construction and empirical testing of formal theories which remain as significantly present in contemporary sociology. Positivism formed the basis for sociology, the idea that there is one true set of natural laws governing how society operates.

First and foremost, Comte was interested in establishing theories that could be tested with the ultimate goal of improving our world once these theories were clearly laid out. He was eager to discover natural laws that applied to society. He viewed the natural sciences, such as biology and physics, as a necessary step in the development of a social science. Just as gravity is a universal truth we all experience in the physical world, Comte believed sociologists could uncover similar laws operating on the social level of people's lives.

In social science, the positive method led to the development of a number of quantitative and statistical techniques. The aim was to:

- a) Remove value judgments and
- b) Utilization of scientific methods.

Positivism followed in the wake of the natural sciences, endorsing the view that social science is to be defined by the methodological procedures that enable us to explain and predict natural phenomena so successfully. If there are to be social sciences, the demand of the unity of science will imply that the method used in natural science must also be applicable to human action. If human action allows for scientific knowledge this will mean, according to the positivistic school that we can and should try to explain human actions by looking for the causal laws that govern them.