



Ibn Khaldun and Auguste Comte: A Comparative Analysis of the Founding Figures of Sociology

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ABSTRACT

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This paper presents a comparative analysis of the contributions of Ibn Khaldun, a 14th-century Arab scholar, and Auguste Comte, a 19th-century French philosopher, to the development of sociology. While Auguste Comte is widely acknowledged in the Western tradition as the “father of sociology,” Ibn Khaldun’s seminal work, “*Muqaddimah*”, place the Preliminary work for a systematic approach to social and historical analysis several centuries before Comte. Ibn Khaldun’s pioneering ideas on social cohesion, economic foundations, and the cyclical nature of civilizations challenge the conventional Eurocentric narrative that places the origins of sociological thought exclusively within Western intellectual history. This paper examines the methodologies, theories, and socio-historical contexts that shaped the works of both thinkers. Ibn Khaldun’s empirical observations and his concept of “*asabiyyah*” (social cohesion) are compared with Comte’s positivist approach and his “*Law of Three Stages*,” which posits the evolution of human thought from theological to metaphysical to positive. Despite the differences in their approaches, both scholars were deeply engaged with the fundamental processes governing social life and the forces driving social change. This study argues for a broader recognition of Ibn Khaldun’s role in the evolution of sociological thought, positioning him not merely as a precursor but as a co-founder of sociology alongside Comte. By doing so, it contributes to a more inclusive understanding of the global intellectual traditions that have shaped the discipline of sociology.

KEYWORDS:

asabiyyah, theology, metaphysic, positivist, empirical, sociological theory.

INTRODUCTION

The discipline of sociology, concerned with the systematic study of human society, possesses a rich intellectual legacy that spans many centuries and cultures. Among the most influential figures in the development of sociology are Ibn Khaldun, a 14th-century Arab historian and thinker, and Auguste Comte, a 19th-century French philosopher who is often credited with founding the discipline as a formal science. While Comte is widely recognized in the Western tradition as the “*father of sociology*,” Ibn Khaldun’s contributions to social theory, particularly through his fundamental work “*Muqaddimah*”, have also earned him a distinguished place in the history of

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social thought. This paper seeks to explore the respective contributions of these two thinkers, offering a comparative analysis of their methodologies, theories, and the socio-historical contexts that shaped their work. In doing so, it argues that Ibn Khaldun’s contributions are as foundational to the discipline as those of Comte, warranting his recognition as a co-founder or even an antecedent to the sociological tradition (Alatas, 2014, pp. 1-3; Gellner, 1981, pp. 57-60). Ibn Khaldun was born in 1332 in Tunis, a city that was part of the medieval Islamic world, which at the time was a hub of intellectual activity. His life spanned a period of significant political and social disruption, as the Islamic world contend with the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate and the rise of regional powers. Ibn Khaldun's experiences as a scholar, statesman, and jurist deeply influenced his understanding of the social dynamics of his time. His “*Muqaddimah*”, originally written as an introduction to a larger work on history, has come to be considered as one of the earliest works to approach the study of society in a systematic and empirical manner. Ibn

Khaldun's analysis of the rise and fall of civilizations, the concept of "asabiyyah" (social cohesion), and the role of economic and social factors in historical change laid the groundwork for later developments in social theory (Ibn Khaldun, 1958, pp. 91-93; Turner, 1974, p. 39).

In contrast, Auguste Comte emerged in a different historical and intellectual context. Born in 1798 in Montpellier, France, his work was extremely influenced by the Enlightenment and the rapid social transformations brought about by the Industrial Revolution. Comte's intellectual journey led him to develop a comprehensive philosophy of positivism, which sought to apply the methods of the natural sciences to the study of society. In his "*Cours de Philosophie Positive*", Comte articulated his vision for sociology as an apparent scientific discipline, complete with its own methodologies and theoretical frameworks. His main thought was the "Law of Three Stages," which posited that human thought evolved through three stages (theological, metaphysical, and positive). According to Comte, sociology represented the culmination of this evolutionary process, a science of society that could uncover the laws governing social order and progress (Comte, 1853, pp. 27-29; Wernick, 2001, p. 62).

A key point of comparison between Ibn Khaldun and Comte lies in their respective methodologies. Ibn Khaldun's approach was mostly empirical, rooted in his observations of the societies and political entities with which he interconnected. He was particularly interested in the cyclical nature of history, wherein societies rise to power and naturally fall due to internal and external pressures. This cyclical model was deeply influenced by his concept of "asabiyyah", which he saw as the driving force behind the cohesion and eventual disintegration of social groups. Ibn Khaldun's emphasis on the importance of social cohesion and the economic bases of society offers a remarkably modern perspective, one that predates many of the ideas later developed in Western sociology (Ibn Khaldun, 1958, pp. 133-135; Alatas, 2014, pp. 45-46).

On the other hand, Comte, aimed to create a systematic and scientific approach to the study of society. His positivist methodology was grounded in the belief that social phenomena could be studied with the same rigor as natural phenomena, leading to the discovery of universal social laws. He distinction between social statics (the study of social structures) and social dynamics (the study of social change) laid the foundation for subsequent sociological inquiry. His work was instrumental in establishing sociology as a formal academic discipline in the West, influencing generations of sociologists who would build upon his theories (Comte, 1853, pp. 70-72; Wernick, 2001, pp. 84-85). Despite the differences in their approaches, both Ibn Khaldun and Comte were concerned with understanding the fundamental processes that govern social life. Their work reflects a deep engagement with the social and historical

conditions of their respective times, offering insights into the nature of social change, the role of religion, and the importance of social cohesion. By examining the contributions of both thinkers, this paper aims to underscore the complementary nature of their work and argue for a more inclusive recognition of Ibn Khaldun's role in the history of sociology. This comparative analysis not only broadens our understanding of the origins of sociological thought but also challenges the Eurocentric narrative that often dominates the history of the discipline. By situating Ibn Khaldun alongside Comte, we can appreciate the diverse intellectual traditions that have contributed to the development of sociology as a global field of study (Turner, 1974, pp. 80-82; Gellner, 1981, pp. 105-107).

1. SOCIOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF IBN KHALDUN

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), an Arab historian, philosopher, and statesman, is widely acknowledged as one of the earliest thinkers to systematically analyze the dynamics of human society. His most famous work, '*Muqaddimah*' (translated as "Introduction" or "Prolegomena"), written in 1377, is often regarded as a foundational text in the fields of sociology, anthropology, history, and economics. Originally conceived as an introduction to a larger work on history, '*Muqaddimah*' has been recognized as one of the earliest attempts to provide a comprehensive theory of society and social change. Ibn Khaldun's contributions to sociology are profound, particularly in his analysis of the rise and fall of civilizations. His theory of '*asabiyyah*' (social cohesion) is central to his understanding of social dynamics. According to Ibn Khaldun, the success and decline of a civilization depend largely on the strength of its social bonds. He argued that a strong '*asabiyyah*' allows a group to achieve political power and establish a state, but as the group's social cohesion weakens, the state begins to decline, after all leading to its collapse. This cyclical view of history was ground breaking, offering a model of social development that emphasized the importance of internal social dynamics rather than external factors alone (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, pp. 97-101).

In addition to his theory of social cohesion, he made significant contributions to the understanding of economic and social structures. He analyzed the role of labor, trade, and the division of labor in the development of societies, highlighting the coordinated of economic activity and social organization. Ibn Khaldun observed that economic prosperity could lead to social decadence, which in turn would weaken '*asabiyyah*' and contribute to the decline of the state. His insights into the economic bases of social life were remarkably advanced for his time and prefigured many ideas that would later be explored by Western economists and sociologists (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, pp. 279-285). Ibn

Khaldun's emphasis on the importance of geographical and environmental factors in shaping the character and behavior of societies also added a crucial dimension to his analysis. He argued that the physical environment influenced the habits, customs, and social organization of people, an idea that anticipated later developments in environmental sociology and anthropology (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, pp. 35-42). His holistic approach to the study of society, which integrated social, economic, political, and environmental factors, represents a significant departure from the more fragmented and specialized analyses that would later dominate the social sciences.

1.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND

To fully appreciate Ibn Khaldun's contributions to sociology, it is essential to understand the historical and intellectual context in which he lived and worked. The 14th century was a period of significant disruption in the Islamic world. The Mongol invasions in the 13th century had destroyed much of the Islamic midland, leading to the fragmentation of the Abbasid Caliphate and the rise of various regional powers. This political fragmentation, coupled with the social and economic challenges of the time, provided the backdrop for Ibn Khaldun's analysis of the factors that lead to the rise and fall of civilizations (Irwin, 2018, pp. 123-129). Born into a family of scholars and statesmen in Tunis, Ibn Khaldun was deeply influenced by his early education in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), theology, philosophy, and history.

His intellectual development was further shaped by his direct involvement in the political life of the time. Throughout his career, Ibn Khaldun held various high-ranking positions, including roles as a diplomat, judge, and advisor to rulers in North Africa and Spain. These experiences provided him with firsthand insights into the workings of power and governance, which he later incorporated into his sociological theories (Alatas, 2014, pp. 42-47). His intellectual background was also shaped by the broader Islamic tradition of scholarship, which emphasized the importance of historical and empirical analysis. Islamic scholars of the medieval period were deeply engaged in the study of history, geography, and the natural sciences. Ibn Khaldun drew on this rich intellectual tradition in his work, particularly the historical method developed by earlier Islamic historians such as al-Masudi and al-Tabari. However, Ibn Khaldun went beyond his predecessors by developing a more systematic and comprehensive theory of social change, one that sought to explain not just the events of history but the underlying causes and patterns that shaped them (Hodgson, 1974, pp. 302-306).

Moreover, Ibn Khaldun engaged with the philosophical traditions of the Islamic world, particularly the works of Aristotle and Plato, which had been extensively studied and

interpreted by Islamic scholars. While he was critical of the speculative approaches of some earlier philosophers, his work reflects a synthesis of empirical observation and philosophical reasoning. He emphasized the importance of an empirical approach to the study of society, arguing that only through observation and experience could one arrive at a true understanding of social phenomena. This emphasis on empiricism was a key innovation in Ibn Khaldun's work, marking a significant departure from the more abstract and theoretical approaches that had dominated Islamic philosophy until that time (Lacoste, 1984, pp. 58-63). His work in *'Muqaddimah'* represents a significant milestone in the history of social thought and continues to be relevant to contemporary discussions on the nature of society and the forces that shape it.

1.2 'ASABIYYAH' AND ITS SOCIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

One of the most significant contributions to sociology is Ibn Khaldun's concept of *'asabiyyah'*, often translated as "social cohesion" or "group solidarity." *'asabiyyah'* is the central force that Ibn Khaldun identifies as driving the rise and fall of civilizations. In his analysis, *'asabiyyah'* is the glue that holds a community together, enabling it to act collectively and achieve political and social power. The strength or weakness of *'asabiyyah'* determines the success or decline of a society, making it a crucial factor in understanding the dynamics of social change.

Ibn Khaldun's theory of *'asabiyyah'* is deeply rooted in his observations of tribal societies in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. He noted that tribes with strong *'asabiyyah'* were able to unite and conquer larger, more established civilizations. For instance, the Arab tribes, united by a strong sense of *'asabiyyah'*, were able to establish the vast Islamic empire in the 7th and 8th centuries (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, pp. 102-105). This unifying force was not limited to kinship ties but extended to any social group with a shared identity and common purpose, such as religious or political movements. However, Ibn Khaldun also observed that *'asabiyyah'* is inherently cyclical. As a group gains power and wealth, its members tend to become more comfortable and complacent. This comfort leads to a weakening of *'asabiyyah'* as individuals prioritize personal gain over collective well-being. As *'asabiyyah'* declines, so does the group's ability to maintain its political power and social cohesion, eventually leading to the downfall of the state. This cyclical process, where strong *'asabiyyah'* leads to the rise of a state, followed by its gradual decline as *'asabiyyah'* weakens, is a recurring theme in Ibn Khaldun's analysis of history (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, pp. 120-125). The sociological implications of Ibn Khaldun's concept of *'asabiyyah'* are profound. Firstly, it focusses on the importance of social cohesion and collective identity in the maintenance of social order and political stability. Modern

sociologists have drawn parallels between *'asabiyyah'* and the concept of social capital, which refers to the networks of relationships and trust that enable society to function effectively. In particular, *'asabiyyah'*, social capital is essential for cooperation and collective action, and its decline can lead to social fragmentation and political instability (Alatas, 2014, pp. 49-53).

Secondly, Ibn Khaldun's theory provides a framework for understanding the dynamics of social change. By focusing on the rise and fall of *'asabiyyah'*, he offers a cyclical model of history that contrasts with the linear models prevalent in Western thought. This cyclical perspective emphasizes the importance of internal social dynamics, such as the balance between individual and collective interests, in shaping the course of history. This approach has influenced modern theories of social change, particularly those that emphasize the role of internal social factors in the development and decline of societies (Irwin, 2018, pp. 131-135).

Finally, *'asabiyyah'* offers insights into the nature of leadership and governance. According to Ibn Khaldun, successful leaders are those who can harness and maintain *'asabiyyah'* within their communities. This requires a deep understanding of the social cohesion and the ability to foster a strong sense of collective identity and purpose. In this way, Ibn Khaldun's concept of *'asabiyyah'* provides a foundation for understanding the social foundations of political power and leadership (Rosenthal, 1967, pp. 234-239). Briefly, *'asabiyyah'* a comprehensive framework for understanding the rise and fall of civilizations, the dynamics of social change, and the nature of political power. The relevance of *'asabiyyah'* extends beyond its historical context, offering valuable insights for contemporary sociological theory and practice.

2. AUGUSTE COMTE AND THE BIRTH OF SOCIOLOGY

Auguste Comte, writing in the 19th century, is often credited with founding sociology as a distinct scientific discipline. His work sought to apply the principles of positivism to the study of society, emphasizing the need for a systematic and empirical approach. Auguste Comte (1798–1857), a French philosopher, is widely regarded as one of the founding figures of sociology. He is credited with coining the term "sociology" and developing the philosophy of positivism, which laid the groundwork for the systematic study of society as a distinct scientific discipline. Comte's contributions to sociology are both theoretical and methodological, and his ideas have had a deep-impact on the development of the social science. The tumultuous political and social environment of post-revolutionary France shaped Comte's vision of sociology. Witnessing the chaos and instability that followed the French Revolution, Comte sought to establish a new social order grounded in scientific principles. He believed that society could be studied in a systematic and empirical manner, much like the natural

sciences, and that this knowledge could be used to guide social reform and progress (Comte, 1975, pp. 67-70).

Comte's sociological thought is his theory of the "law of three stages," which propound that human societies develop through three distinct stages of intellectual evolution: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positivist. In the theological stage, society explains phenomena through supernatural and religious beliefs. The metaphysical stage, which follows, involves explanations based on abstract philosophical concepts. Finally, in the positivist stage, society embraces a scientific approach, relying on observation, experimentation, and empirical evidence to understand the world. Comte argued that the positivist stage represented the highest level of human intellectual development and that sociology, as the science of society, was the culmination of this progression (Comte, 1975, pp. 45-51). Comte's emphasis on positivism also extended to his methodological approach to sociology. He argued that sociologists should adopt the same methods used in the natural sciences, like observation, experimentation, and comparison, to study social phenomena. This approach marked a significant departure from earlier speculative and philosophical approaches to understanding society and laid the foundation for sociology as an empirical and objective discipline. Comte's insistence on the importance of empirical observation and the use of scientific methods in sociology has had a lasting influence on the discipline and continues to be a central tenet of sociological research (Comte, 1975, pp. 112-115).

2.1 THE LAW OF THREE STAGES

The "law of three stages" is perhaps Comte's most famous contribution to sociological theory. It provides a framework for understanding the intellectual evolution of human societies and serves as the foundation for Comte's broader theory of social progress. According to Comte, each stage of intellectual development corresponds to a particular way of thinking about and explaining the world, and the transition from one stage to the next represents a fundamental shift in human consciousness. In the first stage, the theological stage, human thought is dominated by religious beliefs and supernatural explanations. In this stage, people attribute all phenomena to the will of gods or spirits, and religious institutions play a central role in organizing social life.

Comte identified three sub-stages within the theological stage: fetishism, polytheism, and monotheism. In the fetishistic sub-stage, people believe that inanimate objects possess supernatural powers. As societies evolve, they progress to polytheism, where multiple gods are worshiped, and eventually to monotheism, where a single, all-powerful deity is believed to govern the universe (Comte, 1975, pp. 47-52). The second stage, the metaphysical stage, represents a transition from religious to philosophical

explanations. In this stage, people begin to seek more abstract and rational explanations for phenomena, often invoking concepts like nature, essence, and causality. While religious beliefs are still influential, they are increasingly supplemented by philosophical reasoning. This stage reflects an intermediate phase in human intellectual development, where traditional religious explanations are gradually replaced by more abstract and speculative ideas (Comte, 1975, pp. 52-56). The final stage, the positivist stage, is characterized by a scientific approach to understanding the world. In this stage, people rely on empirical observation, experimentation, and logical reasoning to explain phenomena. The positivist stage marks the culmination of human intellectual development, where society embraces science as the primary means of knowledge and progress. Comte believed that this stage represented the future of human civilization and that sociology, as the "science of society," would play a crucial role in guiding social development and reform (Comte, 1975, pp. 56-60).

Comte's law of three stages has significant implications for the study of society. It provides a historical framework for understanding the evolution of human thought and the development of social institutions. By identifying distinct stages of intellectual development, Comte aimed to demonstrate that human societies develop in a predictable and orderly manner, moving from superstition and speculation to scientific knowledge and rationality. This theory also reflects Comte's broader belief in progress and the possibility of social reform through the application of scientific principles. In addition, the law of three stages emphasizes Comte's commitment to positivism and his belief in the scientific study of society. By highlighting the importance of empirical observation and the scientific method, Comte sought to distinguish sociology from other forms of knowledge, particularly speculative philosophy and religious belief. His insistence on the use of scientific methods in sociology has had a great influence on the development of the discipline and continues to shape the way sociologists approach the study of social phenomena (Giddens, 1971, pp. 78-82). We know Auguste Comte's law of three stages is a foundational concept in sociology, providing a framework for understanding the intellectual evolution of human societies. It reflects Comte's broader commitment to positivism and the scientific study of society, and it has had a lasting impact on the development of sociological theory and methodology.

2.2 THE HIERARCHY OF SCIENCES AND THE PLACE OF SOCIOLOGY

Auguste Comte's development of the "hierarchy of sciences" is another crucial contribution to the field of sociology. He proposed that human knowledge develop in a structured and hierarchical manner, with the simpler and more general sciences serving as the foundation for the more

complex and specialized ones. This hierarchy reflects Comte's belief in the progressive development of human knowledge, leading ultimately to the emergence of sociology as the most complex and comprehensive of all sciences.

Comte's hierarchy of sciences begins with the most fundamental disciplines: mathematics and astronomy. According to Comte, these sciences deal with the simplest and most general phenomena and are therefore the earliest to develop in human history. As one moves up the hierarchy, the sciences become increasingly complex, dealing with more specific and interrelated phenomena. Following mathematics and astronomy are physics, chemistry, biology, and finally, sociology (Comte, 1975, pp. 151-155).

Sociology occupies the highest position in Comte's hierarchy because it deals with the most complex and multifaceted phenomena: human society. Comte argued that sociology, as the "science of society," is dependent on the insights and methodologies of the lower sciences but goes beyond them in its scope and complexity. While the lower sciences focus on the physical and biological aspects of existence, sociology is concerned with the social and moral dimensions of human life, which are inherently more complex and dynamic (Comte, 1975, pp. 156-160). The placement of sociology at the top of the hierarchy reflects Comte's belief in the importance of understanding social phenomena in a scientific manner. He saw sociology as the culmination of human intellectual development, capable of synthesizing the knowledge from all other sciences and applying it to the study of society. This synthesis would enable sociologists to uncover the laws governing social behavior and institutions, thereby contributing to the betterment of society (Comte, 1975, pp. 161-165).

Comte's hierarchy of sciences also highlights the interdependence of different scientific disciplines. He believed that the more complex sciences are built upon the simpler ones and that advances in the lower sciences can contribute to progress in the higher sciences. For example, advances in biology, particularly in the understanding of human behavior and physiology, can inform sociological studies of human interactions and social structures. This hierarchical view of knowledge emphasizes the importance of an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to the study of society (Comte, 1975, pp. 166-169).

Moreover, Comte's hierarchy underscores his commitment to positivism and his vision of sociology as a scientific discipline. By placing sociology at the apex of the hierarchy, Comte sought to elevate the study of society to the same level of scientific rigor as the natural sciences. This approach challenged the more speculative and philosophical approaches to understanding society that had dominated European thought before Comte. His insistence on the scientific study of society laid the foundation for sociology as an empirical and systematic discipline, capable of generating objective and reliable knowledge about social

phenomena (Giddens, 1971, pp. 85-88). The hierarchical classification of sciences also reflects Comte's broader philosophical project of positivism, which seeks to unify all human knowledge under a common scientific framework. By organizing the sciences in a hierarchical manner, Comte aimed to show that all knowledge is interconnected and that progress in one field can lead to advancements in others. This vision of knowledge as a coherent and integrated whole is central to Comte's philosophy and has influenced subsequent developments in both sociology and the philosophy of science (Pickering, 1993, pp. 232-236).

Largely Comte emphasized the complexity and importance of social phenomena and established sociology as a distinct and scientific discipline. His hierarchical model of the sciences underscores the interdependence of different fields of knowledge and reflects his broader commitment to positivism and the scientific study of society. This concept has had a lasting impact on the development of sociology and continues to influence the way sociologists approach the study of social phenomena.

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: IBN KHALDUN AND AUGUSTE COMTE

Both Ibn Khaldun and Auguste Comte are celebrated as pioneers in the field of sociology, each offering distinct frameworks and methodologies for understanding society. While they operated in vastly different historical and cultural contexts, a comparative analysis of their contributions reveals both convergences and divergences in their sociological thought. This section will examine the similarities and differences in their approaches to understanding social structures, the dynamics of social change, and the role of scientific methods in studying society. Ibn Khaldun, writing in the 14th century, provided a comprehensive analysis of the rise and fall of civilizations, focusing on the role of social cohesion (*asabiyyah*) and the cyclical nature of history. His work laid the groundwork for understanding the internal dynamics of societies and the factors that contribute to their success or decline. In contrast, Auguste Comte, writing in the 19th century, was more concerned with the intellectual evolution of humanity and the development of scientific knowledge. Comte's positivist philosophy emphasized the importance of empirical observation and the systematic study of society, which he believed would lead to social progress and stability (Comte, 1975, pp. 34-39; Ibn Khaldun, 1967, pp. 45-50).

Despite these differences, both thinkers shared a common goal: to understand the forces that shape human societies and to provide a framework for achieving social order and progress. Their contributions to sociology, while rooted in different traditions, reflect a shared commitment to the systematic study of society and the application of this knowledge to address social challenges.

3.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Empiricism vs. Positivism: The methodological foundations of sociology as laid by Ibn Khaldun and Auguste Comte reveal distinct approaches. Comte championed a positivist approach, advocating for the application of the scientific method to the study of social phenomena, thereby aiming to establish general laws and patterns akin to those in the natural sciences (Ritzer, 2011, p. 27). In contrast, Ibn Khaldun's methodology was more empirical, focusing on observation and historical analysis. His approach involved scrutinizing historical events, social practices, and economic conditions to uncover underlying social dynamics (Alatas, 2013, p. 44).

Holistic vs. Systematic Analysis: The differences between Ibn Khaldun and Comte are further evident in their analytical frameworks. Ibn Khaldun employed a holistic approach, considering economic, political, social, and cultural factors in his analysis to achieve a comprehensive understanding of societal structures (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, p. 35). Conversely, Comte's analysis was more systematic, rooted in the belief that society could be dissected into its constituent parts to be studied scientifically, with the ultimate goal of categorizing and ordering social phenomena (Lenzer, 1975, p. 56).

3.2 SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND THE ROLE OF RELIGION

One of the key areas of convergence between Ibn Khaldun and Auguste Comte is their analysis of social dynamics and the role of religion in shaping societies. Both thinkers recognized the importance of religion in maintaining social order and cohesion, but they approached this subject from different perspectives and with different emphases. Ibn Khaldun viewed religion as a central element in the development and maintenance of *'asabiyyah'*, or social cohesion. He argued that religion provides a shared moral framework and a sense of collective identity that strengthens *'asabiyyah'* and unites communities, particularly in the early stages of a civilization's development. For Ibn Khaldun, religion played a crucial role in legitimizing political authority and promoting social solidarity.

He observed that many of the great empires of the past, including the Islamic caliphates, were founded on a strong religious foundation that helped to unify diverse groups and maintain social order (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, pp. 135-140). However, Ibn Khaldun also recognized that the role of religion could change over time. As societies become more prosperous and "*asabiyyah*" begins to decline, the influence of religion may wane, leading to internal divisions and the eventual weakening of the state. This cyclical view of history highlights the dynamic relationship between religion and social cohesion, with religion serving as both a unifying force and a potential source of conflict as societies evolve (Ibn Khaldun, 1967, pp. 145-150).

Auguste Comte, on the other hand, approached the role of religion from the perspective of intellectual development. In his "law of three stages," Comte argued that human societies progress from theological explanations of the world to metaphysical and finally positivist (or scientific) understandings. In the theological stage, religion is the primary means by which people explain natural and social phenomena. Comte acknowledged that religion played a vital role in early human societies by providing a sense of order and stability. However, he believed that as societies advanced intellectually, the influence of religion would diminish, giving way to a positivist stage where scientific knowledge and empirical observation would become the basis for social organization (Comte, 1975, pp. 48-53). Comte's vision of sociology as the "science of society" was grounded in his belief that religion would eventually be replaced by a new "religion of humanity," centered on the values of altruism, progress, and social harmony. He envisioned a society where sociologists, guided by scientific principles, would take on the role of moral and intellectual leaders, shaping social institutions and policies in accordance with the needs of humanity (Comte, 1975, pp. 182-186). This contrasts with Ibn Khaldun's more cyclical and pragmatic view of religion's role in society, reflecting the different historical and cultural contexts in which they wrote. Despite these differences, both Ibn Khaldun and Comte recognized the significance of religion in shaping social dynamics and the evolution of societies. While Ibn Khaldun emphasized the role of religion in maintaining social cohesion and legitimizing political authority, Comte focused on the intellectual and moral functions of religion and its eventual transformation in the context of modern, scientifically oriented societies. Their analyses underscore the complexity of religion's role in society and highlight the importance of understanding this role within broader social and historical contexts.

3.3 LEGACY AND INFLUENCE

Ibn Khaldun and Auguste Comte, both historic figures in the development of sociological thought, have left indelible marks on the fields of history, economics, sociology, and anthropology although in different ways and contexts. Ibn Khaldun, often address as a precursor to modern sociology, crafted ideas that limits of his time and geographic boundaries. Despite the delayed recognition of his work in the Western world, his magnum opus, *The Muqaddimah*, laid the groundwork for understanding the cyclical nature of societies, the role of economics in societal development, and the importance of 'asabiyyah' (social cohesion) in the rise and fall of civilizations (Alatas, 2013, p. 102). His empirical approach and integration of various social factors anticipated many concepts that would later be formalized within sociology and economics. The rediscovery of his work by Western scholars in the 19th and 20th

centuries has led to a growing appreciation of his contributions, with his ideas influencing modern historiography, social theory, and economic thought (Rosenthal, 1967, p. 76). His impact is particularly notable in the works of historians and economists who explore the dynamics of social change and the interplay between different societal forces.

On the other hand, Auguste Comte's succession is firmly rooted in the formal establishment of sociology as a distinct academic discipline. As the founder of positivism, Comte's insistence on applying the scientific method to the study of society helped shape the methodological approaches of subsequent sociologists, including Émile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer (Ritzer, 2011, p. 63). His vision of sociology as the "queen of the sciences" influenced the development of social theory and the systematic study of societal structures and functions. Comte's classification of the sciences and his law of the three stages (theological, metaphysical, and positive) have had a lasting influence on the field, establishing a framework that would guide sociological inquiry for decades.

4. CONCLUSION

While Auguste Comte is often celebrated as the father of sociology, this paper argues that Ibn Khaldun's contributions to the study of society are equally foundational to the development of sociological thought, each contributing unique perspectives and methodologies that have shaped the discipline. Ibn Khaldun's empirical and holistic approach to studying societies, particularly through his analysis of historical cycles and social cohesion, laid early groundwork for what would later evolve into modern sociology. Despite the delayed recognition of his contributions in the Western world, his influence now spans across various fields, including history, economics, and sociology, highlighting the enduring relevance of his ideas. Auguste Comte, on the other hand, is credited with formally establishing sociology as a distinct academic discipline, underpinned by his positivist philosophy. His systematic approach and the application of the scientific method to social phenomena have had a profound impact on the way sociology is studied and practiced. Comte's work set the stage for subsequent sociologists like Émile Durkheim and Herbert Spencer, cementing his role as a pivotal figure in the formalization of sociological inquiry.

Simultaneously, Ibn Khaldun and Comte represent two pillars of sociological thought, bridging the empirical study of societies with the systematic, scientific analysis of social structures. Their contributions continue to influence contemporary sociological research, underscoring the importance of both historical context and scientific rigor in understanding the complexities of human societies. They have not only shaped the discipline but also provided tools

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and frameworks that remain vital to the ongoing exploration of social dynamics.

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