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ETHICS: THE SOCIAL SITUATION AS A MODEL

Youcef Bouras*

Abstract. Morality has always been the cornerstone of any society's existence, cohesion, and continuity. This is evidenced by the fact that any attempt to dismantle a society begins with the destruction of its morality. This is what we witnessed in the actions of secularism and atheistic movements against the Church in modern history. Western colonialism also focused on this in the societies it occupied- especially Muslim ones- recognizing the value of morality in social cohesion and its role in fostering resistance to its domination within both the individual and society. Materialist philosophies have been at the forefront of the fight against morality, viewing it as a theological or primitive, reactionary legacy dating back to the Dark Ages, and one that, if adopted, would lead to a similar fate. Social positivism is considered one of the most prominent contemporary Western materialist philosophies that has confronted religious and metaphysical morality, particularly Christian and later Islamic, starting from the premise that it became obsolete with the advent of the scientific age. This philosophy views science as the positive or objective alternative to theological or religious superstition. Therefore, we have chosen to present and analyze the ideas of this school of thought from an objective perspective in order to understand its foundations, strengths, and weaknesses. Therefore, we have chosen to present and analyze the ideas of this school of thought from an objective perspective in order to understand its foundations, strengths, and weaknesses.

Keywords: Ethics, Materialist Philosophy, Social Positivism, Religious Ethics, Metaphysics, Positive Ethics

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ЭТИКА: СОЦИАЛЬНАЯ СИТУАЦИЯ КАК МОДЕЛЬ

Юсеф Бурас*

Абстракт. Нравственность всегда являлась краеугольным камнем существования, сплочённости и устойчивости любого общества. Это подтверждается тем фактом, что любая попытка разрушения общества начинается с подрыва его нравственных основ. Подобное мы наблюдали в действиях секуляризма и атеистических движений против Церкви в новейшей истории. Западный колониализм также уделял этому особое внимание в оккупированных им обществах- особенно в мусульманских, осознавая значимость морали для социальной сплочённости и её роль в формировании сопротивления господству как на уровне личности, так и общества в целом. Материалистические философские течения находились в авангарде борьбы против морали, рассматривая её как теологическое или примитивное, реакционное наследие тёмных веков, принятие которого якобы ведёт к аналогичной участи. Социальный позитивизм считается одним из наиболее заметных современных западных материалистических направлений, выступивших против религиозной и метафизической морали- прежде всего христианской, а затем и исламской- исходя из предположения, что она утратила свою актуальность с наступлением научной эпохи. Данное направление рассматривает науку как позитивную или объективную альтернативу теологическим и религиозным представлениям, которые оно считает суевериями. Исходя из этого, в настоящей работе предпринята попытка представить и проанализировать идеи данной школы с объективной точки зрения с целью выявления её теоретических оснований, сильных и слабых сторон.

Ключевые слова: этика, материалистическая философия, социальный позитивизм, религиозная этика, метафизика, позитивная этика

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ETİKA: SOSIAL VƏZİYYƏT MODELİ KİMİ

Yusif Buras*

Abstrakt. Əxlaq hər zaman istənilən cəmiyyətin mövcudluğunun, birliyinin və davamlılığının əsas sütunu olmuşdur. Bu fakt ondan irəli gəlir ki, hər hansı bir cəmiyyətin dağıdılması cəhdi ilk növbədə onun əxlaqi dəyərlərinin məhv edilməsi ilə başlanır. Bu vəziyyəti müasir tarixdə sekulyarizm və ateist hərəkatların Kilsəyə qarşı yönəlmiş fəaliyyətlərində müşahidə etmişik. Qərb müstəmləkəçiliyi də işğal etdiyi cəmiyyətlərdə xüsusilə müsəlman cəmiyyətlərində- bu amilə xüsusi diqqət yetirmişdir; çünki əxlaqın sosial həmrəyliyin formalaşmasında və həm fərd, həm də cəmiyyət səviyyəsində hökmranlığa qarşı müqavimətin gücləndirilməsində mühüm rol oynadığını dərk edirdi. Materialist fəlsəfi cərəyanlar əxlaqa qarşı mübarizənin ön cəbhəsində dayanmış, onu Qaranlıq əsrlərdən qalma teoloji və ya ibtidai, reaksiyon bir miras kimi qiymətləndirmiş və bu mirasın qəbulunun cəmiyyətləri eyni aqibətə sürükləyəcəyini iddia etmişdir. Sosial pozitivizm müasir Qərb materialist fəlsəfələri arasında dini və metafizik əxlaqa- əvvəlcə xristian, daha sonra isə islam əxlaqına- qarşı çıxan ən görkəmli istiqamətlərdən biri hesab olunur. Bu cərəyan elmin meydana çıxması ilə dini əxlaqın köhnəliyini iddia edir və elmi teoloji və dini inanclara qarşı pozitiv, yəni obyektiv alternativ kimi təqdim edir. Bu səbəbdən, məqalədə sözügedən fəlsəfi məktəbin ideyaları obyektiv baxımdan təqdim və təhlil edilir, onun nəzəri əsasları, güclü və zəif cəhətləri müəyyənləşdirilir.

Açar sözlər: etika, materialist fəlsəfə, sosial pozitivizm, dini etika, metafizika, pozitiv etika

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1.Introduction

The three branches of philosophy- being, knowledge, and values- have always formed a great importance in the history of human thought. The branch of values is considered one of the most important because ethics is a central subject within it, as it is related to the life of man as an individual and as a group. Like other branches and subjects, ethics has become a topic disputed by idealistic and spiritual directions on the one hand, and materialist and positivist directions on the other hand. The first ones were pioneers in history and prominence, as they were adopted by various ancient eastern cultures and an important part of Greek philosophy, as well as by religious philosophies like Christianity and Islam. In contrast to that, the materialist proposals in ethics appeared recently, though there were some precedents in hedonist and Epicurean philosophies and others. These ethics have emerged especially in Western philosophy in the nineteenth century with utilitarian, Marxist, and positivist philosophies, with the latter being the most prominent among these schools. The problem raised here is: what is the nature of the philosophical view of ethics in materialist philosophy in general, in its concept, source, and function? And how does social positivism embody this materialist perspective in its conception of ethics (in its nature and function)?

The significance of this topic comes from what materialist philosophy- and especially positivism- has represented as a radical transformation in ethical thinking from metaphysics and spirit to sociology and science.

Hypothesis: Contrary to rational and religious philosophies in history which claim a spiritual or rational nature of ethics, the materialist philosophy, represented especially in dialectical materialism, utilitarianism, and social positivism, sees that ethics return to purely material considerations based on economic, utilitarian, or purely social factors.

Method of treatment: I depended on an analytical critical approach, starting from the materialist concepts of ethics to reach the social positivist model with Comte.

2.Conceptual introduction

We have seen that there are essential concepts in our research considered as keys needing precise control and verification, represented in: ethics, the materialist doctrine in general, and the social positivist doctrine.

2.1.The Concept of Ethics in Various Doctrines

Definitions of ethics vary according to schools, trends, and religious, rational, and materialist directions, and this is what we have to clarify.

A.The concept of ethics in language

Ethics in the Arabic language is the plural of "khuluq," which means habit, disposition, nature, virtue, and religion. For the ancients, it is a faculty from

which actions are produced by the soul without preceding deliberation, thought, or burden [Saliba, 1982, p.49].

While in foreign languages, and we mean specifically Western languages, the word "ethics" corresponds to two terms: (moral), which returns to the Latin root or term "moralis." The second term goes back to the Latin root or word "Ethics," derived from the Latin "ethicus," which itself returns to the Greek "êthikós." There is almost no real difference between the two words in daily, practical, or scientific and philosophical uses [Merimi, 2023].

B. The concept of ethics terminologically

Several definitions can be found depending on the nature of ethics itself or the conception of its source, whether religious, rational, or material. In the religious definition as found with Muslim philosophers and scholars: Al-Jurjani's definition: "Ethics is a state that is firmly rooted in the soul, from which actions are issued easily and smoothly without the need for thought or deliberation. If good actions issue from it, then the state is called good ethics; if bad actions issue from it, then the state from which these actions originate is the source of bad ethics" [Al-Jurjani, 1985, p.136].

As for Ibn Sina, who is one of the philosophers, ethics is a state rooted in the soul which produces voluntary actions, and it is susceptible to upbringing and development toward virtue or vice. The good is what comes from a soul raised on the love of goodness and correctness; the bad is what issues vices easily [Mahmoud, 2009, p.205].

As for the rational philosophy, ethics can be defined as: a system of principles determined by the mind to direct human behavior toward achieving the highest good, which means its source is rational. Advocates of religion and reason agree on the nature of the source as innate and transcendent; while it is divine for the religious, it is metaphysical and a priori for rationalists and idealists. They also agree on its absoluteness and impossibility of change [Durant, 1985, p.349-350].

On the other hand, experimental and materialist philosophies, starting from their approach to moral reality by looking at foundations in human nature, society, matter, and utility, define ethics as: those realistic ethics based on all these foundations, thus characterized by their relativity.

As for social positivism, it is defined as: a set of rules, commands, prohibitions, and duties which has a peculiar existence like the existence of religions and laws [Badawi, 2000, p.152]. They are social phenomena resulting from the interaction of individuals in society; they are relative, changing with time and place, and not fixed values, which is on the pattern of materialist ethics in general.

2.2. Materialist Philosophy in Terms of Its Concept

Methodologically, in this element, we had to recognize the meaning of materialism, then to know its philosophy.

2.2.1. The Concept of Materialism: Linguistically and Terminologically

Material, linguistically, is defined as the natural body that we take as it is or transform into something else for a certain purpose [Saliba, 1982, vol.2, p.306].

Matter is any body that has weight and extension, occupies a space, accepts division, and can take different forms. The matter of a thing is its origin and the elements from which it is formed, whether sensory or moral, like wood matter or the matter of scientific research. The word "materialistic" is a singular noun attributed to matter or materiality, and it is the opposite of spiritual or moral (not visible by known material means). The immaterial is without a body, shape, or dimensions. One says about a person that he is materialistic, meaning he is saturated with what is tangible, sensed, and counted [Al-Razi, 1986, p.225].

Terminologically, materialism is that sensory view towards the world and everything in it- its components, creatures, and beings. Or it is the method to understand the phenomena of this life, and the immense, diverse, existing nature, and to comprehend it depending on defined and precise scientific and objective principles. It is also a method to understand anything related to social life, economic activities, and practical results for the individual in the context of his interaction with life and the subjective and objective environment. This (materialist) view applies to the world in all circumstances and positions, as long as it depends on the material determinants that its adherents made into an independent materialist philosophy [Politzer, n.d., p.136].

Materialist "philosophical" thought is known as that which sees matter as the foundation of existence, the universe, and life, and that the source of knowledge is sensory [Hamdan, 2022].

2.2.2. The Concept of Materialist Philosophy

Materialist philosophy is known as "the philosophical doctrine that accepts only matter as the sole condition of life (human nature), and thus rejects God as one of the conditions of life... so materialist philosophy reduces everything in the world (man and nature) to one material principle, which is the driving force of matter, running and latent in the bodies..." [Al-Messiri, 2007, p.17].

It is also known as what stands opposite to idealism, so it is: the trend that sees matter as the primary origin of existence, that existence is not rational or spiritual as idealism claims, but rather it is a physical, material existence that can be seen and confirmed by senses and experience- unlike the idealist trend- materialist stance sees that even consciousness and perception are nothing but results of material interactions and result from the evolution of matter, meaning everything in existence is material [Aed, 2025].

2.3. The Concept of Social Positivist Philosophy and Its Pioneers

2.3.1.The Concept of Positivism

Linguistically, it is a feminine noun attributed to "wadh" (putting or placing), and it is an industrial source from "wadh," the condition of a human. Al-Jurjani defines it as animal utterance such that whenever it is uttered or imagined, the knowledge of its commitment is understood- it is what must conform and commit, and the utterance with "putting" refers to the whole of what was placed by conformity, its part by precision, and what accompanies it in the mind by commitment, like "human," which refers to the whole by conformity and its part by agreement with commitment and knowledge [Al-Jurjani, n.d., p.253].

Terminologically, generally, it means explaining a phenomenon by another phenomenon, without attributing it to hidden or metaphysical causes. This term in the philosophy of Auguste Comte (founder of social positivism) refers to what is actual or real, independent of the concept of divine law; so the positivist, in this case, is synonymous with real and experimental and is opposite to contemplative, imaginary, and illusory [Saliba, 1982, vol.2, p.577].

2.3.2.The Concept of Social Positivist Philosophy

Social positivist philosophy was born from Auguste Comte (1798-1857), and it is a philosophy that opposes metaphysical philosophy with its different strands and moves in a scientific direction. It also rejected reason as a source of knowledge for its realistic orientation, and it was concerned with subjects of social reality such as religion and politics and society and others. It is defined as a philosophical system that arose as an opposite of theological sciences and is limited to the data of experience. The word "positivist" means what is opposite to imaginary, and it also means what is certain, specific, effective, practical, and purposeful, which measures all things by their real benefits [Lalande, 1986, p.791].

In general, it is any system that is limited to the data of experience and excludes a priori or metaphysical speculations. More precisely, the term refers to the thought of the French philosopher Auguste Comte.

As an ideology and a philosophical movement, positivism first acquired its distinctive features in the works of Comte, who also gave it the name of sociology and its systems. Then it developed through several stages known by different names, such as experimental criticism, logical positivism, and logical empirical theory, which finally merged, in the middle of the twentieth century, into the already existing tradition known as analytic philosophy [Feigl, 2025].

3.Ethics in Materialist Philosophy

It is known that materialist philosophy has a conception that submits to its nature in its view of ethics, considering them on one side as mechanical ethics stemming from instincts that themselves are subject to action and reaction, which leads to the other side, represented by utilitarianism, considering that

ethics is a social issue in which utility and economy have the most prominent role.

3.1. The Starting Points of the Materialist Standpoint in Ethics

At the beginning, we can start by looking at the justifications that materialism relies on in its vision of ethics, and these are what we called the starting points, being the cornerstone on which it depends in its conception.

A. Refusal of the Spiritual–Physical Dualism in the Explanation of Man

Materialist philosophy rejects the spiritual-physical dualism because it considers that all reality is material and consists of matter or arises from its interactions. This philosophy rejects any non-material entities and sees that mind, consciousness, and psychological phenomena are the result of the biological functions of the brain and material processes, instead of being a separate spiritual essence. Instead, materialist philosophy provides an explanation based on that all phenomena, including consciousness, can be explained completely through material components and procedures, without the need to suppose the existence of soul or immaterial mind. Accordingly, it reduces the processes of mind and consciousness, for example, to their essential material processes (such as neural and brain activity), and it refuses spirit as there is no evidence for that through experience, and according to their view, they reject that what does not exist, such as spirit or mind, would be a reason for what does exist, such as visible behavior [Calef, n.d].

B. Considering Matter as the Basis of Existence and Consciousness

Materialism in most of its currents denies any existence for spirit or mind in the ideal or rational sense, and sees both as arising from nature, which has the priority in existence. Moreover, the mind is regarded just like a machine. Engels says: "*The highest question in all philosophy, the question of the relation of thought to being, the relation of the spirit to nature ... and philosophers have split into two major camps according to their answer to this question. Those who assert that spirit existed before nature ... formed the camp of idealism. Those who consider nature as the first belonged to various schools of materialism*" [Engels, n.d., pp.29-30].

3.2. Materialists' Conception of Ethics

Based on what preceded, we can say that the materialist conception of ethics is based on two things: their relativity, and their basis in experience.

A. Ethics Are Not Absolute or Transcendent, but Relative and Conditional on the Material and Social Environment

Ethics change and differ according to the material and social environment in which a person or community was raised, and are not a set of fixed and absolute values. This matches the understanding that ethical standards arise out of material and social circumstances and not from a transcendent or absolute source such as God or mind. By their nature, they are subject to economic and

social environments, like the concept of justice- which varies from one society to another. It might depend on money or class in a society, while in another it depends on the principle of equality.

B.Moral Values Are Understood as Human Experiences Developed in Service of Survival and Social Organization:

Ethics according to the tenets of materialist philosophy are the human history in its process and becoming, meaning the history of relationships which man built with his effort and sweat through his dialectical relation with nature and his brother, man himself. In other words, it is his embodied history that was not built by any powers outside his own history, nor by any abstract dialectic whether from the absolute idea as Hegel says, or the abstract mind as Kant says, or by any other philosophical - or religious - thought that doesn't recognize that man is the master of his fate and that he alone is the creator of his history through the historicity of his relations with nature and society. Ethics are nothing but value stances whose nature and forms were determined by those social relations during the process of production of material goods throughout history. They are a reflection of those relations, but they became regulated as they transformed into custom, habit, and law [Owaid, 2021].

4.The View of Social Positivism Towards Ethics

4.1.The Emergence of Social Positivist Ethical Thought

Social positivism, generally- and in line with other materialist doctrines and philosophies in the last two centuries- arose as a counter-reaction to the idealistic and rational philosophies that dominated and imposed their power throughout the span from the sixteenth century to the early nineteenth century, beginning with rationalist philosophies especially with Descartes (René Descartes, 1596–1650), transcendental idealism with Kant (Immanuel Kant, 1724–1804) which reached its peak with George Berkeley (1685–1753) and Hegel (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 1770–1831) in their well-known subjective idealism, where metaphysical propositions preceded the ideas promoted by these philosophies. The propositions of idealism and metaphysical rationalism revolve around mind as the basis of reality; among the main views of each approach: subjective idealism sees that things exist as they are perceived, as Berkeley says: "to be is to be perceived," and transcendental idealism separates between the world of phenomena and the world of things in themselves, which we find in Kant's statement: "We only perceive the phenomena, which are the conditions of experience." As for rationalism, it focuses on the idea that the fundamental truths can be inferred with certainty by reason; Descartes sees metaphysics as an exact science whose propositions can be proven with mathematical certainty [Ja'nini, 2007, pp.107-109].

From another side, its emergence was in a climate dominated by Christianity in the ethical domain, whose influence remained in this field until the nineteenth century, despite its blows at the hands of material science which refuted many of its conceptions, and the attacks it received from rational and empirical philosophies on many of its propositions, and even the divisions it underwent especially with the emergence of Protestantism- a new rival to Catholicism- that brought about the ideas of individual faith and responsibility which were the reason for liberation from the church's hold on the individual, contrary to traditional Christianity (Catholicism), which calls for a collective spirit and mediation between the individual and even the community with God. We should not forget here the wish of Christian province rulers in Europe to secede from the church, revive ethnic nationalities and local languages, and their encouragement of new sciences to refute the medieval church's propositions- as mentioned above. So despite all that, the core ethical and doctrinal beliefs of Christianity continued to affect Western societies.

One can add what Europe witnessed in the nineteenth century from significant social and political upheaval, such as the French Revolution and the development of capitalism, and others, which revealed the failure of old intellectual frameworks to maintain order. This pushed social positivists to seek new and stable foundations for society by applying the scientific method to the study of social phenomena as an alternative to the old foundations that relied on priesthood and metaphysics [Abelson, 1995, p.188].

In front of this metaphysical and religious thought, social positivism came assisted by what material, empirical, and positivist science achieved, which adopts the concepts of determinism and the scientific law that stipulates explaining phenomena by each other, excluding any a priori rational statements or theological effect- especially with Isaac Newton (1642-1727) - and what experimental philosophy achieved by breaking the barrier of mind and theology and its victory for the proposals of experience and reality; from a different side, it reformulates philosophical ideas- especially with David Hume (1711-1776) and John Locke (1632-1704). Thus, rethinking the construction of knowledge on new foundations based on positivism, which means explaining phenomena by other phenomena, meaning returning all that is real to reality. Thus, returning the propositions of social reality to society itself, including ethics, by adopting an experimental, inductive explanation, built on the principles of determinism and causality.

4.2. The Social Positivist Conception of Ethics

Social positivism considers that all values, including ethical values, originate from society and have a social nature. This social ethical principle appeared late, after many previous principles had dominated the foundation of ethics,

and among them are references for moral behavior such as rational, natural, emotional, and utilitarian ones.

As a fundamental change compared to previous doctrines, positivism imprinted its ethics with a scientific and practical character similar to the material and experimental sciences like physics and astronomy. This means that ethics can be subjected to experimentation just like these sciences according to their nature.

Social positivism succeeded in distinguishing precisely between the rules that organize behavior and the laws that explain it, pointing out that ethics—with its commands, prohibitions, and duties—has an objective existence, even if it is of a special nature, similar to that which distinguishes religions, languages, and laws. Ethics, therefore, are phenomena that can be studied externally in the same way natural sciences study their subjects [Badawi, 2000, p.152]. Several topics enter the scope of ethics, as customs, traditions, even religion and language can be considered among ethical phenomena.

Since what ethics deals with has become, according to their claim, an objective and external matter, it can be approached by empirical or inductive scientific study as topics independent of the self. The subjects mentioned above, like customs, traditions, religion, and language, can be studied quantitatively by inductive, scientific methods, far from introspective, intuitive, or theoretical contemplative approaches that long dominated the studies of man, society, and ethics. To the extent that it is described as a quantitative, inductive method based—like experimental sciences—on observation, statistics, and other methodological requirements.

Based on the existence of this inductive method, the subject of ethics must be defined precisely as the behavior adopted by specific individuals within a certain environment at a certain time. Thus, ethics became a science considered according to the school it belongs to and the nature from which it is viewed, namely sociology. So, ethics has become either a science given these conditions, or an art if it uses what sociology finds as laws in order to undertake the duty of reform. Thus, we conclude that social positivist ethics have abandoned all a priori religious or metaphysical bases and have transformed into a science relying on the laws of human society.

As for the greatest value spoken of by the pioneers of this science, especially Auguste Comte as the foundation of ethical value, it is altruism, meaning the social duty based on enhancing the human feeling among members of society. This altruism is achieved thanks to the law of emotional progress from selfishness to it, and this altruism continues to advance until it prevails according to laws. The growth of altruism goes through successive stages, most importantly the union of individuals in the family, union of families for war, and cooperation of society for the prosperity of industry. From the positivist

emphasis on duty, rights are neglected and erased given their theological origin, as they surpass man to a higher authority [Karam, n.d., pp.339-340].

If the aim of social duty is originally rooted in individuals to the point it forms the comprehensive law that these individuals follow for their own good and that of the whole, then the goal of social ethics is to realize the true meaning of humanity. Here appears the importance of science, through which all this is achieved, as it observes and determines the degree of direct and indirect influence of all inclinations, actions, or activities in individual and social life within one society in a specific period [Karam, n.d., p.340].

4.3.Characteristics of Social Ethics

After ethics in the social school became subject to experimentation as a study method and adopted the image of science, their characteristics must be consistent with those of any experimental science. Most scholars agree on two characteristics: relativity and connection with reality.

4.3.1.Relativity

Since it claims to be scientific, the moral criterion of social positivism is the behavior of the individual- its nature, controls, and purpose in a specific place and time- which gives it relativity, since it targets the individual and not the whole, and in partial dimensions, without an absolute standard. But this does not mean denying goodness for this school, because goodness- even if it is temporary in time and space, and generally subject to evolution and current conditions- these current morals in the positivist doctrine rely on favoring good instincts, altruistic and empathetic instincts, making them predominant, moving alongside selfishness and eventually forming the correct social character of the human person [Al-Awwa, 1986, p.19].

The relativity of ethics here in social positivism is compared to the relativity of knowledge, which is subject to evolution as a result, as well as due to the changing conditions and foundations. Ethics and knowledge are also both issued from human nature itself; and from another side, they are also connected to emotion, which is itself governed by changes in time, place, and the ages of humans, and all of this results in the necessary outcome that ethics is relative.

Relativity also occurs in one society across time under the pressure of social change, as changes in some systems and functional coordination between different systems lead to a similar change in the moral system [Badawi, 2000, pp.159-160].

4.3.2.Realism

Social positivist ethics are connected to tangible reality, in opposition to metaphysical, theological, and idealistic ethics. Through this sensory connection, similar to material sciences, morals became objective—observed externally through behavior, and thus mere phenomena which can be described, analyzed, and classified. Since they are social phenomena, they

differ from one nation to another and from one people to another depending on the social conditions and foundations that created them.

Therefore, customs, traditions, conventions, public manners, standards of good and evil... can be studied by using precise scientific methods, and likely this is what is aimed at. As such, the moral phenomenon obeys the principle of determinism, considering that its causes can be discovered by examining the social conditions and data that produced it [Ibrahim, n.d., p.78].

What can be concluded is that positivist ethics are realistic and neither theological nor metaphysical. They are objective, observable, and monitorable from the outside just like natural phenomena. They carry the power of compulsion; if their conditions are present, they must happen. Moreover, they are directly related to human behavior.

Thus, positivist ethics do not speak about what ought to be, as in the teachings of religions or as described by metaphysics philosophers, but rather about what is. Because it "relies on positive science, it achieves its essential qualities- it is a fact, meaning that it is based on observation not imagination, and it views people as they actually are, not as imagined. So, it does not depend on abstract analysis of the special feelings of the human heart; rather, it is based on evidence provided by humanity about its established motives that pushed it to act throughout the ages mentioned in history. In general, if it uses a truly objective method, it avoids the causes of serious errors" [Rouzi, 1412 AH, p.228].

5.Ethics According to Auguste Comte (1798-1857)

[Auguste Comte was born on January 19, 1798. After attending Lycée Joffre and then the University of Montpellier, Comte was admitted to the École Polytechnique in Paris. He continued his studies at the Faculty of Medicine in Montpellier. Upon returning to Montpellier, he had disagreements with his royalist Catholic family, as he abandoned Catholicism under the influence of the Protestant pastor Daniel Encontre after returning to Paris.

In August 1817, he became a student and secretary to Henri de Saint-Simon, who introduced Comte to the intellectual community and greatly influenced his thought. During that period, Comte published his first articles in various journals directed by Saint-Simon, such as *L'Industrie*, *Le Politique*, and *L'Organisateur* (alongside Charles Dunoyer and Charles Comte in *Le Censeur Européen*), although he did not publish under his own name until 1819, with *The General Separation Between Opinions and Desires*.

In 1824, he broke with Saint-Simon. Earlier, in 1822, Comte had published *Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for the Reorganization of Society*. He married Caroline Massin in 1825, and between their marriage and divorce in 1842, he published six volumes of his *Cours de Philosophie Positive*.

A strong friendship developed between Comte and John Stuart Mill, with whom he collaborated closely. During this time, Comte developed a new "Religion of Humanity." He published four volumes of *System of Positive Polity* (1851-1854). His final work, the first

volume of *The Subjective Synthesis (La Synthèse Subjective)*, was published in 1856. Comte died in Paris on September 5, 1857, from stomach cancer.

Reference:

[Henri Gouhier, *La vie d'Auguste Comte*, Gallimard, 1931].]

We cannot find a model more eloquent in expressing the positivist school in general and in its view of ethics specifically than the philosophy of Auguste Comte.

5.1.The Emotional Basis of Ethics with Comte

Comte used the theory of Gall (Franz Joseph Gall) in the brain, adopting it and defining it as the study of human personality and functions according to the outward shape of the skull. This means that phrenology, also called "cranioscopie" in the same sense given to it by Gall, can then make it possible to know many of the intellectual or moral dispositions of a human or an animal, and leads him to mental stagnation and selfishness. Man must spread the emotional instincts pressed inside himself, and rationality must submit to emotion [Al-Moumni, 2021, p.193].

This was Comte's foundation in his theory about social positivism, as it is the determination of the nature and origin of the social bond, which makes it of an instinctive and natural nature. He sees that the physiological location for the centralization of instincts is the brain, and he compares it to a machine, which consists of a group of conflicting brain functions in reality. According to Comte, the brain has emotional, intellectual, and active functions. All this linking by Comte of the material brain side with emotion is just to make these ethics of a material nature, that can be subjected to material, positivist, and social explanation.

And relating to this point, society works according to the sense of obligation, meaning that each individual does his duty in a reciprocal way. Comte emphasizes that the mind should be servant to the heart, meaning that the mind is characterized by the dominance of the heart: this logical state, where the mind, instead of being just the simple servant of the heart, becomes its complete slave. Finally, he reaches the view that feelings form the moral philosophy and require love as a principle [Al-Moumni, 2021, p.194].

As these emotions are directed toward others, a kind of social emotional duality is created, since the functions of the brain are emotional, intellectual, and active- which means they are directed toward others. Here, we deduce the social character of the brain's organic work. What results from the mind being a servant to the heart in reality, as seen, is the social dimension, as a sense of obligation arises, meaning that every individual does his duty toward others and in a reciprocal way.

Comte considers marriage the institution most representative of this feeling of emotion which rises to the degree of love, and it plays a central role on the

social level. He emphasizes that women must be educated just like the worker, as feminine tenderness can reach universality. That social communication may rise from the local level to the whole field of humanity.

5.2.From the Foundations of Shared Life to Social Ethics

Based on this natural readiness, Comte founded his philosophy on ethics, where living for others is the core of positivist ethics. This made him see that living for others becomes the natural summary of all positive ethics, which biology must truly determine as the universal principle [Comte, 1848/1999, p.128]. This shared life makes human existence an organized life thanks to love, resulting in social ethics being a form of religion based on faith in humanity (the new god) living in history, derived from the intersection between the moral and spiritual sides.

As we saw, the origin of ethics is the family, whose members take it to the whole world. The instincts of selfish self-preservation gradually turn in the family into maternal spiritual connection according to Comte; the closeness of feelings and personal instincts is the origin of forming the first nucleus of society. Children are subordinated to society with the mother, then with the couple, who indeed form the smallest element in society. He says: "*Therefore, the collective body is formed basically, first and foremost by families which constitute its true elements; the classes or guilds make up its own tissue, and finally the cities or towns are its real members*" [Comte, 1848/1999, p.345].

5.3.The Relationship of the Individual to Society

Comte makes the individual a product of society; according to the concept of solidarity, there is no existence for the individual in the presence of society. So, the individual does not exist- there is only society. This means emotional connection between members of society, which creates professional divisions in labor, determines competencies, and mutual relations within the whole society, allowing us to exchange and communicate with others. Comte says: "*Every citizen, regardless of their actual status, is considered a public official whose somewhat specified powers determine societal obligations*" [Comte, 1851–1854/1929, p.156].

5.4.Religion of Humanity and Positivist Ethics

It is known that Auguste Comte divided the stages of human development into three: the religious stage, then the philosophical or metaphysical stage, and finally the scientific or positivist stage. Logically, this requires that the influence of the first two stages vanish, especially the religious stage which, according to him, contradicts everything scientific. But he himself denies this, seeing that the residues of this stage can never be erased, which appears in the resurgence and revival of this suppressed religiosity as man's desire to restore his spiritual balance. Thus came the notion of belief in science as a religion for humanity.

Positivism shows that science begins from observable facts which are determined for the observer, because any phenomenon always consists of a definite relationship between a subject and an object. Comte defined positivist science by saying: "While it is correct that science becomes positive only by relying exclusively on observed facts" [Comte, 1851–1854/1929, p.439].

The efforts of scientists and philosophers since the sixteenth century with Bacon, Descartes, Galileo, Newton, and until the nineteenth century, led to the birth of natural philosophy and gave scientific power its real character- namely, the spiritual element for a new social system. Social life requires intellectual and moral organization, that is, a "spiritual" existence, a spiritual force that constitutes one of the main elements of Comte's political concept, and which will be a form of religion [Al-Moumni, 2021, p.202].

5.5. Positivist Politics and Ethics

Comte believes in the necessity of dictatorship in governance, but not the royal dictatorship linked to theology, where people are not heard and the authority of the royal family, as well as noble families, is supported. Instead, Comte imagines a republican system in which people gain the right to vote, to choose a government that abandons the privileges of royal families. Here, Comte sees the necessity for this government to reconcile between two things- freedom and power- and thus he calls for a republican dictatorship, believing "dictatorship corresponds to a power that is strong and just at the same time... for him, dictatorship reconciles authority and spontaneity" [Al-Moumni, 2021, p.203].

Comte defines politics as an executive power to rebuild the internally destroyed social system, such as organizing celebrations, managing them, implementing public education projects, organizing services and worship, but also restricting ownership and readjusting the relationships between number and material power. These are the goals of politics, and this relates to managing society with its values and the aspirations of its families, not by the will of a few individuals [Comte, 1848/1999, p.194].

The relationship between politics and ethics is quite clear- it's basically a moral philosophy that advocates cooperation, solidarity, altruism, and respect for the contribution of humanity and social communication as a condition for the psychological and physiological balance of individuals. The importance of ethics appears in politics due to the insufficiency of power alone to achieve its aims, so joint action by the government comes to unite efforts through competition and leadership, and the moral influence directs it towards a social orientation governed by the common good. "Let us not forget, indeed, that political ascension results ... from more or less voluntary competition, moreover, active or passive, constantly exposed to failure when emotional harmony is insufficient" [Comte, 1851–1854/1929, p.302], meaning the

necessity of emotional adequacy for the success of political action, which melds collective effort as an alternative or a mitigation of force in political action.

6. Conclusion

Contemporary materialism is considered a revolution against the stereotypical forms of philosophy and the old or prior styles of thought, due to its mechanical, experimental, and realistic perspective towards physical and biological material subjects, which quickly expanded to include human topics connecting with this perspective, among them ethics- where social positivism represents the pinnacle of materialist thought in ethics, as we have seen. Three results can be mentioned here:

First: Exclusion of any supernatural or theological existence in exchange for emphasizing what is tangible and material, which has been confirmed thanks to material experimental science.

Second: Generalizing the method and results of material science to the study of material subjects, ethics included- where social positivism was a forerunner in dealing with this topic due to its importance in achieving and organizing human society.

Third: Auguste Comte embodied positivist ethics in his social project as the fundamental tool for achieving social cohesion, starting from the family to the local community to all of humanity according to his claim.

But some objections to these propositions can be recorded and can be summarized in two objections, each accompanied by a question:

The first is about the ability of science to establish ethics in the absence of the spiritual factor, especially in light of science’s failure to achieve this, given the fragmentation experienced by the family and human society under the realistic materialist approach. Here, we pose the following question: Can ethics exist far from religion, which is based on the spirit and on faith?

The second objection concerns the complete exclusion of the role of the individual or person in the name of rejecting selfish instinct. Here, we note how societies collapse when the status and role of the individual is neglected, as evidenced by the collapse of communist regimes based on a purely social foundation. Thus, it can be argued that social ethics alone are not sufficient, just as in liberal societies that excluded the social dimension in ethics and kept only individual pragmatism- with the moral catastrophes currently threatening these societies. In the face of this challenge, how can we reconcile the social and individual approaches to present an integrated ethics that does not exclude either the individual or society?

Here, the recommendations might be: to try to answer these questions by presenting the Islamic conception of ethics, which integrates the spiritual and

the material-realistic dimensions. After all, it is the religion of Islamic nature (fitrah), and also combines both the individual and social aspects.

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