



THE DIALECTICS OF POSITIVISM AND ISLAMIC EPISTEMOLOGY: SEEKING AN INTEGRATIVE PARADIGM IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

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This article discusses the relevance and problems of Auguste Comte's positivist thought in the context of Islamic education. Positivism, as a scientific paradigm, emphasizes objectivity, empiricism, and rationality as the sole sources of truth. This paradigm has greatly influenced the modern education system, which tends to neglect moral and spiritual dimensions. From the perspective of Islamic education, the positivist approach is considered reductionistic because it denies revelation and transcendental values as integral sources of knowledge. This study employs a qualitative method through a literature review to elaborate on the essence of positivism, the epistemological critique from Islam, and an integrative framework for the development of Islamic educational knowledge. The findings indicate the necessity of repositioning the epistemology of Islamic education toward a post-positivist model that unites revelation, reason, and empirical experience within a unified tauhid (monotheistic) system of knowledge.

Keywords: *Auguste Comte; Integration of Knowledge; Islamic Education; Positivism.*



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INTRODUCTION

Since the 17th century and peaking in the 18th century, the development of science underwent a fundamental transformation with the emergence of the mechanistic paradigm in Newtonian physics. The modern intellectual world experienced a shift in orientation from metaphysics and theology toward rational-empirical explanations that could be scientifically verified.¹ In this context, the natural sciences became the ideal model for all forms of knowledge. This phenomenon not only gave birth to a scientific revolution but also shook the metaphysical and theological foundations that had for centuries been the basis of Western systems of thought.²

Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), one of the transitional figures from the Enlightenment era to positivism, asserted that Renaissance philosophy had destroyed the feudal system, the authority of the traditional Church, and the old metaphysical order.³ However, the destruction of this old system in turn created a vacuum of values and a new direction of thought demanding the reconstruction of a knowledge system in line with the spirit of a scientific and industrial society.⁴ 19th-century thinkers then sought to find new principles of integration capable of explaining the order and progress of modern society.⁵

One of the most monumental efforts within this reconstruction emerged through the thought of Auguste Comte (1798–1857). Inspired by Saint-Simon, Comte sought to construct a system of philosophy capable of explaining the historical journey of human knowledge within a single logical and progressive framework.⁶ This effort was formulated in the “Law of Three Stages”, namely the theological, metaphysical, and positive stages. Through this law, Comte assumed that the development of human knowledge was necessary, progressive, and linear—following the pattern of development of empirical and certain natural sciences.⁷ Thus, Comte placed scientific knowledge as the pinnacle of the evolution of human rationality and asserted that every society would reach intellectual maturity when capable of positive thinking, when knowledge is based solely on observable facts.

In his philosophical system known as positivism, Comte not only laid the methodological foundation for modern science but also gave birth to a new discipline

¹ F. Budi Hardiman, *Filsafat Modern Dari Machiavelli Sampai Nietzsche* (Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2014).

² Melinda Nur Ekawati and Usman Usman, “Filsafat Positivistik Sosial Auguste Comte,” *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar* 10, no. 2 (2025): 430–44, <https://doi.org/10.23969/jp.v10i02.26401>.

³ Kenneth Sacks, “Auguste Comte and Consensus Formation in American Religious Thought—Part 1: The Creation of Consensus,” *Religions* 8, no. 8 (2017): 147, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8080147>.

⁴ George Ritzer, *Teori Sosiologi Modern* (Kencana, 2014).

⁵ Irham Nugroho, “Positivisme Auguste Comte: Analisa Epistemologis dan Nilai Etisnya Terhadap Sains,” *Cakrawala: Jurnal Studi Islam* 11, no. 2 (2016): 167–77, <https://doi.org/10.31603/cakrawala.v11i2.192>.

⁶ Koento Wibisono Siswomihardjo, *Arti Perkembangan Menurut Filsafat Positivisme Auguste Comte* (Gadjah Mada University Press, 1983).

⁷ Mike Gane, *Auguste Comte*, 1st ed., Key Sociologists (Routledge, 2006).

called sociology: the science of society constructed based on scientific laws.⁸ Comte's positivism subsequently became the dominant paradigm for understanding social reality and education in the modern era. However, the application of positivist principles in the humanities and education gave rise to new problems: the reduction of human complexity to mere empirical objects, and the exclusion of spiritual and transcendental aspects in the search for truth.⁹

In the context of Islamic education, this positivist legacy poses a specific epistemological challenge. Islamic education, rooted in the values of revelation, morality, and tawhid (monotheism), views knowledge as a means of recognizing God and forming a complete human being (*insan kâmil*). Therefore, the positivist paradigm that negates the role of revelation and divine values has the potential to create a dichotomy between science and faith, between rational knowledge and spiritual truth.¹⁰ This underscores the importance of a philosophical effort to re-examine the relevance and problems of Auguste Comte's positivist thought in the context of Islamic education—not to reject it entirely, but to understand its epistemological limits and formulate an integrative paradigm aligned with the vision of tawhid in Islam.¹¹

The journey of modern science has never actually been value-free; it grew from the womb of a philosophy carrying a specific ideology. When Auguste Comte conceived positivism in the 19th century, he was not merely introducing a new method for understanding reality, but implanting a new paradigm about the nature of truth itself. Comte asserted that valid knowledge is only that which stems from empirical experience and can be rationally verified. Behind the claim of scientific objectivity and neutrality, positivism harbored a civilizational mission: to liberate humanity from the “myth” of metaphysics and replace it with a new religion called scientific rationality.

It is this paradigm which, often unconsciously, became the foundation of the modern education system. Schools and universities were designed to resemble social laboratories producing functional human beings—measurable, efficient, and logical—yet often lacking moral depth and spiritual awareness. In the context of Islamic education, this positivist legacy presents an epistemological paradox. On one hand, Muslims utilize modern science and technology as means of progress; on the other hand, Islamic education loses its soul when adopting a way of thinking that negates revelation as a source of knowledge.¹²

⁸ Jonathan H. Turner, “The Origins of Positivism: The Contribution of Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer,” in *Handbook of Social Theory* (SAGE Publication, 2001).

⁹ Andrew Wernick, *The Anthem Companion to Auguste Comte* (Anthem Press, 2017).

¹⁰ Jiyanto Jiyanto and Desti Widiani, “Auguste Comte’s Positivism and Its Relevance to Islamic Education in Higher Education,” *At-Tajdid: Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah* 14, no. 1 (2025): 73–83.

¹¹ Lalu Muhammad Syamsul Arifin, “Filsafat Positivisme Auguste Comte dan Relevansinya dengan Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman,” *Interaktif: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Sosial* 12, no. 2 (2020): 55–72.

¹² Yaskur Agil Muzaki et al., “Analysis of Auguste Comte’s Ideology: Positivism and Implementation of Islamic Education,” *Suluah Pasaman* 1, no. 2 (2023): 33–41, <https://doi.org/10.70588/suluahpasaman.v1i2.133>.

This reality gives rise to the urgency of this research. The study of Auguste Comte's positivist thought in the context of Islamic education is not a nostalgia for classical philosophy, but an effort to re-read the epistemological roots of the modern education crisis.¹³ This crisis is visible not only in the weak morality of students but also in the loss of meaning orientation in the educational process itself. In classrooms, knowledge is often taught as information, not as wisdom; truth is measured by data, not by value.

Several Muslim thinkers such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Naquib al-Attas, and Kuntowijoyo have offered critiques of the hegemony of positivism in science. Nasr asserts that modernity has shifted the position of humans from spiritual beings to mere rational-empirical entities;¹⁴ al-Attas proposes the idea of Islamization of knowledge to restore knowledge to its purity;¹⁵ while Kuntowijoyo introduces prophetic social science as a bridge between science and prophetic values.¹⁶ However, most of these studies speak more about the impact of or response to modern science, rather than the epistemological structure underlying it.

Recent studies show an increasing trend of criticism toward the dominance of positivism in Islamic education. As seen in the research by Supratama et al. (2024), they highlight how the empirical-positivist model influences the orientation of Islamic higher education curricula. Research by Muzaki et al. (2023) shows that positivism tends to reduce the spiritual dimension in modern educational practice. Meanwhile, Anuhgra's research (2024) examines how the concept of "value-free science" in positivism is not aligned with the Islamic epistemological view that makes revelation a source of value.

This research seeks to analyze the positivist paradigm itself, namely to trace how Comte constructed a system of thought that made empiricism the "god of epistemology" and removed revelation from the cognitive domain of humans. Through a qualitative research method based on literature review, this research not only provides a conceptual critique of positivism but also traces how this paradigm flows into the education system, shaping the way teachers teach, the way students think, and even the way society judges truth.

The novelty of this research lies in its effort to build a bridge between Western philosophical critique and the reconstruction of Islamic epistemology. Instead of merely rejecting positivism, this research offers tawhidic post-positivism as an alternative paradigm in Islamic education. This model does not place revelation and reason in a dichotomy, but sees them as two sides of an integral system of knowledge. Revelation becomes the source of value and direction, while reason and empirical experience become instruments for understanding and managing reality. Thus, Islamic education is

¹³ Riky Supratama et al., "The Theory of Positivism in Islamic Education, Curriculum and Learning Strategies," *International Journal of Post Axial: Futuristic Teaching and Learning* 2, no. 1 (2024): 9–17.

¹⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Tasawuf Dulu Dan Sekarang* (Pustaka Firdaus, 1991).

¹⁵ Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education* (Mizan, 2004).

¹⁶ Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam Interpretasi Untuk Aksi* (Mizan, 1991).

no longer merely reactive to modern science but becomes proactive in building a transcendental and contributory epistemology.

In the context of contemporary Islamic education, the proposal of this research remains relevant. When the world of education is trapped in instrumental rationality—pursuing accreditation, efficiency, and productivity—Islamic education needs to reaffirm its identity: that the ultimate goal of education is not only knowing and doing, but also being. Humans are not only thinking beings, but also beings seeking meaning. Within this framework, research on Comte's positivism becomes a critical reflection to reorient Islamic education so that it does not merely adopt Western methods, but instills a vision of tawhid in the entire scientific process.

Thus, this research does not exist in a vacuum. It is born from the awareness that behind the advancement of modern science, there is a gaping chasm: the loss of spiritual meaning in the search for truth. Investigating positivism means tracing the root of that loss, while placing it in the context of Islamic education means striving to rediscover the balance between reason, revelation, and experience. This is the novelty of this study, an effort not only to critique the West but also to build an epistemological synthesis that revives the spirit of Islamic education as a process of seeking holistic truth, both scientific and divine.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative, using a philosophical-historical approach, as its object of study is the thought of Auguste Comte and the philosophical edifice of positivism underlying it. In this context, the research is library research, meaning all data and analytical materials are obtained through a literature review of Comte's original works as well as secondary literature interpreting and critiquing them.¹⁷ The philosophical-historical approach was chosen because Comte's thought is not merely a result of rational speculation but also a product of the social, political, and intellectual situation of 19th-century Europe.¹⁸ Thus, analysis of positivism cannot be separated from the context of the era when science and modern society were striving to free themselves from the dominance of metaphysics and theology.

Theoretically, this research seeks to explore the conceptual structure of positivism by examining three main aspects of the philosophy of science: ontological, epistemological, and axiological dimensions. At the ontological level, this research questions how Comte viewed reality and the limits of human knowledge. At the epistemological aspect, the focus is directed at the scientific method and the verification principle used by Comte as the standard for truthful knowledge. Meanwhile, at the axiological dimension, analysis is directed toward understanding how scientific knowledge, in Comte's view, must function socially, to build order and progress for

¹⁷ Evanirosa, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan (Library Research)* (Media Sains Indonesia, 2020).

¹⁸ Miza Nina Adlini et al., "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2022): 974–80, <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3394>.

humanity. Thus, the theoretical work of this research is analytical-reflective, dissecting the basic concepts of positivism and assessing their coherence within the structure of modern philosophical thought.¹⁹

However, this research does not stop at the theoretical level alone. It also incorporates a praxis-interpretative dimension, the effort to connect Comte's conceptual edifice with the empirical and historical realities that gave birth to it, as well as with its implications for the development of contemporary science. This praxis-based work requires a hermeneutic reading of text and context. How did the idea of positivism grow from a crisis of speculative philosophy, how did it shape the pattern of modern scientific thought, and to what extent did its empirical spirit influence the Western worldview toward science and reality. In this stage, positivism is treated not only as a system of ideas but also as a mode of thinking that influences the orientation of modern humans toward knowledge.

The primary data sources in this research consist of Auguste Comte's original works, such as *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830–1842), *Discours sur l'Esprit Positif* (1844), and *Système de Politique Positive* (1851–1854). These works serve as the foundation for understanding the internal logic of positivism, especially regarding the “Law of Three Stages”, the classification of sciences, and ideas about social reconstruction through science. Secondary sources used include books, scholarly articles, and results of studies in the philosophy of science that examine and critique Comte's thought. These sources function as contextualization and comparison materials that help broaden the horizon of meaning.

In the data collection process, this research undertakes stages of documentation and textual interpretation. Every relevant document and text is analyzed by considering its conceptual structure, historical background, and philosophical relevance. Analysis is conducted using philosophical hermeneutics, which combines understanding of the text with interpretation of the meaning behind the text.²⁰ This method allows the researcher not only to explain *what* Comte said, but also *why* and *for what purpose* he said it. Through a hermeneutic approach, positivism is read not as a closed intellectual dogma, but as a process of searching for new rationality in the history of human thought.²¹

In its analysis process, this research follows three steps of research work. *First*, contextual description, the stage of mapping Comte's intellectual biography, the socio-philosophical context of 19th-century Europe, and the key tenets of positivism as contained in his original works. *Second*, critical analysis, namely testing the consistency and logical implications of positivist teachings, especially regarding its rejection of metaphysics and its emphasis on scientific empiricism. This stage also involves comparison between the positivist paradigm and the integrative tradition of Islamic

¹⁹ Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2008).

²⁰ Sondra N Barringer et al., “A History of Causal Analysis in the Social Sciences,” in *Handbook of Causal Analysis for Social Research* (Springer, 2013).

²¹ Hana Sjafei, “Metode Penelitian Studi Literatur, Apa Itu?,” in *Kompas*, 2022.

epistemology to highlight the limitations of Comte's empirical reductionism. *Third*, reflective synthesis, the stage of reformulating the epistemological values of positivism within the horizon of contemporary philosophy of science, while weighing the potential and problems caused by the dominance of a positivist scientific paradigm on modern human life.²²

With this theoretical and praxis-based discursive practice, the research aims not only to understand positivism as a system of thought but also to uncover its operative power in shaping the orientation of modern science and culture. This research moves from text to context, from idea to reality, and from reflection to critique, to find a more holistic understanding of how Auguste Comte placed scientific knowledge as the foundation of human civilization while opening a space for reflection on the limits and direction of scientific development in the present era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Intellectual Biography of Auguste Comte and the Context of the Birth of Positivism

Auguste Comte (1798–1857) is an important figure in the history of modern philosophy and the founder of the positivist movement.²³ His educational background at the École Polytechnique Paris and his involvement in the political dynamics post-French Revolution shaped his thinking about the importance of science as a new moral force. The influence of Saint-Simon was very strong in the early phase of his thought, especially in the effort to see social development evolutionarily and scientifically.²⁴

The intellectual context of the 19th century was marked by advances in the natural sciences, a crisis of metaphysics, and demands for social reconstruction. This became fertile ground for the birth of positivism. Comte viewed that society needed a new knowledge system based on scientific laws to replace the authority of metaphysics and theology.²⁵

If traced back, the development of modern science began in the 17th century and peaked in the 18th century. This was marked by a radical change in the way humans understood reality. The dominance of the Newtonian physics model led to the universe being viewed as a mechanistic system subject to definite and measurable laws. Rationalism and empiricism as the two main pillars of modernity, in this regard, had shifted the position of speculative philosophy previously dominated by metaphysics and theology.²⁶

Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), one of the early modernist thinkers, asserted that Renaissance philosophy had destroyed the feudal system, the authority of

²² Klaus Krippendorff, *Analisis Isi: Pengantar Teori Dan Metodologi* (Rajawali Press, 2019).

²³ Turner, "The Origins of Positivism: The Contribution of Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer."

²⁴ Ritzer, *Teori Sosiologi Modern*.

²⁵ Siswomihardjo, *Arti Perkembangan Menurut Filsafat Positivisme Auguste Comte*.

²⁶ Sayeda Akhter and Md. Ashif Hasan Razu, "Ibn Khaldun and Auguste Comte: A Comparative Analysis of the Founding Figures of Sociology," *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies* 04, no. 08 (2024): 911–18, <https://doi.org/10.55677/ijssers/V04I8Y2024-10>.

the Church, and scholastic metaphysics. However, the collapse of the old order left a vacuum of meaning: humanity lost an integrative system capable of explaining the new reality of a scientific and industrial society. Saint-Simon attempted to reconstruct the history of human knowledge progressively, assuming that science develops progressively and linearly as in the natural sciences.²⁷

That reconstruction later found its systematic form in the thought of Isidore Auguste Marie François Xavier Comte (1798–1857)—a student and secretary of Saint-Simon—known as the father of sociology and founder of positivism. His academic experience at the École Polytechnique in Paris (1814) and his involvement in scientific discourse post-French Revolution shaped his vision of scientific knowledge as a new moral force replacing religion. His monumental work, *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830–1842), was a major effort to build a system of philosophy uniting all branches of science under one methodological principle: true knowledge is that which can be empirically proven.²⁸

The results of the analysis show that Comte's reconstruction of the development of human knowledge was based on a systematic historical reading of the social dynamics of 19th-century Europe. Through the “Law of Three Stages”—which will be explained in the next subsection—Comte sought to explain the pattern of development of human consciousness that is not only historical but also methodological. The findings of this research affirm that positivism was built not merely as a theory of knowledge, but as a social paradigm for creating a modern intellectual order.

Auguste Comte's Positivism and the Modern Science

As explained above, Saint-Simon attempted to build a historical reconstruction of the development of human knowledge through reflective stages, as seen in the development of the natural sciences, which is progressive, necessary, and linear. However, that reconstruction only found its systematic form in the philosophy of Auguste Comte (1798–1857). Through the “Law of Three Stages” which later became the foundation of positivism, Comte sought to explain the evolution of human consciousness from the theological, metaphysical, to the positive stage. Within this framework, human history is considered to move deterministically toward the peak of scientific rationality, where humans cease searching for essential (metaphysical) causes and begin tracing the empirical laws governing phenomena.²⁹

For Comte, the intellectual development of humans has a teleological direction toward the positive stage, where knowledge is only recognized as valid if obtained

²⁷ Mehmet Soyer, “Examining the Origins of Sociology: Continuities and Divergences between Ibn Khaldun, Giambattista Vico, August Comte, Ludwig Gumplowicz, and Emile Durkheim” (Tesis, University of North Texas, 2010).

²⁸ Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy*, 1858th ed. (Calvin Blanchard, 1858).

²⁹ Shermina Oruh and Andi Agustang, “The Three Stages Law of Auguste Comte and Its Contribution to the Study of Sociology,” *International Journal of Health, Economics, and Social Sciences (IJHESS)* 6, no. 1 (2024): 229–34, <https://doi.org/DOI:%252010.56338/ijhess.v6i1.4814>.

through observation, experimentation, and empirical verification. His philosophy rejects all forms of metaphysical or theological explanation that cannot be proven sensually. This is the location of Comte's epistemological revolution: he shifted the center of truth from the realm of revelation and metaphysical speculation toward empirical data and instrumental rationality. His famous principle is "*savoir pour prévoir, prévoir pour pouvoir*", meaning "to know in order to foresee, to foresee in order to control", which asserts that the purpose of science is the prediction and control of reality.³⁰

The key to Comte's philosophy lies in the "Law of Three Stages", namely: [1] The Theological Stage, characterized by the process of humans explaining phenomena based on the intervention of supernatural forces; [2] The Metaphysical Stage, characterized by the process of humans seeking abstract principles behind phenomena; and [3] The Positive (Scientific) Stage, where humans stop seeking ultimate causes and begin tracing the empirical laws governing reality. According to Comte, the intellectual development of humans moves deterministically from the theological stage to the positive stage. It is in this final stage that Comte claims scientific knowledge reaches its maturity. For, humans only acknowledge truth that can be verified through experience and reason.³¹ At this stage, Comte's positivism marks a radical shift in the development of human reason, namely from a theocentric ontology toward an anthropocentric epistemology.

As a logical consequence, Comte constructed a hierarchical classification of sciences, ranging from mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, to sociology which he called the science of human society. This sequence illustrates the complexity of the object and methodological maturity of each discipline. Sociology, according to Comte, must become a positive science of society aimed at explaining social order (social statics) and social change (social dynamics) based on testable laws.

However, Comte did not stop at the scientific dimension. Realizing the spiritual vacuum caused by the secularization of science, he introduced the idea of "Religion of Humanity". In this system, "humanity" replaces the position of God as the center of value and morality. Its basic principles are love (*amour*) as the principle, order (*ordre*) as the foundation, and progress (*progrès*) as the goal. In this system, morality no longer stems from divine revelation, but from rationalized social consensus. Although morally it appears noble, this religion of humanity harbors a paradox: in rejecting metaphysics, Comte actually built a "new metaphysics" that absolutizes humans and removes God as the macrocosm.³²

It is this Comtean positivism that later characterized the face of modern science, marked by its need to always be objective, empirical, measurable, and value-free. In the field of education, this paradigm gave rise to an educational model emphasizing the

³⁰ F. Budi Hardiman, *Melampauai Positivism Dan Modernitas* (Kanisius, 2015).

³¹ Comte, *The Positive Philosophy*.

³² Andrew Wernick, *Auguste Comte and the Religion of Humanity* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

quantification of learning outcomes, efficiency, and the reproduction of technical skills. Knowledge is considered scientific insofar as it can be empirically verified, while moral, spiritual, and transcendental dimensions are deemed irrational or unscientific. Consequently, education loses its ethical and cosmological orientation. Humans are educated to master nature, not to recognize the Creator.

Positivism and the Epistemological Crisis of Modern Education

The philosophy of positivism has a broad impact on the world of education. In this paradigm, scientific knowledge is considered neutral, value-free, and functions to explain and control reality. Modern education is then constructed to resemble a social laboratory that must be measurable, efficient, and based on empirical competencies. Learning success is measured through the quantification of results and objective indicators, while moral and spiritual dimensions are reduced to non-essential supplements.

As a consequence, education loses its ontological function as a means of forming a complete human being. Knowledge is reduced to verifiable information, not wisdom that leads to sagacity. In the Islamic context, this causes an epistemological crisis. Science and faith become separated, reason and revelation are pitted against each other, and the purpose of education is reduced to worldly utilitarianism.³³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr once said that scientific modernity has made humans alienated from the sacred dimension of their existence; humans are merely rational beings without metaphysical awareness. Similarly, Naquib al-Attas asserts that the root of the modern science crisis is the loss of *adab* (proper conduct) toward knowledge and God. Meanwhile, Kuntowijoyo emphasizes the need for "prophetic social science" as a scientific framework combining scientific objectivity with prophetic values. All these critiques, although differing in articulation, point to one conclusion: positivism fails to answer humanity's need for meaning and value.

Islam itself places knowledge as a divine gift originating from three interwoven paths: revelation, reason, and empirical experience. The unity of these three is grounded in a tawhidic worldview, that reality is not divided between the sacred and the profane, but is a manifestation of Allah's will. Therefore, knowledge in Islam aims not only to explain phenomena but also to uncover the meaning and wisdom behind them.³⁴ Within this framework, Comte's positivism is viewed as a form of epistemological reductionism. It cuts reality at the empirical dimension and negates the unseen (*ghaib*), whereas in the Islamic view, both are two sides of one ontological unity.

Therefore, Islamic education cannot simply adopt positivist methodology without undertaking epistemological reinterpretation. It needs to reaffirm the unity of knowledge sources and its transcendental orientation. Empirical science remains

³³ Imam B. Jauhari, *Teori Sosial, Proses Islamisasi Sistem Ilmu Pengetahuan* (Pustaka Pelajar, 2012).

³⁴ Nasr, *Tasawuf Dulu Dan Sekarang*; Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education*.

important but must be under the guidance of revelation and civilized reason. From this perspective, Islamic education needs to be repositioned toward a “tawhidic post-positivism” model, an epistemological model that accepts empirical methods without eliminating the spiritual dimension.

Critique of Positivism and the Repositioning of Islamic Education Epistemology

Islamic epistemology views knowledge as an emanation from Allah, not a product of autonomous human rationality. Knowledge originates from three interrelated entities: revelation, reason, and experience.³⁵ The unity of these three is rooted in a tawhidic cosmological view, meaning that all aspects of life, including science, revolve around the oneness of God. Therefore, Comte's positivism is criticized as a form of epistemological reductionism that negates divine knowledge sources. By rejecting metaphysics and placing empiricism as the sole measure of truth, positivism has severed knowledge from moral and spiritual values.³⁶ From an Islamic perspective, this is a crisis causing the secularization of science—the separation of fact from meaning, science from wisdom, knowledge from *adab* (proper conduct).³⁷

Islamic education needs to respond to the positivist legacy critically and creatively. Islam does not reject empiricism or rationalism but places them within a tawhidic framework, namely the unity of reason, revelation, and experience as sources of knowledge.³⁸ In Islamic epistemology, science is not merely the result of observation but also a search for meaning oriented toward the recognition of Allah SWT. This repositioning necessitates the emergence of a “tawhidic post-positivism” model. This paradigm does not negate the scientific method but rejects the epistemological reduction that separates science from transcendental values. In the tawhidic post-positivism model, empirical knowledge is retained as a means but is given moral direction and divine purpose. Thus, education is oriented not only toward *knowing* and *doing*, but also *being*. All three will direct toward the formation of a complete human being (*insan kamil*) who is faithful, knowledgeable, and virtuous.³⁹

At the practical level, the tawhidic post-positivist paradigm can be applied through curriculum integration uniting science and religion, reflective learning that fosters spiritual awareness, and educational evaluation that measures not only competencies but also character and piety. The ultimate goal is to produce humans who are both rational and transcendental, scientific yet civilized, and ultimately become humans capable of making knowledge a path to servitude.

³⁵ Yudha Okta Anuhgra, “Auguste Comte’s Positivism: The Idea of Value-Free Science in Positivism According to the Islamic View and It’s Implications for Islamic Education,” *Kanz Philosophia: A Journal for Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism* 10, no. 2 (2024): 297–312, <https://doi.org/10.20871/kpjipm.v10i2.349>.

³⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford University Press, 1990).

³⁷ Haedar Nashir, *Agama Dan Krisis Kemanusiaan Modern* (Pustaka Pelajar, 1997).

³⁸ Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi Dan Modernisasi Di Tengah Tantangan Milenium III* (Prenada Media, 2019).

³⁹ Abuddin Nata, “Peran Transformatif Perguruan Tinggi Islam Bagi Kemajuan Ilmu, Kebudayaan Dan Peradaban Di Indonesia,” *Ta’dibuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 1 (2023): 84–104.

Thus, Auguste Comte's thought on positivism is not merely an object of critique but also a material for reflection to rebuild a more integral epistemological foundation for Islamic education. Positivism offers an important lesson about the importance of rationality and observation, yet without spirituality, science loses its orientation. It is here that Islam offers a creative synthesis, a science that is empirical yet divine, methodological yet meaningful. This creative synthesis between empiricism and spirituality is the path toward a holistic paradigm for Islamic education.

CONCLUSION

Auguste Comte's positivist thought is a significant milestone in the history of the development of modern Western philosophy. It emerged as a response to the intellectual exhaustion caused by metaphysical speculation and theological dogmatism of the Middle Ages. By proposing the principle that only knowledge derived from empirical facts can be recognized as true, Auguste Comte sought to reorganize the epistemological foundation of humanity within a scientific framework he called the "Law of Three Stages". The "Law of Three Stages" as a depiction of the journey of human reason starting from the theological, metaphysical, and positive phases, not only explains the evolution of knowledge but also builds the belief that scientific rationality is the pinnacle of human consciousness development. Thus, positivism is not only a theory of knowledge but also an ideology of progress that places science as the central orientation for the social and moral life of modern humans.

However, the triumph of positivism brings philosophical consequences that are not simple. On one hand, it successfully solidified the methodological basis for modern science through empirical verification and scientific objectivity. But on the other hand, positivism also caused epistemological reductionism. It tightly closed off non-empirical dimensions, such as values, revelation, and transcendental consciousness, from being acknowledged as sources of knowledge. It is at this point that epistemological critique from the Islamic scholarly tradition finds its relevance. Islam views science as a cosmological unity (tawhid), the unity of reason, revelation, and experience, so that science does not stop at empirical facts but also unveils the meaning and value underlying the existence of reality. Therefore, the Comtean positivist paradigm cannot be adopted outright within the framework of Islamic education without undergoing a process of epistemological reorientation.

This research shows that the relevance of positivism for Islamic education lies not in its empirical doctrine, but in its awareness of the importance of systematic effort, rationality, and order in scientific thinking. These values can become the foundation for strengthening the Islamic scholarly tradition based on principles of methodological openness and moral responsibility. However, Islamic education needs to transcend the positivist horizon by integrating spiritual and ethical dimensions into every process of seeking knowledge. In other words, what is needed is not a rejection of positivism, but an epistemological transformation toward a tawhidic post-positivist model, where

empiricism and scientific rationality intertwine with the values of revelation and divine consciousness.

In the contemporary context, amidst the increasingly pragmatic and instrumental flow of knowledge globalization, reflection on Comte's positivism reminds us that the crisis of modern science lies not in a lack of data or method, but in the loss of meaning and moral direction. Knowledge uprooted from values can easily become a destructive force, while knowledge rooted in the unity of reason and revelation guides toward benefit (*maslahah*). Therefore, Islamic education needs to develop an integrative scientific paradigm, where empiricism does not erase spirituality, and rationality does not negate faith. Thus, the philosophical legacy of Auguste Comte should be read dialectically, not as a closed system negating the transcendent, but as a mirror for modern human consciousness about the need to reorganize the relationship between science, value, and faith. Positivism offers an important lesson that knowledge without values will lose direction, while faith without rationality will lose transformative power. At the point of balance between the two, Islamic education finds its philosophical footing, namely building knowledge that is not only logically true but also existentially and transcendently meaningful.

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