

Law of Three Stages (YouTube Link- Law of Three Stages By Auguste Comte)

“Auguste Comte” philosophy is based on the concept of positivism. By, “Positivism” he meant that, obtaining knowledge by means of, scientific method. According to Comte; the knowledge, which is obtained using, experimental methods and observation is the only authentic and valid knowledge. The notion, “law of three stages” was discussed in his book “Positive philosophy”, which imply that, society, individual mind, world history and each science had passed through the following progressive law of three stages, which are, as follow, Theological stage, metaphysical stage and Positive stage. As the stages progresses, role of religion diminishes, whereas, positive or scientific role take over in explaining social phenomenon and events.

Theological or Fictitious Stage

This is very old and most primitive stage, of interpreting science and any social phenomenon. In primitive societies individuals believed that, each social phenomenon and events are considered to be the will of God. Human beings are infused with emotions, sentiments and feeling which lead them to believe that, behind occurrence of every event there is supernatural power. Moreover, theological stage is further divided into three stages i.e. fetishism, polytheism and monotheism.

- **Fetishism:** the primary stage of theology is fetishism. In this stage people believed that, spirits are embodied by nature like, trees, stones and wood, which is known as animism. People used to preach them and explain and interpret everything according to their religious belief.
- **Polytheism:** in this stage primitive people believe in multiple God. They believed that, natural forces are controlled by multiple Gods. For example, God of rain, God of fire, God of air etc.
- **Monotheism:** in this stage people believe in one God and believed to be the creator of world and supreme power. Nothing can happen in this world without the will of God.

Individuals in theological stage believe that, all the natural and social events are the work of supreme and supernatural power.

Metaphysical or Abstract Stage

People in metaphysical stage believe in God, however, they do not explain, everything which happens in the society is due to the will of God. However, most of the problems take place due to the inadequacy of humans. To make sense of the world; religious and scientific view co-exists in metaphysical stage. This stage is also called, “transitional stage” because it progresses from absolute imagination to rationality. For example, if someone is sick, they may associate sickness with germs which is rational however, they might use the spiritual ritual to cure the disease. Social phenomena in metaphysical stage are explained through amalgamation of religious belief and rationality.

Positive or Scientific Stage

Each social phenomena in this stage are explained by, the scientific findings and empirical research. For example, if someone is sick it is not interpreted and explained, as the will of God or caused due to some supernatural power of the result of wrong doing of individual which make the God angry and unleashed his wrath upon him in the form of sickness. It is explained by the people rationally and scientifically that, the illness is caused by germs. According to Comte, positivism is absolutely intellectual way, to determine social phenomena, there is no place for supernatural power in it. In this stage religion became less predominant and scientific methods become more predominant in obtaining knowledge.

Law of Three Stages (by Auguste Comte) (Easily Explained)

Auguste Comte, the founder of positivism, believed that human knowledge develops in **three stages**. According to him, real knowledge comes only from **scientific observation and experiments**, not from beliefs or imagination.

The three stages are:

1. **Theological or Fictitious Stage**
2. **Metaphysical or Abstract Stage**
3. **Positive or Scientific Stage**

As society moves through these stages, **religious explanations decrease** and **scientific reasoning increases**.

1. Theological or Fictitious Stage

- This is the **earliest and most primitive stage**.
- People explained everything through **religion or God's will**.
- They believed that **supernatural powers** caused all natural and social events.

This stage has **three sub-stages**:

1. **Fetishism** – People believed that **spirits lived in objects of nature** like trees, stones, or water. (Animism)
2. **Polytheism** – People believed in **many gods**, each controlling natural forces like rain, fire, or wind.
3. **Monotheism** – People began believing in **one God**, the creator of everything, and thought that nothing happens without His will.

👉 In short: People saw **God or spirits** as the reason behind everything.

2. Metaphysical or Abstract Stage

- This stage is a **transition** between religion and science.
- People still believed in God but began to **use reason and logic**.
- They thought events happened not only by God's will but also because of **human or natural causes**.

Example:

If someone got sick, people might say "**It's God's will**", but they also started thinking "**maybe it's due to germs or imbalance in the body**."

👉 In short: People started to **mix religion with logic and rational thinking**.

3. Positive or Scientific Stage

- This is the **final and most advanced stage**.
- People explain everything using **science, facts, and experiments**, not religion.
- Supernatural explanations disappear, and people rely on **observation, testing, and reasoning**.

Example:

If someone is sick, it's explained scientifically — **caused by germs or viruses**, not by God's anger.

👉 In short: People fully depend on **science and evidence** to explain everything.