Development of Sociology and contemporary theoretical perspectives

- Sociological ideas and perspectives developed in Europe during the 19th Century
- Scientific revolution, Enlightenment, Industrialization, and Urbanization
- Sociological and Age of Enlightenment
  - Intellectual Revolution
  - Emphasis placed on critical thinking
  - People became skeptical of the use of religion as source of knowledge
  - People opposed traditional authority
  - Human rights, democracy, liberty, equality
- Sociology and the Industrial Revolution
  - Change from dependence on agriculture to focus on manufacturing
  - Urbanization refers to the process in which more individuals live in urban areas than in rural settings
- Urbanization
  - Industrialization contributed to the growth of cities because individuals moved to cities in search of work in factories
  - Population explosion in cities led to social ills
- Auguste Comte (1798-1857)
  - Invented the word sociology
  - Believed that the scientific method could be applied to the study of human behavior and society based on scientific evidence
  - Believed that sociology should contribute to the welfare of humanity
  - 3 stages of societal evolution
    • Theological stage (very simple societies)- religion: dominating social force
    • Metaphysical stage (rise of great civilization)- philosophy: dominating social force
    • Positive stage (modern societies)- positivism: dominating social force
- Herbert Spencer (1820-1903)
  - British social philosopher
  - Social Darwinism
    • Government should not interfere with individual lives or operation of organizations
    • This will allow “fittest” to survive and “unfit” to die off
- Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)
  - Society should be the unit of analysis, not the individual
  - Society and social conditions it generated shapes individuals and determine (to some extent) the way they think, feel, and act
  - Sociology should be seen as the scientific study of social facts.
    • Social facts represent things or events external to the individual (culture) that have power to shape behavior