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A BOOK FOR THE TIMES:
To exterminate Political Vermin and Moral Quacks.

SOCIAL PHYSICS.

FROM THE

POSITIVE PHILOSOPHY

OF

L. MONTAGNA [Ed.]

AUGUSTE COMTE:

Crown

“Comte fully sees the cause of our intellectual anarchy, and also sees the cure. — LEWIS'S Biog. Hist. of Philosophy.

“By including social science in the scientific hierarchy, the positive spirit admits to success in this study only well-prepared and disciplined minds, so trained in the preceding departments of knowledge as to be fit for the complex problems of the last. The long and difficult preliminary elaboration must disgust and deter vulgar and ill-prepared minds, and subdue the most rebellious. This consideration, if there were no other, would prove the eminently organic tendency of the new political philosophy.—Positive Philosophy p. 434.



NEW YORK:
PUBLISHED BY CALVIN BLANCHARD,
76 NASSAU STREET.

1856.

Price 25 Cents.

HM
C.65

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SOCIAL PHYSICS.

CHAPTER I.

NECESSITY AND OPPORTUNENESS OF THIS NEW SCIENCE.

In the five first books of the Positive Philosophy, our investigation proceeded on an ascertained and undisputed scientific basis; and our business was to exhibit the progress made in each science; to free it from entanglement with the ancient philosophy; and to show what further improvements might be anticipated. Our task is a different, and a much harder one, in the case of the sixth and last science that I am about to treat of. The theories of Social science are still, even in the minds of the best thinkers, completely implicated with the theologico-metaphysical philosophy; and are even supposed to be, by a fatal separation from all other science, condemned to remain so involved for ever. The philosophical procedure which I have undertaken to carry through becomes more difficult and bold, from this point onward, without at all changing its nature or object; and it must so far present a new character as it must henceforth be employed in creating a wholly new order of scientific conceptions, instead of judging, arranging, and improving such as already existed.

It is not to be expected that this new science can be at once raised to a level with even the most imperfect of those which we have been reviewing. All that can be rationally proposed in our day is to recognise the character of positivity in social as in all other science, and to ascertain the chief bases on which it is founded; but this is enough, as I hope to show, to satisfy our most urgent intellectual necessities, and even the most imperative needs of immediate social practice. In its scientific connection with the rest of this work, all that I can hope to do is to exhibit the general considerations of the case, so as to resolve the intellectual anarchy which is the main source of our moral anarchy first, and then of the political, which I shall treat of only through its originating causes. Proposal of the subject. The extreme novelty of such a doctrine and method renders it necessary, before entering upon the

immediate subject to set forth the importance of such a procedure, and the futility of the chief attempts which have been indirectly made to investigate social science. However unquestionable may be the need of such science, and the obligation to discover it, the best minds have not yet attained a point of view from which they can estimate its depth and breadth and true position. In its nascent state every science is implicated with its corresponding art; and remains implicated with it, as we have seen, the longer in proportion to the complexity of the phenomena concerned. If biological science which is more advanced than social, is still too closely connected with the medical art, as we have seen that it is, we can not be surprised that men are insensible to the value of all social speculations which are not immediately connected with practical affairs. We can not be surprised at any obstinacy in repelling them, as long as it is supposed that by rejecting them, society is preserved from chimerical and mischievous schemes: though experience has abundantly shown that the precaution has never availed, and that it does not now prevent our being daily invaded by the most illusory proposals on social matters. It is in deference, as much as is reasonable, to this apprehension that I propose to state, first, how the institution of a science of Social Physics bears upon the principal needs and grievances of society, in its present deplorable state of anarchy. Such a representation may perhaps convince men worthy of the name of statesmen that there is a real and eminent utility in labors of this kind, worthy of the anxious attention of men who profess to devote themselves to the task of resolving the alarming revolutionary constitution of modern societies.

From the point of view to which we have been raised by our study of the preceding sciences, we are able to survey the social situation of our own time in its fullest extent and broadest light; and what we see is that there is a deep and widely-spread anarchy of the whole intellectual system, which has been in this state of disturbance during the long interregnum, resulting from the decline of the theologico-metaphysical philosophy. At the present time, the old philosophy is in a state of imbecility; while the development of the positive philosophy, though always proceeding, has not yet been bold, broad, and general enough to comprehend the mental government of the human race. We must go back through that interregnum to understand truly the present floating and contradictory state of all great social ideas, and to perceive how society is to be delivered from the peril of dissolution, and brought under a new organization, more consistent and more progressive than that which once rested on the theological philosophy. When we have duly observed the powerlessness of conflicting political schools, we shall see the necessity of introducing an entirely new spirit into the organization of society, by which these useless and passionate struggles may be put an end to, and society led out of the revolutionary state in which it has been tossed about for three centuries past.

The ancients used to suppose Order and Progress to be irreconcilable: but both are indispensable conditions in a state of modern civilization; and their combination is at once the grand difficulty and the main resource of every genuine political system. No real order can be established, and still less can it last, if it is not fully compatible with progress: and no great progress can be accomplished if it does not tend to the consolidation of order. Any conception which is so devoted to one of these needs as to prejudice the other, is sure of rejection, sooner or later, as mistaking the nature of the political problem. Therefore, in positive social science, the chief feature must be the union of these two conditions, which will be two aspects, constant and inseparable, of the same principle. Throughout the whole range of science, thus far, we have seen that the conditions of combination and of progress are originally identical: and I trust we shall see, after looking into social science in the same way, that ideas of Order and Progress are in Social Physics, as rigorously inseparable as the ideas of Organization and Life in Biology; from whence indeed they are, in a scientific view, evidently derived.

The misfortune of our actual state is that the two ideas are set up in radical opposition to each other—the retrograde spirit having directed all efforts in favor of Order, and anarchical doctrine having arrogated to itself the charge of Social Progress; and, in this state of things, the reproaches exchanged between the respective parties are only too well merited by both. In this vicious circle is society now confined; and the only issue from it is by the undisputed preponderance of a doctrine equally progressive and hierarchical. The observations which I have to make on this subject are applicable to all European societies, which have, in fact, all undergone a common disorganization, though in different degrees, and with various modifications, and which can not be separately reorganized, however they may be for a time restrained; but I shall keep the French nation chiefly in view, not only because the revolutionary state has been most conspicuous in them, but because they are, in all important respects, better prepared, in spite of appearances, than any other, for a true reorganization.

Among the infinite variety of political ideas which appear to be striving in society, there are in fact only two orders, the mingling of which in various proportions occasions the apparent multiplicity: and of these two, the one is really only the negation of the other. If we wish to understand our own condition, we must look at it as the result and last term of the general conflict undertaken, for three centuries past, for the gradual demolition of the old political system. So regarding it, we see that whereas, for above half a century, the irremediable decay of the old system has proved the necessity of founding a new one, we have not been sufficiently aware of the need to have formed an original and direct conception, adequate to the purpose; so that our theoretical ideas have remained inferior to our practical necessities, which, in a healthy state of the

social organism, they habitually anticipate, to prepare for their regular and peaceable satisfaction. Though the political movement could not but have changed its nature, from that time forward, becoming organic instead of critical, yet, for want of a basis in science, it has proceeded on the same old ideas that had actuated the past struggle; and we have witnessed the spectacle of defenders and assailants alike endeavoring to convert their old weapons of war into instruments of reorganization, without suspecting the inevitable failure which must ensue to both parties. Such is the state that we find ourselves in now. All ideas of order in the political world are derived from the old doctrine of the theological and military system, regarded especially in its catholic and feudal constitution: a doctrine which from our point of view in this work, represents the theological state of social science: and, in the same way, all ideas of progress are still derived from the purely negative philosophy which, issuing from protestantism, assumed its final form and development in the last century, and which, applied to social affairs, constitutes the metaphysical state of politics. The different classes of society range themselves on the one side or the other, according to their inclination for conservatism or amelioration. With every new uprising of a social difficulty, we see the retrograde school proposing, as the only certain and universal remedy, the restoration of the corresponding part of the old political system; and the critical school referring the evil exclusively to the destruction of the old system not being complete. We do not often see the two doctrines presented without modification. They so exist only in purely speculative minds. But when we see them in monstrous alliance, as we do in all degrees of political opinion, we can not but know that such an alliance can not yield any virtue which its elements do not contain, and that it can only exhibit their mutual neutralization. We must here, it is clear, regard the theological and the metaphysical politics separately, in the first place, that we may afterward understand their present antagonism, and form an estimate of the futile combinations into which men have endeavored to force them.

The theological
polity.

Pernicious as the theological polity may be in our day, no true philosopher will ever forget that it afforded the beneficent guardianship under which the formation and earliest development of modern societies took place. But it is equally incontestable that, for three centuries past, its influence among the most advanced nations, has been essentially retrograde, notwithstanding some partial services. We need not go into any discussion of its doctrine, in order to ascertain its powerlessness for future service: for it is plain that a polity that could not hold its ground before the natural progress of intelligence and of society can never again serve as a basis of social order. The historical analysis which I shall have to offer of the causes that have dissolved the Catholic and feudal system will show, better than any argument, how radical and irretrievable is the decay. The theological school ex

plains the fact, as far as it can, by fortuitous and, we might almost say, personal causes: and when they will no longer suffice, resorts to its common supposition, of a mysterious caprice of Providence which has allotted to social order a season of probation, of which no account can be given, either as to its date or its duration, or even its character. A contemplation of historical facts however shows that all the great successive modifications of the theological and military system have, from the beginning and increasingly, tended to the complete elimination of a *régime* which, by the fundamental law of social evolution, could never be more than provisional, however indispensable. And if any efforts to restore the system could achieve a temporary success, they would not bring back society to a normal state, but would merely restore the very situation which compelled the revolutionary crisis, by obliging it to set about the work of destruction again, with more violence, because, the *régime* has altogether ceased to be compatible with progress in the most essential respects. While avoiding all controversy on so plain a case, I must briefly present a new view which appears to me to point out the simplest and surest criterion of the value of any social doctrine, and which emphatically condemns the theological polity.

Regarded from the logical point of view, the problem of our social reorganization seems to me reducible to this one condition: to construct rationally a political doctrine which, in the whole of its active development, shall be always fully consequent on its own principles. No existing doctrines approach to a fulfilment of this condition: all contain, as indispensable elements, numerous and direct contradictions on the greater number of important points. It may be laid down as a principle that the doctrine which furnishes accordant solutions on the various leading questions of polity, without failing in this one respect in the course of application, must, by this indirect test alone, be recognised as sufficiently adapted to reorganize society; since this intellectual reorganization must mainly consist in re-establishing harmony in the troubled system of our social ideas. When such a regeneration shall have been accomplished in an individual mind (and in that way it must begin), its generalization, sooner or later, is secure; for the number of minds can not increase the difficulty of the intellectual convergence, but only defer the success. We shall hereafter find how great is the superiority of the positive philosophy in this view; because, once extended to social phenomena, it must connect the different orders of human ideas more completely than could be done in any other way.

The accomplishment of this great logical condition might be expected from the theological polity above all others, because its doctrine is limited to co-ordinating a system so clearly defined by its long application, and so fully developed in all its essential parts, that it may well be supposed secure from all serious inconsistency. The retrograde school accordingly extols habitually, as its characteristic attribute, the perfect coherence of

Criterion of social doctrine.

Failure of the theological polity.

its ideas, in contrast with the contradictions of the revolutionary school. Yet, though the theological polity is less inconsistent than the metaphysical, it shows a daily increasing tendency to concessions of the most radical importance, directly contrary to all its essential principles. This is evidence enough of the futility of a doctrine which does not even possess the one quality most spontaneously correspondent to its nature. The old political system is seen to be destroyed as soon as its most devoted adherents have lost the true general sentiment of it: and this may now be observed, not only in active practice, but among purely speculative minds of a high order, which are unconsciously modified by the irresistible influences of their age. If examples are desired, we need only bring the retrograde doctrine into comparison with the elements of modern civilization. There can be no doubt that the development of the sciences, of industry, and even of the fine arts, was historically the principal, though latent cause, in the first instance, of the irretrievable decline of the theological and military system. At present, it is the ascendancy of the scientific spirit which preserves us from any real restoration of the theological spirit; as, again, the industrial spirit, in its perpetual extension, constitutes our best safeguard against any serious recurrence of the military or feudal spirit. Whatever may be the names given to our political struggles, this is the real character of our social antagonism. Now, amidst this state of things, do we hear of such a thing as any government, or even any school, seriously proposing a systematic repression of science, industry, and art? Do not all powers (with an eccentric exception here and there) claim the honor of encouraging their progress? Here we have the first inconsistency of the retrograde polity, annulling its own project of a restoration of the past: and though the inconsistency is less apparent than some others, it must be regarded as the most decisive of all, because it is more universal and more instinctive than any other. Napoleon Bonaparte himself, the hero of retrogression in our time, set himself up, in all sincerity, as the protector of industry, art, and science. Purely speculative minds, though more easily separating themselves from any prevalent tendency, have escaped no better from the influence of their times. How many have been the attempts, for instance, for two centuries past, on the part of some of the most eminent minds, to subordinate reason to faith, according to the theological formula; reason itself being made the supreme judge of such a submission, and thus evidencing the contradictory character of the proposition! The most eminent thinker of the Catholic school, the illustrious De Maistre, bore involuntary testimony to the necessity of his time when he endeavored, in his principal work, to re-establish the papal supremacy on historical and political reasonings, instead of ordaining it by divine right, which is the only ground appropriate to such a doctrine, and the only ground he would have proposed in any age but one in which the general state of intelligence precluded such a plea. Instances like these may spare us further illustration.

As for more direct inconsistencies, more striking, though less profound, and comprehended within the present times, we see in every sect of the retrograde school a direct opposition to some fundamental part of their common doctrine. Perhaps the only point on which there is now any unanimity in that school is in the consent to break up the very basis of the catholic and feudal system, by surrendering the division between the spiritual and temporal power; or, what comes to the same thing, acquiescing in the subordination of the spiritual to the temporal authority. In this respect, the kings are showing themselves as revolutionary as their peoples; and the priests have ratified their own degradation, in catholic countries no less than protestant. If their desire is to restore the old system, their first step must be to unite the innumerable sects which have sprung out of the decline of Christianity; but every attempt of the sort has failed through the blind and obstinate determination of the governments to retain the supreme direction of the theological power, the centralization of which they thus render impossible. Napoleon only showed an exaggerated copy, in his violent inconsistencies, of what many princes had done before him: and after his fall, when the sovereigns of Europe united to set up a power in opposition to revolutionary tendencies, they usurped the attributes of the old spiritual authority, and exhibited the spectacle of a high council composed of heretic chiefs, and governed by a schismatic prince. After this it was manifestly impossible to introduce the papal power into the alliance, in any way whatever. Such instances of the postponement of religious principles to temporal convenience are not new; but they show how the main idea of the old political system has ceased to preponderate in the minds of the very persons who undertook to restore it. The divisions in the retrograde school have been of late apparent under all circumstances, whether of success or defeat. Any temporary success ought to rally all dissentients, in a school which boasts of the unity of its doctrine: yet, through a long course of years we have witnessed successive, and more and more serious schisms among the subdivisions of the triumphant party. The advocates of catholicism and those of feudality have quarrelled: and the latter have split into partisans of aristocracy and defenders of royalty. Under the completest restored supremacy, the schisms would only break out again, with more violence, through the incompatibility of the existing social state with the old political system. The vague assent to its general principles which is yielded in a speculative sense, must give way in their application; and every practical development must engender further divisions: and this is the scientific description of any theory which is incompatible with the facts.

When the retrograde party is reduced to the rank of an opposition, it has recourse to the principles of the revolutionary doctrine. This has been the case repeatedly during the last three centuries, when that party has been put upon the defensive. Thus we see the Catholics in England, and yet more in Ireland, asserting the

claim of liberty of conscience, while still clamoring for the repression of Protestantism in France, Austria, and elsewhere. Again, when the sovereigns of Europe invoked the aid of the peoples to put down Napoleon, they surrendered their retrograde doctrine, and testified to the power of the critical, as that which was really influencing civilized society, even though they were proposing, all the while, to effect the restoration of the ancient polity. We have seen something even more wonderful since that struggle. We have seen the retrograde party taking possession of the whole body of critical doctrine, endeavoring to systematize it for its own uses, and sanctioning all its anarchical consequences; trying to set up the catholic and feudal *régime* by the very means which have destroyed it; and believing that a mere change in the person of the sovereign would intercept the consequences of a political movement which they had done nothing to modify.* This is simply a new way of signing a political abdication, however the ability of those who do it may be extolled.—We need not look further for illustrations of the pregnant fact that a polity which is the type of unity and permanence has been full of schisms, and now contains elements directly incompatible with its fundamental principles; and that, as when we find De Maistre reproaching Bossuet with mistaking the nature of catholicism, and then himself falling into inconsistencies, the party of Order is proposing to re-establish that which is not comprehended by its most illustrious defenders.

The Metaphysical polity.

Turning now to the Metaphysical polity, we must first observe and carefully remember that its doctrine, though exclusively critical, and therefore revolutionary, has still always had the virtue of being progressive, having, in fact, superintended the chief political progress accomplished during the last three centuries, which must be, in the first instance, essentially negative. What this doctrine had to do was to break up a system which, having directed the early growth of the human mind and society, tended to protract that infantile period: and thus, the political triumph of the metaphysical school was a necessary preparation for the advent of the positive school, for which the task is exclusively reserved of terminating the revolutionary period by the formation of a system uniting Order with progress. Though the metaphysical system, considered by itself, presents a character of direct anarchy, an historical view of it, such as we shall take hereafter, shows that, considered in its origin, and in its antagonism to the old system, it constitutes a necessary provisional state, and must be dangerously active till the new political organization which is to succeed it is ready to put an end to its agitations.

The passage from one social system to another can never be continuous and direct. There is always a transitional state of anarchy which lasts for some generations at least; and lasts the longer the more complete is the renovation to be wrought. The best political

* This was written during the reign of Louis Philippe, and the administration of M Guizot

progress that can be made during such a period is in gradually demolishing the former system, the foundations of which had been sapped before. While this inevitable process is going on, the elements of the new system are taking form as political institutions, and the reorganization is stimulated by the experience of the evils of anarchy. There is another reason why the constitution of the new system can not take place before the destruction of the old; that without that destruction no adequate conception could be formed of what must be done. Short as is our life, and feeble as is our reason, we can not emancipate ourselves from the influence of our environment. Even the wildest dreamers reflect in their dreams the contemporary social state: and much more impossible is it to form a conception of a true political system, radically different from that amidst which we live. The highest order of minds can not discern the characteristics of the coming period till they are close upon it; and before that, the incrustations of the old system will have been pretty much broken away, and the popular mind will have been used to the spectacle of its demolition. The strongest head of all antiquity is an example of this. Aristotle could not conceive of a state of society that was not founded on slavery, the irrevocable abolition of which took place some centuries after him.—These considerations are illustrative of our own times, for which all former transition periods were merely a preparation. Never before was the destined renovation so extensive and so thorough; and never before, therefore, was the critical preparatory period so protracted and so perilous. For the first time in the history of the world, the revolutionary action is attached to a complete doctrine of methodical negation of all regular government. Such being the origin of the existing critical doctrine, we can explain the services which that doctrine has hitherto rendered, and the obstacles which it now opposes to the reorganization of modern society. We shall see hereafter how each of its principal dogmas has sprung out of some corresponding decay in the old social order; a decay which then proceeded all the faster for the opposition having become a dogma. The misfortune of the case lies in the doctrine which was thus necessarily relative to the old system coming by degrees to be supposed absolute; but we may leave it to those who desire it to blame the political conduct of our fathers, without whose energetic perseverance we should not have found ourselves at our present stage of progress, or have been able to conceive of the better polity that is approaching. The absolute or metaphysical spirit was necessary to direct the formation of the critical and anti-theological doctrine, which needed all possible energy to overthrow the great ancient system; and this energy could no otherwise be imparted to the dogmas of the critical philosophy. The necessity and the fact of the case are obvious enough: but not the less must we deplore the consequence,—that the energy imparted to the anarchical principle has gone on to impede the institution of the very political order for which it came to

prepare the way. When, in the natural course of events, any doctrine has become hostile to the purposes it was destined to serve, it is evidently done with; and its end, or the close of its activity, is near. We have seen that the retrograde or theological polity has become as disturbing as the metaphysical or revolutionary: if we find also that the latter, whose office was to aid progress, has become obstructive, it is clear that both doctrines are worn out, and must soon be replaced by a new philosophy.—This condition of the metaphysical polity is a matter so serious that we must dwell upon it a little, to see how so provisional an influence can have produced the appearance of a new and stable system.

The spirit of revolutionary polity is to erect into a permanency the temporary action which it prompts. For instance, being in antagonism with ancient order, its tendency is to represent all government as being the enemy of society, and the duty of society to be to keep up a perpetual suspicion and vigilance, restricting the activity of government more and more, in order to guard against its encroachments, so as to reduce it at length to mere functions of police, in no way participating in the supreme direction of collective action and social development. This was the inevitable action by which the social evolution was brought about: and it is our misfortune that it now remains as an obstacle to the reorganization that we need. As the process could not but occupy several centuries, the power that wrought it must needs be invested with something definitive and absolute in the popular view, which can not look far beyond the present: and it was well that it was so; for the old system could not have been deprived of its directing powers, if they had not been stripped off from the governments, and assumed by the polity which had arisen to supersede them.

Regarding the doctrine in a more special view, it is clear that its most important principle is the right of free inquiry, or the dogma of unbounded liberty of conscience; involving the immediate consequences of the liberty of the press, or of any other mode of expression, and of communication of opinions. This is the rallying-point of the revolutionary doctrine, to which all orders of minds have come up,—the proud and the humble, the wise and the weak,—those whose other opinions were compatible with this dogma, and those who unconsciously held views of an opposite order. The impulse of this emancipation was irresistible; and the revolutionary contagion was, in this one respect, universal. It is a chief characteristic of the mind of society in this century. The most zealous partisans of the theological polity are as apt as their adversaries to judge by their personal knowledge; and those who, in their writings, set up as defenders of spiritual government, recognise, like the revolutionists whom they attack, no other supreme authority than that of their own reason. Now if we look at what is the real meaning of this dogma of the universal and absolute right of inquiry, we shall find that it is the mere abstract ex-

Becomes ob-
structive.

Dogma of liberty
of conscience.

pression (such as is common in metaphysics) of the temporary state of unbounded liberty in which the human mind was left by the decay of the theological philosophy, and which must last till the social advent of the positive philosophy. Such an embodiment of the fact of the absence of intellectual regulation powerfully concurred in expediting the dissolution of the old system. The formula could not but appear absolute at the time, because no one could foresee the scope of the transitional state which it marked; a state which is even now mistaken by many enlightened minds for a definitive one. Negative as we now see this dogma to be, signifying release from old authority while waiting for the necessity of positive science (a necessity which already puts liberty of conscience out of the question in astronomy and physics, etc.) the absolute character supposed to reside in it gave it energy to fulfil its revolutionary destination; enabled philosophers to explore the principles of a new organization; and, by admitting the right of all to a similar research, encouraged the discussion which must precede and effect the triumph of those principles. Whenever those principles shall have become established, the right of free inquiry will abide within its natural and permanent limits: that is, men will discuss, under appropriate intellectual conditions, the real connection of various consequences with fundamental rules uniformly respected. Till then, the opinions which will hereafter bring understandings into submission to an exact continuous discipline by embodying the principles of the new social order can appear only as simple individual thoughts, produced in virtue of the right of free inquiry; since their final supremacy can result in no other way than from the voluntary assent of numbers, after the freest discussion. I shall enter further into this subject hereafter: and what I have said will, I hope, prevent any one being shocked by my general appreciation of the revolutionary dogma of free inquiry, as it is plain that without it this book would never have been written.

Indispensable and salutary as it has been, this dogma can never be an organic principle: and, moreover, it constitutes an obstacle to reorganization, now that its activity is no longer absorbed by the demolition of the old political order. In any case, private or public, the state of inquiry can evidently be only provisional, indicating the condition of mind which precedes and prepares for a final decision, toward which our reason is always tending, even when it is renouncing old principles, in order to form new ones. It is taking the exception for the rule when we set up, as a natural and permanent state, the precarious situation which belongs to the period of transition; and we ignore the deepest necessities of human reason when we would protract that skepticism which is produced by the passage from one mode of belief to another, and which is, in our need of fixed points of conviction, a kind of morbid perturbation which can not be prolonged beyond the corresponding crisis without serious danger. To be always examining and never deciding would be regarded as something like madness in private

conduct: and no dogmatic consecration of such conduct in all individuals could constitute any perfection of social order, with regard to ideas which it is much more essential, and much more difficult to establish beyond the reach of dispute. There are very few persons who consider themselves fit to sit in judgment on the astronomical, physical, and chemical ideas which are destined to enter into social circulation; and everybody is willing that those ideas should direct corresponding operations; and here we see the beginnings of intellectual government. Can it be supposed that the most important and the most delicate conceptions, and those which by their complexity are accessible to only a small number of highly-prepared understandings, are to be abandoned to the arbitrary and variable decisions of the least competent minds? If such an anomaly could be imagined permanent, a dissolution of the social state must ensue, through the ever-growing divergence of individual understandings, delivered over to their disorderly natural impulses in the most vague and easily-perverted of all orders of ideas. The speculative inertia common to most minds, and perhaps, to a certain extent, the wise reserve of popular good sense, tend, no doubt, to restrict such political aberrations: but these are influences too feeble to root out the pretension of every man to set himself up as a sovereign arbiter of social theories;—a pretension which every intelligent man blames in others, with a reservation, more or less explicit, of his own personal competency. Now the intellectual reorganization can not proceed amidst such a state of things, because the convergence of minds requires the renunciation by the greater number of their right of individual inquiry on subjects above their qualifications, and requiring, more than any others, a real and permanent agreement. Then again, the unbridled ambition of ill-prepared intellects rushes in among the most complex and obscure questions: and these disturbances, though they must finally neutralize each other, make terrible devastation in the interval; and each one that is destroyed makes way for another; so that the issue of these controversies is a perpetual aggravation of the intellectual anarchy.

No association whatever, even of the smallest number of individuals, and for the most temporary objects, can subsist without a certain degree of reciprocal confidence, intellectual and moral, among its members, each one of whom has incessantly to act upon views which he must admit on the faith of some one else. If it is so in this limited case, there is something monstrous in proposing the opposite procedure in the case of the whole human race, each one of whom is at an extreme distance from the collective point of view, and is the last person of the whole number fit to judge of the rules by which his personal action should be directed. Be the intellectual development of each and all what it may, social order must ever be incompatible with a perpetual discussion of the foundations of society. Systematic toleration can exist only with regard to opinions which are considered indifferent or doubtful, as we see in that aspect of the revolutionary spirit which takes its

stand on Protestantism, where the innumerable Christian sects are too weak to pretend to spiritual dominion, but where there is as fierce an intolerance about any common point of doctrine or discipline as in the Romish Church itself. And when the critical doctrine was, at the beginning of the French Revolution, supposed to be organic, we know how the directors of the movement strove to obtain a general assent, voluntary or forced, to the dogmas of the revolutionary philosophy, which they regarded as the bases of social order, and therefore above controversy. We shall see hereafter what are the due limits of the right of free inquiry, in a general way, and in regard to our own social period. It is enough to observe here that political good sense has adopted, to express the first requisite of all organization, that fine axiom of the Catholic Church: *in necessary things, unity: in doubtful things, liberty: in all things, charity*: a maxim which admirably proposes the problem, without, however, suggesting the principles by which it must be solved, and that unity attained which would be a mere illusion if it did not result, in the first instance, from free discussion.

The dogma which ranks next in importance to that of free inquiry is that of Equality; and in the same way, it is taken to be absolute when it is only relative, and permanent, while it expresses merely the position of minds employed in breaking up the old system. It is an immediate consequence of liberty of conscience, which brings after it the most fundamental equality of all,—that of intelligence. The supposition of its being absolute was not less necessary in this case than the former: for, if all social classification had not been systematically disallowed, the old corporations would have preserved their sway, from the impossibility of their conceiving of any other classification. To this day we have no sufficiently distinct notion ourselves of such an arrangement as would be truly appropriate to a new state of civilization.

When the dogma of equality had achieved the overthrow of the old politics, it could not but become an obstacle to any reorganization, because its activity must then be directed against the bases of any new classification whatever; for, of course, any classification must be incompatible with the equality that was claimed for all. Since the abolition of slavery, there has been no denial, from any quarter, of the right of every man (innocent of strong anti-social conduct) to expect from all others the fulfilment of the conditions necessary to the natural development of his personal activity, suitably directed: but, beyond that undisputed right, men can not be made, because they are not, equal, nor even equivalent; and they can not therefore possess, in a state of association, any identical rights beyond the great original one. The simple physical inequalities which fix the attention of superficial observers are much less marked than intellectual and moral differences; and the progress of civilization tends to increase these more important differences, as much as to lessen the inferior kind: and, applied to any assemblage of per-

sons thus developed, the dogma of equality becomes anarchical, and directly hostile to its original destination.

Dogma of the Sovereignty of the People. The second result of the dogma of liberty of conscience is the Sovereignty of the people: and, like the former, it wrought at first the double service of destroying the old *régime* and preparing for a new one. Till the final system could be constituted, the only safeguard against the renewed supremacy of the old one was in the setting up of provisional institutions, which the peoples claimed the absolute right to change at will. It was only by means of the doctrine of popular sovereignty that that succession of political endeavors could take place which must precede the installation of a true system of government, whenever the intellectual renovation of society shall be sufficiently advanced to settle the conditions and natural extent of the different sovereignties. Meanwhile, in discharging its function, this dogma proves its revolutionary character before our eyes, by opposing all reorganization, condemning, as it does, all the superior to an arbitrary dependence on the multitude of the inferior, by a kind of transference to the peoples of the divine right which had become the opprobrium of kings.

Dogma of National Independence.

The revolutionary spirit of the critical doctrine manifests itself no less clearly when we look at international relations. The necessity of order being in this case more equivocal and obscure, the absence of all regulating power has been more ingenuously declared than in other cases. When the ancient spiritual power was politically annulled, the dissolution of European order followed spontaneously from the principle of liberty of conscience; and the most natural papal function was at an end. Till the new social organization shall show us the law by which the nations shall become once more connected, the metaphysical notions of national isolation, and therefore of mutual non-intervention, must prevail; and they will be regarded as absolute till it appears how they defeat their own end. As all attempts at European coordination must otherwise be directed by the ancient system, we owe to the doctrine of national independence our rescue from the monstrous arrangement of the most civilized nations being politically subordinated to the least advanced, because the latter were least changed from their ancient state, and would be sure therefore to be placed at the head of such an association. But, if such a doctrine were more than provisional, the nations would sink below their state in the Middle Ages; and at the very time when they are marked out, by an ever-growing resemblance, for an association more extensive, and, at the same time more regular, than that which was proposed by the old catholic and feudal system. It is clear that when the dogma of national isolation has fulfilled its function of separating the nations, in order to a preparation for a new union, its further action must be as purely anarchical as that of its predecessors.

A brief notice of the logical inconsistency of the revolutionary doctrine will conclude our preliminary review of it.

This inconsistency is more radical and more manifest than in the case of the retrograde or theological doctrine; but it does not imply so utter a condemnation; not only on account of its recent formation, but because such a vice does not prevent its fulfilling its critical office. Notwithstanding profound differences, the adversaries of the old polity found no difficulty in uniting for successive partial demolitions about which they were agreed, postponing till their period of success their contests about the ulterior developments of their doctrine; a course which would be impossible in the case of any organic operation, in which each part must be considered in its relation to the whole. Thus far only, however, can the inconsistency be tolerated. When once the whole of any doctrine becomes hostile to its original purposes, it is condemned: and this is true of the metaphysical doctrine, which at once opposes the progress it professed to aid, and sustains the foundations of the political system it proposed to destroy.

Its culminating point was at the most marked period of the first French Revolution, when it was, by an unavoidable illusion, taken to be the principle of social reorganization. It was then seen in its best aspect of consistency and power; and then it was that, the ancient system being disposed of, its vices became apparent. It showed itself hostile to all social reorganization, and became actually retrograde in its character by setting itself up in violent opposition to the movement of modern civilization. For one illustration, look at the strange metaphysical notion of a supposed state of nature, which was to be the primitive and in-
Notion of a state of Nature.
variable type of every social state. This doctrine is not to be attributed to Rousseau alone. It is that of all philosophers, in all times and countries, who have unconsciously concurred in developing the revolutionary metaphysical doctrine which Rousseau, by his urgent dialectics, only pushed to its real conclusions. His doctrine, which represents a state of civilization as an ever-growing degeneracy from the primitive ideal type, is common to all modern metaphysicians; and we shall see hereafter that it is only the metaphysical form of the theological dogma of the degradation of the human race by original sin. According to such a principle, all political reformation must be regarded as destined to re-establish that primitive state: and what is that but organizing a universal retrogradation, though with progressive intentions? The applications of this doctrine have been in conformity to its philosophical constitution. When it was necessary to replace the feudal and catholic *régime*, men did not fix their contemplation on the social future, but summoned up their imperfect remembrances of a very distant past, trying to substitute for a decrepit system a more ancient and decrepit system still, but, for that very reason, nearer to the primitive type. Instead of a wornout catholicism, they proposed a sort of metaphysical polytheism, at the same time that, in polity, they desired to replace the Middle Age system by the radically inferior *régime* of the Greeks and Romans. The very elements of modern civiliza-

tion, the only possible germs of a new social state, were endangered by barbaric condemnation of the industrial and artistic advancement of modern society, in the name of primitive virtue and simplicity. Even the scientific spirit, which is the only principle of intellectual organization, was stigmatized as tending to institute an aristocracy of knowledge which was as incompatible as any other aristocracy with the original equality that was to be set up again. Lavoisier was the martyr of this state of opinion; and it is his case that will illustrate the period to our remotest posterity. It is useless for the metaphysical school to represent such results as portentous or eccentric incidents. Their legitimate descent from the revolutionary polity is evident and certain; and we should witness a repetition of them if it were possible (which it is not) for this polity to become prevalent again. The tendency to social retrogradation, under the idea of returning to the primitive state, so thoroughly belongs to the metaphysical polity, that the new sects who, in their brief day, have most haughtily censured the revolutionary imitation of Greek and Roman types, have unconsciously reproduced the same error in a far more marked way by striving to re-establish the confusion between the temporal and spiritual power, and extolling, as the highest social perfection, a return to the Egyptian or Hebrew theocracy, founded on fetichism, disguised under the name of pantheism.

Adhesion to the worn-out.

As the metaphysical doctrine was the issue of the theological, and destined to modify it, it was a matter of course that it should vindicate the general foundations of the old system, even after having destroyed its chief conditions of existence. Every reformer, for three centuries past, while urging the development of the critical spirit further than his predecessors, assumed to set immutable bounds to it; deriving his limitations from the old system. All the absolute rights proclaimed as the basis of the new doctrine were guaranteed by a sort of religious consecration, in the last resort; and this was indispensable, if their efficacy was not to be impaired by continual discussion. It was always with an invocation of the principles of the old polity on their lips that the reformers proceeded to demolish the spiritual and temporal institutions in which they were embodied; (and the whole régime fell through the conflict of its chief elements.) Hence there arose, in the intellectual region, a Christianity more and more attenuated or simplified, and reduced at last to that vague and impotent theism which, by a monstrous conjunction of terms, metaphysicians have entitled *Natural Religion*; as if all religion were not necessarily supernatural. The pretension to direct a social reorganization by this strange conception is merely a recurrence to the old principle that social order must rest on a theological basis. This is now the most fatal inconsistency of the revolutionary school; and while armed with such a concession, the advocates of catholicism will always have an incontestable logical superiority over the irrational defamers of the old faith, who proclaim the need of a religious organ

ization, and yet disallow all the necessary conditions. It is clear that society would be condemned to a perpetuity of the intellectual anarchy which characterizes it at present if it were to be for ever made up of minds which admit the want of a theological *régime* on the one hand, while, on the other, they reject its principal conditions of existence; and those who thus acknowledge themselves incapable have no right to discredit the only rational way to re-organization which remains open, and by which every other order of human conceptions has been happily retrieved and established. The social application of the positive philosophy remains as the resource, and the only resource, after the failure of both the preceding systems.

In its temporal application the inconsistency of the metaphysical doctrine is as conspicuous as in the spir- Recurrence to war.
itual. It strives to preserve, if not the feudal, at least the military spirit, in which the feudal had its origin. The French nation did, it is true, in their revolutionary enthusiasm, proscribe war from that time forward: but when the armed coalition of the retrograde forces of Europe brought out an immense amount of energy for self-defence, for the sake of the progressive movement, the sentiment, which was grounded on no principle, soon disappeared, and France was distinguished by the most conspicuous military activity, invested with its most oppressive characteristics. The military spirit is in fact so congenial with the critical doctrine that any pretext will serve for its indulgence: as for instance, when it is proposed to regulate by war the action of the more advanced nations upon the less advanced. The true logical consequence of this would be a universal uproar; but, happily, the nature of modern civilization saves us from the danger. The tendency of the critical *régime* in this respect is shown by the perpetual endeavors of the various sections of the revolutionary school to reinstate the memory of the man who, of all others, strove for political retrogradation, by wasting enormous amount of power in the restoration of the military and theological system.

Before quitting the subject of the inconsistencies of this school, I must, in justice, point out one more con- Principle of Political centralization.
tradiction which, as being of a progressive character, is honorable to those most advanced minds which entertain it, and which alone understand its necessity, opposed as it is to the dogmas of independence and isolation which constitute the spirit of the critical school. I refer to the principle of political centralization. The two parties seem here to have changed sides. The retrograde doctrine, notwithstanding its proud pretensions to order and unity, preaches the distribution of political centres, in the secret hope of preserving the old system yet a while longer among the most backward of the populations, by keeping them aloof from the general centres of civilization; while the revolutionary policy, on the other hand, proud of having withstood, in France, the coalition of the old powers, discards its own maxims to recommend the sub

ordination of the secondary to the principal centres by which such a noble stand has already been made, and which must become a most valuable auxiliary of reorganization. Thus alone can the reorganization be, in the first place, restricted to a choice population. In brief, the revolutionary school alone has understood that the increasing anarchy of the time, intellectual and moral, requires, to prevent a complete dislocation of society, a growing concentration of political action, properly so called.

Thus, after three centuries, employed in the necessary demolition of the ancient *régime*, the critical doctrine shows itself as incapable of other application, and as inconsistent as we have now seen it to be. (It is no more fit to secure Progress, than the old doctrine to maintain Order. But, feeble as they are apart, they actually sustain each other by their very antagonism.) It is universally understood that neither can ever again achieve a permanent triumph: but, so strong is the apprehension of even the temporary preponderance of either, that the general mind, for want of a more rational point of support, employs each doctrine in turn to restrain the encroachments of the other. This miserable oscillation of our social life must proceed till a real doctrine as truly organic as progressive, shall reconcile for us the two aspects of the great political problem. (Then, at last, the two opposite doctrines will disappear for ever in the new conception that will be seen to be completely adapted to fulfil the destination of both.) Often has each party, blinded by some temporary success, believed that it had annihilated the other; and never has the event failed to mock the ignorant exultation. The critical doctrine seemed to have humbled for ever the catholic-feudal school; but that school arose again. Napoleon thought he had accomplished a retrograde reaction; but the very energy of his efforts caused a reaction in favor of revolutionary principles. And thus society continues to vibrate between conflicting influences; and those influences continue to exist only by their mutual neutralization. For that purpose only, indeed, are they now ever applied. Neither could be spared before the advent of the state which is to succeed them. Without the one, we should lose the sentiment of Order, and without the other, that of Progress; and the keeping alive this sentiment, on either hand, is the only practical efficacy which now remains to them. Feeble as the conception must be, in the absence of any principle which unites the two requisites, it is preserved by the presence of the two decaying systems; and they keep before the minds of both philosophers and the public the true conditions of social reorganization, which otherwise our feeble nature might misconceive or lose sight of. Having the two types before us, we see the solution of the great problem to be, to form a doctrine which shall be more organic than the theological, and more progressive than the metaphysical.

The old political system can be no pattern for a *régime* suitable to a widely different civilization; but we are not under the less obligation to study it, in order to learn what are the essential at-

tributes of all social organization, which must reappear in an improved state in the future. The general conception of the theological and military system even seems to me to have passed too much out of sight. And, as to the Critical system, there can be no question of its affording, by its progressive character, and its exposure of the preceding *régime*, a most valuable stimulus to society to seek for something better than mere modifications of systems that have failed. The common complaint that it renders all government impossible, is a mere avowal of impotence on the part of those who utter it. Whatever are its imperfections, it fulfilled for a time one of the two requisities: its abolition would in no way assist the re-establishment of Order; and no declamations against the revolutionary philosophy will affect the instinctive attachment of society to principles which have directed its political progress for three centuries past, and which are believed to represent the indispensable conditions of its future development. Each of its dogmas affords an indication of how the improvement is to be effected. Each expresses the political aspect of certain high moral obligations which the retrograde school, with all its pretensions, was compelled to ignore, because its system had lost all power to fulfil them. In this way, the dogma of Free Inquiry decides that the spiritual reorganization must result from purely intellectual action, providing for a final voluntary and unanimous assent, without the disturbing intervention of any heterogeneous power. Again, the dogmas of Equality and the Sovereignty of the people devolve on the new powers and classes of society the duty of a public-spirited social conduct, instead of working the many for the interests of the few. The old system practised these moralities in its best days; but they are now maintained only by the revolutionary doctrine, which it would be fatal to part with till we have some substitute in these particular respects; for the effect would be that we should be delivered over to the dark despotism of the old system;—to the restorers of religions, for instance, who, if proselytism failed, would have recourse to tyranny to compel unity, if once the principle of free inquiry were lost from among us.

It is useless to declaim against the critical philosophy, and to deplore, in the name of social order, the dissolving energy of the spirit of analysis and inquiry. It is only by their use that we can obtain materials for reorganization; materials which shall have been thoroughly tested by free discussion, carried on till general conviction is secured. The philosophy which will arise out of this satisfaction of the public reason will then assign the rational limits which must obviate the abuse of the analytical spirit, by establishing that distinction in social matters, between the field of reasoning and that of pure observation, which we have found already marked out in regard to every other kind of science.

Though consigned, by the course of events, to a negative doctrine for awhile, society has never renounced the laws of human reason: and when the proper time arrives, society will use the rights of this

reason to organize itself anew, on principles which will then have been ascertained and estimated. The existing state of no-government seems necessary at present, in order to that ascertainment of principles; but it does not at all follow, as some eccentric individuals seem to think, that the right of inquiry imposes the duty of never deciding. The prolonged indecision proves merely that the principles which are to close the deliberation are not yet sufficiently established. In the same way, because society claims the right of choosing and varying its institutions and governing powers, it by no means follows that the right is for ever to be used in choosing and varying, when its indefinite use shall have become injurious. When the right conditions shall have been ascertained, society will submit its choice to the rules which will secure its efficacy; and in the interval, nothing can be more favorable to future order than that the political course should be kept open, to admit of the free rise of the new social system. As it happens, the peoples have, thus far, erred on the side of too hasty a desire for reorganization, and a too generous confidence in every promise of social order, instead of having shown the systematic distrust attributed to the revolutionary doctrine by those whose wornout claims will not bear discussion. There is more promise of political reorganization in the revolutionary doctrine than in the retrograde, though it is the supreme claim of the latter to be the safeguard of social Order.

The Stationary
doctrine.

Such is the vicious circle in which we are at present confined. We have seen what is the antagonism of two doctrines that are powerless apart, and have no operation but in neutralizing each other. They have lost their activity as preponderating influences, and are seen now in the form of political debate, which they daily direct by the one furnishing all the essential ideas of government, and the other the principles of opposition. At shorter and shorter intervals, a partial and transient superiority is allowed to the one or the other, when its antagonist threatens danger. Out of these oscillations a third opinion has arisen, which is constructed out of their ruins, and takes its station between them. I suppose we must give the name of Doctrine to this intermediate opinion, bastard and inconsistent as is its character; for it is presented by very earnest doctors, who urge it upon us as a type of the final political philosophy. We must call it the Stationary Doctrine; and we see it, in virtue of that quality, occupying the scene of politics, among the most advanced people, for above a quarter of a century. Essentially provisional as it is, the Stationary school naturally serves as a guide to society in preserving the material order, without which a true doctrine could not have its free growth. It may be necessary for our weakness that the leaders of this school should suppose that they have a doctrine which is destined to triumph; but whatever benefits arise from their action are much impaired by the mistake of supposing our miserable transition state a permanent type of the social condition. The stationary polity not only contains inconsistencies, but it is itself inconsistency erected

into a principle. It acknowledges the essential principles of the other systems, but prevents their action. Disdainful of Utopias, it proposes the wildest of them all;—that of fixing society for ever in a contradictory position between retrogradation and regeneration. The theory serves to keep in check the other two philosophies; and this may be a good: but, on the other hand, it helps to keep them alive; and it is, in so far, an obstacle to reorganization. When I present my historical review of society, I shall explain the special assemblage of social conditions which gave England her parliamentary monarchy, so lauded by the school of mixed doctrine, but, in fact, an exceptional institution, whose inevitable end can not be very far off. When we enter upon that analysis, we shall see how great is the error of philosophers and statesmen when they have taken up a singular and transient case as the solution of the revolutionary crisis of modern societies, and have endeavored to transplant on the European continent a purely local system, which would be deprived in the process of its very roots: for it is an organized Protestantism which is its main spiritual basis in England. The expectation attached to this single specious aspect of the stationary doctrine will make a future examination of it important; and we shall then see how hopeless is the constitutional metaphysics of the balance of powers, judged by that instance which serves as the common ground of such social fictions. After all the vast efforts made to nationalize elsewhere the stationary compromise, it has never succeeded anywhere but in its native land; and this proves its powerlessness in regard to the great social problem. The only possible result is that the mischief should pass from the acute to the chronic state, becoming incurable by the recognition as a principle of the transient antagonism which is its chief symptom. Its principal merit is that it admits the double aspect of the social problem, and the necessity of reconciling Order and Progress: but it introduces no new idea; and its recognition amounts therefore to nothing more than an equal sacrifice, when necessary of the one and the other. The order that it protects is a merely material order; and it therefore fails in that function precisely in crises when it is most wanted. On the other hand, this function continues to be attributed to royalty, which is the only power of the old polity that is still active: now, the balance which is instituted by the stationary doctrine surrounds the royal power with bonds that are always tightening, while declaring that royal power to be the chief basis of the government. It is only a question of time when the function of sovereignty, thus embarrassed, shall cease, and the pretended balance be destroyed. This parliamentary polity serves the cause of progress no better than that of order: for, as it proposes no new principle, the restraints which it puts upon the revolutionary spirit are all derived from the ancient system, and therefore tend to become more and more retrograde and oppressive. An example of this is, the restrictions on the right of election; restrictions always derived from irrational material conditions, which, being arbitrary in their character,

oppress and irritate, without answering their proposed purpose, and leave the multitude of the excluded much more offended than the small number of the privileged are gratified.

There is no need to say more in this place of the mixed or Stationary doctrine, which is, in fact, only a last phase of the metaphysical polity. The reader can not but see that a theory so precarious and subaltern, so far from being able to reorganize modern society, can only regulate, by protracting, the political conflict, and discharge the negative office of preventing kings from retrograding and peoples from destroying. Whatever the value of this service may be, we can not expect regeneration to be accomplished by means of impediments.

Dangers of the
critical period We have now seen the worth of these three systems. To complete our conviction of the need of a better, we must briefly notice the chief social dangers which result from the deplorable protraction of such an intellectual condition, and which must, from their nature, be aggravated from day to day. The dangers are imputable to all the three systems; though the revolutionary and stationary systems assume that the blame of our disorders rests with the retrograde school: but they are certainly no less guilty; for, powerless to discover the remedy, they protract the mischief and embarrass the treatment. And again, the discordance between the movement of governments and of their peoples is to be attributed quite as much to the hostile spirit of the directing power as to the anarchical tendency of popular opinions. The social perturbations, the aspects of which we are about to examine, proceed no less from the kings than from their peoples, with this aggravated disgrace—that it seems as if the solution ought to emanate from the kings.

Intellectual an-
archy. The first, the most fatal, and the most universal consequence of this situation is the alarming and ever-widening extent of the intellectual anarchy which all acknowledge, however they may differ about its cause and termination. This evil is charged almost exclusively on the revolutionary philosophy; and that school too readily admits the charge. But, as we have seen, that doctrine does not prohibit decision, when the requisite grounds are ascertained: and it is the stationary theory that ought to bear the blame of the absence of those grounds: and yet more the retrograde, which is chargeable with urging the restoration of the same wornout principles which, by their decrepitude, have caused all this anarchy. The stationary school does not want to hear of any such principles, and interdicts them; and the retrograde school insists that the old ones will do over again. So that, if the revolutionary school first encouraged the anarchy, the other two protract it.

Of all questions, there are none which have so much claim as social problems to be consigned to a small number of choice minds which shall have been prepared by a high order of discipline and instruction for the investigation of questions so complex and so

mixed up with human passions. Such is, at least, the natural state of the human mind, in contrast with which its condition in revolutionary periods may be regarded as, in a manner, pathological, however inevitable. The social malady must be very serious when we see all manner of persons, however inferior their intelligence, and however unprepared, stimulated, in the highest manner, and from day to day, to cut the knot of the most intricate political questions, without any guidance or restraint. The wonder is, not that the divergence of opinion is what it is, but that any points of agreement at all are left amid all this dissolution of social maxims. The evil has reached such a point that all political opinions, though of course derived from one of the three schools, differ through so many degrees as to become individual; through all degrees, in fact, that the combination of three orders of vicious principles admits of. Except on occasion of emergency, when there is a temporary coalition (amid which each one usually hopes to have his own way) it becomes more and more difficult to make even a very small number of minds adhere to a plain and explicit profession of political faith. This inability to co-operate prevails in all the three camps—as we ought carefully to observe: and each party has often, in its ingenuous moments, bitterly deplored the intense disagreement with which it supposed itself to be especially afflicted; whereas, the others were no better organized; and the chief difference in the three cases was that each was most acutely sensible of its own misery.

In countries where this intellectual anarchy has been sanctioned by the political preponderance of Protestantism, the divergences have been more multiplied than elsewhere, without being less serious. It could not but be so from the tendency of the general mind, in its then infantile state, to use its new emancipation to plunge into the indefinite discussion of religious opinions—(the most vague and discordant of all)—in the absence of a restraining spiritual authority. In the United States, for instance, there are hundreds of Christian sects, radically discordant, and incessantly parting off into opinions which are really little more than individual, which it is impossible to classify, and which are already becoming implicated with innumerable political differences. The nations which, like the French, have escaped the treacherous stage of Protestantism, and have passed at once from the Catholic to the fully revolutionary state, were not, on that account, entirely exempt from the intellectual anarchy inherent in any prolonged exercise of the absolute right of free individual inquiry. All that can be said is that their aberrations, without being less anti-social, have a less vague character, and are less in the way of the final reorganization. They arise, take possession for awhile of even healthy and well-trained intellects, and then give place to others that have their day, and in their turn are superseded. In our time, we hear of proposals, entertained here and there even by men who know what positive science is in some one department of study, which it is a shock to one's hopes to see so advocated; proposals, for instance, to abolish money

and recur to a state of barter; to destroy the great capitals in order to restore rural innocence; to have a fixed rate of wages, and the same rate for every kind of labor, and so forth. Such opinions are daily given out, side by side with those which are the most philosophical and the most carefully elaborated; and none have any chance of being established under the rule of any intellectual discipline whatever, though the wise are compromised with the foolish in the eyes of public reason. The inevitable result of such a chronic epidemic is the gradual destruction of the public *morale*, which is not sustained, among the generality of men, so much by the direct sentiment as by habit, guided by the uniform assent of individual wills to invariable and general rules, adapted to fix, on every serious occasion, the true idea of the public good. So complex is the nature of social questions that there is much that is to be said on all sides; and there is no institution, however indispensable, which does not involve serious and numerous inconveniences, more or less partial and transient; and, on the other hand, there is no Utopia so wild as not to offer some incontestable advantages; and few are the minds which are not so preoccupied by ideas, or stimulated by passion, as to be able to contemplate at once all the aspects of any social subject. Thus it is that almost all the great maxims of public morality are condemned on account of their salient faults, while their determining grounds are hidden till exhibited by an exact analysis, which must in many cases be extremely delicate. Thus again, it is that all true moral order is incompatible with the existing vagabond liberty of individual minds, if such license were to last; for the great social rules which should become customary can not be abandoned to the blind and arbitrary decision of an incompetent public without losing all their efficacy. The requisite convergence of the best minds can not be obtained without the voluntary renunciation, on the part of most of them, of their sovereign right of free inquiry, which they will doubtless be willing to abdicate, as soon as they have found organs worthy to exercise appropriately their vain provisional supremacy. If it is so in problems of science, there is every reason to expect it in the more difficult questions of social principle. Meanwhile, all vague notions of public good, degenerating into an indistinct philanthropy, must succumb to the energetic forces of a highly-stimulated selfishness. In the daily course of our political conflicts we see accordingly the most conscientious men taxing each other with wickedness and folly; and, on every serious occasion, the most opposite doctrines maintained by persons equally worthy of confidence: and, while all deep and steady conviction is thus rendered impossible, no true political morality can be hoped for by those who desire it most.

This public demoralization has, it must be admitted, been sensibly retarded, in our time, by the preponderance of that revolutionary doctrine which has borne the imputation of causing it; for the revolutionary party, progressive in character, could not but be

animated, more than the others, by sincere convictions, which, in their depth and activity, must tend to restrain, and even annihilate, individual selfishness. This was especially remarkable during the season when the revolutionary doctrine was, by a general illusion, supposed to be destined to reorganize society. Under the impulse of this persuasion, the strongest social devotedness that can shed honor upon contemporary history was manifested. But this could be only for a time. As the illusion disappeared, the convictions which arose from it became first weakened, and then mingled with the influences of the stationary, and even the retrograde polity: and though they are still of a higher order than those which are inspired by the other doctrines, and especially among the young, they have not energy to resist the dissolving action of the revolutionary philosophy, even among its own advocates; so that this philosophy now contributes, almost as much as its two antagonists, to the spread of political demoralization.

Private morality is, happily, much less dependent on established opinions. Other conditions enter into this Private morality. case; and in the commonest questions, natural sentiment is far more operative than in public relations. Disorganizing influences are strongly counteracted by the continuous amelioration of our manners, through a more equitable intellectual development, by a juster sense and more familiar taste for the various fine arts, and by the gradual improvement of social condition in consequence of steady industrial progress. The common rules of domestic and personal morality have guarded private life longer than political from the invasion of disorganizing influences, and the intrusion of individual analysis. But the time has arrived for these inevitable disturbances, long concealed, to manifest their dangerous activity. So long ago as the first rise of the revolutionary state, this deleterious influence on morality, properly so called, began with a serious innovation on the institution of Marriage, which would have been radically changed, by the permission of divorce in Protestant countries, if public decency and private good sense had not, up to this time, weakened the pernicious effects of theologico-metaphysical extravagances. Still, private morality could be reached only through the destruction of political morals; and now, that barrier being broken through, the dissolving action threatens domestic, and even personal morality, which is the necessary foundation of every other. Whichever way we look at it, whether as to the relations of the sexes, to those of ages, or of conditions, it is clear that the elements of all social life are directly compromised by a corrosive discussion which is not directed by true principles, and which brings into question, without the possibility of solution, even the least important ideas of duty. Even the Family, which, amidst the fiercest revolutionary tumults, had been on the whole respected, has been assailed in our day in its very foundations, by attacks on the hereditary principle and on marriage. We have even seen the commonest principle of personal morality, the subjection of the

passions to reason, denied by pretended reformers who, in defiance of all experience and such positive science as we have, have proposed as a fundamental dogma of their regenerated morality, the systematic dominion of the passions, which they have striven, not to restrain, but to excite by the strongest stimulants. These speculations have so far penetrated social life, that any one is now at liberty to make an easy merit of the most turbulent passions; so that, if such license could last, insatiable stomachs might at length get to pride themselves on their own voracity. It is in vain for the retrograde school to throw the blame of all this on the revolutionary school. The censure rests upon themselves, inasmuch as they have persisted in extolling, as the only intellectual bases of social duty, principles which have betrayed their impotence in this very case; for, if theological conceptions are, in truth, the immutable bases of future as well as past morality, how is it that they now fail to obviate such license? What are we to think of the attempt to shore up by laborious artifices, the religious principles which are proposed, after they have lost their strength, as the only supports of moral order? No supreme function can be assigned to convictions that have themselves given way before the development of human reason, which is not likely to use its mature power to reconstruct the bonds which it broke through in the efforts of its youth. It is remarkable that the license I have spoken of has been proposed by the ardent restorers of religious theories, in their exasperation against all positive philosophy; and this has, for some time past, been the case with Protestant, no less than Catholic advocates. So far from furnishing bases for morality, domestic or personal, religious convictions have long tended to its injury, both by hindering its erection on more solid foundations among those who are free from their control, and by being insufficient for their own subjects, without the active intervention of a sacerdotal authority; that authority meanwhile perpetually losing its hold over the more advanced populations, and being more and more absorbed by the care of its own preservation, instead of venturing upon any unpopular scheme of discipline. Daily experience shows that the ordinary morality of religious men is not, at present, in spite of our intellectual anarchy, superior to that of the average of those who have quitted the churches. The chief practical tendency of religious conviction is, in our present social life, to inspire an instinctive and insurmountable hatred against all who have emancipated themselves, without any useful emulation having arisen from the conflict. Thus the chief assaults, direct and indirect, on private as well as public morality, are as strictly imputable to the stationary, and yet more to the retrograde, than to the revolutionary philosophy, which is commonly made to bear all the blame. It is, indeed, but too evident that the three doctrines are almost equally powerless to restrain the development of individual selfishness, which grows bolder, from day to day, in clamoring for the license of the least social passions, in the name of universal intellectual anarchy.

The second characteristic of our condition follows from the first. It is the systematic corruption which is set up as an indispensable instrument of government. The three doctrines bear their share, though it may be an unequal one, in this disgraceful result, because all exclude, as we have seen, true political convictions. Amidst the absence, or the discredit, of general ideas, which have now no power to command genuine acts, there is no other daily resource for the maintenance of even a rough and precarious order than an appeal, more or less immediate, to personal interests. Such an influence is scarcely ever needed with men of deep convictions. Even in the lower order of characters, human nature is rarely so debased as to allow a course of political conduct in opposition to any strong convictions; and such contrariety, if persevered in, would soon paralyze the faculties. In the scientific class, in which philosophical convictions are at present most common and best marked, active corruption is scarcely practicable, though minds are there much of the same quality as they are elsewhere. Thus, exceptional cases apart, the rapid spread of a corruption which avails itself of the half-convictions that are prevalent in the political world must be attributed mainly to the undecided and fluctuating state in which social ideas are kept by the intellectual anarchy of our time. Not only does this disorder of minds permit the political corruption: it even requires it, as the only means of obtaining any sort of practical convergence, such as is necessary for the mere preservation of the social state in its grossest interests: and we must prepare ourselves for the continuous extension of the evil, as long as intellectual anarchy goes on destroying all strong political conviction. Rulers and the ruled are alike guilty in regard to this vice: the rulers by their disdain of all social theory; by their repression of mind, and by their application of the instrument which they can not dispense with to their own, instead of the general interest; and the ruled by their acceptance of the proffered corruption, and by their intellectual condition rendering the use of it inevitable. If individuals can not co-operate on any other ground than that of private interest, they have no right to complain that governments take the same ground to procure the assistance that they can not dispense with, during a period in which it is scarcely possible to see clearly what the public good really consists in. All that can be said for such a state of things is that matters would be worse if individual eccentricities were not somewhat restrained by personal interest, in the absence of better influences; and that it is the natural result of the situation to which it applies, and therefore certainly destined to disappear whenever society shall begin to admit of a better discipline. Till then we must expect to see this miserable expedient more and more resorted to; as is proved by the constant experience of all peoples living under a prolonged constitutional or representative régime, as we now call it, always compelled to organize in this manner a certain material discipline in the midst of a complete intellectual,

and therefore moral anarchy. All that we have a right to require is that governments, instead of welcoming this disastrous necessity, and making an eager use of the facilities it offers, should set themselves to favor, systematically, by all the means at their command, the great philosophical elaboration through which modern society may enter upon a better course.

By corruption, I do not mean only direct venality, nor yet the holding of honorary distinctions which are merely flattering to the vanity. The scope offered to various kinds of ambition is a more corrupting influence. In some countries this had been carried so far, in the form of creation of offices, that nations are farmed by the functionaries of their governments. The danger of such a course is obvious enough; for the number of aspirants, where offices are very numerous, must always largely exceed that of the chosen; and their disappointment must awaken passions anything but favorable to the established *régime*. Moreover, the practice must spread the more it is resorted to; and it will go on extending till the time for social reorganization has arrived. Here, again, all the three schools must share the blame. The Revolutionary school supplied, as we have seen, the dissolving influence which rendered the system of corruption necessary. The Stationary school even sets it up as a type, declaring the equal admission of all the public functions to be the final destination of the general social movement; and aggravating the case by connecting the conditions of order with the mere possession of fortune, however obtained. As for the Retrograde school, with all its pretensions to moral purity, it employs corruption as fatally as the other two, under the special form which it appropriates,—that of systematic hypocrisy. From the opening of the revolutionary period, in the sixteenth century, this system of hypocrisy has been more and more elaborated in practice, permitting the emancipation of all minds of a certain bearing, on the tacit condition that they should aid in protracting the submersion of the masses. This was, eminently, the policy of the Jesuits. Thus has the retrograde school suffered under this vice as early as the others; and it can not but resort to corruption more and more, in proportion to its own opposition to the general movement of the society which it pretends to rule.

This, then, is our state. For want of a moral authority, material order requires the use of either terror or corruption; and the latter is both more durable, less inconvenient, and more accordant with the nature of modern society than the former. But, while admitting the inevitable character of the evil, it is impossible not to lament, bitterly and mournfully, the blindness which prevents the social powers of our time from facilitating to the utmost the philosophical evolution by which alone we can issue into a better state. It seems as if statesmen of all parties were agreed to close this sole avenue of safety by visiting with stupid reprobation all elaboration of social theories. This again, however, is only another consequence of the present state of the most civilized nations; and,

as a consequence, not less necessary or characteristic than those that have gone before.

The third symptom of our social situation is the growing preponderance of material and immediate considerations in regard to political questions. There is something more concerned here than the ordinary antagonism between theory and practice, aggravated by the weakness of attempts at theory in an infantile period of social science. The repugnance to theory is further attributable to the historical circumstances that when, three centuries ago, the spiritual power was finally annulled or absorbed by the temporal, all lofty social speculations were more and more devolved upon minds which were always pre-occupied by practical affairs. Thus kings and their peoples concurred in exalting the lower order of considerations; and the tendency belonged to all the three schools of polity. If the crowning evil of our time be its intellectual anarchy, it is clear that we can not too strongly lament this irrational unanimity of the political world in closing the path of progress by proscribing speculative researches.

We see the consequences in our experience of the past century. In seeking social reorganization, men have not first looked to the doctrines of a new social order, and then to the corresponding manners; but have gone straight to the construction of institutions, at a time when we have all possible evidence that institutions can be nothing more than provisional, restricted to the most indispensable objects, and having no other relation to the future than such facility as they may afford to the process of political regeneration. The making of institutions in our day consists in parcelling out the old political powers, minutely organizing factitious and complex antagonisms among them, rendering them more and more precarious by submitting them to election for terms; but in no way changing either the general nature of the ancient *régime* or the spirit which worked it. For want of all social doctrine, nothing more has been attempted than restraining the powers thus preserved, till there is every danger of their being altogether annulled, while the principles which were to direct their application were left doubtful and obscure. The pompous name of a Constitution is then given to this piece of work, and it is consecrated to the eternal admiration of posterity. Though the average duration of these constitutions has been at most ten years, each new system, set up on the very ground of the failure of the last, has claimed, under pains and penalties, a general faith in its absolute and indefinite triumph. The only action of such institutions is in preventing all social reorganization by fixing minds on puerile questions of political forms, and by interdicting speculations and philosophical discussion which would disclose the principles of reorganization. By this action, the character of the disease has been concealed as much as possible, and any gradual and specific cure has been almost impracticable. It is strange that minds should be so self-deceived as to disclaim all speculative prejudices while

Low aims of
political ques-
tions.

Fatal to Prog-
ress.

they propose the most absurd of all political Utopias,—the construction of a system of government which rests upon no true social doctrine. Such an absurdity is referrible to the cloudy prevalence of the metaphysical philosophy, which perverts and confuses men's notions in politics, as it did formerly, during its short triumph, in all other orders of human conceptions.

It is not only as an impediment to progress that the preponderance of material conceptions is to be deplored. It is dangerous to order. When all political evils are imputed to institutions instead of to ideas and social manners, which are now the real seat of the mischief, the remedy is vainly sought in changes, each more serious than the last, in institutions and existing powers. The failure of the last change is forgotten; and hopes are concentrated on the next, showing how ineffectual are the lessons of experience when the results are not elucidated by a rational analysis. Such changes must occur, in our progress to a better state. What it is fair to require in regard to them is that they should be recognised as provisional, and be guided by some philosophical consideration of the social question at large. Another consequence of the prevalent preference of institutions to doctrines is, besides its prematurity, its engendering errors of the most serious kind, and of a permanent character, by including in the domain of temporal government what belongs to the spiritual. For their neglect of this grand distinction, the various governments of Europe have been punished by becoming responsible for all the evils of society, whencesoever they might have arisen. The illusion is yet more injurious to society itself through the disturbances and mortifications which it induces. An illustration of the case is presented by the discussions and attacks which have so often menaced the institution of Property. It is impossible to deny that, when all exaggerations are stripped away, an unquestionable amount of evil remains in connection with property, which ought to be taken in hand, and remedied, as far as our modern social state permits. But it is equally evident that the remedy must arise from opinions, customs, and manners, and that political regulations can have no radical efficacy; for the question refers us to public prepossessions and usages which must habitually direct, for the interest of society, the exercise of property, in whose hands soever it may be lodged. We may see here how futile and how blind, and also how disturbing, is this tendency to refer everything to political institutions, instead of fixing expectation on an intellectual and moral reorganization.

Thus we proceed, securing neither order nor progress, while we consider our sufferings to be of a physical, whereas they are really of a moral nature. Modifications of ancient systems have been tried, and have given no relief; and our ideas of political progress are narrowing down to that of a substitution of persons,—the most disgraceful political degradation of all, because, directed by no plan, it tends to subject society to an interminable series of catas-

trophes. The material order, which is all that is contemplated, is confided to a power which is regarded as hostile, and perpetually enfeebled by a systematic antagonism. The restricted view of each of the agents of such a mechanism prevents their co-operation, except under the immediate alarm of material anarchy, when they suspend their useless controversies till the storm has blown over, when they go on as before, till some catastrophe ensues, taking everybody by surprise, though any one might have foreseen it. In this discarding of social speculation for the sake of material and immediate considerations, we see a fresh indication that intellectual anarchy is the main cause of our social maladies.

A fourth characteristic of our social condition is a natural consequence and complement of the preceding; Incompetence of political leaders. the incompetence of the minds which occupy the chief political stations, during such a condition of affairs, and even their antipathy to a true reorganization: so that a final, and not less disastrous illusion of modern society is that the solution of the problem may be looked for from those who can do nothing but hinder it. From what we have already seen, we must be aware that the gradual demolition of all social maxims, and, at the same time, the attenuation of political action, must tend to remove elevated minds and superior understandings from such a career, and to deliver over the political world to the rule of charlatanism and mediocrity. The absence of any distinct and large conception of a social future is favorable to the more vulgar forms of ambition; and presumptuous and enterprising mediocrity has never before had so fortunate a chance. While social principles are not even sought, charlatanism will always attract by the magnificence of its promises; and its transient successes will dazzle society, while in a suffering condition, and deprived of all rational hope. Every impulse of noble ambition must turn the best men away from a field of action where there is no chance of scope and permanence, such as are requisite to the carrying out of generous schemes. It is, as M. Guizot has well said, a social period when *men will feebly, but desire immensely*. It is a state of half-conviction and half-will, resulting from intellectual and moral anarchy, offering many obstacles to the solution of our difficulties. It is important, however, not to exaggerate those obstacles. This very state of half-conviction and half-will tends to facilitate by anticipation the prevalence of a true conception of society which, once produced, will have no active resistance to withstand, because it will repose on serious convictions: and at present, the dispersion of social interests tends to preserve the material order which is an indispensable condition of philosophical growth. It would be a mere satirical exaggeration to describe existing society as preferring political quackery and illusion to that wise settlement which it has not had opportunity to obtain. When the choice is offered, it will be seen whether the attraction of deceptive promises, and the power of former habit, will prevent our age from entering, with ardor and steadiness, upon a better course.

There are evident symptoms that the choice will be a wise one, though the circumstances of the time operate to place the direction of the movement in hands which are anything but fittest for the purpose. This inconvenience dates from the beginning of the revolutionary period, and is not a new, but an aggravated evil. For three centuries past, the most eminent minds have been chiefly engaged with science, and have neglected politics; thus differing widely from the wisest men in ancient times, and even in the Middle Ages. The consequence of this is that the most difficult and urgent questions have been committed to the class which is essentially one under two names,—the civilians and the metaphysicians, or, under their common title, the lawyers and men of letters, whose position in regard to statesmanship is naturally a subordinate one. We shall see hereafter that, from its origin to the time of the first French Revolution, the system of metaphysical polity was expressed and directed by the universities on the one hand, and the great judiciary corporations on the other: the first constituting a sort of spiritual, and the other the temporal power. This state of things is still traceable in most countries of the continent; while in France, for above half a century, the arrangement has degenerated into such an abuse that the judges are superseded by the bar, and the doctors (as they used to be called) by mere men of letters; so that now, any man who can hold a pen may aspire to the spiritual regulation of society, through the press or from the professional chair, unconditionally, and whatever may be his qualifications. When the time comes for the constitution of an organic condition, the reign of sophists and declaimers will have come to an end: but there will be the impediment to surmount of their having been provisionally in possession of public confidence.

The survey that we have made must convince us only too well of the anarchical state of existing society, under its destitution of guiding and governing ideas, and amid its conflict of opinions and passions, which there is no power in any of the three schools to cure or moderate. As preliminary considerations, these facts are deeply disheartening; and we can not wonder that some generous and able but ill-prepared minds should have sunk into a kind of philosophical despair about the future of society, which appears to them doomed to fall under a gloomy despotism or into mere anarchy, or to oscillate between the two. I trust that the study we are about to enter upon will give rise to a consoling conviction that the movement of regeneration is going on, though quietly in comparison with the apparent decomposition, and that the most advanced of the human race are at the threshold of a social order worthy of their nature and their needs. I shall conclude this introduction by showing what must necessarily be the intellectual character of the salutary philosophy which is to lead us into this better future: and its dogmatic exposition will follow in the next chapters.

Advent of the
Positive Philo-
sophy.

The preliminary survey which I have just concluded led us necessarily into the domain of politics. We

must now return from this excursion, and take our stand again at the point of view of this whole Work, and contemplate the condition and prospects of society from the ground of positive philosophy. Every other ground has been found untenable. The theological and metaphysical philosophies have failed to secure permanent social welfare, while the positive philosophy has uniformly succeeded, and conspicuously for three centuries past, in reorganizing, to the unanimous satisfaction of the intellectual world, all the anterior orders of human conceptions, which had been till then in the same chaotic state that we now deplore, in regard to social science. Contemporary opinion regarded the state of each of those sciences as hopeless till the positive philosophy brought them out of it. There is no reason why it should fail in the latest application, after having succeeded in all the earlier. Advancing from the less complex categories of ideas to the more complex and final one, and comparing with this experience the picture just given of our present social condition, we can not but see that the political analysis and the scientific concur in demonstrating that the positive philosophy, carried on to its completion, is the only possible agent in the reorganization of modern society. I wish to establish this principle first, and in this place, apart from all considerations about my way of proving my point; so that, if my attempt should be hereafter condemned, no unfavorable inference may be drawn in regard to a method which alone can save society, and that public reason should have nothing to do but to require from happier successors more effectual endeavors in the same direction. In all cases, and especially in this, the method is of even more importance than the doctrine: and it is for this reason that I think it right, before closing my long introduction, to offer, in a brief form, some last prefatory considerations.

This is not the place in which to enter upon any comparison between the positive political philosophy and the other social theories which have been tried; but, while still deferring the scientific appreciation of the positive method, and before quitting the political ground on which I have, for the occasion, taken my stand, I must point out in a direct and general way, the relation of the positive philosophy to the two great necessities of our age.

The ascendancy of a positive social doctrine is secured by its perfect logical coherence in its entire application—a characteristic property which enables us at once to connect the political with the scientific point of view. The positive polity will embrace at once all the essential aspects of the present state of civilization, and will dissolve the deplorable opposition that now exists between the two orders of social needs, the common satisfaction of which will henceforth depend on the same principle. It will impart a homogeneous and rational character to the desultory politics of our day, and it will by the same act connect this co-ordinated present with the whole past, so as to establish a general harmony in the entire system of social ideas, by

Logical coherence of the doctrine.

exhibiting the fundamental uniformity of the collective life of humanity; for this conception can not, by its nature, be applied to the actual social state till it has undergone the test of explaining, from the same point of view, the continuous series of the chief former transformations of society. It is important to note this difference between the positive principle and that of the two other schools. The critical school treats all times prior to the revolutionary period with a blind reprobation. The retrograde school equally fails in uniting the present with the past, and uniformly disparages the position of modern society during the last three centuries. It is the exclusive property of the positive principle to recognise the fundamental law of continuous human development, representing the existing evolution as the necessary result of the gradual series of former transformations, by simply extending to social phenomena the spirit which governs the treatment of all other natural phenomena. This coherence and homogeneousness of the positive principle is further shown by its operation in not only comprehending all the various social ideas in one whole, but in connecting the system with the whole of natural philosophy, and constituting thus the aggregate of human knowledge as a complete scientific hierarchy. We shall see hereafter how this is accomplished, and I mention it now to show how the positive philosophy, finding thus a general fulcrum in all minds, can not but spread to a universal extension. In the present chaotic state of our political ideas, we can scarcely imagine what must be the irresistible energy of a philosophical movement, in which the entire renovation of social science will be directed by the same spirit which is unanimously recognised as effectual in all other departments of human knowledge. Meantime, it finds some points of contact in the most wilful minds, whence it may proceed to work a regeneration of views. It speaks to every class of society, and to every political party, the language best adapted to produce conviction, while maintaining the invincible originality of its fundamental character. It alone, embracing in its survey the whole of the social question, can render exact justice to the conflicting schools, by estimating their past and present services. It alone can exhibit to each party its highest destination, prescribing order in the name of progress, and progress in the name of order, so that each, instead of annulling, may strengthen the other. Bringing no stains from the past, this new polity is subject to no imputation of retrograde tyranny, or of revolutionary anarchy. The only charge that can be brought against it is that of novelty; and the answer is furnished by the evident insufficiency of all existing theories, and by the fact that for two centuries past its success has been uniform and complete, wherever it has been applied.

Its effect on Order.

As to its operation upon Order, it is plain that true science has no other aim than the establishment of intellectual order, which is the basis of every other. Disorder dreads the scientific spirit even more than the theological, and, in

the field of politics, minds which rebelled against metaphysical hypotheses and theological fictions submit without difficulty to the discipline of the positive method. We even see that while the mind of our day is accused of tending toward absolute skepticism, it eagerly welcomes the least appearance of positive demonstration, however premature and imperfect. The eagerness would be full as great if the idea were once formed that social science might also be conducted by the positive spirit. The conception of invariable natural laws, the foundation of every idea of order, in all the departments, would have the same philosophical efficacy here as elsewhere, as soon as it was sufficiently generalized to be applied to social phenomena, thenceforth referred, like all other phenomena, to such laws. It is only by the positive polity that the revolutionary spirit can be restrained, because by it alone can the influence of the critical doctrine be justly estimated and circumscribed. No longer roused to resistance, as by the retrograde school, and seeing its work done better than by itself, it will merge in a doctrine which leaves it nothing to do or to desire. Under the rule of the positive spirit, again, all the difficult and delicate questions which now keep up a perpetual irritation in the bosom of society, and which can never be settled while mere political solutions are proposed, will be scientifically estimated, to the great furtherance of social peace. By admitting at once that the institutions of modern societies must necessarily be merely provisional, the positive spirit will abate unreasonable expectations from them, and concentrate effort upon a fundamental renovation of social ideas, and consequently of public morals. Instead of indifference being caused by this carrying forward of political aims, there will be a new source of interest in so modifying modern institutions as to make them contributory to the inevitable intellectual and moral evolution. At the same time, it will be teaching society that, in the present state of their ideas, no political change can be of supreme importance, while the perturbation attending change is supremely mischievous, in the way both of immediate hinderance and of diverting attention from the true need and procedure. And again, order will profit by the recognition of the relative spirit of the positive philosophy, which discredits the absolute spirit of the theological and metaphysical schools. It can not but dissipate the illusion by which those schools are for ever striving to set up, in all stages of civilization, their respective types of immutable government; as when, for instance, they propose to civilize Tahiti by a wholesale importation of Protestantism and a Parliamentary system. Again, the positive spirit tends to consolidate order, by the rational development of a wise resignation to incurable political evils. Negative as is the character of this virtue, it affords an aid under the pains of the human lot which can not be dispensed with, and which has no place under the metaphysical polity, which regards political action as indefinite. Religious, and especially Christian resignation is, in plain truth, only a prudent temporizing, which enjoins the en-

duration of present suffering in view of an ultimate ineffable felicity. A true resignation—that is, a permanent disposition to endure, steadily, and without hope of compensation, all inevitable evils, can proceed only from a deep sense of the connection of all kinds of natural phenomena with invariable laws. If there are (as I doubt not there are) political evils which, like some personal sufferings, can not be remedied by science, science at least proves to us that they are incurable, so as to calm our restlessness under pain by the conviction that it is by natural laws that they are rendered insurmountable. Human nature suffers in its relations with the astronomical world, and the physical, chemical, and biological, as well as the political. How is it that we turbulently resist in the last case, while, in the others, we are calm and resigned, under pain as signal and as repugnant to our nature? Surely it is because the positive philosophy has as yet developed our sense of the natural laws only in regard to the simpler phenomena; and when the same sense shall have been awakened with regard to the more complex phenomena of social life, it will fortify us with a similar resignation, general or special, provisional or indefinite, in the case of political suffering. An habitual conviction of this kind can not but conduce to public tranquillity, by obviating vain efforts for redress, while it equally excludes the apathy which belongs to the passive character of religious resignation, by requiring submission to nothing but necessity, and encouraging the noblest exercise of human activity, wherever the analysis of the occasion opens any prospect whatever of genuine remedy. Finally, the positive philosophy befriends public order by bringing back men's understandings to a normal state through the influence of its method alone, before it has had time to establish any social theory. It dissipates disorder at once by imposing a series of indisputable scientific conditions on the study of political questions. By including social science in the scientific hierarchy, the positive spirit admits to success in this study only well-prepared and disciplined minds, so trained in the preceding departments of knowledge as to be fit for the complex problems of the last. The long and difficult preliminary elaboration must disgust and deter vulgar and ill-prepared minds, and subdue the most rebellious. This consideration, if there were no other, would prove the eminently organic tendency of the new political philosophy.

Its effect on
Progress.

I have dwelt on this influence of the Positive philosophy, in favor of Order, because it is that which is, as yet, least recognised, while the retrograde and stationary schools continue to found their claims upon that very point. There is less mistake about its favorable influence on Progress. In all its applications, the positive spirit is directly progressive; its express office being to increase our knowledge, and perfect the connection of its parts. Even the illustrations of progression are, at the present day, derived from the positive sciences. Whatever rational idea of social progress (that is, of continuous development, with a steady

tendency toward a determinate end) anywhere exists, should, as we shall hereafter see, be attributed to the unperceived influence of the positive philosophy, in disengaging this great notion from its present vague and fluctuating state by clearly assigning the aim and the general course of progress. Though Christianity certainly bore a part in originating the sentiment of social progress by proclaiming the superiority of the new law to the old, it is evident that the theological polity, proceeding upon an immutable type, which was realized only in the past, must have become radically incompatible with ideas of continuous progression, and manifests, on the contrary, a thoroughly retrograde character. The metaphysical polity, in its dogmatic aspect, has the same incompatibility, though the feeble connection of its doctrines renders it more accessible to the spirit of our time. Indeed, it was only after the decline of that school had begun, that ideas of progress took any general possession of the public mind. Thus the progressive, as well as the organic instinct, is to be developed by the positive philosophy alone.

The only idea of progress which is really proper to the revolutionary philosophy, is that of the continuous extension of liberty; that is, in positive terms, the gradual expansion of human powers. Now, even in the restricted and negative sense in which this is true—that of the perpetual diminution of obstacles—the positive philosophy is incontestably superior; for true liberty is nothing else than a rational submission to the preponderance of the laws of nature, in release from all arbitrary personal dictation. Decisions of sovereign assemblies have been called laws by the metaphysical polity, and have been fictitiously regarded as a manifestation of popular will. But no such homage paid to constitutional entities can disguise the arbitrary tendency which marks all the philosophies but the positive. The arbitrary can never be excluded while political phenomena are referred to Will, divine or human, instead of being connected with invariable natural laws; and liberty will remain illusory and precarious, notwithstanding all constitutional artifices, and whatever be the will to which we pay our daily obedience. By substituting the empire of genuine convictions for that of arbitrary will, the positive philosophy will put an end to the absolute liberty of the revolutionary school—the license of running from one extravagance to another—and, by establishing social principles, will meet the need at once of order and of progress. The special office of the revolutionary philosophy, that of extinguishing all but the historical existence of the ancient political system, is virtually committed to the positive principle; and, in fact, the power exercised by the critical doctrine in this direction has been owing to its serving the purpose of a provisional organ to the positive philosophy. In other sciences, the critical action, however energetic, is only a collateral consequence of its organic development; and the organic development which is fatal to the old theological system, involves in the same condemnation the metaphysical spirit, which is even the less logical of the two. The most serious

difficulty of contemporary politics is the condition of the lower classes; and in this case the positive philosophy affords practical amelioration most favorable to progress. The revolutionary polity opened only an insurrectionary issue to this difficulty, and merely shifted without solving the question. The question is not settled by opening a way to popular ambition, the gratification of which must be confined to a few (probably deserters from their class), and can do nothing to soothe the murmurs of the multitude. The general lot is even aggravated by the excitement of unreasonable hopes, and by the elevation of a few by the chances of the political game. As it is the inevitable lot of the majority of men to live on the more or less precarious fruits of daily labor, the great social problem is to ameliorate the condition of this majority, without destroying its classification, and disturbing the general economy: and this is the function of the positive polity, regarded as regulating the final classification of modern society. We shall have occasion to see hereafter that the mental reorganization, by habitually interposing a common moral authority between the working classes and the leaders of society, will offer the only regular basis of a pacific and equitable reconciliation of their chief conflicts, nearly abandoned in the present day to the savage discipline of a purely material antagonism.

In this brief sketch of the prominent characteristics of the positive polity, we have seen that, notwithstanding its severe estimate of the different existing parties, it commands access to the spirit of each by proving itself adapted to fulfil the aims which each has pursued too exclusively. It can also turn to the profit of its gradual ascendancy all the important incidents of existing society which it could not intercept. Whether in its hour of exultation, the one school manifests its insufficiency; or whether, in the despair of failure, the other shows a disposition to welcome new means of political action; or whether, again, a kind of universal torpor exhibits in its nakedness the aggregate of social needs, the new philosophy can always lay hold of a certain general issue to introduce, by a daily application, its fundamental instruction. In doing this, however, we must, it seems to me, lay aside all hope of a real conversion of the retrograde school. Setting aside some happy individual anomalies, such as always exist, and may become more frequent, it remains indisputable that there is such an antipathy in regard to social questions, between the theological and the positive philosophies, that the one can never estimate the other, and must disappear before it, without being able to undergo any radical modification of its present form. It is, in fact, not Order that the ancient *régime* aims at, but only its own preconception of a unique order, connected with its habits of mind and special interests, outside of which everything appears disorderly, and therefore indifferent. In the midst of its pretended devotion to general order, the retrograde school has often betrayed its tendency to care for the means more than the end. It is through the stationary school,

whose love of order is at least more impartial, if not more disinterested, that the positive polity must obtain the access which it could not hope for from the retrograde school. The metaphysical fictions of the parliamentary or constitutional philosophy may have diverted the mind of the stationary school from the true issue; but they have not attained such an ascendancy among the nations of the European continent as to render them deaf to the rational voice of the new philosophy, when it appeals to a school so openly disposed as is the stationary party to establish permanent order, on whatever principles, in modern society. Some useful action may therefore be hoped for through this medium. Nevertheless, I avow that it is on the revolutionary school alone that, in my opinion, we can expect that the positive polity can exercise a predominant influence, because this school is the only one that is always open to new action on behalf of progress. All its indispensable provisional doctrines will be absorbed by the new philosophy, while all its anarchical tendencies will be extinguished. There will be more explosions of revolutionary doctrine, as long as there are any remains of the retrograde system; for the natural course of events does not wait for our slow philosophical preparation. Whether in virtue of our intellectual condition, or of faults committed by existing governments, such outbreaks will occur; and perhaps they may be necessary to the uprooting of all hope of reconstructing social order on the old basis; but the positive philosophy will have foreseen such conflicts, and will take no part in them, further than to make use of the instruction that they afford. It will not interfere with the last operations of the revolutionary preponderance—knowing that they are the last. Nor will it paralyse so important a general disposition as that which constitutes the critical spirit, properly so called. By subordinating it for ever to the organic spirit, it will open to it broad political aims; it will afford it employment in destroying all metaphysical and theological interference, using for this end the satirical faculties which produced nothing in the last century, but which may be of a secondary value in influencing the development of the political character that will be finally assigned to each school. On the whole, we may hope that the positive philosophy will find grounds of support among the most advanced sections of the revolutionary school; and, whatever may be the hopes of that school from different political parties, it will be unable to dispense with the scientific superiority of the positive doctrine, which is the certain cause and guarantee of its gradual ascendancy.

It might have been hoped that the renovation we are anticipating would have been largely aided by the scientific class of society, as that which must be most familiar with positive science. But it is not so. At present, the anarchical tendencies of that class appear to be as strong as any. The indifference of scientific men to the most interesting and most urgent of all classes of problems may be partly accounted for by

Anarchical tendencies of the scientific class.

their deep intellectual disgust at the irrational character of the social doctrines of their day; but there are other reasons, even less honorable than this. They are themselves defective in scientific discipline. They abhor generalities, and have a systematic predilection for specialities. Under the idea of an organization of labor, they restrict their several pursuits within the narrowest bounds, without providing for the investigation of general relations; and thus, science becomes a pastime, grounded on no adequate preparation. It is not wonderful then that they have no interest in the entire generality which is the indispensable attribute of any philosophy that aspires to the moral government of mankind. Daily experience shows that, when learned bodies are brought into junction, for any political purpose, with sensible men who know nothing of science, but are accustomed to general views, the superiority rests with the latter, even in regard to matters which particularly concern the scientific class. As long as this is the case, the scientific class decrees its own political subordination. Their social sentiment is on a par with their ideas; and their egotism is aggravated by their devotion to specialities, when it ought to be subdued by a mastery of positive science; and would be so, if they could admit its general ideas. This is no fault of individuals among them. It is imputable to the defective scientific education of our time; and all that men of science are censurable for is their dogmatic denial of the need of a better. We must, however, abandon all hope of their co-operation in extending the positive method to the study of social phenomena. If we may anticipate anything in that direction, it must be from a rising generation for whom a more adequate training must be provided, and who will be led by a really scientific education beyond the special and isolated studies to which they now conceive themselves to be destined, and which constitute at present their only idea of scientific pursuit.

Conclusion.

I have now presented a view of the chief points of support which the present state of the social world affords to the renovating influence of the new political philosophy. This introduction may appear long; but it will abridge my future labor by furnishing my readers with a kind of rational programme of the conditions of the subject. Yet more, it indicates clearly what is apt to escape the notice of minds habituated to the superficial and irrational treatment of social questions,—the complete political inefficacy of the positive philosophy. The high practical utility of the theory I am about to offer can not be questioned by the haughtiest politician when it has once been demonstrated that the deepest want of modern society is, in its nature, eminently theoretical, and that, consequently, an intellectual, and then a moral reorganization must precede and direct the political.—This mutual relation being established, with a care proportionate to its importance, we must now return,—not again to quit it,—to the strictly scientific point of view of this work, and pursue the study of the phenomena of social physics in a disposition of mind as purely

speculative as that in which we surveyed the other fundamental sciences, with no other intellectual ambition than to discover the natural laws of a final order of phenomena, remarkable in the extreme, and never before examined in this way.

Before proceeding, however, to this direct examination, I propose to consider, briefly, the principal philosophical attempts to constitute social science; as a general estimate of this kind will tend to illustrate the nature and spirit of this last great department of positive philosophy.

CHAPTER II.

PRINCIPAL PHILOSOPHICAL ATTEMPTS TO CONSTITUTE A SOCIAL SYSTEM.

WE have seen that the complex and special nature of social phenomena is the chief reason why the study History of Social Science. has remain imperfect to the last; it being impossible to analyze them till the simpler departments of science were understood, and till the great discovery of cerebral physiology had opened a rational access to their examination. To this main consideration we must now add another, which explains more specially why it has never till now been possible to establish social science on a positive basis. This consideration is, that we have not till now been in possession of a range of facts wide enough to disclose the natural laws of social phenomena.

The first rise of speculative doctrine has always, in all sciences, taken place from the theological method, as I have shown. In the case of the anterior sciences, this did not preclude the formation of a positive theory, when once there had been a sufficient perpetuity of phenomena. The materials were ready before there were observers qualified to make a scientific use of them. But, even if observers had been ready, the phenomena of social life were not ample and various enough in early days to admit of their philosophical analysis. Many and profound modifications of the primitive civilization were necessary to afford a sufficient basis for experiment. We shall see hereafter how indispensable was the operation of the theological philosophy in directing the earliest progress of the human mind and of society. Our present business is to notice the obstacles which it presented to the formation of a true social science. It was not, in fact, till modern political revolutions, and especially the French, had proved the insufficiency of the old political system for the social needs of the age that the great idea of Progress could acquire sufficient firmness, distinctness and generality, to serve a scientific purpose. The direction of the social

movement was not determined ; and social speculation was embarrassed by fanciful notions of oscillating or circular movements, such as even now cause hesitation in able but ill-prepared minds as to the real nature of human progression. Till it is known in what this progression consists, the fact itself may be disputed : since, from such a point of view, humanity may appear to be doomed to an arbitrary succession of identical phases, without ever experiencing a new transformation, gradually directed toward an end determined by the whole constitution of human nature.

Thus all idea of social progress was interdicted to the philosophers of antiquity, for want of materials of political observation. The most eminent and sagacious of them were subject to the common tendency to suppose the contemporary state of things inferior to that of former times. This supposition was the more natural and legitimate because the philosophical works which contained this view coincided, as to date, with the decline of the Greek and Roman *régime*. This decline, which, in relation to the whole of human history, was in fact progress, could not appear so to the ancients, who did not anticipate what was to come. I have before intimated that the first dawning sense of human progression was inspired by Christianity, which, by proclaiming the superiority of the law of Jesus to that of Moses, gave form to the idea of a more perfect state replacing a less perfect, which had been necessary as a preparation. Though Catholicism* was, in this, simply the organ of expression of human reason, the service it thus rendered entitles it not the less, as all true philosophers will agree, to our eternal gratitude. But, apart from the mischief of the mysticism and vague obscurity which belong to all applications of the theological method, such a beginning could not possibly suggest any scientific view of social progression : for any such progression was barred at once by the claim of Christianity to be the ultimate stage at which the human mind must stop. The social efficacy of the theological philosophy is now exhausted, and it has become therefore retrograde, as we have seen ; but the condition of continuity is an indispensable element in the conception of progress ; an idea which would have no power to guide social speculation if it represented progress as limited by its nature to a determinate condition, attained long ago.

It is thus evident that the conception of progress belongs exclusively to the positive philosophy. This philosophy alone can indicate the final term which human nature will be for ever approaching and never attaining ; and it alone can prescribe the general course of this gradual development. Accordingly, the only rational ideas of continuous advance are of modern origin,

* This great idea belongs essentially to Catholicism, from which Protestantism derived it in an imperfect and corrupt manner,—not only by recurring irrationally to the period of the primitive Church, but also by offering for popular guidance the most barbarous and dangerous part of the Scriptures—that which relates to Hebrew antiquity. Moham medanism pursued the same practice, and thus instituted a mere imitation of Judaic barbarism, without introducing any real amelioration.

and relate especially to the expansion of the positive sciences which gave birth to them. It may even be worth observing that the first satisfactory view of general progression was proposed by a philosopher whose genius was essentially mathematical; and therefore conversant with the simplest form of the scientific spirit. Whatever may be the value of this observation, it is certain that Pascal was animated by a sense of the progress of the sciences when he uttered the immortal aphorism: "The entire succession of men, through the whole course of ages, must be regarded as one man, always living and incessantly learning." Whatever may have been the actual effect of this first ray of light, it must be admitted that the idea of continuous progress had no scientific consistency, or public regard, till after the memorable controversy, at the beginning of the last century, about a general comparison of the ancients and moderns. In my view, that solemn discussion constitutes a ripe event in the history of the human mind, which thus, for the first time, declared that it had made an irreversible advance. It is needless to point out that the leaders of this great philosophical movement derived all the force of their arguments from the scientific spirit: but it is remarkable that their most illustrious adversaries committed the inconsistency of declaring that they preferred the philosophy of Descartes to that which preceded it.—From this scientific origin the conception spread more and more in a political direction, till, at length, the French revolution manifested the tendency of humanity toward a political system, indeterminate enough, but radically different from the old system. This was the negative view of social progress; ineffectual in itself, but necessary as a preparation for the advent of the positive philosophy, when it should have made its induction from social phenomena, and ascertained their laws.

Having thus seen how impossible was the formation of social science in ancient times, we are in a condition to appreciate the attempts which were here and there prematurely made. The foregoing analysis shows that the political conditions of the subject are, generally, precisely coincident with the scientific, so as to retard by their competition the possibility of establishing social science on a positive basis. This obstacle has existed even up to our own generation, who can only make a mere beginning in seeking in the past a basis for social science, in virtue of their experience of a revolutionary period, and of their opening perception of the positive principle, as they see it established in the other departments of human knowledge, including that of intellectual and moral phenomena. It would be waste of time, and a departure from my object, to analyze fully the attempts of ancient philosophers to form a political science which was thus clearly impracticable in their day; and I shall therefore merely point out the essential vice of each speculation, thereby justifying the judgment that we have just passed by anticipation, and disclosing the true nature of an enterprise which remains to be begun.

Aristotle's
"Politics."

The name of Aristotle first presents itself, his memorable "Politics" being one of the finest productions of antiquity, and furnishing the general type of most of the works on that subject that have followed. This treatise could not possibly disclose any sense of the progressive tendencies of humanity, nor the slightest glimpse of the natural laws of civilization; and it was necessarily occupied by metaphysical discussions of the principle and form of government: but it is truly marvellous that any mind should have produced a work so advanced, and even nearer to a positive view than his other works, at a time when political observation was restricted to a uniform and preliminary social state, and when the nascent positive spirit lived feebly in geometry alone. The analysis by which he refuted the dangerous fancies of Plato and his imitators about community of property evidences a rectitude, a sagacity, and a strength, which, in their application to such subjects, have been rarely equalled, and never surpassed. Thus much I have said, in the way of homage to the first manifestation of human genius on the great subject of government, notwithstanding the evident influence that it has exercised upon philosophical meditation, from its own day to this.

The works which succeeded need not detain us. They were merely an accumulation of fresh materials, classified by the type that Aristotle had furnished. The next period worth notice is that in which the preponderance of the positive spirit in the study of phenomena caused the first clear comprehension of the meaning of general laws, and in which the idea of human progress began to assume some consistency; and, to find these two conditions in concurrence, we can hardly go further back than the middle of the last century. The first and most important series of works

Montesquieu.

which then presents itself is that of Montesquieu, first, in his treatise on the "Greatness and Decline of the Romans," and afterward in his "Spirit of Laws." The great strength of this memorable work appears to me to lie in its tendency to regard political phenomena as subject to invariable laws, like all other phenomena. This is manifested at the very outset, in the preliminary chapter, in which, for the first time in the history of the human mind, the general idea of *law* is directly defined, in relation to all, even to political subjects, in the same sense in which it is applied in the simplest positive investigations. The progress of science which had been effected by the labors of Descartes, Galileo, and Kepler, a century before, had rendered the most advanced minds familiar with an incomplete notion of progress. Montesquieu's conception was a generalization of this incomplete notion: and, instead of denying originality to so eminent a service, we may well be amazed that such a conception should be offered, before the positive method had extended beyond the simplest natural phenomena,—being scarcely admitted into the department of chemistry, and not yet heard of in the study of living bodies. And, in the other view, a man must have been in advance of his time, who could

conceive of natural laws as the basis of social speculation and action, while all other able men were talking about the absolute and indefinite power of legislators, when armed with due authority, to modify at will the social state. The very qualities, however, which give its pre-eminence to Montesquieu's work prove to us the impossibility of success in an enterprise so premature in regard to its proposed object, the very conditions of which were still impracticable. The project of the work is not fulfilled in its course; and, admirable as are some of its details, it falls back, like all others, upon the primitive type offered by Aristotle's treatise. We find no reference of social phenomena to the laws whose existence was announced at the outset; nor any scientific selection and connection of facts. The general nature of his practical conclusions seems to show how far the execution of his work was from corresponding with his original intention; for his desultory review of the whole mass of social subjects ends in his setting up, as a universal political type, the English parliamentary system, the insufficiency of which, for the satisfaction of modern social requirements, was not, it is true, so conspicuous in his day as it is now, but still discernible enough, as we shall have occasion to see. It was honorable to Montesquieu's philosophical character, that he steered wide of the metaphysical Utopias which lay in his way, and resorted rather to the narrow anchorage at which he rested; but such a resort, so narrow and so barren, proves that he had wandered away from the course announced by himself. The only part of the book which bears any true marks of sustained positivity is that in which the social influence of permanent local causes—of that which, in political language, we may call climate—is considered. This view, evidently derived from Hippocrates, manifests a tendency to attach observed phenomena to forces able to produce them, as in natural philosophy; but the aim has failed. The true political influence of climate is misconceived, and usually much exaggerated, through the common error of analyzing a mere modification before the main action is fully understood; which is much like trying to determine planetary perturbations before ascertaining the chief gravitations. This error was inevitable under Montesquieu's necessary ignorance of the great social laws, while he was bent upon introducing the positive spirit into the domain of politics. He naturally betook himself to the only class of social speculations which seemed fit for his purpose. Pardonable or unavoidable as was his failure, it is a new evidence of the vast gap which lies open at the outset of the science. Montesquieu did not even perceive, any more than others, the fact which should regulate the whole political theory of climate;—that local physical causes, very powerful in the early days of civilization, lose their force in proportion as human development admits of their being neutralized: a view which would certainly have occurred to Montesquieu if he had possessed himself of the fundamental notion of human progression before he treated of the political theory of climate. Thus, this great philosopher proposed

a grand enterprise which was premature in two senses, and in which he could not but fail,—first, by bringing social phenomena under the operation of the positive spirit before it had been introduced into the system of biological science; and again, in proposing social reorganization during a period marked out for revolutionary action. This explains why a mind so eminent should have exercised, through its very advancement, an immediate influence very inferior to that of a mere sophist, like Rousseau, whose intellectual state, much better adapted to the disposition of his contemporaries, allowed him to constitute himself, with so remarkable a success, the natural organ of the revolutionary movement of the time. It is by our posterity that Montesquieu will be duly estimated, when the extension of the positive philosophy to social speculations will disclose the high value of the precocious attempts which, though doomed to failure, yield the light by which the general question must be laid down.

After Montesquieu, the next great addition to Sociology (which is the term I may be allowed to invent to designate Social Physics) was made by Condorcet, proceeding on the views suggested by his illustrious friend Turgot. Turgot's suggestions with regard to the theory of the perfectability of human nature were doubtless the basis of Condorcet's speculation exhibited in his *Historical Sketch of the Progress of the Human Mind*, in which the scientific conception of the social progression of the race was, for the first time, clearly and directly proposed, with a distinct assertion of its primary importance. The strength of the work lies in its introduction, in which Condorcet exhibits his general idea, and proposes his philosophical project of studying the radical connection of the various social states of mankind. These few immortal pages leave really nothing to be desired in regard to the position of the sociological question at large, which will, in my opinion, rest, through all future time, on this admirable statement. The execution is far from corresponding with the greatness of the project; but no failure in the carrying out can impair the value of the design. The success and the failure may both be easily accounted for by a consideration of the scientific and political knowledge of the time. The expansion of the natural sciences, and especially of chemistry, during the second half of the last century, had thoroughly established in the best minds of the period the idea of positive laws; and the study of living bodies, in the departments of anatomy and taxonomy, if not of physiology, began to assume a truly scientific character. Condorcet's mind was rationally prepared by mathematical study, under the direction of D'Alembert: by his philosophical position in society, he had all the advantage of the expansion of physico-chemical science then taking place; and of the labors of Haller, Jussieu, Linnæus, Buffon, and Vicq-d'Azir in the principal departments of biological knowledge; and it was natural that he should conceive the enterprise of carrying into the speculative study of social phenomena the same positive

method which, from the time of Descartes, had been regenerating the entire system of human knowledge. With equal advantages, and his higher order of genius, Montesquieu would, no doubt, have achieved higher results than he has left us. Still, even Condorcet's project was premature, though less so than that of Montesquieu; for a great deficiency remained in the imperfect state of biological knowledge, and especially in the exclusion of intellectual and moral phenomena from treatment by the positive method: and the unfortunate Condorcet did not live to see them assume their proper place. In their absence, he lost himself in wanderings after an indefinite perfectibility, and chimerical and absurd anticipations. Such aberrations, affecting such men, are a lesson to us as to the impossibility of unaided reason overleaping the intervals which have not been steadily explored in the gradual advance of the human mind. As to the political circumstances of the time—the idea of social progression was certainly more distinct and more firm in Condorcet's than in Montesquieu's time: for the tendency of Society to relinquish the ancient social system was becoming evident, though the new system which was to succeed it was but vaguely suspected, even where it was not wholly misconceived. The evil influence of the revolutionary doctrine is singularly exhibited in Condorcet's work, in the form of an inconsistency which must strike every reader. The human race is there represented as having attained a vast degree of perfection at the close of the eighteenth century, while the author attributes an entirely retrogressive influence to almost every doctrine, institution, and preponderant power throughout the whole past. Whereas, the total progress accomplished can be nothing else than the result of the various kinds of partial progress realized since the beginning of civilization, in virtue of the gradual onward course of human nature. Such a state of things as Condorcet describes would be nothing else than a perpetual miracle; and it is not to him, therefore, that we can look for any disclosure of the laws of human development, any appreciation of the transitory nature of the revolutionary philosophy, or any general conception of the future of society. Here again we recognise the philosophical superiority of Montesquieu, who, not having Condorcet's opportunities of estimating the revolutionary spirit, had been able to free his mind from those critical prejudices in regard to the past which formed the views of all around him, and had injured his own earlier speculations. This brief survey of the labors of these great men shows us that the basis of true social science can be fixed only after the revolutionary spirit has begun to decline; and thus the political, as well as the scientific indications of the subject point to our own time as that in which such a science is to be founded. Condorcet gave us a clear exposition of the nature of the enterprise; but the whole accomplishment yet remains to be achieved.

These two attempts are really all that have been made in the right road to social science; for they are the only speculations

which have been based on the aggregate of historical facts. I shall have occasion, further on, to notice some attempts which are not worthy to rank with these, and which merely testify to the existing need of social science by showing how various are the directions in which it is sought. On one subject, however, I shall here make a few observations, in order to illustrate further the aim and spirit of my own efforts to constitute a basis for social science. That subject is the nature and object of what is called Political Economy.

Political economy. We can not impute to political economists any design to establish social science; for it is the express assertion of the most classical among them that their subject is wholly distinct from, and independent of general political science. Yet, sincere as they doubtless are in their dogma of isolation, they are no less sincerely persuaded that they have applied the positive spirit to economical science; and they perpetually set forth their method as the type by which all social theories will be finally regenerated. As this pretension has obtained credit enough to procure the establishment of several professorships for this species of instruction, I find myself obliged to explain why it is that I can not, as would be very desirable, propose to carry on my enterprise from the point reached by these philosophers, but must begin from the beginning. My criticism on political economy in this place is merely for the purpose of showing that it is not the philosophical creation that we want; and I must refer to my exposition as a whole any objectors to my summary estimate of political economy.

It is unfavorable to the philosophical pretensions of the economists that, being almost invariably lawyers or literary men, they have had no opportunity of discipline in that spirit of positive rationality which they suppose they have introduced into their researches. Precluded by their education from any idea of scientific observation of even the smallest phenomena, from any notion of natural laws, from all perception of what demonstration is, they must obviously be incapable of applying, impromptu, a method in which they have had no practice to the most difficult of all analyses. The only philosophical preparation that they can show is a set of vague precepts of general logic, susceptible of no real use; and thus, their conceptions present a purely metaphysical character. There is one great exceptional case which I must at once exempt from this criticism—that of the illustrious philosopher, Adam Smith, who made no pretension to found a new special science, but merely proposed (what he admirably achieved) to illustrate some leading points of social philosophy by luminous analyses relating to the division of employments, the function of money, the general action of banks, etc., and other chief portions of the industrial developments of the human race. Though involved, like all his contemporaries, in the metaphysical philosophy, a mind of such quality as his could not, however distinguished in the metaphysical school, be blinded by its illusions, because his preparatory studies had impressed him with a sense of what constitutes a true scientific

method, as is clearly proved by the valuable sketches of the philosophical history of the sciences, and of astronomy in particular, which are published among his posthumous works. The economists have no right to claim Adam Smith as their authority while the whole dogmatic part of their science presents a merely metaphysical character, dressed up with special forms and a list of scientific terms, taken bodily from former philosophical expositions,—as, for instance, from the theologico-metaphysical writings of Spinoza. The contemporary history of this so-called science confirms this judgment of its nature. The most certain signs of conceptions being scientific are continuousness and fertility: and when existing works, instead of being the result and development of those that have gone before, have a character as personal as that of their authors, and bring the most fundamental ideas into question; and when, again, the dogmatic constitution provides for no real and sustained progress, but only for a barren reproduction of old controversies, it is clear that we are dealing with no positive doctrine whatever, but merely with theological or metaphysical dissertations. And this is the spectacle which political economy has presented for half a century past. If our economists were really the scientific successors of Adam Smith, they would show us where they had carried on and completed their master's doctrine, and what new discoveries they had added to his primitive surveys; but looking with an impartial eye upon their disputes on the most elementary ideas of value, utility, production, etc., we might imagine ourselves present at the strangest conferences of the scholiasts of the Middle Ages about the attributes of their metaphysical entities; which indeed economical conceptions resemble more and more, in proportion as they are dogmatized and refined upon. The result in both cases is, but too often, the perversion of the valuable indications of popular good sense, which become confused, inapplicable, and productive only of idle disputes about words. All intelligent men, for instance, understand what is meant by the terms *product* and *producer*; but, from the time that economical metaphysics undertook to define them, the idea of production has become through vicious generalizations, so indeterminate, that conscientious and clear writers are obliged to use circuitous explanations to avoid the use of terms which have become obscure and equivocal. Such abuse is analogous to that which metaphysics has introduced into the study of the human understanding, with regard, for instance, to the general ideas of analysis and synthesis and the like. The avowal of the economists that their science is isolated from that of social philosophy in general, is itself a sufficient confirmation of my judgment; for it is a universal fact in social, as in biological science, that all the various general aspects of the subject are scientifically one, and rationally inseparable, so that they can not be illustrated but by each other. Thus, the economical or industrial analysis of society can not be effected in the positive method, apart from its intellectual, moral, and political analysis, past and present.

And thus does the boasted isolation of political economy testify to its being grounded on a metaphysical basis.

This is the dogmatic aspect of the science. But it would be unjust to forget that, looking at this doctrine historically, and more with a political than a scientific view, it constitutes a final essential part of the system of critical philosophy, which has exercised an indispensable, though transitory influence during the revolutionary period. Political Economy has borne an honorable share in this vast intellectual conflict, by thoroughly discrediting the industrial polity of the Middle Ages, which became more and more injurious, in its descent to our time, to the industry which it had once protected. Such is the credit due to Political Economy. Its worst practical fault is that, like the other portions of the metaphysical philosophy, it systemizes anarchy; and the danger is only aggravated by its use of modern scientific forms. It has not been satisfied with criticising, in much too absolute a way, the industrial polity of the old European sovereignties, without which the industrial development of modern times could never have taken place: it goes far beyond this; it sets up as a universal dogma the absence of all regulating intervention whatever as the best means of promoting the spontaneous rise of society; so that, on every serious occasion, this doctrine can respond to urgent practical needs only by the uniform reproduction of this systematic negation. Because it perceives a natural tendency in society to arrange itself in a certain order, not seeing in this a suggestion of an order to be promoted by social arrangements, it preaches an absence of regulation which, if carried out to the limit of the principle, would lead to the methodical abolition of all government. But here we meet the compensating virtue that political economy insists on all human interests being bound up together, and therefore susceptible of a permanent reconciliation. Though this may be simply the expression of the convictions of popular good sense, philosophy owes a tribute of eternal gratitude to the economists for their excellent service in extinguishing the disastrous and immoral prejudice which concluded the amelioration of the condition of some to be obtained by the deterioration of the condition of somebody else; and that the total amount of wealth was always the same; which is as much as denying industrial development altogether. Notwithstanding this great service, political economy has dangerous tendencies through its opposition to the institution of all industrial discipline. As each serious difficulty arises, in the course of industrial development, political economy ignores it. In the great question of Machinery this is remarkably illustrated. This is one of the cases of inconvenience inherent in every industrial improvement, from its tendency to disturb, more or less, and for a longer or shorter time, the mode of life of the laboring classes. Instead of recognising in the urgent remonstrances called forth by this chasm in our social order one of the most eminent and pressing occasions for the application of social science, our economists can do nothing better than

repeat, with pitiless pedantry, their barren aphorism of absolute industrial liberty. Without considering that all human questions, practically regarded, are reducible to mere questions of time, they venture to reply to all complaints that, in the long-run, all classes, and especially the one most injured on the existing occasion, will enjoy a real and permanent amelioration; a reply which will be regarded as derisive, as long as man's life is incapable of being indefinitely lengthened. Such a doctrine publishes its own weakness by showing its want of relation to the aggregate of our practical needs. Would the copyists who were thrown out of employment by the invention of printing have been completely consoled by being convinced that, in the next generation, there would be an equal number of persons living by printing, and many more in succeeding centuries? Yet such is the consolation habitually offered by political economy; and if there were no other evidence, this inefficiency would prove its unfitness to direct, as it proposes to do, the industrial expansion of modern society. And thus it stands condemned, as to its scientific pretensions, and in spite of some important services, from the political as much as from the scientific point of view.

The temporary predilection of men's minds for political economy is, in truth, a new and strong illustration of the instinctive need which prevails to subject social researches to positive methods; and if that were once done, the interest in political economy would disappear. Various other signs of the times testify to the same disposition, which indeed pervades the whole action of our intelligences. I will refer to only one among the multitude of those signs; but it is one which aids in bringing about the satisfaction of the need. I mean the growing inclination for historical study, and the great improvement in that kind of research within two centuries.

Bossuet was, unquestionably, the first who proposed to survey, from a lofty point of view, the whole of the past of society. We can not adopt his explanations, easily derived from theological resources; but the spirit of universality, so thoroughly appreciated, and, under the circumstances, so wonderfully sustained, will always preserve this admirable composition* as a model, suggesting the true result of historical analysis;—the rational co-ordination of the great series of human events, according to a single design; which must, however, be more genuine and complete than that of Bossuet. There is no doubt that this fine piece of instruction has contributed, during both the past and the present century, to the improvement in the character of the chief historical compositions, especially in France and England, and afterward in Germany. Still, history has more of a literary and descriptive than of a scientific character. It does not yet establish a rational filiation in the series of social events, so as to admit (as in other sciences, and allowing for its greater complexity) of any degree of systematic prevision of their future succession. Perhaps

* "Discourse on Natural History."

the imputation of rashness cast upon the mere proposal of such a treatment of history is the strongest confirmation we could have of its present unscientific character: for such prevision is everywhere else admitted to be the ultimate scientific test. Another evidence exists in the easy credit daily obtained by misty historical theories which explain nothing, and which testify to the literary and metaphysical bias under which history is studied, by minds unacquainted with the great scientific movement of modern times. Again, another evidence is the dogmatic separation which it is attempted to keep up between history and politics. Still, we must admit the growing taste of our age for historical labors to be a happy symptom of philosophical regeneration, however the inclination may be wasted upon superficial and misleading works, sometimes written with a view to immediate popularity by ministering to the popular taste. One of the most promising incidents of the time is the introduction into the highly metaphysical class of jurists of an historical school which has undertaken to connect, during every period of history, the whole of its legislation with the corresponding state of society.

If the preceding chapter disclosed the destination of the great philosophical creation of which I am treating, the present exhibits its necessity, and the opportuneness of the time. Attempts to constitute a science of society would not have been so obstinate, nor pursued in ways so various, if an instinctive need of it had not been deeply felt. At the same time, the general analysis of the chief efforts hitherto made explains their failure, and convinces us that the whole enterprise remains to be even conceived of in a manner which will secure its accomplishment. Nothing now prevents our going on to the fulfilment of this proposed task, by entering, in the next chapter, on the study of the method in Social Physics. We have so ascertained and cleared our ground, by first taking a survey of our condition from a political point of view, and then reviewing the preparation made, that we are at full liberty to follow the speculative development that will prevail throughout the rest of this book, which will close with the co-ordination between the theory and practice of Social Physics.

NOTE The foregoing extract, it is believed, will give a tolerable idea of the bearing of the Positive Philosophy on Social Science, and show that Sociology is a Science, connected with, and depending on, every previous one; thus mathematically demonstrating the utter futility of attempting, henceforth to construct the Social fabric on any other basis than POSITIVISM.—*Publisher.*



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