

to the position which philosophical thought seems to occupy in our day. It would appear as if, at the end of the nineteenth century, philosophy was paving the way for a fuller and more original display of the creative forces of the human soul, such as manifest themselves in poetry, art, and religion; for it is a fact, that for the moment these creative powers appear to have receded somewhat into the background, whilst, at the same time, much is expected from them. Wherever the vital forces in a society, or in an age, have not been absolutely exhausted—and I can find no sign of this in the present civilisations of Western Europe—such periods, where the higher creative and spiritual powers seem to be temporarily in abeyance, have always, sooner or later, been followed by periods of greater vigour and productiveness. Auguste Comte, in studying the historical developments of human thought, felt himself justified in laying down his well-known law of the three states,—the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive,—as the rationale of the development of the human mind in its intellectual progress. Formulæ such as that of Comte, or those contained in the doctrines of Hegel or Spencer, all suffer from the defect that they give no intelligible answer to the question, “What is going to happen when the final stage is arrived at?” All historical evidence goes to show that no agency of progress has ever continued to work unchallenged and uninterrupted. All processes in nature and society seem, in course of time, to exhaust themselves and call forth counter-movements which gain force, as it were,