

by vagueness, seemed to have acquired, both with Mill and Comte, definite forms at an unusually early age. Both also took at this early age a lively interest in social questions. But whereas for Mill the private and personal influence of his father ruled supreme and fixed permanently some of his mental characteristics, the great school for Comte was the *École Polytechnique* in Paris. According to his own statement,¹ in a letter to

¹ The letter to Mill is dated 22nd July 1842; to the same year belongs also the publication of the sixth and last volume of the 'Cours de Philosophie Positive.' This contains an elaborate preface occupied mostly with personal explanations. Comte there complains of the want of support and appreciation of his philosophical labours on the part of the members of the governing body of the *École Polytechnique*. To this he attributes his failure to gain a professorship, his connection having been limited to that of an entrance examiner. A reactionary spirit very different from that which governed the earlier period, when in 1814 Comte had entered the school, had, after a crisis in 1816, gradually supervened in the direction of the establishment. This change corresponds in time with the change which took place in Comte's own ideas, when, in the course of the composition of his great work, he came to deal with the biological and political sciences. He recognised more and more, what he had already indicated in an earlier tract (see above, p. 193, note), that the purely mathematical spirit, the analytical method, or, as he called it, the *esprit de détail*, must as we ascend in the sciences be supplanted or compensated by the *esprit d'ensemble*. This development of his own opinions, to which he gave

full expression in the 57th chapter of the 'Cours,' is significant, and was accompanied by his personal experience of the disproportionate encouragement which the mathematical or analytic spirit enjoyed at the expense of what we may now term the synoptic spirit. He had at one time hoped to introduce what he termed *la vraie spiritualité moderne*, through Guizot, whom he reluctantly approached with a proposal of founding, at the Collège de France, a Chair devoted directly to the general history of the positive sciences. But the want of sympathy which Guizot himself exhibited towards the purely mathematical tendencies resulted finally not in a support of the *philosophie positive*, but in the "dangerous restoration of an academy happily suppressed by Bonaparte." This was the restoration of the "Académie de Science Morale" referred to in vol. i. p. 145 of this History. "It is necessary," Comte says, "carefully to distinguish the two schools which, spontaneously antagonistic, divide between themselves, though so far very unequally, the general rule of rational positivism: the mathematical school, properly so called, still dominating without serious contention the whole of the inorganic studies, and the biological school, striving feebly at present to maintain, against the irrational ascendancy of the former,