

surface.”¹ Moreover, Lachelier endeavours to show how the mechanical connections are bound up with the essence of human thinking and are as such purely formal, whereas the actual content of this form is given to us not through thought but through sensation or sight. “Thought which would rest exclusively on the mechanical unity in nature lies, as it were, on the surface of things without penetrating into the things themselves: divorced from reality it would be itself deficient in reality, and would be no more than the empty form or abstract possibility of thought. We must therefore find the means at once of making thought real and reality intelligible; and this can only be done through a second unity which stands in the same relation to the matter of phenomena as the first stands to their form.”²

Whilst Lachelier thus dwells upon the contingent in Nature, a subject which has received further treatment in the writings of Émile Boutroux,³ Charles Renouvier was led away from the positivist creed which he originally embraced by a different line of argument. He recognised the insufficiency of positivism by realising that contradictions and discontinuities meet us everywhere in our contemplation of the world of nature as well as the facts of history. He thus abandoned his original endeavour to bring unity and order into his philosophical views by reducing qualitative to quantitative differences and by finding imperceptible transitions be-

¹ ‘Du Fondement de l’Induction,’ p. 73.

² Ibid., p. 77.

³ ‘De la Contingence des Lois de la Nature’ (3rd ed., 1898).