

this to an understanding of the nature and life of society, *i.e.*, of a community of rational beings. In fact Comte opposed the sensational and analytic philosophy current in France before his time, which had grown up under the influence of English thought.

35.
Influences
that
moulded
his ideas.

Two main influences assisted in the moulding of Comte's ideas: he lived during the age of the great French mathematicians who brought about the consummation of the Newtonian system of mechanics applied to cosmic molar and latterly also to molecular phenomena. He lived also in the age when the biological sciences had been reformed by such intellects as Cuvier, de Blainville, and Bichat. But he also came under the influence of historical philosophers such as Turgot and Condorcet, and of social reformers such as Saint Simon. The former influences taught him what he considered to be the final and correct method of thought, the mathematical or exact method; they also taught him the great difference between the phenomena of inanimate and animated nature. The latter directed his attention to the problems of the regeneration of society. This he looked upon as a phenomenon to be studied biologically and historically. As biology had been added to physics, so sociology had to be added to biology.

Comte did not accept the theory of descent then vaguely conceived by Geoffroy and fancifully elaborated by Lamarck, but he adopted the law of progress and of the perfectibility of the human race as put forward with eloquence and fervour by Condorcet. In looking for an explanation of this characteristic of the human as dis-