

at thirteen he had rejected all historic religion, including Theism. James Mill brought up his son in the conviction that 'concerning the origin of things nothing whatever can be known.' Christianity, he held with the school of Bentham in general, is not only false but pernicious, the God of orthodoxy being 'the most perfect conception of wickedness which the human mind can devise.' . . . But, as J. S. Mill observes, during the period in which he grew up, opinion in England on religion was more compressed than it has been earlier or later. If the Utilitarians were not to throw away all chance of influence they must observe a rule of strict reticence in public; though, as a matter of fact, their real opinions were well understood. Comte was more fortunately situated in this respect. Even under the restored monarchy he could speak as he liked in lectures as in writing; and he never left any doubt that he regarded every form of theology, including the Christian, as superseded, to use his own expression, for all minds at the level of their age."¹

The school of ethics which was represented in France by Comte, in this country by Mill and later on by Spencer, has been variously termed naturalistic or positivist, though Spencer refuses to be considered as influenced by the positivism of Comte. For our present purposes we may more conveniently term it the sociological school, inasmuch as it is distinguished from the earlier theological ethics which had its anchorage in a

¹ Nevertheless Comte was at one with the Jacobin programme in imitating in his later positive polity the hierarchical system of the

Roman Catholic Church, though emptying it of its specifically Christian content.