

On the other side Comte desired to lay bare and apply the approved logic of the exact and natural sciences, and to use it for the solution of practical problems which his master Saint-Simon and some of his disciples had attempted to solve by hasty generalisations. Neither the work of Hegel nor that of Comte, neither the logic of the idea nor that of science was so easily grasped as these two leaders of thought might perhaps imagine; but they have respectively defined problems which have not ceased to occupy the attention of critics and analysts ever since. Unconscious, perhaps, of the difficulty which equally besets both these tasks when treated in a purely theoretical manner, they nevertheless both resorted to an empirical method which was easier and certainly more interesting, namely, the historical method. Both founded a philosophy of history.

A study of history was, in both cases, to define as well as to exemplify the main principle or fundamental truth which each of these two thinkers respectively wished to establish; and accordingly the two chief works in which they embodied their main thesis are, to a large extent, historical. The result is more definite in Comte's work than it is in that of Hegel. Comte's main idea is that expressed in the celebrated 'Law of the Three States,'¹ which in his earlier treatise he ex-

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¹ The 'Law of the Three States,' which Comte repeats endlessly throughout his writings, has been traced to other thinkers before him, and similarly the dialectical formula of Hegel—thesis, antithesis, and synthesis—has been traced back to the writings of Fichte. So far as Comte is concerned, there is an interesting and instructive passage in

Ravaisson's 'Rapport' (p. 54 *sqq.*), frequently quoted already. He traces it to Burdin, a medical friend of Saint-Simon's, who in 1813, in a conversation reported by the latter, remarked that all sciences had begun by being conjectural, and that they must end by being positive; adding that some sciences arrive earlier at this stage than