

vailing enthusiasm and gave just enough expression to it not to deprive it of its mystical depth and poetic colouring. We know that this was followed by a great disillusionment from which the nation has probably not yet recovered.

On the other side Comte lived, as he was well aware, in an age of complete mental and social anarchy, of a disintegration of thought and of political floundering. His task was that of a reformer and reorganiser. But he had to contend with two prevailing errors or maladies which surrounded him: the spirit of reaction on the one side and of extreme radicalism on the other. He was not less prophetic than Hegel, though much more definite and clear. He was full of enthusiasm, but not gifted with that persuasive eloquence without which constructive thinkers in his country rarely gain a hearing. He was not an orator who could charm or harangue large audiences. His writings did not appeal, in the earlier stages of his thought, to the emotions. In this respect his opponents, on all sides, had the advantage over him.

For in spite of the steady cultivation of the exact and natural sciences which had continued all through the Revolution and the Restoration, the age in which Comte lived was a literary, poetical, and rhetorical age. The three schools of thought which then prevailed were eloquently, though hardly methodically, represented by brilliant writers and orators; such were de Maistre and de Lammenais on the side of reaction—not to mention great preachers like Lacordaire—such were Fourier and Proudhon on the side of Socialism; and, above all, Victor Cousin, the eloquent exponent of spiritualism