

by Huxley,¹ that it was not Comte himself but Positivism modified under the influence of Mill, Spencer, and Darwin which became such a prolific vein of thought in Comte's own country.

¹ The discussion of this subject by Huxley in two of his earlier Addresses (see 'Lay Sermons, &c.,' 1891, pp. 104, 128) is still of great interest in the history of philosophical thought as distinguished from that of science and philosophy themselves; for he has shown how a long list of flagrant mistakes of fact and theory in science, philosophy, and history, which he has collected from Comte's works, has not stood in the way of the marked and lasting influence which Comte's philosophy has had, first in this country and then on the Continent; so much so that the term Positivism and the spirit of positive research has outlived the many attacks made upon it. It is well worth while to inquire into the hidden causes of so remarkable a phenomenon in the history of Thought. So far as Huxley himself is concerned he sums up his opinion of Comte in the words: "I shall be sorry if what I have [said] should lead any to suppose that I think M. Comte's works are worthless; or that I do not heartily respect and sympathise with those who have been impelled by him to think deeply upon social problems and to strive nobly for social regeneration. It is the virtue of that impulse, I believe, which will save the name and fame of Auguste Comte from oblivion. As for his philosophy, I part with it by quoting his own words, reported to me by a quondam Comtist, M. Charles Robin: 'La Philosophie est une tentative incessante de l'esprit humain pour arriver au repos; mais elle se trouve incessamment aussi dérangée par les progrès continus de la science. De

là vient pour le philosophe l'obligation de refaire chaque soir la synthèse de ses conceptions; et un jour viendra où l'homme raisonnable ne fera plus d'autre prière du soir.'" Incidentally it may be remarked that the earlier of the two Addresses referred to, that entitled "The Physical Basis of Life" (1868), contains two remarkable passages, the first emphasising the fact that even in the science of inanimate nature the atomising process consisting of analysis into parts and synthesis into compounds does not lead us back to the natural products we start with. "It is, in strictness, true that we know nothing about the composition of any body whatever, as it is. The statement that the crystal of calc-spar consists of carbonate of lime is quite true, if we only mean that, by appropriate processes, it may be resolved into carbonic acid and quicklime. If you pass the same carbonic acid over the very quicklime thus obtained, you will obtain carbonate of lime again; but it will not be calc-spar nor anything like it" (p. 112). The other passage gives concisely what may be supposed to be Huxley's own philosophical creed: "It is necessary to be fully possessed of two beliefs: the first, that the order of nature is ascertainable by our faculties to an extent which is practically unlimited; the second, that our volition counts for something as a condition of the course of events" (p. 126). On Comte's disregard of biological discoveries during his lifetime, such, *e.g.*, as the cellular theory, see also Dr P. Barth, *loc. cit.*, p. 90.