

possibility either of resorting to one rigid method of thought or of appealing to any absolute Truth. His belief in harmony and order does not preclude a great diversity of methods and the recognition of the relativity of all knowledge. Thus a large portion of his principal work is devoted to an analysis of the different methods which should govern the different sciences. He is more liberal than many contemporary and later thinkers in allowing for the different departments different methods of research.

Thus he assigns to the calculating methods the sciences of astronomy and mechanics; to the experimental methods the science of physics; to the formal methods the science of chemistry; and he especially opposes the one-sided employment of these abstract methods in the biological sciences: the latter have to recognise the appearance of a new principle, the principle of Life. He regards this as consisting in what in more modern terms would be called "adaptation to surrounding conditions," and he adopts de Blainville's definition of life as an uninterrupted process of composition and decomposition. He also emphasises the comparative method and the necessity of a rational classification. As regards the real value of mathematics, Comte's estimate seems to have been subject to uncertainty and change, for in the third volume he extols the mathematical as the type of the positive rational method; whereas by the time he had reached the last volume, having experienced the exclusiveness of contemporary mathematicians, he opposes the extreme control which the latter had usurped to themselves in France, and