

prophesied, will climb up to the condition of France and the United States of America, for no people is condemned never to exercise its reason. If the dogma of the perfectibility of human nature, unguarded by any restrictions, is granted, this is a logical inference, and we have already seen that it was one of the ideas current among the philosophers.

Condorcet does not hesitate to add to his picture adventurous conjectures on the improvement of man's physical organisation, and a considerable prolongation of his life by the advance of medical science. We need only note this. More interesting is the prediction that, even if the compass of the human being's cerebral powers is inalterable, the range, precision, and rapidity of his mental operations will be augmented by the invention of new instruments and methods.

The design of writing a history of human civilisation was premature, and to have produced a survey of any durable value would have required the equipment of a Gibbon. Condorcet was not even as well equipped as Voltaire.¹ The significance of his *Sketch* lies in this, that towards the close of an intellectual movement it concentrated attention on the most important, though hitherto not the most prominent, idea which that movement had disseminated, and as it were officially announced human Progress as the leading problem that claimed the interest of mankind. With him Progress was associated intimately with particular eighteenth century doctrines, but these were not essential to it. It was a living idea; it survived the compromising theories which began to fall into

¹ But as he wrote without books the *Sketch* was a marvellous *tour de force*.

discredit after the Revolution, and was explored from new points of view. Condorcet, however, wedded though his mind was to the untenable views of human nature current in his epoch and his circle, did not share the tendency of leading philosophers to regard history as an unprofitable record of folly and crime which it would be well to obliterate or forget. He recognised the interpretation of history as the key to human development, and this principle controlled subsequent speculations on Progress in France.

6

Cabanis, the physician, was Condorcet's literary executor, and a no less ardent believer in human perfectibility. Looking at life and man from his own special point of view, he saw in the study of the physical organism the key to the intellectual and moral improvement of the race. It is by knowledge of the relations between his physical states and moral states that man can attain happiness, through the enlargement of his faculties and the multiplication of enjoyments, and that he will be able to grasp, as it were, the infinite in his brief existence by realising the certainty of indefinite progress. His doctrine was a logical extension of the theories of Locke and Condillac. If our knowledge is wholly derived from sensations, our sensations depend on our sensory organs, and mind becomes a function of the nervous system.

The events of the Revolution quenched in him as little as in Condorcet the sanguine confidence that it was the opening of a new era for science and art, and thereby for the general Progress of man.

"The present is one of those great periods of history to which posterity will often look back" with gratitude.¹ He took an active part in the *coup d'État* of the 18th of Brumaire (1799) which was to lead to the despotism of Napoleon. He imagined that it would terminate oppression, and was as enthusiastic for it as he and Condorcet had been for the Revolution ten years before. "You philosophers," he wrote,² "whose studies are directed to the improvement and happiness of the race, you no longer embrace vain shadows. Having watched, in alternating moods of hope and sadness, the great spectacle of our Revolution, you now see with joy the termination of its last act; you will see with rapture this new era, so long promised to the French people, at last open, in which all the benefits of nature, all the creations of genius, all the fruits of time, labour, and experience will be utilised, an era of glory and prosperity in which the dreams of your philanthropic enthusiasm should end by being realised."

It was an over-sanguine and characteristic greeting of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. Cabanis was one of the most important of those thinkers who, living into the new period, took care that the ideas of their own generation should not be overwhelmed in the rising flood of reaction.

¹ Picavet, *Les Idéologues*, p. 203. Cabanis was born in 1757 and died in 1808.

² *Ib.* p. 224.

CHAPTER XII

THE THEORY OF PROGRESS IN ENGLAND

I

THE idea of Progress could not help crossing the Channel. France and England had been at war in the first year of the eighteenth century, they were at war in the last, and their conflict for supremacy was the leading feature of the international history of the whole century. But at no period was there more constant intellectual intimacy or more marked reciprocal influence between the two countries. It was a commonplace that Paris and London were the two great foci of civilisation, and they never lost touch of each other in the intellectual sphere. Many of the principal works of literature that appeared in either country were promptly translated, and some of the French books, which the censorship rendered it dangerous to publish in Paris, were printed in London.

It was not indeed to be expected that the theory should have the same kind of success, or exert the same kind of effect in England as in France. England had her revolution behind her, France had hers before her. England enjoyed what were then considered large political liberties, the envy of other lands; France groaned under the tyranny of

worthless rulers. The English constitution satisfied the nation, and the serious abuses which would now appear to us intolerable were not sufficient to awaken a passionate desire for reforms. The general tendency of British thought was to see salvation in the stability of existing institutions, and to regard change with suspicion. Now passionate desire for reform was the animating force which propagated the idea of Progress in France. And when this idea is translated from the atmosphere of combat, in which it was developed by French men of letters, into the calm climate of England, it appears like a cold reflection.

Again, English thinkers were generally inclined to hold, with Locke, that the proper function of government is principally negative, to preserve order and defend life and property, not to aim directly at the improvement of society, but to secure the conditions in which men may pursue their own legitimate aims. Most of the French theorists believed in the possibility of moulding society indefinitely by political action, and rested their hopes for the future not only on the achievements of science, but on the enlightened activity of governments. This difference of view tended to give to the doctrine of Progress in France more practical significance than in England.

But otherwise British soil was ready to receive the idea. There was the same optimistic temper among the comfortable classes in both countries. Shaftesbury, the Deist, had struck this note at the beginning of the century by his sanguine theory, which was expressed in Pope's banal phrase: "Whatever is, is right," and was worked into a

system by Hutcheson. This optimism penetrated into orthodox circles. Progress, far from appearing as a rival of Providence, was discussed in the interests of Christianity by the Scotch theologian, Turnbull.¹

2

The theory of the indefinite progress of civilisation left Hume cold. There is little ground, he argued, to suppose that "the world" is eternal or incorruptible. It is probably mortal, and must therefore, with all things in it, have its infancy, youth, manhood, and old age; and man will share in these changes of state. We must then expect that the human species should, when the world is in the age of manhood, possess greater bodily and mental vigour, longer life, and a stronger inclination and power of generation. But it is impossible to determine when this stage is reached. For the gradual revolutions are too slow to be discernible in the short period known to us by history and tradition. Physically and in mental powers men have been pretty much the same in all known ages. The sciences and arts have flourished now and have again decayed, but when they reached the highest perfection among one people, the neighbouring peoples were perhaps wholly unacquainted with them. We are therefore uncertain whether at present man is advancing to his point of perfection or declining from it.²

The argument is somewhat surprising in an eighteenth century thinker like Hume, but it did

¹ *The Principles of Modern Philosophy*, 1740.

² *Essay on the Populousness of Ancient Nations*, ad init.

not prevent him from recognising the superiority of modern to ancient civilisation. This superiority forms indeed the minor premiss in the general argument by which he confuted the commonly received opinion as to the populousness of ancient nations. He insisted on the improvements in art and industry, on the greater liberty and security enjoyed by modern men. "To one who considers coolly on the subject," he remarked, "it will appear that human nature in general really enjoys more liberty at present in the most arbitrary government of Europe than it ever did during the most flourishing period of ancient times."¹

He discussed many of the problems of civilisation, especially the conditions in which the arts and sciences flourish,² and drew some general conclusions, but he was too sceptical to suppose that any general synthesis of history is possible, or that any considerable change for the better in the manners of mankind is likely to occur.³

The greatest work dealing with social problems, that Britain produced in the eighteenth century, was Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and his luminous exposition of the effects of the division of labour was the most considerable contribution made by British thinkers of the age to the study of human development. It is much more than a treatise on economic principles; it contains a history of the gradual economic progress of human society, and it suggests the expectation of an indefinite augmentation of wealth and well-being. Smith was entirely at one with the French Economists on the value

¹ The justification of this statement was the abolition of slavery in Europe.

² *Essay on the Rise of Arts and Sciences.*

³ Cf. *Essay on the Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth, ad init.*

of opulence for the civilisation and happiness of mankind. But it was indirectly perhaps that his work contributed most effectively to the doctrine of the Progress of collective mankind. His teaching that the free commercial intercourse of all the peoples of the world, unfettered by government policies, was to the greatest advantage of each, presented an ideal of the economic "solidarity" of the race, which was one element in the ideal of Progress. And this principle soon began to affect practice. Pitt assimilated it when he was a young man, and it is one of the distinctions of his statesmanship that he endeavoured to apply the doctrines of his master so far as the prevailing prejudices would allow him.

3

A few writers of less weight and fame than Hume or Smith expressly studied history in the light of Progress. It would not help us, in following the growth of the idea, to analyse the works of Ferguson, Dunbar, or Priestley. But I will quote one passage from Priestley, the most eminent of the three, and the most enthusiastic for the Progress of man. As the division of labour—the chief principle of organised society—is carried further he anticipates that

. . . nature, including both its materials and its laws, will be more at our command ; men will make their situation in this world abundantly more easy and comfortable ; they will probably prolong their existence in it and will grow daily more happy. . . . Thus, whatever was the beginning of this world, the end will be glorious and paradisiacal beyond what our imaginations can now conceive.

Extravagant as some people may suppose these views to be, I think I could show them to be fairly suggested by the true theory of human nature and to arise from the natural course of human affairs.

The problem of dark ages, which an advocate of Progress must explain, was waved away by Priestley in his *Lectures on History* with the observation that they help the subsequent advance of knowledge by "breaking the progress of authority."¹ This is not much of a plea for such periods viewed as machinery in a Providential plan. The great history of the Middle Ages, which in the words of its author describes "the triumph of barbarism and religion," had been completed before Priestley's *Lectures* appeared, and it is remarkable that he takes no account of it, though it might seem to be a work with which a theory of Progress must come to terms.

Yet the sceptical historian of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, who was more at home in French literature than any of his fellow-countrymen, was not opposed to the theory of Progress, and he even states it in a moderate form. Having given reasons for believing that civilised society will never again be threatened by such an irruption of barbarians as that which oppressed the arms and institutions of Rome, he allows us to "acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion that every age of the world has increased, and still increases, the real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge and perhaps the virtue of the human race."

"The discoveries of ancient and modern navi-

¹ This was doubtless suggested to him by some remarks of Hume in *The Rise of Arts and Sciences*.

gators, and the domestic history or tradition of the most enlightened nations, represent the *human savage*, naked both in mind and body, and destitute of laws, of arts, of ideas, and almost of language. From this abject condition, perhaps the primitive and universal state of man, he has gradually arisen to command the animals, to fertilise the earth, to traverse the ocean, and to measure the heavens. His progress in the improvement and exercise of his mental and corporeal faculties has been irregular and various, infinitely slow in the beginning, and increasing by degrees with redoubled velocity; ages of laborious ascent have been followed by a moment of rapid downfall; and the several climates of the globe have felt the vicissitudes of light and darkness. Yet the experience of four thousand years should enlarge our hopes and diminish our apprehensions; we cannot determine to what height the human species may aspire in their advances towards perfection; but it may safely be presumed that no people, unless the face of nature is changed, will relapse into their original barbarism."¹

But Gibbon treats the whole subject as a speculation, and he treats it without reference to any of the general principles on which French thinkers had based their theory. He admits that his reasons for holding that civilisation is secure against a barbarous cataclysm may be considered fallacious; and he also contemplates the eventuality that the fabric of sciences and arts, trade and manufacture, law and policy, might be "decayed by time." If so, the growth of civilisation would have to begin again, but not *ab initio*. For "the more

¹ *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. xxxviii. *ad fin.*

useful or at least more necessary arts," which do not require superior talents or national subordination for their exercise, and which war, commerce, and religious zeal have spread among the savages of the world, would certainly survive.

These remarks are no more than *obiter dicta*, but they show how the doctrine of Progress was influencing those who were temperamentally the least likely to subscribe to extravagant theories.

4

The outbreak of the French Revolution evoked a sympathetic movement among English progressive thinkers which occasioned the Government no little alarm. The dissenting minister Dr. Richard Price, whose *Observations on Civil Liberty* (1776), defending the action of the American colonies, had enjoyed an immense success, preached the sermon which provoked Burke to write his *Reflections*; and Priestley, no less enthusiastic in welcoming the Revolution, replied to Burke. The Government resorted to tyrannous measures; young men who sympathised with the French movement and agitated for reforms at home were sent to Botany Bay. Paine was prosecuted for his *Rights of Man*, which directly preached revolution. But the most important speculative work of the time, William Godwin's *Political Justice*, escaped the censorship because it was not published at a popular price.¹

The *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, begun

¹ Godwin had helped to get Paine's book published in 1791, and he was intimate with the group of revolutionary spirits who were persecuted by the Government. A good account of the episode will be found in Brailsford's *Shelley, Godwin, and their Circle*.

in 1791, appeared in 1793. The second edition, three years later, shows the influence of Condorcet's *Sketch*, which had appeared in the meantime. Godwin says that his original idea was to produce a work on political science to supersede Montesquieu. The note of Montesquieu's political philosophy was respect for social institutions. Godwin's principle was that social institutions are entirely pernicious, that they perpetuate harmful prejudices, and are an almost insuperable obstacle to improvement. If he particularly denounced monarchical government, he regarded all government as evil, and held that social progress would consist, not in the reformation of government, but in its abolition. While he recognised that man had progressed in the past, he considered history mainly a sequence of horrors, and he was incapable of a calm survey of the course of civilisation. In English institutions he saw nothing that did not outrage the principles of justice and benevolence. The present state of humanity is about as bad as it could be.

It is easy to see the deep influence which the teaching of Rousseau exercised on Godwin. Without accepting the theory of Arcadia Godwin followed him in unsparing condemnation of existing conditions. Rousseau and Godwin are the two great champions in the eighteenth century of the toiling and suffering masses. But Godwin drew the logical conclusion from Rousseau's premisses which Rousseau hesitated to draw himself. The French thinker, while he extolled the anarchical state of uncivilised society, and denounced government as one of the sources of its corruption,

nevertheless sought the remedy in new social and political institutions. Godwin said boldly, government is the evil; government must go. Humanity can never be happy until all political authority and social institutions disappear.

Now the peculiarity of Godwin's position as a doctrinaire of Progress lies in the fact that he entertained the same pessimistic view of some important sides of civilisation as Rousseau, and at the same time adopted the theories of Rousseau's opponents, especially Helvétius. His survey of human conditions seems to lead inevitably to pessimism; then he turns round and proclaims the doctrine of perfectibility.

The explanation of this argument was the psychological theory of Helvétius. He taught, as we saw, and Godwin developed the view in his own way, that the natures and characters of men are moulded entirely by their environment—not physical, but intellectual and moral environment, and therefore can be indefinitely modified. A man is born into the world without innate tendencies. His conduct depends on his opinions. Alter men's opinions and they will act differently. Make their opinions conformable to justice and benevolence, and you will have a just and benevolent society. Virtue, as Socrates taught, is simply a question of knowledge. The situation, therefore, is not hopeless. For it is not due to the radical nature of man; it is caused by ignorance and prejudice, by governments and institutions, by kings and priests. Transform the ideas of men, and society will be transformed. The French philosopher considered that a reformed system of educating children would

be one of the most powerful means for promoting progress and bringing about the reign of reason; and Condorcet worked out a scheme of universal state education. This was entirely opposed to Godwin's principles. State schools would only be another instrument of power in the hands of a government, worse even than a state Church. They would strengthen the poisonous influence of kings and statesmen, and establish instead of abolishing prejudices. He seems to have relied entirely on the private efforts of enlightened thinkers to effect a gradual conversion of public opinion.

In his study of the perfectibility of man and the prospect of a future reign of general justice and benevolence, Godwin was even more visionary than Condorcet, as in his political views he was more radical than the Revolutionists. Condorcet had at least sought to connect his picture of the future with a reasoned survey of the past, and to find a chain of connection, but the perfectibility of Godwin hung in the air, supported only by an abstract theory of the nature of man.

It can hardly be said that he contributed anything to the theoretical problem of civilisation. His significance is that he proclaimed in England at an opportune moment, and in a more impressive and startling way than a sober apostle like Priestley, the creed of progress taught by French philosophers, though considerably modified by his own anarchical opinions.

5

Perfectibility, as expounded by Condorcet and Godwin, encountered a drastic criticism from

Malthus, whose *Essay on the Principle of Population* appeared in its first form anonymously in 1798. Condorcet had foreseen an objection which might be raised as fatal to the realisation of his future state. Will not the progress of industry and happiness cause a steady increase in population, and must not the time come when the number of the inhabitants of the globe will surpass their means of subsistence? Condorcet did not grapple with this question. He contented himself with saying that such a period must be very far away, and that by then "the human race will have achieved improvements of which we can now scarcely form an idea." Similarly Godwin, in his fancy picture of the future happiness of mankind, notices the difficulty and shirks it. "Three-fourths of the habitable globe are now uncultivated. The parts already cultivated are capable of immeasurable improvement. Myriads of centuries of still increasing population may pass away and the earth be still found sufficient for the subsistence of its inhabitants."

Malthus argued that these writers laboured under an illusion as to the actual relations between population and the means of subsistence. In present conditions the numbers of the race are only kept from increasing far beyond the means of subsistence by vice, misery, and the fear of misery.¹ In the conditions imagined by Condorcet and Godwin these checks are removed, and consequently the population would increase with great rapidity, doubling itself at least in twenty-five years.

¹ This observation had been made (as Hazlitt pointed out) before Malthus by Robert Wallace (see *A Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind*, p. 13, 1753). It was another book of Wallace that suggested the difficulty to Godwin.

But the products of the earth increase only in an arithmetical progression, and in fifty years the food supply would be too small for the demand. Thus the oscillation between numbers and food supply would recur, and the happiness of the species would come to an end.

Godwin and his adherents could reply that one of the checks on over-population is prudential restraint, which Malthus himself recognised, and that this would come more extensively into operation with that progress of enlightenment which their theory assumed.¹ But the criticisms of Malthus dealt a trenchant blow to the doctrine that human reason, acting through legislation and government, has a virtually indefinite power of modifying the condition of society. The difficulty, which he stated so vividly and definitely, was well calculated to discredit the doctrine, and to suggest that the development of society could be modified by the conscious efforts of man only within restricted limits.²

6

The *Essay* of Malthus afterwards became one of the sacred books of the Utilitarian sect, and it is

¹ This is urged by Hazlitt in his criticism of Malthus in the *Spirit of the Age*.

² The recent conclusions of Mr. Knibbs, statistician to the Commonwealth of Australia, in vol. i. of his Appendix to the Census of the Commonwealth, have an interest in this connection. I quote from an article in the *Times* of August 5, 1918: "An eminent geographer, the late Mr. E. G. Ravenstein, some years ago, when the population of the earth was estimated at 1400 million, foretold that about the middle of this century population would have reached a limit beyond which increase would be disastrous. Mr. Knibbs is not so pessimistic and is much more precise; though he defers the disastrous culmination, he has no doubt as to its inevitability. The limits of human expansion, he assures us, are much nearer than popular opinion imagines; the difficulty of food supplies will soon be

interesting to notice what Bentham himself thought of perfectibility. Referring to the optimistic views of Chastellux and Priestley on progressive amelioration he observed that "these glorious expectations remind us of the golden age of poetry." For perfect happiness "belongs to the imaginary region of philosophy and must be classed with the universal elixir and the philosopher's stone." There will always be jealousies through the unequal gifts of nature and of fortune; interests will never cease to clash and hatred to ensue; "painful labour, daily subjection, a condition nearly allied to indigence, will always be the lot of numbers"; in art and poetry the sources of novelty will probably be exhausted. But Bentham was far from being a pessimist. Though he believes that "we shall never make this world the abode of happiness," he asserts that it may be made a most delightful garden "compared with the savage forest in which men so long have wandered."¹

7

The book of Malthus was welcomed at the moment by all those who had been thoroughly frightened by the French Revolution and saw in the "modern philosophy," as it was called, a serious danger to society.² Vice and misery and the in-

most grave; the exhaustion of sources of energy necessary for any notable increase of population, or advance in the standards of living, or both combined, is perilously near. The present rate of increase in the world's population cannot continue for four centuries."

¹ *Works*, vol. i. p. 193 seq.

² Both Hazlitt and Shelley thought that Malthus was playing to the boxes, by sophisms "calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph" (*Revolt of Islam*, Preface). Bentham refers in his *Book of Fallacies* (*Works*, ii. p. 462) to the unpopularity of the views of Priestley, Godwin, and Condorcet: "to aim at perfection has been pronounced to be utter folly or wickedness."

exorable laws of population were a godsend to rescue the state from "the precipice of perfectibility." We can understand the alarm occasioned to believers in the established constitution of things, for Godwin's work—now virtually forgotten, while Malthus is still appealed to as a discoverer in social science—produced an immense effect on impressionable minds at the time. All who prized liberty, sympathised with the downtrodden, and were capable of falling in love with social ideals, hailed Godwin as an evangelist. "No one," said a contemporary, "was more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after; and wherever liberty, truth, justice was the theme, his name was not far off." Young graduates left the Universities to throw themselves at the feet of the new Gamaliel; students of law and medicine neglected their professional studies to dream of "the renovation of society and the march of mind." Godwin carried with him "all the most sanguine and fearless understandings of the time."¹

The most famous of his disciples were the poets Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and afterwards Shelley. Wordsworth had been an ardent sympathiser with the French Revolution. In its early days he had visited Paris:

An emporium then
Of golden expectations and receiving
Freights every day from a new world of hope.

He became a Godwinian in 1795, when the Terror had destroyed his faith in Revolutionary France. Southey, who had come under the influence of Rousseau, was initiated by Coleridge into Godwin's theories, and in their utopian enthusiasm they formed

¹ Hazlitt, *Spirit of the Age*: article on Godwin (written in 1814).

the design of founding a "pantisocratic" settlement in America, to show how happiness could be realised in a social environment in which duty and interest coincide and consequently all are virtuous. The plan anticipated the experiments of Owen and Cabet; but the pantisocrats did not experience the disappointments of the socialists, for it was never carried out. Coleridge and Southey as well as Wordsworth soon abandoned their Godwinian doctrines.¹ They had, to use a phrase of Hazlitt, lost their way in Utopia, and they gave up the abstract and mechanical view of society which the French philosophy of the eighteenth century taught, for an organic conception in which historic sentiment and the wisdom of our ancestors had their due place. Wordsworth could presently look back and criticise his Godwinian phase as that of

A proud and most presumptuous confidence
In the transcendent wisdom of the age
And its discernment.²

He and Southey became conservative pillars of the state. Yet Southey, reactionary as he was in politics, never ceased to believe in social Progress,³ Amelioration was indeed to be effected by slow and cautious reforms, with the aid of the Church, but the intellectual aberrations of his youth had left an abiding impression.

While these poets were sitting at Godwin's feet,

¹ In letters of 1797 and 1798 Coleridge repudiated the French doctrines and Godwin's philosophy. See Cestre, *La Révolution française et les poètes anglais* (1789-1809), pp. 389, 414.

² *Excursion*, Book ii.

³ See his *Colloquies*; and Shelley, writing in 1811, says that Southey "looks forward to a state when all shall be perfected and matter become subjected to the omnipotence of mind" (Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, i. p. 212). Compare below, p. 325.

Shelley was still a child. But he came across *Political Justice* at Eton; in his later life he re-read it almost every year; and when he married Godwin's daughter he was more Godwinian than Godwin himself. Hazlitt, writing in 1814, says that Godwin's reputation had "sunk below the horizon," but Shelley never ceased to believe in his theory, though he came to see that the regeneration of man would be a much slower process than he had at first imagined. In the immature poem *Queen Mab* the philosophy of Godwin was behind his description of the future, and it was behind the longer and more ambitious poems of his maturer years. The city of gold, of the *Revolt of Islam*, is Godwin's future society, and he describes that poem as "an experiment on the temper of the public mind as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live." As to *Prometheus Unbound* his biographer observes:¹

All the glittering fallacies of "Political Justice"—now sufficiently tarnished—together with all its encouraging and stimulating truths, may be found in the *caput mortuum* left when the critic has reduced the poetry of the "Prometheus" to a series of doctrinaire statements.

The same dream inspired the final chorus of *Hellas*. Shelley was the poet of perfectibility.

8

The attraction of perfectibility reached beyond

¹ Dowden, *ib.* ii. p. 264. Elsewhere Dowden remarks on the singular insensibility of Shelley's mind "to the wisdom or sentiment of history" (i. p. 55).

the ranks of men of letters, and in Robert Owen, the benevolent millowner of Lanark, it had an apostle who based upon it a very different theory from that of *Political Justice* and became one of the founders of modern socialism.

The success of the idea of Progress has been promoted by its association with socialism.¹ The first phase of socialism, what has been called its sentimental phase, was originated by Saint-Simon in France and Owen in England at about the same time; Marx was to bring it down from the clouds and make it a force in practical politics. But both in its earlier and in its later forms the economical doctrines rest upon a theory of society depending on the assumption, however disguised, that social institutions have been solely responsible for the vice and misery which exist, and that institutions and laws can be so changed as to abolish misery and vice. That is pure eighteenth century doctrine; and it passed from the revolutionary doctrinaires of that period to the constructive socialists of the nineteenth century.

Owen learned it probably from Godwin, and he did not disguise it. His numerous works enforce it *ad nauseam*. He began the propagation of his gospel by his "New View of Society, or Essays on the formation of the human character, preparatory to the development of a plan for gradually ameliorating the condition of mankind," which he

¹ The word was independently invented in England and France. An article in the *Poor Man's Guardian* (a periodical edited by H. Hetherington, afterwards by Bronterre O'Brien), Aug. 24, 1833, is signed "A Socialist"; and in 1834 *socialisme* is opposed to individualism by P. Leroux in an article in the *Revue Encyclopédique*. The word is used in the *New Moral World*, and from 1836 was applied to the Owenites. See Dolléans, *Robert Owen* (1907), p. 305.

dedicated to the Prince Regent.¹ Here he lays down that "any general character, from the best to the worst, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means; which means are to a great extent at the command and under the control of those who have influence in the affairs of men."² The string on which he continually harps is that it is the cardinal error in government to suppose that men are responsible for their vices and virtues, and therefore for their actions and characters. These result from education and institutions, and can be transformed automatically by transforming those agencies. Owen founded several short-lived journals to diffuse his theories. The first number of the *New Moral World* (1834-36)³ proclaimed the approach of an ideal society in which there will be no ignorance, no poverty, and no charity—a system "which will ensure the happiness of the human race throughout all future ages," to replace one "which, so long as it shall be maintained, must produce misery to all." His own experimental attempt to found such a society on a miniature scale in America proved a ludicrous failure.

It is to be observed that in these socialist theories the conception of Progress as indefinite

¹ 3rd ed. 1817. The Essays had appeared separately in 1813-14.

² P. 19.

³ This was not a journal, but a series of pamphlets which appeared in 1836-1844. Other publications of Owen were: *Outline of the Rational System of Society* (6th ed., Leeds, 1840); *The Revolution in the Mind and Practice of the Human Race, or the coming change from Irrationality to Rationality* (1849); *The Future of the Human Race, or a great, glorious and peaceful Revolution, near at hand, to be effected through the agency of departed spirits of good and superior men and women* (1853); *The New Existence of Man upon Earth*, Parts i.-viii., 1854-55.

tends to vanish or to lose its significance. If the millennium can be brought about at a stroke by a certain arrangement of society, the goal of development is achieved; we shall have reached the term, and shall have only to live in and enjoy the ideal state—a menagerie of happy men. There will be room for further, perhaps indefinite, advance in knowledge, but civilisation in its social character becomes stable and rigid. Once man's needs are perfectly satisfied in a harmonious environment there is no stimulus to cause further changes, and the dynamic character of history disappears.

Theories of Progress are thus differentiating into two distinct types, corresponding to two radically opposed political theories and appealing to two antagonistic temperaments. The one type is that of constructive idealists and socialists, who can name all the streets and towers of "the city of gold," which they imagine as situated just round a promontory. The development of man is a closed system; its term is known and is within reach. The other type is that of those who, surveying the gradual ascent of man, believe that by the same interplay of forces which have conducted him so far and by a further development of the liberty which he has fought to win, he will move slowly towards conditions of increasing harmony and happiness. Here the development is indefinite; its term is unknown, and lies in the remote future. Individual liberty is the motive force, and the corresponding political theory is liberalism; whereas the first doctrine naturally leads to a symmetrical system in which the authority of the state is preponderant, and the individual has little

more value than a cog in a well-oiled wheel: his place is assigned; it is not his right to go his own way. Of this type the principal example that is not socialistic is, as we shall see, the philosophy of Comte.

CHAPTER XIII

GERMAN SPECULATIONS ON PROGRESS

I

THE philosophical views current in Germany during the period in which the psychology of Locke was in fashion in France and before the genius of Kant opened a new path, were based on the system of Leibnitz. We might therefore expect to find a theory of Progress developed there, parallel to the development in France though resting on different principles. For Leibnitz, as we saw, provided in his cosmic optimism a basis for the doctrine of human Progress, and he had himself incidentally pointed to it. This development, however, was delayed. It was only towards the close of the period—which is commonly known as the age of "Illumination"—that Progress came to the front, and it is interesting to observe the reason.

Wolf was the leading successor and interpreter of Leibnitz. He constrained that thinker's ideas into a compact logical system which swayed Germany till Kant swept it away. In such cases it usually happens that some striking doctrines and tendencies of the master are accentuated and enforced, while others are suffered to drop out of sight.

So it was here. In the Wolfian system, Leibnitz's conception of development was suffered to drop out of sight, and the dynamic element which animated his speculation disappeared. In particular, he had laid down that the sum of motive forces in the physical world is constant. His disciples proceeded to the inference that the sum of morality in the ethical world is constant. This dogma obviously eliminates the possibility of ethical improvement for collective humanity. And so we find Mendelssohn, who was the popular exponent of Wolf's philosophy, declaring that "progress is only for the individual; but that the whole of humanity here below in the course of time shall always progress and perfect itself seems to me not to have been the purpose of Providence."

The publication of the *Nouveaux Essais* in 1765 induced some thinkers to turn from the dry bones of Wolf to the spirit of Leibnitz himself. And at the same time French thought was penetrating. In consequence of these influences the final phase of the German "Illumination" is marked by the appearance of two or three works in which Progress is a predominating idea.

We see this reaction against Wolf and his static school in a little work published by Herder in 1774—"a philosophy of history for the cultivation of mankind." There is continuous development, he declares, and one people builds upon the work of another. We must judge past ages, not by the present, but relatively to their own particular conditions. What exists now was never possible before, for everything that man accomplishes is conditioned by time, climate, and circumstances.

Six years later Lessing's pamphlet on the *Education of the Human Race* appeared, couched in the form of aphoristic statements, and to a modern reader, one may venture to say, singularly wanting in argumentative force. The thesis is that the drama of history is to be explained as the education of man by a progressive series of religions, a series not yet complete, for the future will produce another revelation to lift him to a higher plane than that to which Christ has drawn him up. This interpretation of history proclaimed Progress, but assumed an ideal and applied a measure very different from those of the French philosophers. The goal is not social happiness, but a full comprehension of God. Philosophy of religion is made the key to the philosophy of history. The work does not amount to more than a suggestion for a new synthesis, but it was opportune and arresting.

Herder meanwhile had been thinking, and in 1784 he gave the German world his survey of man's career—*Ideas of the Philosophy of the History of Humanity*. In this famous work, in which we can mark the influence of French thinkers, especially Montesquieu, as well as of Leibnitz, he attempted, though on very different lines, the same task which Turgot and Condorcet planned, a universal history of civilisation.

The Deity designed the world but never interferes in its process, either in the physical cosmos or in human history. Human history itself, civilisation, is a purely natural phenomenon. Events are strictly enchainèd; continuity is unbroken; what happened at any given time could have happened only then, and nothing else could have happened. Herder's

rigid determinism not only excludes Voltaire's chance but also suppresses the free play of man's intelligent will. Man cannot guide his own destinies; his actions and fortunes are determined by the nature of things, his physical organisation and physical environment. The fact that God exists in inactive ease hardly affects the fatalistic complexion of this philosophy; but it is perhaps a mitigation that the world was made for man; humanity is its final cause.

The variety of the phases of civilisation that have appeared on earth is due to the fact that the possible manifestations of human nature are very numerous and that they must all be realised. The lower forms are those in which the best, which means the most human, faculties of our nature are undeveloped. The highest has not yet been realised. "The flower of humanity, captive still in its germ, will blossom out one day into the true form of man like unto God, in a state of which no terrestrial man can imagine the greatness and the majesty."

Herder is not a systematic thinker—indeed his work abounds in contradictions—and he has not made it clear how far this full epiphany results from the experiences of mankind in preceding phases. He believes that life is an education for humanity (he has taken the phrase of Lessing), that good progressively develops, that reason and justice become more powerful. This is a doctrine of Progress, but he distinctly opposes the hypothesis of a final and unique state of perfection as the goal of history, which would imply that earlier generations exist for the sake of the later and suffer in order to ensure the felicity of remote posterity—a theory which offends his sense of justice and fitness. On the

contrary, man can realise happiness equally in every stage of civilisation. All forms of society are equally legitimate, the imperfect as well as the perfect; all are ends in themselves, not mere stages on the way to something better. And a people which is happy in one of these inferior states has a perfect right to remain in it.

Thus the Progress which Herder sees is, to use his own geometrical illustration, a sequence of unequal and broken curves, corresponding to different maxima and minima. Each curve has its own equation, the history of each people is subject to the laws of its own environment; but there is no general law controlling the whole career of humanity.

Herder brought down his historical survey only as far as the sixteenth century. It has been suggested¹ that if he had come down further he might have comprehended the possibility of a deliberate transformation of societies by the intelligent action of the human will—an historical force to which he does not do justice, apparently because he fancied it incompatible with strict causal sequence. The value of his work does not lie in the philosophical principles which he applied. Nor was it a useful contribution to history; of him it has been said, as of Bossuet, that facts bent like grass under his feet.² But it was a notable attempt to do for human phenomena what Leibnitz in his *Theodicy* sought to do for the cosmos, and it pointed the way to the rationalistic philosophies of history which were to be a feature of the speculations of the following century.

¹ Javary, *De l'idée de progrès*, p. 69.

² Jouffroy, *Mélanges*, p. 81.

The short essay of Kant, which he clumsily called the *Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmopolitical Plan*,¹ approaches the problems raised by the history of civilisation from a new point of view.

He starts with the principle of invariable law. On any theory of free will, he says, human actions are as completely under the control of universal laws of nature as any other physical phenomena. This is illustrated by statistics. Registers of births, deaths, and marriages show that these events occur with as much conformity to laws of nature as the oscillations of the weather.

It is the same with the great sequence of historical events. Taken alone and individually, they seem incoherent and lawless; but viewed in their connection, as due to the action not of individuals but of the human species, they do not fail to reveal "a regular stream of tendency." Pursuing their own often contradictory purposes, individual nations and individual men are unconsciously promoting a process to which if they perceived it they would pay little regard.

Individual men do not obey a law. They do not obey the laws of instinct like animals, nor do they obey, as rational citizens of the world would do, the laws of a preconceived plan. If we look at the stage of history we see scattered and occasional indications of wisdom, but the general sum of men's actions is "a web of folly, childish vanity, and often even of the idlest wickedness and spirit of destruction."

¹ 1784.

The problem for the philosopher is to discover a meaning in this senseless current of human actions, so that the history of creatures who pursue no plan of their own may yet admit of a systematic form. The clew to this form is supplied by the predispositions of human nature.

I have stated this problem almost in Kant's words, and as he might have stated it if he had not introduced the conception of final causes. His use of the postulate of final causes without justifying it is a defect in his essay. He identifies what he well calls a stream of tendency with "a natural purpose." He makes no attempt to show that the succession of events is such that it cannot be explained without the postulate of a purpose. His solution of the problem is governed by this conception of finality, and by the unwarranted assumption that nature does nothing in vain.

He lays down that all the tendencies to which any creature is predisposed by its nature must in the end be developed perfectly and agreeably to their final purpose. Those predispositions in man which serve the use of his reason are therefore destined to be fully developed. This destiny, however, cannot be realised in the individual ; it can only be realised in the species. For reason works tentatively, by progress and regress. Each man would require an inordinate length of time to make a perfect use of his natural tendencies. Therefore, as life is short, an incalculable series of generations is needed.

The means which nature employs to develop these tendencies is the antagonism which in man's social state exists between his gregarious and his antigregarious tendencies. His antigregarious nature

expresses itself in the desire to force all things to comply to his own humour. Hence ambition, love of honour, avarice. These were necessary to raise mankind from the savage to the civilised state. But for these antisocial propensities men would be gentle as sheep, and "an Arcadian life would arise, of perfect harmony and mutual love, such as must suffocate and stifle all talents in their very germs." Nature, knowing better than man what is good for the species, ordains discord. She is to be thanked for competition and enmity, and for the thirst of power and wealth. For without these the final purpose of realising man's rational nature would remain unfulfilled. This is Kant's answer to Rousseau.

The full realisation of man's rational nature is possible only in a "universal civil society" founded on political justice. The establishment of such a society is the highest problem for the human species. Kant contemplates, as the political goal, a confederation of states in which the utmost possible freedom shall be united with the most rigorous determination of the boundaries of freedom.

Is it reasonable to suppose that a universal or cosmopolitical society of this kind will come into being; and if so, how will it be brought about? Political changes in the relations of states are generally produced by war. Wars are tentative endeavours to bring about new relations and to form new political bodies. Are combinations and re-combinations to continue until by pure chance some rational self-supporting system emerges? Or is it possible that no such condition of society may ever arrive, and that ultimately all progress may be overwhelmed by a hell of evils? Or, finally, is Nature

pursuing her regular course of raising the species by its own spontaneous efforts and developing, in the apparently wild succession of events, man's originally implanted tendencies?

Kant accepts the last alternative on the ground that it is not reasonable to assume a final purpose in particular natural processes and at the same time to assume that there is no final purpose in the whole. Thus his theory of Progress depends on the hypothesis of final causes.

It follows that to trace the history of mankind is equivalent to unravelling a hidden plan of Nature for accomplishing a perfect civil constitution for a universal society; since a universal society is the sole state in which the tendencies of human nature can be fully developed. We cannot determine the orbit of the development, because the whole period is so vast and only a small fraction is known to us, but this is enough to show that there is a definite course.

Kant thinks that such a "cosmopolitical" history, as he calls it, is possible, and that if it were written it would give us a clew opening up "a consolatory prospect into futurity, in which at a remote distance we shall discover the human species seated upon an eminence won by infinite toil, where all the germs are unfolded which nature has implanted and its own destination upon this earth accomplished."

3

But to see the full bearing of Kant's discussion we must understand its connection with his ethics. For his ethical theory is the foundation and the motive of his speculation on Progress. The pro-

gress on which he lays stress is moral amelioration ; he refers little to scientific or material progress. For him morality was an absolute obligation founded in the nature of reason. Such an obligation presupposes an end to be attained, and this end is a reign of reason under which all men obeying the moral law mutually treat each other as ends in themselves. Such an ideal state must be regarded as possible, because it is a necessary postulate of reason. From this point of view it may be seen that Kant's speculation on universal history is really a discussion whether the ideal state, which is required as a subjective postulate in the interest of ethics, is likely to be realised objectively.

Now, Kant does not assert that because our moral reason must assume the possibility of this hypothetical goal civilisation is therefore moving towards it. That would be a fallacy into which he was incapable of falling. Civilisation is a phenomenon, and anything we know about it can only be inferred from experience. His argument is that there are actual indications of progress in this desirable direction. He pointed to the contemporary growth of civil liberty and religious liberty, and these are conditions of moral improvement. So far his argument coincides in principle with that of French theorists of Progress. But Kant goes on to apply to these data the debatable conception of final causes, and to infer a purpose in the development of humanity. Only this inference is put forward as a hypothesis, not as a dogma.

It is probable that what hindered Kant from broaching his theory of Progress with as much

confidence as Condorcet was his perception that nothing could be decisively affirmed about the course of civilisation until the laws of its movement had been discovered. He saw that this was a matter for scientific investigation. He says expressly that the laws are not yet known, and suggests that some future genius may do for social phenomena what Kepler and Newton did for the heavenly bodies. As we shall see, this is precisely what some of the leading French thinkers of the next generation will attempt to do.

But cautiously though he framed the hypothesis Kant evidently considered Progress probable. He recognised that the most difficult obstacle to the moral advance of man lies in war and the burdens which the possibility of war imposes. And he spent much thought on the means by which war might be abolished. He published a philosophical essay on *Perpetual Peace*, in which he formulated the articles of an international treaty to secure the disappearance of war. He considered that, while a universal republic would be the *positive* ideal, we shall probably have to be contented with what he calls a *negative* substitute, consisting in a federation of peoples bound by a peace-alliance guaranteeing the independence of each member. But to assure the permanence of this system it is essential that each state should have a democratic constitution. For such a constitution is based on individual liberty and civil equality. All these changes should be brought about by legal reforms; revolutions—he was writing in 1795—cannot be justified.

We see the influence of Rousseau's *Social Contract* and that of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, with

whose works Kant was acquainted. There can be little doubt that it was the influence of French thought, so powerful in Germany at this period, that turned Kant's mind towards these speculations, which belong to the latest period of his life and form a sort of appendix to his philosophical system. The theory of Progress, the idea of universal reform, the doctrine of political equality—Kant examined all these conceptions and appropriated them to the service of his own highly metaphysical theory of ethics. In this new association their spirit was changed.

In France, as we saw, the theory of Progress was generally associated with ethical views which could find a metaphysical basis in the sensationalism of Locke. A moral system which might be built on sensation, as the primary mental fact, was worked out by Helvétius. But the principle that the supreme law of conduct is to obey nature had come down as a practical philosophy from Rabelais and Montaigne through Molière to the eighteenth century. It was reinforced by the theory of the natural goodness of man. Jansenism had struggled against it and was defeated. After theology it was the turn of metaphysics. Kant's moral imperative marked the next stage in the conflict of the two opposite tendencies which seek natural and ultra-natural sanctions for morality.

Hence the idea of progress had a different significance for Kant and for its French exponents, though his particular view of the future possibly in store for the human species coincided in some essential points with theirs. But his theory of life gives a different atmosphere to the idea. In

France the atmosphere is emphatically eudaemonic ; happiness is the goal. Kant is an uncompromising opponent of eudaemonism. " If we take enjoyment or happiness as the measure, it is easy," he says, " to evaluate life. Its value is less than nothing. For who would begin one's life again in the same conditions, or even in new natural conditions, if one could choose them oneself, but of which enjoyment would be the sole end ? "

There was, in fact, a strongly-marked vein of pessimism in Kant. One of the ablest men of the younger generation who were brought up on his system founded the philosophical pessimism—very different in range and depth from the sentimental pessimism of Rousseau—which was to play a remarkable part in German thought in the nineteenth century. Schopenhauer's unpleasant conclusion that of all conceivable worlds this is the worst, is one of the speculations for which Kant may be held ultimately responsible.

4

Kant's considerations on historical development are an appendix to his philosophy; they are not a necessary part, wrought into the woof of his system. It was otherwise with his successors the Idealists, for whom his system was the point of departure, though they rejected its essential feature, the limitation of human thought. With Fichte and Hegel progressive development was directly deduced from their principles. If their particular interpretations of history have no permanent value, it is significant that, in their ambitious attempts to explain the universe *a priori*, history was conceived

as progressive, and their philosophies did much to reinforce a conception which on very different principles was making its way in the world. But the progress which their systems involved was not bound up with the interest of human happiness, but stood out as a fact which, whether agreeable or not, is a consequence of the nature of thought.

The process of the universe, as it appeared to Fichte,¹ tends to a full realisation of "freedom"; that is its end and goal, but a goal that always recedes. It can never be reached; for its full attainment would mean the complete suppression of Nature. The process of the world, therefore, consists in an indefinite approximation to an unattainable ideal: freedom is being perpetually realised more and more; and the world, as it ascends in this direction, becomes more and more a realm of reason.

What Fichte means by freedom may be best explained by its opposition to instinct. A man acting instinctively may be acting quite reasonably, in a way which any one fully conscious of all the implications and consequences of the action would judge to be reasonable. But in order that his actions should be free he must himself be fully conscious of all those implications and consequences.

It follows that the end of mankind upon earth is to reach a state in which all the relations of life shall be ordered according to reason, not instinctively but with full consciousness and deliberate purpose. This end should govern the ethical rules

¹ Fichte's philosophy of history will be found in *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* (1806), lectures which he delivered at Berlin in 1804-5.

of conduct, and it determines the necessary stages of history.

It gives us at once two main periods, the earliest and the latest: the earliest, in which men act reasonably by instinct, and the latest, in which they are conscious of reason and try to realise it fully. But before reaching this final stage they must pass through an epoch in which reason is conscious of itself, but not regnant. And to reach this they must have emancipated themselves from instinct, and this process of emancipation means a fourth epoch. But they could not have wanted to emancipate themselves unless they had felt instinct as a servitude imposed by an external authority, and therefore we have to distinguish yet another epoch wherein reason is expressed in authoritarian institutions to which men blindly submit. In this way Fichte deduces five historical epochs: two in which progress is blind, two in which it is free, and an intermediate in which it is struggling to consciousness.¹ But there are no locked gates between these periods; they overlap and mingle; each may have some of the characteristics of another; and in each there is a vanguard leading the way and a rearguard lagging behind.

At present (1804) we are in the third age; we have broken with authority, but do not yet possess a clear and disciplined knowledge of reason.²

¹ *First Epoch*: that of instinctive reason; the age of innocence. *Second*: that of authoritarian reason. *Third*: that of enfranchisement; the age of scepticism and unregulated liberty. *Fourth*: that of conscious reason, as science. *Fifth*: that of regnant reason, as art.

² Three years later, however, Fichte maintained in his patriotic *Discourses to the German Nation* (1807) that in 1804 man had crossed the threshold of the fourth epoch. He asserted that the progress of "culture" and science will depend henceforward chiefly on Germany.

Fichte has deduced this scheme purely *a priori* without any reference to actual experience. "The philosopher," he says, "follows the *a priori* thread of the world-plan which is clear to him without any history; and if he makes use of history, it is not to prove anything, since his theses are already proved independently of all history."

Historical development is thus presented as a necessary progress towards a goal which is known but cannot be reached. And this fact as to the destiny of the race constitutes the basis of morality, of which the fundamental law is to act in such a way as to promote the free realisation of reason upon earth. It has been claimed by a recent critic that Fichte was the first modern philosopher to humanise morals. He completely rejected the individualistic conception which underlay Kantian as well as Christian ethics. He asserted that the true motive of morality is not the salvation of the individual man but the Progress of humanity. In fact, with Fichte Progress is the principle of ethics. That the Christian ideal of ascetic saintliness detached from society has no moral value is a plain corollary from the idea of earthly Progress.

One other point in Fichte's survey of history deserves notice—the social *rôle* of the savant. It is the function of the savant to discover the truths which are a condition of moral progress; he may be said to incarnate reason in the world. We shall see how this idea played a prominent part in the social schemes of Saint-Simon and Comte.

5

Hegel's philosophy of history is better known

than Fichte's. Like Fichte, he deduced the phases *a priori* from his metaphysical principles, but he condescended to review in some detail the actual phenomena. He conceived the final cause of the world as Spirit's consciousness of its own freedom. The ambiguous term "freedom" is virtually equivalent to self-consciousness, and Hegel defines Universal History as the description of the process by which Spirit or God comes to the consciousness of its own meaning. This freedom does not mean that Spirit could choose at any moment to develop in a different way; its actual development is necessary and is the embodiment of reason. Freedom consists in fully recognising the fact.

Of the particular features which distinguish Hegel's treatment, the first is that he identifies "history" with political history, the development of the state. Art, religion, philosophy, the creations of social man, belong to a different and higher stage of Spirit's self-revelation.¹ In the second place, Hegel ignores the primitive prehistoric ages of man, and sets the beginning of his development in the fully-grown civilisation of China. He conceives the Spirit as continually moving from one nation to another in order to realise the successive stages of its self-consciousness: from China to India, from India to the kingdoms of Western Asia; then from the Orient to Greece, then to Rome, and finally to the Germanic world. In the East men knew only that *one* is free, the political characteristic was despotism; in Greece and Rome they knew that *some* are free, and the political forms were aristocracy

¹ The three phases of Spirit are (1) subjective; (2) objective; (3) absolute. Psychology, *e.g.*, is included in (1), law and history in (2), religion in (3).

and democracy; in the modern world they know that *all* are free, and the political form is monarchy. The first period he compared to childhood, the second to youth (Greece) and manhood (Rome), the third to old age, old but not feeble. The third, which includes the medieval and modern history of Europe, designated by Hegel as the Germanic world—for “the German spirit is the spirit of the modern world”—is also the final period. In it God realises his freedom completely in history, just as in Hegel’s own absolute philosophy, which is final, God has completely understood his own nature.

And here is the most striking difference between the theories of Fichte and Hegel. Both saw the goal of human development in the realisation of “freedom,” but, while with Fichte the development never ends as the goal is unattainable, with Hegel the development is already complete, the goal is not only attainable but has now been attained. Thus Hegel’s is what we may call a closed system. History has been progressive, but no path is left open for further advance. Hegel views this conclusion of development with perfect complacency. To most minds that are not intoxicated with the Absolute it will seem that, if the present is the final state to which the evolution of Spirit has conducted, the result is singularly inadequate to the gigantic process. But his system is eminently inhuman. The happiness or misery of individuals is a matter of supreme indifference to the Absolute, which, in order to realise itself in time, ruthlessly sacrifices sentient beings.

The spirit of Hegel’s philosophy, in its bearing

on social life, was thus antagonistic to Progress as a practical doctrine. Progress there had been, but Progress had done its work; the Prussian monarchical state was the last word in history. Kant's cosmopolitical plan, the liberalism and individualism which were implicit in his thought, the democracies which he contemplated in the future, are all cast aside as a misconception. Once the needs of the Absolute Spirit have been satisfied, when it has seen its full power and splendour revealed in the Hegelian philosophy, the world is as good as it can be. Social amelioration does not matter, nor the moral improvement of men, nor the increase of their control over physical forces.

6

The other great representative of German idealism, who took his departure from Kant, also saw in history a progressive revelation of divine reason. But it was the processes of nature, not the career of humanity, that absorbed the best energies of Schelling, and the elaboration of a philosophical idea of organic evolution was the prominent feature of his speculation. His influence—and it was wide, reaching even scientific biologists—lay chiefly in diffusing this idea, and he thus contributed to the formation of a theory which was afterwards to place the idea of Progress on a more imposing base.

Schelling influenced, among others, his contemporary Krause, a less familiar name, who worked out a philosophy of history in which this idea is fundamental. Krause conceived history, which is the expression of the Absolute, as the development of life; society as an organism; and social growth

as a process which can be deduced from abstract biological principles.

All these transcendent speculations had this in common that they pretended to discover the necessary course of human history on metaphysical principles, independent of experience. But it has been rightly doubted whether this alleged independence was genuine. We may question whether any of them would have produced the same sequence of periods of history, if the actual facts of history had been to them a sealed book. Indeed we may be sure that they were surreptitiously and subconsciously using experience as a guide, while they imagined that abstract principles were entirely responsible for their conclusions. And this is equivalent to saying that their ideas of progressive movement were really derived from that idea of Progress which the French thinkers of the eighteenth century had attempted to base on experience.

The influence, direct and indirect, of these German philosophers reached far beyond the narrow circle of the bacchants or even the wandbearers of idealism. They did much to establish the notion of progressive development as a category of thought, almost as familiar and indispensable as that of cause and effect. They helped to diffuse the idea of "an increasing purpose" in history. Augustine or Bossuet might indeed have spoken of an increasing purpose, but the "purpose" of their speculations was subsidiary to a future life. The purpose of the German idealists could be fulfilled in earthly conditions and required no theory of personal immortality.

This atmosphere of thought affected even in-

telligent reactionaries who wrote in the interest of orthodox Christianity and the Catholic Church. Progressive development is admitted in the lectures on the *Philosophy of History* of Friedrich von Schlegel.¹ He denounced Condorcet, and opposed to perfectibility the corruptible nature of man. But he asserted that the philosophy of history is to be found in "the principles of social progress."² These principles are three: the hidden ways of Providence emancipating the human race; the freewill of man; and the power which God permits to the agents of evil,—principles which Bossuet could endorse, but the novelty is that here they are arrayed as forces of Progress. In fact, the point of von Schlegel's pretentious, unilluminating book is to rehabilitate Christianity by making it the key to that new conception of life which had taken shape among the enemies of the Church.

7

As biological development was one of the constant preoccupations of Goethe, whose doctrine of metamorphosis and "types" helped to prepare the way for the evolutionary hypothesis, we might have expected to find him interested in theories of social progress, in which theories of biological development find a logical extension. But the French speculations on Progress did not touch his imagination; they left him cool and sceptical. Towards the end of his life, in conversation with Eckermann, he made some remarks which indicate his attitude.³

¹ Translated into English in 2 vols., 1835.

² *Op. cit.* ii. p. 194, *sqq.*

³ *Gespräche mit Goethe*, 23 Oktober 1828.

“‘The world will not reach its goal so quickly as we think and wish. The retarding demons are always there, intervening and resisting at every point, so that, though there is an advance on the whole, it is very slow. Live longer and you will find that I am right.’

“‘The development of humanity,’ said Eckermann, ‘appears to be a matter of thousands of years.’

“‘Who knows?’ Goethe replied, ‘perhaps of millions. But let humanity last as long as it will, there will always be hindrances in its way, and all kinds of distress, to make it develop its powers. Men will become more clever and discerning, but not better nor happier nor more energetic, at least except for limited periods. I see the time coming when God will take no more pleasure in the race, and must again proceed to a rejuvenated creation. I am sure that this will happen and that the time and hour in the distant future are already fixed for the beginning of this epoch of rejuvenation. But that time is certainly a long way off, and we can still for thousands and thousands of years enjoy ourselves on this dear old playing-ground, just as it is.’”

That is at once a plain rejection of perfectibility, and an opinion that intellectual development is no highroad to the gates of a golden city.

CHAPTER XIV

CURRENTS OF THOUGHT IN FRANCE AFTER THE REVOLUTION

I

THE failure of the Revolution to fulfil the visionary hopes which had dazzled France for a brief period—a failure intensified by the horrors that had attended the experiment—was followed by a reaction against the philosophical doctrines and tendencies which had inspired its leaders. Forces, which the eighteenth century had underrated or endeavoured to suppress, emerged in a new shape, and it seemed for a while as if the new century might definitely turn its back on its predecessor. There was an intellectual rehabilitation of Catholicism, which will always be associated with the names of four thinkers of exceptional talent, Chateaubriand, De Maistre, Bonald, and Lamennais.

But the outstanding fame of these great reactionaries must not mislead us into exaggerating the reach of this reaction. The spirit and tendencies of the past century still persisted in the circles which were most permanently influential. Many eminent savants who had been imbued with the ideas of Condillac and Helvétius, and had taken

part in the Revolution and survived it, were active under the Empire and the restored Monarchy, still true to the spirit of their masters, and commanding influence by the value of their scientific work. M. Picavet's laborious researches into the activities of this school of thinkers has helped us to understand the transition from the age of Condorcet to the age of Comte. The two central figures are Cabanis, the friend of Condorcet,¹ and Destutt de Tracy. M. Picavet has grouped around them, along with many obscurer names, the great scientific men of the time, like Laplace, Bichat, Lamarck, as all in the direct line of eighteenth century thought. "Ideologists" he calls them.² Ideology, the science of ideas, was the word invented by de Tracy to distinguish the investigation of thought in accordance with the methods of Locke and Condillac from old-fashioned metaphysics. The guiding principle of the ideologists was to apply reason to observed facts and eschew *a priori* deductions. Thinkers of this school had an influential organ, the *Décade philosophique*, of which J. B. Say the economist was one of the founders in 1794. The Institut, which had been established by the Convention, was crowded with "ideologists," and may be said to have continued the work of the Encyclopaedia.³ These men had a firm faith in the indefinite progress of knowledge, general enlightenment, and "social reason."

¹ He has already claimed our notice, above, p. 215.

² Ideology is now sometimes used to convey a criticism; for instance, to contrast the methods of Lamarck with those of Darwin.

³ Picavet, *op. cit.* p. 69. The members of the 2nd Class of the Institut, that of moral and political science, were so predominantly Ideological that the distrust of Napoleon was excited, and he abolished it in 1803, distributing its members among the other Classes.

2

Thus the ideas of the "sophists" of the age of Voltaire were alive in the speculative world, notwithstanding political, religious, and philosophical reaction. But their limitations were to be transcended, and account taken of facts and aspects which their philosophy had ignored or minimised. The value of the reactionary movement lay in pressing these facts and aspects on the attention, in reopening chambers of the human spirit which the age of Voltaire had locked and sealed.

The idea of Progress was particularly concerned in the general change of attitude, intellectual and emotional, towards the Middle Ages. A fresh interest in the great age of the Church was a natural part of the religious revival, but extended far beyond the circle of ardent Catholics. It was a characteristic feature, as every one knows, of the Romantic movement. It did not affect only creative literature, it occupied speculative thinkers and stimulated historians. For Guizot, Michelet, and Auguste Comte, as well as for Chateaubriand and Victor Hugo, the Middle Ages have a significance which Frenchmen of the previous generation could hardly have comprehended.

We saw how that period had embarrassed the first pioneers who attempted to trace the course of civilisation as a progressive movement, how lightly they passed over it, how unconvincingly they explained it away. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the medieval question was posed in such a way that any one who undertook to develop the doctrine of Progress would have to explore it

more seriously. Madame de Staël saw this when she wrote her book on *Literature considered in its Relation to Social Institutions* (1801). She was then under the influence of Condorcet and an ardent believer in perfectibility, and the work is an attempt to extend this theory, which she testifies was falling into discredit, to the realm of literature. She saw that, if man regressed instead of progressing for ten centuries, the case for Progress was gravely compromised, and she sought to show that the Middle Ages contributed to the development of the intellectual faculties and to the expansion of civilisation, and that the Christian religion was an indispensable agent. This contention that Progress was uninterrupted is an advance on Condorcet and an anticipation of Saint-Simon and Comte.

A more eloquent and persuasive voice was raised in the following year from the ranks of reaction. Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* appeared in 1802, "amidst the ruins of our temples," as the author afterwards said, when France was issuing from the chaos of her revolution. It was a declaration of war against the spirit of the eighteenth century which had treated Christianity as a barbarous system whose fall was demanded in the name of Progress. But it was much more than polemic. Chateaubriand arrayed arguments in support of orthodox dogmas, original sin, primitive degeneration, and the rest; but the appeal of the book did not lie in its logic, it lay in the appreciation of Christianity from a new point of view. He approached it in the spirit of an artist, as an aesthete, not as a philosopher, and so far as he proved anything he proved that Christianity is valuable because

it is beautiful, not because it is true. He aimed at showing that it can "enchanter l'âme aussi divinement que les dieux de Virgile et d'Homère." He might call to his help the Fathers of the Church, but it was on Dante, Milton, Racine that his case was really based. The book is an apologia, from the aesthetic standpoint of the Romantic school. "Dieu ne défend pas les routes fleuries quand elles servent à revenir à lui."

It was a matter of course that the defender of original sin should reject the doctrine of perfectibility. "When man attains the highest point of civilisation," wrote Chateaubriand in the vein of Rousseau, "he is on the lowest stair of morality; if he is free, he is rude; by civilising his manners, he forges himself chains. His heart profits at the expense of his head, his head at the expense of his heart." And, apart from considerations of Christian doctrine, the question of Progress had little interest for the Romantic school. Victor Hugo, in the famous Preface to his *Cromwell* (1827), where he went more deeply than Chateaubriand into the contrasts between ancient and modern art, revived the old likeness of mankind to an individual man, and declared that classical antiquity was the time of its virility and that we are now spectators of its imposing old age.

From other points of view powerful intellects were reverting to the Middle Ages and eager to blot out the whole development of modern society since the Reformation, as the Encyclopaedic philosophers had wished to blot out the Middle Ages. The ideal of Bonald, De Maistre, and Lamennais was a sacerdotal government of the world, and the

English constitution was hardly less offensive to their minds than the Revolution which De Maistre denounced as "satanic." Advocates as they were of the dead system of theocracy, they contributed, however, to the advance of thought, not only by forcing medieval institutions on the notice of the world but also by their perception that society had been treated in the eighteenth century in too mechanical a way, that institutions grow, that the conception of individual men divested of their life in society is a misleading abstraction. They put this in extravagant and untenable forms, but there was a large measure of truth in their criticism, which did its part in helping the nineteenth century to revise and transcend the results of eighteenth century speculation.

In this reactionary literature we can see the struggle of the doctrine of Providence, declining before the doctrine of Progress, to gain the upper-hand again. Chateaubriand, Bonald, De Maistre, Lamennais firmly held the dogma of an original golden age and the degradation of man, and denounced the whole trend of progressive thought from Bacon to Condorcet. These writers were unconsciously helping Condorcet's doctrine to assume a new and less questionable shape.

3

Along with the discovery of the Middle Ages came the discovery of German literature. In the intellectual commerce between the two countries in the age of Frederick the Great, France had been exclusively the giver, Germany the recipient. It was due, above all, to Madame de Staël that the

tide began to flow the other way. Among the writers of the Napoleonic epoch, Madame de Staël is easily first in critical talent and intellectual breadth. Her study of the Revolution showed a more dispassionate appreciation of that convulsion than any of her contemporaries were capable of forming. But her *chef-d'œuvre* is her study of Germany, *De l'Allemagne*,¹ which revealed the existence of a world of art and thought, unsuspected by the French public. Within the next twenty years Herder and Lessing, Kant and Hegel were exerting their influence at Paris. She did in France what Coleridge was doing in England for the knowledge of German thought.

Madame de Staël had raised anew the question which had been raised in the seventeenth century and answered in the negative by Voltaire: is there progress in aesthetic literature? Her early book on *Literature* had clearly defined the issue. She did not propose the thesis that there is any progress or improvement (as some of the Moderns had contended in the famous Quarrel) in artistic form. Within the limits of their own thought and emotional experience the ancients achieved perfection of expression, and perfection cannot be surpassed. But as thought progresses, as the sum of ideas increases and society changes, fresh material is supplied to art, there is "a new development of sensibility" which enables literary artists to compass new kinds of charm. The *Génie du Christianisme* embodied a commentary on her contention, more arresting than any she could herself have furnished. Here the reactionary joined hands with the disciple of

¹ A.D. 1813.

Condorcet, to prove that there is progress in the domain of art. Madame de Staël's masterpiece, *Germany*, was a further impressive illustration of the thesis that the literature of the modern European nations represents an advance on classical literature, in the sense that it sounds notes which the Greek and Roman masters had not heard, reaches depths which they had not conjectured, unlocks chambers which to them were closed,—as a result of the progressive experiences of the human soul.¹

This view is based on the general propositions that all social phenomena closely cohere and that literature is a social phenomenon; from which it follows that if there is a progressive movement in society generally, there is a progressive movement in literature. Her books were true to the theory; they inaugurated the methods of modern criticism, which studies literary works in relation to the social background of their period.

4

France, then, under the Bourbon Restoration began to seek new light from the obscure profundities of German speculation which Madame de Staël proclaimed. Herder's *Ideas* were translated by Edgar Quinet, Lessing's *Education* by Eugène Rodrigues. Cousin sat at the feet of Hegel. At the same time a new master, full of suggestiveness for those who were interested in the philosophy of

¹ We can see the effect of her doctrine in Guizot's remarks (*Histoire de la civilisation en Europe*, 2^e leçon) where he says of modern literatures that "sous le point de vue du fond des sentiments et des idées elles sont plus fortes et plus riches [than the ancient]. On voit que l'âme humaine a été remuée sur un plus grand nombre de points à une plus grande profondeur"—and to this very fact he ascribes their comparative imperfection in form.

history, was discovered in Italy. The *Scienza nuova* of Vico was translated by Michelet.

The book of Vico was now a hundred years old. I did not mention him in his chronological place, because he exercised no immediate influence on the world. His thought was an anachronism in the eighteenth century, it appealed to the nineteenth. He did not announce or conceive any theory of Progress, but his speculation, bewildering enough and confused in its exposition, contained principles which seemed predestined to form the basis of such a doctrine. His aim was that of Cabanis and the ideologists, to set the study of society on the same basis of certitude which had been secured for the study of nature through the work of Descartes and Newton.

His fundamental idea was that the explanation of the history of societies is to be found in the human mind. The world at first is felt rather than thought; this is the condition of savages in the state of nature, who have no political organisation. The second mental state is imaginative knowledge, "poetical wisdom"; to this corresponds the higher barbarism of the heroic age. Finally, comes conceptual knowledge, and with it the age of civilisation. These are the three stages through which every society passes, and each of these types determines law, institutions, language, literature, and the characters of men.

Vico's strenuous researches in the study of Homer and early Roman history were undertaken in order to get at the point of view of the heroic age. He insisted that it could not be understood unless we transcended our own abstract ways of thinking

and looked at the world with primitive eyes, by a forced effort of imagination. He was convinced that history had been vitiated by the habit of ignoring psychological differences, by the failure to recapture the ancient point of view. Here he was far in advance of his own times.

Concentrating his attention above all on Roman antiquity, he adopted—not altogether advantageously for his system—the revolutions of Roman history as the typical rule of social development. The succession of aristocracy (for the early kingship of Rome and Homeric royalty are merely forms of aristocracy in Vico's view), democracy, and monarchy is the necessary sequence of political governments. Monarchy (the Roman Empire) corresponds to the highest form of civilisation. What happens when this is reached? Society declines into an anarchical state of nature, from which it again passes into a higher barbarism or heroic age, to be followed once more by civilisation. The dissolution of the Roman Empire and the barbarian invasions are followed by the Middle Ages, in which Dante plays the part of Homer; and the modern period with its strong monarchies corresponds to the Roman Empire. This is Vico's principle of reflux. If the theory were sound, it would mean that the civilisation of his day must again relapse into barbarism and the cycle begin again. He did not himself state this conclusion directly or venture on any prediction.

It is obvious how readily his doctrine could be adapted to the conception of Progress as a spiral movement. Evidently the corresponding periods in his cycles are not identical or really homogeneous. Whatever points of likeness may be discovered

between early Greek or Roman and medieval societies, the points of unlikeness are still more numerous and manifest. Modern civilisation differs in fundamental and far-reaching ways from Greek and Roman. It is absurd to pretend that the general movement brings man back again and again to the point from which he started, and therefore, if there is any value in Vico's reflux, it can only mean that the movement of society may be regarded as a spiral ascent, so that each stage of an upward progress corresponds, in certain general aspects, to a stage which has already been traversed, this correspondence being due to the psychical nature of man.

A conception of this kind could not be appreciated in Vico's day or by the next generation. The *Scienza nuova* lay in Montesquieu's library, and he made no use of it. But it was natural that it should arouse interest in France at a time when the new idealistic philosophies of Germany were attracting attention, and when Frenchmen, of the ideological school, were seeking, like Vico himself, a synthetic principle to explain social phenomena. Different though Vico was in his point of departure as in his methods from the German idealists, his speculations nevertheless had something in common with theirs. Both alike explained history by the nature of mind which necessarily determined the stages of the process; Vico as little as Fichte or Hegel took eudaemonic considerations into account. The difference was that the German thinkers sought their principle in logic and applied it *a priori*, while Vico sought his in concrete psychology and engaged in laborious research to establish it *a posteriori* by the actual data of history.

But both speculations suggested that the course of human development corresponds to the fundamental character of mental processes and is not diverted either by Providential intervention or by free acts of human will.

5

These foreign influences co-operated in determining the tendencies of French speculation in the period of the restored monarchy, whereby the idea of Progress was placed on new basements and became the headstone of new "religions." Before we consider the founders of sects, we may glance briefly at the views of some eminent savants who had gained the ear of the public before the July Revolution—Jouffroy, Cousin, and Guizot.

Cousin, the chief luminary in the sphere of pure philosophy in France in the first half of the nineteenth century, drew his inspiration from Germany. He was professedly an eclectic, but in the main his philosophy was Hegelian. He might endow God with consciousness and speak of Providence, but he regarded the world-process as a necessary evolution of thought, and he saw, not in religion but in philosophy, the highest expression of civilisation. In 1828 he delivered a course of lectures on the philosophy of history. He divided history into three periods, each governed by a master idea: the first by the idea of the infinite (the Orient); the second by that of the finite (classical antiquity); the third by that of the relation of finite to infinite (the modern age). As with Hegel, the future is ignored, progress is confined within a closed system, the highest circle has already been reached.

As an opponent of the ideologists and the sensational philosophy on which they founded their speculations, Cousin appealed to the orthodox and all those to whom Voltairianism was an accursed thing, and for a generation he exercised a considerable influence. But his work—and this is the important point for us—helped to diffuse the idea, which the ideologists were diffusing on very different lines—that human history has been a progressive development.

Progressive development was also the theme of Jouffroy in his slight but suggestive introduction to the philosophy of history (1825),¹ in which he posed the same problem which, as we shall see, Saint-Simon and Comte were simultaneously attempting to solve. He had not fallen under the glamour of German idealism, and his results have more affinity with Vico's than with Hegel's.

He begins with some simple considerations which conduct to the doubtful conclusion that all the historical changes in man's condition are due to the operation of his intelligence. The historian's business is to trace the succession of the actual changes. The business of the philosopher of history is to trace the succession of ideas and study the correspondence between the two developments. This is the true philosophy of history: "the glory of our age is to understand it."

Now it is admitted to-day, he says, that the human intelligence obeys invariable laws, so that a further problem remains. The actual succession of ideas has to be deduced from these necessary laws.

¹ "Réflexions sur la philosophie de l'histoire," in *Mélanges philosophiques*, 2nd edition, 1838.

When that deduction is effected—a long time hence—history will disappear; it will be merged in science.

Jouffroy then presented the world with what he calls the *fatality of intellectual development*, to take the place of Providence or Destiny. It is a fatality, he is careful to explain, which, so far from compromising, presupposes individual liberty. For it is not like the fatality of sensual impulse which guides the brute creation. What it implies is this: if a thousand men have the same idea of what is good, this idea will govern their conduct in spite of their passions, because, being reasonable and free, they are not blindly submissive to passion, but can deliberate and choose.

This explanation of history as a necessary development of society corresponding to a necessary succession of ideas differs in two important points from the explanations of Hegel and Cousin. The succession of ideas is not conceived as a transcendent logic, but is determined by the laws of the *human* mind and belongs to the domain of psychology. Here Jouffroy is on the same ground as Vico. In the second place, it is not a closed system; room remains for an indefinite development in the future.

6

While Cousin was discoursing on philosophy at Paris in the days of the last Bourbon king, Guizot was drawing crowded audiences to his lectures on the history of European civilisation,¹ and the keynote of these lectures was Progress. He

¹ *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe.*

approached it with a fresh mind, unencumbered with any of the philosophical theories which had attended and helped its growth.

Civilisation, he said, is the supreme fact so far as man is concerned, "the fact *par excellence*, the general and definite fact in which all other facts merge." And "civilisation" means progress or development. The word "awakens, when it is pronounced, the idea of a people which is in motion, not to change its place but to change its state, a people whose condition is expanding and improving. The idea of progress, development, seems to me to be the fundamental idea contained in the word *civilisation*."

There we have the most important positive idea of eighteenth century speculation, standing forth detached and independent, no longer bound to a system. Fifty years before, no one would have dreamed of defining civilisation like that and counting on the immediate acquiescence of his audience.

But progress has to be defined. It does not merely imply the improvement of social relations and public well-being. France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was behind Holland and England in the sum and distribution of well-being among individuals, and yet she can claim that she was the most "civilised" country in those ages. The reason is that civilisation also implies the development of the individual life, of men's private faculties, sentiments, and ideas. The progress of man therefore includes both these developments. But they are intimately connected. We may observe how moral reformers generally

recommend their proposals by promising social amelioration as a result, and that progressive politicians maintain that the progress of society necessarily induces moral improvement. The connection may not always be apparent, and at different times one or other kind of progress predominates. But one is followed by the other ultimately, though it may be after a long interval, for "*la Providence a ses aises dans le temps.*" The rise of Christianity was one of the crises of civilisation, yet it did not in its early stages aim at any improvement of social conditions; it did not attack the great injustices which were wrought in the world. It meant a great crisis because it changed the beliefs and sentiments of individuals; social effects came afterwards.

The civilisation of modern Europe has grown through a period of fifteen centuries and is still progressing. The rate of progress has been slower than that of Greek civilisation, but on the other hand it has been continuous, uninterrupted, and we can see "the vista of an immense career."

The effects of Guizot's doctrine in propagating the idea of Progress were all the greater for its divorce from philosophical theory. He did not touch perplexing questions like fatality, or discuss the general plan of the world; he did not attempt to rise above common-sense; and he did not essay any premature scheme of the universal history of man. His masterly survey of the social history of Europe exhibited progressive movement as a fact, in a period in which to the thinkers of the eighteenth century it had been almost invisible. This of course was far from proving that Progress is the

key to the history of the world and human destinies. The equation of civilisation with progress remains an assumption. For the question at once arises: Can civilisation reach a state of equilibrium from which no further advance is possible; and if it can, does it cease to be civilisation? Is Chinese civilisation mis-called, or has there been here too a progressive movement all the time, however slow? Such questions were not raised by Guizot. But his view of history was effective in helping to establish the association of the two ideas of civilisation and progress, which to-day is taken for granted as evidently true.

7

The views of these eminent thinkers Cousin, Jouffroy, and Guizot show that—quite apart from the doctrines of ideologists and of the “positivists,” Saint-Simon and Comte, of whom I have still to speak—there was a common trend in French thought in the Restoration period towards the conception of history as a progressive movement. Perhaps there is no better illustration of the infectiousness of this conception than in the *Historical Studies* which Chateaubriand gave to the world in 1831. He had learned much, from books as well as from politics, since he wrote the *Genius of Christianity*. He had gained some acquaintance with German philosophy and with Vico. And in this work of his advanced age he accepts the idea of Progress, so far as it could be accepted by an orthodox son of the Church. He believes that the advance of knowledge will lead to social progress, and that society, if it seems some-

times to move backward, is always really moving forward. Bossuet, for whom he had no word of criticism thirty years before, he now convicts of "an imposing error." That great man, he writes, "has confined historical events in a circle as rigorous as his genius. He has imprisoned them in an inflexible Christianity—a terrible hoop in which the human race would turn in a sort of eternity, without progress or improvement." The admission from such a quarter shows eloquently how the wind was setting.

The notions of development and continuity which were to control all departments of historical study in the later nineteenth century were at the same time being independently promoted by the young historical school in Germany which is associated with the names of Eichhorn, Savigny, and Niebuhr. Their view that laws and institutions are a natural growth or the expression of a people's mind, represents another departure from the ideas of the eighteenth century. It was a repudiation of that "universal reason" which desired to reform the world and its peoples indiscriminately without taking any account of their national histories.

CHAPTER XV

THE SEARCH FOR A LAW OF PROGRESS :

I. SAINT-SIMON

AMID the intellectual movements in France described in the last chapter the idea of Progress passed into a new phase of its growth. Hitherto it had been a vague optimistic doctrine which encouraged the idealism of reformers and revolutionaries, but could not guide them. It had waited like a handmaid on the abstractions of Nature and Reason ; it had hardly realised an independent life. The time had come for systematic attempts to probe its meaning and definitely to ascertain the direction in which humanity is moving. Kant had said that a Kepler or a Newton was needed to find the law of the movement of civilisation. Several Frenchmen now undertook to solve the problem. They did not solve it ; but the new science of sociology was founded ; and the idea of Progress, which presided at its birth, has been its principal problem ever since.

I

The three thinkers who claimed to have discovered the secret of social development had also in view the practical object of remoulding society on

general scientific principles, and they became the founders of sects, Fourier, Saint-Simon, and Comte. They all announced a new era of development as a necessary sequel of the past, an inevitable and desirable stage in the march of humanity, and delineated its features.

Comte was the successor of Saint-Simon, as Saint-Simon himself was the successor of Condorcet. Fourier stands quite apart. He claimed that he broke entirely new ground, and acknowledged no masters. He regarded himself as a Newton for whom no Kepler or Galileo had prepared the way. The most important and sanest part of his work was the scheme for organising society on a new principle of industrial co-operation. His general theory of the universe and man's destinies which lay behind his practical plans is so fantastic that it sounds like the dream of a lunatic. Yet many accepted it as the apocalypse of an evangelist.

Fourier was moved by the far-reaching effects of Newton's discovery to seek a law which would co-ordinate facts in the moral world as the principle of gravitation had co-ordinated facts in the physical world, and in 1808 he claimed to have found the secret in what he called the law of Passional Attraction.¹ The human passions have hitherto been sources of misery; the problem for man is to make them sources of happiness. If we know the law which governs them, we can make such changes in our environment that none of the passions will need to be curbed, and the free indulgence of one

¹ *Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales*. General accounts of his theories will be found in *Charles Fourier, sa vie et sa théorie*, by his disciple Dr. Ch. Pellarin (2nd ed., 1843), and in Flint, *Hist. of Philosophy of History in France*, etc., pp. 408 sqq.

will not hinder or compromise the satisfaction of the others.

His worthless law for harmonising the passions without restraining them need not detain us. The structure of society, by which he proposed to realise the benefits of his discovery, was based on co-operation, but was not socialistic. The family as a social unit was to be replaced by a larger unit (*phalange*), economically self-sufficing, and consisting of about 1800 persons, who were to live together in a vast building (*phalanstère*), surrounded by a domain sufficient to produce all they required. Private property is not abolished; the community will include both rich and poor; all the products of their work are distributed in shares according to the labour, talents, and capital of each member, but a fixed minimum is assured to every one. The scheme was actually tried on a small scale near the forest of Rambouillet in 1832.

This transformation of society, which is to have the effect of introducing harmony among the passions, will mark the beginning of a new epoch. The duration of man's earthly career is 81,000 years, of which 5000 have elapsed. He will now enter upon a long period of increasing harmony, which will be followed by an equal period of decline—like the way up and the way down of Heraclitus. His brief past, the age of his infancy, has been marked by a decline of happiness leading to the present age of "civilisation" which is thoroughly bad—here we see the influence of Rousseau—and from it Fourier's discovery is the clue to lead humanity forth into the epoch in which harmony begins to emerge. But men who have lived in the bad ages need not be

pitied, and those who live to-day need not be pessimistic. For Fourier believed in metempsychosis, and could tell you, as if he were the private secretary of the Deity calculating the arithmetical details of the cosmic plan, how many very happy, tolerably happy, and unhappy lives fall to the lot of each soul during the whole 81,000 years. Nor does the prospect end with the life of the earth. The soul of the earth and the human souls attached to it will live again in comets, planets, and suns, on a system of which Fourier knew all the particulars.¹

These silly speculations would not deserve even this slight indication of their purport were it not that Fourier founded a sect and had a considerable body of devoted followers. His "discovery" was acclaimed by Béranger :

Fourier nous dit : Sors de la fange,
 Peuple en proie aux déceptions,
 Travaille, groupé par phalange,
 Dans un cercle d'attractions ;
 La terre, après tant de désastres,
 Forme avec le ciel un hymen,
 Et la loi qui régit les astres,
 Donne la paix au genre humain.

Ten years after his death (1837) an English writer tells us that "the social theory of Fourier is at the present moment engrossing the attention and exciting the apprehensions of thinking men, not only in France but in almost every country in Europe." Grotesque as was the theoretical background of his doctrines, he helped to familiarise the world with the idea of indefinite Progress.

¹ Details will be found in the *Théorie de l'unité universelle*, originally published under the title *Association domestique-agricole* in 1822.

2

"The imagination of poets has placed the golden age in the cradle of the human race. It was the age of iron they should have banished there. The golden age is not behind us, but in front of us. It is the perfection of social order. Our fathers have not seen it; our children will arrive there one day, and it is for us to clear the way for them."

The Comte de Saint-Simon, who wrote these words in 1814, was one of the liberal nobles who had imbibed the ideas of the Voltairian age and sympathised with the spirit of the Revolution. In his literary career from 1803 to his death in 1825 he passed through several phases of thought,¹ but his chief masters were always Condorcet and the physiologists, from whom he derived his two guiding ideas that ethics and politics depend ultimately on physics and that history is progress.

Condorcet had interpreted history by the progressive movement of knowledge. That, Saint-Simon said, is the true principle, but Condorcet applied it narrowly, and committed two errors. He did not understand the social import of religion, and he represented the Middle Ages as a useless interruption of the forward movement. Here Saint-Simon learned from the religious reaction. He saw that religion has a natural and legitimate social rôle and cannot be eliminated as a mere perversity. He expounded the doctrine that all social phenomena cohere. A religious system, he said, always corresponds to the stage of science which the society

¹ They are traced in G. Weill's valuable monograph, *Saint-Simon et son œuvre*, 1894.

wherein it appears has reached; in fact, religion is merely science clothed in a form suitable to the emotional needs which it satisfies. And as a religious system is based on the contemporary phase of scientific development, so the political system of an epoch corresponds to the religious system. They all hang together. Medieval Europe does not represent a temporary triumph of obscurantism, useless and deplorable, but a valuable and necessary stage in human progress. It was a period in which an important principle of social organisation was realised, the right relation of the spiritual and temporal powers.

It is evident that these views transformed the theory of Condorcet into a more acceptable shape. So long as the medieval tract of time appeared to be an awkward episode, contributing nothing to the forward movement but rather thwarting and retarding it, Progress was exposed to the criticism that it was an arbitrary synthesis, only partly borne out by historical facts and supplying no guarantees for the future. And so long as rationalists of the Encyclopaedic school regarded religion as a tiresome product of ignorance and deceit, the social philosophy which lay behind the theory of Progress was condemned as unscientific; because, in defiance of the close cohesion of social phenomena, it refused to admit that religion, as one of the chief of those phenomena, must itself participate and co-operate in Progress.

Condorcet had suggested that the value of history lies in affording data for foreseeing the future. Saint-Simon raised this suggestion to a dogma. But prevision was impossible on Condorcet's un-

scientific method. In order to foretell, the law of the movement must be discovered, and Condorcet had not found or even sought a law. The eighteenth century thinkers had left Progress a mere hypothesis based on a very insufficient induction; their successors sought to lift it to the rank of a scientific hypothesis, by discovering a social law as valid as the physical law of gravitation. This was the object both of Saint-Simon and of Comte.

The "law" which Saint-Simon deduced from history was that epochs of organisation or construction, and epochs of criticism or revolution, succeed each other alternately. The medieval period was a time of organisation, and was followed by a critical, revolutionary period, which has now come to an end and must be succeeded by another epoch of organisation. Having discovered the clew to the process, Saint-Simon is able to predict. As our knowledge of the universe has reached or is reaching a stage which is no longer conjectural but *positive* in all departments, society will be transformed accordingly; a new *physicist* religion will supersede Christianity and Deism; men of science will play the *rôle* of organisers which the clergy played in the Middle Ages.

As the goal of the development is social happiness, and as the working classes form the majority, the first step towards the goal will be the amelioration of the lot of the working classes. This will be the principal problem of government in reorganising society, and Saint-Simon's solution of the problem was socialism. He rejected the watchwords of liberalism—democracy, liberty, and

equality—with as much disdain as De Maistre and the reactionaries.

The announcement of a future age of gold, which I quoted above, is taken from a pamphlet which he issued, in conjunction with his secretary, Augustin Thierry the historian, after the fall of Napoleon.¹ In it he revived the idea of the Abbé de Saint-Pierre for the abolition of war, and proposed a new organisation of Europe more ambitious and utopian than the Abbé's league of states. At this moment he saw in parliamentary government, which the restored Bourbons were establishing in France, a sovran remedy for political disorder, and he imagined that if this political system were introduced in all the states of Europe a long step would have been taken to the perpetuation of peace. If the old enemies France and England formed a close alliance there would be little difficulty in creating ultimately a European state like the American Commonwealth, with a parliamentary government supreme over the state governments. Here is the germ of the idea of a "parliament of man."

3

Saint-Simon, however, did not construct a definite system for the attainment of social perfection. He left it to disciples to develop the doctrine which he sketched. In the year of his death (1825) Olinde Rodrigues and Enfantin founded a journal, the *Producteur*, to present to humanity the one thing which humanity, in the opinion of their master, then most needed, a new general doctrine.

History shows that peoples have been moving

¹ *De la réorganisation de la société européenne*, p. 111 (1814).

from isolation to union, from war to peace, from antagonism to association. The programme for the future is association scientifically organised. The Catholic Church in the Middle Ages offered the example of a great social organisation resting on a general doctrine. The modern world must also be a social organisation, but the general doctrine will be scientific, not religious. The spiritual power must reside, not in priests but in savants, who will direct the progress of science and public education. Each member of the community will have his place and duties assigned to him. Society consists of three classes of workers—industrial workers, savants, and artists. A commission of eminent workers of each class will determine the place of every individual according to his capacities. Complete equality is absurd; inequality, based on merit, is reasonable and necessary. It is a modern error to distrust state authority. A power directing national forces is requisite, to propose great ideas and to make the innovations necessary for Progress. Such an organisation will promote progress in all domains: in science by co-operation, in industry by credit, and in art too, for artists will learn to express the ideas and sentiments of their own age. There are signs already of a tendency towards something of this kind; its realisation must be procured, not by revolution but by gradual change.

In the authoritarian character of the organisation to which these apostles of Progress wished to entrust the destinies of man we may see the influence of the great theocrat and antagonist of Progress, Joseph de Maistre. He taught them the necessity

of a strong central power and the danger of liberty.

But the fullest exposition of the Saint-Simonian doctrine of development was given by Bazard, one of the chief disciples, a few years later.¹ The human race is conceived as a collective being which unfolds its nature in the course of generations, according to a law—the law of Progress—which may be called the physiological law of the human species, and was discovered by Saint-Simon. It consists in the alternation of *organic* and *critical* epochs.

In an organic epoch men discern a destination and harmonise all their energies to reach it. In a critical epoch they are not conscious of a goal, and their efforts are dispersed and discordant. There was an organic period in Greece before the age of Socrates. It was succeeded by a critical epoch lasting to the barbarian invasions. Then came an organic period in the homogeneous societies of Europe from Charlemagne to the end of the fifteenth century, and a new critical period opened with Luther and has lasted till to-day. Now it is time to prepare the advent of the organic age which must necessarily follow.

The most salient fact observable in history is the continual extension of the principle of association, in the series of family, city, nation, supernational Church. The next term must be a still vaster association comprehending the whole race.

In consequence of the incompleteness of association, the exploitation of the weak by the strong has been a capital feature in human societies, but

¹ *Exposition de la doctrine saint-simonienne*, 2 vols., 1830-1.

its successive forms exhibit a gradual mitigation. Cannibalism is followed by slavery, slavery by serfdom, and finally comes industrial exploitation by the capitalist. This latest form of the oppression of the weak depends on the right of property, and the remedy is to transfer the right of inheriting the property of the individual from the family to the state. The society of the future must be socialistic.

The new social doctrine must not only be diffused by education and legislation, it must be sanctioned by a new religion. Christianity will not serve, for Christianity is founded on a dualism between matter and spirit, and has laid a curse on matter. The new religion must be monistic, and its principles are, briefly: God is one, God is all that is, all is God. He is universal love, revealing itself as mind and matter. And to this triad correspond the three domains of religion, science, and industry.

In combining their theory with a philosophical religion the Saint-Simonian school was not only true to its master's teaching but obeying an astute instinct. As a purely secular movement for the transformation of society, their doctrine would not have reaped the same success or inspired the same enthusiasm. They were probably influenced too by the pamphlet of Lessing to which Madame de Staël had invited attention, and which one of Saint-Simon's disciples translated.

The fortunes of the school, the life of the community at Mênilmontant under the direction of Enfantin, the persecution, the heresies, the dispersion, the attempt to propagate the movement in Egypt, the philosophical activity of Enfantin and

Lemonnier under the Second Empire, do not claim our attention ; the curious story is told in M. Weill's admirable monograph.¹ The sect is now extinct, but its influence was wide in its day, and it propagated faith in Progress as the key to history and the law of collective life.²

¹ See note in Appendix.

² Two able converts to the ideas of Saint-Simon seceded from the school at an early stage in consequence of Enfantin's aberrations : Pierre Leroux, whom we shall meet again, and P. J. B. Buchez, who in 1833 published a thoughtful *Introduction à la science de l'histoire*, where history is defined as "a science whose end is to foresee the social future of the human species in the order of its free activity" (vol. i. p. 60, ed. 2, 1842).

CHAPTER XVI

THE SEARCH FOR A LAW OF PROGRESS :

II. COMTE

I

AUGUSTE COMTE did more than any preceding thinker to establish the idea of Progress as a luminary which could not escape men's vision. The brilliant suggestions of Saint-Simon, the writings of Bazard and Enfantin, the vagaries of Fourier, might be dismissed as curious rather than serious propositions, but the massive system wrought out by Comte's speculative genius—his organic scheme of human knowledge, his elaborate analysis of history, his new science of sociology—was a great fact with which European thought was forced to reckon. The soul of this system was Progress, and the most important problem he set out to solve was the determination of its laws.

His originality is not dimmed by the fact that he owed to Saint-Simon more than he afterwards admitted or than his disciples have been willing to allow. He collaborated with him for several years, and at this time enthusiastically acknowledged the intellectual stimulus he received from the elder savant. But he derived from Saint-Simon much more than the stimulation of his thoughts in a

certain direction. He was indebted to him for some of the characteristic ideas of his own system. He was indebted to him for the principle which lay at the very basis of his system, that the social phenomena of a given period and the intellectual state of the society cohere and correspond. The conception that the coming age was to be a period of organisation like the Middle Ages, and the idea of the government of savants, are pure Saint-Simonian doctrine. And the fundamental idea of a *positive* philosophy had been apprehended by Saint-Simon long before he was acquainted with his youthful associate.

But Comte had a more methodical and scientific mind, and he thought that Saint-Simon was premature in drawing conclusions as to the reformation of societies and industries before the positive philosophy had been constructed. He published—he was then only twenty-two—in 1822 a *Plan of the scientific operations necessary for the re-organisation of society*, which was published under another title two years later by Saint-Simon, and it was over this that the friends quarrelled. This work contains the principles of the positive philosophy which he was soon to begin to work out; it announces already the “law of the Three Stages.”

The first volume of the *Cours de philosophie positive* appeared in 1830; it took him twelve years more to complete the exposition of his system.¹

2

The “law of Three Stages” is familiar to many who have never read a line of his writings. That

¹ With vol. vi., 1842.

men first attempted to explain natural phenomena by the operation of imaginary deities, then sought to interpret them by abstractions, and finally came to see that they could only be understood by scientific methods, observation, and experiment—this was a generalisation which had already been thrown out by Turgot. Comte adopted it as a fundamental psychological law, which has governed every domain of mental activity and explains the whole story of human development. Each of our principal conceptions, every branch of knowledge, passes successively through these three states which he names the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive or scientific. In the first, the mind invents; in the second, it abstracts; in the third, it submits itself to positive facts; and the proof that any branch of knowledge has reached the third stage is the recognition of invariable natural laws.

But, granting that this may be the key to the history of the sciences, of physics, say, or botany, how can it explain the history of man, the sequence of actual historical events? Comte replies that history has been governed by ideas; "the whole social mechanism is ultimately based on opinions." Thus man's history is essentially a history of his opinions; and these are subject to the fundamental psychological law.

It must, however, be observed that all branches of knowledge are not in the same stage simultaneously. Some may have reached the metaphysical, while others are still lagging behind in the theological; some may have become scientific, while others have not passed from the metaphysical. Thus the study of physical phenomena has already

reached the positive stage; but the study of social phenomena has not. The central aim of Comte, and his great achievement in his own opinion, was to raise the study of social phenomena from the second to the third stage.

When we proceed to apply the law of the three stages to the general course of historical development, we are met at the outset by the difficulty that the advance in all the domains of activity is not simultaneous. If at a given period thought and opinions are partly in the theological, partly in the metaphysical, and partly in the scientific state, how is the law to be applied to general development? One class of ideas, Comte says, must be selected as the criterion, and this class must be that of social and moral ideas, for two reasons. In the first place, social science occupies the highest rank in the hierarchy of sciences, on which he laid great stress. In the second, those ideas play the principal part for the majority of men, and the most ordinary phenomena are the most important to consider. When, in other classes of ideas, the advance is at any time more rapid, this only means an indispensable preparation for the ensuing period.

The movement of history is due to the deeply rooted though complex instinct which pushes man to ameliorate his condition incessantly, to develop in all ways the sum of his physical, moral, and intellectual life. And all the phenomena of his social life are closely cohesive, as Saint-Simon had pointed out. By virtue of this cohesion, political, moral, and intellectual progress are inseparable from material progress, and so we find that the phases of his material development correspond to intellectual changes.

The principle of consensus or "solidarity," which secures harmony and order in the development, is as important as the principle of the three stages which governs the onward movement. This movement, however, is not in a right line, but displays a series of oscillations, unequal and variable, round a mean motion which tends to prevail. The three general causes of variation, according to Comte, are race, climate, and deliberate political action (such as the retrograde policies of Julian the Apostate or Napoleon). But while they cause deflections and oscillation, their power is strictly limited; they may accelerate or retard the movement, but they cannot invert its order; they may affect the intensity of the tendencies in a given situation, but cannot change their nature.

3

In the demonstration of his laws by the actual course of civilisation, Comte adopts what he calls "the happy artifice of Condorcet," and treats the successive peoples who pass on the torch as if they were a single people running the race. This is "a rational fiction," for a people's true successors are those who pursue its efforts. And, like Bossuet and Condorcet, he confined his review to European civilisation; he considered only the *élite* or advance guard of humanity. He deprecated the introduction of China or India, for instance, as a confusing complication. He ignored the *rôles* of Brahmanism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism. His synthesis, therefore, cannot claim to be a synthesis of universal history; it is only a synthesis of the movement of European history.

In accordance with the law of the three stages, the development falls into three great periods. The first or Theological came to an end about A.D. 1400, and the second or Metaphysical is now nearing its close, to make way for the third or Positive, for which Comte was preparing the way.

The Theological period has itself three stages, in which Fetishism, Polytheism, and Monotheism successively prevail. The chief social characteristics of the Polytheistic period are the institution of slavery and the coincidence or "confusion" of the spiritual and temporal powers. It has two stages: the theocratic, represented by Egypt, and the military, represented by Rome, between which Greece stands in a rather embarrassing and uneasy position.

The initiative for the passage to the Monotheistic period came from Judaea, and Comte attempts to show that this could not have been otherwise. His analysis of this period is the most interesting part of his survey. The chief feature of the political system corresponding to monotheism is the separation of the spiritual and temporal powers; the function of the spiritual power being concerned with education, and that of the temporal with action, in the wide senses of those terms. The defects of this dual system were due to the irrational theology. But the theory of papal infallibility was a great step in intellectual and social progress, by providing a final jurisdiction, without which society would have been troubled incessantly by contests arising from the vague formulae of dogmas. Here Comte had learned from Joseph de Maistre. But that thinker would not have been edified when Comte went on to declare that in the passage from polytheism to

monotheism the religious spirit had really declined, and that one of the merits of Catholicism was that it augmented the domain of human wisdom at the expense of divine inspiration.¹ If it be said that the Catholic system promoted the empire of the clergy rather than the interests of religion, this was all to the good; for it placed the practical use of religion in "the provisional elevation of a noble speculative corporation eminently able to direct opinions and morals."

But Catholic monotheism could not escape dissolution. The metaphysical spirit began to operate powerfully on the notions of moral philosophy, as soon as the Catholic organisation was complete; and Catholicism, because it could not assimilate this intellectual movement, lost its progressive character and stagnated.

The decay began in the fourteenth century, where Comte dates the beginning of the Metaphysical period—a period of revolution and disorder. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the movement is spontaneous and unconscious; from the sixteenth till to-day it has proceeded under the direction of a philosophical spirit which is negative and not constructive. This critical philosophy has only accelerated a decomposition which began spontaneously. For as theology progresses it becomes less consistent and less durable, and as its conceptions become less irrational, the intensity of the emotions which they excite decreases. Fetishism had deeper roots than polytheism and lasted longer; and polytheism surpassed monotheism in vigour and vitality.

Yet the critical philosophy was necessary to

¹ *Cours de philosophie positive*, vi. 354.

exhibit the growing need of solid reorganisation and to prove that the decaying system was incapable of directing the world any longer. Logically it was very imperfect, but it was justified by its success. The destructive work was mainly done in the seventeenth century by Hobbes, Spinoza, and Bayle, of whom Hobbes was the most effective. In the eighteenth all prominent thinkers participated in developing this negative movement, and Rousseau gave it the practical stimulus which saved it from degenerating into an unfruitful agitation. Of particular importance was the great fallacy, which Helvétius propagated, that human intellects are equal. This error was required for the full development of the critical doctrine. For it supported the dogmas of popular sovereignty and social equality, and justified the principle of the right of private judgement.

These three principles—popular sovereignty, equality, and what he calls the right of free examination—are in Comte's eyes vicious and anarchical.¹ But it was necessary that they should be promulgated, because the transition from one organised social system to another cannot be direct; it requires an anarchical interregnum. Popular sovereignty is opposed to orderly institutions and condemns all superior persons to dependence on the multitude of their inferiors. Equality, obviously anarchical in its tendency, and obviously untrue (for, as men are not equal or even equivalent to one another, their rights cannot be identical), was similarly necessary to break down the old institutions. The universal claim to the right of free judgement merely consecrates the

¹ *Op. cit.* iv. 36-38.

transitional state of unlimited liberty in the interim between the decline of theology and the arrival of positive philosophy. Comte further remarks that the fall of the spiritual power had led to anarchy in international relations, and if the spirit of nationality were to prevail too far, the result would be a state of things inferior to that of the Middle Ages.

But Comte says for the metaphysical spirit in France that with all its vices it was more disengaged from the prejudices of the old theological régime, and nearer to a true rational positivism than either the German mysticism or the English empiricism of the same period.

The Revolution was a necessity, to disclose the chronic decomposition of society from which it resulted, and to liberate the modern social elements from the grip of the ancient powers. Comte has praise for the Convention, which he contrasts with the Constituent Assembly with its political fictions and inconsistencies. He pointed out that the great vice in the "metaphysics" of the crisis—that is, in the principles of the revolutionaries—lay in conceiving society out of relation to the past, in ignoring the Middle Ages, and borrowing from Greek and Roman society retrograde and contradictory ideals.

Napoleon restored order, but he was more injurious to humanity than any other historical person. His moral and intellectual nature was incompatible with the true direction of Progress, which involves the extinction of the theological and military régime of the past. Thus his work, like Julian the Apostate's, exhibits an instance of deflection from the line of Progress. Then came the parliamentary system of the restored Bourbons

which Comte designates as a political Utopia, destitute of social principles, a foolish attempt to combine political retrogression with a state of permanent peace.

4

The critical doctrine has performed its historical function, and the time has come for man to enter upon the Positive stage of his career. To enable him to take this step forward, it is necessary that the study of social phenomena should become a positive science. As social science is the highest in the hierarchy of sciences, it could not develop until the two branches of knowledge which come next in the scale, biology and chemistry, assumed a scientific form. This has recently been achieved, and it is now possible to found a scientific sociology.

This science, like mechanics and biology, has its statics and its dynamics. The first studies the laws of co-existence, the second those of succession; the first contains the theory of order, the second that of progress. The law of consensus or cohesion is the fundamental principle of social statics; the law of the three stages is that of social dynamics. Comte's survey of history, of which I have briefly indicated the general character, exhibits the application of these sociological laws.

The capital feature of the third period, which we are now approaching, will be the organisation of society by means of scientific sociology. The world will be guided by a general theory, and this means that it must be controlled by those who understand the theory and will know how to apply it. Therefore society will revive the principle which was

realised in the great period of Monotheism, the distinction of a spiritual and a temporal order. But the spiritual order will consist of savants who will direct social life not by theological fictions but by the positive truths of science. They will administer a system of universal education and will draw up the final code of ethics. They will be able, more effectively than the Church, to protect the interests of the lower classes.

Comte's conviction that the world is prepared for a transformation of this kind is based principally on signs of the decline of the theological spirit and of the military spirit, which he regarded as the two main obstacles to the reign of reason. Catholicism, he says, is now no more than "an imposing historical ruin." As for militarism, the epoch has arrived in which serious and lasting warfare among the *élite* nations will totally cease. The last general cause of warfare has been the competition for colonies. But the colonial policy is now in its decadence (with the temporary exception of England), so that we need not look for future trouble from this source. The very sophism, sometimes put forward to justify war, that it is an instrument of civilisation, is a homage to the pacific nature of modern society.

We need not follow further the details of Comte's forecast of the Positive period, except to mention that he did not contemplate a political federation. The great European nations will develop each in its own way, with their separate "temporal" organisations. But he contemplated the intervention of a common "spiritual" power, so that all nationalities "under the direction of a homogeneous speculative

class will contribute to an identical work, in a spirit of active European patriotism, not of sterile cosmopolitanism."

Comte claimed, like Saint-Simon, that the data of history, scientifically interpreted, afford the means of prevision. It is interesting to observe how he failed himself as a diviner; how utterly he misapprehended the vitality of Catholicism, how completely his prophecy as to the cessation of wars was belied by the event. He lived to see the Crimean war.¹ As a diviner he failed as completely as Saint-Simon and Fourier, whose dream that the nineteenth century would see the beginning of an epoch of harmony and happiness was to be fulfilled by a deadly struggle between capitalism and labour, the civil war in America, the war of 1870, the Commune, Russian pogroms, Armenian massacres, and finally the universal catastrophe of 1914.

5

For the comprehension of history we have perhaps gained as little from Comte's positive laws as from Hegel's metaphysical categories. Both thinkers had studied the facts of history only slightly and partially, a rather serious drawback which enabled them to impose their own constructions with the greater ease. Hegel's method of *a priori* synthesis was enjoined by his philosophical theory; but in Comte we also find a tendency to *a priori* treatment. He expressly remarks that the chief social features of the Monotheistic period might almost be constructed *a priori*.

The law of the Three Stages is discredited. It

¹ He died in 1857.

may be contended that general Progress depends on intellectual progress, and that theology, metaphysics, and science have common roots, and are ultimately identical, being merely phases in the movement of the intelligence. But the law of this movement, if it is to rank as a scientific hypothesis, must be properly deduced from known causes, and must then be verified by a comparison with historical facts. Comte thought that he fulfilled these requirements, but in both respects his demonstration was defective.

The gravest weakness perhaps in his historical sketch is the gratuitous assumption that man in the earliest stage of his existence had animistic beliefs and that the first phase of his progress was controlled by fetishism. There is no valid evidence that fetishism is not a relatively late development, or that in the myriads of years stretching back beyond our earliest records, during which men decided the future of the human species by their technical inventions and the discovery of fire, they had any views which could be called religious or theological. The psychology of modern savages is no clew to the minds of the people who wrought tools of stone in the world of the mammoth and the *Rhinoceros tichorhinus*. If the first stage of man's development, which was of such critical importance for his destinies, was pre-animistic, Comte's law of progress fails, for it does not cover the ground.

In another way, Comte's system may be criticised for failing to cover the ground, if it is regarded as a philosophy of history. In accordance with "the happy artifice of Condorcet," he assumes that the growth of European civilisation is the only history

that matters, and discards entirely the civilisations, for instance, of India and China. This assumption is much more than an artifice, and he has not scientifically justified it.

The reader of the *Philosophie positive* will also observe that Comte has not grappled with a fundamental question which has to be faced in unravelling the woof of history or seeking a law of events. I mean the question of contingency. It must be remembered that contingency does not in the least affect the doctrine of determinism; it is compatible with the strictest interpretation of the principle of causation. A particular example may be taken to show what it implies.

It may plausibly be argued that a military dictatorship was an inevitable sequence of the French Revolution. This may not be true, but let us assume it. Let us further assume that, given Napoleon, it was inevitable that he should be the dictator. But Napoleon's existence was due to an independent causal chain which had nothing whatever to do with the course of political events. He might have died in his boyhood by disease or by an accident, and the fact that he survived was due to causes which were similarly independent of the causal chain which, as we are assuming, led necessarily to an epoch of monarchical government. The existence of a man of his genius and character at the given moment was a contingency which profoundly affected the course of history. If he had not been there another dictator would have grasped the helm, but obviously would not have done what Napoleon did.

It is clear that the whole history of man has

been modified at every stage by such contingencies, which may be defined as the collisions of two independent causal chains. Voltaire was perfectly right when he emphasised the rôle of chance in history, though he did not realise what it meant. This factor would explain the oscillations and deflections which Comte admits in the movement of historical progression. But the question arises whether it may not also have once and again definitely altered the direction of the movement. Can the factor be regarded as virtually negligible by those who, like Comte, are concerned with the large perspective of human development and not with the details of an episode? Or was Renouvier right in principle when he maintained "the real possibility that the sequence of events from the Emperor Nerva to the Emperor Charlemagne might have been radically different from what it actually was"?¹

6

It does not concern us here to examine the defects of Comte's view of the course of European history. But it interests us to observe that his synthesis of human Progress is, like Hegel's, what I have called a closed system. Just as his own absolute philosophy marked for Hegel the highest and ultimate term of human development, so for Comte the coming society whose organisation he adumbrated was the final state of humanity beyond which there would be no further movement. It would take time to perfect the organisation, and

¹ He illustrated this proposition by a fanciful reconstruction of European history from 100 to 800 A.D. in his *Uchronie*, 1876. He contended that there is no definite law of progress: "The true law lies in the equal possibility of progress or regress for societies as for individuals."

the period would witness a continuous increase of knowledge, but the main characteristics were definitely fixed. Comte did not conceive that the distant future, could he survive to experience it, could contain any surprises for him. His theory of Progress thus differed from the eighteenth century views which vaguely contemplate an indefinite development and only profess to indicate some general tendencies. He expressly repudiated this notion of *indefinite* progress; the data, he said, justify only the inference of *continuous* progress, which is a different thing.

A second point in which Comte in his view of Progress differed from the French philosophers of the preceding age is this. Condorcet and his predecessors regarded it exclusively from the eudaemonic point of view. The goal of Progress for them was the attainment of human felicity. With felicity Comte is hardly more concerned than Hegel. The establishment of a fuller harmony between men and their environment in the third stage will no doubt mean happiness. But this consideration lies outside the theory, and to introduce it would only intrude an unscientific element into the analysis. The course of development is determined by intellectual ideas, and he treats these as independent of, and indifferent to, eudaemonic motives.

A third point to be noted is the authoritarian character of the régime of the future. Comte's ideal state would be as ill to live in for any unfortunate being who values personal liberty as a theocracy or any socialistic utopia. He had as little sympathy with liberty as Plato or as Bossuet, and less than the eighteenth century philosophers.

This feature, common to Comte and the Saint-Simonians, was partly due to the reaction against the Revolution, but it also resulted from the logic of the man of science. If sociological laws are positively established as certainly as the law of gravitation, no room is left for opinion ; right social conduct is definitely fixed ; the proper functions of every member of society admit of no question ; therefore the claim to liberty is perverse and irrational. It is the same argument which some modern exponents of Eugenics use to advocate a state tyranny in the matter of human breeding.

When Comte was writing, the progressive movement in Europe was towards increase of liberty in all its forms, national, civic, political, and economical. On one hand there was the agitation for the release of oppressed nationalities, on the other the growth of liberalism in England and France. The aim of the liberalism of that period was to restrict the functions of government ; its spirit was distrust of the state. As a political theory it was defective, as modern Liberals acknowledge, but it was an important expression of the feeling that the interests of society are best furthered by the free interplay of individual actions and aims. It thus implicitly contained or pointed to a theory of Progress sharply opposed to Comte's : that the realisation of the fullest possible measure of individual liberty is the condition of ensuring the maximum of energy and effectiveness in improving our environment, and therefore the condition of attaining public felicity. Right or wrong, this theory reckons with fundamental facts of human nature which Comte ignored.

7

Comte spent the later years of his life in composing another huge work, on social reorganisation. It included a new religion, in which Humanity was the object of worship, but added nothing valuable or memorable to the speculations of his earlier manhood.

The *Course of Positive Philosophy* was not a book that took the public by storm. We are told by a competent student of social theories in France that the author's name was little known in his own country till about 1855, when his greatness began to win recognition, and his influence to operate.¹ Even then his work can hardly have been widely read. But through men like Littré and Taine, whose conceptions of history were moulded by his teaching, and men like Mill, whom he stimulated, as well as through the disciples who adopted Positivism as a religion, his leading principles, detached from his system, became current in the world of speculation.

He laid the foundations of sociology, convincing many minds that the history of civilisation is subject to general laws, or, in other words, that a science of society is possible. In England this idea was still a novelty when Mill's *System of Logic* appeared in 1843.

The publication of this work, which attempted to define the rules for the investigation of truth in all fields of inquiry and to provide tests for the hypotheses of science, was a considerable event, whether we regard its value and range or its prolonged influence on education. Mill, who had

¹ Weill, *Hist. du mouvement social*, p. 21.

followed recent French thought attentively and was particularly impressed by the system of Comte, recognised that a new method of investigating social phenomena had been inaugurated by the thinkers who set out to discover the "law" of human progression. He proclaimed and welcomed it as superior to previous methods, and at the same time pointed out its limitations.

Till about fifty years ago, he said, generalisations on man and society have erred by implicitly assuming that human nature and society will for ever revolve in the same orbit and exhibit virtually the same phenomena. This is still the view of the ostentatiously practical votaries of common sense in Great Britain; whereas the more reflective minds of the present age, analysing historical records more minutely, have adopted the opinion that the human race is in a state of necessary progression. The reciprocal action between circumstances and human nature, from which social phenomena result, must produce either a cycle or a trajectory. While Vico maintained the conception of periodic cycles, his successors have universally adopted the idea of a trajectory or progress, and are endeavouring to discover its law.

But they have fallen into a misconception in imagining that if they can find a law of uniformity in the succession of events they can infer the future from the past terms of the series. For such a law would only be an "empirical law"; it would not be a causal law or an ultimate law. However rigidly uniform, there is no guarantee that it would apply to phenomena outside those from which it was derived. It must itself depend on laws of mind and

character (psychology and ethology). When those laws are known and the nature of the dependence is explained, when the determining causes of all the changes constituting the progress are understood, then the empirical law will be elevated to a scientific law, then only will it be possible to predict.

Thus Mill asserted that if the advanced thinkers who are engaged on the subject succeed in discovering an empirical law from the data of history, it may be converted into a scientific law by deducing it *a priori* from the principles of human nature. In the meantime, he argued that what is already known of those principles justifies the important conclusion that the order of general human progression will mainly depend on the order of progression in the intellectual convictions of mankind.

Throughout his exposition Mill uses "progress" in a neutral sense, without implying that the progression necessarily means improvement. Social science has still to demonstrate that the changes determined by human nature do mean improvement. But in warning the reader of this he declares himself to be personally an optimist, believing that the general tendency, saving temporary exceptions, is in the direction of a better and happier state.

8

Twenty years later¹ Mill was able to say that the conception of history as subject to general laws had "passed into the domain of newspaper and ordinary political discussion." Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England*,² which enjoyed an

¹ In later editions of the *Logic*.

² Vol. i. appeared in 1857, vol. ii. in 1861.

immediate success, did a great deal to popularise the idea. In this stimulating work Buckle took the fact of Progress for granted; his purpose was to investigate its causes. Considering the two general conditions on which all events depend, human nature and external nature, he arrived at two conclusions: (1) In the early stage of history the influence of man's external environment is the more decisive factor; but as time goes on the rôles are gradually inverted, and now it is his own nature that is principally responsible for his development. (2) Progress is determined, not by the emotional and moral faculties, but by the intellect;¹ the emotional and moral faculties are stationary, and therefore religion is not a decisive influence in the onward movement of humanity. "I pledge myself to show that the progress Europe has made from barbarism to civilisation is entirely due to its intellectual activity. . . . In what may be called the innate and original morals of mankind there is, so far as we are aware, no progress."

Buckle was convinced that social phenomena exhibit the same undeviating regularity as natural phenomena. In this belief he was chiefly influenced by the investigations of the Belgian statistician Quetelet (1835). "Statistics," he said, "has already thrown more light on the study of human nature than all the sciences put together." From the regularity with which the same crimes recur in the same state of society, and many other constant averages, he inferred that all actions of individuals result directly from the state of society in which they live, and that laws are operating which, if we

¹ This was the view of Jouffroy, Comte, and Mill; Buckle popularised it.

take large enough numbers into account, scarcely undergo any sensible perturbation.¹ Thus the evidence of statistics points to the conclusion that progress is not determined by the acts of individual men, but depends on general laws of the intellect which govern the successive stages of public opinion. The totality of human actions at any given time depends on the totality of knowledge and the extent of its diffusion.

There we have the theory that history is subject to general laws in its most unqualified form, based on a fallacious view of the significance of statistical facts. Buckle's attempt to show the operation of general laws in the actual history of man was disappointing. When he went on to review the concrete facts of the historical process, his own political principles came into play, and he was more concerned with denouncing the tendencies of which he did not approve than with extricating general laws from the sequence of events. His comments on religious persecution and the obscurantism of governments and churches were instructive and timely, but they did not do much to exhibit a set of rigid laws governing and explaining the course of human development.

The doctrine that history is under the irresistible control of law was also popularised by an American physiologist, J. W. Draper, whose *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe* appeared in 1864 and was widely read. His starting-point was a superficial analogy between a society and an individual. "Social advancement is as completely

¹ Kant had already appealed to statistics in a similar sense; see above, p. 243.

under the control of natural law as a bodily growth. The life of an individual is a miniature of the life of a nation," and "particles" in the individual organism answer to persons in the political organism. Both have the same epochs—infancy, childhood, youth, manhood, old age—and therefore European progress exhibits five phases, designated as Credulity, Inquiry, Faith, Reason, Decrepitude. Draper's conclusion was that Europe, now in the fourth period, is hastening to a long period of decrepitude. The prospect did not dismay him; decrepitude is the culmination of Progress, and means the organisation of national intellect. That has already been achieved in China, and she owes to it her well-being and longevity. "Europe is inevitably hastening to become what China is. In her we may see what we shall be like when we are old."

Judged by any standard, Draper's work is much inferior to Buckle's, but both these books, utterly different though they were in both conception and treatment, performed a similar function. Each in its own way diffused the view which had originated in France, that civilisation is progression and, like nature, subject to general laws.

CHAPTER XVII

"PROGRESS" IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (1830-1851)

I

IN 1850 there appeared at Paris a small book by M. A. Javary, with the title *De l'idée du progrès*. Its interest lies in the express recognition that Progress was the characteristic idea of the age, ardently received by some, hotly denounced by others.

"If there is any idea," he says, "that belongs properly to one century, at least by the importance accorded to it, and that, whether accepted or not, is familiar to all minds, it is the idea of Progress conceived as the general law of history and the future of humanity."

He observes that some, intoxicated by the spectacle of the material improvements of modern civilisation and the results of science, set no limits to man's power or his hopes; while others, unable to deny the facts, say that this progress serves only the lower part of human nature, and refuse to look with complacency on a movement which means, they assert, a continuous decadence of the nobler part. To which it is replied that, if moral decadence is a fact, it is only transient; it is a

necessary phase of a development which means moral progress in the end, for it is due to the process by which the beliefs, ideas, and institutions of the past disappear and make way for new and better principles.

And Javary notes a prevailing tendency in France to interpret every contemporary movement as progressive, while all the social doctrinaires justify their particular reforms by invoking the law of Progress. It was quite true that during the July monarchy nearly all serious speculations on society and history were related to that idea. It was common to Michelet and Quinet, who saw in the march of civilisation the gradual triumph of liberty; to Leroux and Cabet, who preached humanitarian communism; to Louis Blanc and to Proudhon; to the bourgeois, who were satisfied with the régime of Louis Philippe and grew rich, following the precept of Guizot, as well as to the workers who overthrew it. It is significant that the journal of Louis Blanc, in which he published his book on the *Organisation of Work* (1839), was entitled *Revue des progrès*. The political question as to the due limits between government and individual freedom was discussed in terms of Progress: is personal liberty or state authority the efficient means of progressing? The metaphysical question of necessity and freewill acquired a new interest: is Progress a fatality, independent of human purposes, determined by general, ineluctable, historical laws? Quinet and Michelet argued vigorously against the optimism of Cousin, who with Hegel held that history is just what it ought to be and could not be improved.

Among the competing theories of the time, and sharply opposed to the views of Comte, was the idea, derived from the Revolution, that the world is moving towards universal equality and the obliteration of class distinctions, that this is the true direction of Progress. This view, represented by leaders of the popular movement against the bourgeois ascendancy, derived powerful reinforcement from one of the most enlightened political thinkers of the day. The appearance of de Tocqueville's renowned study of American democracy was the event of 1834. He was convinced that he had discovered on the other side of the Atlantic the answer to the question whither the world is tending. In American society he found that equality of conditions is the generating fact on which every other fact depends. He concluded that equality is the goal of humanity, providentially designed.

"The gradual development of equality of conditions has the principal characteristics of a providential fact. It is universal, it is permanent, it eludes human power; all events and all men serve this development. . . . This whole book has been written under the impression of a sort of religious terror produced in the author's soul by the view of this irresistible revolution which for so many centuries has been marching across all obstacles, and which is to-day seen still advancing in the midst of the ruins it has made. . . . If the men of our time were brought to see that the gradual and progressive development of equality is at once the

past and the future of their history, this single discovery would give that development the sacred character of the will of the sovran master."

Here we have a view of the direction of Progress and the meaning of history, pretending to be based upon the study of facts and announced with the most intense conviction. And behind it is the fatalistic doctrine that the movement cannot be arrested or diverted; that it is useless to struggle against it; that men, whatever they may do, cannot deflect the clock-like motion regulated by a power which de Tocqueville calls Providence but to which his readers might give some other name.

3

It has been conjectured,¹ and seems probable enough, that de Tocqueville's book was one of the influences which wrought upon the mind of Proudhon. The speculations of this remarkable man, who, like Saint-Simon and Comte, sought to found a new science of society, attracted general attention in the middle of the century. His hostility to religion, his notorious dictum that "property is theft," his gospel of "anarchy," and the defiant, precipitous phrases in which he clothed his ideas, created an impression that he was a dangerous anti-social revolutionary. But when his ideas are studied in their context and translated into sober language, they are not so unreasonable. Notwithstanding his communistic theory of property and his ideal of equality, he was a strong individualist. He held that the future of civilisation depends on

¹ Georges Sorel, *Les Illusions du progrès*, pp. 247-8 (1908).

the energy of individuals, that liberty is a condition of its advance, and that the end to be kept in view is the establishment of justice, which means equality. He saw the difficulty of reconciling liberty with complete equality, but hoped that the incompatibility would be overcome by a gradual reduction of the natural differences in men's capacities. He said, "I am an anarchist," but his anarchy only meant that the time would come when government would be superfluous, when every human being could be trusted to act wisely and morally without a restraining authority or external sanctions. Nor was he a Utopian. He comprehended that such a transformation of society would be a long, slow process, and he condemned the schools of Saint-Simon and Fourier for imagining that a millennium might be realised immediately by a change of organisation.

He tells us that all his speculations and controversial activities are penetrated with the idea of Progress, which he described as "the railway of liberty"; and his radical criticism on current social theories, whether conservative or democratic, was that they did not take Progress seriously though they invoked it.

"What dominates in all my studies, what forms their beginning and end, their summit and their base, their reason, what makes my originality as a thinker (if I have any), is that I affirm Progress resolutely, irrevocably, and everywhere, and deny the Absolute. All that I have ever written, all I have denied or affirmed, I have written, denied or affirmed in the name of one unique idea, Progress. My adversaries, on the other hand, are all partisans

of the Absolute, *in omni genere, casu, et numero*, to use the phrase of Sganarelle."

4

A vague confidence in Progress had lain behind and encouraged the revolution of 1789, but in the revolution of 1848 the idea was definitely enthroned as the regnant principle. It presided over the session of the Committee which drew up the Constitution of the second Republic. Armand Marrast, the most important of the men who framed that document, based the measure of universal suffrage upon "the invisible law which rules societies," the law of progress which has been so long denied but which is rooted in the nature of man. His argument was this: Revolutions are due to the repression of progress, and are the expression and triumph of a progress which has been achieved. But such convulsions are an undesirable method of progressing; how can they be avoided? Only by organising elastic institutions in which new ideas of amelioration can easily be incorporated, and laws which can be accommodated without struggle or friction to the rise of new opinions. What is needed is a flexible government open to the penetration of ideas, and the key to such a government is universal suffrage.

Universal suffrage was practical politics, but the success of the revolution fluttered agreeably all the mansions of Utopia, and social reformers of every type sought to improve the occasion. In the history of the political struggles of 1848 the names are written of Proudhon, of Victor Considérant the disciple of Fourier, of Pierre Leroux the humani-

tarian communist, and his devoted pupil George Sand. The chief title of Leroux to be remembered is just his influence over the soul of the great novelist. Her later romances are pervaded by ideas derived from his teaching. His communism was vague and ineffectual, but he was one of the minor forces in the thought of the period, and there are some features in his theory which deserve to be pointed out.

Leroux had begun as a member of the Saint-Simonian school, but he diverged into a path of his own. He reinstated the ideal of equality which Saint-Simon rejected, and made the approach to that ideal the measure of Progress. The most significant process in history, he held, is the gradual breaking down of caste and class: the process is now approaching its completion; "to-day *man* is synonymous with *equal*."

In order to advance to the city of the future we must have a force and a lever. Man is the force, and the lever is the idea of Progress. It is supplied by the study of history which displays the improvement of our faculties, the increase of our power over nature, the possibility of organising society more efficaciously. But the force and the lever are not enough. A fulcrum is also required, and this is to be found in the "solidarity" of the human race. But this conception meant for Leroux something different from what is ordinarily meant by the phrase, a deeper and even mystical bond. Human "solidarity" was a corollary from the pantheistic religion of the Saint-Simonians, but with Leroux, as with Fourier, it was derived from the more difficult doctrine of palingenesis. We of this generation, he believed, are not merely the sons and descendants of past

generations, we are the past generations themselves, which have come to birth again in us.

Through many pages of the two volumes¹ in which he set forth his thesis, Leroux expended much useless learning in endeavouring to establish this doctrine, which, were it true, might be the central principle in a new religion of humanity, a transformed Pythagoreanism. It is easy to understand the attractiveness of palingenesis to a believer in Progress: for it would provide a solution of the anomaly that generations after generations are sacrificed for the sake of posterity, and so appear to have no value in themselves. Believers in Progress, who are sensitive to the sufferings of mankind, past and present, need a stoical resolution to face this fact. We saw how Herder refused to accept it. A pantheistic faith, like that of the Saint-Simonian Church, may help some, it cannot do more, to a stoical acquiescence. The palingenesis of Leroux or Fourier removes the radical injustice. The men of each generation are sacrificed and suffer for the sake of their descendants, but as their descendants are themselves come to life again, they are really suffering in their own interests. They will themselves reach the desirable state to which the slow, painful process of history is tending.

But palingenesis, notwithstanding all the ancient opinions and traditions that the researches of Leroux might muster, could carry little conviction to those who were ceasing to believe in the familiar doctrine of a future life detached from earth, and Madame Dudevant was his only distinguished convert.

¹ *De l'humanité*, 1840 (dedicated to Béranger).

The ascendancy of the idea of Progress among thoughtful people in France in the middle of the last century is illustrated by the work which Ernest Renan composed under the immediate impression of the events of 1848. He desired to understand the significance of the current revolutionary doctrines, and was at once involved in speculation on the future of humanity. This is the purport of *L'Avenir de la science*.¹

The author was then convinced that history has a goal, and that mankind tends perpetually, though in an oscillating line, towards a more perfect state, through the growing dominion of reason over instinct and caprice. He takes the French Revolution as the critical moment in which humanity first came to know itself. That revolution was the first attempt of man to take the reins into his own hands. All that went before we may call, with Owen, the irrational period of human existence.

We have now come to a point at which we must choose between two faiths. If we despair of reason, we may find a refuge from utter scepticism in a belief in the external authority of the Roman Church. If we trust reason, we must accept the march of the human mind and justify the modern spirit. And it can be justified only by proving that it is a necessary step towards perfection. Renan affirmed his belief in the second alternative, and felt confident that science—including philology, on the human bearings of which he enlarged,—

¹ *L'Avenir de la science—Pensées de* (1848). Published in 1890.

philosophy, and art would ultimately enable men to realise an ideal civilisation, in which all would be equal. The state, he said, is the machine of Progress, and the Socialists are right in formulating the problem which man has to solve, though their solution is a bad one. For individual liberty, which socialism would seriously limit, is a definite conquest, and ought to be preserved inviolate.

Renan wrote this work in 1848 and 1849, but did not publish it at the time. He gave it to the world forty years later. Those forty years had robbed him of his early optimism. He continues to believe that the unfortunate conditions of our race might be ameliorated by science, but he denounces the view that men can ever be equal. Inequality is written in nature; it is not only a necessary consequence of liberty, but a necessary postulate of Progress. There will always be a superior minority. He criticises himself too for having fallen into the error of Hegel, and assigned to man an unduly important place in the universe.

In 1890 there was nothing left of the sentimental socialism which he had studied in 1848; it had been blown away by the cold wind of scientific socialism which Marx and Engels created. And Renan had come to think that in this new form socialism would triumph.¹ He had criticised Comte for believing that "man lives exclusively by science, or rather little verbal tags, like geometrical theorems, dry formulae." Was he satisfied by the concrete doctrine of Marx that all the phenomena of civilisation at a given period are

¹ He reckoned without the new forces, opposed to socialism as well as to parliamentary democracy, represented by Bakunin and men like Georges Sorel.

determined by the methods of production and distribution which then prevail? But the future of socialism is a minor issue, and the ultimate goal of humanity is quite uncertain. "Ce qu'il y a de consolant, c'est qu'on arrive nécessairement quelque part." We may console ourselves with the certainty that we must get somewhere.

6

Proudhon described the idea of Progress as the railway of liberty. It certainly supplied motive power to social ideals which were repugnant and alarming to the authorities of the Catholic Church. At the Vatican it was clearly seen that the idea was a powerful engine driven by an enemy; and in the famous *Syllabus* of errors which Pope Pius IX. flung in the face of the modern world at the end of 1864, Progress had the honour of being censured. The eightieth error, which closes the list, runs thus:

Romanus Pontifex potest ac debet cum progressu, cum liberalismo et cum recenti civilitate sese reconciliare et componere.

"The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, be reconciled and come to terms with progress, with liberalism, and with modern civilisation."

No wonder, seeing that Progress was invoked to justify every movement that stank in the nostrils of the Vatican—liberalism, toleration, democracy, and socialism. And the Roman Church well understood the intimate connection of the idea with the advance of rationalism.

CHAPTER XVIII

MATERIAL PROGRESS : THE EXHIBITION OF 1851

I

IT is not easy for a new idea of the speculative order to penetrate and inform the general consciousness of a community until it has assumed some external and concrete embodiment or is recommended by some striking material evidence. In the case of Progress both these conditions were fulfilled in the period 1820 to 1850. In the Saint Simonian Church, and in the attempts of Owen and Cabet to found ideal societies, people saw practical enterprises inspired by the idea. They might have no sympathy with these enterprises, but their attention was attracted. And at the same time they were witnessing a rapid transformation of the external conditions of life, a movement to the continuation of which there seemed no reason for setting any limit in the future. The spectacular results of the advance of science and mechanical technique brought home to the mind of the average man the conception of an indefinite increase of man's power over nature as his brain penetrated her secrets. This evident material progress which has continued incessantly

ever since has been a mainstay of the general belief in Progress which is prevalent to-day.

England was the leader in this material progress, of which the particulars are familiar and need not be enumerated here. The discovery of the power of steam and the potentialities of coal revolutionised the conditions of life. Men who were born at the beginning of the century had seen, before they had passed the age of thirty, the rapid development of steam navigation, the illumination of towns and houses by gas, the opening of the first railway.

It was just before this event, the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester railway, which showed how machinery would abbreviate space as it had revolutionised industry, that Southey published his *Sir Thomas More, or Colloquies on the Progress of Society* (1829). There we see the effect of the new force on his imagination. "Steam," he says, "will govern the world next, . . . and shake it too before its empire is established." The biographer of Nelson devotes a whole conversation to the subject of "steam and war." But the theme of the book is the question of moral and social progress, on which the author inclines to the view that "the world will continue to improve, even as it has hitherto been continually improving; and that the progress of knowledge and the diffusion of Christianity will bring about at last, when men become Christian in reality as well as in name, something like that Utopian state of which philosophers have loved to dream." This admission of Progress, cautious though it was, circumscribed by reserves and compromised by hesitations, coming from such a conservative pillar of Church and State as Southey,

is a notable sign of the times, when we remember that the idea was still associated then with revolution and heresy.

It is significant too that at the same time an octogenarian mathematician of Aberdeen was composing a book on the same subject. Hamilton's *Progress of Society* is now utterly forgotten, but it must have contributed in its day to propagating the same moderate view of Progress, consistent with orthodoxy, which Southey held. "The belief of the perfectibility of human nature and the attainment of a golden age in which vice and misery have no place, will only be entertained by an enthusiast; but an inquiry into the means of improving our nature and enlarging our happiness is consistent with sober reason, and is the most important subject, merely human, that can engage the mind of man."¹

2

We have been told by Tennyson that when he went by the first train from Liverpool to Manchester (1830) he thought that the wheels ran in grooves. "Then I made this line:

Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change."²

Locksley Hall, which was published in 1842, illustrates how the idea of Progress had begun to creep into the imagination of Englishmen. Though subsidiary to a love story, it is the true theme of the poem. The pulsation of eager interest in the terrestrial destinies of humanity, the large excitement

¹ P. 13. The book was published posthumously by Murray in 1830, a year after the author's death.

² See *Tennyson, Memoir by his Son*, vol. i. p. 195.

of living in a "wondrous Mother-age," dreams of the future, quicken the passion of the hero's youth. His disappointment in love disenchanting him; he sees the reverse side of civilisation, but at last he finds an anodyne for his palsied heart in a more sober version of his earlier faith, a chastened belief in his Mother-age. He can at least discern an increasing purpose in history, and can be sure that "the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns." The novelty of the poem lay in finding a cathartic cure for a private sorrow, not in religion or in nature, but in the modern idea of Progress. It may be said to mark a stage in the career of the idea.

The view of civilisation which Tennyson took as his *motif* had no revolutionary implications, suggested no impatience or anger with the past. The startling prospect unfolding itself before Europe is "the long result of time," and history is justified by the promise of to-day:

The centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed.

Very different was the spirit in which another great poet composed, nearly twenty years later, a wonderful hymn of Progress. Victor Hugo's *Plein Ciel*, in his epic *La Légende des siècles*,¹ announces a new era of the world in which man, the triumphant rebel, delivered from his past, will move freely forward on a glorious way. The poet is inspired not by faith in a continuous development throughout the ages, but by the old spirit of the Revolution, and he sees in the past only a heavy chain which the race at last flings off. The horrible past has gone,

¹ A.D. 1859.

not to return : " ce monde est mort " ; and the poem is at once a paeon on man's victorious rebellion against it and a dithyramb on the prospect of his future.

Man is imagined as driving through the heavens an aerial car to which the four winds are harnessed, mounting above the clouds, and threatening to traverse the ether.

Superbe, il plane, avec un hymne en ses agrès ;
Et l'on voit voir passer la strophe du progrès.
Il est la nef, il est le phare !
L'homme enfin prend son sceptre et jette son bâton.
Et l'on voit s'envoler le calcul de Newton
Monté sur l'ode de Pindare.

But if this vision foreshadows the conquest of the air, its significance is symbolic rather than literal, and, like Pindar checking the steeds of his song, Hugo returns to earth :

Pas si loin ! pas si haut ! redescendons. Restons
L'homme, restons Adam ; mais non l'homme à tâtons,
Mais non l'Adam tombé ! Tout autre rêve altère
L'espèce d'idéal qui convient à la terre.
Contentons-nous du mot : meilleur ! écrit partout.

Dawn has appeared, after six thousand years in the fatal way, and man, freed by " the invisible hand " from the weight of his chains, has embarked for new shores :

Où va-t-il ce navire ? Il va, de jour vêtu,
À l'avenir divin et pur, à la vertu,
À la science qu'on voit luire,
À la mort des fléaux, à l'oubli généreux,
À l'abondance, au calme, au rire, à l'homme heureux,
Il va, ce glorieux navire.

Oh ! ce navire fait le voyage sacré !
C'est l'ascension bleue à son premier degré ;
Hors de l'antique et vil décombre,

Hors de la pesanteur, c'est l'avenir fondé ;
C'est le destin de l'homme à la fin évadé,
Qui lève l'ancre et sort de l'ombre !

The union of humanity in a universal commonwealth, which Tennyson had expressed as "the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World," the goal of many theorists of Progress, becomes in Hugo's imagination something more sublime. The magic ship of man's destiny is to compass the cosmopolis of the Stoics, a terrestrial order in harmony with the whole universe.

Nef magique et suprême ! elle a, rien qu'en marchant,
Changé le cri terrestre en pur et joyeux chant,
Rajeuni les races flétries,
Établi l'ordre vrai, montré le chemin sûr,
Dieu juste ! et fait entrer dans l'homme tant d'azur
Qu'elle a supprimé les patries !

Faisant à l'homme avec le ciel une cité,
Une pensée avec toute l'immensité,
Elle abolit les vieilles règles ;
Elle abaisse les monts, elle annule les tours ;
Splendide, elle introduit les peuples, marcheurs lourds,
Dans la communion des aigles.

3

Between 1830 and 1850 railway transport spread throughout Great Britain and was introduced on the Continent, and electricity was subdued to man's use by the invention of telegraphy. The great Exhibition of London in 1851 was, in one of its aspects, a public recognition of the material progress of the age and the growing power of man over the physical world. Its aim, said a contemporary, was "to seize the living scroll of human progress, inscribed with every successive conquest of man's intellect."¹ The

¹ *Edinburgh Review* (October 1851), p. 562, in a review of the *Official Catalogue* of the Exhibition.

Prince Consort, who originated the Exhibition, explained its significance in a public speech :

"Nobody who has paid any attention to the peculiar features of our present era will doubt for a moment that we are living at a period of most wonderful transition, which tends rapidly to accomplish that great end to which indeed all history points—the *realisation of the unity of mankind*. . . . The distances which separated the different nations and parts of the globe are rapidly vanishing before the achievements of modern invention, and we can traverse them with incredible ease ; the languages of all nations are known, and their acquirements placed within the reach of everybody ; thought is communicated with the rapidity, and even by the power, of lightning. On the other hand, the *great principle of division of labour*, which may be called the moving power of civilisation, is being extended to all branches of science, industry, and art. . . . Gentlemen, the Exhibition of 1851 is to give us a true test and a living picture of the point of development at which the whole of mankind has arrived in this great task, and a new starting-point from which all nations will be able to direct their further exertions." ¹

The point emphasised here is the "solidarity" of the world. The Exhibition is to bring home to men's consciousness the community of all the inhabitants of the earth. The assembled peoples, wrote Thackeray, in his "May-day Ode," ²

¹ Martin, *Life of the Prince Consort* (ed. 3), iii. p. 247. The speech was delivered at a banquet at the Mansion House on March 21, 1850.

² Published in the *Times*, April 30, 1851. The Exhibition was opened on May 1.

See the sumptuous banquet set,
The brotherhood of nations met
Around the feast.

And this was the note struck in the leading article of the *Times* on the opening day: "The first morning since the creation that all peoples have assembled from all parts of the world and done a common act." It was claimed that the Exhibition signified a new, intelligent, and moral movement which "marks a great crisis in the history of the world," and foreshadows universal peace.

England, said another writer, produced Bacon and Newton, the two philosophers "who first lent direction and force to the stream of industrial science; we have been the first also to give the widest possible base to the watch-tower of international progress, which seeks the formation of the physical well-being of man and the extinction of the meaner jealousies of commerce."¹

These quotations show that the great Exhibition was at the time optimistically regarded, not merely as a record of material achievements, but as a demonstration that humanity was at last well on its way to a better and happier state, through the falling of barriers and the resulting insight that the interests of all are closely interlocked. A vista was suggested, at the end of which far-sighted people might think they discerned Tennyson's "Federation of the World."

4

Since the Exhibition, western civilisation has advanced steadily, and in some respects more rapidly

¹ *Edinburgh Review*, loc. cit.

than any sober mind could have predicted—civilisation, at least, in the conventional sense, which has been not badly defined as “the development of material ease, of education, of equality, and of aspirations to rise and succeed in life.”¹ The most striking advance has been in the technical conveniences of life—that is, in the control over natural forces. It would be superfluous to enumerate the discoveries and inventions since 1850 which have abridged space, economised time, eased bodily suffering, and reduced in some ways the friction of life, though they have increased it in others. This uninterrupted series of technical inventions, proceeding concurrently with immense enlargements of all branches of knowledge, has gradually accustomed the least speculative mind to the conception that civilisation is naturally progressive, and that continuous improvement is part of the order of things.

So far the hopes of 1851 have been fulfilled. But against all this technical progress, with the enormous expansion of industry and commerce, dazzling to the man in the market-place when he pauses to reflect, have to be set the exploitation and sufferings of industrial workers, the distress of intense economic competition, the heavier burdens of preparation for modern war. The very increase of “material ease” seemed unavoidably to involve conditions inconsistent with universal happiness; and the communications which linked the peoples of the world together modified the methods of warfare instead of bringing peace. “Toutes nos merveilleuses inventions sont aussi puissantes pour le mal

¹ B. Kidd, *Social Evolution*, p. 368.

que pour le bien."¹ One fact indeed might be taken as an index that humanity was morally advancing—the abolition of slavery in America at the price of a long and sanguinary war. Yet some triumphs of philanthropy hardly seemed to endanger the conclusion that, while knowledge is indefinitely progressive, there is no good reason for sanguine hopes that man is "perfectible" or that universal happiness is attainable. A thoughtful writer observed, discussing Progress in 1864, that the innumerable individual steps in the growth of knowledge and business organisation have not been combined, so far, to produce a general advance in the happiness of life; each step brings increase of pressure.²

Yet in spite of all adverse facts and many eminent dissenters the belief in social Progress has on the whole prevailed. This triumph of optimism was promoted by the victory of a revolutionary hypothesis in another field of inquiry, which suddenly electrified the world.

¹ H. de Ferron, *Théorie du progrès* (1867), ii. 439.

² Lotze, *Microcosmus* (Eng. tr.), vol. ii. p. 396.

CHAPTER XIX

PROGRESS IN THE LIGHT OF EVOLUTION

I

IN the sixties of the nineteenth century the idea of Progress entered upon the third period of its history. During the *first* period, up to the French Revolution, it had been treated rather casually ; it was taken for granted and received no searching examination either from philosophers or from historians. In the *second* period its immense significance was apprehended, and a search began for a general law which would define and establish it. The study of sociology was founded, and at the same time the impressive results of science, applied to the conveniences of life, advertised the idea. It harmonised with the notion of "development" which had become current both in natural science and in metaphysics. Socialists and other political reformers appealed to it as a gospel.

By 1850 it was a familiar idea in Europe, but was not yet universally accepted as obviously true. The notion of social Progress had been growing in the atmosphere of the notion of biological development, but this development still seemed a highly precarious speculation. The fixity of species and the creation of man, defended by powerful interests

and prejudices, were attacked but were not shaken. The hypothesis of organic evolution was much in the same position as the Copernican hypothesis in the sixteenth century. Then in 1859 Darwin intervened, like Galileo. The appearance of the *Origin of Species* changed the situation by disproving definitely the dogma of fixity of species and assigning real causes for "transformism." What might be set aside before as a brilliant guess was elevated to the rank of a scientific hypothesis, and the following twenty years were enlivened by the struggle around the evolution of life, against prejudices chiefly theological, resulting in the victory of the theory.

The *Origin of Species* led to the *third* stage of the fortunes of the idea of Progress. We saw how the heliocentric astronomy, by dethroning man from his privileged position in the universe of space and throwing him back on his own efforts, had helped that idea to compete with the idea of a busy Providence. He now suffers a new degradation within the compass of his own planet. Evolution, shearing him of his glory as a rational being specially created to be the lord of the earth, traces a humble pedigree for him. And this second degradation was the decisive fact which has established the reign of the idea of Progress.

2

Evolution itself, it must be remembered, does not necessarily mean, applied to society, the movement of man to a desirable goal. It is a neutral, scientific conception, compatible either with optimism or with pessimism. According to different estimates

it may appear to be a cruel sentence or a guarantee of steady amelioration. And it has been actually interpreted in both ways.

In order to base Progress on Evolution two distinct arguments are required. If it could be shown that social life obeys the same general laws of evolution as nature, and also that the process involves an increase of happiness, then Progress would be as valid a hypothesis as the evolution of living forms. Darwin had concluded his treatise with these words :

As all the living forms of life are the lineal descendants of those which lived long before the Silurian epoch, we may feel certain that the ordinary succession by generation has never once been broken, and that no cataclysm has desolated the whole world. Hence we may look with some confidence to a secure future of equally inappreciable length. And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental environments will tend to progress towards perfection.

Here the evolutionist struck the note of optimism. And he suggested that laws of Progress would be found in other quarters than those where they had hitherto been sought.

The ablest and most influential development of the argument from evolution to Progress was the work of Spencer. He extended the principle of evolution to sociology and ethics, and was the most conspicuous interpreter of it in an optimistic sense. He had been an evolutionist long before Darwin's decisive intervention, and in 1851 he had published his *Social Statics*, which, although he had not yet worked out the evolutionary laws which he began to formulate soon afterwards and was still a theist,

exhibits the general trend of his optimistic philosophy. Progress here appears as the basis of a theory of ethics. The title indicates the influence of Comte, but the argument is sharply opposed to the spirit of Comte's teaching, and sociology is treated in a new way.¹

Spencer begins by arguing that the constancy of human nature, so frequently alleged, is a fallacy. For change is the law of all things, of every single object as well as of the universe. "Nature in its infinite complexity is ever growing to a new development." It would be strange if, in this universal mutation, man alone were unchangeable, and it is not true. "He also obeys the law of indefinite variation." Contrast the houseless savages with Newtons and Shakespeares; between these extremes there are countless degrees of difference. If then humanity is indefinitely variable, perfectibility is possible.

In the second place, evil is not a permanent necessity. For all evil results from the non-adaptation of the organism to its conditions; this is true of everything that lives. And it is equally true that evil perpetually tends to disappear. In virtue of an essential principle of life, this non-adaptation of organisms to their conditions is ever being rectified, and one or both continue to be modified until the adaptation is perfect. And this applies to the mental as well as to the physical sphere.

In the present state of the world men suffer many evils, and this shows that their characters are

¹ *Social Statics, or the Conditions Essential to Human Happiness specified, and the first of them developed*, is the full title.

not yet adjusted to the social state. Now the qualification requisite for the social state is that each individual shall have such desires only as may fully be satisfied without trenching upon the ability of others to obtain similar satisfaction. This qualification is not yet fulfilled, because civilised man retains some of the characteristics which were suitable for the conditions of his earlier predatory life. He needed one moral constitution for his primitive state, he needs quite another for his present state. The resultant is a process of adaptation which has been going on for a long time, and will go on for a long time to come.

Civilisation represents the adaptations which have already been accomplished. Progress means the successive steps of the process. That by this process man will eventually become suited to his mode of life, Spencer has no doubts. All excess and deficiency of suitable faculties must disappear; in other words, all imperfection. "The ultimate development of the ideal man is logically certain—as certain as any conclusion in which we place the most implicit faith; for instance, that all men will die." Here is the theory of perfectibility asserted, on new grounds, with a confidence not less assured than that of Condorcet or Godwin.

Progress then is not an accident, but a necessity. Civilisation is a part of nature, being a development of man's latent capabilities under the action of favourable circumstances which were certain at some time or other to occur. Here Spencer's argument assumes a final cause. The ultimate purpose of creation, he asserts, is to produce the greatest amount of happiness, and to fulfil this aim

it is necessary that each member of the race should possess faculties enabling him to experience the highest enjoyment of life, yet in such a way as not to diminish the power of others to receive like satisfaction. Beings thus constituted cannot multiply in a world tenanted by inferior creatures; these, therefore, must be dispossessed to make room; and to dispossess them aboriginal man must have an inferior constitution to begin with; he must be predatory, he must have the desire to kill. In general, given an unsubdued earth, and the human being "appointed" to overspread and occupy it, then, the laws of life being what they are, no other series of changes than that which has actually occurred could have occurred.

The argument might be put in a form free from the assumption of a final cause, and without introducing the conception of a divine Providence which in this work Spencer adopted, though in his later philosophy it was superseded by the conception of the Unknowable existing behind all phenomena. But the rôle of the Divine ruler is simply to set in motion immutable forces to realise his design. "In the moral as in the material world accumulated evidence is gradually generating the conviction that events are not at bottom fortuitous, but that they are wrought out in a certain inevitable way by unchanging forces."

The optimism of Spencer's view could not be surpassed. "After patient study," he writes, "this chaos of phenomena into the midst of which he [man] was born has begun to generalise itself to him"; instead of confusion he begins to discern "the dim outlines of a gigantic plan. No accidents,

no chance, but everywhere order and completeness. One by one exceptions vanish, and all becomes systematic."

Always towards perfection is the mighty movement—towards a complete development and a more unmixed good; subordinating in its universality all petty irregularities and fallings back, as the curvature of the earth subordinates mountains and valleys. Even in evils the student learns to recognise only a struggling beneficence. But above all he is struck with the inherent sufficingness of things.

But the movement towards harmony, the elimination of evil, will not be effected by idealists imposing their constructions upon the world or by authoritarian governments. It means gradual adaptation, gradual psychological change, and its life is individual liberty. It proceeds by the give and take of opposed opinions. Guizot had said, "Progress, and at the same time resistance." And Spencer conceives that resistance is beneficial, so long as it comes from those who honestly think that the institutions they defend are really the best and the proposed innovations absolutely wrong.

It will be observed that Spencer's doctrine of perfectibility rests on an entirely different basis from the doctrine of the eighteenth century. It is one thing to deduce it from an abstract psychology which holds that human nature is unresistingly plastic in the hands of the legislator and the instructor. It is another to argue that human nature is subject to the general law of change, and that the process by which it slowly but continuously tends to adapt itself more and more to the conditions of social life—children inheriting the acquired

aptitudes of their parents—points to an ultimate harmony. Here profitable legislation and education are auxiliary to the process of unconscious adaptation, and respond to the psychological changes in the community, changes which reveal themselves in public opinion.

3

During the following ten years Spencer was investigating the general laws of evolution and planning his Synthetic Philosophy which was to explain the development of the universe. He aimed at showing that laws of change are discoverable which control all phenomena alike, inorganic, biological, psychical, and social. In the light of this hypothesis the actual progression of humanity is established as a necessary fact, a sequel of the general cosmic movement and governed by the same principles; and, if that progression is shown to involve increasing happiness, the theory of Progress is established. The first section of the work, *First Principles*, appeared in 1862. The *Biology*, the *Psychology*, and finally the *Sociology*, followed during the next twenty years; and the synthesis of the world-process which these volumes lucidly and persuasively developed, probably did more than any other work, at least in England, both to drive home the significance of the doctrine of evolution and to raise the doctrine of Progress to the rank of a commonplace truth in popular estimation, an axiom to which political rhetoric might effectively appeal.

Many of those who were allured by Spencer's gigantic synthesis hardly realised that his theory of

social evolution, of the gradual psychical improvement of the race, depends upon the validity of the assumption that parents transmit to their children faculties and aptitudes which they have themselves acquired. On this question experts notoriously differ. Some day it will probably be definitely decided, and perhaps in Spencer's favour. But the theory of continuous psychical improvement by a process of nature encounters an obvious difficulty, which did not escape some critics of Spencer, in the prominent fact of history that every great civilisation of the past progressed to a point at which instead of advancing further it stood still and declined, to become the prey of younger societies, or, if it survived, to stagnate. Arrest, decadence, stagnation has been the rule. It is not easy to reconcile this phenomenon with the theory of mental improvement.

The receptive attitude of the public towards such a philosophy as Spencer's had been made possible by Darwin's discoveries, which were reinforced by the growing science of palaeontology and the accumulating material evidence of the great antiquity of man. By the simultaneous advances of geology and biology man's perspective in time was revolutionised, just as the Copernican astronomy had revolutionised his perspective in space. Many thoughtful and many thoughtless people were ready to discern—as Huxley suggested—in man's "long progress through the past, a reasonable ground of faith in his attainment of a nobler future."

The recorded portion of his long progress through the past was indeed not altogether pleasant to look back on for any one gifted with imagination,

and Winwood Reade, a young African traveller, exhibited it in a vivid book as a long-drawn-out martyrdom. But he was a disciple of Spencer, and his hopes for the future were as bright as his picture of the past was dark. *The Martyrdom of Mân*, published in 1872, was so widely read that it reached an eighth edition twelve years later, and may be counted as one of the agencies which popularised Spencer's optimism.

That optimism was not endorsed by all the contemporary leaders of thought. Lotze had asserted emphatically in 1864 that "human nature will not change," and afterwards he saw no reason to alter his conviction.

Never one fold and one shepherd, never one uniform culture for all mankind, never universal nobleness. Our virtue and happiness can only flourish amid an active conflict with wrong. If every stumbling-block were smoothed away, men would no longer be like men, but like a flock of innocent brutes, feeding on good things provided by nature as at the very beginning of their course.¹

But even if we reject with Spencer the old dictum, endorsed by Lotze as by Fontenelle, that human nature is immutable, the dictum of ultimate harmony encounters the following objection. "If the social environment were stable," it is easy to argue, "it could be admitted that man's nature, variable *ex hypothesi*, could gradually adapt itself

¹ *Microcosmus*, Bk. vii. 5 *ad fin.* (Eng. trans. p. 300). The first German edition (three vols.) appeared in 1856-64, the third, from which the English translation was made, in 1876. Lotze was optimistic as to the durability of modern civilisation: "No one will profess to foreknow the future, but as far as men may judge it seems that in our days there are greater safeguards than there were in antiquity against unjustifiable excesses and against the external forces which might endanger the continued existence of civilisation."

to it, and that finally a definite equilibrium would be established. But the environment is continually changing as the consequence of man's very efforts to adapt himself; every step he takes to harmonise his needs and his conditions produces a new discord and confronts him with a new problem. In other words, there is no reason to believe that the reciprocal process which goes on in the growth of society between men's natures and the environment they are continually modifying will ever reach an equilibrium, or even that, as the character of the discords changes, the suffering which they cause diminishes."

In fact, upon the neutral fact of evolution a theory of pessimism may be built up as speciously as a theory of optimism. And such a theory was built up with great power and ability by the German philosopher E. von Hartmann, whose *Philosophy of the Unconscious* appeared in 1869. Leaving aside his metaphysics and his grotesque theory of the destiny of the universe, we see here and in his subsequent works how plausibly a convinced evolutionist could revive the view of Rousseau that civilisation and happiness are mutually antagonistic, and that Progress means an increase of misery.

Huxley himself, one of the most eminent interpreters of the doctrine of evolution, did not, in his late years at least, entertain very sanguine views of mankind. "I know of no study which is so saddening as that of the evolution of humanity as it is set forth in the annals of history. . . . Man is a brute, only more intelligent than other brutes"; and "even the best of modern civilisations appears

to me to exhibit a condition of mankind which neither embodies any worthy ideal nor even possesses the merit of stability." There may be some hope of a large improvement, but otherwise he would "welcome a kindly comet to sweep the whole affair away." And he came to the final conclusion that such an improvement could only set in by deliberately resisting, instead of co-operating with, the processes of nature. "Social progress means the checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another which may be called the ethical process."¹ How in a few centuries can man hope to gain the mastery over the cosmic process which has been at work for millions of years? "The theory of evolution encourages no millennial anticipations."

I have quoted these views to illustrate that evolution lends itself to a pessimistic as well as to an optimistic interpretation. The question whether it leads in a desirable direction or not is answered according to the temperament of the inquirer. In an age of prosperity and self-complacency the affirmative answer was readily received, and the term evolution attracted to itself in common speech the implications of value which belong to Progress.

It may be noticed that the self-complacency of the age was promoted by the popularisation of scientific knowledge. A rapidly growing demand (especially in England) for books and lectures, making the results of science accessible and interesting to the lay public, is a remarkable feature of the

¹ Huxley considers progress exclusively from an ethical, not from an eudaemonic point of view.

second half of the nineteenth century; and to supply this demand was a remunerative enterprise. This popular literature explaining the wonders of the physical world was at the same time subtly flushing the imaginations of men with the consciousness that they were living in an era which, in itself vastly superior to any age of the past, need be burdened by no fear of decline or catastrophe, but trusting in the boundless resources of science might securely defy fate.

4

Thus in the seventies and eighties of the last century the idea of Progress was becoming a general article of faith. Some might hold it in the fatalistic form that humanity moves in a desirable direction, whatever men do or may leave undone; others might believe that the future will depend largely on our own conscious efforts, but that there is nothing in the nature of things to disappoint the prospect of steady and indefinite advance. The majority did not inquire too curiously into such points of doctrine, but received it in a vague sense as a comfortable addition to their convictions. But it became a part of the general mental outlook of educated people.

When Mr. Frederic Harrison delivered in 1889 at Manchester an eloquent discourse on the "New Era," in which the dominant note is "the faith in human progress in lieu of celestial rewards of the separate soul," his general argument could appeal to immensely wider circles than the Positivists whom he was specially addressing.

The dogma—for a dogma it remains, in spite of

the confidence of Comte or of Spencer that he had made it a scientific hypothesis—has produced an important ethical principle. Consideration for posterity has throughout history operated as a motive of conduct, but feebly, occasionally, and in a very limited sense. With the doctrine of Progress it assumes, logically, a preponderating importance; for the centre of interest is transferred to the life of future generations who are to enjoy conditions of happiness denied to us, but which our labours and sufferings are to help to bring about. If the doctrine is held in an extreme fatalistic form, then our duty is to resign ourselves cheerfully to sacrifices for the sake of unknown descendants, just as ordinary altruism enjoins the cheerful acceptance of sacrifices for the sake of living fellow-creatures. Winwood Reade indicated this when he wrote, "Our own prosperity is founded on the agonies of the past. Is it therefore unjust that we also should suffer for the benefit of those who are to come?" But if it is held that each generation can by its own deliberate acts determine for good or evil the destinies of the race, then our duties towards others reach out through time as well as through space, and our contemporaries are only a negligible fraction of the "neighbours" to whom we owe obligations. The ethical end may still be formulated, with the Utilitarians, as the greatest happiness of the greatest number; only the greatest number includes, as Kidd observed, "the members of generations yet unborn or unthought of." This extension of the moral code, if it is not yet conspicuous in treatises on Ethics, has in late years been obtaining recognition in practice.

5

Within the last forty years nearly every civilised country has produced a large literature on social science, in which indefinite Progress is generally assumed as an axiom. But the "law" whose investigation Kant designated as the task for a Newton, which Saint-Simon and Comte did not find, and to which Spencer's evolutionary formula would stand in the same relation as it stands to the law of gravitation, remains still undiscovered. To examine or even glance at this literature, or to speculate how theories of Progress may be modified by recent philosophical speculation, lies beyond the scope of this volume, which is only concerned with tracing the origin of the idea and its growth up to the time when it became a current creed.

Looking back on the course of the inquiry, we note how the history of the idea has been connected with the growth of modern science, with the growth of rationalism, and with the struggle for political and religious liberty. The precursors (Bodin and Bacon) lived at a time when the world was consciously emancipating itself from the authority of tradition and it was being discovered that liberty is a difficult theoretical problem. The idea took definite shape in France when the old scheme of the universe had been shattered by the victory of the new astronomy and the prestige of Providence, *cuncta supercilio mouentis*, was paling before the majesty of the immutable laws of nature. There began a slow but steady reinstatement of the kingdom of this world. The otherworldly dreams of theologians,

· Ceux qui reniaient la terre pour patrie,

which had ruled so long lost their power, and men's earthly home again insinuated itself into their affections, but with the new hope of its becoming a place fit for reasonable beings to live in. We have seen how the belief that our race is travelling towards earthly happiness was propagated by some eminent thinkers, as well as by some "not very fortunate persons who had a good deal of time on their hands." And all these high-priests and incense-bearers to whom the creed owes its success were rationalists, from the author of the *Histoire des oracles* to the philosopher of the Unknowable.

EPILOGUE

IN achieving its ascendancy and unfolding its meaning, the Idea of Progress had to overcome a psychological obstacle which may be described as *the illusion of finality*.

It is quite easy to fancy a state of society, vastly different from ours, existing in some unknown place like heaven ; it is much more difficult to realise as a fact that the order of things with which we are familiar has so little stability that our actual descendants may be born into a world as different from ours as ours is from that of our ancestors of the pleistocene age.

The illusion of finality is strong. The men of the Middle Ages would have found it hard to imagine that a time was not far off in which the Last Judgement would have ceased to arouse any emotional interest. In the sphere of speculation Hegel, and even Comte, illustrate this psychological limitation : they did not recognise that their own systems could not be final any more than the system of Aristotle or of Descartes. It is science, perhaps, more than anything else—the wonderful history of science in the last hundred years—that has helped us to transcend this illusion.

But if we accept the reasonings on which the dogma of Progress is based, must we not carry

them to their full conclusion? In escaping from the illusion of finality, is it legitimate to exempt that dogma itself? Must not it, too, submit to its own negation of finality? Will not that process of change, for which Progress is the optimistic name, compel "Progress" too to fall from the commanding position in which it is now, with apparent security, enthroned? *"Ἔσσεται ἡμᾶρ ὅταν . . .* A day will come, in the revolution of centuries, when a new idea will usurp its place as the directing idea of humanity. Another star, unnoticed now or invisible, will climb up the intellectual heaven, and human emotions will react to its influence, human plans respond to its guidance. It will be the criterion by which Progress and all other ideas will be judged. And it too will have its successor.

In other words, does not Progress itself suggest that its value as a doctrine is only relative, corresponding to a certain not very advanced stage of civilisation; just as Providence, in its day, was an idea of relative value, corresponding to a stage somewhat less advanced? Or will it be said that this argument is merely a disconcerting trick of dialectic played under cover of the darkness in which the issue of the future is safely hidden by Horace's prudent god?

APPENDIX

NOTES TO THE TEXT

INTRODUCTION

P. 7.—The history of the idea of Progress has been treated briefly and partially by various French writers; e.g. Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, vi. 321 sqq.; Buchez, *Introduction à la science de l'histoire*, i. 99 sqq. (ed. 2, 1842); Javary, *De l'idée de progrès* (1850); Rigault, *Histoire de la querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* (1856); Bouillier, *Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne* (1854); Caro, *Problèmes de la morale sociale* (1876); Brunetière, *La Formation de l'idée de progrès*, in *Études critiques*, 5^e série. More recently M. Jules Delvaille has attempted to trace its history fully, down to the end of the eighteenth century. His *Histoire de l'idée de progrès* (1910) is planned on a large scale; he is erudite and has read extensively. But his treatment is lacking in the power of discrimination. He strikes one as anxious to bring within his net, as *théoriciens du progrès*, as many distinguished thinkers as possible; and so, along with a great deal that is useful and relevant, we also find in his book much that is irrelevant. He has not clearly seen that the distinctive idea of Progress was not conceived in antiquity or in the Middle Ages, or even in the Renaissance period; and when he comes to modern times he fails to bring out clearly the decisive steps of its growth. And he does not seem to realise that a man might be "progressive" without believing in, or even thinking about, the doctrine of Progress. Leonardo da Vinci and Berkeley are examples. In my *Ancient Greek Historians* (1909) I dwelt on the modern origin of the idea (p. 253 sqq.). Recently Mr. R. H. Murray, in a learned appendix to his *Erasmus and Luther*, has developed the thesis that Progress was not grasped in antiquity (though he makes an exception of Seneca),—a welcome confirmation.

I. 1, p. 9.—Plato's philosophy of history. In the myth of the *Statesman* and the last Books of the *Republic*. The best

elucidation of these difficult passages will be found in the notes and appendix to Book viii. in J. Adam's edition of the *Republic* (1902).

P. 10.—Plato's world-cycle. I have omitted details not essential; e.g. that in the first period men were born from the earth and only in the second propagated themselves. The period of 36,000 years, known as the Great Platonic Year, was probably a Babylonian astronomical period, and was in any case based on the Babylonian sexagesimal system and connected with the solar year conceived as consisting of 360 days. Heraclitus seems to have accepted it as the duration of the world between his periodic universal conflagrations. Plato derived the number from predecessors, but based it on operations with the numbers 3, 4, 5, the length of the sides of the Pythagorean right-angled triangle. The Great Year of the Pythagorean Philolaus seems to have been different, and that of the Stoics was much longer (6,570,000 years).

I may refer here to Tacitus, *Dialogus* c. 16, as an appreciation of historical perspective unusual in ancient writers: "The four hundred years which separate us from the ancients are almost a vanishing quantity if you compare them with the duration of the ages." See the whole passage, where the *Magnus Annus* of 12,954 years is referred to.

P. 12.—Some of the Pythagoreans: See Simplicius, *Phys.* 732, 26.

Pp. 13, 14.—The quotations from Seneca will be found in *Naturales Quaestiones*, vii. 25 and 31. See also *Epist.* 64. Seneca implies continuity in scientific research. Aristotle had stated this expressly, pointing out that we are indebted not only to the author of the philosophical theory which we accept as true, but also to the predecessors whose views it has superseded (*Metaphysics*, i. ii. chap. 1). But he seems to consider his own system as final.

Pp. 14, 15.—The quotations and the references here will be found in *Nat. Quaest.* i. *Praef.*; *Epist.* 104, § 16 (cp. 110, § 8; 117, § 20, and the fine passage in 65, § 16-21); *Nat. Quaest.* iii. 28-30; and finally *Epist.* 90, § 45, cp. § 17. This last letter is a criticism on Posidonius, who asserted that the arts invented in primitive times were due to philosophers. Seneca repudiates this view: *omnia enim ista sagacitas hominum, non sapientia inuenit.*

Seneca touches on the possibility of the discovery of new lands beyond the ocean in a passage in his *Medea* (374 sqq.) which has been often quoted:

uenient annis
 secula seris, quibus oceanus
 uincula rerum laxet et ingens
 pateat tellus Tiphysque novos
 detegat orbes, . . .
 nec sit terris ultima Thule.

II. 1, p. 22.—It may be added that, as G. Monod observed, "les hommes du moyen âge n'avaient pas conscience des modifications successives que le temps apporte avec lui dans les choses humaines" (*Revue Historique*, i. p. 8).

2, p. 24.—Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* iii. 6. 39.

3, p. 24.—Of Bacon's *Opus Majus* the best and only complete edition is that of J. H. Bridges, 2 vols. 1897 (with an excellent Introduction). The associated works, *Opus Minus* and *Opus Tertium*, have been edited by Brewer, *Fr. Rogeri Bacon Opera Inedita*, 1859.

P. 25.—Solidarity of the Sciences: Cp. *Opus Tertium*, c. iv. p. 18, omnes scientiae sunt connexae et mutuis se fovent auxiliis sicut partes ejusdem totius, quarum quaelibet opus suum peragit non solum propter se sed pro aliis.

P. 26.—"Things which lead to felicity": *Opus Majus*, vii. p. 366.

P. 27.—Arab astrologer: *Ib.* iv. p. 266; vii. p. 389.

P. 27.—Antichrist: (1) His coming may be fixed by astrology: *Opus Majus*, iv. p. 269 (inveniretur sufficiens suspicio vel magis certitudo de tempore Antichristi; cp. p. 402). (2) His coming means the end of the world: *ib.* p. 262. (3) We are not far from it: *ib.* p. 402. One of the reasons which seem to have made this view probable to Bacon was the irruption of the Mongols into Europe during his lifetime; cp. p. 268 and vii. p. 234. Another was the prevalent corruption, especially of the clergy, which impressed him deeply; see *Compendium studii philosophiae*, ed. Brewer, p. 402. (4) "Truth will prevail," etc.: *Opus Majus*, i. pp. 19, 20. He claimed for experimental science that it would produce inventions which could be usefully employed against Antichrist: *ib.* vii. p. 221.

P. 28.—Bacon quotes Seneca: See *Opus Majus*, i. pp. 37, 55, 14.

Much has been made out of a well-known passage in his short Epistle *de secretis operibus artis et naturae et de nullitate magiae*, c. iv. (ed. Brewer, p. 533), in which he is said to *predict* inventions which have been realised in the locomotives, steam navigation, and aeroplanes of modern times. But Bacon predicts nothing. He is showing that science can invent curious and, to the vulgar,

incredible things without the aid of magic. All the inventions which he enumerates have, he declares, been actually made in ancient times, with the exception of a flying-machine (*instrumentum volandi quod non vidi nec hominem qui vidisset cognovi, sed sapientem qui hoc artificium excogitavit explorare cognosco*).

Compare the remarks of S. Vogl, *Die Physik Roger Bacon* (1906), 98 sqq.

III. 2, p. 31. — Machiavelli's principle of advance and decline: *Discorsi*, ii. Introduction; *Istorie fiorentine*, v. *ad init.* For the cycle of constitutions through which all states tend to move see *Discorsi*, ii. 2 (here we see the influence of Polybius).

P. 31. — "For these events are due to men," etc.: *Discorsi*, iii. 43.

P. 32. — The wise legislator: *Ib.* iii. 1. The lawgiver must assume for his purposes that all men are bad: *ib.* i. 3. Villari has useful remarks on these principles in his *Machiavelli*, Book ii. cap. iii.

P. 32. — "It has been well pointed out" by Villari, *loc. cit.*

3, p. 33. — It has been observed that the thinkers who were rebelling against the authority of Aristotle—the most dangerous of the ancient philosophers, because he was so closely associated with theological scholasticism and was supported by the Church—frequently attacked under the standard of some other ancient master; e.g. Telesio resorted to Parmenides, Justus Lipsius to the Stoics, and Bruno is under the influence of Plotinus and Plato (Bouillier, *La Philosophie cartésienne*, vol. i. p. 5). The idea of "development" in Bruno has been studied by Mariupolsky (*Zur Geschichte des Entwicklungsbegriffs in Berner Studien*, Bd. vi. 1897), who pointed out the influence of Stoicism on his thought.

P. 35. — Rabelais, Book ii. chap. 8.

P. 35. — Ramus: *Praefat. Scholarum Mathematicarum*, maiorem doctorum hominum et operum proventum seculo uno vidimus quam totis antea 14 seculis maiores nostri viderent. (Ed. Basel, 1569.)

CHAPTER I

1, P. 38. — Bodin's synthesis of universal history: See especially *Methodus*, cap. v. pp. 124, 130, 136.

P. 38. — Climates and geography. The fullest discussion will be found in the *République*, Book v. cap. 1. Here Bodin anticipated Montesquieu. There was indeed nothing new in the principle; it had been recognised by Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Polybius, and other Greeks, and in a later age by Roger Bacon.

But Bodin first developed and applied it methodically. This part of his work was ignored, and in the eighteenth century Montesquieu's speculations on the physical factors in history were applauded as a new discovery.

3, p. 42.—Astrology. Bodin was also a firm believer in sorcery. His *La Démonomanie* (1578) is a monument of superstition.

P. 42.—Historical periods determined by numbers: *Methodus*, cap. v. pp. 265 sqq.

4, p. 43.—The world built on a divine plan: Cp. Baudrillart, *J. Bodin et son temps*, p. 148 (1853). This monograph is chiefly devoted to a full analysis of *La République*.

P. 44.—Solidarity of peoples: *République*, Book v. cap. 1 (p. 690; ed. 1593); *Methodus*, cap. vi. p. 194; cap. vii. p. 360.

CHAPTER II

1, p. 50.—German critics have been generally severe on Bacon as deficient in the scientific spirit. Kuno Fischer, *Bacon von Verulam* (1856). Liebig, *Ueber Francis Bacon von Verulam und die Methode der Naturforschung* (1863). Lange (*Geschichte des Materialismus*, i. 195) speaks of "die abergläubische und eitle Unwissenschaftlichkeit Bacos."

2, p. 51.—Utility the end of knowledge. The passages specially referred to are: *De Aug. Sc.* vii. 1; *Nov. Org.* i. 81 and 3.

3, p. 53.—Repudiation of the authority of the ancients: *Nov. Org.* i. 84; 56, 72, 73, 74.

P. 55.—"It may truly be affirmed," etc.: *Advancement of Learning*, ii. 13, 14.

P. 55.—Bacon's synthesis of history: *Advancement*, ii. 1, 6; *Nov. Org.* i. 78, 79, 85.

P. 57.—On the doctrine of Returns: *Nov. Org.* i. 92 sqq.

4, p. 58.—The third visitation of learning: *Advancement*, ii. 24.

P. 58.—Purpose of study of nature. Campanella held its purpose to be the contemplation of the wisdom of God; cp., for instance, *De sensu rerum*, Bk. iv. *epilogus*, where the world is described as *statua Dei altissimi* (p. 370; ed. 1620).

P. 59.—Providence: See *Advancement*, iii. 11. On the influence of the doctrine on historical writing in England at the beginning of the seventeenth century see Firth, *Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World* (Proc. of British Academy, vol. viii., 1919), p. 8.

5, p. 60.—Harrington, *Oceana*, pp. 77-8, 3rd ed. (1747).

P. 60.—Maritime explorations and ideal states. Similarly the ideal communistic states imagined by Euemerus and Iambulus in the southern seas owed their geographical positions to the popular interest in seafaring in the Indian Ocean in the age after Alexander. One wonders whether Campanella knew the account of the fictitious journey of Iambulus to the Islands of the Sun, in Diodorus Siculus, ii. 55-60.

6, p. 61.—Inventions in the City of the Sun: *Civitas Solis*, p. 461 (ed. 1620). Expectancy of end of world: *Ib.* p. 455.

CHAPTER III

2, p. 67.—Old age of the world. Descartes wrote:

Non est quod antiquis multum tribuamus propter antiquitatem, sed nos potius iis seniores dicendi. Jam enim senior est mundus quam tunc majoremque habemus rerum experientiam. (A fragment quoted by Baillet, *Vie de Descartes*, viii. 10.) Passages to the same effect occur in Malebranche, Arnauld, and Nicole. (See Bouillier, *Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne*, i. 482-3.)

A passage in La Mothe Le Vayer's essay *Sur l'opiniâtreté* in Orasius Tubero (ii. 218) is in point, if, as seems probable, the date of that work is 1632-33. "Some defer to the ancients and allow themselves to be led by them like children; others hold that the ancients lived in the youth of the world, and it is those who live to-day who are really the ancients, and consequently ought to carry most weight." See Rigault, *Histoire de la querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, p. 52.

The passage of Pascal occurs in the *Fragment d'un traité du vide*, not published till 1779 (now included in the *Pensées*, I^e Partie, Art. 1), and therefore without influence on the origination of the theory of progress. It has been pointed out that Guillaume Colletet had in 1636 expressed a similar view (Brunetière, *Études critiques*, v. 185-6).

P. 68.—Quotation from Pascal: *Pensées*, *ib.*

3, p. 70.—For the prevalence of "libertine" thought in France at the beginning of the seventeenth century see the works of the Père Garasse, *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps ou prétendus tels*, etc. (1623). Cp. also Brunetière's illuminating study, "Jansénistes et Cartésiens" in *Études critiques*, 4^{me} série.

4, p. 73.—Bossuet's *Universal History*: It has been shown that on one hand he controverts Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, and on the other the dangerous methods of Richard Simon, one

of the precursors of modern biblical criticism. Brunetière, *op. cit.* 74-85.

P. 74.—Passage from Bossuet, quoted by Brunetière, *op. cit.* 58.

P. 75.—Fénelon's *Réfutation* of Malebranche's *Traité de la nature et de la grâce* was not published till 1820. This work of Malebranche also provoked a controversy with Arnauld, who urged similar arguments.

P. 77.—Leibnitz: See particularly *Monadologie*, ad fin. (published posthumously in German 1720, in Latin 1728); *Théodicée*, § 341 (1710); and the paper, *De rerum originatione radicali*, written in 1697, but not published till 1840 (*Opera philosophica*, ed. Erdmann, p. 147 *sqq.*).

CHAPTER IV

1, p. 81.—For the views of Saint Sorlin see the Preface to his *Clovis* and his *Traité pour juger des poètes grecs, latins, et français*, chap. iv. (1670). Cp. Rigault, *Hist. de la querelle*, p. 106. The polemic of Saint Sorlin extended over about five years (1669-73).

2, pp. 85-7.—The passages in Perrault's *Parallèle* specially referred to in the text will be found in vol. i. pp. 35-7, 60-61, 67, 231-3.

3, p. 89.—Among modern poets equal to the ancients, Hakewill signalises Sir Philip Sidney, Spenser, Marot, Ronsard, Ariosto, Tasso (Book iii. chap. 8, § 3).

P. 90.—Hakewill on the end of the world: See Book i. chap. 2, § 4, p. 24.

P. 91.—Circular progress: Book iii. chap. 6, § 1, p. 259.

5, p. 97.—"The lunar world." It may be noted that John Wilkins (Bishop of Chester) published in 1638 a little book entitled *Discovery of a New World*, arguing that the moon is inhabited. A further edition appeared in 1684. He attempted to compose a universal language (Sprat, *Hist. of Royal Society*, p. 251). His *Mercury or the Secret and Swift Messenger* (1641) contains proposals for a universal script (chap. 13). There is also an ingenious suggestion for the communication of messages by sound, which might be described as an anticipation of the Morse code. Wilkins and another divine, Seth Ward, the Bishop of Salisbury, belonged to the group of men who founded the Royal Society.

CHAPTER V

9, p. 113.—The Marquise of the *Plurality of Worlds* is supposed to be Madame de la Mésangère, who lived near Rouen, Fontenelle's birthplace. He was a friend and a frequent visitor at her château. See Maigron, *Fontenelle*, p. 42. The English translation of 1688 was by Glanvill. A new translation was published at Dublin as late as 1761.

11, p. 120.—Saint Évremond on Perrault: In a letter to the Duchess of Mazarin, *Works*, Eng. tr., iii. 418.

12, p. 124.—Abbé Terrasson, 1670-1750. His *Philosophie applicable à tous les objets de l'esprit et de la raison* was issued posthumously in 1754. His *Dissertation critique sur l'Iliade* appeared in 1715.

CHAPTER VI

2, p. 133.—For Sully's grand Design compare the interesting article of Sir Geoffrey Butler in the *Edinburgh Review*, October 1919.

CHAPTER VIII

1, p. 159.—The passage from Diderot's article *Encyclopédie* is given as translated by Morley, *Diderot*, i. 145.

P. 162.—The passages quoted on utility are from d'Holbach, *Système de la nature*, i. c. 12, p. 224; c. 15, p. 312; Diderot, *De l'interprétation de la nature* in *Œuvres*, ii. p. 13; Raynal, *Histoire des deux Indes*, vii. p. 416. The effectiveness of the teaching may be illustrated from the *Essay on Man*, by Antoine Rivarol, whom Burke called the Tacitus of the Revolution. "The virtues are only virtues because they are useful to the human race." *Œuvres choisies* (ed. de Lescure), i. p. 211.

P. 162.—Bacon: See d'Alembert's tribute to him in the *Discours préliminaire*.

2, p. 163.—The Encyclopædia: The general views which governed the work may be gathered from d'Alembert's introductory discourse and from Diderot's article *Encyclopédie*. An interesting sketch of the principal contributors will be found in Morley's *Diderot*, i. chap. v. Another modern study of the Encyclopædic movement is the monograph of L. Ducros, *Les Encyclopédistes* (1900). Helvétius has recently been the subject of a study by Albert Keim (*Helvétius, sa vie et son œuvre*, 1907). Among other works which help the study of the speculations of

this age from various points of view may be mentioned: Marius Roustan, *Les Philosophes et la société française au xviii^e siècle* (1906); Espinas, *La Philosophie sociale du xviii^e siècle et la Révolution* (1898); Lichtenberger, *Le Socialisme au xviii^e siècle* (1895). I have not mentioned in the text Boullanger (1722-1758), who contributed to the Encyclopaedia the article on *Political Economy* (which has nothing to do with economics but treats of ancient theocracies); the emphasis laid on his views on progress by Buchez (*op. cit.* i. 111 *sqq.*) is quite excessive.

3, p. 166.—The most informing discussion of the relations between the Advanced and Backward races is Bryce's *Romanes Lecture* (1902).

4, p. 169.—Raynal on improvement of the race: cp. his *Histoire*, vii. 214, 256. This book was first published anonymously; the author's name appeared in the edition of 1780.

5, pp. 170-1.—The passages of d'Holbach specially referred to are: *Système social*, i. 1, p. 13; *Syst. de la nature*, i. 6, p. 88; *Syst. soc.* i. 15, p. 271; *Syst. de la n.* i. 1, p. 3.

P. 172.—Helvétius on slow progress: *De l'esprit*, Disc. ii. cc. 24, 25.

7, p. 176.—The principle that intolerance on the part of the wise and strong towards the ignorant and weak is a good thing is not alien to the spirit of the French philosophers, though I do not think any of them expressly asserted it. In the following century it was formulated by Colins, a Belgian (author of two works on social science, 1857-60), who believed that an autocratic government suppressing liberty of conscience is the most effective instrument of Progress. It is possible that democracy may yet try the experiment.

CHAPTER IX

3, p. 182.—In his admirable edition of *The Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (1915), p. 89, Vaughan suggests that in Rousseau's later works we may possibly detect "the first faint beginnings" of a belief in Progress, and attributes this to the influence of Montesquieu.

P. 183.—The consistency of the *Social Contract* with the *Discourse on Inequality* has been much debated. They deal with two distinct problems, and the *Social Contract* does not mark any change in the author's views. Though it was not published till 1762 he had been working at it since 1753.

P. 184.—For Mably's political doctrines see Guerrier's monograph, *L'Abbé de Mably* (1886), where it is shown that among

"the theories which determined in advance the course of the events of 1789" the Abbé's played a rôle which has not been duly recognised.

P. 184.—Passage from Diderot: *Réfutation de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius* in *Œuvres* ii. p. 431. Elsewhere (p. 287) he argues that in a community without arts and industries there are fewer crimes than in a civilised state, but men are not so happy.

P. 185.—D'Holbach on savage life: *Syst. soc.* i. 16, p. 190.

P. 185.—Luxury: D'Holbach, *ib.* iii. 7; Diderot, art. *Luxe* in the *Encyclopaedia*; Helvétius, *De l'esprit*, i. 3.

4, p. 189.—Europe a confederated republic. So Rivarol, writing in 1783 (*Œuvres*, i. pp. 4 and 52): "Never did the world offer such a spectacle. Europe has reached such a high degree of power that history has nothing to compare with it. It is virtually a federative republic, composed of empires and kingdoms, and the most powerful that has ever existed."

P. 191.—Comte on comparative estimates of happiness: *Cours de philosophie positive*, iv. 379.

P. 191.—Soon after the publication of the book of Chastellux—though I do not suggest any direct connection—a society of Illuminati, who also called themselves the Perfectibilists, was founded at Ingoldstadt, who proposed to effect a pacific transformation of humanity. See Javary, *De l'idée de progrès*, p. 73.

CHAPTER X

1, p. 192.—*Réflexions sur les avantages d'écrire et d'imprimer sur les matières de l'administration* (1764); in *Mélanges*, vol. iii. p. 55. Morellet held, like d'Holbach, that society is only the development and improvement of nature itself (*ib.* p. 6).

2, p. 194.—Mercier's early essay: *Des malheurs de la guerre et des avantages de la paix* (1766). On the savage: *L'Homme sauvage* (1767). For the opposite thesis see the *Songes philosophiques* (1768). He describes a state of perfect happiness in a planet where beings live in perpetual contemplation of the infinite. He appreciates the work of philosophers from Socrates to Leibnitz, and describes Rousseau as standing before the swelling stream, but cursing it. It may be suspected that the writings of Leibnitz had much to do with Mercier's conversion.

P. 194.—*L'an 2440*: The author's name first appeared in the 3rd ed., 1799. A German translation, by C. F. Weisse, was published in London in 1772. The English version, by Dr. Hooper, appeared in the same year, and a new edition in 1802;

the translator changed the title to *Memoirs of the year Two thousand five hundred*.

3, p. 196.—Theatres. In 1769 Mercier began to carry out his programme of composing and adapting plays for instruction and edification. His theory of the true functions of the theatre he explained in a special treatise, *Du théâtre ou Nouvel Essai sur l'art dramatique* (1773).

CHAPTER XI

5, p. 212.—It is interesting to notice that the ablest of medieval Arabic historians, Ibn Khaldun (fourteenth century), had claimed that if history is scientifically studied future events may be predicted.

CHAPTER XII

2, p. 220.—It has been observed by Mr. Leslie Stephen that the doctrine of the rights of man lies in the background of Adam Smith's speculations.

3, p. 221.—In his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* Adam Ferguson treated the growth of civilisation as due to the progressive nature of man, which insists on carrying him forward to limits impossible to ascertain. He formulated the process as a movement from simplicity to complexity, but contributed little to its explanation.

P. 221.—This passage of Priestley occurs in his *Essay on the First Principles of Government and on the Nature of Political, Civil, and Religious Liberty* (1768, 2nd ed. 1771), pp. 2-4. His *Lectures on History and General Policy* appeared in 1788.

Priestley was a strict utilitarian, who held that there is nothing intrinsically excellent in justice and veracity apart from their relation to happiness. The degree of public happiness is measured by the excellence of religion, science, government, laws, arts, commerce, conveniences of life, and especially by the degrees of personal security and personal liberty. In all these the ancients were inferior, and therefore they enjoyed less happiness. The present state of Europe is vastly preferable to what it was in any former period. And "the plan of this divine drama is opening more and more." In the future

Knowledge will increase and accumulate and diffuse itself to the lower ranks of society, who, by degrees, will find leisure for speculation; and looking beyond their immediate employment, they will

consider the complex machine of society, and in time understand it better than those who now write about it.

See his *Lectures*, pp. 371, 388 *sqq.*, 528-53.

The English thinker did not share all the views of his French masters. As a Unitarian, he regarded Christianity as a "great remedy of vice and ignorance," part of the divine plan; and he ascribed to government a lesser rôle than they in the improvement of humanity. He held, for instance, that the state should not interfere in education, arguing that this art was still in the experimental stage, and that the intervention of the civil power might stereotype a bad system.

Not less significant, though less influential, than the writings of Priestley and Ferguson was the work of James Dunbar, Professor of Philosophy at Aberdeen, entitled *Essays on the History of Mankind in Rude and Cultivated Ages* (2nd ed., 1781). He conceived history as progressive, and inquired into the general causes which determine the gradual improvements of civilisation. He dealt at length with the effects of climate and local circumstances, but unlike the French philosophers did not ignore heredity. While he did not enter upon any discussion of future developments, he threw out incidentally the idea that the world may be united in a league of nations.

Posterity, he wrote, "may contemplate, from a concurrence of various causes and events, some of which are hastening into light, the greater part, or even the whole habitable globe, divided among nations free and independent in all the interior functions of government, forming one political and commercial system" (p. 287).

Dunbar's was an optimistic book, but his optimism was more cautious than Priestley's. These are his final words:

If human nature is liable to degenerate, it is capable of proportionable improvement from the collected wisdom of ages. It is pleasant to infer from the actual progress of society, the glorious possibilities of human excellence. And, if the principles can be assembled into view, which most directly tend to diversify the genius and character of nations, some theory may be raised on these foundations that shall account more systematically for past occurrences and afford some openings and anticipations into the eventual history of the world.

CHAPTER XIII

1, p. 239.—Wolf and Mendelssohn: See Bock, *Jakob Wegelin als Geschichtstheoretiker*, in *Leipziger Studien*, ix. 4, pp. 23-7 (1902).

P. 241.—Quotation from Herder: *Ideen*, v. 5.

P. 242.—Herder's geometrical illustration: *Ib.* xv. 3.

The power of ideas in history, which Herder failed to appreciate, was recognised by a contemporary savant from whom he might have learned. Jakob Wegelin, a Swiss, had, at the invitation of Frederick the Great, settled in Berlin, where he spent the last years of his life and devoted his study to the theory of history. His merit was to have perceived that "external facts are penetrated and governed by spiritual forces and guiding ideas, and that the essential and permanent in history is conditioned by the nature and development of ideas." (Dierauer, quoted by Bock, *op. cit.* p. 13.) He believed in the progressive development of mankind as a whole, but as his learned brochures seem to have exerted no influence, it would be useless here to examine more closely his views, which are buried in the transactions of the Prussian Academy of Science. In Switzerland he came under the influence of Rousseau and d'Alembert. After he moved to Berlin (1765) he fell under that of Leibnitz. It may be noted (1) that he deprecated attempts at writing a universal history as premature until an adequate knowledge of facts had been gained, and this would demand long preliminary labours; (2) that he discussed the question whether history is an indefinite progression or a series of constant cycles, and decided for the former view. (*Mémoire sur le cours périodique*, 1785). Bock's monograph is the best study of Wegelin; but see also Flint's observations in *Philosophy of History*, vol. i. (1874).

2, p. 243.—This work of Kant was translated by De Quincey (*Works*, vol. ix. 428 *sqq.*, ed. Masson), who is responsible for *cosmopolitical* as the rendering of *weltbürgerlich*.

3, p. 250.—Kant's pessimism has been studied at length by von Hartmann, in *Zur Geschichte und Begründung des Pessimismus* (1880).

P. 250.—Schopenhauer recognised progress social, economic, and political, but as a fact that contains no guarantee of happiness; on the contrary, the development of the intelligence increases suffering. He ridiculed the optimistic ideals of comfortable, well-regulated states. His views on historical development have been collected by G. Sparlinsky, *Schopenhauers Verhältnis zur Geschichte*, in *Berner Studien z. Philosophie*, Bd. lxxii. (1910).

4, p. 253.—A recent writer on Fichte: X. Léon, *La Philosophie de Fichte* (1902), pp. 477-9.

P. 253.—The rôle of savant: Fichte, *Ueber die Bestimmung des Gelehrten* (1794).

6, p. 256.—Schelling's views notoriously varied at various stages of his career. In his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) he distinguished three historical periods, in the first of which the Absolute reveals itself as Fate, in the second as Nature, in the third as Providence, and asserted that we are still living in the second, which began with the expansion of Rome (*Werke*, i. 3, p. 603). In this context he says that the conception of an infinite "progressivity" is included in the conception of "history," but adds that the perfectibility of the race cannot be directly inferred. For it may be said that man has no proper history but turns round on a wheel of Ixion. The difficulty of establishing the fact of Progress from the course of events lies in discovering a criterion. Schelling rejects the criterion of moral improvement and that of advance in science and arts as unpractical or misleading. But if we see the sole object of history in a gradual realisation of the ideal state, we have a measure of Progress which can be applied; though it cannot be proved either by theory or by experience that the goal will be attained. This must remain an article of faith (*ib.* 592 *sqq.*).

P. 256.—Krause divided man's earthly career into three Ages—infancy, growth, and maturity. The second of these falls into three periods characterised by (1) polytheism, (2) monotheism (Middle Ages), (3) scepticism and liberty, and we are now in the third of these periods. The third Age will witness the union of humanity in a single social organism, and the universal acceptance of "panentheism" (the doctrine of the unity of all in God), which is the principle of Krause's philosophy and religion. But though this will be the final stage on the earth, Krause contemplates an ulterior career of humanity in other solar systems.

Krause never attracted attention in England, but he exerted some influence in France and Spain, and especially in Belgium, notwithstanding the grotesque jargon in which he obscured his thoughts. See Flint, *Philosophy of History*, pp. 474-5. Flint's account of his speculations is indulgent. The main ideas of his philosophy of history will be found in the *Introduction à la philosophie* (éd. 2, 1880) of G. Tiberghien, a Belgian disciple.

CHAPTER XIV

2, p. 265.—Bonald indeed in his treatise *De pouvoir* adopted the idea of development and applied it to religion (as Newman did afterwards) for the purpose of condemning the Reformation as a retrograde movement.

3, p. 266.—German literature was indeed already known, in some measure, to readers of the *Décade philosophique*, and Kant had been studied in France long before 1813, the year of the publication of *De l'Allemagne*. See Picavet, *Les Idologues*, p. 99.

4, p. 268.—Vico has sometimes been claimed as a theorist of Progress, but incorrectly. See B. Croce, *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* (Eng. tr., 1913), p. 132—an indispensable aid to the study of Vico. The first edition of the *Scienza nuova* appeared in 1725; the second, which was a new work, in 1730.

Vico influenced Ballanche, a writer who enjoyed a considerable reputation in his day. He taught the progressive development of man towards liberty and equality within the four corners of the Christian religion, which he regarded as final. His *Palingénésie sociale* appeared in 1823–30.

CHAPTER XV

1, p. 281.—An English writer: R. Blakey, *History of the Philosophy of Mind*, vol. iv. p. 293 (1848). Fourier, born 1772, died in 1837. His principal disciple was Victor Considérant.

3, p. 285.—The best study of the Saint-Simonian school is that of G. Weill, *L'École saint-simonienne, son histoire, son influence jusqu'à nos jours* (1896), to which I am much indebted.

P. 287.—Law of Progress. In the *Globe*, which became an organ of Saint-Simonism in 1831, Enfantin announced a new principle (Weill, *op. cit.* 107). He defined the law of history as "the harmony, ceaselessly progressive, of flesh and spirit, of industry and science, of east and west, of woman and man." The rôle of woman played a large part in the teaching of the sect.

Saint-Simon's law of organic and critical ages was definitely accepted by H. de Ferron, a thinker who did not belong to the school, as late as 1867. See his *Théorie du progrès*, vol. ii. p. 433.

P. 289.—Influence of Saint-Simonism. It may be noticed that Saint-Simoniens came to the front in public careers after the revolution of 1848; e.g. Carnot, Reynaud, Charton.

CHAPTER XVI

1, p. 290.—Comte collaborated with Saint-Simon from 1818–1822. The final rupture came in 1824. The question of their relations is cleared up by Weill (*Saint-Simon*, chap. xi.). On the quarrel see also Ostwald, *Auguste Comte* (1914), 13 sqq.

2, p. 293.—Position of social science in hierarchy: *Cours de phil.*

pos. v. 267. Law of consensus: *op. cit.* iv. 347 *sqq.*, 364, 505, 721, 735.

3, p. 296.—One of the merits of Catholicism: *op. cit.* vi. 354.

P. 297.—Three modern principles condemned: *op. cit.* iv. 36-68.

5, p. 302.—Criticism of Comte's assumption that civilisation begins with animism: Weber's criticisms from this point of view are telling (*Le Rythme du progrès*, 73-95). He observes that if Comte had not left the practical and active side of intelligence in the shade and considered only its speculative side, he could not have formulated the law of the Three Stages. He would have seen that "the positive explanation of phenomena has played in every period a preponderant rôle, though latent, in the march of the human mind." Weber himself suggests a scheme of two states (corresponding to the two-sidedness of the intellect), technical and speculative, practical and theoretical, through the alternation of which intellectual progress has been effected. The first stage was probably practical (he calls it *proto-technic*). It is to be remembered that when Comte was constructing his system palaeontology was in its infancy.

P. 302.—À propos of the view that only European civilisation matters it has been well observed that "human history is not unitary but pluralistic": F. J. Teggart, *The Processes of History*, p. 24 (1918).

P. 303.—On contingency and the "chapter of accidents" see Cournot, *Considérations sur la marche des idées et des événements dans les temps modernes* (1872), i. 116 *sqq.* I have discussed the subject and given some illustrations in a short paper, entitled "Cleopatra's Nose," in the *Annual* of the Rationalist Press Association for 1916.

7, p. 307.—The influence of Comte. The manner in which ideas filter through, as it were, underground and emerge oblivious of their source is illustrated by the German historian Lamprecht's theory of historical development. He surveyed the history of a people as a series of what he called typical periods, each of which is marked by a collective psychical character expressing itself in every department of life. He named this a diapason. Lamprecht had never read Comte, and he imagined that this principle, on which he based his *kulturhistorische Methode*, was original. But his psychical diapason is the psychical consensus of Comte, whose system, as we have seen, depended on the proposition that a given social organisation corresponds in a definite way to the contemporary stage of mental development; and Comte had derived the principle from Saint-Simon.

Cf. his pamphlet *Die kulturhistorische Methode* (1900). The succession of "typical periods" was worked out for Germany in his *History of the German People*.

P. 308.—Philosophical writers in England in the middle of the century paid more attention to Cousin than to Comte or Saint-Simon. J. D. Morell, in his forgotten *History and Critical View of Speculative Philosophy* (1846), says that eclecticism is the philosophy of human progress (vol. ii. 635, 2nd ed.). He conceived the movement of humanity as that of a spiral, ever tending to a higher perfection (638).

8, p. 310.—Buckle has been very unjustly treated by some critics, but has found an able defender in Mr. J. M. Robertson (*Buckle and his Critics* (1895)). The remarks of Benn (*History of Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, ii. 182 sqq.) are worth reading.

CHAPTER XVII

1, p. 313.—Lamartine denounced in his monthly journal *Le Conseiller du peuple*, vol. i. (1849), all the progressive gospels of the day, socialist, communist, Saint-Simonian, Fourierist, Icarian—in fact every school of social reform since the First Republic—as purely materialistic, sprung from the "cold seed of the century of Helvétius" (pp. 224, 287).

3, p. 316.—Proudhon. Compare the appreciation by Weill in *Histoire du mouvement social en France 1852-1910* (1911, ed. 2), p. 41: "Le grand écrivain révolutionnaire et anarchiste n'était au fond ni un révolutionnaire ni un anarchiste, mais un réformateur pratique et modéré qui a fait illusion par le ton vibrant de ses pamphlets contre la société capitaliste."

P. 317.—Quotation from Proudhon: *Philosophie du progrès, Première lettre* (1851).

4, p. 318.—Marrast, "the invisible law"; "Oui," he continues, "toute société est progressive, parce que tout individu est éduicable, perfectible; on peut mesurer, limiter, peut-être les facultés d'un individu; on ne saurait limiter, mesurer ce que peuvent, dans l'ordre des idées, les intelligences dont les produits ne s'ajoutent pas seulement mais se fécondent et se multiplient dans une progression indéfinie." No. 393 *République française. Assemblée nationale. Projet de Constitution . . . précédé par un rapport fait au nom de la Commission par le citoyen Armand Marrast. Séance du 30 août, 1848*.

5, p. 321.—The ascendancy of the idea of Progress at this epoch may be further illustrated by E. Pelletan's *Profession de*

foi du dix-neuvième siècle, 1852 (4th ed., 1857), where Progress is described as the general law of the universe; and by Jean Reynaud's *Philosophie religieuse: Terre et ciel* (3rd ed., 1858), a religious but not orthodox book, which acclaims the "soveran principle of perfectibility" (cp. p. 138). I may refer also to the rhetorical pages of E. Vacherot on the *Doctrine du progrès*, printed (as part of an essay on the Philosophy of History) in his *Essais de philosophie critique* (1864).

P. 322.—Renan, speaking of the Socialists, paid a high tribute to Bazard (*L'Avenir de la science*, p. 104). On the other hand, he criticised Comte severely (p. 149).

Renan returned to speculation on the future in 1863, in a letter to M. Marcellin-Berthelot (published in *Dialogues et fragments philosophiques*, 1876): "Que sera le monde quand un million de fois se sera reproduit ce qui s'est passé depuis 1763, quand la chimie, au lieu de quatre-vingt ans de progrès, en aura cent millions?" (p. 183). And again in the *Dialogues* written in 1871 (*ib.*), where it is laid down that the end of humanity is to produce great men: "le grand œuvre s'accomplira par la science, non par la démocratie. Rien sans grands hommes; le salut se fera par des grands hommes" (p. 103).

CHAPTER XVIII

1, p. 326.—"Progress of Society." The phrase was becoming common; e.g. Russell's *History of Modern Europe* (1822) has the sub-title *A view of the Progress of Society, etc.* The didactic poem of Payne Knight, *The Progress of Civil Society* (1796), a very dull performance, was quite unaffected by the dreams of Priestley or Godwin. It was towards the middle of the nineteenth century that Progress, without any qualifying phrase, came into use.

4, p. 333.—Against Lotze we might set many opinions which do not seem to have been influenced by the doctrine of evolution. For instance, the optimism of M. Marcellin-Berthelot in a letter to Renan in 1863. He says (Renan, *Dialogues*, p. 233) that one of the general results of historical study is "the fact of the incessant progress of human societies in science, in material conditions, and in morality, three correlatives. . . . Societies become more and more civilised, and I will venture to say more and more virtuous. The sum of good is always increasing, and the sum of evil diminishing, in the same measure as the sum of truth increases and the sum of ignorance diminishes."

In 1867 Emerson delivered an address at Harvard on the

"Progress of Culture" (printed in his *Letters and Social Aims*), in which he enumerates optimistically the indications of social advance: "the new scope of social science; the abolition of capital punishment and of imprisonment for debt: the improvement of prisons; the efforts for the suppression of intemperance, etc., etc.," and asks: "Who would live in the stone age, or the bronze, or the iron, or the lacustrine? Who does not prefer the age of steel, of gold, of coal, petroleum, cotton, steam, electricity, and the spectroscope?"

The discursive *Thoughts on the Future of the Human Race*, published in 1866, by W. Ellis (1800-81), a disciple of J. S. Mill, would have been remarkable if it had appeared half a century earlier. He is untouched by the theory of evolution, and argues on common-sense grounds that Progress is inevitable.

CHAPTER XIX

3, p. 341.—In an article on "Progress: its Law and Cause," in the *Westminster Review*, April 1857, Spencer explained that social progress, rightly understood, is not the increase of material conveniences or widening freedom of action, but changes of structure in the social organism which entail such consequences, and proceeded to show that the growth of the individual organism and the growth of civilisation obey the same law of advance from homogeneity to heterogeneity of structure. Here he used *progress* in a neutral sense; but recognising that a word is required which has no teleological implications (*Autobiography*, i. 500), he adopted *evolution* six months later in an article on "Transcendental Physiology" (*National Review*, Oct. 1857). In his study of organic laws Spencer was indirectly influenced by the ideas of Schelling through von Baer.

P. 344.—Huxley: See *Agnosticism in Nineteenth Century* (Feb. 1889); *Government: Anarchy or Regimentation*, *ib.* (May 1890); *Essays on Evolution and Ethics* (1894).

4, p. 346.—It was said in 1881 by an American writer (who strongly dissented from Spencer's theory) that the current view was "fatalistic." See Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*. But it may be doubted whether those of the general public who optimistically accepted evolution without going very deeply into the question really believed that the future of man is taken entirely out of his hands and is determined exclusively by the nature of the cosmic process. Bagehot was a writer who had a good deal of influence in his day; and in *Physics and Politics* (1872), where he discusses Progress, there is no suggestion of

fatalism. In France, the chief philosophical writers who accepted Progress as a fact protested against a fatalistic interpretation (Renouvier, Cournot, Caro; and cf. L. Carrau's article on Progress in the *Revue des deux Mondes* (Oct. 1875)).

Progress was discussed by Fiske in his *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy* (1874), vol. ii. 192 *sqq.* For him (p. 201) "the fundamental characteristic of social progress is *the continuous weakening of selfishness and the continuous strengthening of sympathy.*"

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