Chapter X.

Of The Inverse Deductive, Or Historical, Method.

§ 1. There are two kinds of sociological inquiry. In the first kind, the question proposed is, what effect will follow from a given cause, a certain general condition of social circumstances being presupposed. As, for example, what would be the effect of imposing or of repealing corn laws, of abolishing monarchy or introducing universal suffrage, in the present condition of society and civilization in any European country, or under any other given supposition with regard to the circumstances of society in general, without reference to the changes which might take place, or which may already be in progress, in those circumstances. But there is also a second inquiry, namely, what are the laws which determine those general circumstances themselves. In this last the question is, not what will be the effect of a given cause in a certain state of society, but what are the causes which produce, and the phenomena which characterize, states of society generally. In the solution of this question consists the general Science of Society; by which the conclusions of the other and more special kind of inquiry must be limited and controlled.

§ 2. In order to conceive correctly the scope of this general science, and distinguish it from the subordinate departments of sociological speculation, it is necessary to fix the ideas attached to the phrase, "A State of Society." What is called a state of society, is the simultaneous state of all the greater social facts or phenomena. Such are: the degree of knowledge, and of intellectual and moral culture, existing in the community, and in every class of it; the state of industry, of wealth and its distribution; the habitual occupations of the community; their division into classes, and the relations of those classes to one another; the common beliefs which they entertain on all the subjects most important to mankind, and the degree of assurance with which those beliefs are held; their tastes, and the character and degree of their æsthetic development; their form of government, and the more important of their laws and customs. The condition of all these things, and of many more which will readily suggest themselves, constitute the state of society, or the state of civilization, at any given time.

When states of society, and the causes which produce them, are spoken of as a subject of science, it is implied that there exists a natural correlation among these different elements; that not every variety of combination of these general social facts is possible, but only certain combinations; that, in short, there exist Uniformities of Co-existence between the states of the various social phenomena. And such is the truth; as is indeed a necessary consequence of the influence exercised by every one of those phenomena over every other. It is a fact implied in the *consensus* of the various parts of the social body.

States of society are like different constitutions or different ages in the physical frame; they are conditions not of one or a few organs or functions, but of the whole organism. Accordingly, the information which we possess respecting past ages, and respecting the various states of society now existing in different regions of the earth, does, when duly analyzed, exhibit uniformities. It is found that when one of the features of society is in a particular state, a state of many other features, more or less precisely determinate, always or usually co-exists with it.

But the uniformities of co-existence obtaining among phenomena which are effects of causes, must (as we have so often observed) be corollaries from the laws of causation by which these phenomena are really determined. The mutual correlation between the different elements of each state of society, is, therefore, a derivative law, resulting from the laws which regulate the succession between one state of society and another; for the proximate cause of every state of society is the state of society immediately preceding it. The fundamental problem, therefore, of the social science, is to find the laws according to which any state of society produces the state which succeeds it and takes its place. This opens the great and vexed question of the progressiveness of man and society; an idea involved in every just conception of social phenomena as the subject of a science.

§ 3. It is one of the characters, not absolutely peculiar to the sciences of human nature and society, but belonging to them in a peculiar degree, to be conversant with a subject-matter whose properties are changeable. I do not mean changeable from day to day, but from age to age; so that not only the qualities of individuals vary, but those of the majority are not the same in one age as in another.

The principal cause of this peculiarity is the extensive and constant reaction of the effects upon their causes. The circumstances in which mankind are placed, operating according to their own laws and to the laws of human nature, form the characters of the human beings; but the human beings, in their turn, mould and shape the circumstances for themselves and for those who come after them. From this reciprocal action there must necessarily result either a cycle or a progress. In astronomy also, every fact is at once effect and cause; the successive positions of the various heavenly bodies produce changes both in the direction and in the intensity of the forces by which those positions are determined. But in the case of the solar system, these mutual actions bring around again, after a certain number of changes, the former state of circumstances; which, of course, leads to the perpetual recurrence of the same series in an unvarying order. Those bodies, in short, revolve in orbits: but there are (or, conformably to the laws of astronomy, there might be) others which, instead of an orbit, describe a trajectory--a course not returning into itself. One or other of these must be the type to which human affairs must conform.

One of the thinkers who earliest conceived the succession of historical events as subject to fixed laws, and endeavored to discover these laws by an analytical survey of history, Vico, the celebrated author of the *Scienza Nuova*, adopted the former of these opinions. He conceived the phenomena of human society as revolving in an orbit; as going through periodically the same series of changes. Though there were not wanting circumstances tending to give some plausibility to this view, it would not bear a close scrutiny: and those who have succeeded Vico in this kind of speculations have universally adopted the idea of a trajectory or progress, in lieu of an orbit or cycle.

The words Progress and Progressiveness are not here to be understood as synonymous with improvement and tendency to improvement. It is conceivable that the laws of human nature might determine, and even necessitate, a certain series of changes in man and society, which might not in every case, or which might not on the whole, be improvements. It is my belief, indeed, that the general tendency is, and will continue to be, saving occasional and temporary exceptions, one of improvement; a tendency toward a better and happier state. This, however, is not a question of the method of the social science, but a theorem of the science itself. For our purpose it is sufficient that there is a progressive change both in the character of the human race and in their outward circumstances, so far as moulded by themselves; that in each successive age the principal phenomena of society are different from what they were in the age preceding, and still more different from any previous age: the periods which most distinctly mark these successive changes being intervals of one generation, during which a new set of human beings have been educated, have grown up from childhood, and taken possession of society.

The progressiveness of the human race is the foundation on which a method of philosophizing in the social science has been of late years erected, far superior to either of the two modes which had previously been prevalent, the chemical or experimental, and the geometrical modes. This method, which is now generally adopted by the most advanced thinkers on the Continent, consists in attempting, by a study and analysis of the general facts of history, to discover (what these philosophers term) the law of progress: which law, once ascertained, must according to them enable us to predict future events, just as after a few terms of an infinite series in algebra we are able to detect the principle, of regularity in their formation, and to predict the rest of the series to any number of terms we please. The principal aim of historical speculation in France, of late years, has been to ascertain this law. But while I gladly acknowledge the great services which have been rendered to historical knowledge by this school, I can not but deem them to be mostly chargeable with a fundamental misconception of the true method of social philosophy. The misconception consists in supposing that the order of succession which we may be able to trace among the different states of society and civilization which history presents to us, even if that order were more rigidly uniform than it has yet been

proved to be, could ever amount to a law of nature. It can only be an empirical law. The succession of states of the human mind and of human society can not have an independent law of its own; it must depend on the psychological and ethological laws which govern the action of circumstances on men and of men on circumstances. It is conceivable that those laws might be such, and the general circumstances of the human race such, as to determine the successive transformations of man and society to one given and unvarying order. But even if the case were so, it can not be the ultimate aim of science to discover an empirical law. Until that law could be connected with the psychological and ethological laws on which it must depend, and, by the consilience of deduction *a priori* with historical evidence, could be converted from an empirical law into a scientific one, it could not be relied on for the prediction of future events, beyond, at most, strictly adjacent cases. M. Comte alone, among the new historical school, has seen the necessity of thus connecting all our generalizations from history with the laws of human nature.

§ 4. But, while it is an imperative rule never to introduce any generalization from history into the social science unless sufficient grounds can be pointed out for it in human nature, I do not think any one will contend that it would have been possible, setting out from the principles of human nature and from the general circumstances of the position of our species, to determine *a priori* the order in which human development must take place, and to predict, consequently, the general facts of history up to the present time. After the first few terms of the series, the influence exercised, over each generation by the generations which preceded it, becomes, (as is well observed by the writer last referred to) more and more preponderant over all other influences; until at length what we now are and do, is in a very small degree the result of the universal circumstances of the human race, or even of our own circumstances acting through the original qualities of our species, but mainly of the qualities produced in us by the whole previous history of humanity. So long a series of actions and reactions between Circumstances and Man, each successive term being composed of an ever greater number and variety of parts, could not possibly be computed by human faculties from the elementary laws which produce it. The mere length of the series would be a sufficient obstacle, since a slight error in any one of the terms would augment in rapid progression at every subsequent step.

If, therefore, the series of the effects themselves did not, when examined as a whole, manifest any regularity, we should in vain attempt to construct a general science of society. We must in that case have contented ourselves with that subordinate order of sociological speculation formerly noticed, namely, with endeavoring to ascertain what would be the effect of the introduction of any new cause, in a state of society supposed to be fixed--a knowledge sufficient for the more common exigencies of daily political practice, but liable to fail in all cases in which the progressive movement of society is one of the influencing elements; and therefore more precarious in proportion as the case is more important. But since both the natural varieties of mankind, and the original diversities of local circumstances, are much less considerable than the points of agreement, there will naturally be a certain degree of uniformity in the progressive development of the species and of its works. And this uniformity tends to become greater, not less, as society advances; since the evolution of each people, which is at first determined exclusively by the nature and circumstances of that people, is gradually brought under the influence (which becomes stronger as civilization advances) of the other nations of the earth, and of the circumstances by which they have been influenced. History accordingly does, when judiciously examined, afford Empirical Laws of Society. And the problem of general sociology is to ascertain these, and connect them with the laws of human nature, by deductions showing that such were the derivative laws naturally to be expected as the consequences of those ultimate ones.

It is, indeed, hardly ever possible, even after history has suggested the derivative law, to demonstrate *a priori* that such was the only order of succession or of co-existence in which the effects could, consistently with the laws of human nature, have been produced. We can at most make out that there were strong *a priori* reasons for expecting it, and that no other order of succession or co-existence would have been so likely to result from the nature of man and the general circumstances of his position. Often we can not do even this; we can not even show that what did take place was probable *a priori*, but only that it was possible. This, however--which, in the Inverse Deductive Method that we are now characterizing, is a real process of verification--is as indispensable, as verification by specific experience has been shown to be, where the conclusion is originally

obtained by the direct way of deduction. The empirical laws must be the result of but a few instances, since few nations have ever attained at all, and still fewer by their own independent development, a high stage of social progress. If, therefore, even one or two of these few instances be insufficiently known, or imperfectly analyzed into their elements, and therefore not adequately compared with other instances, nothing is more probable than that a wrong empirical law will emerge instead of the right one. Accordingly, the most erroneous generalizations are continually made from the course of history; not only in this country, where history can not yet be said to be at all cultivated as a science, but in other countries where it is so cultivated, and by persons well versed in it. The only check or corrective is, constant verification by psychological and ethological laws. We may add to this, that no one but a person competently skilled in those laws is capable of preparing the materials for historical generalization, by analyzing the facts of history, or even by observing the social phenomena of his own time. No other will be aware of the comparative importance of different facts, nor consequently know what facts to look for, or to observe; still less will he be capable of estimating the evidence of facts which, as is the case with most, can not be ascertained by direct observation or learned from testimony, but must be inferred from marks.

§ 5. The Empirical Laws of Society are of two kinds; some are uniformities of co-existence, some of succession. According as the science is occupied in ascertaining and verifying the former sort of uniformities or the latter, M. Comte gives it the title of Social Statics, or of Social Dynamics; conformably to the distinction in mechanics between the conditions of equilibrium and those of movement; or in biology, between the laws of organization and those of life. The first branch of the science ascertains the conditions of stability in the social union; the second, the laws of progress. Social Dynamics is the theory of Society considered in a state of progressive movement; while Social Statics is the theory of the *consensus* already spoken of as existing among the different parts of the social organism; in other words, the theory of the mutual actions and reactions of contemporaneous social phenomena; making(279) provisionally, as far as possible, abstraction, for scientific purposes, of the fundamental movement which is at all times gradually modifying the whole of them.

"In this first point of view, the provisions of sociology will enable us to infer one from another (subject to ulterior verification by direct observation) the various characteristic marks of each distinct mode of social existence, in a manner essentially analogous to what is now habitually practiced in the anatomy of the physical body. This preliminary aspect, therefore, of political science, of necessity supposes that (contrary to the existing habits of philosophers) each of the numerous elements of the social state, ceasing to be looked at independently and absolutely, shall be always and exclusively considered relatively to all the other elements, with the whole of which it is united by mutual interdependence. It would be superfluous to insist here upon the great and constant utility of this branch of sociological speculation. It is, in the first place, the indispensable basis of the theory of social progress. It may, moreover, be employed, immediately, and of itself, to supply the place, provisionally at least, of direct observation, which in many cases is not always practicable for some of the elements of society, the real condition of which may, however, be sufficiently judged of by means of the relations which connect them with others previously known. The history of the sciences may give us some notion of the habitual importance of this auxiliary resource, by reminding us, for example, how the vulgar errors of mere erudition concerning the pretended acquirements of the ancient Egyptians in the higher astronomy were irrevocably dissipated (even before sentence had been passed on them by a sounder erudition) from the single consideration of the inevitable connection between the general state of astronomy and that of abstract geometry, then evidently in its infancy. It would be easy to cite a multitude of analogous cases, the character of which could admit of no dispute. In order to avoid exaggeration, however, it should be remarked, that these necessary relations among the different aspects of society can not, from their very nature, be so simple and precise that the results observed could only have arisen from some one mode of mutual co-ordination. Such a notion, already too narrow in the science of life, would be completely at variance with the still more complex nature of sociological speculations. But the exact estimation of these limits of variation, both in the healthy and in the morbid state, constitutes, at least as much as in the anatomy of the natural body, an indispensable complement to every theory of Sociological Statics; without which the indirect exploration above spoken of would often lead into error.

"This is not the place for methodically demonstrating the existence of a necessary relation among all the possible aspects of the same social organism; a point on which, in principle at least, there is now little difference of opinion among sound thinkers. From whichever of the social elements we choose to set out, we may easily recognize that it has always a connection, more or less immediate, with all the other elements, even with those which at first sight appear the most independent of it. The dynamical consideration of the progressive development of civilized humanity, affords, no doubt, a still more efficacious means of effecting this interesting verification of the *consensus* of the social phenomena, by displaying the manner in which every change in any one part, operates immediately, or very speedily, upon all the rest. But this indication may be preceded, or at all events followed, by a confirmation of a purely statical kind; for, in politics as in mechanics, the communication of motion from one object to another proves a connection between them. Without descending to the minute interdependence of the different branches of any one science or art, is it not evident that among the different sciences, as well as among most of the arts, there exists such a connection, that if the state of any one well-marked division of them is sufficiently known to us, we can with real scientific assurance infer, from their necessary correlation, the contemporaneous state of every one of the others? By a further extension of this consideration, we may conceive the necessary relation which exists between the condition of the sciences in general and that of the arts in general, except that the mutual dependence is less intense in proportion as it is more indirect. The same is the case, when, instead of considering the aggregate of the social phenomena in some one people, we examine it simultaneously in different contemporaneous nations; between which the perpetual reciprocity of influence, especially in modern times, can not be contested, though the *consensus* must in this case be ordinarily of a less decided character, and must decrease gradually with the affinity of the cases and the multiplicity of the points of contact, so as at last, in some cases, to disappear almost entirely; as for, example, between Western Europe and Eastern Asia, of which the various general states of society appear to have been hitherto almost independent of one another.

These remarks are followed by illustrations of one of the most important, and until lately, most neglected, of the general principles which, in this division of the social science, may be considered as established; namely, the necessary correlation between the form of government existing in any society and the contemporaneous state of civilization: a natural law which stamps the endless discussions and innumerable theories respecting forms of government in the abstract, as fruitless and worthless, for any other purpose than as a preparatory treatment of materials to be afterward used for the construction of a better philosophy.

As already remarked, one of the main results of the science of social statics would be to ascertain the requisites of stable political union. There are some circumstances which, being found in all societies without exception, and in the greatest degree where the social union is most complete, may be considered (when psychological and ethological laws confirm the indication) as conditions of the existence of the complex phenomena called a State. For example, no numerous society has ever been held together without laws, or usages equivalent to them; without tribunals, and an organized force of some sort to execute their decisions. There have always been public authorities whom, with more or less strictness and in cases more or less accurately defined, the rest of the community obeyed, or according to general opinion were bound to obey. By following out this course of inquiry we shall find a number of requisites, which have been present in every society that has maintained a collective existence, and on the cessation of which it has either merged in some other society, or reconstructed itself on some new basis, in which the conditions were conformed to. Although these results, obtained by comparing different forms and states of society, amount in themselves only to empirical laws; some of them, when once suggested, are found to follow with so much probability from general laws of human nature, that the consilience of the two processes raises the evidence to proof, and the generalizations to the rank of scientific truths.

This seems to be affirmable (for instance) of the conclusions arrived at in the following passage, extracted, with some alterations, from a criticism on the negative philosophy of the eighteenth century,(280) and which I quote, though (as in some former instances) from myself, because I have no better way of illustrating the conception I have formed of the kind of theorems of which sociological statics would consist.

"The very first element of the social union, obedience to a government of some sort, has not been found so easy a thing to establish in the world. Among a timid and spiritless race like the inhabitants of the vast plains of tropical countries, passive obedience may be of natural growth; though even there we doubt whether it has ever been found among any people with whom fatalism, or in other words, submission to the pressure of circumstances as a divine decree, did not prevail as a religious doctrine. But the difficulty of inducing a brave and warlike race to submit their individual *arbitrium* to any common umpire, has always been felt to be so great, that nothing short of supernatural power has been deemed adequate to overcome it; and such tribes have always assigned to the first institution of civil society a divine origin. So differently did those judge who knew savage men by actual experience, from those who had no acquaintance with them except in the civilized state. In modern Europe itself, after the fall of the Roman empire, to subdue the feudal anarchy and bring the whole people of any European nation into subjection to government (though Christianity in the most concentrated form of its influence was co-operating in the work) required thrice as many centuries as have elapsed since that time.

"Now if these philosophers had known human nature under any other type than that of their own age, and of the particular classes of society among whom they lived, it would have occurred to them, that wherever this habitual submission to law and government has been firmly and durably established, and yet the vigor and manliness of character which resisted its establishment have been in any degree preserved, certain requisites have existed, certain conditions have been fulfilled, of which the following may be regarded as the principal.

"First: there has existed, for all who were accounted citizens--for all who were not slaves, kept down by brute force--a system of *education*, beginning with infancy and continued through life, of which whatever else it might include, one main and incessant ingredient was *restraining discipline*. To train the human being in the habit, and thence the power, of subordinating his personal impulses and aims to what were considered the ends of society; of adhering, against all temptation, to the course of conduct which those ends prescribed; of controlling in himself all feelings which were liable to militate against those ends, and encouraging all such as tended toward them; this was the purpose, to which every outward motive that the authority directing the system could command, and every inward power or principle which its knowledge of human nature enabled it to evoke, were endeavored to be rendered instrumental. The entire civil and military policy of the ancient commonwealths was such a system of training; in modern nations its place has been attempted to be supplied, principally, by religious teaching. And whenever and in proportion as the strictness of the restraining discipline was relaxed, the natural tendency of mankind to anarchy re-asserted itself; the state became disorganized from within; mutual conflict for selfish ends, neutralized the energies which were required to keep up the contest against natural causes of evil; and the nation, after a longer or briefer interval of progressive decline, became either the slave of a despotism, or the prey of a foreign invader.

"The second condition of permanent political society has been found to be, the existence, in some form or other, of the feeling of allegiance or loyalty. This feeling may vary in its objects, and is not confined to any particular form of government; but whether in a democracy or in a monarchy, its essence is always the same; viz., that there be in the constitution of the state *something* which is settled, something permanent, and not to be called in question; something which, by general agreement, has a right to be where it is, and to be secure against disturbance, whatever else may change. This feeling may attach itself, as among the Jews (and in most of the commonwealths of antiquity), to a common God or gods, the protectors and guardians of their state. Or it may attach itself to certain persons, who are deemed to be, whether by divine appointment, by long prescription, or by the general recognition of their superior capacity and worthiness, the rightful guides and guardians of the rest. Or it may connect itself with laws; with ancient liberties or ordinances. Or, finally, (and this is the only shape in which the feeling is likely to exist hereafter), it may attach itself to the principles of individual freedom and political and social equality, as realized in institutions which as yet exist nowhere, or exist only in a rudimentary state. But in all political societies which have had a durable existence, there has been some fixed point: something which people agreed in holding sacred; which, wherever freedom of discussion was a recognized principle, it was of course lawful to contest in theory, but which no one could either fear or hope to see shaken in practice; which, in short (except perhaps during some temporary crisis),

was in the common estimation placed beyond discussion. And the necessity of this may easily be made evident. A state never is, nor until mankind are vastly improved, can hope to be, for any long time exempt from internal dissension; for there neither is nor has ever been any state of society in which collisions did not occur between the immediate interests and passions of powerful sections of the people. What, then, enables nations to weather these storms, and pass through turbulent times without any permanent weakening of the securities for peaceable existence? Precisely this--that however important the interests about which men fell out, the conflict did not affect the fundamental principle of the system of social union which happened to exist; nor threaten large portions of the community with the subversion of that on which they had built their calculations, and with which their hopes and aims had become identified. But when the questioning of these fundamental principles is (not the occasional disease, or salutary medicine, but) the habitual condition of the body politic, and when all the violent animosities are called forth, which spring naturally from such a situation, the state is virtually in a position of civil war; and can never long remain free from it in act and fact.

"The third essential condition of stability in political society, is a strong and active principle of cohesion among the members of the same community or state. We need scarcely say that we do not mean nationality, in the vulgar sense of the term; a senseless antipathy to foreigners; indifference to the general welfare of the human race, or an unjust preference of the supposed interests of our own country; a cherishing of bad peculiarities because they are national, or a refusal to adopt what has been found good by other countries. We mean a principle of sympathy, not of hostility; of union, not of separation. We mean a feeling of common interest among those who live under the same government, and are contained within the same natural or historical boundaries. We mean, that one part of the community do not consider themselves as foreigners with regard to another part; that they set a value on their connection--feel that they are one people, that their lot is cast together, that evil to any of their fellow-countrymen is evil to themselves, and do not desire selfishly to free themselves from their share of any common inconvenience by severing the connection. How strong this feeling was in those ancient commonwealths which attained any durable greatness, every one knows. How happily Rome, in spite of all her tyranny, succeeded in establishing the feeling of a common country among the provinces of her vast and divided empire, will appear when any one who has given due attention to the subject shall take the trouble to point it out. In modern times the countries which have had that feeling in the strongest degree have been the most powerful countries: England, France, and, in proportion to their territory and resources, Holland and Switzerland; while England in her connection with Ireland is one of the most signal examples of the consequences of its absence. Every Italian knows why Italy is under a foreign yoke; every German knows what maintains despotism in the Austrian empire;(281) the evils of Spain flow as much from the absence of nationality among the Spaniards themselves, as from the presence of it in their relations with foreigners: while the completest illustration of all is afforded by the republics of South America, where the parts of one and the same state adhere so slightly together, that no sooner does any province think itself aggrieved by the general government than it proclaims itself a separate nation."

§ 6. While the derivative laws of social statics are ascertained by analyzing different states of society, and comparing them with one another, without regard to the order of their succession, the consideration of the successive order is, on the contrary, predominant in the study of social dynamics, of which the aim is to observe and explain the sequences of social conditions. This branch of the social science would be as complete as it can be made, if every one of the leading general circumstances of each generation were traced to its causes in the generation immediately preceding. But the *consensus* is so complete (especially in modern history), that in the filiation of one generation and another, it is the whole which produces the whole, rather than any part a part. Little progress, therefore, can be made in establishing the filiation, directly from laws of human nature, without having first ascertained the immediate or derivative laws according to which social states generate one another as society advances; the *axiomata media* of General Sociology.

The empirical laws which are most readily obtained by generalization from history do not amount to this. They are not the "middle principles" themselves, but only evidence toward the establishment of such principles. They consist of certain general tendencies which may be perceived in society; a progressive increase of some social elements, and diminution of others, or a gradual change in the general character of

certain elements. It is easily seen, for instance, that as society advances, mental tend more and more to prevail over bodily qualities, and masses over individuals; that the occupation of all that portion of mankind who are not under external restraint is at first chiefly military, but society becomes progressively more and more engrossed with productive pursuits, and the military spirit gradually gives way to the industrial; to which many similar truths might be added. And with generalizations of this description, ordinary inquirers, even of the historical school now predominant on the Continent, are satisfied. But these and all such results are still at too great a distance from the elementary laws of human nature on which they depend--too many links intervene, and the concurrence of causes at each link is far too complicated--to enable these propositions to be presented as direct corollaries from those elementary principles. They have, therefore, in the minds of most inquirers, remained in the state of empirical laws, applicable only within the bounds of actual observation; without any means of determining their real limits, and of judging whether the changes which have hitherto been in progress are destined to continue indefinitely, or to terminate, or even to be reversed.

§ 7. In order to obtain better empirical laws, we must not rest satisfied with noting the progressive changes which manifest themselves in the separate elements of society, and in which nothing is indicated but the relation of fragments of the effect to corresponding fragments of the cause. It is necessary to combine the statical view of social phenomena with the dynamical, considering not only the progressive changes of the different elements, but the contemporaneous condition of each; and thus obtain empirically the law of correspondence not only between the simultaneous states, but between the simultaneous changes, of those elements. This law of correspondence it is, which, duly verified *a priori*, would become the real scientific derivative law of the development of humanity and human affairs.

In the difficult process of observation and comparison which is here required, it would evidently be a great assistance if it should happen to be the fact, that some one element in the complex existence of social man is pre-eminent over all others as the prime agent of the social movement. For we could then take the progress of that one element as the central chain, to each successive link of which, the corresponding links of all the other progressions being appended, the succession of the facts would by this alone be presented in a kind of spontaneous order, far more nearly approaching to the real order of their filiation than could be obtained by any other merely empirical process.

Now, the evidence of history and that of human nature combine, by a striking instance of consilience, to show that there really is one social element which is thus predominant, and almost paramount, among the agents of the social progression. This is, the state of the speculative faculties of mankind; including the nature of the beliefs which by any means they have arrived at, concerning themselves and the world by which they are surrounded.

It would be a great error, and one very little likely to be committed, to assert that speculation, intellectual activity, the pursuit of truth, is among the more powerful propensities of human nature, or holds a predominating place in the lives of any, save decidedly exceptional, individuals. But, notwithstanding the relative weakness of this principle among other sociological agents, its influence is the main determining cause of the social progress; all the other dispositions of our nature which contribute to that progress being dependent on it for the means of accomplishing their share of the work. Thus (to take the most obvious case first), the impelling force to most of the improvements effected in the arts of life, is the desire of increased material comfort; but as we can only act upon external objects in proportion to our knowledge of them, the state of knowledge at any time is the limit of the industrial improvements possible at that time; and the progress of industry must follow, and depend on, the progress of knowledge. The same thing may be shown to be true, though it is not quite so obvious, of the progress of the fine arts. Further, as the strongest propensities of uncultivated or half-cultivated human nature (being the purely selfish ones, and those of a sympathetic character which partake most of the nature of selfishness) evidently tend in themselves to disunite mankind, not to unite them--to make them rivals, not confederates, social existence is only possible by a disciplining of those more powerful propensities, which consists in subordinating them to a common system of opinions. The degree of this subordination is the measure of the completeness of the social union, and the nature of the

common opinions determines its kind. But in order that mankind should conform their actions to any set of opinions, these opinions must exist, must be believed by them. And thus, the state of the speculative faculties, the character of the propositions assented to by the intellect, essentially determines the moral and political state of the community, as we have already seen that it determines the physical.

These conclusions, deduced from the laws of human nature, are in entire accordance with the general facts of history. Every considerable change historically known to us in the condition of any portion of mankind, when not brought about by external force, has been preceded by a change, of proportional extent, in the state of their knowledge, or in their prevalent beliefs. As between any given state of speculation, and the correlative state of every thing else, it was almost always the former which first showed itself; though the effects, no doubt, reacted potently upon the cause. Every considerable advance in material civilization has been preceded by an advance in knowledge: and when any great social change has come to pass, either in the way of gradual development or of sudden conflict, it has had for its precursor a great change in the opinions and modes of thinking of society. Polytheism, Judaism, Christianity, Protestantism, the critical philosophy of modern Europe, and its positive science--each of these has been a primary agent in making society what it was at each successive period, while society was but secondarily instrumental in making *them*, each of them (so far as causes can be assigned for its existence) being mainly an emanation not from the practical life of the period, but from the previous state of belief and thought. The weakness of the speculative propensity in mankind generally has not, therefore, prevented the progress of speculation from governing that of society at large; it has only, and too often, prevented progress altogether, where the intellectual progression has come to an early stand for want of sufficiently favorable circumstances.

From this accumulated evidence, we are justified in concluding, that the order of human progression in all respects will mainly depend on the order of progression in the intellectual convictions of mankind, that is, on the law of the successive transformations of human opinions. The question remains, whether this law can be determined; at first from history as an empirical law, then converted into a scientific theorem by deducing it *a priori* from the principles of human nature. As the progress of knowledge and the changes in the opinions of mankind are very slow, and manifest themselves in a well-defined manner only at long intervals, it can not be expected that the general order of sequence should be discoverable from the examination of less than a very considerable part of the duration of the social progress. It is necessary to take into consideration the whole of past time, from the first recorded condition of the human race, to the memorable phenomena of the last and present generations.

§ 8. The investigation which I have thus endeavored to characterize, has been systematically attempted, up to the present time, by M. Comte alone. His work is hitherto the only known example of the study of social phenomena according to this conception of the Historical Method. Without discussing here the worth of his conclusions, and especially of his predictions and recommendations with respect to the Future of society, which appear to me greatly inferior in value to his appreciation of the Past, I shall confine myself to mentioning one important generalization, which M. Comte regards as the fundamental law of the progress of human knowledge. Speculation he conceives to have, on every subject of human inquiry, three successive stages; in the first of which it tends to explain the phenomena by supernatural agencies, in the second by metaphysical abstractions, and in the third or final state confines itself to ascertaining their laws of succession and similitude. This generalization appears to me to have that high degree of scientific evidence which is derived from the concurrence of the indications of history with the probabilities derived from the constitution of the human mind. Nor could it be easily conceived, from the mere enunciation of such a proposition, what a flood of light it lets in upon the whole course of history, when its consequences are traced, by connecting with each of the three states of human intellect which it distinguishes, and with each successive modification of those three states, the correlative condition of other social phenomena.(282)

But whatever decision competent judges may pronounce on the results arrived at by any individual inquirer, the method now characterized is that by which the derivative laws of social order and of social progress must be sought. By its aid we may hereafter succeed not only in looking far forward into the future history of the

human race, but in determining what artificial means may be used, and to what extent, to accelerate the natural progress in so far as it is beneficial; to compensate for whatever may be its inherent inconveniences or disadvantages; and to guard against the dangers or accidents to which our species is exposed from the necessary incidents of its progression. Such practical instructions, founded on the highest branch of speculative sociology, will form the noblest and most beneficial portion of the Political Art.

That of this science and art even the foundations are but beginning to be laid, is sufficiently evident. But the superior minds are fairly turning themselves toward that object. It has become the aim of really scientific thinkers to connect by theories the facts of universal history: it is acknowledged to be one of the requisites of a general system of social doctrine, that it should explain, so far as the data exist, the main facts of history; and a Philosophy of History is generally admitted to be at once the verification, and the initial form, of the Philosophy of the Progress of Society.

If the endeavors now making in all the more cultivated nations, and beginning to be made even in England (usually the last to enter into the general movement of the European mind) for the construction of a Philosophy of History, shall be directed and controlled by those views of the nature of sociological evidence which I have (very briefly and imperfectly) attempted to characterize; they can not fail to give birth to a sociological system widely removed from the vague and conjectural character of all former attempts, and worthy to take its place, at last, among the sciences. When this time shall come, no important branch of human affairs will be any longer abandoned to empiricism and unscientific surmise: the circle of human knowledge will be complete, and it can only thereafter receive further enlargement by perpetual expansion from within.