

The following text was originally published in PROSPECTS: the quarterly review of comparative education (Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education), vol. XXVI, no. 1, March 1996, p. 209-22.

©UNESCO:International Bureau of Education, 1999

This document may be reproduced free of charge as long as acknowledgement is made of the source.

AUGUSTE COMTE

(1796–1857)

Jacques Muglioni¹

A strange destiny! The whole of Comte's life is a romance. His successors are divided between two attitudes—the incomprehension of disciples of limited outlook, and the indifference, or even hostility, of thinkers who could have learned a great deal, if only they had read him.

The mathematician in him fulminated against the limitations of calculus: he was as severe with the scientists of his time as he was with the writers and journalists. As founder of positivism, he went so far as to conclude that science was a thing of the past, whereas the future belonged to art.² He saw in the French Revolution the greatest event in universal history, while at the same time he thought only of putting an end to the crisis it had brought about. This examiner at the Ecole Polytechnique extolled pure love. This man of faith announced the end of superstition and, at the same time, instituted the Religion of Humanity. He condemned the abstract feminism of the 'negative' period, but only in order to give women a leading place in a regenerate humanity. His admirable correspondence³ with Clotilde de Vaux during the 'year without parallel' (1845) was to prompt Alain to say that Musset's *Les nuits* were indeed read!

The difficulty is how to read the ten volumes of Comte's work without bothering about the commentaries, most of which are mediocre or even mendacious. The reader is rewarded at times on discovering a lucidity, on the verge of madness, found only in Kant and Hegel, who, apart from Comte, are perhaps the last great names in the history of philosophy as inaugurated by Plato. Thus, we are in the presence of an author who will be a closed book to readers who are devotees of modernity.

Ethics and polity

The decisive point, no doubt, is that Comte's work leads not so much to a political doctrine as to a philosophy of education. As early as 1825 he was to write, 'Education and philosophy are closely and necessarily related'.⁴ Actually, the dominant question in his work arose from the fact that the old spiritual power which regulated pre-Revolutionary society in essential matters had collapsed. As Catholicism had become no more than an imposing historical ruin, the moral ascendancy it exercised in the Middle Ages had become the task of journalists and literary writers, the spiritual guides of modern times. Nowadays we would say that for the general public the media had replaced the Church. Humanity thus appeared to be lost unless some new ascendancy, of positive inspiration, emerged to regulate contemporary society and so to ensure the future of humanity. Hence, education was not a function like any other: it was the very essence of society. For the most part, people behaved as they had been brought up to behave.

This idea, which inspires all of Comte's thinking, suffered a long eclipse, which may not even now be nearing its end. Montesquieu and Rousseau, after Plato, were well aware that the public institution was a dead letter without the virtue of the citizen, and therefore that polity relied above all on education. However, the nineteenth century, fascinated by industrial progress and the law of supply and demand, finally preferred the empiricism of the English-

speaking world, and subsequently tended to subordinate thought to economic mechanisms. In this respect, at least, Marxists and liberals agreed to share the same assumptions—a fact well illustrated today by the spurious political debate. Conversely, the decisive role accorded to education by Comte presupposes the independence of spiritual power from temporal power: we might say the independence of intellectual authority from political power. Thus Comte, at a far remove from the confusion caused by the ideas in vogue, was able to distinguish, and even contrast, authority and power.

It was not therefore the spiritual which mirrored the temporal, as if it were a mere ‘superstructure’, but rather the reverse. People usually behaved in accordance with what they believed, with the prejudices or convictions current in the world in which they grew up. Hence, the urgency of a new spiritual power which, contrary to the journalism then serving as a spiritual guide, could make it possible to overcome the crisis resulting from the disintegration of the old system. We know that, according to the ‘Law of the Three Stages’,⁵ a crisis is the intermediate and transitory stage between two orders, the first of which, the *theological stage*, having lapsed, awaits a subsequent, positive stage. Now, the new spiritual power capable of inspiring education from that point on, far from being a mere reflection of existing society, should enable that society to leave behind what Comte calls *the metaphysical or abstract stage*, which in his mind stood essentially for the crisis brought about by the disintegration of the old system.

Intelligence and learning

Thus understood, education, whose role was decisive for the future of humanity, was naturally addressed to the individual. Its effectiveness could vary considerably, however, not so much because of social differences, as was to be thought later (and even more so in our own time, when people persist in subordinating virtues to situations, as Alain would put it), as by reason of the relationship with nature, which remains at the root of individuality. That is why, when Comte defined humanity, he made it clear that ‘all humanity’ could not mean ‘all human beings’,⁶ but only those capable, to some extent, of partaking of the essence of humanity by virtue of their contribution, of whatever nature, to the common task. Human beings could not be reduced to animality, but their organic basis gave them an indestructible temperament, although more often than not it was perfectible. An individual was therefore far from being a simple result of the environment. Taking from phrenology what was worth retaining, as Alain suggests,⁷ it had to be concluded that education might have its limits. Between those who would never really be ‘persons’ and the great figures of genius, there were many different degrees. Comte’s thought will be seen to be far removed from current thinking, dogmatically put about by the media, concerning ‘underachievement at school’ and ‘socio-cultural handicaps’.

Even then it had to be made clear that intellectual success was far from being the absolute criterion, or even a necessary one. Many a worker was worth more than certain doctors. Intellectual merit itself was not to be measured merely by academic success. Not only was it essential to distinguish between intelligence and learning,⁸ but it had to be remembered that there was a talent that preceded education, as was clearly to be seen in the fine arts. A person’s skill, humanity, and also good judgement, could not be sanctioned by certificates or degrees. There again we see how Comte would have treated the question raised by inequality of academic achievement, which spurs our reformers to reduce the school to a day-care centre without anyone in charge, or again the question of exclusion, which sanctions the lumping together of the real victims of social injustice and the parasites of humanity that ‘proliferate’⁹—Comte expressly noted— ‘in anarchical times’. He likewise said that there was no such thing as mathematical, or physical, or chemical genius, as if the ‘partitioning of the brain-pan’ were to

be taken seriously;¹⁰ on the contrary, it is the whole person that makes a choice and takes up a vocation.

History and psychology

History was the great educator of humanity. History was education, as so well shown by the theory of language¹¹ and that of art.¹² Humanity educated itself over time by a kind of ‘self-creation’, which, far from expressing an arbitrary freedom to surpass itself, was made possible only by the support it found in human nature, developed by the immensity of its past. It was history which, by its progression, made the basic relation between mind and nature intelligible. For nature never supported mind except through the mediation of time. If that were the case, an education which believed it could take psychology as its basis was symptomatic of the crisis into which we were plunged by anarchical speculation. The knowledge of childhood was not psychological, but historical. So a positivist education was an education based not on the bogus sciences, the latest superstitions of modernity, but on the experience and memory of humanity.

When Comte deprecates ‘the deplorable obsession with psychology’,¹³ he therefore draws attention to the fact that our knowledge is not psychological, but historical. He means in particular that, as the purpose of education is to enable human beings to attain humanity, it is not a question of coming down to the child’s level, but of raising the child to the dignity of a person. Subjectivity should not be abandoned to its anarchical drives; the first concern must be to ‘model the inside on the outside’. Here we are reminded of Clotilde de Vaux’s famous formula: ‘Our species more than any other needs duties as a pre-condition for feelings’.¹⁴ It was in this sense that education was liberating. Comte dwelt on the exaggerations of educational psychology, which consisted in giving free rein to the egotistic tendencies to the point of repressing the kindly instincts, which were present in childhood. Education could not therefore avoid restraining inclinations—and indeed very strong inclinations—which, if given free rein, would be detrimental to the development of the mind and the growth of the heart. This kind of suppression did not imply repression of private desires and interests whose reality would thus be ignored. On the contrary, it meant recognizing levels of reality in the human mind and proceeding to order them in accordance with natural laws. For an education which deliberately admitted only the most obvious individual spontaneity would be committing the greatest offence against the child, whose nascent generosity would thus be curbed and placed under an interdict, as it were. Here, the terms accredited by the ‘metaphysical’ education of absolute drives had to be reversed: repression was at the opposite pole from what it was claimed to be by an education dominated by a psychology which was, in Comte’s opinion, as we know, a mere caricature of science. Human beings evolved directly from the biological to the social, from animality to humanity, their true individuality being situated beyond that progression. Education should liberate aspirations hitherto repressed by the imperious urges of a vitality which, from the standpoint of humanity, was not an end in itself. To educate was first of all to protect the weakest inclinations, for they were already on a level with those of a mature person.

So education was not made to perpetuate the state of childhood, either in the individual or in the species. Comte would undoubtedly have found it absurd if he had heard it said that the school was made for the children. If education had a meaning, it was in that it enabled the child, not only to become an adult in mind and feelings, but above all to meditate on the childhood of humanity and its development, which, in fact, was the history of a liberation.

Authority versus power

Only positivist education, based on the philosophical knowledge of humanity, could meet with unanimous free consent. Education was a universal bond. Through it, individuals came to resemble and to know one another, not only in space, but more essentially in time. Through it, too, the great Western republic was already universal, according to the theory whereby all the various situations of humanity were part of the same fundamental evolution. So nothing could be further removed from Comte's thought than the present-day cult of differences, which he would most certainly have perceived as an anti-historical prejudice and a regressive phenomenon. Positivist education made everyone participate in the same history, which was a history of liberation. Philosophy was seen essentially as emancipating.

It will be recalled that the interval of modernity, which Comte did not imagine as interminable, and whose end he sometimes even believed he could predict, succeeded the theological order, in decline as we know, and preceded the truly positive human order. However, this stage of crisis tended by its very nature towards the dissolution of any order whatsoever: it brushed aside any rule, from then on held in advance to be arbitrary, giving free rein to subjective opinions, the manifestation and expression of which placed a curb on what was best in individuals, to the extent of repressing their strictly human vocation.

We can, then, understand why Comte condemned the principle of limitless freedom of conscience,¹⁵ a legacy of the necessary challenge to the old order, but perpetuated beyond all reason. Thus 'there is no freedom of conscience in astronomy': it was enough to have studied. However—as we very well know—education might not always stand up very well to the 'insurrectional habits of modern thought'.¹⁶

True authority

At the heart of this philosophy of education looms an idea that must not be overlooked. As we rise in the scale of encyclopaedic knowledge, the action of natural forces, as it becomes more complex, becomes more flexible, and when we enter the world of living things, then of the human species and human thought, it is no longer merely forces that act, for their low intensity makes consent necessary for them to be effective.¹⁷ Thus, even in the history of the mind, authority changes in nature: it tends to be less coercive when it is ultimately based on simple acknowledgement of what is true. This inevitable natural weakness of intellectual and moral authority can become a force only through the alliance of vigilance and the generosity at the heart of positive education. Liberated from all transcendence, from the omnipotence of God, spiritual power no longer has any authority except that of the truth. In fact, it is nothing more than humanity having achieved self-knowledge.

Recognizing an authentic spiritual authority presupposed the rejection, as a result of philosophical progress, of the authoritarian and arbitrary forms of authority—in short, self-appointed authority. In modern times, the worst authority was the acknowledged authority of specialists confined in their narrow spheres of competence. People who knew nothing else but what they believed they knew by virtue of a 'compartmentalized specialization' in fact did not even know what they were supposed to know. Charlatanism thus existed in authority. The performances of a clever mathematician (nowadays we would say a computer), the esotericism of a formal language, the feats of a technique in one of its narrow fields, including in the fine arts, aroused unjustified admiration in the uninitiated, who imagined something they could not do themselves to be the work of superior beings, instead of using their judgement to compare each of those wonders with the achievements of humanity as a whole, in order to appreciate their usefulness and discriminate between the real thing and the insignificant. Positivist education made people free, that is to say, instead of passively undergoing modernity, they were capable of reconciling it with universal history.

Education was not a matter for a special science, but for philosophy

Here we are far from the formative ambitions to which the educational institutions lay claim, and are often confined. A feature of specialized instruction, theoretical or practical, was the ignoring or neglecting of the general principles that might have given it a meaning. Addressing the workers at a people's university, Comte did not offer them further vocational training. He did not talk to them about their trades, their district or their daily routine. He spirited them away from their 'environment' to let them see beyond their world: a result of this teaching was the *Traité philosophique d'astronomie populaire*¹⁸ [Philosophical treatise on popular astronomy]. This approach is obviously the reverse of the 'training courses' people go on today. A genuine school is not designed to provide occupational and further training: it is above all liberating, and the influence Comte's thought was to have on the establishment of the republican school is well known. There are diametrically opposite ways of understanding what is called 'preparation for life', for we might ask 'what is life?'. The purpose Comte proposes for education concerns people who, on emerging from a revolutionary crisis and protracted anarchy, were to inaugurate the positive era which alone could combine order and progress.

It will be seen that the theory of education is not a matter for a special science, but presupposes an all-embracing view, that is, philosophy. It is because humanity is history and that this reminds us that we began with childhood that we can understand childhood and find the paths along which to lead it. The theory of education is no more than the positive representation of the history of humanity.

The cult of memory

The programme for education was therefore first embodied in the philosophy of history that emerged from the 'social dynamics': humanity was built up more through continuity than through solidarity,¹⁹ more over time than over space. Thus education could not merely focus on the present, as was the tendency in a 'society without ancestors'—Comte went so far as to refer to 'the rebellion of the living against all the dead'. On the contrary, education presupposed the cult of memory. One could have no idea of humanity without referring to history. Reverence for the past inclined us to extol our ancestors, that is, those who preceded us. For they were, in a sense, in front of us rather than behind us, and thus showed us the way. No real progress was possible if we lost sight of the historical continuity whereby humanity was constituted. For just as theological dogmas had jeopardized the idea of order, demoralizing criticism, not based on any rule, would eventually jeopardize the idea of progress. It was therefore commemoration and not adherence to the immediate present which should prevail in education.

Humanity's past belonged to everyone. Through memory, our governing faculty, as Pascal²⁰ had so well understood, the past enabled humanity to fulfil itself by means of an unbroken forward movement. The crime of colonialism, for instance, was not therefore that it underrated cultures foreign to our own, but that it imposed those elements which, in our past and in our present, could jeopardize progress. The combined action of the missionaries and the *littérateurs* had prevented backward populations from passing directly from their initial fetishism to the positive stage, from thus doing without the major crisis with which we were still grappling. 'The crime of the West'²¹ therefore consisted in passing on our vices rather than our virtues. The wrong lay not so much in the conquest as in the contamination. Once again it will be seen that nothing in Comte's thought tended towards what is now known as 'cultural pluralism'. Humanity was one and indivisible, whatever the appearances of the moment. However, the West had not fulfilled its educational function, which indeed it had already abandoned in its own case. Thus, Comte invites us to raise our sights to the idea of universal

education. Differences were not spatial, nor were they ethnic and cultural, as it is the fashion to say; they were differences in time, that is, they were historical. Then again, it had to be remembered that history did not progress everywhere at the same pace. Spatial, or geographical, diversity was not representative of the persons concerned unless it was related to time and to history. The fetishist was part of the spectrum. Not recognizing the historical dimension of humanity which made us all absolutely alike, and thus forgetting that humanity educated itself, was the most serious offence against the human being. Education did not have to be invented: knowing what we were was enough.

Education should be encyclopaedic

It is not enough just to read Comte; he has to be reread. And then the *Cours de philosophie positive*, which he was to regard later as a mere introduction, takes on its full significance. What matters above all is to rule out the restrictive interpretations suggested nowadays by the word *positivism*. A person had first to learn to adjust to the invariable order of things, but this was so as better to adjust later to human order. Science teaching was therefore just a part of education, and its utility was conditional on its real purpose being kept in sight. If one had first to learn to submit to external order, it was so as to prepare oneself better for the correct appreciation of human order. Science teaching thus served only as a kind of introductory course; it was not an end in itself. That is why Comte's positivism is quite the opposite of a school of scientism which, as we know, would sometimes see fit to cite him as its authority.

In the first place, the 'encyclopaedic' law that governed the classification of the sciences had a supremely educational value. Comte's epistemology is primarily inseparable from what he himself referred to as 'the philosophical history of the sciences', which was part and parcel of the whole history of the human mind. Between ordinary common sense and science there was no break, contrary to the theme of predilection which was to inspire the epistemology of the twentieth century. However, an introduction to science presupposed an epistemological and historical order on which the syllabuses had naturally to be based. One had always to begin at the beginning. Whoever, for reasons of topical interest or technical efficiency, began at the end would have but a smattering of science unrelated to real scientific processes. That explained why science teaching taken to extremes could produce so many pseudo-thinkers. The neglect of encyclopaedic order jeopardized the teaching of science. It was for that reason that the abstract sciences, the only sciences that fitted into an ordered classification, should be taught first. Human intelligence ranged from the abstract to the concrete, from theory to reality. Besides, the concrete sciences could not be fitted into the systematic classification of the sciences, for every concrete science required the contributions of a number of sciences which had first to be studied separately. The path of knowledge, and hence the order of study, thus led from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher. For instance, knowledge of living things implied previous knowledge of the inert. In other words, physics and chemistry were a prerequisite for biology. And knowledge of human beings (here Comte invented the term *sociology*, which was subsequently to lose its initial meaning) thus came at the pinnacle of the ascent from the lower to the higher, where a comprehensive approach, which was none other than the approach of philosophy itself, could be freely exercised.

Comte persisted in the idea that true science was made above all to be taught. There was no science outside popular science. However, popular science was not to be understood, as it so often is in our time, as the dissemination of contents which degenerate as they are dispersed. An encyclopaedia, for example, was not an alphabetical directory from which one could extract a variety of facts and figures at need—still less a data bank. It was the order of thought patterned on the external order, and thus established. It was not with the idea of changing the world or making money that one studied the sciences, but to set one's own thoughts in order. This *polytechnicien* knew that science can be lethal when it is acquired as a means to achieve

power or wealth. In short, not only was science teaching far from being the whole of education, as we shall see, but it was not to be conducted with a view to mercenary applications. One of the perversions of our time—Comte forewarned us—is to subordinate intelligibility to technical efficiency.²² He was already aware that modernity was tempted by a perverse use of the sciences. He had reason to fear, as was to be the case with Jules Verne, that the craze for technologies would drive out the humanities. He went still farther, however: he knew that the fanaticism of the technocrats would finally destroy scientific thought itself.²³

Education should be general

Comte gave his philosophy of education its full meaning when he inveighed against '*l'usurpation algébrique*'²⁴ [the despotism of mathematics], or again 'the preponderance of signs over ideas', which tended to give the scientific accolade to those who could skilfully negotiate the secret corridors of what Leibniz in his time had called 'blind thought'. Skill at manipulation led to loss of intellect. The development of science teaching in our own time only goes to justify Comte's apprehension. The confusion of ideas which he condemned is now affecting both the school and society as a whole. Comte especially stresses the catastrophic effects of specialization, which was mainly of use for practical tasks, but which in the field of theory overburdened the mind. Hence his critical exploration of the relations between research and teaching. On the one hand, scientists were appreciated only if they produced practical inventions,²⁵ on the other hand, the specialization necessary in the world of industry was tending to gain ground in both research and teaching. Thus scientific tasks fell more and more to 'thinkers of little repute',²⁶ who, for lack of a vocation, were not motivated by anything much except their career prospects. With research thus deprived of strictly scientific thought, the sources of real education were tending to dry up.

So, contrary to the misleading interpretations of positivism, Comte did not hesitate to say that science was a thing of the past. He knew that the great discoveries which humanity could make had for the most part accompanied the historical advent of the positive spirit—something our contemporaries have difficulty in understanding owing to a simplistic idea of progress. What was to follow concerned acquisitions of detail, useful above all for the development or renewal of all manner of technologies. This observation was of decisive importance for the education of the human being of the future. The first rule when setting up education was not to sacrifice the imperishable to what was doomed to pass away and should be recognized for what it was. Comte unceasingly inveighed against a misguided education obsessed with change, which would remain in the exclusive service of a transitory society. In the first place, all education was general and thus presupposed a philosophical inspiration. Strictly speaking, there could be no such thing as technical education. For this reason, Comte did not attempt to address engineers or technicians, whose minds had become inaccessible. Comte's view, which will appear paradoxical in the extreme to our contemporaries, was that the minds most accessible to philosophical reflection were those of the workers,²⁷ at least those of his day, who, as yet unspoiled by 'training courses' and spared the cult of profit, were still open to general ideas.

Education and spiritual power

Commemoration, which was to be the keystone of the Religion of Humanity, made it clear that the first human duty was to combat oblivion. So, at the root of education there was history—not psychology, which concealed a principle of confinement. In the first place, the purpose of education was not to perpetuate childhood, except the poetry of infancy, which preserved the better part of the initial fetishism. Education could not, of course, ignore the reality of living

organisms, which, situated between the realm of the inert and the realm of the human, underlay the human species without ever constituting it. Education remained blind, however, if it ignored the paths followed by the human species in its early stages. Genuine education was humanity attaining self-awareness while coming to terms with the past which fashioned us.

The idea of spiritual power was bound up with that of an education inspired by a comprehensive approach, that is, philosophy, and thus capable of setting thoughts in order and effecting the intellectual reform appropriate to the modern era. It should not be forgotten—and Comte continually reverted to this—that the most difficult speculations, those that touched on humanity, society and politics, presupposed both encyclopaedic and historical preparation. Otherwise they were idle and baseless and set a bad example, the very opposite of lucidity and wisdom, as was the case when journalists and rhetoricians held sway. The influence of speculation on action created a new duty in that respect. And the difficulty arose precisely from the fact that education and spiritual power were interdependent. Indeed, without such a power no education was possible, for education would then be at the mercy of the temporal and the most obvious interests. And without such education no spiritual authority could be lastingly constituted. Despite the risks, which were only too apparent, we had therefore to rely on the free progress of ideas gradually to reduce the anarchical tendencies resulting from that same progress—a speculative and practical optimism due solely to a supporting philosophical reflection on history.

The term spiritual power might itself be misleading, for in reality that power demanded nothing and did not influence the will. So it could not be a government, for the mind did not obey orders and rejected submission. And to confine oneself to advising meant having to give up any actual political function, and even wealth.²⁸ In that sense, education was the opposite of power. Intellectual authority, for instance, existed only if it did not use coercion. Education presupposed an authority which was not the power to constrain or force the will, but merely the capacity to enlighten. Thus real authority was immediately recognized. It was that complete renunciation of power which constituted the real strength of authority. It followed that education could not answer to a temporal power, which in relation to it would inevitably be arbitrary. This is what Comte meant by freedom of education. Its organization in fact required intellectual competence, that is, an authority capable of resisting the arbitrariness of power and, at best, of inspiring it.

Aesthetic education

We know how the finding that science had become a thing of the past was to be understood. Science marked a great turning-point. It remained a mainspring of education. However, only the great beginnings which contributed to the founding of the positive spirit should be called upon. Similarly, if it was considered that the future belonged to art, then art had to be related to its history. Comte spoke of art as he did of science. Both succumbed to the seduction of techniques and narrow specialization. The distinction established between the heart and the mind applied equally to science and to art: there was no genius without inspiration; there was no education without the participation of the feelings.

Nothing brings out more clearly the unity of Comte's thought than his analysis of aesthetic education. Just as science was of value essentially by reason of its approach, and hence the methodical discovery of an external order that liberated the mind, so genuine art was that which in various forms expressed feelings common to humanity, and even revealed those feelings. The whole purpose of education was to enable everyone to discover humanity through its works. However, those works would become a dead letter without initial conviction. Nor was there any education without inspiration. Discovering the genius of Archimedes could move a person to tears.²⁹ Comte treated art as he treated science, clearly distinguishing its primary purpose, which was to instruct or to charm, from its academic use,

even reputedly innovative, which tended to become exclusive in the crisis into which people were plunged by habitually negative criticism. Just as formalism and specialization made us forget that science was thought, so they drove the beauty out of art to produce mere sophisticated curiosities. Music without melody, painting, sculpture or architecture without drawing, were perversions of art, which thus departed from humanity.

Basically, education was learning, that is, the acquisition and ordering of knowledge. 'Real scientific genius' could be recognized in the discovery of 'general laws' which served 'directly to explain a host of everyday phenomena in the midst of which' people lived 'without understanding them'.³⁰ Likewise, in the matter of art, Comte looked forward to the time when a 'regenerated education' would 'render singing and drawing as familiar as speech and writing'.³¹ This *polytechnicien*, who was a regular Italian opera-goer, no doubt held opera to be the most complete of all the arts: it was through singing that humanity first expressed itself and was revealed to itself. He teaches us how to overcome the long divorce between modern thought and feeling, or imagination.³² It is then understandable that teachers in all subjects are often incapable of teaching, that is, of kindling the passion to know or to create, of arousing the emotion produced by great works of artistic or poetic genius. If a theorem was not approached in the same way as a poem was discovered, education left the heart indifferent and so deprived us of humanity. It was thus fairly clear that science should appeal to the individual from the level of transcendence, as did art, and not the contrary. Thus education had to start with the highest, instead of starting with the lowest, i.e. with that psychology which was quickly forgotten once truth in action and beauty in memorable works was discovered. If pupils were treated as children they would never become adults. And it was neither the intellectual curiosity so dear to the erudite, nor the technical skill so dear to the practitioners, that could constitute the basis of education.

We are brought back to the central idea of spiritual power. It is easy to hold forth on the grandiose dream of a new religion, this time without God or superstitions, which would simply bring people together, and establish and maintain the constituent bond of humanity. The detailed description of the future rites may bring a smile to the lips of more than one reader, apart, perhaps, from the central idea of commemoration through which humanity makes a point of remembering itself, of bearing its true nature in mind. And, indeed, humanity should not forget itself. Comte tells us that our repetitive modernity will not experience a revival unless it regains the fundamental inspiration that long presided over its history. Education undoubtedly needs firmly established institutions, but it also needs that conviction which 'the rebellious habits of modern thought'³³ continue, even nowadays, to repress or destroy.

Notes

1. *Jacques Muglioni (France)*
Agrégé de philosophie, taught philosophy in the final year of the secondary level in Paris and elsewhere in France, then at the upper preparatory level at the Lycée Henri IV, Paris, before assuming the duties of dean of the general inspectorate of philosophy. Author of a number of articles, some of which were recently collected in two volumes: *L'école ou le loisir de pensée* (1993) and *Auguste Comte, un philosophe pour notre temps* (1995).
2. *Système de politique positive*, Preliminary discourse, vol. I, part V, in particular p. 299.
3. *Correspondance générale*, vol. III.
4. 'Considérations sur la science et les savants', in: *Du pouvoir spirituel*, Paris, Le livre de poche, Pluriel, 1978, p. 249.
5. *Cours de philosophie positive*, 1st lesson.
6. *Le catéchisme positiviste*, p. 78-79.
7. See Alain, *Sentiments, passions et signes*, chapter XLVIII.
8. *Le catéchisme positiviste*, 2nd discussion.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Cours de philosophie positive*, 45th lesson.
11. *Système de politique positive*, vol. II, chapter IV.
12. *Ibidem*, Preliminary discourse, part 5.

13. *Cours de philosophie positive*, 45th lesson, p. 854.
14. *Le catéchisme positiviste*, 10th discussion.
15. *Système de politique positive*, General appendix, vol. IV, p. 18.
16. See in particular, *Système de politique positive*, Preliminary discourse, part 3.
17. *Du pouvoir spirituel*, p. 7.
18. See the bibliographical references.
19. *Le catéchisme positiviste*, 2nd discussion, p. 78–79.
20. *Discours sur l'esprit positif*, para. 45. See Pascal, *Traité du vide*.
21. See in particular *Le catéchisme positiviste*, part 3.
22. *Le catéchisme positiviste*, part 1: 'La science constitue toujours un simple prolongement de la commune sagesse. Jamais elle ne crée aucune doctrine essentielle.' [Science is always a mere extension of common sense. It never creates any essential doctrine.]
23. *Correspondance générale*, vol. I, p. 174.
24. The expression is to be found in Vol. I of *La synthèse subjective*, in particular.
25. See notes 21 and 22.
26. *Cours de philosophie positive*, 46th lesson, Hermann II, p. 76-77.
27. *Passim*, in particular *Système*, chapter 14, p. 81 et seq.
28. *Cours de philosophie positive*, the 45th lesson in particular.
29. *Cours de philosophie positive*, 45th lesson, p. 868.
30. *Système de politique positive*, vol. I, Preliminary discourse, Part 5.
31. *Le catéchisme positiviste*, p. 177.
32. *Système de politique positive*, Preliminary discourse, vol. I, p. 275.
33. *Système de politique positive*, Preliminary discourse, part 5, p. 275.

Works by Auguste Comte

As most of Comte's works, neglected by the publishers, are out of print, they can be consulted only in libraries. The most recent publications are mentioned below:

Cours de philosophie positive. 2 vols. Paris, Hermann, 1975.

Leçons de sociologie. From the 47th to the 51st lesson, with an introduction by Juliette Grange. Paris, GF-Flammarion, 1995.

Système de politique positive. 4 vols. Paris, Anthropos, 1969.

Du pouvoir spirituel. 1 vol. including the early opuscules. Paris, Le livre de poche, Pluriel, 1978.

Le catéchisme positiviste. Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1966.

Discours sur l'esprit positif. Paris, Société positiviste internationale, 1923. Republished: Paris, Vrin, 1987.

Traité philosophique d'astronomie populaire. Paris, Fayard, 1985.

La synthèse subjective. Paris, printed privately, 1856.

Œuvres choisies. Ed. by Henri Gouhier. Paris, Aubier, 1946.

Correspondance générale, 8 vols. Archives positivistes, Mouton, 1973; Paris, Vrin, 1984.

On Auguste Comte and his philosophy of education

Alain. *Idées*. Paris, Paul Harmann, 1939.

Arbousse-Bastide, P. *L'éducation universelle dans la philosophie d'Auguste Comte*. 2 vols. Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1957.

Collective work. *Auguste Comte, qui êtes-vous?* Preface by Edgar Faure. Paris, La Manufacture, 1988.

Gouhier, H. *La vie d'Auguste Comte*. Paris, Vrin, 1965.

———. *La philosophie d'Auguste Comte : esquisses*. Paris, Vrin, 1987.

Muglioni, J. *Auguste Comte, un philosophe pour notre temps*. Paris, Kimé, 1995. See chapter VI: 'L'idée d'éducation universelle'.