

sophical, task. Both thinkers were right, but only partially right, as Huxley has clearly shown;<sup>1</sup> but it was natural that Cuvier's position should for a long time be regarded as the stronger; since he had shown how, by detailed research, to increase enormously the stock of actual knowledge about the things of nature; whereas the uncritical and only half practical suggestions of Goethe had undergone in the wild speculations of Schelling, Steffens, and Oken a development that frightened off men of exact thought. Cuvier saw the necessity of crying halt to these vague dreams which he had the merit of opposing, for the lasting benefit of true science, with the full force of his great authority.<sup>2</sup>

As in France and Germany so also in England, the tendency to distinguish minutely, to describe, to classify, and in doing so to fill the museums with new specimens,

<sup>1</sup> 'Life of Owen,' vol. ii. p. 296: "The irony of history is nowhere more apparent than in science. Here we see the men over whose minds the coming events of the world of biology cast their shadows, doing their best to spoil their case in stating it; while the man who represented sound scientific method is doing his best to stay the inevitable progress of thought and bolster up antiquated traditions. The progress of knowledge during the last seventy years enables us to see that neither Geoffroy nor Cuvier was altogether right nor altogether wrong; and that they were meant to hunt in couples instead of pulling against one another."

<sup>2</sup> As to Cuvier's own wavering on the great question of the fixity of species, see Huxley, *loc. cit.*, p. 294: "During the earlier part of his career, I doubt if Cuvier would have categorically denied any of

Geoffroy's fundamental theses. And even in his later years Sir Charles Lyell, many years ago, gave me reasons for the opinion that Cuvier was by no means confident about the fixity of species. There was never any lack of the scientific imagination about the great anatomist; and the charge of indifference to general ideas, sometimes brought against him, is stupidly unjust." And further, p. 295: "In later life, however, Cuvier seems to have become so much disgusted by the vagaries of the *Naturphilosophie* school, and to have been so strongly impressed by the evil which was accruing to science from their example, that he was provoked into forsaking his former wise and judicious critical attitude; and in his turn he advocated hypotheses which were none the better than those of his opponents."