

years, the instrument was gradually improved. The reasons which prevented Bichat from treating biology as an application of physics and chemistry lay deeper, and were rooted in the second great idea which governed him and his school—his “Vitalism.” As stated above, those who have studied the phenomena of life can be divided into two classes. There are those who have been struck by the resemblance of the processes and phenomena in living matter with those in dead or unorganised matter: their attention has been directed more and more to establishing a parallelism between organic and inorganic nature, and they have frequently ended in the conviction that their parallelism warrants us in asserting their ultimate identity. There have been others who have been impressed with the essential and fundamental difference between organic and inorganic processes and phenomena. To them, all attempts to reduce the living process to a mechanism seem to have failed, and however much they have appreciated the insight gained by the other class of students, they have deemed it equally important to emphasise the essential difference—the independence, originality, and incommensurability of the phenomena of life. The latter can be called Vitalists in the broadest sense of the term. Bichat belonged to them. As the former class of students have frequently arrived at the thesis that organic and inorganic processes are ultimately identical, so the latter have frequently arrived at the thesis that they are fundamentally opposed and antagonistic. Bichat gives expression to this view in his celebrated definition of life, as the totality of those

10.
His
vitalism.

11.
His defini-
tion of life.