

ethics. On the other hand, the central idea with Spencer as with Comte and the utilitarians before him, was the welfare of human society, its progress towards a greater common good or general happiness and the obligations which this end imposed upon individual members; though Spencer also insisted on the rights of the individual, which with him remained prior to the society of which it is the unit. If with the latter school the dominant thought was the end to be attained which the study of nature and history alike helps us to define, the great event which casts its shadow before; with the former it was the perfect personality of the Divine Spirit which stood at the beginning; it was the sustaining ground of everything, the principle which was realising itself by an endless process in the gradual development of finite human minds towards fuller consciousness and more perfect personality. The idealists were, at the same time, too much interested and impressed by the social and political reforms which had emanated from the utilitarian school to confine themselves as much to individual ethics as had been the case with many of the leading German thinkers; this circumstance may explain why they were specially attracted by Hegel, whose ethics, though not embracing sociology, moved more in the region of objective morality (culture, society, and the State), and why the writings of Lotze, in which this interest never made itself prominently felt, did not fully satisfy the speculative need of his English readers. These might perhaps have found what they looked for in the writings of Fichte and Schleiermacher, had it not