

brought together; either affords support and enlargement to views contained in the other.

Spencer was a solitary and independent thinker, like the other three we have just been dealing with. He resembled Comte in having only a slender connection with contemporary philosophy. Only a few thinkers, such as Sir Wm. Hamilton, Mansel, and John Stuart Mill, seem to have influenced him. He took little or no interest in the opinions of other thinkers, nor any pains to understand them; in fact, he admitted himself that he never cared to read any book with the opening arguments of which he could not agree. Spencer, more clearly than Comte, defines the highest task of philosophy much in the way that I have adopted in this chapter. In fact, he has helped very materially to formulate and introduce the modern definition of philosophy. He considers its formal task to be unification of knowledge, and, in the introduction to his 'First Principles'—which forms the first part of his system of synthetic philosophy—he defines its main practical outcome as the reconciliation of religion and science.

As little as to Comte does it occur to Spencer that the exposition of any philosophical system should be preceded by a critical investigation of the means which are at the disposal of the human mind to solve its highest problems. The Kantian or critical spirit is foreign to both these thinkers: they are both dogmatic, inasmuch as they, without many preliminaries, state the position which they take up; in both cases the position is gained by a grand generalisation of an incomplete induction, and it is proved by examples and illustrations