

theories. It seems as if even the most abstract and serene thought could not live long without coming into contact—for mutual good or evil—with the affairs of practical life.

These affairs and interests of practical life form the highest subject of philosophical thought; with their furtherance, be it to strengthen, to reform, or to develop them, philosophical thought is mainly occupied. The whole fabric of Society, all the work of Culture, all the achievements of civilisation, are bound up with certain existing fundamental convictions which cannot be attacked or lost without the most serious consequences. In the face of this circumstance it would be futile to maintain that any earnest thinker could approach these momentous problems without a feeling of the great responsibility which must attach to his utterances. It is not too much to say that the whole weight of the moral world presses upon the minds of those who deal with these fundamental problems.

The great philosophers of the past century have shared this feeling of heavy responsibility with the great thinkers of former ages, and the fact that that century has probably produced a greater number of leading thinkers fully conscious of the educational and reforming task which lay before them, is a sign that more has been expected in these recent times from philosophical speculation than in any former age during the whole course of civilised history. The only age which could be compared with the nineteenth century was that which during the fourth and third centuries B.C. witnessed the disintegration of the ideals of Grecian

51.  
Philo-  
sophers as  
educators  
and re-  
formers.