

the natural history of the human mind, we can nevertheless easily recognise how, in modern philosophy, the different theories of knowledge have sprung up under the distinct though frequently unconscious influence of those habits and tendencies of thought which, in general and scientific literature, were at the time most acceptable and dominating. And in this we may possibly find an explanation of the different ways on which leading thinkers have in different periods and countries approached the same problem. The *Wissenschaftslehre* of Fichte sprang up under the dominant impression of a great change which had recently taken place in men's minds, and which had found a partial expression in Kant's philosophy. But it was not an exclusively academic interest which directed Fichte's earliest speculations. Before he became, as he tells us, accidentally acquainted with Kant's philosophy, he had come under the influence of Lessing's theological polemics in Germany and of the educational interests which emanated from Rousseau in Switzerland. Both produced in him that mental unrest, that "storm and stress" which was common to many other prominent writers and thinkers of the day. He partook, in his way, of that yearning for liberty in religious belief and social life which was as widespread as it was indefinite. It was the problem of liberty which he tried to solve for himself. Inclined for a moment, under the influence of Spinoza, to adopt the determinist solution, he first found relief and satisfaction in Kant's doctrine of the higher life of the human mind in which it is able to assert its autonomy, or self-imposed law of duty and conduct. At that moment the storm of the Revolution

8.  
Influence of  
current  
literature  
and science.