

. . . a chapter of German philosophy would have come out differently, larger, more lasting, and more fruitful. So important is it to march with history and to follow the historic development of the great ideas in mankind.”¹ Gradually almost the whole philosophical interest in Germany—with two or three brilliant exceptions—threw itself into historical studies, bent upon tracing everywhere the movement of ideas, and thus elaborating on a larger and more accurate scale the programme of Hegel’s philosophy. But as the lofty ideas of the classical period of German literature, where philosophy itself had found its inspiration, receded into the past, and what Hegel had done and Schelling attempted appeared to the critical eye to be untenable or shadowy, the flood of historical literature descended more and more to lower levels, spreading out in the study of mere detail. A loss of grasp, a disintegration of philosophical thought as a whole, was the inevitable consequence. Not unnaturally, therefore, a generation succeeded for whom the earlier leading ideals had lost their meaning, and who would accordingly seize with eagerness any new suggestion which afforded the prospect of arriving at that unification of thought which had been temporarily lost, but without which no fruitful progress could be made in any large department of knowledge.

Through the working of the scientific spirit as well as through that of the critical spirit, with both of which my readers have become acquainted in earlier chapters of

¹ See the preface to the second edition of ‘Logische Untersuchungen.’