

49.
Ethical
spirit of
British
philosophy.

creed, the more necessary it seems to be to establish firmly and definitely the principles and postulates of morality—*i.e.*, a moral creed. A great part of modern speculation abroad is, at the end of the century, occupied with this latter, the practical, problem, and has thus arrived at a better understanding of what philosophical thought has been occupied with in this country during the whole of the nineteenth century. For it has always been characteristic of British philosophy that it has given independent and special attention to the ethical problem. This problem was of equal interest to those who took the metaphysical problem, the problem of Reality, to be satisfactorily solved in the ruling religious creed—as was the case throughout the Scottish school of common-sense—and to those who, following Hume, despaired of satisfactorily solving either the problem of Knowledge or the problem of Reality. Generally speaking German philosophy has arrived, towards the end of the nineteenth century, at a doubt regarding the capacity of the human intellect to solve these problems, similar to that expressed, more than a hundred years earlier, by David Hume.

50.
Return of
British
thinkers to
Meta-
physics.

English philosophers, in approaching the ethical problems, have after all not been so very far away from the metaphysical problem as is sometimes supposed and represented; for in attempting to define the highest ends and aims of human conduct, they have implicitly approached the question: What is or should be the highest reality for us human beings? In the end also, notably in the later writings of J. S. Mill, when the metaphysical support which current religious beliefs afforded was