

Protestantism heralded the era of independent thought and free inquiry. And the task became still more urgent when, in addition to the breaking down of authorities in the region of Belief, the French Revolution shook the very foundations of national, social, and individual existence—*i.e.*, when not only the problem of Knowledge but also the problem of Existence or Reality was pushed into the foreground.

If this country for a long time partook of the movement of the Reformation only so far as Church government was concerned, the reforms of Ritual and of Doctrine following deliberately and tardily,¹ still less did it witness any subversion of the general order of things equal to that which took place at the end of the eighteenth century in France, and which was felt all over the Western Continent of Europe. The waves of this great storm did indeed beat against the shores of this island, but they did little more than create alarm and help to formulate those problems which the industrial and commercial progress of a country blessed with a settled government and a national representation brought necessarily to the surface.

These problems were the problems of wealth in the first instance, of political rights and social organisation later on. The fundamental problem of existence, the problem of Reality, had indeed been touched by David Hume, but not with a full sense of its enormous and ultimate practical importance; as he himself affects to admit that a game of backgammon or a good dinner

¹ See above, p. 116.