

Hegel to any great extent. It was more by those who were inspired by the general tenor and tendency of his thought, than by himself, that the necessity was felt to tackle ethical problems specifically. And this has been even more marked among his followers in this country than it has been abroad. We shall therefore have to revert to him later on, when we shall try to understand some of the more recent ethical speculations peculiar to English thought. It will now be more interesting to cast a glance at that system of thought which in France—unknown for a long time to German thinkers—was slowly preparing the opposite forces which should gradually drive into the background that official philosophy which called itself Spiritualism and was largely indebted, notably through its great representative Cousin, to the teachings of Schelling and Hegel in Germany. This was the spirit of Positivism reduced for the first time to a philosophical creed by Auguste Comte.

31.
Comte's
Positivism.

In order to understand this independent counter-movement which was not confined to French thought, though it there received both a name and an ambitious systematic treatment, it will be of advantage to look upon the ethical problem from a somewhat different point of view. This suggested itself naturally in a country which had witnessed in succession the temporary downfall of two traditional powers, Religion and the State. The former had lost its spiritual centre and meaning, through the attacks of the prominent representatives of sensationalism and scepticism who dominated French literature during the second half of the