

Divine order and command by the endeavour to cast its anchor into the ground of a social order and command. The transition from the earlier to the later position took place in this country, and still earlier in France, without passing through the intermediate stage which I referred to above. Following a terminology introduced by Comte we may term the latter the metaphysical stage.<sup>1</sup> It is represented in Germany by the successive phases of idealism. As I have stated on a former occasion, these aimed at supporting or replacing the traditional and historical religious beliefs by a philosophical or reasoned creed. It may be said that for the greater part of a whole century the majority of serious-minded persons in Germany believed that such a philosophical or reasoned creed was a feasible achievement of the human intellect, and expected its realisation. In the same degree as this expectation was destroyed the transition to the positive stage has become more and more accentuated. With it, German thought has taken up the sociological point of view. The problem of society and humanity has been pushed into the foreground and is there studied with quite as much ardour as it was studied in England and France fifty or a hundred years earlier: and this in the clearly established interest of morality, of the solution of the ethical problem. Not only have societies and periodicals been founded to serve the purposes of "ethical culture," but sociology, in the largest sense of the word, as the study of humanity, is represented by an enormous and still increasing literature. German thought has in this instance as in so

19.  
Absence in  
both alike of  
metaphys-  
ical stage.

<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, p. 483.