

not in his early years come under the dominating influence of other philosophical thinkers. His indebtedness to others, so far as his special formula of Evolution is concerned, was only slight. Mill's logic and Hamilton's discussions bearing upon the relativity of knowledge are almost the only philosophical writings which seem to have had an important influence upon Spencer. So much greater was the influence of the exact, and still more of the natural, sciences. But, with Mill, Spencer holds that the problem of society is the most important philosophical problem of the day. He and his friend G. H. Lewes were the first to experience and proclaim the necessity of elaborating a reasoned creed which should take the place of the religious creed then prevalent in slightly varying forms among Anglicans, Nonconformists, and the members of the Scottish Churches. Through this practical tendency he worked together with the Positivism of Comte. And, on the other side, he unconsciously went about the performance

about the same time he, according to his own account, inserted into his scheme the purely mechanical principles of "the indestructibility of matter, the continuity of motion, the rhythm of motion and the law of the direction of motion. It became clear that all the changes to be interpreted are consequences of the ceaseless redistribution of matter and motion everywhere going on, and must conform to those ultimate physical principles which regulate this redistribution" (p. 163). The second point is emphasised by Spencer himself. The general mechanical substructure of his system met with little or no appreciation. It was, as he tells

us, the earlier, shorter, and purely preliminary portion of 'First Principles,' his Agnosticism, which attracted attention. "The general theory which the body of the book elaborates was passed over or but vaguely indicated. And during the five-and-twenty years which have since elapsed [1887] I have nowhere seen a brief exposition of this general theory." In fact, Spencer's influence on philosophical thought is very much limited to his biological conception of Society and his Agnosticism as to ultimate problems. The uniting principle, however, deserves special attention. I shall revert to it in the following chapter.