

73.
His position in the history of thought.

can thus only be estimated if we are acquainted with all the different aspects which the social problem presented towards the middle of the century, such as have come under review in the earlier portion of this chapter.

Of all the social philosophers and reformers of the last century he probably represents the most equal combination of theoretical with practical knowledge. He conceived of the social problem in one of its most important and most practical aspects, and he retains the German propensity for deductive and systematic reasoning. Thus, he believes in the dialectic both in nature and in history: but the former is not the dialectic of Schelling and Hegel, but the dialectic of the exact sciences; and the latter does not consist in the unfolding of a logical idea, but in the practical impulses and motives which live in the minds of acting personalities and of the masses. Like many others who inherited Hegel's dialectic habit of thought, he turned away from the abstract generalisations of Hegel. To define the principle of movement in nature or history as the Idea or Spirit, appeared to him too general. In its generality it indeed comprises everything and yet explains nothing. We must descend to definite notions if we wish to make any progress in any special department or to solve any special problem.

74.
His central idea.

Thus Marx, in his social philosophy, takes up one definite aspect or idea as others have done in other regions of thought; and he, like others, exaggerates and pushes his principle to an extreme. What this principle is, which should explain to him the historical development of human society, and define, as well as