

animated by the spirit of Voltaire, whereas the latter was largely indebted to Rousseau. Whilst Rousseau, and after him Herder, had recourse to the elemental forces of nature and mind, studied the origin of things, and favoured a poetical and romantic interpretation of nature, pointing always to unexplored regions, and drawing inspiration from the half-illuminated storehouse of subconscious thought, Voltaire and the encyclopædists lived in the clear daylight of scientific reasoning, of logical analysis, of methodical definition and construction, denouncing everything outside of it as mere sentiment or illusion. Whilst the former were Christian humanitarians, the latter were critical sceptics and freethinkers. That both lines of thought were working at the same problem, that, earlier or later, they both elaborated a similar ideal,—using even the same term “humanity” to define it,—is indeed a significant fact, as is likewise the circumstance that the scientific conception led in its greatest representative, Comte, to a fantastic and romantic elaboration, whereas the Christian humanitarian line of thought in Germany ended with Feuerbach and Strauss in a sort of scientific materialism not unlike the earlier materialism of Helvetius and Condillac in France, though much less elegantly expressed.

A more modest, though, in the end, a more lasting contribution to the treatment of the problem of human society came during the same age from this country. Thinkers here had also been profoundly stirred by the political events in America and in France; neither were there wanting solitary minds who treated single aspects of the social problem from a

7.  
Contrast  
between  
Voltaire and  
Rousseau.