

are now considered as the main characteristics of Positivism. The first is that of the hierarchy of the sciences, and subsequently also of Social Order upon the foundation of the exact and the natural sciences. The second is one of the first great comprehensive, and to a large extent successful, attempts in the direction of a history of human thought and human society, of a philosophy of History. In working out this, as also by conceiving of sociology as a separate and distinct science, Comte has placed himself at the head of all those who have, before and after him, dealt with the social problem in its largest sense as the problem of Humanity.

But before treating more in detail the main points of Comte's teaching and the growth and diffusion of the positive philosophy—which indeed belonged to a much later period—it is well to note what was done in Germany at the end of the eighteenth and during the first third of the nineteenth century. There, as I stated above, Rousseau's gospel of the return to nature, including his natural religion as well as the proclamation of the natural rights of man, had created a great impression. But no sympathy was felt with the scientific or naturalistic interpretation which was given to these ideas in the school of the encyclopædists and of many of the French reformers during the Revolution. The word Nature was not narrowed down to mean merely the physical side of things. The term Nature as applied to human affairs was conceived in a much larger sense as including the intellectual, the moral and the spiritual, as well as the physical factors in the life of man and mankind. Social problems, so far as they were