

that knowledge depends on the conviction that unity and order pervades everything, need not occupy us at present. The fact that he identified this principle of unity and order with the personal Deity of religion permitted him to bring spiritual and natural knowledge into connection and gave to his philosophy a twofold interest. For it was capable of being on the one side mystically interpreted by spiritual thinkers, whilst on the other side the emphasis laid upon mathematical reasoning attracted those who had successfully begun to explain mechanically many phenomena in nature. Whilst the former line of thought led to the religious conception that we know and "see all things in God" (Malebranche), the mechanical philosophers on the other side recognised that for their purposes the supposition of a definite (mechanical) order in the universe was all that was wanted, and that the task of the natural philosopher consisted in tracing in detail some lines of this inwoven cypher of all Reality. Towards this Descartes had already made a beginning in his celebrated theory of Vortices. But the thinker who most consistently devoted himself to carrying forward the line of thought suggested by Descartes, viz., the ascent through abstract thought to a conception of the true order and unity of the world, and the working of this by a mathematical method, was Spinoza, whose writings, however, acquired their importance in modern philosophy much later, and need not occupy us at present. A more striking immediate reaction upon the course of thought on the Continent than was exercised by the philosophy of Spinoza, who nevertheless influenced contemporary thinkers more than

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Spinoza and  
Leibniz.