

has been generally admitted, emanated from Leibniz, and this influence has, with important fluctuations, continued up to the present day. One of the reasons why this influence has again and again made itself felt is because none of the great thinkers of modern times has studied with such equal interest and sympathy the most opposite lines of thought, and because hardly any one has been qualified in the same degree by genius and education to appreciate seemingly contradictory tendencies. Ancient and modern, English, French, and Italian philosophies were alike known to him; he was a mathematician and abstract thinker as well as a naturalist and historian, a practical man of the world as well as a theorist. The two great objects which he seems to have had in view all through his life were, first, to reconcile apparently opposed views, to harmonise existing differences in philosophy, politics, and religion; and secondly, to lead his theoretical and abstract meditations into practical channels.

Turning now to the special problem with which I am dealing in this chapter, the problem of knowledge, we find in the philosophy of Leibniz a great advance in his conception of the nature of Knowledge and the means possessed by the human mind of acquiring it. With Descartes the criterion of truth consisted in clearness of thinking and immediate evidence, two qualities which were nowhere more conspicuous than in the reasoning of the mathematical sciences.¹ A similar predilection for

¹ This conception of Descartes was more fully elaborated by Leibniz. What with Descartes was not sufficiently distinguished received in Leibniz's treatment a somewhat more definite expression. He dis-

tinguishes between what is clear from what is also distinct. "Clear" is opposed to "obscure," "distinct" to "confused." A notion is clear if readily recognised; it is distinct if analysable into its parts