

II.

If we, for a moment, adopt an expression which has been coined and become current in modern philosophical literature, and according to which philosophy consists in unified knowledge, its highest aim being the unification of thought, we may say that modern philosophy on the Continent consciously worked from its very beginning in Descartes towards the attainment of this end, whereas, in this country, it only arrived at a recognition of this, its highest task, during the latter part of the nineteenth century. I have expressed the same idea in other words by saying that modern philosophy on the Continent aimed at the establishment of a consistent and comprehensive philosophical creed. The boldest attempt to solve this problem is no doubt the system of Spinoza, whereas Descartes had contented himself with enunciating certain leading principles. In Spinoza philosophy attained to an elevation of spirit and diction which has only been reached in rare instances. It became to its author an expression, as it were, of his deepest religious convictions; it rose to inspiration. Such had been the philosophy of Plato in antiquity, such was the philosophy of Spinoza in modern times. Both are conspicuous by their grandeur and sublimity. But in the same way as Plato's philosophy in ancient times was followed, and to a large extent superseded, by the sober and judicious treatment of Aristotle, so the creative effort of Spinoza was superseded, for the time being, by the harmonising endeavours contained in Leibniz's

27.
Aim at
unity in
Continental
thought.

28.
Spinoza and
Leibniz
contrasted.