

It is from this common foundation that all other substances have derived the origin of their solidity, for all fixed matter, however much decomposed, subsides finally into glass by the sole action of fire : it resumes its first nature, when disengaged from the fluid, or volatile matters, which were united with it ; and this glass, or vitreous matter, which composes the mass of our globe, represents so much the better the element of earth, as it has neither colour, smell, taste, liquidity, nor fluidity, qualities which all proceed from the other elements, or belong to them.

If glass be not precisely the element of earth, it is at least the most ancient substance of it ; metals are more recent, and less dignified ; and most other minerals form within our sight. Nature produces glass only in the particular focus of its volcanos, whereas every day she forms other substances by the combination of glass with the other elements. If we would form to ourselves a just idea of her formation of the globe, we must first consider her processes, which demonstrate that it has been melted or liquefied by fire ; that from this immense heat it successively passed to its present degree ; that in the first moments, where its surface began to take consistence, inequalities