

power of converting matter into their proper substance, and to assimilate the parts of other bodies, are the greatest destroyers. Fire, for example, turns into its own substance almost every species of matter, and is the greatest means of destruction known to us. Animals seem to participate of the qualities of flame; their internal heat is a kind of fire; therefore, after fire, animals are the greatest destroyers, and they assimilate and convert into their own substance every matter which may serve them for food: but although these two causes of destruction are very considerable, and their effects perpetually incline to the annihilation of organized beings, the cause of reproduction is infinitely more powerful and active; she seems to borrow, even from destruction itself, means to multiply, since assimilation, which is one cause of death, is at the same time a necessary means of producing life.

To destroy an organized being is, as we have observed, only to separate the organic particles of which it is composed; these particles remain separated till they are re-united by some active power. But what is this active power?—It is the power which animals and vegetables have to assimilate the matter that