

congregated apparently at random in the receptacle which holds it, might exhibit a number of properties and manifest itself to be the subject of various laws, without announcing that either a creative power or an intelligent purpose had to do with the formation of it. For of what significancy is it towards any conclusion of this sort—that an isolated lump is possessed of hardness, or solidity, or weight; or that we can discern in it the law of cohesion, and the law of impulse, and the law of gravitation. These laws might all be detected in any one body, or they might be shared in common throughout an aggregate of bodies—scattered about in rude disorder; yet exhibiting no trace whatever of a first production at the mandate of any living potentate, or any subsequent distribution which bespoke a skilful and scheming intellect which presided over it. Matter must have had some properties to certify its existence to us, it being by its properties alone and not by any direct view of its naked substratum that we come to recognise it—so that, to learn of matter at all, it must have had some properties or other belonging to it. Now these properties might be conceived of variously, and all the actual laws of the material system might be discovered in a confused medley of things strewn around without any principle of arrangement—its chemical, and optical, and magnetic, and mechanical laws; and yet from the study of these, no argument might be drawn in favour of a God, who either called the matter into being, or endowed it with the attributes which we find it to possess.