

law to the presiding intelligence who ordained it. It is the beautiful discovery of La Grange that this is the only law which is consistent with the permanency of the planetary system—that if the law of mutual attraction between its bodies had deviated by a thousandth part from that which actually obtains, the mutual disturbances which take place among the planets themselves would at length have deranged the whole economy of their movements—that the errors would have accumulated in one direction so as at length either to have brought the planets to the sun, or sent them to irreclaimable distances away from it—but that now the errors alternate between one direction and another—reaching to a maximum upon one side, which it never can exceed, and then oscillating back again so as to keep a little way to the right or the left of a certain mean state, which forms the invariable and indestructible average of a system that, under other laws of gravitation, would have contained within itself the principles of its own dissolution.

20. In virtue of the distinction between the laws of matter and its dispositions, we might perhaps release ourselves from a certain atheistical imagination which, without assuming the shape of a distinct principle, or coming forth in aught like a formal avowal, is apt to maintain its hold over the spirits and conceptions chiefly of physical inquirers. There is a mystery inscrutable in the creation of matter out of nothing—and, on the other hand, if it have existed from everlasting, why may it not, unchangeable in character as in being,