

the universe. Some have endeavoured to evade its force by maintaining that the world as it now exists has existed from eternity. They assert that the present order of things, or an order of things in some way resembling the present, produced by the same causes, governed by the same laws, has prevailed through an infinite succession of past ages. We shall not dwell upon any objections to this tenet which might be drawn from our own conceptions, or from what may be called metaphysical sources. Nor shall we refer to the various considerations which history, geology, and astronomical records supply, and which tend to show, not only that the past duration of the present course of things is finite, but that it is short, compared with such periods as we have had to speak of. But we may observe, that the doctrine of a resisting medium once established, makes this imagination untenable; compels us to go back to the origin, not only of the present course of the world, not only of the earth, but of the solar system itself; and thus sets us forth upon that path of research into the series of past causation, where we obtain no answer of which the meaning corresponds to our questions, till we rest in the conclusion of a most provident and most powerful Creating Intelligence.

It is related of Epicurus that when a boy, reading with his preceptor these verses of Hesiod,

*Ἡτοι μὲν πρῶτις αὖ Χάος γενετ', αὐτὰρ ἐπειτα
Γαί' ευρυσερνος παντῶν ἔδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ
Ἀθανάτων,*

Eldest of beings, Chaos first arose,
Thence Earth wide stretched, the steadfast seat of all
The Immortals,

the young scholar first betrayed his inquisitive genius by asking "And chaos whence?" When in his riper years he had persuaded himself that this question was sufficiently answered by saying that chaos arose from the concourse of atoms, it is strange that the same