

matter, excepting gold. The greater or lesser fluidity, does not, therefore, indicate that the parts of the fluid are more or less weighty, but only that their adherence is so much the less, and their separation so much the easier.

Air, therefore, of all known matter, is that which heat divides the easiest, and is very near the nature of fire, whose property consists in the expansive motions of its parts; and it is from this similarity that air so strongly augments the activity of fire, to which it is the most powerful assistant, and the most intimate and necessary food. Even combustible matters will not keep it alive if deprived of air, for under this privation the most intense fire will not burn; but a single spark of air is sufficient to kindle them, and in proportion as it is supplied with that element the fire becomes strong, extended, and devouring.

Artificial phosphorus, and gunpowder, seem, at first, to be an exception, for they have no need of the assistance of renewed air to inflame and wholly consume them: their combustion may be performed in the closest vessels, but that is because those matters, which are also the most combustible, contain the necessary quantity of air in their substance, therefore they have no need of the assistance of foreign air.

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