

sophers. The sun, atmosphere, earth, sea, &c. are all great masses on which they established all their conclusions; and if there ever had existed a planet of phlogiston, an atmosphere of alkali, an ocean of acid, or a mountain of diamonds, such might have been looked upon as the general and real principles of all bodies, but they are only particular substances, produced, like all the rest, by the combinations of true elements; and ideas to the contrary would never have been started but upon the supposition that the earth was neither more simple nor less convertible than either of the other elements.

In the great mass of solid matter, which the earth represents, the superficial is the least pure. All the matter deposited by the sea, in form of sediment, all stones produced by shell-animals, all substances composed by the combinations of the waste of the animal or vegetable kingdom, and all those which have been changed by the fires of volcanos, or sublimated by the internal heat of the globe, are mixed and transformed substances; and although they compose great masses they do not clearly represent to us the element of earth. They are vitrifiable matters, whose mass must be considered as 100,000 times more considerable than all those other substances, which should be regarded as the true basis of this element.

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