

over the testimonies and credit of the ancients. Modern naturalists, either through a respect for their philosopher, or through complaisance for their contemporaries, have adopted the same opinion. Nothing is allowed to the ancients but what cannot be avoided. Determined, perhaps, by these motives, of which self-love too often is the abettor, have we not naturally too much inclination to refuse what is due to our predecessors? and if, in our time, more is refused than was in any other, is it not that, by being more enlightened, we think we have more right to fame, and more pretensions to superiority?

Be that as it may, this invention was the cause of many other discoveries of antiquity which are at present unknown, because the facility of denying them has been preferred to the trouble of finding them out; and the burning glasses of Archimedes have been so decried, that it does not appear possible to re-establish their reputation; for, to call the the judgment of Descartes in question, something more is required than assertions, and there only remained one sure decisive mode, but at the same time difficult and bold, which was to undertake to discover glasses that might produce the like effects.

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