

not having any superfluous parts, consequently are incapable of reproduction.

This explanation of nutrition and reproduction will not probably be received by those who admit but of a certain number of mechanical principles, and reject all which do not depend on them; and as what has been said of nutrition and expansion comes under the latter description, they will possibly treat it as unworthy dependence. But I am quite of a different opinion from these philosophers; for it appears to me that, by admitting only a certain number of mechanical principles, they do not see how greatly they contract the bounds of philosophy, and that for one phenomenon that can be explained by a system so confined, a thousand would be found exceeding its limits.

The idea of explaining every phenomenon in nature by mechanical principles was certainly a great and beautiful exertion, and which Descartes first attempted. But this idea is only a project, and if properly founded, have we the means of performing it? These mechanical principles are the extent of matter, its impenetrability, its motion, its external figure, its