

intents and purposes, *exactly alike* in all their properties. Now, when we see a great number of things precisely alike, we do not believe this similarity to have originated except from a common principle independent of them; and that we recognise this likeness, chiefly by the identity of their deportment under similar circumstances, strengthens rather than weakens the conclusion. A line of spinning-jennies,* or a regiment of soldiers dressed exactly alike, and going through precisely the same evolutions, gives us no idea of independent existence: we must see them act out of concert before we can believe them to have independent wills and properties, not impressed on them from without. And this conclusion, which would be strong even were there only two individuals precisely alike in all respects and *for ever*, acquires irresistible force when their number is multiplied beyond the power of imagination to conceive. If we mistake not, then, the discoveries alluded to effectually destroy the idea of an *eternal self-existent matter*, by giving to each of its atoms the essential characters, at once, of a *manufactured article*, and a *subordinate agent*.

(29.) But to ascend to the origin of things, and speculate on the creation, is not the business of the natural philosopher. An humbler field is sufficient for him in the endeavor to discover, as far as our faculties will permit, what *are* these primary qualities originally and unalterably impressed on matter, and to discover the *spirit* of the laws of nature, which includes groups and classes of relations and facts from the *letter* which, as before observed, is presented to us by single phenomena: or if, after all, this should prove impossible; if such a step be beyond our faculties; and the essential qualities of material agents be really *occult*, or incapable of being expressed in any form intelligible to our understandings, at least to approach as near to their comprehension as the nature of the case will allow; and devise such forms of words as shall include and *represent* the greatest possible multitude and variety of phenomena.

* Little reels used in cotton-mills to twist the thread.