

neglected, and an humble and patient inquiry after facts altogether despised, as unworthy of the high *priori* ground a true philosopher ought to take. It was the radical error of the Greek philosophy to imagine that the same method which proved so eminently successful in mathematical would be equally so in physical inquiries, and that, by setting out from a few simple and almost self-evident notions, or *axioms*, every thing could be reasoned out. Accordingly, we find them constantly straining their invention to discover these principles which were to prove so pregnant. One makes *fire* the essential matter and origin of the universe; another *air*; a third discovers the key to every difficulty, and the explanation of all phenomena, in the “*το απειρον*” or infinitude of things; a fourth, in the *το εν* and the *το μη εν*, that is to say, in entity and nonentity;—till at length an authority, which was destined to command opinions for nearly two thousand years, settled this important point, by deciding, that *matter*, *form*, and *privation*, were to be considered the principles of all things.

(101.) It were to do injustice to Aristotle, however, to judge of him by *such* a sample of his philosophy. He, at least, saw the necessity of having recourse to nature for something like principles of physical science; and as an observer, a collector and recorder of facts and phenomena, stood without an equal in his age. It was the fault of that age, and of the perverse and flimsy style of verbal disputation which had infected all learning, rather than his own, that he allowed himself to be contented with vague and loose notions drawn from general and vulgar observation, in place of seeking carefully, in well arranged and thoroughly considered instances, for the true laws of nature. His voluminous works, on every department of human knowledge existing in his time, have nearly all perished. From his work on animals, which has descended to us, we are, however, enabled to appreciate his powers of observation; and a parallel drawn by an eminent Oxford professor between his classifications and those of the most illustrious of living naturalists, shows him to have attained a view of animated