

entirely opposite views regarding the nature of the interior of the globe. It has been computed at what depths liquid or even gaseous substances would, from the pressure of their own superimposed strata, attain a density exceeding that of platinum or even iridium; and in order that the compression which has been determined within such narrow limits might be brought into harmony with the assumption of simple and infinitely compressible matter, Leslie has ingeniously conceived the nucleus of the world to be a hollow sphere, filled with an assumed "imponderable matter, having an enormous force of expansion." These venturesome and arbitrary conjectures have given rise, in wholly unscientific circles, to still more fantastic notions. The hollow sphere has by degrees been peopled with plants and animals, and two small subterranean revolving planets—Pluto and Proserpine—were imaginatively supposed to shed over it their mild light; as, however, it was further imagined that an ever-uniform temperature reigned in these internal regions, the air, which was made self-luminous by compression, might well render the planets of this lower world unnecessary. Near the north pole, at 82° latitude, whence the polar light emanates, was an enormous opening, through which a descent might be made into the hollow sphere, and Sir Humphrey Davy and myself were even publicly and frequently invited by Captain Symmes to enter upon this subterranean expedition: so powerful is the morbid inclination of men to fill unknown spaces with shapes of wonder, totally unmindful of the counter evidence furnished by well-attested facts and universally acknowledged natural laws. Even the celebrated Halley, at the end of the seventeenth century, hollowed out the Earth in his magnetic speculations! Men were invited to believe that a subterranean freely-rotating nucleus occasions by its position the diurnal and annual changes of magnetic declination. It has thus been attempted in our own day, with tedious solemnity, to clothe in a scientific garb the quaintly-devised fiction of the humorous Holberg.\*

\* [The work referred to, one of the wittiest productions of the learned Norwegian satirist and dramatist Holberg, was written in Latin, and first appeared under the following title: *Nicolai Klimii iter subterraneum novam telluris theoriam ac historiam quintæ monarchiæ adhuc nobis incognitæ exhibens e bibliotheca b. Abelinii. Hafniæ et Lipsiæ sumt. Jac. Preuss, 1741.* An admirable Danish translation of this learned but severe satire on the institutions, morals, and manners of the inhabitants of the upper Earth, appeared at Copenhagen in 1789, and was entitled *Niels Klim's underjordiske reise ved Ludvig Holberg, oversat*