

which they do not already possess, they may threaten. In the almost uninterrupted course of the knowledge transmitted to them, and in their ancient scientific nomenclature, we may trace, as the guiding points of the history of the human race, recollections of the various channels through which important inventions, or, at any rate, their germs, have been conveyed to the nations of Europe; thus from Eastern Asia has flowed the knowledge of the direction and declination of a freely-suspended magnetic rod; from Phœnicia and Egypt the knowledge of chemical preparations, as glass, animal and vegetable dyes, and metallic oxyds; and from India the general use of *position* in determining the increased values of a few numerical signs.

Since civilization has left its most ancient seat within the tropics or the sub-tropical zone, it has remained permanently settled in the portion of the earth whose northern regions are less cold than those of Asia and America under the same latitude. The continent of Europe may be regarded as a western peninsula of Asia, and I have already observed how much general civilization is favored by the mildness of its climate, and how much it owes to the circumstances of its variously articulated form, first noticed by Strabo; to its position in respect to Africa, which extends so far into the equatorial zone, and to the prevalence of the west winds, which are warm winds in winter, owing to their passing over the surface of the ocean. The physical character of Europe has opposed fewer obstacles to the diffusion of civilization than are presented in Asia and Africa, where far-extending parallel ranges of mountain chains, elevated plateaux, and sandy deserts interpose almost impassable barriers between different nations.

We will therefore start in our enumeration of the principal momenta that characterize the history of the physical consideration of the universe from a portion of the earth which is, perhaps, more highly favored than any other, owing to its geographical position, and its constant intercourse with other countries, by means of which the cosmical views of nations experience so marked a degree of enlargement.

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