

PRINCIPAL MOMENTA THAT HAVE INFLUENCED THE HISTORY OF THE PHYSICAL CONTEMPLATION OF THE UNIVERSE.

THE MEDITERRANEAN CONSIDERED AS THE STARTING-POINT FOR THE REPRESENTATION OF THE RELATIONS WHICH HAVE LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE GRADUAL EXTENSION OF THE IDEA OF THE COSMOS.—SUCCESSION OF THIS RELATION TO THE EARLIEST CULTIVATION AMONG HELLENIC NATIONS.—ATTEMPTS AT DISTANT MARITIME NAVIGATION TOWARD THE NORTHEAST (BY THE ARGONAUTS); TOWARD THE SOUTH (TO OPHIR); TOWARD THE WEST (BY COLÆUS OF SAMOS).

PLATO, in his *Phædo*, describes the narrow limits of the Mediterranean in a manner that accords with the spirit of enlarged cosmical views.* “We, who inhabit the region extending from Phasis to the Pillars of Hercules, occupy only a small portion of the earth,” he writes, “where we have settled ourselves round the inner sea like ants or frogs round a swamp.” This narrow basin, on the borders of which Egyptian, Phœnician, and Hellenic nations flourished and attained to a high degree of civilization, is the point from which the most important historical events have proceeded, no less than the colonization of vast territories in Africa and Asia, and those maritime expeditions which have led to the discovery of the whole western hemisphere of the globe.

The Mediterranean shows in its present configuration the traces of an earlier subdivision into three contiguous smaller closed basins.†

The Ægean is bounded to the south by the curved line formed by the Carian coast of Asia Minor, and the islands of Rhodes, Crete, and Cerigo, and terminating at the Pelopon-

* Plato, *Phædo*, p. 109, B. (Compare *Herod.*, ii., 21.) Cleomedes supposed that the surface of the earth was depressed in the middle, in order to receive the Mediterranean (*Voss, Crit. Blätter*, bd. ii., 1828, s. 144 und 150).

† I first developed this idea in my *Rel. Hist. du Voyage aux Régions Equinoxiales*, t. iii., p. 236, and in the *Examen Crit. de l'Hist. de la Géogr. au 15ème Siècle*, t. i., p. 36-38. See, also, Otfried Müller, in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1838, bd. i., s. 376. The most western basin, which I name generally the Tyrrhenian, includes, according to Strabo, the Iberian, Ligurian, and Sardinian Seas. The Syrtic basin, east of Sicily, includes the Ausonian or Sicilian, the Libyan, and the Ionian Seas. The southern and southwestern part of the Ægean Sea was called Cretic, Saronic, and Myrtoic. The remarkable passage in *Aristot., De Mundo*, cap. iii. (p. 393, Bekk.), refers only to the bay-like configuration of the coasts of the Mediterranean, and its effect on the ocean flowing into it.