

This sentence is of interest in more than one way. The theory that all "the more perfect organic natures," that is all Vertebrate animals, are descended from one common prototype, that they have arisen from it by propagation (Inheritance) and transformation (Adaptation), may be distinctly inferred. But it is especially interesting to observe that Goethe admits no exceptional position for man, but rather expressly includes him in the tribe of the other Vertebrate animals. The most important special inference of the Doctrine of Filiation, that man is descended from other Vertebrate animals, may here be recognized in the germ.³

This exceedingly important fundamental idea is expressed by Goethe still more clearly in another passage (1807), in the following words: "If we consider plants and animals in their most imperfect condition, they can scarcely be distinguished. But this much we can say, that the creatures which by degrees emerge as plants and animals out of a common phase, where they are barely distinguishable, arrive at perfection in two opposite directions; so that the plant in the end reaches its highest glory in the tree, which is immovable and stiff, the animal in man, who possesses the greatest mobility and freedom." This remarkable passage not only indicates most explicitly the genealogical relationship between the vegetable and animal kingdoms, but contains the germ of the monistic or monophyletic hypothesis of descent, the importance of which I shall have to explain hereafter.

At the time when Goethe in this way sketched the fundamental features of the Theory of Descent, another German philosopher, Gottfried Reinhold Treviranus, of