

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE MORPHOLOGICAL VIEW OF NATURE..

1.
The abstract
sciences.

THE different aspects of nature which I have reviewed in the foregoing chapters, and the various sciences which have been elaborated by their aid, comprise what may appropriately be termed the abstract study of natural objects and phenomena. Though all the methods of reasoning with which we have so far become acquainted originated primarily through observation and in the reflection over things natural, they have this in common, that they—for the purpose of examination—remove their objects out of the position and surroundings which nature has assigned to them: that they *abstract* them. This process of abstraction is either literally a process of removal from one place to another, from the great work-and store-house of nature herself, to the small workroom, the laboratory of the experimenter; or—where such removal is not possible—the process is carried on merely in the realm of contemplation: one or two special properties are noted and described, whilst a number of collateral data are for the moment disregarded. In the former case, it is by a process of actual or physical, in the latter by one