

CHAPTER III

WATER

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

IT was assuredly not chance that led Thales to found philosophy and science with the assertion that water is the origin of all things. Whether his belief was most influenced by the wetness of animal tissues and fluids, or by early poetic cosmogonies, or by the ever present importance of the sea to the Ionians,¹ however vague his conception of water may, indeed must, have been, he at least expressed a conclusion which proceeded from experience and serious reflection. Later, when positive knowledge had already grown to be a substantial basis for speculation, both meteorological and chemical views contributed to the decision of Empedocles and Aristotle to include water among the elements.² And it is especially worthy of note that of earth, air,

¹ Windelband, "Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft," V. 1. 139. Nördlingen, 1888.

² Windelband, *l.c.*; S. Günther, "Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften." Reclam, Leipzig, Vol. I, p.19.