

The various causes of change in the inanimate world having been thus enumerated, the doctrine of equivocal generation is next propounded, as illustrating a corresponding perpetual flux in the animate creation.\*

In the Egyptian and Eastern cosmogonies, and in the Greek version of them, no very definite meaning can, in general, be attached to the term "destruction of the world;" for sometimes it would seem almost to imply the annihilation of our planetary system, and at others a mere revolution of the surface of the earth.

*Opinions of Aristotle.*—From the works now extant of Aristotle, and from the system of Pythagoras, as above exposed, we might certainly infer that these philosophers considered the agents of change now operating in nature, as capable of bringing about in the lapse of ages a complete revolution; and the Stagyrice even considers occasional catastrophes, happening at distant intervals of time, as part of the regular and ordinary course of nature. The deluge of Deucalion, he says, affected Greece only, and principally the part called Hellas, and it arose from great inundations of rivers during a rainy winter. But such extraordinary winters, he says, though after a certain period they return, do not always revisit the same places. †

Censorinus quotes it as Aristotle's opinion, that there were general inundations of the globe, and that they alternated with conflagrations; and that the flood constituted the winter of the great year, or astronomical cycle, while the conflagration, or destruction by fire, is the summer or period of greatest heat. ‡ If this passage, as Lipsius supposes, be an amplification, by Censorinus, of what is written in "the *Meteorics*," it is a gross misrepresentation of the doctrine of the Stagyrice, for the general bearing of his reasoning in that treatise tends clearly in an opposite direction. He refers to many examples of changes now constantly going on, and insists emphatically on the great results which they must produce in the lapse of ages. He instances particular cases of lakes that had dried up, and deserts that had at length become watered by rivers and fertilized. He points to the growth of the Nilotic Delta since the time of Homer, to the shallowing of the Palus Mæotis within sixty years from his own time; and although, in the same chapter, he says nothing of earthquakes, yet in others of the same treatise he shows himself not unacquainted

\* It is not inconsistent with the Hindoo mythology to suppose that Pythagoras might have found in the East not only the system of universal and violent catastrophes and periods of repose in endless succession, but also that of periodical revolutions, effected by the continued agency of ordinary causes. For Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, the first, second, and third persons of the Hindoo triad, severally represented the Creative, the Preserving, and the Destroying powers of the Deity. The co-existence

of these three attributes, all in simultaneous operation, might well accord with the notion of perpetual but partial alterations finally bringing about a complete change. But fiction expressed in the verses before quoted from Menù, of eternal vicissitudes in the vigils and slumbers of the Infinite Being, seems accommodated to the system of great general catastrophes followed by new creations and periods of repose.

† *Meteor.* lib. i. cap. 12.

‡ *De Die Nat.*