

of the whole animate creation, as the Egyptian priests did that of the universe, to a single egg?

In the absence of any positive data for framing a theory on so obscure a subject, the following considerations were deemed of importance to guide conjecture.

In the first place, if we examine the whole series of known animals, from one extremity to the other, when they are arranged in the order of their natural relations, we find that we may pass progressively, or, at least, with very few interruptions, from beings of more simple to those of a more compound structure; and, in proportion as the complexity of their organization increases, the number and dignity of their faculties increase also. Among plants, a similar approximation to a graduated scale of being is apparent. Secondly, it appears, from geological observations, that plants and animals of more simple organization existed on the globe before the appearance of those of more compound structure, and the latter were successively formed at more modern periods; each new race being more fully developed than the most perfect of the preceding era.

Of the truth of the last-mentioned geological theory, Lamarck seems to have been fully persuaded; and he also shows that he was deeply impressed with a belief prevalent amongst the older naturalists, that the primeval ocean invested the whole planet long after it became the habitation of living beings; and thus he was inclined to assert the priority of the types of marine animals to those of the terrestrial, so as to fancy, for example, that the testacea of the ocean existed first, until some of them, by gradual evolution, were *improved* into those inhabiting the land.

These speculative views had already been, in a great degree, anticipated by Demaillet in his *Telliamed*, and by several modern writers; so that the tables were completely turned on the philosophers of antiquity, with whom it was a received maxim, that created things were always most perfect when they came first from the hands of their Maker; and that there was a tendency to progressive deterioration in sublunary things when left to themselves —

————— omnia fatis
In pejus ruere, ac retrò sublapsa referri.

So deeply was the faith of the ancient schools of philosophy imbued with this doctrine, that, to check this universal proneness to degeneracy, nothing less than the re-intervention of the Deity was thought adequate; and it was held, that thereby the order, excellence, and pristine energy of the moral and physical world had been repeatedly restored.

But when the possibility of the indefinite modification of individuals descending from common parents was once assumed, as also the geological inference respecting the progressive development of organic life, it was natural that the ancient dogma should be rejected, or rather reversed, and that the most simple and imperfect forms and faculties should be conceived to have been the originals whence all