

But simple as the idea is, it has been slowly evolved, gaining content as research furnished fuller illustration, and gaining clearness as criticism forced it to keep in touch with facts. It has slowly developed from the stage of suggestion to the stage of verification; from being an *a priori* anticipation it has become an interpretation of nature; and from being a modal interpretation it has advanced to the rank of a causal theory.

Almost all naturalists now accept the Doctrine of Descent, here wisdom is certainly justified of her children; but it is quite another thing to be ready with a Theory of Evolution. In short, the *fact* of organic evolution forces itself upon us, but a study of the *factors* is still a lesson in uncertainties.

In estimating the guesses at truth which abound in the writings of the early Greek philosophers, we must avoid two opposite errors,—on the one hand, that of reading into them a scientific value Greek
Period. which they are far from possessing; on the other hand, that of unduly depreciating them because they were imaginative, not inductive.

Thales (624–548 B.C.), the Ionian, was one of the first to suggest the theory that all things arose from water, a theory, as Professor Osborn remarks, natural “in a country surrounded by warm marine currents prodigal with shore and deep-sea life”; Anaximander (611–547), the Milesian, had some crude notion of metamorphoses, and forestalled the grotesqueness of some modern versions of Recapitulation in his picture of the emergence of ancestral man from an encapsuled fish-like stage wafted ashore like a mermaid’s purse; Anaximenes (588–524) had a theory of a primordially prolific earth-slime, which seems like a far-off suggestion of one of Oken’s dreams.

We reach firmer ground when we pass from the earliest schools to those who are often called the Physicists. Heraclitus (535–475) held a vividly kinetic conception of the universe, as a system of continuous movements, a view as familiar to the Greek mind as it is in modern physics, and perhaps furnishing one of the elements which went to the composition of the evolution