

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF EVOLUTION.¹

AT the close of the year which marks the Darwin Centenary and the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of the *Origin of Species*, it seems to me peculiarly fitting that the American Philosophical Association, as well as other learned societies, should avail itself of the privilege of commemorating this event. I have therefore been minded to choose for the president's address, a subject having direct reference to that labor of thought which has placed the philosophical as well as the scientific world under a permanent debt of gratitude to Charles Darwin.

We of the present generation may be said to be living in the Darwinian age of thought. Every subject of research or of speculation during the last fifty years has been profoundly affected by the new methods and new problems which the doctrine of evolution has provoked. For philosophy, however, it has been not so much an introduction to new as a revival of old problems and methods. In an age which antedated the birth of Darwin and his years of patient and fruitful investigation, philosophical insight had already divined in broad outlines at least the program of evolution.

One of our most eminent biologists, Professor Osborn, president of the Museum of Natural History in New York, testifies most appreciatively of this anticipatory work of philosophy. In his historical study, *From the Greeks to Darwin*, he speaks of those pioneers in the field of evolutionary theory, Bacon, Leibniz, Kant, Lessing, Herder, Schelling and Hegel, as follows :

" It is a very striking fact that the basis of our modern methods of studying evolution was established not by the early naturalists,

¹ Delivered as the presidential address before the American Philosophical Association at Yale University, December 28, 1909.