

more questionable the claim that all the various types of life have been produced by descent with modification from one original form.

AN ARGUMENT THAT LOST MOST OF ITS STRENGTH

One of the points greatly stressed in spreading the theory of evolution in the past was the argument from vestigial organs. About a century ago a German anatomist listed nearly one hundred structures in the human body as quite useless. He declared that they are really vestiges left over from a previous animal stage in which similar organs had a real purpose in the maintenance of life. Recently this argument has lost a very considerable part of its strength, because of new discoveries in physiology.

The idea that so many parts of the human body have no real purpose was simply a result of human ignorance. As more and more has been learned about the human body, many of these parts have been found to have an important place in the carrying on of life.

At one time anatomists, seeing no duct leading away from the thyroid gland, concluded that it could have no purpose but was merely a remainder from an earlier evolutionary stage. As knowledge increased it was discovered that the thyroid, so far from being useless, is extremely important to the preservation and maintenance of human life, and today its importance is universally recognized. In the similar case of the thymus it has now been recognized to be of great importance during early life for a normal development of the body's protective chemical substances (antibodies). Thus some of these organs have been found to have particular importance at a certain part of life, such as in the embryonic stage or in childhood.

A few years ago it was said that the number of clear vestiges had been reduced to six. Today we hear little about any except the vermiform appendix. Many biologists doubt that the appendix should be called a vestige, insisting that it has a real purpose even if perhaps not yet fully understood.