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YET ANOTHER BLOW TO THE MYTH OF VESTIGIAL ORGANS

Darwinism considers all life on Earth as a product of chance mutations and natural selection and, as an *a priori* commitment, excludes intelligent design. In order to argue against design, the Darwinist mind seeks for flaws in the biological systems. From Darwin to Dawkins, over and over, this dogmatic stance has led the evolutionist to insist on the existence of imaginary flaws and "useless" vestigial organs in living systems. However, over and over, these bold claims by evolutionists turned out to be manifestations of ignorance. The allegedly vestigial organs were discovered to be performing very important functions and the whole "vestigial organ" argument turned out to be a fallacy.

The history of science documents a steady reduction in the number of the so-called vestigial organs. The allegedly non-functional organs, one by one, turned out to be organs whose functions had not yet been discovered. A list of vestigial organs that was made by the German Anatomist R. Wiedersheim in 1895 included approximately 100 structures, including the appendix and the coccyx. As science progressed, it was discovered that all of the organs in Wiedersheim's list in fact had very important functions. For instance, it was discovered that the appendix, which was supposed to be a "vestigial organ," was in fact a part of the lymphatic system. A medical publication notes in 1997 that "other bodily organs and tissues - the thymus, liver, spleen, appendix, bone marrow, and small collections of lymphatic tissue such as the tonsils in the throat and Peyer's patch in the small intestine - are also part of the lymphatic system. They too help the body fight infection."¹

It was also discovered that the tonsils, which were also included in Wiedersheim's list of vestigial organs, had a significant role in protecting the throat against infections, particularly until adolescence. It was found that the coccyx at the lower end of the vertebral column supports the bones around the pelvis and is the convergence point of some small muscles and for this reason, it would not be possible to sit comfortably without a coccyx.

In the years that followed, it was realized that the thymus triggered the immune system in the human body by activating the T cells, that the pineal gland was in charge of the secretion of some important hormones, that the thyroid gland was effective in providing steady growth in babies and children, and that the pituitary gland controlled the correct functioning of many hormone glands. All of these were once considered to be "vestigial organs." Finally, the semi-lunar fold in the eye, which was referred to as a vestigial organ by Darwin, has been found in fact to be in charge of cleansing and lubricating the eye.

The steady reduction in the list of vestigial organs results from the fact that this is an argument from ignorance. Some wiser evolutionists also came to realize this fact. S.R.

Scadding, an evolutionist himself, once wrote in his article "Can vestigial organs constitute evidence for evolution?" published in the journal *Evolutionary Theory*:

Since it is not possible to unambiguously identify useless structures, and since the structure of the argument used is not scientifically valid, I conclude that "vestigial organs" provide no special evidence for the theory of evolution.²



All instances of vestigial organs have been disproved in time. For example the semicircular fold in the eye, which was mentioned in the *Origins* as a vestigial structure, has been shown to be fully functional in our time, though its function was unknown in Darwin's time. This organ lubricates the eyeball.

The Leg of the Horse

The latest blow to the myth of vestigial organs comes from a recent study of the leg of the horse. An article in the 20-27 December 2001 issue of the *Nature* magazine, entitled "Biomechanics: Damper For Bad Vibrations", it is noted that "Some muscle fibres in the legs of horses seem to be evolutionary leftovers with no function. But in fact they may act to damp damaging vibrations generated in the leg as the horse runs." The article reads:

Horses and camels have muscles in their legs with tendons more than 600 millimetres long connected to muscle fibres less than 6 millimetres long. Such short muscles can change length only by a few millimetres as the animal moves, and seem unlikely to be of much use to large mammals. The tendons function as passive springs, and it has been assumed that the short muscle fibres are redundant, the remnants of longer fibres that have lost their function over the course of evolution. But Wilson and colleagues argue... that these fibres might protect bones and tendons from potentially damaging vibrations....

Their experiments show that short muscle fibres can damp the damaging vibrations following the impact of a foot on the ground. When the foot of a running animal hits the ground, the impact sets the leg vibrating; the frequency of the vibrations is relatively high—for example, 30–40 Hz in horses—so many cycles of vibration would occur while the foot was on the ground if there were no damping.

The vibrations might cause damage, because bone and tendon are susceptible to fatigue failure. Fatigue in bones and

tendons is the accumulation of damage resulting from repeated application of stresses. Bone fatigue is responsible for the stress fractures suffered by both human athletes and racehorses, and tendon fatigue may explain at least some cases of tendonitis. Wilson et al. suggest that the very short muscle fibres protect both bones and tendons from fatigue damage by damping out vibrations...³

In short, a closer look at the anatomy of the horse revealed that the structures that had been considered as nonfunctional by evolutionists have very important functions. In other words, scientific progress demonstrated that what was considered to be evidence for evolution is in fact evidence for design.

Evolutionists should take a hint from this fact, if they are willing to do so. These comments made in *Nature* seem reasonable:

Wilson et al. have found an important role for a muscle that seemed to be the relic of a structure that had lost its function in the course of evolution. Their work makes us wonder whether other vestiges (such as the human appendix) are as useless as they seem.⁴

This is not surprising. The more we learn about nature, the more we see the evidence for God's creation. As Michael Behe notes, "the conclusion of design comes not from that we do not know, but from what we have learned over the past 50 years."⁵ And Darwinism turns out to be an argument from ignorance, or, in other words, an "atheism of the gaps."



1. The Merck Manual of Medical Information, Home edition, Merck & Co., Inc. The Merck Publishing Group, Rahway, New Jersey, 1997.

2. S. R. Scadding, "Do 'Vestigial Organs' Provide Evidence for Evolution?", *Evolutionary Theory*, vol. 5, May 1981, p. 173.

3. R. McNeill Alexander, "Biomechanics: Damper For Bad Vibrations", *Nature*, 20-27 December 2001

4. Ibid.

5. Behe's Seminar in Princeton, 1997