

391. If it be thus shown that the transformations which take place in the embryo are of the same nature, and of the same importance, as those which occur afterwards, the circumstance that some precede and others succeed birth cannot mark any radical distinction between them. Both are processes of the life of the individual. Now, as life does not commence at birth, but goes still farther back, it is quite clear that the modifications which supervene during the former period are essentially the same as, and continuous with, the later ones; and hence, that metamorphoses, far from being exceptional in the case of Insects, are one of the general features of the Animal Kingdom.

392. We are, therefore, perfectly entitled to say that all animals, without exception, undergo metamorphoses. Were it not so, we should be at a loss to conceive why animals of the same division present such wide differences; and that there should be, as in the class of Reptiles, some families that undergo important metamorphoses, (the frogs, for example,) and others in which nothing of the kind is observed after birth, (the Lizards and Tortoises.)

393. It is only by connecting the two kinds of transformations, namely, those which take place before, and those after birth, that we are furnished with the means of ascertaining the relative perfection of an animal; in other words, these transformations become, under such circumstances, a natural key to the gradation of types. At the same time, they will force upon us the conviction that there is an immutable principle presiding over all these changes, and regulating them in a peculiar manner in each animal.

394. These considerations are exceedingly important, not only from their bearing upon classification, but not less so from the application which may be made of them to the study of fossils. If we examine attentively the fishes that have been found in the different strata of the earth, we remark that