

The vertebral column continues into the upper lobe of the tail, which is much longer than the lower lobe, and is thus adapted to sustain the body in an inclined position, with the head and mouth nearest to the bottom.

Among existing cartilaginous Fishes, the vertebral column is prolonged into the caudal fin of Sturgeons and Sharks: the former of these perform the office of scavengers, to clear the water of impurities, and have no teeth, but feed by means of a soft leather-like mouth, capable of protrusion and contraction, on putrid vegetables and animal substances at the bottom; hence they have constant occasion to keep their bodies in the same inclined position as the extinct fossil Fishes, whose feeble brush-like teeth shew that they also fed on soft substances in similar situations.*

The Sharks employ their tail in another peculiar manner, to turn their body in order to bring the mouth, which is placed downwards beneath the head, into contact with their prey. We find an important provision in every animal to give a position of ease and activity to the head during the operation of feeding.†

* At the siege of Silistria, the Sturgeons of the Danube were observed to feed voraciously on the putrid bodies of the Turks and Russian soldiers that were cast into that river.

† This remarkable elongation of the superior lobe of the tail is found in every bony Fish of strata anterior to and including the Magnesian limestone; but in strata above this limestone the