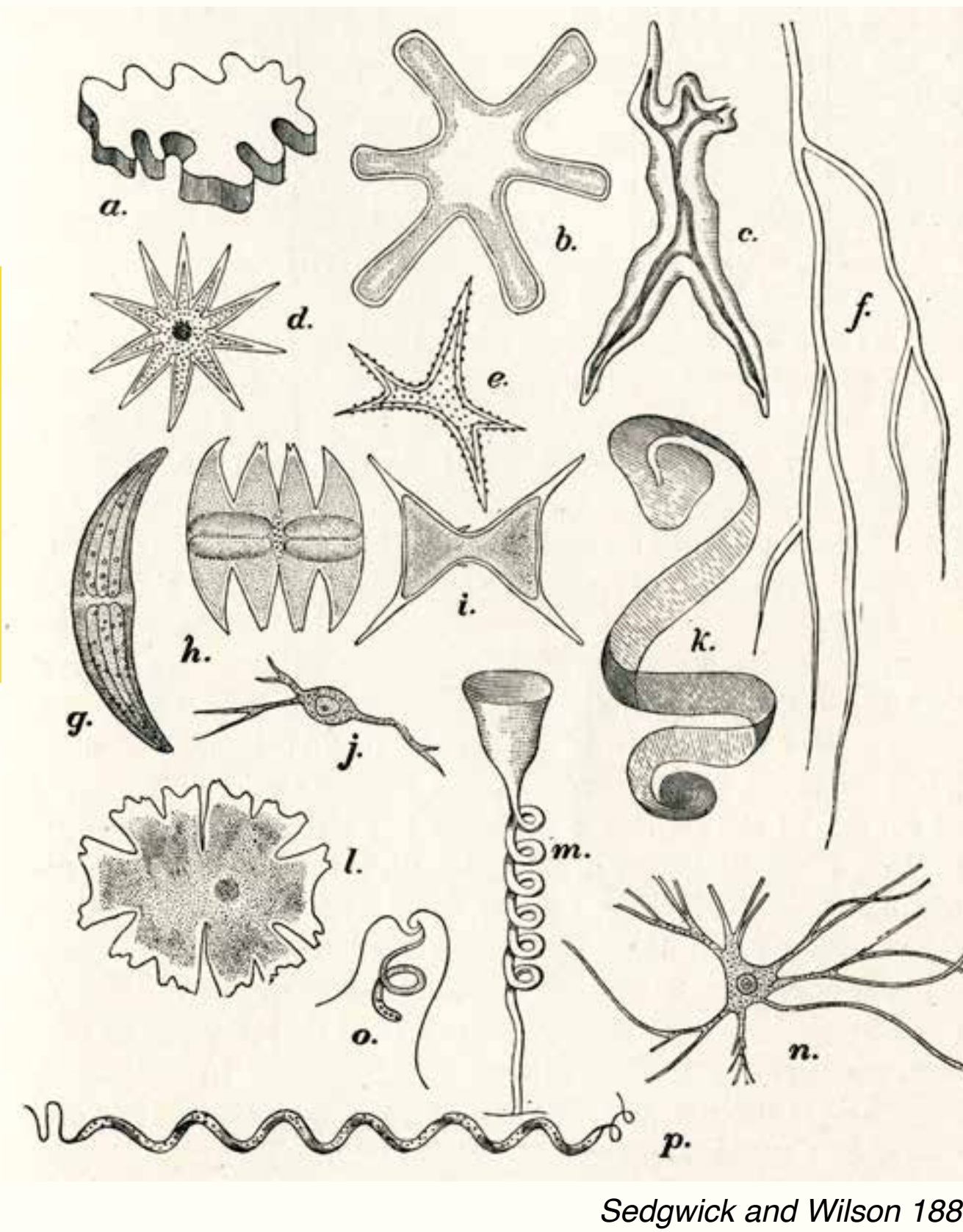
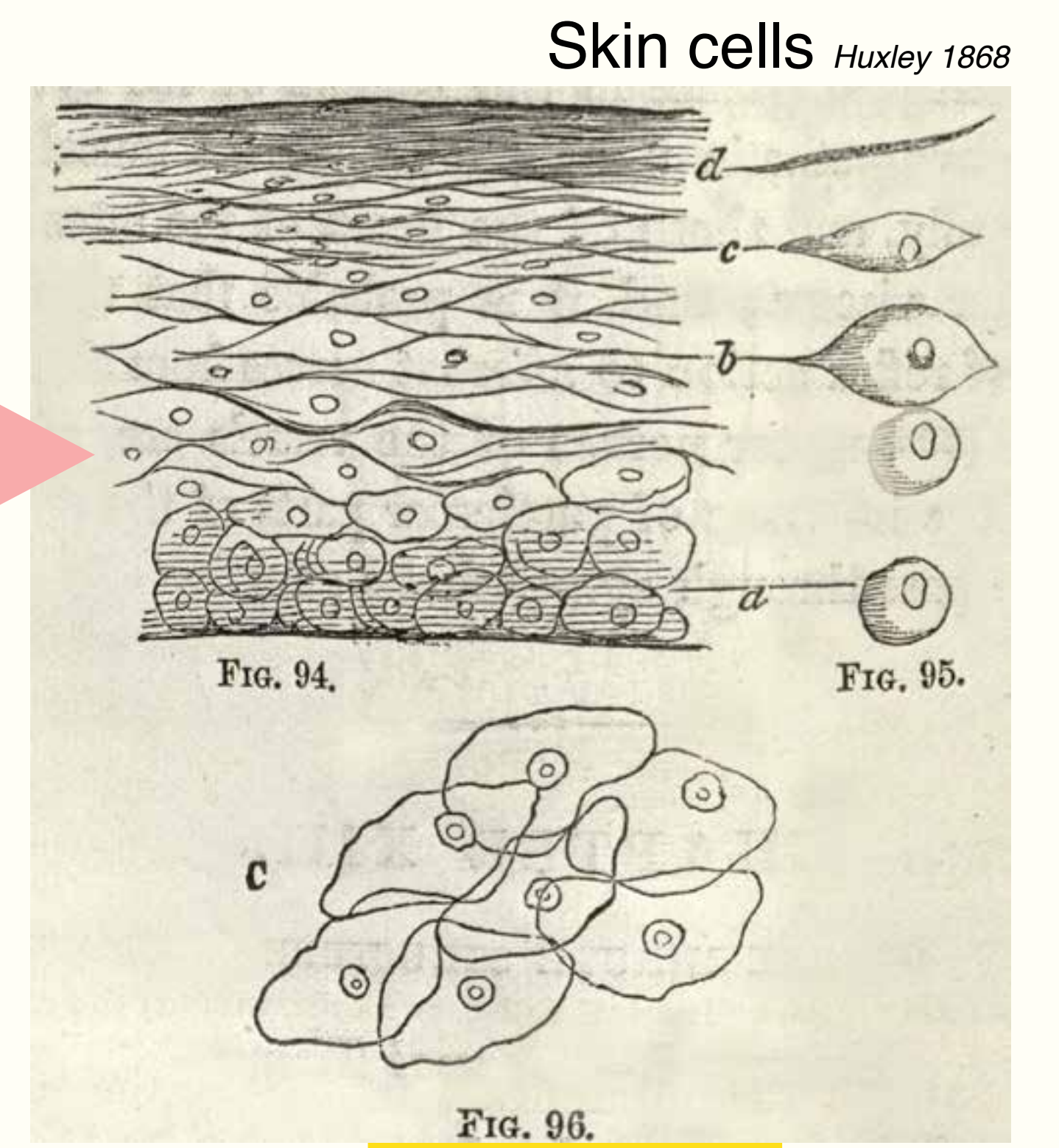


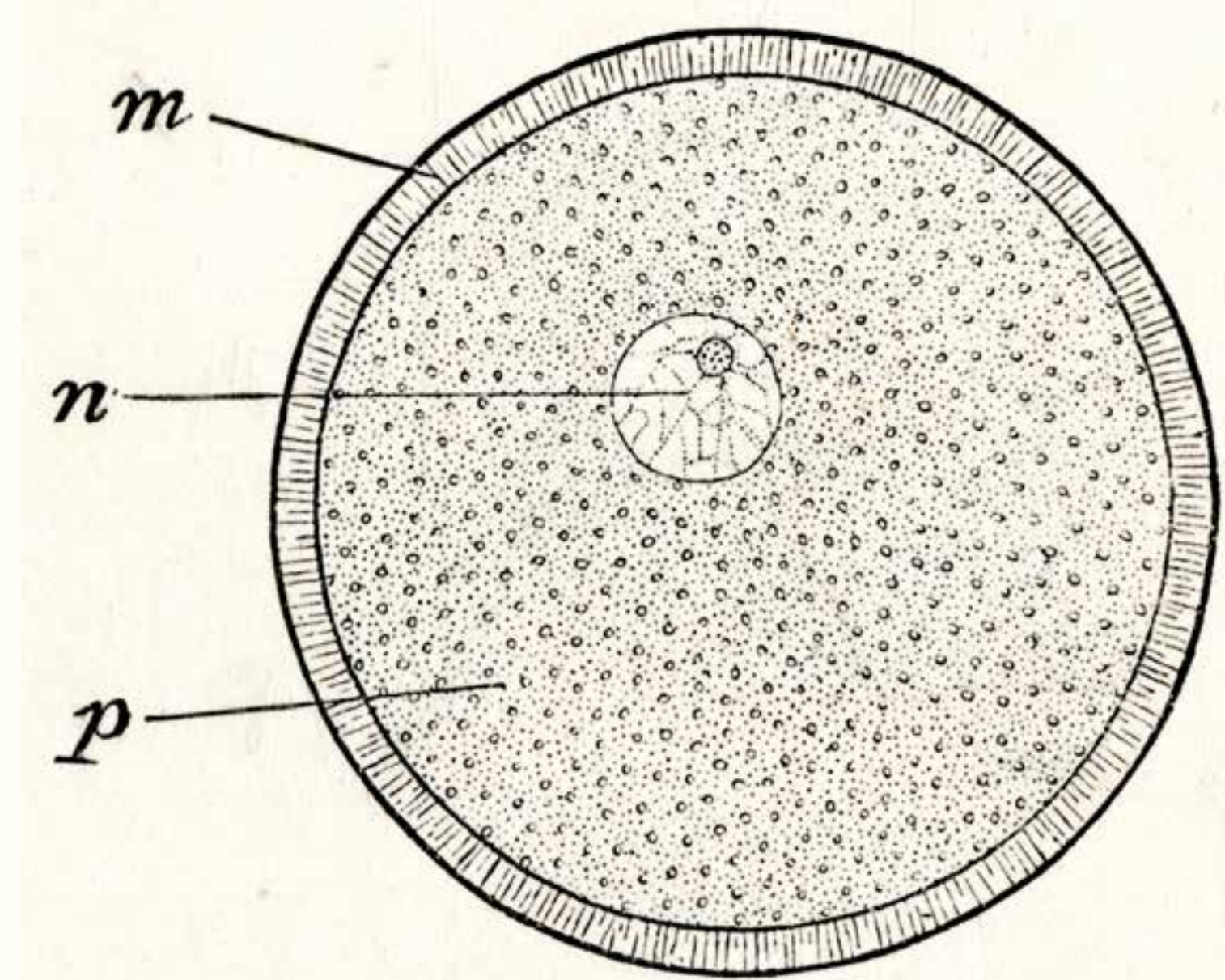
PRESENTING AND REPRESENTING "THE" CELL

Cell theory helped unify study of organisms into the single field called "biology." The earliest biology textbooks presented cells as fundamental units of life but focused on specific types of cell: skin cells made up skin, blood cells make up blood, and so on. The earliest images presented particular cells from specific organs and organisms.

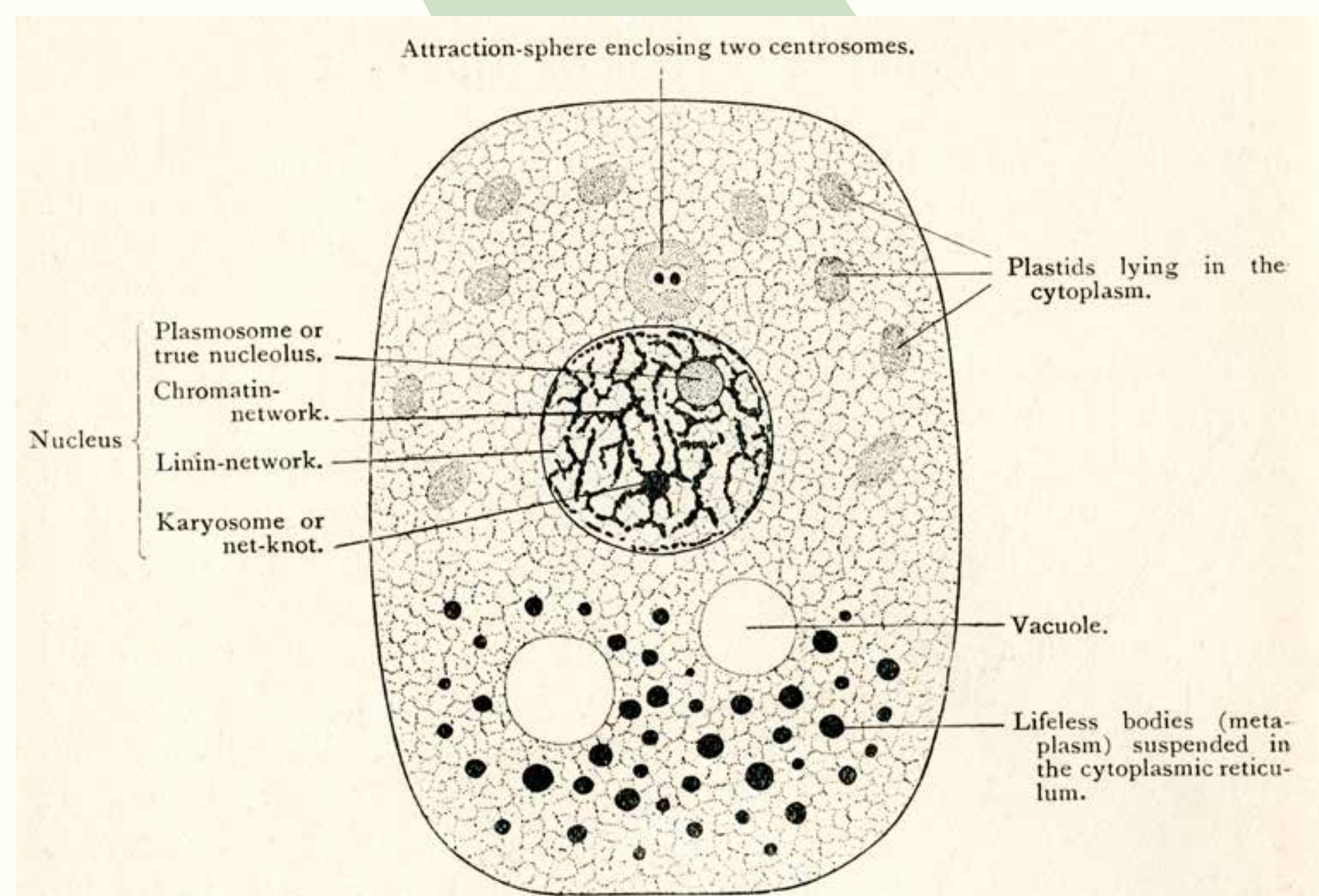


Specific cells showing a diversity of cell shapes

In the United States, textbooks moved beyond particular cells to represent cells through a diagram of a generalized cell.



A "slightly" diagrammatic starfish ovum

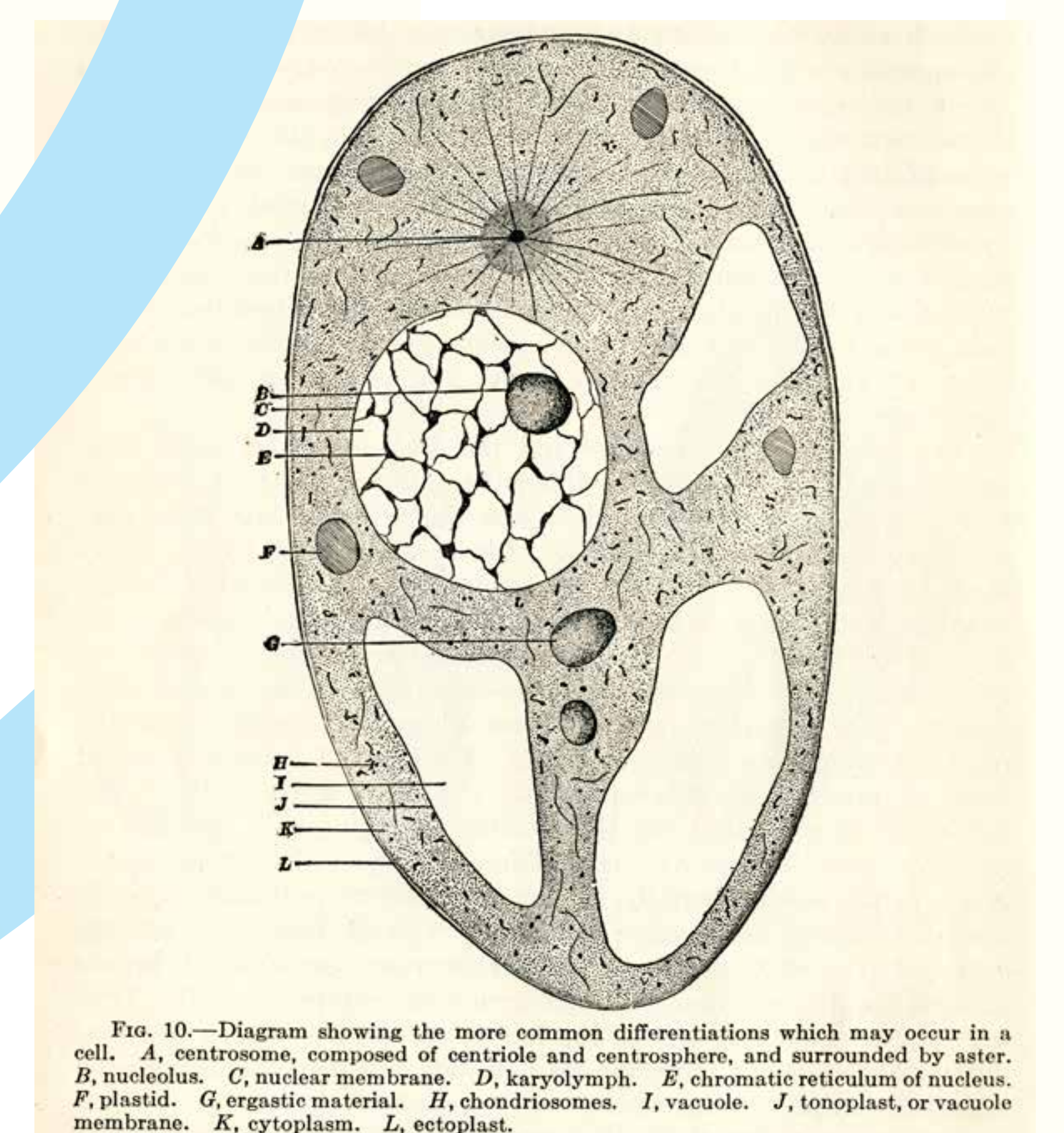
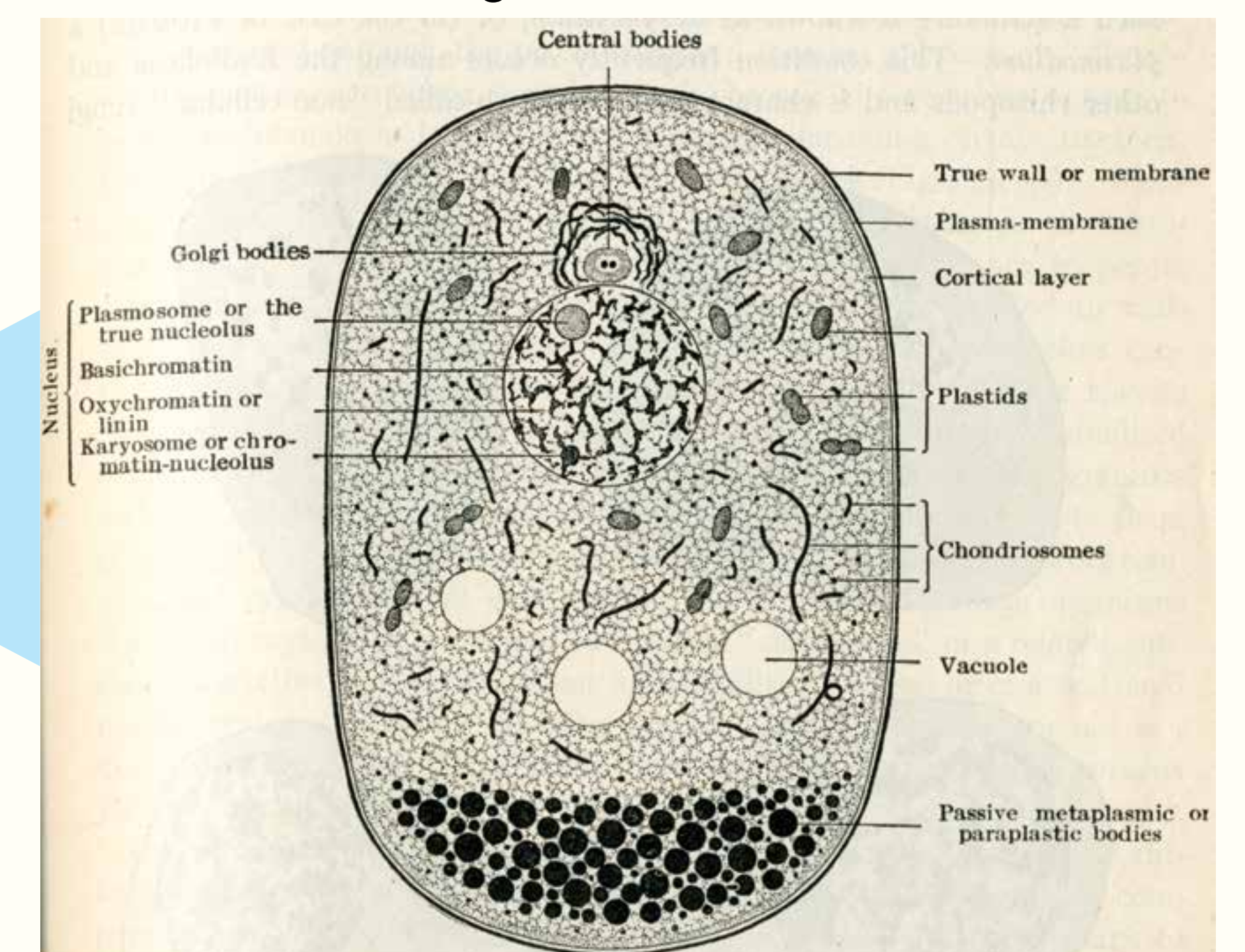


A fully diagrammatic cell Wilson 1896

These representations of "the" cell show abstract conceptions of a general cell, a thing with all the essential components a cell needs to be a cell, to do what cells do.

The diagrams evolved over time, offering the best available theoretical interpretations of general features of all cells.

Wilson's cell diagram, almost 2 decades later



A fully diagrammatic cell Sharp 1921

But what do cells do? And how do we know, since we can only see so much through the microscope?