

**THE UNITY OF MATTER. A
DIALOGUE ON THE RELATION
BETWEEN THE VARIOUS FORMS
OF MATTER WHICH AFFECT THE
SENSES**

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The unity of matter. A dialogue on the relation between the various forms of matter which affect the senses by Alex. Stephen Wilson

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ALEX. STEPHEN WILSON

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A DIALOGUE

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WHICH AFFECT THE SENSES.

BY

ALEX. STEPHEN WILSON.



LONDON:
SAMUEL HIGHLEY, 32, FLEET STREET.
1855.

"All analogy leads us to infer, and new discoveries continually direct our expectation to, the idea, that the most extensive laws to which we have hitherto attained, converge to some few simple and general principles, by which the whole of the material universe is sustained, and from which its infinitely varied phenomena emerge as the necessary consequences."

BABBAGE



38, 637

P R E F A C E.

HAVING endeavoured, without success, to obtain for the question discussed in the following pages the opinions of various scientific gentlemen, I have resolved, instead of intruding myself further in that way, to appeal to the public. I took the liberty of soliciting these opinions, in order that, should my views appear to competent judgment crude and hasty, and destitute of any catholic claim, I might avoid exposing them to public condemnation;—that is, supposing the public kind enough to notice them. But being firmly persuaded in my own mind, upon the most mature view which I have been able to arrive at in a long course of study, that the doctrine here submitted is not only true, but of considerable importance, I venture to put it forward for the verdict of others. Some of its more obvious consequences I have endeavoured to investigate in

a much larger work. Whether that work shall appear will depend on the reception met with by the present tract. There is but one thought here set forth, and that thought is, that the medium of seeing is elementally correlated to the media or objects of the other senses: in other words, that all forms of matter are derived from the same stock of elements. That is the proposition sought to be proved. It is virtually proposed by Newton in one of the questions at the end of his *Optics*; and that the reader may be the more disposed cautiously to estimate the proof it rests upon, he may be here informed that its chief and most startling consequence, if true, is, that the creation and constant enlargement of our globe and its planetary kindred is *the* very work which is being carried on in the system at this moment. We have to search neither the fabulous past nor the nebulous distant for the method of God's creative agency, but to stand where we are, and interrogate Nature as to what that work is which she is continually plying here. And she may inform us, from the new ground taken, that 'a

globe is not created, in our sense of the term,— is not finished and set up in its ultimate position and dimensions when it has become a round ball, and has reached a diameter of eight thousand or eighty thousand miles. If our plain and intelligible optical, or rather physical, proposition be a fact, one of its necessary consequences is nothing less than that the body at the centre of our system is being decomposed, while its effete matter subserves the reverse process in respect of the bodies circulating about it—with a direct reference to that decomposition. Lord Rosse's discoveries, if they have not refuted Laplace's cosmogony, have taken away the foundations on which it was originally built; so that, in strictness, the theory ought now to have no existence; since, had our present knowledge of the objects on which it was founded existed in Sir W. Herschel's time, that theory would never have been grounded on these objects. The cosmogony of Moses leaves the *method* of globe manufacture an open question. We have gone abroad for creation, as if nothing so grand could be transpiring at home; but since we are

in want of a cosmogony just now, there will be no harm, before launching out into space again, of inquiring a little more particularly what that work really is which is going on here. The present attempt is not so much an attempt to settle the question treated of, as to open up what, I confess, appears to me a new and extensive field of investigation; and I trust it may merit a candid consideration, even should it be denied any higher character than that of hypothesis. I will not conceal, however, that it assumes to be founded upon experiment and observation; and that, if the inference be false, it is not false because a hypothesis, but because it is an illogical induction.

A. S. W.

BOSTON BY OGDRAIN,
Nov. 20, 1854.

THE UNITY OF MATTER.

Sylvius. We have agreed, I think, that as regards the material universe, the causes of phenomena are not to be sought by us in our present state of existence, beyond the material world itself;—what then, I would ask you, Mentor, is the object of natural science?

Mentor. By persons pursuing science for different purposes of practice or speculation, different ends will be proposed. But, in my opinion, the final object which the man of science—regarded as a philosopher—consciously or unconsciously follows after, is such a view of the material economy as shall give entire satisfaction to the mind.

Gravius. But what proof should we have that a view which afforded a mental satisfaction, should be truly representative of the reality of things?

Ment. Although the constant aim of natural science is to arrive at a view of the material world, in which our mental picture should be an exact counterpart, or echo of that world, yet we can only appeal to our senses in confirmation of the knowledge we have already acquired by these senses; but