

**PLURI-CELLULAR  
MAN; PP. 1-113**

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Pluri-Cellular Man; pp. 1-113 by C. A. Stephens

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**C. A. STEPHENS**

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WHENCE AND WHAT IS THE INTELLECT, OR "SOUL"?

WHAT BECOMES OF THE SOUL?

IS IT POSSIBLE TO SAVE THE SOUL?

FROM

THE BIOLOGICAL STANDPOINT.

BY

*Revised*  
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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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IN a small volume published in 1888, the author set forth the Sentient Hypothesis of matter at considerable length, from which the following paragraphs may be here quoted : —

“ We conceive of matter as sentient, and that its sentience is a constant, constantly expended in motion and every form of dynamic energy, and as constantly renewed in the cycle of the universe. Sentience is the origin and end of all natural phenomena. Matter moves and returns to itself through the great cycle of universal phenomena. Matter possesses the elements of *feeling*; hence the universe has everywhere a low degree of sense, — *sense* to proceed toward an object; and this sense to proceed toward an object is that which gives semblance of design in nature.

“ Gravitation and natural phenomena result from the primary sentient impulse : a static impulse which constitutes matter what we behold it to be.

“ What seems the inertia of matter is a condition of equilibrium; what appears to be dead matter is only matter at a deadlock, from which it may be released to live. This *living*, that is to say, primarily sentient, property is eternal to and inseparable from the ultimate atom, a *constant* amid the changing phenomena of sun and world systems; and even when locked in the apparently dead clod, or stick, or stone, the initial atoms are still living atoms, robbed of not one whit of their static ability to feel and to live. Such is the present conception.

“ Philosophy taught much concerning certain supposititious properties of matter, and has portrayed its impenetrability, porosity, extensibility, ductility, inertia, *et al.* These were held to be its prime properties. As a necessity of theological tenets, matter was depicted as the lifeless material of a manufactured universe.

"But the philosophy of to-day postulates matter, not as lifeless but as living; not the inert substance of a created world, but the living substance of a self-creating and self-sustaining universe; that matter is itself *creative* of natural phenomena by virtue of that static attribute which resides at the core of every atom.

"Atomicity, however, is a depth of matter of which we yet know little; the *life* of unorganized matter is expressed mainly in the effects which we term gravitation and the natural forces. Of atoms such as probably radiate from the sun, no apparatus yet devised by man enables us to obtain definition in terms of weight or size.

"We know that we stand upon something solid and resistant to touch. This is the testimony of sense. Whether the atoms be 'physical points,' centres of radiation of energy, is as debatable to-day as in Berkeley's time. Nor is it likely that a solution of this problem can be immediately reached, since all our knowledge points to a well-nigh infinite subdivision and rarefaction of matter. But, as an incident of the broadening of knowledge in this particular, there may be remarked the return of scientific opinion from the extremes of the dynamic hypothesis toward the Newtonian doctrine of matter. To treat of *force* as something distinct from matter is a solecism.

"That the sentient theory does, in very truth, found on a lower basis of fact and discloses a law of phenomena not hitherto set forth in any scheme of nature, no one who will observe its application to physical and vital problems, thus far obscure, can long doubt. It portrays a universe, acting of itself, without interference. It presents as 'unknowable,' or as yet unknown, but one thing — *matter*. The sentient or vital hypothesis of the universe assumes, primarily, that matter, the basis substance of sensible nature, is creative of the universe by virtue of a single primary property — *sentience*.

"The philosophic argument for this hypothesis is the same given for every doctrine of either matter or deity, since men first reasoned; namely, its simplicity, consisting in (1) the fact that it accounts more fully for all phenomena than any other hypothesis; and (2) that it accounts for such phenomena with the assumption of fewest unknown quantities. And herein lies all the *a priori* proof that has ever been advanced for any

world hypothesis, or that ever can be advanced in evidence. We reason, and can reason on no other basis.

"The sentient particles *feel*, and from this eternal well-spring all phenomena, physical and vital, move forth. Rather there are no physical phenomena in the sense of an insentient force. All motion originates from the elementary sentience. Hence, in organized matter, we contemplate, not the miracle of an insentient force transforming itself into sentience and intelligence, but simply the raising-up of this primary sentience of matter to more full expression. The organism of any living creature is the instrument developed and employed by the inherent sentience of its component particles to obtain wider, fuller feeling.

"The moral effect of this later conception of matter and of nature is strong and far-reaching.

"It means kinship and brotherhood with all nature about us. It means love and sympathy, not only for all living things, but for earth, air, and sky, for the great sentient environment out of which we have emerged, and a part of which we are. For it is when we are in such sympathy and co-relation with the universe around us that we live in fullest measure. Alienation is death. We die as we grow callous to the world around us, and that is a false creed which instructs to forgetfulness of earth and a direction of the heart and mind to a foreign state of existence. Such alienation is a hastening on to the apathy of old age. We are to be taught to live, not to die. It is a most hopeful fact that all the enormous falsehood which forms the burden and the shame of literature, namely, that earth is a dreary place and life a miserable bourn, has never really alienated the great warm heart of humanity from this dear old earth, the birthplace and home of all the human generations."

This doctrine of matter (by no means new, since it was the doctrine of Gassendi in 1640, of Tyndall in 1870; and in the classic era, of Epikuros, Demokritos and Lucretius) was variously and unfavorably criticised in 1889, as a "recent form of scientific materialism." It is not without gratification, therefore, that after three