

**OUTLINE OF SIR WILLIAM  
HAMILTON'S  
PHILOSOPHY, A  
TEXTBOOK FOR STUDENTS**

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Outline of Sir William Hamilton's philosophy, a textbook for students by James McCosh & J. Clark Murray

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**JAMES MCCOSH & J. CLARK MURRAY**

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# OUTLINE

OF

## SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON'S PHILOSOPHY.

A TEXT-BOOK FOR STUDENTS.

BY THE

REV. J. CLARK MURRAY,

PROFESSOR OF MENTAL AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, CANADA.

With an Introduction,

BY THE

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To the Memory  
OF  
SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON,  
THIS ESSAY  
IN THE EXPOSITION OF HIS PHILOSOPHY

Is Inscribed

BY

A GRATEFUL PUPIL.



"On Earth there is nothing great but Man;  
In Man there is nothing great but Mind."

## P R E F A C E .

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THE primary object of this work is to provide a convenient text-book in philosophy; The labors of Sir William Hamilton as a professor formed generally the most powerful influence in the philosophical education of those who came within their reach; and a similar influence has extended into wider circles through his writings. It seemed to me, therefore, that his philosophy might still be made a valuable instrument of philosophical culture.

The chief difficulty in the way of this lay in the selection of one of his works, suitable for use as a text-book. A very slight acquaintance with these is sufficient to show that none of them by itself presents a complete view of his philosophical opinions in systematic order.<sup>1</sup> The *Lectures on Metaphysics*,

<sup>1</sup> For many readers it may not be unnecessary to enumerate the works of Sir William Hamilton. (1.) His edition of *Reid's Works* (1846) contains, besides many valuable footnotes, a number of supplementary dissertations on various philosophical subjects. Only a few of the intended dissertations were ever completed; but since his death his editors have published the fragmentary materials he had collected for the dissertations which had been left unfinished. (2.) The articles which he had contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* were collected into one volume, with numerous additions, under the title of *Discussions in Philosophy and Literature, Education and University Reform* (1852). (3.) The lectures, which he had been in the habit of delivering to his classes, were published posthumously; the *Lectures on Metaphysics*, in 1859; the *Lectures on Logic*, in 1860.

which contain the fullest account of his philosophy, and from which, therefore, the largest extracts have been drawn for the present work, besides being devoted mainly to one subdivision of his system, fail to give his matured views, or the matured expression of his views, on some subjects, while the discussion of many points is overladen with a mass of extraneous matter, which is generally confusing to the beginner and unnecessary for the comprehension of Hamilton's own system. I have, therefore, thought it advisable to attempt the systematic exhibition of his philosophical opinions without regard to the order or the mode of treatment which he has followed in any of his writings.

In doing so, however, it was necessary to adopt some order; and it seemed to me that I had no right to adopt any other than that which the philosopher has himself suggested in his distribution of the philosophical sciences,<sup>1</sup> though he has nowhere been able to carry it out. This distribution may possess comparatively little merit, and has certainly exerted no influence in directing the course of speculative thought in Europe or America, such as has flowed from Hegel's or from Comte's classification of the sciences; but the system of Hamilton would be inadequately represented by following any other course than that which I have adopted.

With regard to the liberties which I have taken in the composition of this *Outline*, I may remark, in the first place, that it has frequently been necessary to transfer passages from their original contexts, and that, in doing so, I have introduced them into their new contexts by such connecting particles and phrases as seemed most appropriate. I have

<sup>1</sup> See *Lectures on Metaphysics*, VII.