

**REVIEW OF THE WORK OF MR.  
JOHN STUART MILL ENTITLED  
'EXAMINATION OF SIR WILLIAM  
HAMILTON'S PHILOSOPHY'**

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Review of the Work of Mr. John Stuart Mill Entitled 'Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy' by George Grote

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**GEORGE GROTE**

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# REVIEW

OF

THE WORK OF MR JOHN STUART MILL,  
ENTITLED, 'EXAMINATION OF  
SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON'S PHILOSOPHY.'



BY GEORGE GROTE,

AUTHOR OF

'THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT GREECE,'  
'PLATO AND THE OTHER COMPANIONS OF SOCRATES,' ETC.

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*An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's  
Philosophy, and of the Principal Philosophi-  
cal Questions discussed in his Writings.*  
By JOHN STUART MILL. London: Long-  
mans. 1865.

THE work bearing the above title is an octavo volume, consisting of twenty-eight chapters, and five hundred and sixty pages. This is no great amount of print; but the amount of matter contained in it is prodigious, and the quality of that matter such as to require a full stretch of attention. Mr Mill gives his readers no superfluous sentences, scarcely even a superfluous word, above what is necessary to express his meaning briefly and clearly. Of such a book no complete abstract can be given in the space to which we are confined.

To students of philosophy—doubtless but a minority among the general circle of English readers—this work comes recommended by the strongest claims both of interest and instruction. It presents in direct antithesis two most conspicuous representatives of the modern speculative mind of England—Sir W. Hamilton and Mr John Stuart Mill.

Sir W. Hamilton has exercised powerful influence over the stream of thought during the present generation. The lectures on Logic and Metaphysics delivered by him at Edinburgh, for twenty years, determined the view taken of those subjects by a large number of aspiring young students, and determined that view for many of them permanently and irrevocably.\* Several emi-

\* Mr Mansel and Mr Veitch, the editors of Sir W. Hamilton's Lectures on Metaphysics, posthumously published, say in their preface (p. xiii.)—

‘For twenty years—from 1836 to 1856—the courses of logic and metaphysics were the means through which



nent teachers and writers of the present day are proud of considering themselves his disciples, enunciate his doctrines in greater or less proportion, and seldom contradict him without letting it be seen that they depart unwillingly from such a leader. Various

Sir William Hamilton sought to discipline and imbue with his philosophical opinions the numerous youth who gathered from Scotland and other countries to his classroom; and while, by these prelections, the author supplemented, developed, and moulded the national philosophy, leaving thereon the ineffaceable impress of his genius and learning, he, at the same time and by the same means, exercised over the intellects and feelings of his pupils an influence which, for depth, feeling, and elevation, was certainly never surpassed by that of any philosophical instructor. Among his pupils there are not a few who, having lived for a season under the constraining power of his intellect, and been led to reflect on those great questions regarding the character, origin, and bounds of human knowledge, which his teaching stirred and quickened, bear the memory of their beloved and revered instructor inseparably blended with what is highest in their present intellectual life, as well as in their practical aims and aspirations.'

new phrases and psychological illustrations have obtained footing in treatises of philosophy, chiefly from his authority. We do not number ourselves among his followers; but we think his influence on philosophy was in many ways beneficial. He kept up the idea of philosophy as a subject to be studied from its own points of view: a dignity which in earlier times it enjoyed, perhaps, to mischievous excess, but from which in recent times it has far too much receded—especially in England. He performed the great service of labouring strenuously to piece together the past traditions of philosophy, to re-discover those which had been allowed to drop into oblivion, and to make out the genealogy of opinions as far as negligent predecessors had still left the possibility of doing so.

The forty-six lectures on *Metaphysics*, and the thirty-five lectures on *Logic*, published by Messrs Mansel and Veitch, constitute the biennial course actually delivered by Sir W.

Hamilton in the Professorial Chair. They ought therefore to be looked at chiefly with reference to the minds of youthful hearers, as preservatives against that mischief forcibly described by Rousseau — ‘L’inhabitude de penser dans la jeunesse en ôte la capacité pendant le reste de la vie.’

Now, in a subject so abstract, obscure, and generally unpalatable, as Logic and Metaphysics, the difficulty which the teacher finds in inspiring interest is extreme. That Sir W. Hamilton overcame such difficulty with remarkable success, is the affirmation of his two editors; and our impression, as readers of his lectures, disposes us to credit them. That Sir W. Hamilton should have done this effectively is in itself sufficient to stamp him as a meritorious professor—as a worthy successor to the chair of Dugald Stewart, whose unrivalled perfection in that department is attested by every one. Many a man who ultimately adopted speculative