

# **OUTLINES OF METAPHYSICS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649277131

Outlines of metaphysics by John S. Mackenzie

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Cover @ 2017

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BY

JOHN S. MACKENZIE

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SECOND EDITION REVISED

81862  
3/5/07

London

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1906

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First Edition, 1902.  
Second Edition, 1906.

GLASGOW: PRINTED AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS BY  
ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.

TO

EDWARD CAIRD, Litt. D., LL.D., D.C.L.,  
Master of Balliol

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED AS A  
MARK OF REVERENCE AND GRATITUDE





## PREFACE

THE publication of so small a book, dealing with so vast a subject, certainly calls for some explanation. It is the outcome of a larger plan—the *ridiculus mus*, as some may think, that has issued from a too ambitious undertaking. I had promised a good many years ago to write a book for Sonnenschein's Library of Philosophy, giving a comprehensive and connected survey of philosophical first principles, as these appear in the light of the most recent developments of thought. This promise may at some time be fulfilled; but the duties of a teacher of Philosophy in a provincial College are not favourable to large constructive efforts; and several circumstances have made this particular attempt appear less urgent than it once did. The publication of Mr. Bradley's great work on *Appearance and Reality* might well give pause to any one who had a similar design in view. If his brilliant dialectic and subtle speculative insight had failed to produce a convincing scheme of philosophic truth, the prospect was not very encouraging for the smaller fry. On the other hand, so far as he had succeeded, further attempts in the same direction became unnecessary

It was partly for this reason, as well as for the other that I have indicated, that I decided, for a time at least, to abandon the larger scheme, and attempt something smaller and more feasible. It seemed to me that a short introductory book might at least be of some use in helping students to a more easy understanding of the larger ones—a book that should aim chiefly at indicating the place and nature of the various metaphysical problems, rather than at thrashing them out in detail. The difficulty of metaphysical study lies largely, I think, in the bewildering way in which one problem rises out of another, like hills appearing over one another's crests. The mere attempt to put them in some sort of order may have a certain value. Of course a book that attempts to do little more than this cannot be of much use to the philosophical investigator, who aims at thinking out some special problem. Nor can it be expected to have any great attraction for the general reader who is interested in philosophical inquiries. Such a reader will usually desire to find solutions of difficulties, rather than indications of the points at which they lie and slight suggestions of methods by which they may be dealt with. Such a book as I refer to would be chiefly serviceable to the student who is just beginning seriously to face the great issues that are included under the term *Metaphysics*. A student at this stage is apt to lose his way, and often to lose heart at the same time, in the midst of a multitude of disconnected problems, and of divergent systems that seek by various methods to deal with them. The histories of Philosophy do not wholly remove this

difficulty; and even the Introductions to Philosophy, that have become so numerous in recent years, do not appear—partly, perhaps, because they are most often of foreign extraction—to meet the needs of the ordinary English reader. It seemed to me that, in view of the recent constructive work that has been attempted in our own country, it ought now to be possible, in a quite short sketch, to give enough indication of the nature of the problems to enable the student to find his bearings among them. This is what I have here tried to do.

The chief difficulty of such an attempt lies in the necessity of combining two requirements that appear almost incompatible with one another. A text-book that is to be of any real value to the student must be alive. To point to the various problems as if they were specimens in a museum, would obviously be to fail entirely in the object that is aimed at—viz., that of bringing out the vital relationships of the various points that have to be considered. On the other hand, a text-book of this kind must not aim at superseding, in the minds of those who use it, the works to which it is an introduction. I have kept both these points steadily in view; but I can hardly hope that I have been completely successful in avoiding the dangers to which I refer. My aim at least has been to produce a book which is a living unity within itself, and which yet points continually outwards to the larger life of the speculative thought of the world.

The general method of treatment that I have adopted is genetic. The application of this method to Philosophy