

**IDEALISM: AN ESSAY,
METAPHYSICAL
AND CRITICAL**

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Idealism: An Essay, Metaphysical and Critical by William Graham

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WILLIAM GRAHAM

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BY

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P R E F A C E .

THE following Essay is chiefly an attempt to elucidate, and to show the connexion between, two great conceptions of the universe, the one emanating from Berkeley and the other from Hegel. It tries also to show the general meaning of Idealism, about which in the British Islands there is still, although Berkeley wrote a century and a half ago, the strangest confusion of thought. The want of comprehension of Berkeley's Idealism in particular, even by very distinguished men, is still more surprising; but that such is the case I hope to establish clearly in the last chapter against a number of Critics, including Hamilton and Mansel, the latest and best exponents of the Scotch school of Philosophy. I have also tried to maintain Berkeley's position against the adverse attitude of some German thinkers, in particular against that of Kant.

The Table of Contents will show more clearly what the work attempts, much of which, I believe, has not been done before. The most hoped for or aimed at is, that the leading thoughts of two great thinkers will be somewhat more clearly apprehended than before, and the nullity of some of the adverse Criticisms, especially those against Berkeley, clearly shown. As regards Hegel, it is only the real result which is offered, and in part defended; not the logical evolution of his system, which is extremely abstract, hard to be understood, and is already given in Stirling's "Secret of Hegel;" while the real result is both more important and more intelligible. The arguments here employed, though mostly taken from the principles, are seldom to be found directly in the words of the thinkers whose thoughts are chiefly here illustrated, and in such case I will accept whatever praise or blame may attach to them, as being shaped by myself from principles involved in the Idealisms of Berkeley and Hegel, considered as general systems of Thought. But the seed-thought belongs mostly to Berkeley or to Hegel, and only the shaping of the argument for their defence against their Critics is original, just as

a pleader's speech may be so regarded. The last chapter is entirely devoted to a refutation of Berkeley's Critics, and as this was the work in which Hamilton and Mansel—the creators and chief advocates of Natural Realism, the system now opposed to Berkeley's Idealism—most delighted, it is hoped that it may be considered fair to render to them again the measure they meted out so often to others.

The doctrines of several great thinkers are here attacked, but it is generally in defence of what I consider deposited and fully established Truth, which cannot be considered as on its trial for ever. I do not indeed consider refutation but criticism, i. e.—the elimination of truth from blended error, the filiation of the grown thought to its germinal form, the reconciliation of two aspects of the One Truth—the proper work of Philosophy to-day, but yet it is quite necessary to refute the refuters. I am tempted to say to these refuters that no great thinker has ever been really refuted—not Spinoza, nor Locke, nor Berkeley, nor Hume, nor Hegel—for the immortal features of Truth were

shown to each of these seekers, but unveiled successively more and more, while the full glory of her face is reserved for the stronger and clearer eyes of her future followers. And besides, her various aspects arose partly from refraction through different mental atmospheres, and partly from different individual positions; while to see free from distortion, and to see from a common centre supposes the best Reason of the race to be what it only tends to become, one and perfect, like to Truth, its own proper object, which is also one.

As regards the style of writing in the following pages, I am aware of a well-founded objection, which might fairly be made, and for which some apology may seem to be needed. It is, that there are signs of haste and want of care in selection and finish of phrase and sentence, and to this I must plead guilty; my excuse being that in addition to such general reasons as may urge any one to lay their ideas before the public, there happened here to be a special one, compelling instant haste, during the composition of the greater part of the Essay, and permitting no hesitation in the choice