

**THE PROBLEM OF PHILOSOPHY AT THE
PRESENT TIME: AN INTRODUCTORY
ADDRESS DELIVERED TO THE
PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649249961

The Problem of Philosophy at the Present Time: An Introductory Address Delivered to the Philosophical Society of the University of Edinburgh by Edward Caird

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

EDWARD CAIRD

**THE PROBLEM OF PHILOSOPHY AT THE
PRESENT TIME: AN INTRODUCTORY
ADDRESS DELIVERED TO THE
PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH**

1007

THE PROBLEM OF PHILOSOPHY AT
THE PRESENT TIME.

THE
PROBLEM OF PHILOSOPHY
AT THE PRESENT TIME:

*AN INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS DELIVERED TO THE
PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF EDINBURGH.*

BY

EDWARD CAIRD, LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW;
LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR OF MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

GLASGOW:
JAMES MACLEHOSE & SONS, ST. VINCENT STREET.
Publishers to the University.
1881.

B
804
.C14

Gift
From the Library of
R. W. Whaley
8-11-43

THE PROBLEM OF PHILOSOPHY AT THE PRESENT TIME.

IN complying with the request which you have done me the honour to make, to deliver the introductory address to this Society, I think that, instead of treating of any special philosophical subject, it will be more profitable to make some general remarks on the nature and objects of the study to which the Society is devoted. I propose, therefore, to say something as to the general problem of philosophy, and the special forms which that problem has taken in recent times. In doing so, it will not be possible for me to avoid an appearance of dogmatism, as I must make some assertions which are much disputed, the objections to which I shall not have time to discuss. But instead of interpolating weakening phrases, such as "it humbly appears to me," and the like, I venture simply to make this apology once for

all, and to ask you to adopt, for the time, a point of view which may not be your own. Afterwards you can avenge yourselves for this temporary submission by subjecting my words to what criticism you think fit. A philosophic temper is shown, above all things, in the power of entering into the views of another, and taking them for the moment almost as if they were your own, without prejudice to the subsequent critical reaction, which will be effective just in proportion to the degree of your previous sympathetic appreciation of the ideas criticised.

What, then, is the task of philosophy? What is its task in general, and how is that task modified by the circumstances of the present time? To the first of these questions, I answer that, stated in very general terms, the task of philosophy is to gain, or rather perhaps to regain, such a view of things as shall reconcile us to the world and to ourselves. The need for philosophy arises out of the broken harmony of a spiritual life, the different elements or factors of which seem to be set in irreconcilable opposition to each other; in which, for example, the religious consciousness, the consciousness of the infinite, is at war with the secular consciousness, the consciousness of the

finite ; or again, the consciousness of the self, with the consciousness of the external world. It is easy to see this, if we reflect on the nature of the controversies which most trouble us at present. They all, directly or indirectly, turn upon the difficulty of reconciling the three great terms of thought,—the world, self, and God : the difficulty of carrying out to their legitimate consequences what seem to be our most firmly based convictions as to any one of these factors in our intellectual life, without rejecting in whole or in part the claims of the others. Thus, for example, many writers in the present time find it impossible to admit the truth and solidity of the principles and methods of physical science in relation to the material world, without extending their application beyond that world. Yet, if we make this extension, and treat these methods and principles as universal, we inevitably reduce consciousness, thought, and will, to the level of physical phenomena, and make even their existence an insoluble problem. Others, again, find it difficult to assert the truth, that the consciousness of self enters into all our experience, without reducing that experience to a series of states of the individual soul. And others, like Mr. Spencer and Professor