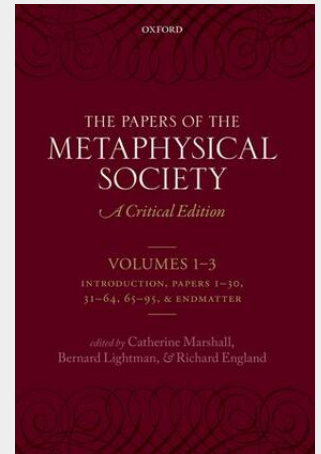


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The Papers of the Metaphysical Society, 1869-1880

A Critical Edition

The Metaphysical Society was founded in 1869 at the instigation of James Knowles (editor of the Contemporary Review and then of the Nineteenth Century) with a view to "collect, arrange, and diffuse Knowledge (whether objective or subjective) of mental and moral phenomena" (first resolution of the Society in April 1869). The Society was a private club which gathered together a latter-day clerisy. Building on the tradition of the Cambridge Apostles, they elected talented members from across the Victorian intellectual spectrum: Bishops, one Cardinal, philosophers, men of science, literary figures, and politicians. The Society included in its 62 members prominent figures such as T. H. Huxley, William Gladstone, Walter Bagehot, Henry Edward Manning, John Ruskin and Alfred Lord Tennyson. The papers they produced are key primary sources which shed new light on the ideas of their authors on the burning subjects of the day, ranging from the existence and personality of God to the nature of conscience or the existence of the soul. They are a legacy of a period when intellectuals were wondering how, and what, to believe in a time of social change, spiritual crisis, and scientific progress. The dissolution of the Society in 1880 did not diminish the value of the papers: they illustrate a tradition of private, open discussion among famous men of the most widely varying views; they offer detailed insight into the evolution of the relationships between different schools of Victorian scientific and religious thought; and they bring to light heretofore under-represented points of conflict and harmony. All 95 papers are included, accompanied by introductions and scholarly notes that set each paper into their proper context.



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