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William Rowan Hamilton, Poet and Mathematician

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Since the advent of Quantum Mechanics the name of William Rowan Hamilton is familiar to every physicist. However, for multiple reasons the very original conceptions underlying Hamilton's work went largely unnoticed during the XX century and today are practically forgotten. In this communication I will trace a portrait of Hamilton's life and work, emphasizing how his Kantian philosophy of mathematics impressed a peculiar character to his more mature mathematical works. In particular, I will make a focus on the conceptions underlying Hamilton's geometric theory of quaternions, the first theory of a four-dimensional space-time.

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