



PAUL GRICE

# Herbert Paul Grice

## 1913–1988

PAUL GRICE was born 15 March 1913 in Birmingham, the elder son of Herbert Grice, businessman and musician, and his wife, Mabel Felton, a schoolmistress. He died on 28 August 1988, in Berkeley, California.

The salient facts of his career are easily stated. He was educated first at Clifton College, Bristol, where he was head boy and also distinguished in music and sports, and second, at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he was awarded first class honours in classical honour moderations (1933) and *literae humaniores* (1935) and of which he later became an honorary fellow (1988). After a year as assistant master at Rossall School, Lancashire, and then two years as Harmsworth Senior Scholar at Merton College, Oxford, he was appointed lecturer and in 1939 Fellow and tutor in philosophy at St John's College, Oxford, and university lecturer in the sub-faculty of philosophy. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1966 and became an Honorary Fellow of St John's in 1980.

During the Second World War he served in the Royal Navy in the Atlantic theatre and then in Admiralty intelligence from 1940 to 1945. In 1942 he married Kathleen, daughter of George Watson, naval architect, and sister of Steven Watson, a St John's colleague and historian.

After the war he soon became known as a philosopher of great originality and independence and was frequently invited to the United States where he held visiting appointments at Harvard, Brandeis, Stanford, and Cornell universities. In 1967 he was invited again to Harvard to deliver the William James lectures; and in that same year he left Oxford finally for the United States, becoming professor of philosophy at the University

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of California at Berkeley. There, through teaching and informal discussion he exerted a great influence on a steadily growing group of devoted students and colleagues. He gave many distinguished lectures, seminars, and symposia at universities, conferences, and professional associations all across the country. He was elected president of the Pacific division of the American Philosophical Association in 1975 and invited to give the Carus lectures in 1983. A collection of essays on his work edited by Richard Grandy and Richard Warner, with an introduction by the editors and replies and comments by Grice himself, was published by the Oxford University Press in 1986 under the neatly acrostic title, *Philosophical Grounds of Reason, Intention, Categories, Ends*. He returned to Oxford to give the John Locke Lectures in Trinity Term 1979. Near the end of his life he carefully prepared for publication *Studies in the Way of Words* (Harvard University Press, 1989), which contains most of his major essays, the William James lectures, some previously unpublished papers and a retrospective assessment. His Carus lectures and related material on the metaphysics of value appeared as *The Conception of Value* in 1991.

Such an outline gives a far from adequate impression of the exceptional quality of Grice's mind and of the complexity of his personality. One of the authors of the present memoir, P. F. Strawson, writes of his personal memories of Grice:

During one of my terms as an undergraduate at St John's I was fortunate enough to have Paul Grice as my tutor for the Logic paper in PPE. I had never previously encountered such a formidable critic or such a subtle and resourceful thinker. Later, after the war, he and I collaborated for a time in a series of seminars which we gave in the early 1950s. Sometimes we would take it in turn for each to present a paper on his own. Sometimes, and much more arduously, we would engage in joint composition, arguing over each sentence until we reached an agreed version. The publication of our only joint article, 'In Defence of a Dogma', (1956), was one delayed result of this demanding exercise; though even then I had to undertake the final writing up myself because of Grice's extreme reluctance to venture into print. This reluctance was so great that it was only after persistent bullying on my part that he brought himself, some years after its composition, to publish his own highly original, ingenious and justly celebrated first article on Meaning (1957).<sup>1</sup>

During that period of collaboration I formed the opinion, confirmed by subsequent observation, that no one on the current scene was his equal either in detecting flaws in others' reasoning, or in the ingenuity and subtlety with which he elaborated views of his own and contrived defences for them. I sus-

<sup>1</sup> This was Grice's first article in the post-war period. His very first publication in philosophy was 'Personal Identity' *Mind*, 50 (1941), an article whose technical interest came to be seen relatively recently. See Timothy Williamson *Identity and Discrimination* (Oxford, 1990), p. 122.

pect, sometimes, that it was the strength of his own critical powers, his sense of the vulnerability of philosophical argument in general, that partially accounted, at the time, for his privately expressed doubts about the ability of his own work to survive criticism. After all, if there were always detectable flaws in others' reasoning, why should there not be detectable, even though by him undetected, flaws in his own? Hence a certain inhibiting perfectionism; though I think it should be added that when he finally removed to the West coast of the United States, such inhibitions—as has happened, I believe, to more than one Englishman—were finally swept away by a warm tide of approbation such as is rarely experienced on these colder shores.

Enough of first-personal reminiscence. Now for the work itself. It is clear that though he has made impressive contributions to a number of other topics, it is his writings both on meaning in general and on the theory of conversational implicature in particular that have deservedly commanded the most attention on the part of philosophers and linguists alike.

On meaning in general Grice began with a heroic two-stage attempt at a classically reductive analysis of the concept of linguistic meaning in psychological terms, specifically in terms of the intentions of speakers to induce certain responses, e.g. beliefs or intentions to act, on the part of their audiences. At the basis of the whole attempt lay the notion of what he called 'utterer's occasion-meaning'. This is roughly the idea of someone—call him the utterer—using some device or other on some particular occasion to get something across, to communicate some message to someone else, the audience. The message in question was what the utterer of the device, whatever it was, *meant* on that occasion by that device. Hence 'utterer's occasion-meaning'. Illustrative examples were given to demonstrate that this notion could be wholly explained in terms of utterer's intention, with no dependence on semantic concepts and no essential reference to linguistic or other conventionally established devices. That was stage one. The next stage, of course, was to explicate the notion of linguistic meaning itself in terms, ultimately, of utterer's occasion-meaning (together with whatever other non-semantic concepts might be called for).

The project encountered difficulties at both stages. Obviously you could intend to get someone, say, to believe a certain proposition, say the proposition that *p*, and you could succeed in doing so without appearing on the scene at all, simply by so arranging matters that he would see for himself that *p*, or by surreptitiously putting in his way conclusive evidence that *p*. Equally obviously this would not be a case of your meaning, in the required sense, that *p*. Grice initially suggested that what was required for

a case of ‘utterer’s occasion-meaning that p’ was that the utterer should do something, perform some act, not only with the primary intention of getting his audience to believe that p, but with the secondary intention that the audience should come to form this belief *for the reason* that he, the audience, recognised the utterer’s primary intention, viz. the intention to get him to believe that p. Then, and then only, it was suggested, would the audience appreciate that the utterer *meant* that p by the device he used; only then would he appreciate that the utterer was trying, so to speak, to *tell* him that p. Of course the word ‘tell’ is here used in an extended sense, since the means employed need not be linguistic, and indeed are not in the illustrative examples initially offered.

The trouble at this stage arose from the fact that various ingenious souls were able to devise counter-examples that showed that the conditions initially offered were insufficient. Cases were described in which those conditions were satisfied but in which it could not reasonably be said that someone had intended by his act to convey a message to another, to tell him, say, that p, to mean p. So some elaboration or complication of the original analysis seemed to be called for. But any such revision merely prompted further and more complex counter-examples; and the prospect of a realistic and non-regressive solution began to seem poor.

Of course Grice was the last person to be daunted by complexities. The ingenuity with which difficulties were devised for the original analysis merely prompted him to exercise an equal ingenuity in contriving adjustments designed to circumvent them; and in this exercise, of which no attempt will be made here to record the details, it seems he thought to the end that he had pretty well succeeded. For, after all, the central idea, the original notion, the idea, namely, of overtly intending to get some message across to an audience, did seem to have a lot going for it; enough, certainly, to ensure that, with whatever tinkering was necessary, the central idea could be made to survive.

So, though there were difficulties with this stage of the programme, they did not seem insuperable. The more serious difficulties arose at the second stage—in the attempt to explicate the notion of linguistic meaning in general, hence the full-blown panoply of semantic concepts, in terms of utterer’s occasion-meaning (itself explained without reference to such concepts), together with whatever other non-semantic concepts of a socio-psychological kind might be required. In spite of the many subtle manoeuvres he executed around this problem, it is not clear that Grice regarded himself as having finally solved it. Indeed at one point he refers to his account of the stages by which an artificial system of communica-

tion devices, in effect a language, might be thought of as *emerging* from his initially described situations of people meaning something by their acts—he refers to this account as a *myth*, comparable with the political theorist's myth of the social contract: a help, perhaps, to full understanding but not a substitute for it.

Grice's reductive, or quasi-reductive, theory of linguistic meaning in general has chiefly engaged the mainly critical attention of philosophers. It is otherwise with the theory of conversational implicature. That has captivated linguists and philosophers alike. Of course everyone has always known that a man may, by saying what he says, imply something addition to, or even at variance with, what he actually says. But it is hardly an exaggeration to say that Grice was the first to attempt a systematic theory of this phenomenon. He introduced the terms of art 'implicate' and 'implicature': on the one hand to do general duty for all the members of a family of terms which include 'imply' 'suggest' 'mean' 'insinuate' and so on; and on the other, perhaps, though he does not say this, to distinguish the concept from that of logical or necessary implication. (It was unnecessary for him to say this, since 'implies' in the *logical* sense does not take a personal subject. It is not the speaker, but what he says, that has *logical* consequences.)

So now to the theory of conversational implicature. As a preliminary, we must first note two connected distinctions which Grice draws. One is a distinction between conventional and non-conventional implicature or implication; the other a distinction between what is *said* (in a certain favoured sense) and what is implicated, or *implied*, whether conventionally or non-conventionally. To quote an example of Grice's: one who utters a sentence of the form 'p therefore q' *conventionally* implicates or implies that the matter affirmed at q is a consequence of, or follows from, the matter affirmed at p. The implication is carried by the conventional linguistic meaning of 'therefore'. But this implicature is not part of what is *said* in Grice's favoured sense. What is said in that sense (effectively 'both p and q') is not made false by the failure of the implicated consequence-relation to hold. And the point is general: it holds for all implicatures, conventional and non-conventional. The truth-value of what is *said*, in Grice's sense, is independent of the truth or falsity of what is implicated.

The notion of *conventional* implicatures, carried for example by such conjunctions as 'therefore' 'so' 'but' 'although' 'because' and other expressions, is reasonably clear; and for the time being no more need be said about it. Grice's theory of *conversational* implicature relates not to these

but, as he cautiously puts it, to a certain *subclass* of *non-conventional* implicatures. The caution implied in the use of the term 'subclass' is well advised. It would be stretching the concept of *conversational* implicature perhaps intolerably to represent it as covering all cases in which a speaker non-conventionally implies something more than, or different from, what he actually says; for to convey the implication to his audience he might be relying on details of his own and his audience's knowledge of a particular situation in a way not provided for by the conditions, whatever they are, which govern conversational implicature. So what finally are those conditions?

Well, there is one central or governing assumption: that rational beings engaged, say, in imparting or exchanging information, may normally be expected to speak in such a way as to forward, rather than impede, the general or particular ends of such conversational exchanges; to contribute positively rather than negatively to those purposes. *Normally* must be stressed here, since obviously there are special circumstances in which any such expectation would be unwarranted. But the *general* principle holds: indeed its holding in *general* might even be thought to be a necessary condition of the very existence of the activity in question. Grice calls it the Co-operative Principle. From it there flow a number of maxims, not necessarily independent of each other, which we will all immediately recognise as such as we *should*, i.e. ideally ought to observe in conversation: e.g. make your contribution neither less nor more informative than is required; affirm only what you take to be true or have adequate evidence for; be relevant; and avoid faults of expression such as obscurity, ambiguity, prolixity, etc. In the ordinary course of conversation we tend to assume that our interlocutor will be conforming with the Co-operative Principle, hence with the maxims into which it ramifies. So if what he says appears to deviate deliberately in some significant way from such conformity, we shall reasonably take him to be implying by his contribution something more than or different from what he actually says; and will normally be able to make out from the conversational context what this implication is.

Here is an example. A and B are discussing the relative intellectual endowments of their colleagues. A remarks to B on the high intelligence of a third colleague, C. B replies: if C were of a more angelic temperament, he wouldn't make some of the pronouncements he does make. Since what is at issue is intelligence, not character, the possession or lack of an *angelic* temperament seems quite irrelevant. But B, remembering the familiar adage about fools rushing in etc., immediately cottons on to the implicature, viz. that C is not really as bright as all that.

The example just given, like many others given by Grice himself, is a particular conversational implicature, specific to the particular context and occasion. More interesting, and more important to the philosophy of meaning in general, are cases of what Grice calls 'generalised conversational implicature'. A standard illustration of this phenomenon is the speaker's use of the disjunctive form, 'A or B', in reply to a question, when the information-seeker's needs would obviously be more fully met had the speaker been in a position to give, and been willing to give, the more specific answer mentioning just one of the alternatives. So, assuming the speaker is conforming to the Co-operative Principle, it follows that he was not in that position, that although he had sufficient grounds for asserting their disjunction, he didn't know which of the two disjoined alternatives was correct. And so, in general, with other less than ideally specific answers like 'Somewhere in the kitchen' or 'In one of the dining-room cupboards'. Of course, in all such cases, there might be special circumstances which defeated the implication.

The theoretical importance of the phenomenon of generalised conversational implicature is, Grice argues, considerable. Philosophers, properly concerned with the meanings of expressions, are also properly, and indeed necessarily, concerned with the conditions under which they can be either correctly *or* appropriately used. Grice's distinctive contribution was to insist that one should not confuse the two: a given use may fail the test of 'appropriateness' without necessarily failing the test of 'correctness'. And this may particularly be the case if the use of an expression carries a generalised conversational implicature which by hypothesis, is no part of its conventional meaning. Thus, in the case considered above, while a disjunctive answer, 'either A or B' carries a generalised implication of the speaker's ignorance of which disjunct is the right one, this is no part of the meaning of the disjunctive particle 'or'. What the speaker says may be perfectly true, even if he knows perfectly well that the right, and more informative, answer would be 'A'. Indeed the speaker may correctly and intelligibly go on to say 'A or B; I know perfectly well which it is, but I'm not telling you because I want you to find out for yourself'. Grice finds in this one of the distinctive marks of generalised conversational implicatures: namely, that they can be explicitly cancelled, as in this case.

So Grice has equipped himself with a potentially very powerful instrument: and he uses it in the case of a number of expressions to demonstrate, or attempt to demonstrate, that features of their normal use which philosophers have been prone to represent as integral to their meanings



should rather be seen as generalised conversational implicatures of their use and thus as no part of their conventional meaning. All these attempts are argued, and illustrated, with his customary ingenuity. But not all are equally successful. J. L. Austin remarked long ago, apropos of his own discovery of the explicit performative, that anyone who forges a new weapon for the philosopher's armoury may at the same time be fashioning new skids to put under his feet; and inadvertently illustrated the point with the uncharacteristically imprudent remarks he made at one time about the expression 'I know'. So it was, in at least one important instance, with Grice; although the case was argued, in this instance, with characteristic subtlety and skill.

That for later. In the meantime it is possible to harvest, from his two exercises on meaning in general and conversational implicature in particular, a series of distinctions which Grice has drawn and which are surely essential to our understanding in the whole area of the theory of meaning as linguistically conveyed. We are to consider an utterance of a complete declarative sentential utterance-type; the relevant distinctions are all explicitly or implicitly present in Grice's work.

1 First, then, we have the literal meaning (or meanings) of the sentential type in question, as determined by the syntax and lexicon of the language used. The plural 'meanings' allows for any of what are customarily called lexical or syntactic ambiguities in the utterance-type in question; though it might be thought that in such cases it would be arguably better to say, not that we have an ambiguous sentence, but that we have two different sentences with different meanings. Grice here speaks of the *timeless meanings* of the utterance-type.

2 So, secondly, we have the *actual* literal meaning of the utterance-type, as uttered on the occasion in question, i.e. the literal meaning of the sentence uttered when all the so-called ambiguities are removed. Grice calls this the *applied timeless meaning* of the utterance-type.

3 Thirdly, if the sentence-type uttered includes any indexical or demonstrative expressions or any proper names, then, even if we know the applied timeless meaning of the words uttered, we still do not know what was said until we know also what, in the context of utterance, is the referential force of all those expressions and names. Then we may be said to know the *literal-cum-referential meaning* of the utterance. Grice does not make a separate mention of this, though he clearly allows for it.

4 Fourthly, Grice here draws a further distinction, already referred to, between what is actually *said*, in his favoured sense, and what, over and

above this, is *conventionally* implied by the inclusion in the utterance of certain conjunctions like 'therefore', 'so', 'but', 'although' etc. or certain other expressions like 'Alas' or, in its current American usage or misusage, 'hopefully'.

5 Fifthly, then, we have just these conventional implications themselves which, though certainly part of what is meant, form no part of what is said in the favoured sense and have no bearing on the truth-value of the latter.

Now so far, with all these distinctions, we have stayed throughout in the area of the conventional meaning of expressions, supplemented only by the determination of reference in the case of indexicals and names.

6 But sixthly and finally, we come to those further implications of what is said, 'the specification of which falls outside the specification of the conventional meaning of the words used'. This is the area in which the theory of conversational implicature finds play; though, as earlier remarked, Grice is wisely cautious enough not to maintain that all non-conventional implications are to be explained in terms of what theory. For one may well imply something by what one says without expecting one's audience's comprehension to be mediated by any tacit assumption on his part that one is observing the maxims dictated by the Co-operative Principle; relying, rather, on no more than our shared knowledge of the details of the situation to which one's remark relates.

It was earlier observed that Grice himself was not immune from the philosophical temptation to push a new and fertile idea beyond the limits of its just application; and it is now time to report the most signal instance of his doing so with the theory of generalised conversational implicature. He argues that the conventional meaning of an indicative conditional is the same as that of the stipulated meaning of the material or Philonian conditional of truth-functional logic; that an indicative 'if p, q' is identical in meaning with ' $p \supset q$ ' which is itself equivalent to the simple truth-functional disjunction ' $\sim p \vee q$ ' or to the simple negation of the conjunction ' $p \ \& \ \sim q$ '. Any appearance to the contrary is explained by his theory. It is obvious how the argument, on his principles, will go. Simply to affirm the bare alternative, either not-p is true or q is true without any indication of which is true is obviously less informative than a straightforward denial of p or a straightforward assertion of q. So it is ruled out by the maxims flowing from the Co-operative Principle, unless one has some reason for affirming it other than knowledge of the

truth-value of either of the alternatives. But any such reason one might have would precisely be a reason for thinking that the truth of *p*, if established, would be a ground for taking *q* to be true as well, i.e. would have the truth of *q* as a *consequence*. And this is exactly what the ordinary man takes the locution 'if *p*, then *q*' to *mean*. In Grice's view, of course, what the ordinary man takes to be the conventional meaning of the conjunction is not its meaning at all, but simply a generalised conversational implicature of the use of an expression which really has the same meaning as the truth-functional connective.

It is important to notice the shape of the argument here. What Grice has really demonstrated has itself the form of a conditional: viz. that *if* 'if *p*, *q*' really means no more and no less than ' $p \supset q$ ' (or, in other words, if the natural language indicative conditional really is the truth-functional material conditional) then the consequentialist implication of the use of 'if *p*, *q*' can be and will correctly be explained as a conversational implicature of its use and hence no part of its conventional meaning. But to demonstrate, as Grice does, *this* conditional about ordinary conditionals has absolutely no force at all to show that *its* antecedent is true, viz. that the ordinary conditional is indeed really a material conditional. That conclusion would follow only if it were also shown that the consequentialist implication of the ordinary use of 'if' could *not* be explained *in any other way*; that the offered explanation was the only possible one. But that is quite obviously false. For a much simpler explanation is immediately available: viz. that it is precisely a feature of the *conventional* meaning of 'if' that it carries the consequentialist implication—which is just what the ordinary man naively, and correctly, thinks. That is to say, just as '*p*, therefore *q*' or '*p*, so *q*' (as Grice himself proclaims) conventionally implies the holding of a consequentialist relation between the asserted proposition *p* and the (hence also asserted) proposition *q*, so 'if *p*, *q*' conventionally implies the holding of the consequentialist relation between the unasserted, merely hypothesised, proposition *p* and the equally unasserted proposition *q*. Nothing could be plainer.

A footnote here. If we accept this conclusion and at the same time follow Grice in maintaining a strict distinction between what is said in his favoured sense and what is implied, whether conventionally or conversationally, and if we further hold that only what is actually *said* in the favoured sense can be assigned a truth-value, then we shall have to deny truth-values to ordinary conditionals, since neither clause of the conditional is actually asserted; and some philosophers have adopted this view.

In fact we don't in general quite do this in practice, and it is natural that we shouldn't. If we regard the consequentialist implication as clearly correct we tend to treat the conditional as a whole as true; if we regard the consequentialist implication as clearly incorrect, we may dismiss it as false, saying, by way of denial, 'That wouldn't follow at all' or 'It could perfectly well turn out that p without its being the case that q'. If, as is perhaps more common, we regard the implication as uncertain, we hedge, with such expressions as 'Maybe', 'Quite possibly'; or assign it some degree of probability or reasonableness.

These last remarks are no more than a footnote—not really important for the central issue. It is interesting, however, to note another case in which Grice's use of the notion of conversational implicature exhibits the same general shape as in the case of his treatment of indicative conditionals. Thus he argues that those features of the use of singular definite descriptions which have encouraged some philosophers to hold that failure of reference may result in failure of truth-value (or, as Austin once put it, in the utterance being 'void for lack of reference') could, and perhaps should, be explained in a different way, namely the following. First, take it that some form of Russell's Theory of Descriptions gives the correct analysis of what is said when a declarative utterance is made which includes a singular definite description in subject position. Then the theory of conversational implicature, together with certain ancillary devices or assumptions, will account for the impression that the success of the reference apparently made by the description is a presupposed condition of the utterance having a truth-value. Hence Russell's analysis can be seen as correct. This view of Grice's, more tentatively advanced than his account of conditionals, has not won general acceptance among linguists. Nor should it have. For what he has demonstrated is simply the following conditional: *if* we view a sentence containing a definite description as simply a definitional contraction of an appropriate form of the Russellian expansion, *then* the existential *presupposition* seemingly carried by such a description can be explained with the aid of the theory of conversational implicature. But of course establishing this conditional has no force at all to show that the view mentioned in its antecedent is correct. In fairness it should be stressed that Grice advanced his account only tentatively. He did not positively align himself with it, but rather, I suspect, regarded it, as we should also, as an interesting exercise. So there is here a marked contrast with his attitude in the case of conditionals.

Besides his contributions to the philosophy of language Grice devised

and defended a version of the causal theory of perception, a version which was both original and essentially sound, immune to the criticisms to which such theories are usually exposed. Of more general interest and of great significance are Grice's many reflections variously distributed in his writings, on the nature and history of the philosophical enterprise as a whole. In this extended area he is released from the constraints of close detailed argument and illustration, and precision of statement, which he characteristically imposed on himself in more limited discussions; and consequently his writing in the wider area is marked by a freshness, elegance, and even wittiness not much in evidence elsewhere in his work. Examples may be found both in *Studies in the Way of Words* and, more especially, in his own contribution to the volume of essays on his work edited and introduced by Richard Grandy and Richard Warner.

In the section of that contribution which Grice entitles 'Opinions' two particular passages are especially worthy of attention. The first is to be found on pages 64–6 of the Grandy–Warner volume and concerns two aspects of the *unity* of philosophy, the 'latitudinal' and the 'longitudinal' as he calls them. We are all familiar with those departmental-sounding names which reverberate throughout the discipline: ontology, epistemology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, ethics, and so on. In speaking of the latitudinal unity of the subject, Grice is not merely making the point that there are cross-connections between these. He wants to insist on a stronger unity than this: that all are but aspects of one single enquiry; or, at its strongest and in his own words, 'that it is not possible to reach full understanding of, or high level proficiency in, any one sub-discipline without corresponding understanding and proficiency in the others'. He disclaims any ability to prove such a thesis; but sketches some suggestions of ways in which it might be supported.

The thesis of the Longitudinal Unity of Philosophy, i.e. of its unity through time, is one with which few philosophers will have difficulty in agreeing. We all accept that, as Grice puts it, we should 'treat the great but dead philosophers as if they were great but living, as persons who have much to say to us now'—while at the same time we must remain aware of those radical changes in the idioms of speech and climates of thought which, if not fully appreciated, carry risks of misunderstanding.

The other passage, of still greater significance and importance, follows immediately upon these reflections on the unity of philosophy. In it Grice voices his strong opposition to what he calls Minimalism in

philosophy: a comprehensive heading under which he groups a cluster of other -isms, giving pride of place among them to the one which bears the name Extensionalism, but including also Nominalism, Positivism, Physicalism, Reductivism, and (in the currently most favoured sense of the term) Naturalism—besides several others. What is common to them all is a species of exclusiveness—a denial of legitimacy or, so to speak, of philosophical citizenship to all but a privileged and restricted class of objects or concepts.

Once more disclaiming argument, Grice admits that his ‘antipathy to minimalism depends much more on a concern to have a philosophical approach which would have prospects of doing justice to the exuberant wealth and variety of human experience in a manner seemingly beyond the reach of minimalism than on the availability of any argument which would show the theses of minimalism to be mistaken’; and acknowledges that what he has said against it has been ‘perhaps a little tinged with rhetoric’. Well, if that is a fault, it is not a grievous one; and we who are profoundly in sympathy with him on this matter would not be inclined to reproach him with it.

The formidable intellectual gifts which marked Grice’s philosophical work were deployed to great effect in other activities such as chess and bridge, the latter of which he played for Oxfordshire for some years; while cricket, to which he largely devoted most of his summers while living in England, provided another field in which his enormous energy, his determination and his fierce competitiveness could find ample scope. His musical talent was a less public affair; his piano playing was fluent and forceful, and he was quite a serious composer; though here, as in philosophy, he could not bring himself to think that any piece was ever really finished, and his works, it appeared, were permanently awaiting revision.

His personality was complex. On the one hand he could be morose, gloomy, full of self-doubt. On the other he could be zestful, witty, convivial, confident of his own powers, and ferociously scathing about over-estimated or pretentious work of others. His practical life was often disorderly. He was a quite unreliable correspondent. He smoked heavily until failing health and increasing breathlessness forced him to give it up.

It is, after all, as a philosopher that Paul Grice will be most lastingly remembered. Other anglophone philosophers born, like him, in the twentieth century may well have had greater influence and done a larger

quantity of work of enduring significance. Few have had the same gift for hitting on ideas that have in their intended uses the appearance of inevitability. None has been cleverer, or shown more ingenuity and persistence in the further development of such ideas.

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