

H. Paul Grice

1913–1988

PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, EMERITUS

Berkeley

Paul Grice was born March 13, 1913, in Birmingham, England, earned two Firsts at Corpus Christi College, Oxford (1935 and 1936), and, after a year as Assistant Master at Rossall School in Lancashire, began a period as Lecturer, Tutor, Fellow, and finally University Lecturer at St. John's College, Oxford. His Oxford career, during which his reputation as a philosopher's philosopher spread through the English-speaking portion of the world, was interrupted by nearly five years' service in the Royal Navy, at first in the Atlantic theatre and later in Admiralty intelligence. After the war, he was a visiting lecturer at Harvard, Brandeis, Stanford, and Cornell, and was elected to the British Academy in 1966. He joined the Berkeley faculty in 1967, where he taught until 1986, well past his 1979 retirement, serving briefly as department chairman in 1971. He was one of very few philosophers invited to give both the William James Lectures at Harvard (1967) and the John Locke Lectures at Oxford (1978). Although health problems greatly diminished his physical vigor in later years, he remained philosophically very active, leading discussion groups in his home, giving papers at professional meetings, and completing the manuscript for his first book, *Studies in the Way of Words* (Harvard University Press, 1989) very near his death. (A second book, *The Conception of Value*, based on his Carus Lectures, was published in 1991 by Oxford University Press.) Among his former students are many of the most distinguished philosophers of the present day.

His contribution to the Department of Philosophy was unique. Grice taught only graduate courses, although advanced undergraduates were encouraged to attend, and he was regarded by many as a sort of spiritual head of a new movement in philosophy at Berkeley.

His seminars were well attended by his colleagues, graduate students, and advanced undergraduates, always with a scattering of visitors from other campuses. The presentation was, for most of the audience, more than a little difficult to follow, as Grice laid out his newest ideas slowly, in great detail, with much hesitation and occasional backtracking, shading each thesis with the qualifications he rightly considered necessary to shield it from the objections its very clarity invited. The spirited and often heated discussions that ensued led to clarifications, consolidations, and yet further refinements. Particularly memorable were Grice's carefully crafted and often very elaborate extemporaneous refutations of views counter to his own, deployed stepwise, like so many chess moves, until the piece was captured, the whole process accompanied by contained but unconcealed, rising, and somewhat mischievous glee. Philosophy in Grice's hands was a cooperative enterprise, a conversation in search of truth, despite its outward appearance of combat. And it was an enterprise he loved deeply.

Grice did important work on philosophical subjects as diverse as Aristotle's metaphysics, the foundations of psychology, and ethics. His strongest influence lies in the philosophy of language, where his thought continues to shape the way philosophers, linguists, and cognitive scientists think about meaning, communication, and the relationship between language and mind. He stressed the philosophical importance of separating what a *sentence* means from, on the one hand, what a speaker *said* in uttering it and, on the other, what the speaker *meant* by uttering it. He provided systematic attempts to say precisely what meaning is by providing a series of ever more refined analyses of the utterer's meaning, sentence meaning, and what is said. He produced an account of how it is possible for what a speaker says and what that speaker means to diverge. By characterizing a philosophically important distinction between the "genuinely semantic" and "merely pragmatic" implications of a statement, Grice clarified the relationship between classical logic and the semantics of natural language. He provided some much needed philosophical ventilation by deploying his notion of "implicature" to devastating effect against certain over-zealous strains of "ordinary language philosophy," without himself abandoning the view that philosophy must pay attention to the nuances of ordinary talk. And he undercut some of the most influential arguments for a philosophically significant notion of "presupposition."

Grice's conviviality is legendary among philosophers. The flavor of his wit survives in his writing, as does a suggestion of the way he could draw his listeners into his perspectives on a topic and treat philosophical discussion as a very high form of entertainment. It is a great pity that we can't in the same way preserve his love of laughter and the expressiveness of his ice-blue eyes. A bench has been placed in front of Moses Hall to commemorate Paul Grice, providing a place to continue indefinitely the philosophical conversation he encouraged, enjoyed, and, to a great extent, lived for.

He is survived by his wife, Kathleen; his son, Tim; his daughter, Karen McNicoll; his brother, Derek; and three grandchildren.

STEPHEN NEALE
BARRY STROUD
BRUCE VERMAZEN
BERNARD WILLIAMS