Contents

Kant made simple 2
Our Minds are not Mirrors 4
Kant at the Bar:  Transcendental Idealism in Daily Life 4
Kant and the Smashing Beer Glass 6
Kant As He Is 7
Pleasure Now 8
The Roots of Reason Issue 77 Philosophy Now 13
Philosophy of Distinction (And Connection) 14
Philosophical Connections 15
The Roots Of Bambrough 16
Judgments of perception and judgments of experience 17
Beyond Pleasure and Pain 18

NOTE
"An article was included by Ralph Blumenau entitled, "Kant and the Thing in Itself", on page 13 of the last issue. How ever we failed to include the title of this article except at the end. We therefore unreservedly apologize for this error.

Kant made simple

Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) was a German philosopher who taught for many years at the University of Königsberg. He made pivotal contributions to the study of ethics and epistemology and was a leading figure in the German Enlightenment.

TWO STAGES OF KNOWLEDGE

Kant identified two stages in the process whereby our mind works the raw material of sensation into the finished product of thought. The first stage is the coordination of sensations by applying to them the forms of perception - space and time. The second stage is the coordination of perceptions by applying to them the forms of conception - the categories of thought.

— Stage 01 —

A sensation is merely the awareness of a stimulus, such as a taste on the tongue, pressure on the hand, or a flash of light in the eye. These scattered sensations do not constitute knowledge. They are all that the infant has in the early stages of its development, before it recognises objects. The mind groups the various sensations about an object, such as an apple. The sensations of odour, pressure, light and taste are united to constitute a "thing", which we call an apple. There is now an awareness not so much of a stimulus as of a specific object. This is what Kant means by a perception.

The process by which the scattered sensations came to be ordered into a perception is not a property of sensations themselves but relies on the activity of the mind. Firstly, not all the sensations are accepted; most are ignored. Myriad forces play upon our bodies at any moment, causing a storm of stimuli, yet only those selected can be moulded into perceptions suited to our present purpose, or that bring messages of danger. The clock is ticking or that bring messages of danger. The clock is ticking and moulded into the ordered concepts of thought. Objects are the pre-existing structures in the mind into which perceptions are received, and by which they are classified and moulded into the ordered concepts of thought. Objects serve as the building blocks of all our thinking and knowing.

— Stage 2 —

In the second stage, the mind raises the perceptual knowledge of objects into the conceptual knowledge of relationships, sequences and laws. Just as the mind arranged sensations around objects in space and time, so in the second stage the mind arranges perceptions (objects and events) about certain basic ideas. According to Kant these are: unity, plurality, totality, reality, negation, limitation, substance-and-accident, cause-and-effect, reciprocity, possibility, necessity, and contingency.

These are Kant's famous twelve categories. They are subjective in the same sense in which space and time are, i.e. our mental constitution is such that they are applicable to whatever we experience, i.e. they are the means by which we process our experience. Yet there is no reason to suppose them applicable to things-in-themselves. The categories are the pre-existing structures in the mind into which perceptions are received, and by which they are classified and moulded into the ordered concepts of thought. Objects serve as the building blocks of all our thinking and knowing.

The categories are the bridge to the ideas that we have of the world. All our understanding, all theory is mediated by them.

SUMMING UP

Sensation is unorganised stimulus, perception is organised sensation, conception is organised perception, i.e. knowledge. At the next level, science is organised knowledge. At each stage there is a greater degree of order and unity. This unity cannot come from things-in-themselves, for these are known to us only as bare sensations. It is our mind that imposes order, sequence and unity onto raw experience. The world does not have order of itself, but because thought creates it.

The world as we know it is a construction, a product to which the mind contributes as much by its molding as things-in-themselves contribute through stimuli. (We perceive the building as rectangular, whereas we see a trapezium.) Kant wrote, "It remains completely unknown to us what objects may be in themselves and apart from the receptivity of our senses. We know nothing but our mental structure through the elaboration of sensations into perceptions, and of these into conceptions or ideas.

As a result, the moon is for us merely our ideas.

Kant does not doubt the existence of the external world; he merely asserts that we know nothing about it except that it exists. A goodly part of every object is created by the forms of perception and understanding. We know the object as it manifests in our mind; what it is before being moulded by our mind we cannot know.

Professor McCormick is a past winner of the Outstanding Teaching Award for the College of Arts and Letters.
For Kant, our minds are not passive receivers of representations like mirrors. A normal flat mirror reflects the image from an object as if it is the same except in a two-dimensional way. It was a common attitude among philosophers before Kant to treat the mind like a mirror. The mirror does not change the form of the object. Likewise, the mind does not affect or change the form of the objects, it just receives them. However, Kant changed the whole picture. He treated minds as active filters. Whatever is reflected on it is shaped in a certain way.

However, Kant changed the whole picture. He treated minds as active filters. Whatever is reflected on it is shaped in a certain way. But what does this mean, ‘reality in and of itself’? The world Kant uses for a thing in and of itself, is ‘thing-in-itself’ (‘ding-an-sich’); and the collective word for reality as it is in itself is ‘noumenon’, taken from the Greek word ‘nous’ roughly meaning ‘intellect’ or ‘pure thought’ or ‘pure reason’ (because Kant thinks what little we can know about it we can only know in terms of pure reason). This noumenal world is reality as it really is, divorced from or independent of our sense perceptions of it. Our sense perceptions of the world – the feeling of the cold glass in your hand, the taste of the beer, the smell of it as it nears your lips, the gold colour of the liquid – are referred to by Kant as ‘phenomena’.

This way of dividing the world is both very interesting and very troubling. Take the mahogany bar counter before you. When you see the table, the dark topography of engraved lines, you experience phenomena, or sense experiences: colour, shape, sound when you set down your glass, and tactile feelings as you lean against it. While one may be inclined to believe one is simply experiencing the table as it is in and of itself that would be mistaken. These phenomena we experience are not the ultimate cause of the experience. For example, if I look up at the sky I can’t change it from blue to pink just by thinking about it, which might be thought possible if all that existed were the experiences themselves. Instead, Kant was convinced that there was something beyond our immediate sensations causing these phenomena. There’s something out there, insisted Kant, the source of these sense perceptions: something behind or beyond them called the noumenal world.

But aye, there’s the rub. Kant maintained that although there is a noumenal world that is the initial cause of our subjective (phenomenal) experience of the world, we can never access that world directly. What then can we know directly? Kant thought that all we could know directly were our phenomena. But there’s more to experience and reality than this. He maintained that the world as experienced is the product of a ‘Matrix’.

Our Minds are the Matrix

In the first Matrix film (1999), Morpheus tells Neo, “If real is what you can feel, smell, taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain.” Kant didn’t believe in any robotic conspiracies to systematically delude humanity. Instead, Kant takes a position which I believe is just as striking: for him, our minds are the Matrix. This idea is at the heart of...
Kant’s philosophy, and he called this position transcendental idealism. That is to say the mind has structures which impose structure on the data our senses receive from the world, and so actually create our worlds in certain ways. These mental structures organize all our diverse sense data into experiential context for us, turning the physical data our senses receive from the world into our experienced sense perceptions of the world.

The Starry Night, is just dots and streaks of colour smeared on canvas. Our minds apprehend these coloured blotches and make sense of them as images. And that’s just the start of how our minds influence our experience. More radically, Kant thought that even time and space are aspects of our experience created by the mind, independent of reality in and of itself. Looking around the bar as you walk on, it’s hard to see how this might be the case; but, then, how could we possibly organize our experience without the experiences being organized in space and time?

Take time. We all have something of a biological clock inside ticking away, allowing us to locate a given experience along a sequential continuum. Yet have too much beer and suddenly your psychological filter goes a little haywire. maybe everything seems to be on fast-forward: the girls next to you are waving their hands a little faster, and your friend’s story about the dream they had last night is getting a little shorter (thank God).

This experience is called ‘temporal compression’, and can be a very real first-hand experience when one ingests too much of a sedative like alcohol. Stimulants like caffeine or amphetamines can have the opposite effect, called ‘temporal dilation’, making it seem like the world has slowed down. The same holds for changes in body temperature. When your ambient body temperature is dramatically raised, say, in the case of a fever, it feels as if time is moving slowly. When exposed to extreme cold one can have the opposite effect, called ‘temporal dilation’, making experience of time seem to be on fast-forward; the girls next to you are waving their hands a little faster, and your friend’s story about the dream they had last night is getting a little shorter (thank God).

This means we’re not perceiving or experiencing a pre-existing world. Rather, the structures of the mind are bringing forth phenomena, created as much by the workings of the mind as by (noumenal) reality, and thus the world as we experience it is dependent for its form upon the way the mind works.

The more you think about it, the more intuitive the idea of mind structuring the world we experience seems. For example, you get up to go to the bathroom, and on your way you see a painting of dogs playing poker. What are you really seeing? Paintings give the illusion of having ‘organised meaning’ – but in fact any painting, even da Vinci’s Mona Lisa or van Gogh’s

Kant and the Smashing Beer Glass

You get back from the bathroom.

“Two more, please”, your friend mouths to the bartender, holding up two fingers. She nods subtly in recognition. You watch as the busy woman reaches for two glasses with one hand, working the cash register with the other. In a moment of inattention, she loses grip of one of the glasses. It smashes as it hits the wooden floor. The shards glister like toothed diamonds against the dull background.

While this event may seem trivial, a glass falling and hitting the floor actually brings up another interesting topic in metaphysics: causality.

When Kant was only twenty-four, the Scottish philosopher David Hume published his magnum opus. An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (1748). Among other things, Hume was interested in our common sense understanding of causality. We usually think we can know about what’s going to happen in the future based on our intuitive knowledge of the laws of nature. that is, how things behave. For example, we know that if we lift up something heavier than air, like a beer glass, and let go of that object, it will definitely fall downwards, and, being glass, may shatter. David Hume, sceptically asked, “How do we know that?”

Hume argued that we often assume that if event B always follows event A, then A caused B. We believe there is a necessary connection, that is, a relationship which can be no other way, between A and B. Strictly speaking though, Hume added, the most we can logically claim is that until now heavy objects have always fallen downwards. And the only basis for thinking that the same connection will hold (for example, a cup will subsequently hit the floor when dropped), is our belief that the future will continue to resemble the past. That belief, Hume continued, we gain merely through custom or habit. In other words, Hume was saying that all our ideas about causation are down our own habituation to associated events, and that’s it. Thus, the causal connections we make have nothing to do with knowledge of any necessary connection, but rather we derive them from our experience. Strictly speaking, we have no justification for claiming knowledge of causality.

This scepticism about causality freaked Kant out. It was this work by Hume that, Kant tells us, “interrupted my dogmatic slumber” – changing the direction of Kant’s philosophy.

As said above, Kant believes that in our experience of the world we use a ‘cognitive matrix’ to make sense of the stimuli around us. In addition to time and space (which Kant called the forms of sensibility), he posited a complex mental architecture he called the categories of the understanding, which also play their part in bringing forth the phenomenal world. He posited twelve categories in all, including plurality (how many objects there are), existence, and possibility (what does exist; and what, in principle, could exist). The categories basically comprise our cognitive toolbox for making sense of our sense data, and for making judgments about our experiences too. Most relevant to our present discussion is the category of causal dependence, or cause and effect. In other words, for Kant, our perception of the world in terms of cause and effect is something our minds impose on our experience of the world.

Since cause and effect are thus ineradicable features of the mind to Kant, this means causality isn’t as uncertain as Hume made it out to be. Just before watching the glass fall and shatter on the floor, Kant would say we could know for certain the glass would fall downwards. How could we know this? Kant tells us that the phenomenal world, the world as we experience it, is governed by deterministic laws. (Kant was very impressed with Newton’s three laws of motion.) However, physical laws only apply to the phenomenal world, not the noumenal. So he’s saying that physical laws don’t say anything about the world in and of itself. In other words, the deterministic physical laws we’re familiar with, like the law of gravitation, are only representative of human psychology; or how our minds organise the world for our experience. But given that our minds do organise the world in this way, we can know that we’re going to experience the world as being organized in this way.

Kant As He Is

There’s an old Talmudic proverb anticipating Kant which says, “We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are.” Kant’s transcendental idealism gives this proverb an entirely new meaning. A Kantian might rightly amend it to say, “We can never know things in themselves, we can only know things as
processed through our psychological filters. Certainly not as memorably a saying, but more philosophically accurate.

Interestingly, Kant presumed we all have the same cognitive architecture (with a few minor exceptions, such as colour blindness). This is why, when the glass fell from the woman's hand, everyone in the bar watching would have had similarly suitable experiences of the same event. That is to say, although the perspectives of the bar patrons will obviously differ according to their location, every single person would have perceived the same event: the glass was let go of, it fell downwards, and then it shattered on the wooden floor. Kant called the assumed similarity of human experiences empirical realism.

Turning away from looking at the fragments of glass on the floor, you go back to talking to your friend. As your friend continues on and on about their dream, your attention begins to wander. Suddenly you become aware of the pressure of the bar stool under you, the weight of your T-shirt against your shoulders, the music and the ambient noise, the aftertaste of the bar stool under you, the weight of your T-shirt against your shoulders, and the aftertaste of the beer you're drinking. ‘Isn't it weird, ’ you think, ‘that you state resolutely, “I think that we don't see things as they are… we see things as we are.”

© Patrick Cannon 2013 Patrick Cannon graduated in Philosophy at Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland.

Pleasure Now

Dane Gordon on a Forgotten Philosopher Who Practiced What He Preached

Aristippus is remembered in the history of Western philosophy as the founder of hedonism, that is, as the first person to propose the theory that pleasure is the good of life. But he is not remembered very much, mainly as the shadowy forerunner of later Epicureanism. None of his many works, which might have given us the information we need about his teaching, have survived, and what we do know appears to be rudimentary.

But Aristippus was an interesting and complex personality, and his brand of hedonism had a strength and directness which were overlooked in the somewhat apologetic revision proposed by Epicurus. What can we do to bring him back to life, to turn the shadowy figure into a real philosopher? One way is to look at the numerous references to Aristippus in the ancient writers. These extend from his contemporaries, many of whom were friends and followers of Socrates, to St Augustine who lived during the last days of Rome, approximately eight hundred years later. So let's do that, for there we will find a great deal of information.

Xenophon, a contemporary of Aristippus, records a conversation in his Memorabilia in which Socrates takes Aristippus to task for his self-indulgent life. He really enjoyed wine, women and song, and was glad for everyone to know it. How can we take a so-called philosophy seriously which provides an argument for what surely needs no argument – having a good time? In fact, as Aristippus was exceedingly intelligent, one might almost suppose his philosophy was a put-on to unset the sober minded. There's provocativeness about his manner reminiscent of Oscar Wilde. We can never be quite sure whether what he did or said was serious – surely the biggest sin in philosophy next to being irrational. His life and his teaching therefore don’t fit the image of Greek intellectualism (Euripides describes him slightly as a person of “most luxurious and sensual habits”). The latter-day student of philosophy is likely to spend only a brief time with Aristippus and his raw hedonism and move on to what pleasure really means, as explained carefully, even a bit self-righteously, by Epicurus, and very much later by John Stuart Mill.

Yet if we look at the account of his life in Diogenes Laertius and at various ancient writers beyond those we have considered we get a picture of someone who was not merely a self-indulgent sensualist.

A possible reason for why he was so often misunderstood, and why he behaved and spoke as he did, he did not take himself seriously. David Hume may be an example of that in the modern era; Socrates may be the only other philosopher than Aristippus in ancient times. That may have been why Socrates liked him. Aristippus didn't mind what people thought. He made independent choices and had quick common sense answers to those who criticized. For example, Socrates objected to Aristippus’ taking money for his teaching. Aristippus responded, perhaps with a laugh, that he didn’t take money from people for himself, but to teach them how to spend it. Once Socrates asked him, “Where did you get so much?” And Aristippus replied “Where you got so little.” When his mistress said he had made her pregnant he told her “You don’t know any more than I do about it; if you walked through a thorn bush, which thorn had scratched you.”

He loved to puncture people’s pretensions. One day he was at the baths with Diogenes the Cynic, whom Cicero described as “notorious for the most frantic excesses of imoroseness and self-denial.” This was the man whom Alexander the Great visited and invited him. “Ask of me what you want,” and received the curt reply, “Stand out of my light.” Aristippus left the baths first and took Diogenes’ old cloak, leaving behind his expensive purple one. A purple robe was regarded as elegant by Athenian society. When Diogenes discovered what had happened he went running after Aristippus demanding his old cloak back. Aristippus chided him for being so concerned about his reputation, that he would rather go cold than be seen wearing purple. A similar example of Aristippus’ wry humour: A person jeered at him because Dionysius, the ruler of Syracuse, had given Plato a book but had given Aristippus money. “The fact is,” he said, “Plato wanted a book and I wanted money.”

People were continually trying to take a morally superior attitude toward Aristippus – in modern parlance, to put him down. Typical of this was someone who attempted to imply that using perfume, as Aristippus did, was unworthy of a man. He replied simply “No animal is the worse for having a pleasant scent, so neither is a man.” I think Socrates enjoyed all this. What he didn't hear himself he certainly heard from others. Athens was a small town. Socrates had described himself as a gadfly for the serious business of stirring up the body politic. Aristippus was like a humble bee that for no especially serious purpose bothers everyone at the garden party through the operation of our minds. With the forms of sensibility (time and space) providing the groundwork for experience, the categories of the mind synthesize the raw sense data into our richly textured subjectivity, and this synthesis of all the aspects of our experience happens simultaneously. That is, as well as having rational understanding, we feel, hear, taste, smell, see all at the same time, even when we privilege one sense modality over the others. Kant says this thing to which we attach the word ‘I’ is the product of our minds necessarily functioning in this unitary way; because we must each perceive all our experience through a unified mind, this stream of consciousness flowing from our mental architecture gives us the experience of having a transcendental ego, a self, or a soul.

“… what do you think it means?” Your friend asks.


“My dream, what do you think it means? It doesn’t seem like it can mean anything other than that.”

“Well… ” you reply hesitantly, realizing you were thinking about transcendental idealism the entire time your friend was relaying their dream. After taking a thoughtful sip of your drink you state resolutely, “I think that we don’t see things as they are… we see things as we are.”

7 Aristippus passed

Diogenes as he was washing lentils. He said, “If you could but learn to flatter the king, you would not have to live on lentils.” Diogenes said, “And if you could learn to live on lentils, you would not have to flatter the king.”

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and gets them to spill the teacups and swat the cakes instead of

Behind this lightness or flippancy are glimpses of a more serious intent. When someone asked him how Socrates died he answered, "As I should wish to die myself." Surely not a quip.

For all his alleged luxurious and self-indulgent living he wasn't a rich man. At the time when Charles Chaplin was being

Dionysius. Near the end of his life he returned to Cyrene with his daughter Arete, whom he instructed in his teaching, and his grandson, also Aristippus, who had the name of Metrodiketas, or 'mother taught' because he was instructed by his mother.

Common sense psychology told Aristippus that pleasure is a good even if it arises from unbecoming causes. Even perception of it. Secondly he would deny that the character of the activity affect the nature of the pleasure.

Epicurus seems almost nervously anxious lest his hedonism be confused with the other kind, that is, with Aristippus’ kind of hedonism. In his letter to Menoeceus he considered to be distinctive characteristics of the teaching of Aristippus. Epicurus seems almost nervously anxious lest his hedonism be confused with the other kind, that is, with Aristippus’ kind of hedonism. In his letter to Menoeceus he

We find a similar disjunction between the harshness of parts of Epicurus’ teaching and the generous character of his life.

I would like to dwell on Epicurus because of the nature of the pleasures for which Aristippus was infamous. For all his alleged luxurious and self-indulgent living he wasn't a rich man. At the time when Charles Chaplin was being

But this is a great misunderstanding which Aristippus, if he has any continuing identity in the Platonic world of ideas, must find rather amusing. He was always inclined to laugh at his critics rather than fight them, for what one has in Epicurus, and also in Mill, is not Hedonism at all. It is something else.

The role of pleasure in Epicurus and Mill is similar to that associated with the Cyrenaic school founded by Aristippus.

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Aristippus was good natured, intelligent, witty, not given to extremes, not overly introspective, but thoughtful enough to recognise that people can spoil the enjoyment of what they have by pinning for the past and worrying about the future. They are never where they are, and so they don’t quite ever live.

Aristippus believed we should enjoy what we can when we can, and not be afraid of the basic pleasures. Human beings are flesh and blood. This was the core of Aristippus’ hedonism. Yet, as we have seen, it was not self-indulgent, and not without discipline. He taught and lived by simple ethical criteria, too simple for Epicurus and Mill. They wanted pleasure to be high minded and so, as I have suggested, it turned out that what they really wanted was not pleasure. But Aristippus wanted pleasure; he was a true hedonist. He got a lot of it and he shared it. If we were to reflect on this we might conclude it was not at all a bad way to live.

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15. Diogenes Laertius p.88. Plutarch gives a slightly different version of this incident in the essay ‘Vitae Honesta’, in his Moralia. work cited p.127. The implication still is that Anaxilones had proskene Aristippus.
16. Diogenes Laertius p.91
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OTHER SOURCES
This article is an abbreviated version of a paper given at the annual meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy in Binghamton, New York.
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Aristippus and the three beautiful courtiers

The cult of the god Dionysus "the youthful, beautiful, effeminate god of wine" provided the most extreme examples. Euripides' play The Bacchae shows the dark and dreadful side of lack of restraint in that religious cult. From the philosophers' perspective this was the antithesis of how life should be lived, and their teachings provided a direct alternative. Epicurus, for example, made a point of that.19 One can suppose therefore that Aristippus' more serious philosophical colleagues, in particular, Plato, would have found his teaching objectionable no matter how attractive his personality. Guthrie suggests cautiously that Plato's dialogue Plebeus was a response to a pupil of Socrates whom, he believed, had gone "wildly wrong"20 and so could be discouraged. If this was the case, it was not at all a bad way to arrive at the conclusion we have by pining for the past and worrying about the future. They are never where they are, and so they don't quite ever live.

Aristippus believed we should enjoy what we can when we can, and not be afraid of the basic pleasures. Human beings are flesh and blood. This was the core of Aristippus' hedonism. Yet, as we have seen, it was not self-indulgent, and not without discipline. He taught and lived by simple ethical criteria, too simple for Epicurus and Mill. They wanted pleasure to be high minded and so, as I have suggested, it turned out that what they really wanted was not pleasure. But Aristippus wanted pleasure; he was a true hedonist. He got a lot of it and he shared it. If we were to reflect on this we might conclude it was not at all a bad way to live.
A dual passion for systematic thinking and common senseence, philosophy's composite bedrock, along with a disdain for the fads of modern academia. Bambrough insistently viewed philosophy not as an exalted or abstruse profession, but as a service to the mind, intended to make things both deeper and clearer to ordinary people — or at least to ordinary scholars and students. His writings brilliantly demonstrate how philosophy can do precisely that.

**Philosophy of Distinction (And Connection)**

Except for his rise from a modest background, John Renford Bambrough's biography is not extraordinary. Indeed he appears overall to have led the rather typically donnish life of a British scholar. (It wasn't an entirely quiet life, however: he enjoyed intellectual debates, both at Cambridge and on the BBC.) He was born into a Yorkshire mining family, where his father was an electrician at the Silksworth Colliery. The young Bambrough excelled at the Bedale Grammar School, and after national service as a miner in 1944-5 he won a scholarship to St John's College, Cambridge, of which college he would be a fellow for nearly fifty years.

Bambrough began as a lecturer in Classics; being well-educated in ancient philosophy through his study of Greek, he eventually migrated into Philosophy. By age 26 he was appointed a Tutor at St John's. He married in the same year (1952), and he and his wife Moira eventually raised four children — three daughters and a son. In 1966 he would move from a lecturership in the Classics Faculty to a chair in the Liberal Sciences. He later served as President of St John's, but failed twice to attain the coveted position of Master. From 1972 to 1994 Bambrough edited Philosophy, and in 1989-90 he served as president of the Aristotelian Society, one of Britain's most prestigious philosophical organizations.

In later years Bambrough contracted Lewy Body disease, a neurological illness with some similarities to Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, forcing his early retirement. Some colleagues spoke of depression as well. Yet they fondly recalled the particular gravity among students; according to one, he was "one of the great teachers of St John's in the second half of the twentieth century, widely revered and appreciated by generations."

I first came across Bambrough's name when I was an undergraduate in an ancient philosophy seminar. The readings were Pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle and critiques of them. Most of the latter were drawn from twentieth century British philosophy, which comprises one of the richest pools of scholarly writing in the English language. Even within that of philosophy's most basic tasks. "Good philosophy," Bambrough writes at the beginning, "consists in exhibiting connections and distinctions which have hitherto lain hidden; in drawing distinctions without obscuring connections, and marking connections without obscuring distinctions... It is because all or most ways of marking distinctions or connections between concepts have clear advantages and clear disadvantages that philosophy is so difficult and so controversial." (New Essays on Plato and Aristotle, p.164). This quote summarizes the essay, and also represents what I believe is Bambrough's most important insight: virtually all human language and thought consists of mental connections and distinctions; and it's philosophy's job to keep the wires from crossing, without (as it were) disconnecting them.

Philosophy is thinking about thinking. It involves propositions about the world and our place within it. But another way it may be thought of is in terms of achieving precise meanings and deep understanding; we do this by using rational argument to make claims and counterclaims. Furthermore, philosophy, and indeed analytic thinking generally, what ever the context or field, sometimes reveals and sometimes obscures such distinctions and connections... Each of several different uses [of language] may be valuable for the light it sheds and dangerous because of the shadow it casts. Philosophy, Bambrough suggests, is largely an economy whose currency is meaning, and is full of apparent dilemmas. Philosophy is the domain in which we manage these dilemmas — such as the one he cites in Aristotle of whether to use one word or several words for 'justice'. If the Inuit have multiple words for kinds of snow, their philosophers would need to talk about the connections among them that having more than one word obscures. The point is to see behind the semantic shadows our concepts cast.

It seems unlikely that Bambrough ever read the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Yet Gramsci made a strikingly similar observation in the 1930s, in the section on journalism in his Prison Notebooks, an essay of radical literature: "Finding the real identity beneath the apparent contradiction and differentiation, and finding the substantial diversity beneath the apparent identity, is the most delicate, misunderstood and yet essential endowment of the critic of ideas and the historian..."

This crucial 'paradigm of philosophy,' as Bambrough calls it, is more a technique than an argument; or more precisely, it is an argument for a basic technique of philosophy — a technique that could also be applied to, or even serve to define, analytic thinking generally.

One interesting implication of this analytic paradigm is that in a sense, we are all philosophers: whenever we use language we make assertions that must be qualified by further assertions — further connecting and distinguishing in order to refine our meanings, at least up to some point of diminishing returns. We can use language effectively and communicate on a higher level than primitive grunts because we can identify things in the world and relate them to other things, cataloguing both their apparent and their differentiating features. The baseball in my yard can usefully be called a 'ball,' as can the golf ball in my neighbour's yard. Both share qualities that make them balls (being more or less spherical, designed for sport, etc.), as well as having differentiating qualities (e.g. their size, material, mass, exact shape). In reciting those qualities we are necessarily making distinctions and connections at the same time.

Of the two great traditions of modern philosophy, empiricism and rationalism, Bambrough is more of a rationalist — that is, a believer in the primacy of reason over experience as the ultimate source of knowledge. But he is not so dogmatic as to commit the cardinal philosophical error of ignoring the truths of rival perspectives. His thought tends to accord with Kantian habits of mind, which are contrary but not radical, focusing on complex relationships (in Bambrough's case, simultaneous connections and distinctions), and which relish ambiguity and complexity, seeking the intellectual balances and economies which maximize insight and minimize obscurity. Bambrough thought also hearkens back to earlier rationalists in regarding the belief that classical epistemology and metaphysics still have interesting things to say to scholars and students, in an age when the modern analytic and postmodern traditions disdained such forms of reasoning. Thus Bambrough appeals to systematic thinking and first principles rather than linguistic reductionism or philosophical nihilism. His disdain for the more obscure concerns of some of his peers in twentieth century philosophy is evident.

**Philosophical Connections**

As I returned to Bambrough's writings in 2002/3 after learning of his death, two things seemed curiously missing from his oeuvre — not flaws, so much as intriguing conundra. The first was the absence of any clue in his writings as to his political beliefs. In general, Bambrough avoids political questions, and on the rare occasions when he writes about them leaves no trace of his own views. This is somewhat unusual among philosophers who write about moral and political theory: one often finds subtle hints (and sometimes unsubtle ones) of a writer's value system in the grain of their work. It struck me as odd that a thinker of Bambrough's reach and imagination would decline to make any political arguments at all. The concepts of freedom, democracy, equality and justice rarely if ever appear in his corpus, and never in a normative or prescriptive ('You should do this') sense. I was therefore a bit surprised to learn from his Cambridge colleagues that he was a 'classical liberal,' i.e., a conservative: as one of his friends put it, he was someone who believed in 'free market orthodoxy. I didn't witness his live debates with students and colleagues, or on the BBC, so it's hard to know exactly where our assumptions or values diverged. But it's striking how he kept such arguments, which he seemed to relish making in public forums, out of his philosophical writings.
The Roots Of Bambrough

J.R. Bambrough’s books and essays attend to timeless philosophical issues. Inevitably, there are occasional difficulties, complexities and puzzles in his work; but there is never a lack of goodness. A short aside: ‘Foundations’ is somewhat dense and enigmatic, but hardly impenetrable. The essay contains this signature, if slightly cryptic, observation: “the function of reasoning is to effect economies of surprise”. This can be understood in different ways, but I take him to be suggesting that reasoning expands the domain of common understanding, thus limiting the need to content what exists. By revealing hidden relations (distinctions or connections), analytic reasoning prevents or at least minimizes surprise about what is, thereby clearing the way for full and honest debates about values. Bambrough never confuses reason with values; reason is instrumental – a means and not an end (although paradoxically it is also something that he and most philosophers are an expert at, and it should be seen as a sort of acknowledgment as a boast rather than a confession. When philosophers see themselves as practitioners of an esoteric discipline, and hence omit to think and write as and about human beings with human preoccupations, they leave vacant niches which are promptly filled by mountebanks.” (Southwest Philosophy Review 8:1, Jan 1988). In concluding he observes that “Philosophy Review 8:1, Jan 1988). In concluding he observes that “Philosophy cannot be reduced to a mere handmaiden of clear thinking – ‘philosophy as therapy’ was the phrase that one of Bambrough’s (non-philosopher) colleagues used to describe this approach. But I doubt that Bambrough himself would ever have strictly confined philosophy to the role of facilitating clear thinking, as Wittgenstein did – and ‘therapy’ is anyway surely not a term he would have chosen. (It would seem harder to argue that broad and deep knowledge of the history of philosophy and its many themes and questions does not in some way constitute an ‘area of expertise’.)

As his careful attention to Plato and Aristotle shows, Bambrough understood that philosophy has more than a single discrete function (although, as he might have observed, there are important connections as well as distinctions between its functions). Philosophy is indeed about clarifying and deepening our ideas and making better arguments; but it is also a compendium of problems, arguments and ideas, and two-and-a-half millennia of designing and critiquing models of mind, experience and society.

While not a system-builder or explicit believer in any particular philosophical design – Kantian or otherwise – Bambrough was not hostile to systematic philosophical thinking in that architectural sense; even those who reject system-building generally concede that architects such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Marx produced great intellectual edifices that benefit the student by being studied before the critical demolition begins.

Philosophy in the twentieth century saw radical departures from the classical systems of the past, into new and more technique-oriented veins of thought: pragmatism, logical positivism, phenomenology, existentialism, structuralism, linguistic analysis. While some of these are relicts of thought, they are likely to endure mainly as artifacts of the intellectual history of the twentieth century. But J.R. Bambrough’s legacy of humane rationalism is more than just a salutary antidote to the excesses of the fads and movements that have arisen in the wake of the great systems of the centuries and earlier centuries. We can be reminded that “the professionalization of physics and mathematics is sometimes taken to imply that ‘philosophy’ is of no importance. But the roots of Bambrough’s ideas in the classical tradition, which is prefigured in Plato and emerges in modern Europe with Descartes, is directly in Bambrough’s intellectual ancestry. In particular, it seems odd that Bambrough never mentions Kant, with whom he seems to have had so much in common. Indeed, many of Bambrough’s metaphysical and epistemological themes seem like Kantian ones shorn of the burden of critical demolition begins.

Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, and Marx produced great intellectual edifices that benefit the student by being studied before the critical demolition begins.
Aristippus arguably the only true hedonist—who genuinely sought and cherished pleasure for its own end. People were wary of him due to his negligence of social structure and appropriateness, and for sidestepping or overcoming the gods and death—concepts on which ancient civilizations were organized around. Acting without acknowledgment of the impact on others seemed disgraceful, unfair, morally inferior and largely inappropriate. The vein of philosophy at this time centered on human reason, and philosophers were frustrated at the simplicity and lightheartedness of hedonism. Plato held that reason, by nature was the most critical part of the human mind and should always be held above spirit and emotion. Aristotle maintained that the key to happiness, and that the best kind of life was lived in unconditional devotion to reason and rationality. Aristippus' theory seemed juvenile, distasteful and artless, sparking a tension between pleasure and rationality and where the boundaries might lay.

Tensions such as this seem to trigger from the inextricable unity of life and death, the temporal and the eternal, and the fears and anxieties human beings experience in response. Its grappling with wondering where to find meaning in life, where to locate value and at what cost, how to live well, and what to do with pain as a moral compass. Is each person responsible to create their own meaning where they want to find it, or are they better to be guided by external forces, be it friends, religion, culture or pleasure?

In basic Catholicism, the dichotomy of salvation and damnation as consequence for earthly life choices and actions embodies the conflict well. In the Satanism offered by Antion LeVey, one lives best when defying the self entirely, maximizing extreme individuation and putting the self above everything without exception. LeVey was an atheist, not believing in God nor Satan, but for the devil to represent the powers latent in every man, the carnal, primordial and animalistic self. In Catholicism the rules are set and administered by ancient teachings, with an omnipotent and omniscient God, who will punish you upon death for sinning. One could argue that living as a fundamentalist Christian is sacrificing a free will to please a God. Nietzsche comes to conclude that we require a shift in perspective and attitude toward pain, as it is not evil but liberating. It is from a standpoint of intense pain and suffering that human excellence is birthed. It is through struggle that man comes to know more. He would argue that pain is a productive motivator for human action. He would argue that suffering that human excellence is birthed. It is through the tension that lies between pleasure and pain, a mixture of both Apollo and Dionysus, with a preference to the Dionysian side. Nietzsche untangles the dualism, showing how they cannot be thought as separate entities, embracing suffering and pleasure, rationality and irrationality.

Hedonism teaches that we are to avoid pain to maximize pleasure, but are these concepts really as simple as enjoying food and wine? Arthur Schopenhauer's theory of desire asserts that for every pleasure fulfilled, leaves another vacant and the system is never complete; the game is never won; therefore man is left unsatisfied, chasing something he can never have as an end. Therefore, desire is unaccountably undesirable. Pleasure must necessarily involve some sort of negative build up, or experience in order to constitute it being pleasurable and positive in the first place. Because to want, or to enjoy, signifies a prior lack.

Hedonism advocates an existence that veers away from pain, but it appears that pain and struggle is intrinsically valuable and constituent of pleasure itself. French Deconstructualist Jacques Derrida says that any concept held as true, necessarily holds within it’s absolute opposite as being equally true. Pleasure and pain stand together as two poles of the binary each held up and held true entirely by the definition of the other and the tension between them. It follows that pain must be equally valuable in itself as it is the inversion of pleasure, allowing it to exist.

Nietzsche sees pain and suffering as fundamentally productive motivators for human action. He would argue that pain is not the abandonment of pain that leads to a good life, but a shift in perspective and attitude toward pain, as it is not evil but liberating. It is the tension that lies between pleasure and pain, a mixture of both which man requires to become excellent, great and successful. We need the tension; we need to protect ourselves forward or as a species. Nietzsche fantasized the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence, the idea that one is approached by a demon in their darkest hour and taunted with the prospect that they will live the same life over and over again, for eternity. He concludes that one would not scold the demon, but to imagine it the greatest news ever. His intention was for people to accept life in all its pleasures and pains, rejecting delusions and escapism. Therefore we need not seek pleasure and avoid pain, but to embrace all aspects of life.

Aristippus’ suggested that life should be lived in order to maximize pleasure, but also to avoid pain. Modern philosophy has suggested that pleasure is not a realistic end in itself, and that pain does not equate to evil. In order for a meaningful existence, each side of the coin is valuable. Heaven and Hell, Apollo and Dionysus, rationality and irrationality, pleasure and pain.
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