

ROBERT CRAIGIE CROSS
CBE, MA

When Robert Cross went to Aberdeen University as Regius Professor of Logic in 1953, philosophy teaching was divided into two traditional departments - Moral Philosophy and Logic and Metaphysics - and an elementary course in philosophy was compulsory for arts students. These aspects were to change radically. Aberdeen was still then a small, local university with the traditions of Scottish higher education firmly in place. Students came largely from the North-East region, there were no student residences, and "meal Monday" was used to enable students to return home for a break. In his first few years Cross, with Wlodek Bednarowski, established up-to-date courses in logic, general philosophy and the history of philosophy which emphasised the virtues of clarity, careful analysis and common sense typical of Oxford philosophy at the time. Cross's own major philosophical work was *Plato's Republic: a philosophical commentary*, written with A. D. Woozley (his part being written in his distinctive near-indecipherable handwriting, sometimes known as "Linear C") and published in 1964. It was written not as a new work of scholarship but as a patient, careful survey of the arguments in the Republic which students at all levels would find accessible and illuminating. The book had the characteristic care and lucidity in outlining Plato's views which were typical of Cross's writing and teaching. It has been widely used ever since. He took great satisfaction from learning in the mid-1990s that students continued to take substantial numbers of photocopies from the book; and it is still prominently cited as a basic text for students.

Robert Cross was born in Glasgow on 24 April 1911 and grew up in Dunbartonshire. Graduating from Glasgow University in 1932 with first class honours and the award of the David Logan Medal for the most distinguished arts graduate, he won the Foulis Scholarship to Queen's College, Oxford, where he was taught by Sir Oliver Franks. There he obtained a Double First in Mods and Greats, concentrating on philosophy and Ancient History. In 1938 he was appointed Fellow and Tutor at Jesus College. During the Second World War he served in the Navy, and then the Admiralty, where his service as Secretary of the Shipbuilding Trades Joint Council and the Admiralty Industrial Council first revealed his diplomatic gifts in administration. He then returned to Oxford until 1953, when he moved back to Scotland, to Aberdeen - one of a number of younger, established philosophy fellows of Oxford colleges who around that time moved to chairs in Scotland (others were W.H. Walsh, A.D. Woozley and Donald Mackinnon).

It was in teaching undergraduates in Aberdeen that Cross made his main contribution. In an age when teaching was not thought to require large quantities of handout material, or questionnaires to measure student responses, his lectures and seminars provided an accessible and stimulating balance of noteworthy exposition and forceful criticism. Student responses were then well understood through informal contacts and examination results, and these showed that his methods were both appreciated and successful. At the end of the 1950s Aberdeen differed from other Scottish universities, all of which had some philosophy compulsion, in the greater popularity, with considerably larger classes, of logic and metaphysics over moral philosophy. Cross's presence made a substantial contribution to that popularity. Undergraduates throughout his Aberdeen career learned more from his patient, quiet, often wry response to arguments, whether of undergraduates or of other philosophers, than from the technical ingenuity or greater subtlety of other approaches.

Administration began presently to call on his abilities, both within the university (in a period of great expansion and student unrest), and beyond: he served on the University Court, and as Vice-Principal from 1974 to 1978; and from 1965 he served for 10 demanding years on the University Grants Committee (latterly as Chairman of its Arts Sub-Committee). He was also an attentive member of the North Eastern Regional Hospital Board and served on the Scottish Hospital Trust. Though his style was restrained and conciliatory, he had an unusually powerful influence in the university's counsels; to his offices he brought a wise and constructive mind which by its moderation - and concentration on essentials - frequently turned contention to agreement. In his work in the UGC - a milieu not lacking in biggish egos and narrow interests - his was a voice of restraint and balance, with the wider picture always in view. His efficient, quiet, imperturbable and patient work in these different areas was recognised by appointment as CBE in 1972, and Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1977.

On retiring in 1978 he moved to the Borders, where he was able to indulge his love of fishing and gardening, and he and his wife enjoyed the company of many visiting friends. He married Peggy Vernon in 1943; she and their two daughters survive him. He died on 13 September 2000, aged 89.

ROBIN CAMERON, GRAHAM BIRD AND MAX GASKIN
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