The intellectual atmosphere of Oxford philosophy during the decade or so from 1945 was very different from that which Grice had known before the Second World War. As students and dons alike returned from war service, the process of change that had begun with a few young philosophers during the 1930s picked up momentum. Old orthodoxies and methods were overthrown as a host of new thinkers and new ideas took their place. The style of study was questioning, exploratory and cooperative. Many of the philosophers who were active in this period, such as Geoffrey Warnock and Peter Strawson, have since testified to the spirit of optimism, enthusiasm and sheer excitement that predominated. The reasons for these emotions were similar to those that had drawn A. J. Ayer to the work of the Vienna Circle just over a decade earlier. A new style of philosophy was going to ‘solve’ many of the old problems. Once again, this was to be achieved by close attention to and analysis of language. For logical positivists this involved ‘translating’ problematic statements of everyday language into logically rigorous, empirically verifiable sentences. For the new Oxford philosophers, however, no such translations would be necessary. A suitably rigorous attention to the facts of language was going to be a sufficient, indeed the only suitable, philosophical tool.

In retrospect, Grice suggested the following causes of the differences after the war:

the dramatic rise in the influence of Austin, the rapid growth of Oxford as a world-centre of philosophy (due largely to the efforts of Ryle), and the extraordinarily high quality of the many young philosophers who at that time first appeared on the Oxford scene.
Gilbert Ryle, the tutor who had introduced Ayer to Wittgenstein and encouraged him to travel to Vienna, was a decade or more older than Grice and his contemporaries, having been born in 1900. However, his influence on Oxford philosophy during the 1940s and 1950s was considerable. His philosophy of mind, in particular, was widely known through his teaching, and was eventually published as *The Concept of Mind* in 1949. In this book, Ryle argues against the received idea of the mind as a mental entity separate from, but in some way inhabiting, the physical body: Descartes’s ‘ghost in the machine’. All that can legitimately be discussed are dispositions to act in a certain way in certain situations. The error of dualism can be attributed to the tendency to analyse minds as ‘things’ just as bodies are things. Taken together with a strict distinction between mental and physical, this gives rise to the error of defining minds as ‘non-physical things’. This error stems from a basic category mistake involving the type of vocabulary used in discussions of minds. Differences between the physical and the mental have been ‘represented as differences inside the common framework of the categories of “thing”, “stuff”, “attribute”, “state”, “process”, “change”, “cause” and “effect”’. Only close attention to language reveals this tendency among philosophers to extend erroneously terms applicable to physical phenomena, and thus to enter into unproductive metaphysical commitments. Ryle was keen to see this philosophical approach adopted more widely, and after he took over as editor of *Mind* in 1947, began what Jonathan Rée has described as a ‘systematic campaign’ to take control of English philosophy. He drew together some of the more promising young Oxford philosophers and ‘by galvanising them into writing, especially about each other, in the pages of *Mind*, he gave English academic philosophy in the fifties an energy and sense of purpose such as it has never seen before or since.’

The style of philosophy Ryle was deliberately promoting found resonances in the work of J. L. Austin, who was continuing to develop the notions about ordinary language with which he had confronted Ayer before the war. Ayer himself had returned to Oxford only briefly, before taking up a chair at University College London in 1946. The ideas of logical positivism were, in any case, losing their earlier glamour and appeal for younger philosophers, and Austin became the natural leader of the next wave of Oxford philosophy, both before and after his appointment as White’s Professor of Moral Philosophy in 1952. This promotion may seem surprising today; Austin had published just three papers by 1952, none of which were strictly about moral philosophy. It seems that credit was given to the importance of his ideas, and his rep-