

## Who was Sophie Bryant?

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I'm going to talk to you about a very fascinating person from the history of thought. I like to think about her as a philosopher, because that's how she thought of herself. She considered herself a philosopher.

She was born 1850 and died in 1922. She was lost in the Alps for two weeks. In fact, she had passed away, and there was a great, huge news story. She was a very famous person in the 1920s but she's been largely forgotten and the philosophy part of her work, and her thinking and her intellectual work, has been particularly forgotten. She's usually remembered as an educationalist. She was a key player in the reform of education, particularly for girls and women in the late 19th century. But it was as a philosopher that she most identified as we can see from this quote. 'Philosophy was so much a part of herself, of the very texture of her mind, and of the way she saw the world and life, that it is impossible to treat it [merely] as part.' (Mary Wood 1922: 21).

In this presentation I will show you how her philosophy infiltrated her practical aims, which centred around broadening education for women and girls and working people, improving society and getting people to think for themselves and be autonomous individuals. Within her philosophy we get the typical kind of philosophy of mind, epistemology, ethics that was current at the time, written about in a highly sophisticated manner.

Just a little bit of life background. She was born in Ireland, and moved to London in the early 1860s when her father took up a position as a mathematics professor at the newly founded University of London. She joined Bedford College, which at that time was like a finishing school. It wasn't part of the University of London yet but it was somewhere where girls could go to study for exams. There were these new exams that were introduced, for girls, and she took some of the first exams. I think it was introduced in 1863. There were these examinations at Cambridge, examinations for girls, and she entered the examinations when she was 16, 1866, and she got the highest mark of anyone who had sat for these exams. There were over 250 students who sat for that exam.

But there wasn't much she could do then. There were no university places open to her. So, she went and got married. But unfortunately, her husband died after a year of marriage. He was a doctor, and she moved back home. At this stage, she came into the attention of another very extraordinary woman, Miss Frances Buss, who had founded and ran one of the first secondary schools for girls in the country, North London Collegiate School. She saw that Sophie Bryant had

got this amazing grade and she said, *Come and work for me at my school, and be a maths teacher.*

So, she became a maths teacher and she was kind of mentored by Buss. There's a lot of rabbit holes you can go down. You should Google Frances Buss to find out what an extraordinary person she was, as well. But you can't cover everybody. She became a maths teacher and, soon enough, her students were sent to Girton College, in Cambridge, and they became Wranglers. The Wranglers were the people who were on the highest, above everyone else, on the mathematical tripods. And they said this wasn't possible for girls because girls couldn't do maths but soon they were above all of the men and these were the students that she taught.

She was doing extraordinarily well in her mathematics teaching. And then, lo and behold in 1878, when she's 28 years old, she can finally go to university, which she does as well as teaching full-time. And she enters University College London, where she gains a degree in the mental and moral sciences, which is what philosophy was called in those days, in 1881. And then, in 1884, she would be the first woman to gain a Doctor of Science. They didn't have PhDs, they just had Doctors of Science [DSc] so this is what she got. She wrote her thesis on philosophy. I've read her thesis. It's actually a combination of neuroscience and Kant, which is kind of quite interesting, and difficult to write. So, she gained this degree. She was not only one of the first women to ever gain a degree in the United Kingdom but she was one of the first people at the University of London to gain a DSc, which was not an easy thing to do.

At that point, she couldn't get an academic job. She became increasingly busy with committees and societies. For example, she was the only woman of the founding members of the British Psychological Association. She was one of the only women in the London Mathematical Society. She was on the University of London Senate, again, one of two women, the first women. She was the first, the first, the first, again and again and again. The Royal Commission of Secondary School Education, which I'll talk about in a minute, she was on that. She was one of three women on that board. They'd never had any women on that board before, and on and on and on.

One of the main things she did in all of these committees, she had the ones that were just more about thinking, like the Mathematical Society, but then, she had the ones that were about teaching. She was very keen on teacher training, and we'll explain that in a minute.

When it came to philosophy, I found out in the archives that she got the highest mark of the only person who was placed in the first category for that year for the mental and moral sciences, at the University of London in 1881. And it was high and way above everyone else. Two of her examiners I'll mention here, wrote about her work. The first one is James Ward. He was a Don in Cambridge, at Trinity College. A few years later, he would be a tutor to Bertrand Russell. And he wrote of her, 'After a pretty wide experience of the capacities of philosophy students, both here and in Cambridge, and elsewhere, I can confidently say that I've known none superior to Mrs. Bryant, either in power of sustained thinking, or in clearness of expression.' The other person who was an examiner was the great professor of philosophy of mind and logic at UCL, George Croom Robertson, who also was the founder of *The Journal*, first editor of *The Journal of Mind*, one of the founders and the first editor of *The Journal of Mind*, which is a very important journal in philosophy today. And he noted that she had 'a very

superior intelligence'. [Grote Professor of Philosophy of Mind and Logic (UCL), George Croom Roberston.] So, this was her.

That's what she was doing in philosophy. But as I said, there were other things on her mind, mathematics, for one. She would go on to write about mathematics and statistics. She did some work on the geometry of the cells that bees make in their nests. She worked out the geometry of that. She authored a textbook, a book on Euclid. She wrote about Irish independence and learned both Middle and Old Irish. And she was involved in suffrage. When she started being interested in women's suffrage, she said, *Oh, women should be educated before they can vote*. There was a certain school of thought along those lines. I think partly, that was because she was interested in promoting education for girls and women. But in the end, she said, *No, we just need to get the vote*. And she began campaigning, as you can see here. She also undertook philosophical research, and this is what I've been particularly interested in.

Because she worked in the theoretical and experimental field, this very new experimental psychology, which she connected to philosophy because she was trying to figure out how people come to learn and understand things and how they become self-conscious and autonomous and moral agents. And she was trying, on the one hand to theorise about that, and on the other, to try and do some practical experiments to find out more, what we might call now experimental philosophy.

And the goal and the things that she saw, both in her practical and her theoretical work, were that pupils have minds of their own. Now, that might sound a bit facile to you. Of course, students have minds of your own, all students have minds of your own. But there was a trend, at that time, to think that you could figure out how minds worked by looking at the associations that they made and predicting what kinds of conclusions would come out of this. And she rejected that sort of idea. The other thing she rejected was William James's identification of emotions with bodily responses. And she used her own experiences, as a woman, to explain that that emotions are intellectual, and not just physical. This was quite extraordinary, because she had to be a sort of nice Victorian woman, but she also had to talk about those intellectual emotions that women have.

So, the first piece of work I'm going to talk about is a book that she wrote in 1887, called *On Educational Ends*. So here she is doing philosophy but she's doing philosophy, which is philosophy of education, which is the sort of philosophy that women have been allowed to do over the past three or four hundred years, and so she had to couch it in these terms. However, a lot of what she talks about is much more abstract than that. As I said, she follows James Ward, in fact, the person who had been one of her examiners, who had written about how we should resist this mechanised associationalist psychology, the idea that presentations ..., you have sensations, and then there are impersonal laws that associate them together. And then, you get something that comes out of that. The danger of this is you could get something like Social Darwinism, which was also popular at the time. So, you could then identify and classify character types, and according to differences in national or socioeconomic origins. And then, you could control things through eugenics. You could get better people, by sort of breeding better people. She resisted that. She wanted to show that people have control over the impressions that came, that you create yourself. You create your own characters. This was a very prominent stance that she had against the Social Darwinist position. Some of that comes

out of Mill, as well. She was a devoted Millian, in many ways, in her philosophy. This is from Mill's book on logic. Of course, she was also, I think, very much influenced by Mill's *On Liberty* and *The Subjection of Women*.

The book goes first into, what are the ends, what are the goals of education? She reviews the predecessors, and she says, *I'm going to give a better account, a really comprehensive account*. The goals of education are knowledge and goodness. We're going to see she closely associates knowledge with moral virtue. You have your intellectual virtues, you have your moral virtues, and they are knitted together for Bryant. And she talks about the cultivation of minds. So, cultivation of lots of images of seeds and growth so that the teacher is bringing something out of the student. The student is an incredibly interested, inquiring mind and shouldn't be shut down by just too much information. We need to find something that stimulates this inner growth of the mind. And the ultimate goal is to produce the best kind of human person possible under the circumstances. You can see here that this is gender-neutral. She's writing a book that's not about girls and not about boys, it's everyone, and everyone is the same for her. And she talks about this standard character who's at once both good and wise, who had interconnection between moral and intellectual virtues.

So that's fundamental. Wisdom without goodness is fault, goodness without wisdom is mechanical. She has a certain view about how logic works which comes from the philosopher and logician and mathematician George Boole, who was also Irish, and ended up in London. And she follows the Boolean logic. Basically, the Boolean logic is quite different from what we get when we reach Wittgenstein and Russell because everything is falling under mathematical logic. So, propositional logics, logistic logic, will fall under a broader heading of mathematical logic. So later on it changes. It switches around. And this is apparently why she sees mathematics and the study of mathematics as absolutely essential to clear thinking in general. Mathematics is the fundamental abstract framework for all human minds.

And then, her ethics is broadly Kantian but not entirely. She's thinking about the will and duty. And once you are grown up, to a certain degree, you will realise that you will internalise your duty towards others, but it becomes your true self. That's how you become free and autonomous.

It's this process of coming to consciousness as a rational that we're aiming for in the moral agent, in the young person in school, but they don't lose their personalities. It's not becoming impartial. This impartiality is not to lose who you are, it's to actually see more clearly, to become yourself, to preserve your personality. So, she has very strong views about character which are important to her account of education as you'll see later on her practical account for education.

Now, altruism is incredibly important because altruism is not just a duty but it involves feeling and an understanding of the self. She proposes that around a certain age, age 13 seemed to be kind of the start of this, a person becomes self-conscious, and really wants to become perfect. But, by wanting to become perfect, they see something better outside themselves that's driving them to towards perfection and they will therefore be taking care of others around them in the earthly community. And there's a theology here that's really not typical of this period. It's not a traditional theology. It's thinking that divinity is somehow within the rational spirit, it's within

the soul, and it's through education that you've come to be in touch with both this holiness and your duties towards others.

As I said before, the knowledge and virtue are knit together very closely. However, she does separate them out into different kinds of virtues. Part of my research is as a classicist, a classical philosopher. This is all very familiar to me. Virtue is knowledge for Socrates, and I think it is for her, too. But she also, more like Aristotle, separates out the intellectual virtues and tells us about them and then talks about the moral virtues for things like humility, fortitude and self-denial.

This is a quote from near the end of her book.

‘Intellectual growth implies a basis of moral character; and thus too the love of truth, the philosophic spirit is itself a sufficient cause for the production of such character... Given, then, the moral basis, the skilful educator will guarantee the production from small beginnings of sound intellectual character.’ [Bryant, *On Educational Ends* 270].

You're going to be clever. You're going to know stuff, right? But ‘Given, on the other hand, the love of truth, then the educator need little more than encourage consistency in its pursuit, to produce a moral character fundamentally sound.’ [Bryant, *On Educational Ends* 270]. See, there's love of truth, and then teacher will make that person good. There's a duality of educational ends, the moral and the intellectual. Now, this would immediately garner some critique from James Sully in an early edition of the *Journal of Mind*. His first worry is that the influence is of Kantian thought are a little too apparent. And I think she can counter that because she's actually blending a number of different moral perspectives. She has Plato's view of the soul as unified by rationality because you remember she said, *You are really yourself if you are your reasoning self*. And she uses Plato to support this. She talks about Aristotle several times. She knows the text pretty well. For instance, she thinks that enjoying yourself is part of living a good life and that actually being virtuous makes you happy. And she talks about habituation. It's incredibly important to habituate yourself to the right ways of acting and feeling. And then, there's this connection between individual and community that we already saw in her Deist theology. She thinks that this coming to self-consciousness is done within a community, has to be done within a community, so the perfect self cannot come into existence out of relation to the perfect community. But her community is more expansive than the communities that we find in ancient philosophy and is more in line with the Kantian ideals but also those of the British idealists and Mill. And Mill has his utilitarianism, so there's this beneficence towards all humankind. Actually, she has this really interesting, almost thought experiment, that reminds me of some contemporary ethical philosophy where there are these kind of scenarios of two people are drowning who do you save? Here it is in this book, in 1887. She says, *It depends. You need to have the right character, to be able to determine who's the right person to save*. Because first of all, you might think you ought to save the person who means the most to you, your family member, your kinsman, your friend. *But*, she says, ‘it might happen that a choice had to be made between saving a more useful and a less useful life, judged from the standpoint of public service.’ [OEE 108-9] It's like those scenarios, like the trolley problem where you say, *But what if the person on the track is a doctor, and the five people are murderers on leave from the prison? So, the doctor is more helpful to society*.

She's worrying about these kinds of things in a broadly kind of Kantian framework but also with this utilitarian ideal of the beneficence towards all humankind and improving society as a whole. It's a lot more complicated than Sully's critique being that it's too Kantian. However, he does have another pretty good worry. He says, *You can be clever without being good, and you can be good without being clever.* Those things obviously come apart. Think of Goethe's Faust who sold his soul to the Devil for knowledge. The worst person you could possibly be could be the smartest person you ever met, right? *And so*, he says, this is part of his critique, 'That she has not deeply felt this difficulty seems conjecturable from her final chapter, which, in its complete identification of the logical and ethical character, appears to contradict not only common facts but the observable tendencies of development.' [Sully 1888:108] So this is a pretty valuable critique. And in her defense what I think she's up to: Several things. Of course, she's very concerned that girls and women and working people get the same kinds of intellectual education as others. And if she sells it as making them better people, better citizens, then that will hopefully get on board their more exacting education. But she also believes, she really does believe, that these things are connected together as the ancients did and that she thinks that also this will appeal to people who are trying to, who would like their citizens to be law-abiding and dutiful. And she says, *Look, they need to have abstract education. They need to learn how to think for themselves. They need to develop their own autonomy. Otherwise, all you're doing is controlling people. You're controlling ignorant people.* I think that's also, really, a dutiful point of the reason why she knits those together even though you can find people who are clever and not good. Actually, in a later article, she addresses this critique and I'll just read this out. She's talking about cases where people are, in fact, she's talking about the case, not the person who's clever and bad but the person who's ignorant and good. She's got a way an argument against the person who's ignorant and good, because her position is that everyone should get this exact same education, and then they'll be even better. So, they can be ignorant and morally good, but they're going to lack resilience is the basic premise here. She says,

'There's much to be said in appreciation of this type when the balance is beneficent. The sudden blaze of instinct warms more genially than the steady beam of reason, and so the unconsciousness of good instinct is loveable preeminently...' But 'Instincts that cannot be expressed as principles cannot be dealt with as entering into the ideal of conduct and cannot therefore be in themselves modified by or incorporated with reason.' People 'whose unmeditative goodness delights the heart ....afflict us by their entire unmanageability on occasions demanding any readjustment of the instinctive current of ideas or conduct.' Byrant 1897: 74

So, basically, the people who are instinctively good and lovable and have good instincts, when they meet difficult situations are not able to incorporate those instincts with reasoning, aren't able to figure out the right thing to do, and so they're unmanageable, so they are more flighty and there's less flexibility. That's her answer in that particular work.

Now, I'm not going to spend as much time on philosophy of mind as I might otherwise because I want to get on to her practical work in schools and her effect on early Victorian and Edwardian life. But it's a complicated system that she sets out on educational ends. She's trying to explain actually how people come to understand things, how they come to know things. It's a

combination of, it's not empiricist and it's not a combination of empiricist and rationalists, but it's not copying out Kant or anything. She talks about passive and active elements of the mind and there are these four key mental operations or events that happen for you for a person to gain knowledge which is really important to know about when you're teaching people, right? So, you need attention, you need to concentrate, and then you need the imagination which will lead to the construction of an object. After that, that's not enough. You then have to survey the whole, see how that object fits into your general knowledge, general interconnection of all knowledge is very important to her theory. And then, incredibly important is this correction of error because you could actually put this in the wrong place because your mind mixes cause and association sometimes and you need to keep checking that you're doing this correctly.

So, those are the four steps to gaining knowledge and they require some active elements. So, there are some passive elements to mind. There are things that you will learn and take in without really being aware of it, and this is what she does her experiments on, those kinds of things. But there is also the important point that you need, as a student, to be engaged with your learning. You need to pay it... it's not just paying attention but there are these techniques of grasping things, using your imagination, sweeping over the whole with your attention and so on. And the use of self-consciousness that she has.

She breaks it up into two. There's concepts and discourse, and then there's math, which we'll see on the next slide. And here, she says, *Look, you can get information by mere accretion and assimilation*. So, these passive elements without the active engagement, but that's really suboptimal. Let's not have that kind of thing. You need to try and actually avoid that at all costs. It dampens down the spirit of the child and their curiosity. And so, what you need to do is you ask, you keep the information from children who say, *What is this? How do we figure this out?* And then, you get them to try and assimilate it to past experience, and so on. She gives an example from Alice in Wonderland, and this is a bit more complicated, I don't have time to go into it. But basically, she's talking about how there can be universal properties which are then applied to particulars and you come to understand the particular. This is why, from the smile of the Cheshire Cat, you know it's the Cheshire cat. So, there are all these different kinds of explanations.

Now, quality, number, and measure is going to be incredibly important to her as I explained before, partly because the mathematical arts, partly because she has this Boolean view, but also, she thinks that they give you habits of thinking which are incredibly important for things like science. When you're trying to figure something out with the X quantifier, you don't know what X is. This is the kind of curiosity you need and the seeking of completeness that you'll also apply to the natural sciences, for instance. And this is to spark the wonder and keep it going in children. So, it's not just technically learning how to do maths, but it's also this.

One thing I'll note about Bryant's philosophical outlook on educational ends is that it falls in line with key developments in British idealism, but she's never been noted as a member of this field of study. She overlaps with it significantly and, in fact, she would be ahead of the wave in a lot of ways. So, there are some elements of Chapter Five which I see fit very well with these writers, Richard Haldane and Henry Jones. You can find them in books like this, you can find them in encyclopedia articles that summarise the system of the British idealists. But she is never mentioned. There are only two women who are ever mentioned in this school, Helen

Oakley and May Sinclair, and they're from the 1920s. So, she's doing this stuff in the 1880s, ahead of some of these others. Boston Quake she knows and works with and so I'm currently doing research to find out more about her association with Wilson Craig and Stout. They certainly shared a practical outlook which was about improving society and resisting the social Darwinist.

Part of the, in non-educational ends, she wants to show that the student has to not have too much of this passive to be encouraged to persistently, constantly encouraged to try and persistently expected to succeed. But then, on the other hand, you can't have too much of the active because then that will lead to hastiness and errors. So, you're going to have these, and there's a chore for these imbalances which is the habitual nature of problem solving that you get from mathematics. Mathematics are incredibly important to her and she wants girls and women to study mathematics. It was resisted, it was still thought to be something that was useless to girls at this time and she thinks of it as a 'natural school in which the mind attains full consciousness of the ideal form of knowledge' [OEE: 237] and so on and that you'll use it. You'll use those kinds of principles in science as well which is, of course, true.

Some of the things she does when she does this, she does early experiments. This is before there were any labs and she does experiments with children, with people. In fact, this is a nice experiment to look up where a lot of the participants are philosophers and she goes around saying, *Will you do this for me? I'll give you a word, and tell me the word that occurs to you right away when I give you that word and write it down.* And then she times how long that takes. She does a whole survey of what that can show you. What she's trying to find out, she says, is something about these passive elements because although she thinks they're both passive and active elements, she wants to know more about these passive elements, and she says, 'The forced rapidity ...must have tended to secure that the most readily suggested word came to hand first, thus excluding, so far as possible, deliberate acts of choice.' [Cattell and Bryant 1889: 250]

She's trying to get that, we might even call it biases. She's trying to get at the biases, but this research, she doesn't conclude anything absolute. She doesn't say, *Oh look, I figured out exactly how this works.* She says there's a lot of variables going on here that need to be managed, and we haven't got the experimental methods yet to manage these variables. So, even with all haste, the amount of thinking and choosing does get itself done in these experiments. We haven't eliminated those higher activities so we can't come to any definite conclusions about these passive elements. She's resistant to reducing, some kind of reductionism.

So intellectual virtues and self-surrender. We had this intellectual activity. These are the virtues, intellectual activity, intellectual docility, so we're into the active and passive because you don't want to be too quick. You don't want to know everything all the time. And this is where her paper on self-development and self-surrender is so interesting, because she connects moral sympathy with others to a kind of intellectual virtue of humility. So, the moral sympathy sounds quite feminine. Acts of self-surrender, they're always going on. Those people who are like that are responsive and come to the rescue whenever there's need. They are docile and readily give themselves to learn from any book or teacher. It's two things. They do things for other people, they have feelings that other people have, but they're also intellectually open-minded. And so, she's kind of saying rather than thinking badly about this self-surrender, this openness and care



for others, that's actually a virtue that will make you smarter, because you don't want to be too quick to think you know the right answer. And so, there's this extraordinary passage that, well, I'll read a little bit to you. She says,

'The effect of the self-surrendering habit of mind on the acquisition of knowledge and growth of intellect is specially marked. It is impossible to understand a difficult writer, or one far removed from our own point of view, if we insist on maintaining ourselves throughout at our own centre of our thought. An author must be read, a thinker must be studied from his own point of view. This mind of the reader must be given to him to follow his lead, opened as wide as it will open to receive his thought, cleared for a time from obstructive preconceptions... Great patience is sometimes required for this task, and it's often necessary to read a book through once or twice rapidly, though with care, preserving throughout the most humble and even reverential attitude of mind. It is, of course, a much cleverer thing to read the difficult author, even as a beginner, in a carping, critical spirit, to gauge all his ideas and test arguments by comparison with our own ideas and measurement with our logical foot-rule. It's perfectly true that we have not finished understanding him, have not made the truth of his knowledge our own, until we have either put him through this sifting process, or thought out the matter for ourselves. Nevertheless, the first step is to see what he means and to see it in its most favorable light. This is what I imagine some 'smart' ]people with unnaturally sharp critical intellect so often fail to do.' [Bryant 1893: 318-19)

She's just talking about something that later becomes known as... The concept's gone out of my mind. But reading another philosopher, a charitable reading of another philosopher or another thinker, and she's saying that that's much cleverer.

So, these idealised characters think for themselves, seek out an attempt to solve theoretical difficulties, and have this deep sympathy for other humans. Now, that was quite novel at the time and, as I said, the 19th century saw this trend towards thinking of human characters traced back to scientific rules of association and then came in the sinister dimension of the eugenics of Francis Galton. And, it turns out that she knew Galton in some capacity because he asked or urged her to do a certain experiment. So, she says, earlier this year, 'I made some attempts to devise means of testing the mental characteristics of children at the suggestion of Mr Francis Galton.' [Bryant 1886: 338]

He wants to find some kind of associational dissent. She takes 13-year-old girls from her school and they are taken into one room and they have to describe everything in that room and write it down. And they're from different backgrounds, they have different upbringings. So, they're different young women, and she resists coming up with some kind of way of mapping their intelligence through this test. She's doing it because she's been asked to do it by Galton, but she is resisting the reduction of their capacities. And she says what comes in is your own biases. So, you read this evidence through the atmosphere of your own personality. So, at present 'I see no royal route to the investigation of character in its more complex manifestations.' [Bryant 1886: 343]. So, she's resisting these things, although she's called on to work on them.

Now, she works on sympathy. Sympathy was quite an important concept at the time that people were looking at. She links it very closely to this ethics on educational ends. And she is in

line with some people at the time who say, *What it is when you sympathise is you expand beyond yourself*. So, you have the feelings of the other person, you become the other person. She does something that nobody else does. She writes a paper that includes an account of antipathy. So, what happens when you have a negative? What's the opposite of sympathy? It's when you have a negative feeling about somebody else and she says there's a similar process. In fact, you are projecting yourself into the other person and thinking that all the things you don't like about yourself or yourself as you wouldn't like yourself, and you're hating for that reason. But what she emphasizes is that it is a very automatic response. It's like a bias, and you need to undercut this because you haven't thought long enough. It's an error in judgment with respect to the feelings of others, a prejudice, if you will. So, she's talking about this antipathy that nobody else has related to the way that they're thinking about sympathy. So, I find this really extraordinary.

I'll mention James but I won't go into very much detail, but what she's basically doing is she's arguing against this famous paper by William James called *What Is An Emotion* that appears in *The Mind* in 1884, and his theory is that a bodily change is an emotion. So, it is a physical thing when you are... So, he says, 'We feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble.' [Bryant 1896: 52] Now, there were various different critiques of this at the time but Bryant's is different from all of them. And what she does is use counter examples. She uses her own experiences and her own experiences are of things like grief and anger, of being frightened and being exhilarated but she says that those things are intellectual, those things have an intellectual element or tend to, or many of them tend to. For example, now she was a mountain climber. These were some Victorian women climbing mountains. So, she talks, some of her examples are so interesting because they're things like, Oh, difficult mountain to climb. Then you get these feelings, you get exhilarated, but that's not your emotion. That's separate from any other emotion that you have. She's separating out some of the physical things that happen to you from the emotions that you feel. And, in this particular paper from the late 1890s, she divides the emotions into emotions of personality, which are more concerned with the physiology, and what she calls emotions of beauty or objective emotions and these include things like feeling really excited because you've solved a math problem. That's an objective emotion for her, and she talks about these things being harmonious, bringing you to harmony.

And James uses an example of a woman to prove, a first personal account of a woman. He says, *All of these physical things were happening to me and they were my emotions*. So, I think James in this case is... this is William James. -He's aware that women at the time were trained to associate their experiences with their bodily experiences. They were supposed to be sensual and so on. So, this example is quite useful to him. But she switches it up and uses an example of her own depression, of a general depression, and when she woke up one day, she heard a bird and she was able to then realise that her depression had been an unreal experience, one in which she hadn't been properly self-conscious. So, she hadn't been conscious of her intellectual part. She hadn't been properly self-conscious. That's what James described as a misunderstanding. That's not what the person was really, who that person really was. Who they were was their mind and their intellect.

And I love this one, so I'll read this one out. So, she thinks about, also brings in things like dangerous sport. She liked to climb mountains. She was also one of the first women to have a bicycle. She used to cycle to work every day. She says,

'Danger incites to advance as well as retreat. I am familiar with this double instinct... One chooses the difficult course, and yet, all the while, shrinks from the imagination of it or vice versa; Instinct advances, Imagination retreats. I always feel this more or less about the prospect of cycling across town through crowded streets. I know I can do it, and know I will enjoy it, and I'm sure that I'm going to do it. And yet, there is a slight touch of vague uneasiness and imaginative shrinking.' [Bryant 1896: 56]

Anyway, you can imagine, these were crowded streets and noisy traffic. I don't think there were cycle lanes in those days. So, in general, she has this view of the emotions as intelligent but references her own experiences as a woman.

All right, final postscript about Bryant's achievements in philosophy. She has these achievements, experimental philosophy where she's saying, *You need to repeat these psychological experiments. You can't come up with proof unless you have reliability and accuracy, and you need to hold the variables still and you need to take into account biases of people.* So, this is a very, very early emergence of the disciplines of experimental philosophy and psychology. And she has this non-reductionist approach about acquisition of knowledge and character, as we've already seen. So, those are her main philosophical achievements. But she had practical aims, and that was to ameliorate the education of women, girls, and working people, mainly through the promotion of abstract subject matter for all.

So, maths and science were subjects that were brought in to replace or supplement theology and classics, which had become more difficult to provide to the masses, let's say. But she had a theoretical basis behind why these subjects were important and useful for everybody, not just because they were going to become scientists, but because this would make them better people. And she applies this to women, not only women and girls are capable of mathematics, they get beyond that because they're all becoming wranglers, but that their moral virtues are fundamentally the same as men. And I underline that because you might think, *Well, of course,* but that wasn't the case in Victorian Britain. Women were to be virtuous in a completely different way from men, and she assumed that they would have exactly the same virtues. Insofar, in her work on the Bryce Commission, she faced a lot of challenges because people were saying, *We don't need to teach girls science or maths or any of these things because they're going to go home and be a wife, mother, or woman washing up. So, we need to teach them domestic science.*

And her argument was in order for them to have a good character as a citizen, they need to have this education. And she uses women and girls in her examples to show the community of moral ends, is the little girl who helps her mother to mind the baby and cook the family dinner. This is in her example. She brings in that, *Okay, they're going to go home and they're going to help their mother, but they have to be a good citizen and intelligent and good person, as well.*

So, Sully's review. One of the things I found unfair about it is that he says, *Well, there's something nice about her examples, because they are plucked from the field of personal experience. She has these observations of childish ways. She looks at children. That's what her*

*book is about.* But I think this is missing the point. She's giving those observations of girl children because girl children have to know the hard facts just as well as anyone else because they are going to be good citizens and girls are entitled to those abstractions of logic and ethics as much as anyone else.

So, she persistently opposed the view that girls should be taught different subjects than boys. And she strongly advocated for female-led women teachers. And the reason for this is, if you had men in charge of schools, like you had a school of girls, but there was a male head, then they persistently took out maths and science. This used to happen all the time and this was so threatening to the establishment that women would be in charge that there was actually a backlash in 1902 when the women's right to be educated or elected in local administration of education was taken away. So, this had to be fought for again. This is her, by the way.

And in the public schools: So, the whole thing about education is that you were supposed to learn to be a gentleman. So, what are women supposed to do? Well, they can just consume information because they can't be noble and adventurous. Well, just a little bit noble and adventurous. And so Bryant had to work towards this idea of character and self-determination for girls and women, and this was noted in her obituary volume by all the teachers and students who worked with her, that she wanted people to have this autonomy and self-control, that she thought that this was learned in part through picking up problem solving skills in the classroom. And that was part of being a good person but also having this character.

She became the head of the Association of Headmistresses. I was trying to find out when the Association of Headmistresses got amalgamated with the Association of Headmasters, but I couldn't find that out. But they were separate things. She says similar things, she says, *The unreformed schoolmaster being ignorant of the nature of knowledge and children's minds was apt to take it for granted. That telling and repeating were proper means. To this end, the result was much failure of knowledge and much blunting of wits, and then, they would lose the fresh craving to learn.*

So, she continued to give these accounts, and she herself had to be somebody that the students would look up to, that teachers would look up to. She took the teachers as well on her jaunts of mountains because they had to be leaders. And she says, *Look, the child will also learn by example. And so, they must present this child with the ideal, a better personality for their realisation.* This is what the leader will say. She holds the mirror. So, the teacher 'holds the mirror up to them in which they see, not their actual selves, but [her] his idea of them as their actual meaning.' [Bryant 1887: 41] So, she's got to be this person who shows them that they can have this character. And she really took this on board, I believe.

And this teacher said of her, you 'should worship the name of Sophie Bryant, for she hoisted the flag of equality with envied man, in man's hitherto to unchallenged supremacy - that of mind and brain.' [Diehl 1908: 303] She had to be an intellectual as well as being this educationalist. On the other hand, she presented herself as quite meek. We see that she's homely and womanly, dignity, attractive, serenity, pose, winsome. And so, she came across as a proper Victorian lady. And I think that she was canny in this.

So, after becoming head mistress of North London Collegiate School in 1895, she garnered a huge amount of media interest. There's all kinds of newspaper articles about her preserved in

the archives at North London Collegiate. A typical interview would be something like, *Oh, at your lovely school, do you teach the girls how to sew?* And she would say, *Yes, we do have a sewing room, but they also have to learn maths.* And then another question in this particular interview was about how wonderful it was that women were so naturally suited to be school teachers and they were really brilliant at school teaching. She said a little bit about, *Yes, they are, they do excel, but you must understand that all the most brilliant female minds in the country, they're all school teachers because this is the only profession open to them, and we really, really should have other professions that they're coming in for.* So, she's saying this 1896 in one of these women's journals, this one called *The Princess*. And, you see, just before retirement there's another article where she says, she reveals what she was aiming at all along. She says, 'Bit by bit, it was shown that there is not a line of work which a woman cannot take up.' [Times 1918]

Just one more note on that. In the same article, she complained that women are underpaid. And I found out when she became the headmistress of North London Collegiate, she had to have reference letters from the great and good, really serious politicians had to write her reference letters. She got 50 letters from people, like the great and the good, congratulating her. This was one of the most important and prestigious schools in the country. Her salary was the same as a male labourer and it was half what a common soldier would've got. So, she must've been independently wealthy to be able to take up that position.

A final note is about the history of philosophy. So, that was a lot of social history, but my particular interest is in the history of philosophy, and her philosophical work does not survive our histories of philosophy. Her part has dropped out and been obscured. She's absent from discussions of mind, emotions, ethics, and 19th century philosophy, and she doesn't appear even in a recent book by a female scholar entitled *Women Philosophers of 19th Century Britain*. One place she does make an appearance is this lengthy, many volume history of women in philosophy by Eileen Way, 1994 but that she dismisses her. She wasn't very good. She didn't have anything to say.

I found this for feminist historians, have a similar dismissive attitude. For example, they say, *Oh, well, that book about education, it never entered the mainstream because it was incomprehensible.* Now, you wouldn't say that about a 19th century philosophy book by a man. You would get down to work trying to figure out what it meant. And this is the kind of sexism in historiography and philosophy that we still have going on. I know O'Neill, a very important writer on women's philosophy in the early modern period, who points out that if we dismiss a woman philosopher on the grounds that we can't follow their train of thought or we haven't heard of them, then this is our failing. It's admission of our own failing, rather than anything. Actually, she wrote excellent and extraordinary philosophy in line with philosophers at the time, such as T H Green and Henry Sidgwick.

I just have that to end with: There she is, and she's just climbed a mountain. [shows a photo of Bryant up a mountain]

This is a text transcript to the talk - please check references if you wish to requote quotations.

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