

## IN PARENTHESIS Newsletter (24/1)

Dear friends of the Quartet,

The last two years were very exciting: *Metaphysical Animals* by Clare and Rachael came out in 2022 to a large celebratory echo, and last summer many of us met in Durham to share work on and celebrate the Quartet. This year, IN PARENTHESIS is looking for new ways to advertise and support scholarship on Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley and Iris Murdoch, and how their way of thinking features in the landscape of analytic philosophy.

One new step is this newsletter, which we will send out twice a year. We aim to keep you up to date about events, projects and publications, as well as to keep you entertained by *short and delightful* snippets of archive material, letters or poetry, and a short *focus on a philosopher* in the vicinity of the Quartet's thought.

We are in the process of redesigning our [website](#) with a view to making things easier to find; do take a look! You'll find various categories in which we very much rely on your input and support. Please let us know about your events and new projects so that we can add them to the news section and advertise them in our newsletter. Also, if you've taught or are teaching a seminar on the Quartet or one of its members, it'd be wonderful if you'd like to share your syllabus! We have a section on the new website dedicated to teaching material and hope that easy access to texts, seminar plans and handouts will be useful in widening philosophical canons.

We are currently in the process of thinking about how to broaden the focus of IN PARENTHESIS. With the Quartet at the centre, as a lens and catalyst, our aim is to illuminate the hidden counter-traditions in British moral philosophy in the 20th century – counter traditions to logical positivism, scientism, non-cognitivism, anti-metaphysicalism, utilitarianism and other dominant strands. How did they get started, who formed their philosophical parentage, and who kept them going? One key figure here, to give you an example, will be [Dorothy Emmet](#) (1904-2000). She was a major figure of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century British philosophy. Her moral philosophy was informed by anthropology and sociology. Like Murdoch (the two were friends and Emmet dedicated one of her books to Iris) she saw religion, spirituality, and philosophy as part of the same enterprise. She wrote four books in metaphysics and six in moral, social, and political philosophy.

We hope to curate online reading events and talk series, as well as obtain funds to host biennial events exploring these connections in the future. You'll always find up-to-date information on our website. If you have ideas, would like to host an event yourself, or simply get connected, do drop us a line and make sure to register on Mapping the Quartet! Let's rethink the received story of analytic philosophy together!

The next newsletter will go out in October. Please let us know any item you would like to see featured by 30 September 2024. Thank you!

### Events

["Filming Metaphysical Animals – A Symposium"](#) in Cambridge, 3 May 2024

["The Moral Philosophy of Mary Midgley"](#) at the University of Nottingham, 16-17 July 2024 (CFP deadline is 2 June 2024)

["11<sup>th</sup> Iris Murdoch Society Conference"](#) in Chichester on 30 August – 1 September 2024

## Current projects/research/jobs

IP board-member Ellie Robson has been awarded a Post-Doctoral Fellowship from the BSHP for a project on 'Aristotelian naturalism in 20<sup>th</sup> century ethical writing by women philosophers' including Midgley and Stebbing.

Mapping The Quartet member Amy Ward has been awarded a Pre-Doctoral Fellowship from the BSHP for archival work on Murdoch and Weil.

Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman are writing a Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Mary Midgley, due out in 2026.

Mapping the Quartet member Peter West (Northeastern University London) has been awarded BA/Leverhulme funding for a project on Women at the Dawn of Analytic Philosophy, which will focus on the work of Susan Stebbing, Margaret Macdonald, and Dorothy Emmet - including their connections to the Quartet.

David Midgley is working on a new edition of his fabulous 2005 *The Essential Mary Midgley*, commissioned by Routledge.

## New publications

*Iris Murdoch and the Political*, Gary Browning, July 2024

*Are you an Illusion*, Mary Midgley, new Routledge edition, September 2023

*A Terribly Serious Adventure: Philosophy at Oxford 1900-60*, Nikhil Krishnan, March 2023

## Teaching Materials

Mark Hopwood's [TED "Ideas change everything" video](#) on "How to know if you're being selfish", featuring thoughts of Iris Murdoch:

[BBC "In Our Time" on Elizabeth Anscombe](#), featuring Rachael Wiseman

## Focus on ...

### MARY WARNOCK AND THE QUARTET

Mary was at Oxford during the post-war years, when it became 'the philosophical centre of the world' (*Memoir* 49). The Quartet were part of the scene, and Mary came to know Iris, Philippa, and Elizabeth severally. They all left long-lasting first impressions on Mary: she was awestruck by Philippa's aristocratic demeanour; she was, of course she was, seduced by Iris's easy affability; and she was taken by the peculiar package that was Elizabeth – a voice of astonishing beauty and so serene a face, together with a shabbiness that on occasion drew the authorities to action. Mary also admired their philosophical acumen, and celebrated their distinctiveness from the prevailing philosophical trends. These trends, specifically the ordinary language philosophy associated with Austin, Elizabeth deemed 'evil' (*Memoir* 56) and she made it her mission to protect Mary from them.

But, at least initially, Mary was an enthusiast of Austin's approach, and welcomed the strict standards of meaning that it relentlessly promoted. In time, though, she became dissatisfied with the direction in which that approach took moral philosophy in particular, rendering it much too distant from how moral lives are actually lived. She credited each of Iris, Elizabeth, and especially Philippa, for starting a step change by questioning one of its most cherished tenets – namely, the division of fact from value – and thus paving the way for reclaiming the content of moral judgements as a legitimate philosophical concern. Mary's own contribution to this new shift came in her *Imagination*. There she argued that the faculty of imagination is the power of interpretation of everything we experience. Since, she maintained, imagination blends both intellect and emotion, it is the first duty of education to cultivate both. This was in alignment with Mary's passion for teaching and education policy, for which she abandoned philosophy first in the 60s and then finally in the 70s. In addition to *Imagination*, Mary wrote a number of short survey books: *Ethics since 1900* with OUP in 1960, reprinted several times since, and with a second edition issued in 1966; *Existential Ethics*, with Macmillan in 1967; and *Existentialism* in 1970 with OUP, re-issued as a revised edition in 1996. She also edited *Sartre: A Collection of Critical Essays* with Anchor in 1971, and the collection *Women Philosophers* with Everyman in 1996, which includes pieces from Iris, Elizabeth, Philippa, and Mary Midgley. After leaving academia, Mary wrote over a dozen books addressed to the layperson.

Sources: Warnock, Mary (2000) *A Memoir: People and Places*, Duckworth

(by Ana Barandalla)



**short and delightful**

“I'm glad that you watch television. I'm sure it is good for relaxation”

(Iris Murdoch to Philippa Foot, 14 February 1981)

All the best from the IN PARENTHESIS board