

women) In Parenthesis

Newsletter (24/2)

Dear friends of the Quartet,

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of [Professor Robert Stern](#) last August. Bob was a great friend and supporter of In Parenthesis from the first. He read a draft of *Metaphysical Animals* within a day, returning his typically insightful and precise comments with his usual dose of subtle wit and deep enthusiasm. His philosophical legacy is enormous, including his important work on [Murdoch](#). His intellectual generosity, love of philosophy and encouragement of younger colleagues remain an inspiration.

The new academic year has begun and there are many Quartet-related events and publications we would like to point you to. We are particularly delighted about our new *(women) In Parenthesis* “Work-in-Progress Series”, an online talk series held every other month throughout the academic year. The excellent first talk was held by Peter West last Tuesday. You can find it on our [Youtube channel](#), onto which we will upload as many talks as possible.

Do have a look at our [website](#), to which we constantly add new items. We now have a [Quartet Archives](#) page – please send us any additional listings we don’t know about! Also, do take a look at the call for participation below: we’re looking for contributions of short profiles to our “[Connected Figures](#)” page. Finally, we would love to populate our [publications](#) page with new papers! If you have written or know of papers that link at least two quartet members or a quartet member with a “connected figure”, do let us know at info@womeninparenthesis.co.uk.

The next newsletter will go out in April 2025. Please let us know of any item you would like to see featured by 31 March 2025. If there are important events happening in the meantime, do let us know as well. We happily send out little announcements and reminders in between the newsletters. Thank you!

All the very best,

Eva (newsletter editor) and the *(women) In Parenthesis* board

Events

We are very happy to have launched the *(women) In Parenthesis* “Work-in-Progress Series”. Every two months throughout the academic year a Quartet researcher will present on their current project. Join us online for what promises to be a lively chain of events!

15 October 2024:

Peter West, “Thinking as Human Beings with Stebbing, Macdonald, Emmet, Murdoch and Midgley” (catch up on YouTube [here](#))

10 December 2024:

Ian James Kidd, “Midgley, Wickedness, and Vices”

11 February 2025:

10am GMT note special time: Peter Robinson, “Philosophic Plumbing of the Australian Vocational Educational Framework”

8 April 2025:

Nicola Holt, “Iris Murdoch, Susanne Langer and the Great Transformer”

3 June 2025:

Chiara Pellegrini, “Discussing Relationality Starting From G.E.M. Anscombe”

Sessions will take place 3pm to 4.30pm UK time, with the exception of 11th February 2025, when we will meet at 10am UK time. To join, follow this zoom link:

<https://zoom.us/j/91391091203?pwd=wXUGpcGflTvlc5Gqvmb8yVK3JEUsAL.1>

Check the *(women) In Parenthesis* [Youtube Channel](#) for recordings!

Conferences

“Philosophy After Murdoch”, 28-29 March 2025, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, organised by Matthew Congdon (Vanderbilt) and Mark Hopwood (Sewanee)

Until very recently, it was possible to refer to Iris Murdoch as a neglected or peripheral philosopher: a figure well-known as a novelist yet whose philosophical writings were too undisciplined or eccentric to fit the mold of recognizable academic philosophy. As recently as 2012, it was still necessary to make the case for Murdoch’s very status as a philosopher, as reflected in the title of the landmark volume, *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher*. Today the situation has changed dramatically. The past decade has seen a blossoming of new scholarly interest in Murdoch’s philosophical writings, which now strike many as prescient in the challenges they pose to methods and assumptions that continue to dominate academic philosophy. It is now possible for Murdochian conceptions of love, moral concepts, language, attention, vision, reality, and beyond to intervene meaningfully in contemporary philosophical conversations. Domains often kept apart in mainstream philosophy—such as fact and value, the ethical and the aesthetic, ordinary moral life and reflective moral philosophy—can now be explored in their complex continuities by pursuing philosophy in a Murdochian key. The aim of this workshop is to build upon and encourage these developments by inviting participants to share their visions of what philosophy looks like *after* Murdoch. The program for the *Philosophy After Murdoch* workshop is now complete, and will feature talks by Talbot Brewer, Justin Broackes, Silvia Caprioglio Panizza, Kyla Ebels-Duggan, Anil Gomes, Mark Hopwood, Francey Russell, and Nandi Theunissen. Others interested in attending the workshop should contact Matt Congdon (matthew.congdon@vanderbilt.edu) or Mark Hopwood (mhopwood@sewanee.edu) to register.

“[The Somerville Group: Influences, Impact and Legacy](#)”, 13-15 June 2025 at Lund University in Sweden. [Deadline](#) for 300-word abstracts is 1 March 2025.

“[Die Souveränität des Guten: Iris Murdoch und die Folgen](#)”, 20-22 February at the Katholische Akademie in Berlin, Germany. Deadline for 5000-character abstracts (English or German) is 6 December 2024.

“Suffering and Attention”, a combination of a one-day student conference and a two-day workshop focusing on ways of attending and failing to attend to suffering, inspired by Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch, at Tübingen University, Germany, spring 2025, organised by Silvia Caprioglio Panizza and Eva-Maria Düringer. More details to follow.

"Intellectual Traditions in Dialogue and Conflict", the 18th Annual Conference of the International Society for MacIntyrean Enquiry (ISME), held at the University of Pennsylvania, 10-12 July 2025. The conference is on the theme of and will include keynote lectures by Anscombe scholar Candace Vogler (University of Chicago) and the historian Samuel Moyn (Yale University). Proposals are especially welcome that explore the relationship between the thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and Elizabeth Anscombe, including papers that discuss their influence on contemporary work in virtue ethics, natural law theory, theories of justice, and related topics. Read the Call for Papers [here](#). Deadline for proposals is 15 January 2025.

Conference reports

[“The Moral Philosophy of Mary Midgley”](#) was held at the University of Nottingham, 16-17 July 2024, organised by Ian James Kidd and Ellie Robson.

The first ever conference dedicated solely to Midgley’s philosophy was held at the University of Nottingham last summer. We had a wonderful array of Midgley scholars, like Greg McElwain, Benjamin Lipscomb and Clare MacCumhaill and some newcomers to Midgley’s work also. The conference focused mainly on Midgley’s moral philosophy, with hopes for further conferences to come, drawing on the many themes of Mary’s philosophy. Many of the talks presented chapters for a forthcoming Palgrave-Macmillan volume, part of the *Philosophers in Depth* series, entitled ‘Mary Midgley’s Moral Philosophy and Ethics’.

[“11th Iris Murdoch Society Conference”](#) in Chichester on 30 August – 1 September 2024

The biennial Iris Murdoch Society conference was held at the University of Chichester from 30th August – 1st September. The conference brought together scholars working on a wide range of Murdochian topics, and included talks on Murdoch’s philosophy, literature and biography. There were also previews and discussions of exciting forthcoming projects, such as potential film adaptations of *The Italian Girl* and *The Sea, The Sea*.

Call for Participation

Connected Figures

We are keen to augment the number of profiles included on the [‘Connected Figures’](#) page of the Women in Parenthesis site. We are currently seeking profiles on

Donald MacKinnon
A.D. Lindsay
Mary Glover

Heinz Cassirer
R.G. Collingwood

If you or any of your colleagues have research expertise in this area or would like to try your hand at a profile, please get in touch on info@womeninparenthesis.co.uk If you have suggestions for other Connected Figures to include, please also get in touch.

Student-led Reading Groups

Resources for Reading Groups are available [here](#).

The Durham reading group is now in its 9th year and is keen to make contact with other reading groups across the Network. If you or your students are in a reading group, please let us know. In general, it would be wonderful to link groups across the world through Mapping the Quartet.

Notes from a Biscuit Tin 2025

We are thrilled to announce that Mary's biscuit tin will be doing another global-lap in 2025. We will soon issue a call for Expressions of Interest to receive the biscuit tin. This round the theme will be 'Philosophy in the Wild' and will be project-managed by the brilliant poet and philosopher Mara-Daria Cojocar. Please keep an eye on Philos-L for the announcement. We are particularly keen to find and support philosopher/poet pairings in the Global South and New Zealand, in addition to the UK/Ireland, Europe and US/Canada.

Current research projects and funding possibilities

Alan Tapper has finished the first draft of a paper on "[Julius Kovesi](#) and the Quartet: A Little-known Story". You can read the abstract below. If you wish to read the draft paper, email Alan at alandtapper@gmail.com

This article situates the Australian moral philosopher Julius Kovesi (1930–1989) in the context of the "Quartet" of women philosophers—Iris Murdoch, Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot and Mary Midgley—with whom he was associated in various ways. These connections have not been documented previously, but they are not minor or incidental. The evidence shows that Kovesi made a distinctive contribution to the reshaping of moral philosophy that the Quartet were developing. In particular, it shows him as developing a Wittgensteinian but not an Aristotelian moral philosophy.

Blandine Langrut just finished her [doctorate](#) at Lorraine University on "Anscombe's Moral Realism: A Philosophy of Integrity". You can read the abstract below. Also, Blandine is writing up a paper on Anscombe and Mystical Perception, tentatively entitled "Naturally Spiritual, The Metaphysical Anthropology of Elizabeth Anscombe". If you wish to read the draft paper, email Blandine at blandine.lagrut@gmail.com

For Elizabeth Anscombe (1919-2001), every effort at goodness is also a quest for truth. Moral vigilance takes the form of a *Daimôn* reminding each person of the task of examining their life:

‘Perhaps in some way, I can’t see, I may be on a bad path, perhaps I am hopelessly wrong in some essential way.’ This thesis argues that Anscombe is developing an original type of moral realism centred on the notion of integrity and polarised by one question: how does a person come to grasp, as rigorously as possible, the meaning and gravity of their actions? According to her, three conditions are necessary to correctly assess the weight of our actions – they provide the blueprint for our work: we need to know what we are *actually* doing, we need to have some idea of the necessities of our human nature and, finally, we need to recognise the infinite value of this nature. Along the way, this thesis shows how the Anscombean philosophy of integrity reconfigures the debate on moral prohibitions. For her, certain acts are to be refused absolutely, whatever the cost to well-being or the consequent situation. But this cannot be done either at the expense of personal discernment or at the cost of alienation. Her way of conceiving the human makes it possible to resolve this tension by establishing that the prohibition does not need to be decreed by an external authority to be absolute. It can be imposed internally on the agent, as a compelling evidence, due to their *spiritual* nature.

The Central European University in Vienna offers a doctoral scholarship to all PhD students, and provides various stipends and tuition waivers at the MA level. It's open to students working on the Wartime Quartet, and already has PhD students working on Foot and Murdoch.

<https://philosophy.ceu.edu/about-0>

Durham University is currently accepting applications for its PhD program. To be considered for funding please apply before 31st December. Get in touch with Clare (clare.maccumhaill@dur.ac.uk) to discuss possible funding routes. Durham holds the Midgley Archive and currently has two PhD students working on the Quartet.

Liverpool University is currently inviting applications for its PhD programme, and would be delighted to hear from students wishing to work on the Quartet (or Quartet+). To be considered for AHRC funding (including a ring-fenced ‘Female Philosopher Global Majority studentship’) please apply before 13th January. For more info see [here](#), or write to Rachael (rachael.wiseman@liverpool.ac.uk).

New publications

Metaphysical Animals has just come out in French: *Le Quartet d'Oxford. Quand Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley et Iris Murdoch réinventaient la philosophie*, by Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman, transl. by Clotilde Meyer and Rémi Clot-Goudard, September 2024

The Creation of Wittgenstein: Understanding the Roles of Rush Rhees, Elizabeth Anscombe and Georg Henrik von Wright, by Thomas H. Wallgren, Bloomsbury, August 2024

“*Mary Midgley’s Meta-ethics and Neo-Aristotelian Naturalism*”, by Ellie Robson, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 2024.

“*The Function of the Church in a Tie of War: The Resolute Voices of Donald MacKinnon and Elizabeth Anscombe*”, by John Berkman, in *Studies in Christian Ethics* 37(3), pp. 619-642, 2024.

[“Philosophy is an Art: For Margaret Macdonald, philosophical theories are akin to stories, meant to enlarge certain aspects of life”](#), by Peter West, AEON April 2024.

[“Murdoch and Gilead: John Ames as a Model of Murdochian Virtue”](#), by Cathy Mason in Garry Hagberg (ed.), *Narrative and Ethical Understanding*

Listen to Miles Leeson’s podcast featuring Larry Blum, discussing the (philosophical) friendship between Iris Murdoch and Dorothy Emmet [here](#).

José Costa Júnior from the IFMG Campus Ponte Nova, Brazil, has published a [review](#) of books about the Quartet and a [review](#) of Mary Midgley’s *What is Philosophy for*.

Dominic Lash has just published an article on Martin Scorsese's film *The King of Comedy*, which he uses to explore a “partial idealism” centred on phenomena whose basis is in shared human practices of education and conduct, such as promises and manners. He uses quite a bit of Anscombe in the course of the article, which you can read [here](#). You can get in touch with Dominic at domlash@hotmail.com – he’d love to hear your thoughts.

Forthcoming:

Anscombe on Wittgenstein: Reminiscences of a Philosophical Friendship, edited by John Berkman and Roger Teichmann, due to be published by OUP in 2025.

Mary Midgley on What Matters: Conversations on Science, Ethics and Nature, by Greg McElwain, due to be published by Bloomsbury in 2026. The book will be a thematically-curated collection of philosophical conversations/interviews with Midgley from 2011-18, complete with narration, exposition, and contextualization.

Other

The Iris Murdoch Association of North America

Robert Cremins (University of Houston, Texas) and [Samuel Filby](#) (Northwestern University, Illinois) are starting a new Iris Murdoch Association! If you are based in Canada or the USA and would like to join the mailing list please email Robert (rcremins@central.uh.edu) and Sam (samuelfilby2025@u.northwestern.edu) to find out about future events and to be a part of the network.

Teaching Materials

José Costa Júnior from the IFMG Campus Ponte Nova, Brazil, has published a comment on the climate challenges in Brazil with a focus on Mary Midgley. Read it [here](#).

Take a look at the *(women) In Parenthesis Youtube channel*, which features short videos on some of the Quartet’s major positions, explained in a very accessible and visually appealing

way. Also, you'll find some of the (upcoming) talks of our *(women) In Parenthesis* "Work-in-Progress" series there.

Focus on ...

DOROTHY EMMET

Dorothy Emmet (1904-2000), around fifteen years the Quartet's senior, was very much a kindred spirit in their shared rejection of many of the orthodoxies of their time in moral philosophy. She showed an independent spirit, both intellectual and personal, from early on. As an Oxford undergraduate in 1926 she heard a lecture by the economic historian R.H. Tawney, concerning a general strike of that year across England and Wales which, she said, "gave me the nearest thing to a conversion experience," leading her to venture to a region of Wales where she taught political philosophy (as a 22-year-old) to unemployed and largely Marxist miners.

Emmet developed wide-ranging specialties in philosophy—ethics, social philosophy (including what we would now call philosophy of social science) and political philosophy, philosophy of religion, and metaphysics. She wrote one book, *Function, Purpose, and Powers* (1958, reissue 1972), based on an anthropology seminar at her home University of Manchester, and another, *Rules, Roles, and Relations* (1966), from a stay at Columbia University in the US in the early '60's, collaborating with a prominent American sociologist, Robert Merton. She also helped to establish a Philosophy program at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria in the early '70's, having learned some about African life, religions, and ethics in the anthropology seminar.

Emmet and Murdoch formed a "philosophic friendship" built partly around their shared retaining of a connection to the "transcendent" in their ethical thought, and a refusal to draw a sharp boundary between religion/spirituality and philosophy. Emmet says she and Murdoch agreed that "Christianity as it has been historically conceived has got to go." But Emmet lived in a philosophical/religious community, the Epiphany Philosophers, in Cambridge from 1966 on (taking early retirement from Manchester), and edited a journal, *Theoria to Theory* devoted to bringing science, religion, and philosophy into constructive dialogue with one another. She devoted her 1994 work *Role of the Unrealisable* to Murdoch, and of it Murdoch said, "I love and revere it...[S]o grateful to you for dedicating your great book to me."

Dorothy Emmet was the author of 10 books, including those mentioned above and also *The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking* (1946) and *Philosophers and Friends: Reminiscences of 70 Years in Philosophy* (1996).

Find out more about her [here](#).

short and delightful

PROFESSOR IN THE KITCHEN



She cooks for relaxation

News Chronicle Reporter

MISS Dorothy Emmet, M.A. (Oxford) whose appointment as Professor of Philosophy at Manchester University was announced yesterday, believes that cooking gives relaxation from hard thinking.

Miss Emmet is the only woman professor of philosophy in this country.

When I saw her last night she was preparing a meal at her house in Yew Tree-lane, Wythenshawe. She runs the house alone, with occasional help, and enjoys gardening.

She came to Manchester University from King's College, Newcastle-on-Tyne, in 1938, as lecturer in the philosophy of religion.

Leaving Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, with a first in "Greats," Miss Emmet went later to Harvard University as a Commonwealth scholar. She has written several books on philosophy.