

Preface

The fifteen papers in this volume were all part of the Royal Institute of Philosophy's annual lecture series in London, for 2018–9. The focus and indeed the motivation for the series was that 2019 represented the centenary of the birth of three highly distinguished philosophers, with one more coming in 2020. All of these philosophers, who were contemporaries and erstwhile colleagues at Oxford in the 1940s, were women, and not coincidentally.

The four philosophers were Elizabeth Anscombe, Mary Midgley and Iris Murdoch, all born in 1919, and Philippa Foot, who was born in 1920. When the lecture series was being planned, Mary Midgley was still alive, and approaching her 100th birthday; arrangements had been made to involve her in the series, by video link from her home in Newcastle, arrangements to which she had readily agreed. Sadly she died shortly before the planned event could take place. In its stead was a kind of memorial to her, attended by her three sons and other friends and acquaintances, as well as by the usual lecture audience.

The papers which follow will bring out the range and depth of the thought of our four subjects. However it is worth emphasizing at the start that in the 1940s and on into the 1950s these four women represented a powerful and vociferous opposition to what at the time was the dominant and largely male-dominated form of moral philosophy in Oxford, and indeed in the rest of the world of Anglo-American analytic philosophy. This dominant form has come to be dubbed as 'consequentialism'; that it is no longer regarded as to all intents and purposes as unquestionable is due in no small part to the work and influence of the four women we are here celebrating. Having said that, it is important to emphasise that their individual and collective contributions to philosophy and to intellectual life more generally were not confined to the attack on consequentialism, and this will be amply born out in what follows.

The opening paper in this book and also in the lecture series is an overview by Benjamin Lipscomb of the work of the four philosophers and of their multifarious inter-relationships down the years. For those not familiar with this story, and even to those who are, 'The Women Are Up To Something' will provide an invaluable key, including an explanation both of how these four women came to such prominence in the late 1940s in Oxford, and also of the paper's title.

Lipscomb is then followed by four papers on the work of Elizabeth Anscombe. The first, 'A Philosopher of singular style and multiple modes' by John Haldane, provides an enlightening survey of Anscombe's philosophy and her manner of doing it, including examining her critical stance towards many of the most popular theses among her contemporaries in the philosophical world and the relationship of her work and style to the writings of Wittgenstein and Aristotle. Haldane also considers the relationship between Anscombe's formal philosophy and some of her reflections on religion, addressed to non-philosophical audiences.

Jennifer A. Frey in 'Revisiting Modern Moral Philosophy' argues that the radical message of Anscombe's classic paper of that title has still not been fully taken on board, even by some of those who see themselves as following its precepts. They have not, as Anscombe urged, stopped playing the game altogether. In conclusion Frey argues strongly in favour of Anscombe's view that all human action is moral (or immoral).

In 'Anscombe on Brute Facts and Human Affairs' Rachel Wiseman argues for the stress in Anscombe's moral philosophy on the social context of the human action, and indeed, of morality, against a conception of the moral agent as an isolated individual thinking on his or her own. As with our being as agents, our notions of obligation and the rest work within a sense that we are social beings.

Finally on Anscombe Candace Vogler in 'Aristotelian Necessity' emphasizes the primacy of stopping modals (prohibitions) in Anscombe's moral philosophy before showing how this relates to a conception of the human good. In developing this latter point, Vogler suggests that while some of what might be needed here can be explained in terms of an Aristotelian necessity, what is required for a peaceful life together, in quasi-utilitarian mode. However – and maybe in tension what Wiseman says – for Vogler ultimately what Anscombe is asserting about stopping modals requires a conception of a theological or religious sort.

In 'Volunteers and Conscripts: Philippa Foot and the Amoralist' Nakul Krishna attempts a rehabilitation of Foot's early conception of morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives, one in which moral demands depend on the motivation of particular individuals. Foot later abandoned this position because it seemed to give no answer to someone who was motivated to do despicable actions, but Krishna emphasizes human freedom in such matters, and refers to Bernard Williams and the early Foot herself in wondering whether we actually need any more than a basic sense of human sympathy

for morality to work. Maybe for most of us, most of the time, a sense that we are ultimately responsible to each other might suffice.

John Hacker-Wright in 'Virtues as Perfections of Human Powers: On the Metaphysics of Goodness in Aristotelian Naturalism' considers Foot's later thought, as expounded in her *Natural Goodness*. Grounding morality in the demands of our nature is not, he argues, an empirical claim, but one based in a notion of flourishing, what he calls 'natural normativity', in the human case one bound up with our natural powers, which include those pertaining to morality, to virtue and vice. In spelling out this thought Hacker-Wright invokes an Aristotelian finality, and also Thomas Aquinas's sense of us as rational animals subject to natural law and exercising our powers against such a background. In this he sees himself as going beyond commentators sympathetic to Foot's approach, such as McDowell, Michael Thompson and indeed Foot herself.

Finally on Foot, Clare Mac Cumhaill interestingly extends Foot's notion of the flourishing involved in natural goodness to encompass the aesthetic as well as the moral. In doing this she brings in references not just to Foot, but also to Iris Murdoch.

On Iris Murdoch herself, Julia Driver, in 'Love and Unsettling in Iris Murdoch' endeavours in a qualified way to resolve a potential tension between trying to see someone clearly, unselfishly, disinterestedly, and loving them, which Murdoch hopes will go together. A tension might arise if seeing them clearly reveals something unpleasant or worse (as appears to be the case in some of Murdoch's novels). Driver suggests that seeing them really clearly might reveal the true self, which can still be loved, overlooking some flaws, providing that the flaws in question do not impact on the true self.

Sabina Lovibond in 'The Elusiveness of the Ethical: From Murdoch to Diamond' in a comparison of Murdoch with Diamond, and with the aid of some fascinating literary passages, argues against what might be called the imperialism of the ethical. She advocates a form of value pluralism, in which other values, such as the aesthetic, are important as well; valuing is ubiquitous in our consciousness, but not moral valuing, and perhaps rightly not ubiquitous. (Does she thus part company with the Anscombian claim, as reported by Frey, that all actions are moral/immoral?)

Hannah Marije Altorf in 'Iris Murdoch and Common Sense, Or What It Is Like to be a Woman in Philosophy' points out that there is reason to believe that Murdoch was not always taken seriously enough as a philosopher because she was a woman – and this, even though, in her later life she herself resisted being given any sort of consideration because she was a woman. Nevertheless Murdoch

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would probably not have dissented from the view strongly advanced by Altorf that a diversity of viewpoint, including of course that of women, is desirable in philosophy, contributing to a kind of 'common' sense, philosophy as based in experience and contributing to a shared effort to make sense of our life.

That Mary Midgley would not have dissented from that – indeed the idea of philosophy making sense of our life are her words – is clearly demonstrated by Liz McKinnell in 'Philosophical Plumbing in the Twenty-First Century'. McKinnell uses Midgley's thought to explore the value of a diversity of voices for philosophy and society as a whole. In doing this she makes effective use of the relationship between mother and baby, something of which Midgley would undoubtedly have approved, not only in itself, but because it goes strongly against atomistic individualism.

Atomistic individualism of a Hobbesian or free market variety was something against which Midgley fought vigorously in much of her work, as Gregory McElwain demonstrates clearly in 'Relationality in the Thought of Mary Midgley'. And, as he shows, relationality in Midgley's hands extended to our interconnectedness with animals and the natural world generally. Midgley was an early philosophical defender of the significance of animals philosophically and elsewhere, and may even have influenced Foot on the notion of natural goodness here.

David Cooper in 'Removing the Barriers': Mary Midgley on Concern for Animals' takes up Midgley's sense that our attitude to animals is not just hubristic all too often. Even when apparently favourable to animals it is often over-theoretical. What is needed is not more theorizing, pro or contra, but 'attention to actual engagements with animals and to the moral failings or vices that distort people's relationships with them'.

Finally in 'Evolution as a Religion: Mary Midgley's Hopes and Fears', I myself examine Midgley's crusade not just against Dawkins and the selfish gene, but also against what she calls the 'Omega Men', scientists or science writers who predict unimaginable futures as humanity ascends the evolutionary escalator. I qualify some of what she says about Darwin and Social Darwinism, but end with positive remarks about the holistic, quasi-religious vision she espoused about the world as a whole.

On behalf of the Royal Institute of Philosophy I would like to thank the contributors to the book and to the lecture series. We hope that we have produced something worthy of the four philosophers whose centenary we are here marking. I would also like to

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