

(women) In Parenthesis

Newsletter (25/1)

Dear friends of the Quartet,

We're happy to share with you the spring edition of the *(women) In Parenthesis* newsletter, a colourful assembly of events, research projects and publications about Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley and Iris Murdoch. We'd particularly like to draw your attention to the pre-doctoral conference in Cambridge in June and the call for participation and support.

The next newsletter will go out in October 2025. Please let us know of any item you would like to see featured by 30 September 2025. If there are important events happening in the meantime, do let us know as well. We'll be sending out little announcements and reminders in between the newsletters, and you can also find us on [Bluesky](#). Thank you!

All the very best,

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

Events

(women) In Parenthesis "Work-in-Progress Series"

The first season of our "Work-in-Progress series" is coming to an end with the following talk:

3 June 2025, 3-4:30 pm UK time:

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

To join, follow this zoom link:

<https://zoom.us/j/91391091203?pwd=wXUGpcGflTvlc5Gqymb8yVK3IEUsAL.1>

Check the *(women) In Parenthesis* [Youtube Channel](#) for recordings of past talks.

Please do consider joining us for the second season in the coming academic year:

Call for Abstracts

We welcome abstracts for the 2025-6 online "Work-in-Progress Series" on topics within the [Women in Parenthesis](#) scope of interest. This includes the thought of its central figures - G.E.M. Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Iris Murdoch, and Mary Midgley - as well as the women's intellectual environment, e.g. work by Dorothy Emmet, Mary Warnock, Susan Stebbing, Donald MacKinnon. See our [website](#) for more information.

The meetings will be held on Zoom, starting in October 2025 and continue every two months, with the last meeting in June 2026. Talks are expected to last around 45-50 minutes, followed by a 35-40 minute Q&A. Dates and times are to be determined.

Please send your anonymised abstracts of around 250 words (but we're not fussed about length), with your details on a different attachment, to anabarandalla@me.com, by the end of 31st July 2025.

Conferences

13-15 June 2025

The Somerville Group: Influences, impact, and legacy.

Lund University, Sweden. Keynote speakers will be Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman. You can still sign up until 1st of May! Find more information [here](#).

28-29 June 2025

Pre-doctoral (undergraduate and masters students) Wartime Quartet Conference

Trinity College Cambridge (in person and hybrid), Keynotes: Jane Heal, Sabina Lovibond

Organizers: Amia Guha (Cambridge), Will Patterson (KCL), Roisin Gibbons (Durham).

We had an overwhelming response to our CFA and are delighted that close to 30 predoctoral students will be presenting on 8 panels over two days. We are also facilitating a poster session on the theme of 'methodology' which was a strong focus of the papers we received. The event promises to be highly stimulating and celebratory. The quality of abstracts received was really noteworthy. Well done to the organizers for securing funding from the BSHP and Trinity College Cambridge!

Given the large number of predoctoral participants however, we are *more keen than ever* for MtQ member support. The conference will take place in the afternoon of both 28th and 29th June in Cambridge. If you can make any part of it, please get in touch with Clare (c.maccumhaill@gmail.com). We are looking for folk to help facilitate panels and provide mentorship. A letter of invitation can be provided if that helps access funds to attend.

2-4 July 2025

The *Diversity Reading List* are celebrating their 10 year anniversary with a two-and-a-half-day conference on 2 - 4 July 2025 in Manchester! Confirmed keynote speakers are Suki Finn (Royal Holloway University of London), Ma Cassandra Ysobel Teodosio (Women Doing Philosophy, UP Diliman), Paul Giladi (SOAS), and Ian Kidd (Nottingham). Find out more [here](#).

Conference reports

A conference on the theme of 'a Heterodox Traditions in Analytic Philosophy' (20-21 March 2025, Vita-Salute San Raffaele University of Milan) attracted lots of researchers working on the Quartet, including many MtQ members. Francesca Scapinello presented 'Maverick Masters and Interconnectedness: on Kovesi, Murdoch and Plato'; Chiara Pellegrini presented 'Ideas from the Wartime Quartet: The Concept of Relationality Between Anscombe's "Why?" and Midgley's "Philosophical Plumbing"'; Peter West and Ellie Robson presented 'Aristotelian Ethics: A Counter-Tradition in Twentieth-Century British Moral Philosophy' and Rachael Wiseman and Clare Mac Cumhaill, presented 'Irrelevant Intrusions: Conversations on the History of Philosophy'. There were also papers on Murdoch by Colette Olive (Leeds) and Arnaud Petit (Oxford); and on Murdoch and Midgley by Miranda Boldrini (Université Côte d'Azur). You can find out more about the Heterodox Traditions project [here](#).

The British Society for the History Annual Conference (3-5th April, Cambridge) was on the very Quartet-friendly theme of *Animals and the Environment in the History of Philosophy*. There was a veritable feast of Midgley with five talks on a variety of themes with strong representation from MtQ members and colleagues - Ellie Robson and Sophia Connell, Tom Whyman, Elizabeth Macintosh, Greg McElwain, Clare Mac Cumhaill and Enrico Galvagni. Murdoch was also represented, with a talk by Fay Lee, as were the connected Quartet+ figures of Stebbing and Emmet in work by Peter West. Lia Nordmann gave a paper on Kant and Diamond. The full programme with titles is on the BSHP [website](#).

Aligning with Women's Day, there was a workshop at the University of Cambridge on *Ideas of Women in Philosophy*. Two of the six talks focused on Quartet members: Jane Heal (Cambridge) on Elizabeth Anscombe, and Cathy Mason (CEU) on Iris Murdoch.

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
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. We would be extremely grateful for support with developing this part of the website.

Current research projects and funding possibilities

MtQ member Camille Braune has submitted her PhD thesis on Iris Murdoch and language! Congrats Camille! The title is: "For a new ethics of attention to language. From the work of the British novelist and philosopher Iris Murdoch (1919–1999)"

Here is an abstract:

This PhD thesis aims to explore Iris Murdoch's influence on the development of a new contemporary ordinary ethics, embracing both the concepts of attention to language (i.e. what it means to be attentive to language, how to be attentive to it and why) and ordinary ethics (i.e. how ordinary life can be the privileged ground of the moral life). This is a linguistic and literary approach that brings together the current of perfectionism in moral philosophy and the conceptual approach in ethics, and which aims to propose a new ethics of attention to language as a singular moral project. By engaging with the philosophical current that aims to defend attention as a central concept for ethics, this doctoral thesis aims to show the essential contribution to the elaboration of this concept by Iris Murdoch from the 1950s onwards, by articulating the initial postulate with a research aimed at understanding what is at stake when the concept of attention is applied to language. The challenge is to understand the possibility of linguistic perfectionism, as well as to grasp how the relationship between attention and language is an ethical but also a decisively political one.

MtQ member Alan Towey's current research project focuses on three New College Oxford alumni, Walter Hatch, William Spooner, and Edmund Morshead. This trio were engaged in an earlier attempt to bring philosophy back to life at Oxford some 70 years before the Quartet. They are also connected with the Quartet via Donald MacKinnon: Spooner taught A E Taylor and Mackinnon was Taylor's assistant from 1936 to 1937 when Taylor was Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh. (All three had been at New College). Alan's recent article ([Aristotle for all? The work of Walter Mooney Hatch](#)) is a good place to start for anyone interested.

There is also a Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@newcollegearistotelians>

Durham University is welcoming applications for the Durham Collections Fellowships! The closing date for applications is 21 May 2025. For all our members with a research interest in Mary Midgley, this might be a wonderful opportunity to access the Midgley archive! Find out more [here](#).

Notes from a Biscuit Tin is back! Following the success of this 2019-2021 global philosophy and poetry project – centred on Mary Midgley's biscuit tin – we are running a second version. Curated by philosopher-poet Mara-Daria Cojocaru, 'Philosophy in the Wild: Finding Hope in Mixed Communities', focuses on Midgley's concept of the mixed community. The project launched at the BSHP conference and the first events were delivered by Elizabeth Mackintosh in Pembrokeshire. The 'anthrozoological vasculum' is now on its way to France. It would be lovely if MtQ members intercepted the vasculum on its global voyage. Find out more, including its route and local organisers, [here](#).

New publications

Ellie Robson has written a blog post for AEON on Mary Midgley's "Rings and Books", which you can read [here](#).

Rachael Wiseman has written an article on Dorothy Emmet: 'Dorothy Emmet: 'for administrators whose hearts are with the anarchists, and anarchists who can have a heart for the administrators''. Stuart Jones (ed.), *Manchester Minds*, MUP 2024. Find it [here](#).

The *British Journal of Aesthetics* has published a special virtual edition on Susanne Langer. You can find it [here](#).

Camille Braune has spoken to French radio station France Culture about Iris Murdoch, her ethics, her philosophy of language, her political commitment and the question of feminism. Listen to it [here](#).

Duncan Richter recently published a paper about Elizabeth Anscombe's view of Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion. You can find it [here](#).

Alan Tapper has published an article on Julius Kovesi and the Quartet! You can find it [here](#).

Forthcoming:

Matt Dougherty is publishing a paper on Iris Murdoch's Heidegger manuscript, you'll find a link to a draft of it [here](#).

Other

Find us on Bluesky @inparenthesis.bsky.social!

We'd like to draw your attention to the *Society for Women in Philosophy* (SWIP)'s mentoring scheme, which you can read more about [here](#).

Tim Hull, of *Time Theological Videos*, is making videos for all four Quartet members, plus Donald MacKinnon! Links to the videos are [here](#).

Have a listen to the *Philosophy Talk* series on Wise Women – naturally including four episodes on the Quartet. You can listen [here](#).

Focus on ...

JULIUS KOVESI

In 2003 Mary Midgley made a list of the philosophers who had been "friends and colleagues" of the Quartet. The list included three born around 1930: Alasdair MacIntyre, John Searle and Julius Kovesi. MacIntyre and Searle are of course very well-known, but Kovesi was then and still is a little-known name. Kovesi was born in Hungary. He and his family escaped and moved to Australia in 1949. He went to Oxford in 1956–58, where he picked up on the Quartet's desire to remake moral philosophy. Back in Australia, at the University of Western Australia, he wrote his only book, *Moral Notions* (1967). It was, I think, intended as his contribution to the Quartet's project. Four articles followed, somewhat critical of the Quartet's later pro-Aristotelian direction. He died in 1989.

Kovesi's focus was on moral concepts. Austin and Wittgenstein were his models. Following these models led him to develop a theory of meaning, one he sketched in *Moral Notions*. Philippa Foot expressed his central concern well. "First and foremost it is that where most contemporary moral philosophers have as their starting point an account of what an individual speaker is *doing* (as e.g. expressing an attitude or

issuing a prescription) when he or she praises or condemns an action, Julius starts much further back with an account of the formation of a particular kind of concept. He sees moral thinking as above all formation of concepts such as *murder* or *stealing* and distinguishes such concepts from those which bring together such familiar objects as tables or houses: the distinction depending on the different place that operation with one kind of concept or the other *has in our lives*.”

Foot herself, following Elisabeth Anscombe, moved in an Aristotelian direction, seeking to ground morality in an account of human nature. Kovesi rejected this move, seeing the whole debate as a “tournament” or sideshow. “The anti-naturalists think that they have to demonstrate that even in the field of evaluation the criteria are not always given and then claim that moral judgments are like that. The anti-anti-naturalists want to show that in the field of evaluation the criteria are given and then claim that moral judgments are like that. The battle has to be fought out in this substitute tournament because it cannot be fought over examples from moral life – because in moral life we do not evaluate”. Kovesi regarded “evaluation” as a specialised activity applicable only to particulars. Moral judgement operated very differently.

Kovesi, though close to the Quartet, was an original thinker. Bernard Harrison has said that he regards Kovesi as “the most brilliantly original moral philosopher of the twentieth century”. However, his work has been little researched. There is one book on the subject: *Meaning and Morality: Essays on the Philosophy of Julius Kovesi* (Brill, 2012). Much more could be done. My recent essay offers one interpretation of his thought: ‘Julius Kovesi and The Quartet: Another Way of Remaking Moral Philosophy’, *Philosophical Investigations*, 48, 2025, 201–221.

See also a short biography [here](#).

by Alan Tapper