

# 'The Women are Up to Something'

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## **Abstract**

In this essay, I offer an interpretation of the ethical thought of Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley, and Iris Murdoch. The combined effect of their work was to revive a naturalistic account of ethical objectivity that had dominated the pre-modern world. I proceed narratively, explaining how each of the four came to make the contribution she did towards this implicit common project: in particular how these women came to see philosophical possibilities that their male contemporaries mostly did not.

## **1. Introduction**

In this essay, I offer an interpretation of the ethical thought of Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley, and Iris Murdoch: interpreting them as contributing in different ways to a common project. There was a project that emerged over time and couldn't have been fully anticipated in advance; together, they made a naturalistic defense of ethical objectivity credible again, after it had been largely abandoned for several centuries. I proceed narratively, explaining how each of the four came to make the contribution she did toward this implicit common project: in particular how these women came to see philosophical possibilities that their male contemporaries mostly did not.

## **2. Greats and Gate-Keeping**

Anscombe, Foot, Midgley, and Murdoch were born within 18 months of one another as part of the modest baby boom that followed the First World War. All born just after the Great War, these women consequently reached university age just at the verge of the Second World War. All four were accepted at Oxford, which was then the most desirable choice for a talented and ambitious young woman in the far-flung British empire. Oxford, unlike Cambridge, granted degrees to women. At the same time, lingering anxieties about the place of women at the University had led (back in 1927) to a freeze on the number of women who could be admitted each year to

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Oxford's four women's colleges.<sup>1</sup> The upshot was, women from Great Britain and the rest of the empire who sought the distinction of an Oxbridge education *and* a degree were in competition with one another for perhaps 250 places a year.

For all that concentration of talent, women who came to study at Oxford did suffer deficits relative to their male peers. The most distinguished and best-resourced public schools in Britain – Eton, Rugby, Winchester – were male-only. And these schools were particularly strong, and schools open to women comparatively weak, in classical languages. This was the subject area that prepared one for the standard philosophy curriculum at Oxford: Greats, which opened with two years of classical literature and history before turning to pre-modern and modern philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

There is almost a parable here about the subtle ways in which gate-keeping works. People could suppose that they are simply insisting on baseline competence in some relevant subjects: on some good, helpful background. And there's no in-principle reason why any kind of person might not have that background. But in fact, given the way the world is, the effect of insisting on that background is to cut off opportunities for people who might be capable of impressive work, if only there were a path open to them that didn't impose those conditions. Novelist Nina Bawden, who read 'Modern Greats' (that is, Philosophy Politics and Economics) a few years later, found that even in that concentration – explicitly designed for students interested in the kind of broad-based education Greats provided but who had never seriously studied Greek – her philosophy tutor didn't know where to begin with her: 'He had not taught girls before,' she wrote, 'nor any student of either sex from a state grammar school, and could not believe I had never learned Greek. He seemed convinced...that I must be concealing this simple and fundamental skill out of some mysterious modesty'.<sup>3</sup>

Foot, like Bawden, read Modern Greats. Her pre-undergraduate education was typical for an upper-class girl of the time: supplied by a shifting series of governesses and centering on comportment and other minor accomplishments, supplemented with whatever bits of history, mathematics, and the like that a particular governess happened to know and chose to emphasize. Foot only ended up at Oxford because a particularly good governess, near the end of her

<sup>1</sup> Pauline Adams, *Somerville for Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 164.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Conradi, *Iris* (New York and London: Norton, 2001), 86.

<sup>3</sup> Nina Bawden, *In My Own Time* (New York: Clarion, 1994), 68.

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teenage years, saw capacity in her and encouraged her to fill in the gaps in her education with correspondence courses and then apply.<sup>4</sup> Foot told a story about overhearing her mother lament to a friend that her daughter was pursuing something as *common* as a university education. 'Never mind, dear', the friend consoled her mother. 'She doesn't *look* clever'.<sup>5</sup> Greats was out of the question for Foot. But Anscombe, Midgley, and Murdoch – each middle-class, each more comprehensively educated – all read Greats. Anscombe was a special case in this regard, as in many others. Her mother had been a schoolteacher and had started her children on Greek at a young age.<sup>6</sup> So, although Anscombe attended a suburban high school of no great distinction, she was reading Plato in Greek before university. Midgley and Murdoch, by contrast, were required<sup>7</sup> to do remedial language study, and Midgley spent the year before going up cramming.<sup>8</sup> No matter what, they were never going to achieve the easy competence of someone who had been doing translations and verse compositions from age 11.

But they were better prepared in other ways, maybe precisely because they'd been less cloistered in a world of privilege. The time that an elite public-school curriculum might have given to Greek, they'd spent instead on history and literature and politics. In her memoir, Midgley writes about a seminar she and Murdoch attended on Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. She was assigned to a working group with Murdoch and a male peer. She and Murdoch were struck by 'how much better equipped [he was] about the language, and how much less idea he had of the point of what was being said'.<sup>9</sup>

When the storm clouds that had been looming over Europe finally broke with Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia, many of Oxford's young men enlisted straightaway, even before conscription began in 1939. Until several years into the war, though, women were encouraged to complete their educations so that they could fill white-collar positions in the government and other critical sectors that were being vacated by men.

<sup>4</sup> Alex Voorhoeve, 'The Grammar of Goodness: An Interview with Philippa Foot', *The Harvard Review of Philosophy* XI (2003), 33.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Conradi and Gavin Lawrence, 'Professor Philippa Foot', *The Independent*, 19 October 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Geach, conversation with author.

<sup>7</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, 'Introduction', *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), vii.

<sup>8</sup> Op. cit. note 2, 610, n. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Mary Midgley, *The Owl of Minerva* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 98.

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In the meantime, they filled another kind of vacated position: as the preferred protégés of their remaining professors. No one should wish for a war, but the effect of the depopulation of the university on the kind of attention given to women students was profound. Midgley recalls, ‘the effect was to make it a great deal easier for a woman to be heard in discussion than it is in normal times. Sheer loudness of voice has a lot to do with the difficulty, but there is also a temperamental difference about confidence: about the amount of work that one thinks is needed to make one’s opinion worth hearing’.<sup>10</sup> Anscombe again, was an outlier. The most intimidatingly brilliant of the four, she had been bound for a career in philosophy from well before she went up. As a high schooler, she had been puzzling already about problems in the metaphysics of causation that would occupy her throughout her life. Again, she suffered no deficit of preparation in classical languages and was held back only a little in Greats because she couldn’t be bothered to invest much effort in any aspect of the curriculum that wasn’t at the center of her concerns.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Ayer, MacKinnon and Hare

For the other three, though, mentoring made all the difference. Not just any mentor would have sufficed. It wasn’t only that, as women, they didn’t fit the preconceived image of a philosopher in the minds of some potential mentors, perhaps even in their own: someone with a deeper, more carrying voice, someone whose style in discussion was more stereotypically masculine, someone with flawless Greek. It was also that the kind of philosophy in fashion at that moment was apt to repel capable students who didn’t already think of themselves as philosophers and whose interests ran – like those of many young people in those unsettled times – towards ethics and politics. It took a mentor accustomed to thinking untimely and unconventional thoughts to recognize and encourage their potential and to offer them a model of philosophizing different from the prevailing one.

What was the prevailing model? It was the logical positivism particularly associated with the group of Viennese intellectuals calling themselves ‘the Vienna Circle’, and popularized in Britain by a brash, attention-seeking young don, A.J. Ayer.

<sup>10</sup> Op. cit. note 9., 123.

<sup>11</sup> Jenny Teichman, ‘Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe: 1919–2001’, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 115 (2001), 38.

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In 1935, Ayer published an improbable book, a philosophical best-seller: *Language Truth and Logic*. The book was a sensation, drawing praise and denunciation in the academic and popular press alike. It was an attack on virtually all philosophy that had ever been written.

The opening sentence lays down the challenge: 'The traditional disputes of philosophers are, for the most part, as unwarranted as they are unfruitful'.<sup>12</sup> The reason, Ayer said, is that philosophers have not policed their language, have not made sure that their utterances – in particular, their declarative utterances, their *statements* – are meaningful. And what kinds of statements are meaningful? Just two: statements about the world that can be confirmed or disconfirmed by observation, and statements about the governing principles of our language, its syntax and semantics. There are statements of fact, open in principle to verification or falsification by experience. There are statements defining words or laying out other conventions for their use. There are some derivative cases, like interrogatives. All else is sound and fury.

There are many problems with this view, some of which Ayer came to recognize. For one: do Ayer's own programmatic statements about what sorts of statements are meaningful pass the test that they apply to other statements? But it is the legacy of Ayer's view that is relevant here: particularly its legacy in ethics. The conclusion Ayer drew about ethical discourse was that it is largely meaningless. It merely expresses the approval or disapproval of the speaker. As Ayer wrote, 'If...I...say, "Stealing money is wrong", I produce a sentence which has no factual meaning – that is, expresses no proposition which can be either true or false. It is as if I had written "Stealing money!!" – where the shape and thickness of the exclamation marks show, by a suitable convention, that a special sort of moral disapproval is...being expressed'.<sup>13</sup>

Ayer thus helped codify a dichotomy that had been emerging since the early-modern period: a dichotomy between 'facts' and 'values'. According to this dichotomy, values are human projections onto a value-free reality. So we can't conform our evaluative attitudes and judgments to an independent reality. 'Fact', the term contrasted with 'value' in the fact-value dichotomy, is equally expressive of this conception. Isn't reality just the sum total of the facts? And what is left, after one has accounted for all the facts? Nothing real. Only various subjective attitudes that one might take up toward the facts, with no possibility that one could get these *wrong*.

<sup>12</sup> A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1952), 33.

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit. note 12., 107.

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Ayer self-consciously embraced this view, drew out its implications, and gave it powerful articulation. He more than anyone set the context in which Anscombe, Foot, Midgley, and Murdoch began reflecting philosophically about ethics; he set them their task. He rendered suspect or invisible virtually all pre-modern ethical reflection, which didn't distinguish fact and value in his way.

For an extended period, before and after the war, philosophers developed their theories in response to Ayer. There was no avoiding the challenge. In a letter to Foot, shortly after their graduation, Murdoch wrote that she was looking ahead and contemplating the significance of life, but added glibly that of course such expressions were meaningless.<sup>14</sup> Ayer was in the air.

As Murdoch's letter illustrates, the effect of Ayer's work was destructive. It didn't help people think about questions like what to do with their lives: questions they were bound to think about, regardless. It *undercut* such thinking. As Murdoch would later come to recognize, Ayer's work *did* imply an ideal: it glamorized a kind of disillusioned toughness that faced up to a world in which words like 'good' have no meaning. But that was not the life-wisdom that Murdoch and her friends sought.

Philosophy was salvaged for Foot, Midgley, and Murdoch when they were assigned theologian-philosopher Donald MacKinnon as their philosophy tutor. More famous now in theological circles, MacKinnon was a philosopher before he was a theologian, and was evidently one of the most impressive intellects of his generation. On joining the philosophy sub-faculty in the mid-30s, the hulking Scotsman was promptly invited to join 'the Brethren', a small coterie convened by the top young philosophers at Oxford, including Ayer, Isaiah Berlin, and J.L. Austin.<sup>15</sup>

MacKinnon was interested in the whole history of philosophy. He taught his students to engage seriously with the kinds of figures Ayer was encouraging readers to dismiss. But as shown by his involvement with the Brethren, he also kept current on contemporary philosophy, and took seriously Ayer's charge that his own areas of concern – ethics and theology – were groundless speculation, even meaningless.

When MacKinnon is not remembered for these things – his brilliance, his preoccupation with the special challenges to ethics and theology in late modernity – he is remembered as a tormented eccentric:

<sup>14</sup> Avril Horner and Anne Rowe, eds., *Living on Paper: Letters from Iris Murdoch 1934–1995* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2015), 25.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998), 85.

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a man who chewed pencils to splinters or gnawed lumps of coal as his students read out their essays. Midgley writes:

'MacKinnon often made strange unpredictable movements and, in particular, strange grimaces, which...seemed to express profound anguish. A lot of the stories about him are true enough. He did wave pokers and other things about in an alarming way.... He did lie on the floor or beat the wall violently.... He was prone to long silences, sometimes not seeming to hear at all what was said to him'.<sup>16</sup>

If MacKinnon suffered from a condition like Tourette's, as Midgley speculates, it may have been exacerbated in those days, when – disqualified from military service – he threw himself into teaching as if to justify his existence, taking on as many students as would ordinarily be divided among three or more tutors.

MacKinnon could be intimidating on first acquaintance. But he also inspired devotion: by his intelligence and insight, by the generosity of attention he lavished on students, by the depth of his engagement with both the material he taught and the crises of the time. The effects of his teaching were transformative: by the end of their undergraduate years, Foot, Midgley, and Murdoch were all considering philosophy as a path. Foot later described MacKinnon as 'holy' and as having 'created' her.<sup>17</sup> This from a committed atheist. For her part, in 1945, Murdoch wrote about MacKinnon, 'after meeting him one really understands...how those people at Galilee got up & followed without any hesitation'.<sup>18</sup>

Under MacKinnon's mentorship, Foot, Midgley, and Murdoch were becoming the kind of philosophers who would turn to out-of-fashion figures in the history of philosophy for light, and whose aim in philosophy was to reflect on what Ayer would have regarded as the meaningless question of the best life for human beings. Once more, on both points, Anscombe was ahead of her friends. She had converted to Catholicism as a teenager, defying her parents. Her parents believed in nothing in particular (her mother was a nominal Anglican), but were determined that if their daughter was going to become religious, she should at least do so in a conventional, respectable way: Church of England. They called in a priest to sort her out. Anscombe promptly buttonholed the poor man: 'Do you think the

<sup>16</sup> Op. cit. note 8, 116.

<sup>17</sup> Op. cit. note 2, 127.

<sup>18</sup> Iris Murdoch, *A Writer at War: Letters and Diaries 1938–1946*, ed. Peter Conradi (London: Short Books, 2010), 256.

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bread *is* the body of Christ?’ The priest hemmed and hawed, said it was a difficult question and shrouded in mystery. Anscombe was unimpressed: ‘well, I do’.<sup>19</sup> She was not only a born philosopher, but a born contrarian. And her Catholicism prompted her to take seriously questions about the best life for humans, and to look for instruction to figures like Thomas Aquinas. The presence of Anscombe in Foot, Midgley, and Murdoch’s life – and the awe with which they regarded her – further bolstered their sense that there was another way besides Ayer’s.

When did they first set themselves against Ayer’s vision? It is hard to know. Late in life, Foot gave a number of interviews in which she identified the day on which she first thought that she had to do ethics in a way that defied Ayer’s strictures. She was at the cinema for the newsreels, the day they showed the liberation of the Belsen and Buchenwald camps: the piles of bodies, the emaciated survivors pressing against the fence. Like many of her contemporaries, Foot emerged from the cinema catatonic with shock. From the moment she saw those images, she said, she was committed to the idea that Ayer was mistaken. How, she didn’t know yet. But he was; he had to be. ‘There was something absolutely wicked about the Holocaust’, she said to one interviewer. ‘There is something objective here’.<sup>20</sup>

We must note, though: there was another way to react to the war, a way that revised but did not repudiate Ayer’s view. And it wasn’t the reaction of people who hadn’t faced real horror.

R.M. Hare would become the principal professional antagonist to the women I’ve been discussing. Ayer’s views on ethics were crude. But more sophisticated versions of these views were developed over the ensuing decade that addressed the problems with Ayer’s views from within Ayer’s basic world-picture. Hare was the greatest of the improvers. Cantankerous and profoundly earnest, he stood for everything philosophically that Foot and her friends came to reject. He too was born in 1919, and so went up to Balliol a couple of years before the war. In 1938, when it had become clear that war was coming, Hare gave himself 24 hours to sort out whether he was a pacifist. After a hard night of reflection, he enlisted. He was sent to east Asia, where he spent a happy year teaching Punjabi soldiers to operate British military equipment before Singapore fell and he was captured, plunging his life into darkness. After a couple of years in a prison camp, he was sent off to work on the Burma railway. Between a quarter and a half of his fellow prisoners died

<sup>19</sup> Roger Teichmann, conversation with author.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Jonathan Ree, BBC Radio 3, 19 September, 2000.



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from day after day of hauling dirt on starvation rations. Hare did not die. He kept himself alive and sane in part by doing philosophy. He stole an accounting ledger from a guard shack and kept it hidden for three years, writing out his life philosophy with any stylus he could manufacture and any time he could scrounge: for instance, when he was judged unfit for work due to dysentery. When Hare was released after the war, he judged that his book was no good, a judgment he seems to have formed under the influence of Ayer's positivism.<sup>21</sup>

The main lessons Hare took away from the war and brought with him into the rest of his career were these: first, there is no reasoning with some people. There was no arguing with his taskmasters on the Burma railway. Past a certain point, reasoning about how to live is futile: not only because people can always refuse to listen, but because, past a certain point, there is nothing more to be said. A person chooses a way of life, explicitly or implicitly, and that is that. Second, and relatedly, if there is any rational necessity in ethics, it is just this necessity of choosing a way of life: a set of principles, as Hare thought of it. Some people do this with more inner strength and clarity of vision, some merely fall into a way of life that they never articulate clearly to themselves. But we all live out some principles, whether we recognize them and own up to them or not, and (here is the link to Ayer) there are no facts that dictate which principles we ought to adopt. We must each simply decide what to live for. Hare was generalizing from his own experience: he had enlisted by an act of reflective self-commitment, and he had kept himself alive and integrated by a further act of commitment. Anyone familiar with the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre will recognize the affinities between his ideas and Hare's that Murdoch would later stress.

At the end of the war, Hare like many others returned to university. Thanks to the influx of ex-servicemen – the slow-clearing backlog of people pursuing educations they'd had to postpone – and then another baby boom, an era opened in which there were jobs for most would-be dons. In the second half of the 40s, Anscombe and Foot both secured research fellowships and some teaching at Somerville College. Murdoch was a train ride away at Cambridge doing graduate work, and then landed a position at St. Anne's. Midgley too did some graduate work, at Oxford, which she then abandoned in favor of a job at Reading. Notwithstanding various entrenched, half-conscious prejudices – reflected in small things,

<sup>21</sup> A.W. Price, 'Richard Mervyn Hare: 1919–2002', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 124 (2004), 119.

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like a discussion group for rising young philosophers calling itself 'the Brethren' – all four were on their way to being professionally established by the end of the 40s.

Up to this point, I have been talking about how Anscombe, Foot, Midgley, and Murdoch became interested in philosophy and were prepared for the contributions they would later make. Now I am going to sketch the implicit common project I see in their work, one with ongoing relevance to the current philosophical scene and to late-modern Western culture generally. I will continue to give my remarks narrative form, because the project I am highlighting was an unfolding one, not something these women devised one afternoon in the late 40s in a tea shop. This shouldn't surprise us, because what they eventually accomplished involved an imaginative leap outside the strictures endorsed by their contemporaries and predecessors. Perhaps some imaginative leaps come all at once, fully formed. More commonly, though, as Thomas Kuhn describes, people first raise new questions about some dominant framing, freeing people to consider that the dominant framing could be wrong; later, people begin to try out possible alternatives: or perhaps just elements of alternatives. Only then does it become possible to develop these.<sup>22</sup> The leap outside the fact-value dichotomy was this latter kind of leap.

Surely it helped, though, that the people who pursued it were insider-outsiders, and had each been mentored by an insider-outsider (in Anscombe's case, Wittgenstein). They had learned to engage current scholarship. But they had also learned to engage old-fashioned thoughts and topics that no late-modern person was supposed to take seriously.

### 4. Murdoch's Diagnosis

Murdoch was in some ways the furthest 'outside' of the four, though it depends what kind of externality one has in mind. In any case, she made a contribution that none of her friends could: diagnosing the several theories of ethics they were concerned to reject. When I say Murdoch 'diagnosed' these theories, I mean she identified them as symptoms of something deeper: an underlying cultural condition or outlook. She identified the unexpressed and peculiarly late-modern ideals behind a set of theories that were standardly presented as timeless, value-neutral analyses of moral thought and discourse.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962).

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This was crucial, I think, if she and her friends were to think sufficiently radically about what to put in place of such theories. If you don't perceive what is motivating an outlook – especially if you carry that motive within yourself, like latent malaria – you're apt to keep collapsing into the same outlook.

Murdoch aspired already in her 20s to be a novelist as well as a philosopher, and to be part of the international community of writers and public intellectuals. She had always had a facility for languages, and kept acquiring them throughout her life. What Murdoch discerned, thanks to her voracious and diverse reading, was the kinship between French existentialism on the one hand and the thought of British philosophers like Ayer and Hare on the other. If neither group was reading the other but they were coming to very similar conclusions, however masked by different vocabularies, Murdoch saw that as suggestive of an underlying intellectual or spiritual condition. I mentioned in passing the kinship between the thought of Sartre and that of Hare. No one had noticed this before Murdoch, and thus no one could go further and ask what lay behind it. Murdoch both noticed and asked.

At one level, the answer is plain: Ayer and Sartre and Hare all adhere to the late-modern world-picture I described above: there are facts and there are values, and values aren't facts; they are subjective attitudes people take up *toward* facts. If one regards this as uncontestable, then one might think there is little more to say: two mostly unconnected groups of scholars converged on the same truth. But if one is troubled by the limitations of this picture – what it doesn't allow one to say about the Nazis – and wonders what could take its place, then it is worth retaining one's curiosity and digging deeper. First, it is helpful to recognize it as late-modern: as culturally and historically local. One can then ask whether there are credible alternatives available from other times and places. Second, it is helpful to recognize that the picture, at least in the way in which it is usually presented and motivated, is not fully self-consistent. It – or its advocates – make the picture much more appealing than it would otherwise be by connecting it with an ideal, the objective validity of which they overtly disavow. According to the picture, ideals are just projections: none more objectively valid than another. But invariably, the picture is motivated in significant part, even given an atmosphere of spiritual grandeur, by the tacit, unscrutinized invocation of tropes of nineteenth-century Romanticism, specifically the Romantic sublime: the exhilaration of staring into the abyss, into the icy valuelessness of it all. To summon the courage and honesty to stare down the cold truth: like

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Hector's defiance of his fate in *The Iliad*, this is noble. On the premises of the view in question, such talk of nobility (or, in British authors like Hare, of facing life like an adult<sup>23</sup>) should count as but one more arbitrary projection. But with all the cultural force of deeply internalized Romanticism behind it, it is presented as if it were what the view explicitly disallows: an objectively valid ideal. The seeming gloom of the existentialist is superficial, Murdoch writes. It 'conceals elation'.<sup>24</sup> For one places oneself among the elect who are man enough to face the truth. To recognize these attitudes and outlooks as cultural peculiarities – to be given permission even to smile at their pretension – is to be in a much stronger position to begin thinking about alternatives. This was Murdoch's contribution, beginning with the pair of radio addresses at the turn of the 1950s that grew into her first book: the first study of Sartre in English.<sup>25</sup>

Murdoch left her position at St. Anne's by the early 60s, ostensibly to focus on her fiction, but also because she had concluded that what she did wasn't really philosophy. If she alone could have offered her diagnosis, offering it nevertheless served to marginalize her further from the academic community to which she belonged. For in Oxford, under the influence of J.L. Austin, an inspiring but also narrow conception of philosophical method had by the early 50s come to dominate.

Austin's method had roots both in the patient textual scholarship he practiced as a classics tutor and in his wartime experiences sifting military intelligence. Working collaboratively with his (male) junior colleagues (whom he convened each Saturday morning during term-time), he tried to get as clear as possible about subtle differences among clusters of topically related words: 'hounding down the minutiae', as he put it.<sup>26</sup> Austin was determined to make *progress* in philosophy, and surveying the wreckage of philosophical history – all the grand systems constructed, then abandoned – he renounced system-building. Or, at any rate, he determined that the only way to build was extremely slowly, piece by piece, scrutinizing our words

<sup>23</sup> R.M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 196.

<sup>24</sup> Iris Murdoch, 'On God and Good', *The Sovereignty of Good* (London and New York: Routledge, 1970), 50.

<sup>25</sup> Iris Murdoch, *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (Cambridge: Bowes, 1953).

<sup>26</sup> J.L. Austin, 'A Plea for Excuses', in J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (eds.), *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 123.

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and through them our concepts. Under his influence, a whole generation of Oxford philosophers came to share his impatience with generalization and synthesis, his intellectual aesthetic of clarity and cleanliness. 'Words are our tools', he wrote, 'and ... we should use clean tools'.<sup>27</sup>

It is not difficult to see the attractions of Austin's approach: the painstaking carefulness, the submission to the ideal of getting something right, even if it is nothing grand. But in a context obsessed with that ideal, Murdoch's eclectic, allusive essays, concerned with big, competing visions of the world and the human condition, were bound to appear merely sloppy. Murdoch inspired those close to her with her insight and breadth of exposure, but her philosophical writing was less and less appreciated in Oxford as the 50s wore on. People regarded her as a helpful expert on a minor subject, contemporary French thought. Hare's remarks on French existentialism are telling: 'the thing wrong with the Existentialists and the other Continental philosophers is that they haven't had their noses rubbed in the necessity of saying exactly what they mean'.<sup>28</sup>

Murdoch's work didn't register, in her milieu, as being properly disciplined, properly *philosophical*. Isaiah Berlin, who adulated Austin, quipped about Murdoch that she was 'a lady not known for the clarity of her views'.<sup>29</sup> There is something terribly sad about that remark, as Berlin himself was filled with self-doubt on account of the similarly allusive and visionary qualities of his own best work. He didn't think what he did was real philosophy either, because real philosophy, in that time and place, meant 'what Austin did'. One has to wonder whether Murdoch's increasing detachment from philosophy, and perhaps even her curious but vigorous insistence that there is little connection between her novels and her philosophical writings, reflects a similar internalization of a communal judgment that what she did, even if it went under the banner of philosophy, didn't merit the name.

Murdoch was inspiring to her friends – she and Foot were by the mid-50s co-teaching a graduate course on the ancient ethical vocabulary of virtue and vice – but she was marginalized within the philosophical community. What then did it take to get the attention of that community, to get it to begin reconsidering its predominant ways of thinking about ethics? A frontal assault.

<sup>27</sup> Op. cit. note 26, 129.

<sup>28</sup> Ved Mehta, *Fly and the Fly-Bottle* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), 51.

<sup>29</sup> Op. cit. note 2, 302.

## 5. Anscombe and Foot

As I've noted, Anscombe was acknowledged by her circle of friends as the most brilliant of the four. This compensated for the fact that she was, socially, even more an outsider than Murdoch. Murdoch was personally magnetic, someone who always had more devoted friends and admirers than she had time to give. By contrast, Anscombe was at once pugnacious and shy, physically awkward, famously dismissive of proprieties of dress and speech. If she hadn't awed everyone around her intellectually, life in Oxford might have been intolerable for her.

From the mid-40s, she and Foot were both (somewhat tenuously) hired on at Somerville, which really had work for only one philosophy tutor but kept finding fellowships for them both (particularly for Anscombe) so as to postpone the day when it had to choose and let one of them go. Despite a workload to rival MacKinnon's from the early 40s, Foot made time daily to, in effect, apprentice herself to Anscombe. Anscombe herself evidently regarded their regular afternoon discussions as important enough to go on making time for them. We should note that Anscombe had more than enough to do herself, even setting aside her work translating Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. From the mid-40s through the early 60s, she always had small children at home. Her husband Peter Geach lived and taught several hours away in Birmingham. For Anscombe to take time daily for Foot in this context is impressive. Foot for her part had found an object of intellectual devotion such as she had had before in MacKinnon. She describes their conversations memorably: 'It was like in those old children's comics where a steamroller runs over a character who becomes flattened – an outline on the ground – but is there all right in the next episode'.<sup>30</sup>

The key to Anscombe's character, I think, is not combativeness as such, for she was not always combative. She once characterized herself as 'torn by a *saeva indignatio*'.<sup>31</sup> The reference to Jonathan Swift, from whose epitaph the expression is taken, is apt: like Swift, Anscombe felt herself frequently, painfully out of step with the world around her. Like Swift, the things that made Anscombe feel this way were the world's cozy accommodations with what she regarded as terrible evils. Being shy, she mostly avoided public controversy through the early 50s. Until that is the spring of 1956,

<sup>30</sup> Op. cit. note 4, 34–35.

<sup>31</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, 'Introduction', *Ethics, Religion, and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), vii.

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when she undertook to oppose the nomination of former US President Harry Truman for an honorary degree from Oxford.

As an undergraduate, Anscombe had co-authored a short pamphlet on the traditional doctrine of just war: a piece notable for its prediction that the Allies would descend eventually to direct attacks on civilians.<sup>32</sup> This, she said, could not be squared with the traditional criteria of *jus in bello*, which require that only just means be used to prosecute a war. Direct attacks on civilians, she noted, are not a just means. Direct attacks on civilians are direct attacks on the innocent, i.e., murder. It was the same objection she would press against Mr. Truman's degree, a decade and a half later.

Anscombe's protest, in late spring 1956, became a minor international news item.<sup>33</sup> It was unsuccessful. Anscombe rose to speak in Congregation, the potentially enormous but usually sparsely attended assembly of faculty and alumni with the authority to grant or withhold such degrees and denounced the nomination (one quote has survived from reports of her speech: 'if you do this', she asked, 'what Nero, what Ghengis Khan, what Hitler or what Stalin will not be honoured in the future?').<sup>34</sup> But the University administration, fearing institutional embarrassment, solicited members to show up and vote for the honor. 'The women are up to something' some were told. 'We have to go and vote them down'.<sup>35</sup>

What infuriated Anscombe most were the justifications her colleagues offered, showing either that they believed it all right to attack civilians or that they cared more about losing face than about murder. Anscombe had not until 1956 published anything on ethics, aside from the undergraduate pamphlet. She had some second-hand awareness of recent developments in ethical theory from her daily discussions with Foot. But her energies had been mostly absorbed, for half a decade, in her work as one of Wittgenstein's literary executors. Recall too: from her undergraduate days, she had been selectively attentive to what people thought she should study. As it happened, though, at the same time the University was preparing to honor Truman, and Anscombe was asking herself why 'so many Oxford people should be willing to

<sup>32</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, 'The Justice of the Present War Examined', *Ethics, Religion, and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 72–81.

<sup>33</sup> It was reported for instance in *The New York Times* of 19 June, 1956.

<sup>34</sup> *Oxford Mail*, 1 May 1956.

<sup>35</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, 'Mr Truman's Degree', *Ethics, Religion, and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 65.

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flatter such a man',<sup>36</sup> Foot went on leave. Anscombe took up some of her colleague's usual responsibilities, including tutorials in ethics.<sup>37</sup> These two experiences – the Truman protest and the new reading she was doing in preparation for tutorials – converged in Anscombe's mind. 'I get some small light', she wrote in her pamphlet, 'when I consider the productions of Oxford moral philosophy since the First World War, which I have lately had occasion to read'.<sup>38</sup> None of the prevailing theories, she found, categorically excluded the killing of the innocent: that is, murder. None of them indeed categorically excluded anything. None of them then had room for Anscombe's own deepest ethical conviction: that 'we have to fear God and keep his commandments, and calculate what is for the best only within the limits of that obedience'.<sup>39</sup>

She included a paragraph about this at the end of her pamphlet. The result was that a month later, a short note arrived from the BBC Talks Department, asking if Anscombe might 'develop the theme of the relevance of Oxford philosophy to situations such as the one which inspired your pamphlet'.<sup>40</sup> Alight with Swiftian *indignatio*, she agreed. So on a windy evening in late January 1957, Anscombe arrived at Broadcasting House to record, in her famously soft, sweet voice, a work of biting irony, titled 'Oxford Moral Philosophy: Does it "corrupt the youth"?'<sup>41</sup> The gist of the address is as follows: to make the charge stick that Hare and others corrupt the youth, you'd have to show that the youth would have turned out better without their influence. But the youth had been raised in a culture that had no objection to massacring Japanese civilians. So how could one maintain that Hare's philosophy corrupts anyone, just because it offers no resources for critiquing such atrocities?

The irony was subtle enough that her producer first mistook the script for 'a vigorous defence of Oxford morals and moralists'<sup>42</sup> and urged that she quote people who thought Oxford moral philosophy

<sup>36</sup> Op. cit. note 32, 70.

<sup>37</sup> Mary Geach, 'Introduction' in Anscombe, G.E.M., *Human Life, Action and Ethics* (Exeter and Charlottesville: Imprint Academic, 2005), xvii.

<sup>38</sup> Op. cit. note 37.

<sup>39</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, 'War and Murder', *Ethics, Religion, and Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 61.

<sup>40</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre, RCONT3 – G.E.M. Anscombe, A.E. Harvey to G.E.M. Anscombe, 18 July, 1956.

<sup>41</sup> Subsequently reprinted in *The Listener* 57 (14 February, 1957).

<sup>42</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, Letter to the Editor, *The Listener* 57 (14 March, 1957).



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was corrupting.<sup>43</sup> But when the piece broadcast in early February and subsequently appeared in *The Listener*, its targets understood it well enough. Two of them, Hare and P.H. Nowell-Smith, had letters to the editor in the next issue, filling a column each. Anscombe, who loved a fight, replied: 'I was glad to read [Mr. Hare's] letter and Mr. Nowell-Smith's. They show that what I want to go for is really there'.<sup>44</sup> The correspondence lasted into April, generating more heat than light.

Meanwhile, delighted with the tempest she had stirred, Anscombe drafted a follow-up talk, to be titled 'Principles' and was outraged when it was rejected as being 'too personal'. Denied this outlet, she wrote perhaps the most famous article of her career: 'Modern Moral Philosophy'.<sup>45</sup> It is an odd piece, as anyone who has read it can attest, full of delicious or maddening hit-and-run remarks about a variety of historical and contemporary figures. It reads somewhat like a broadcast talk, in parts.

What did Anscombe say? She offers a Murdochian diagnosis of the ethical theories of her contemporaries and their predecessors and recommends that the whole project of moral philosophy as it has been conceived since the early modern period be abandoned in favor of an attempt to reappropriate the premodern approach of Aristotle and Aquinas. Anscombe herself, having unburdened herself on the subject in this article and in her short but similarly influential book, *Intention*, returned to her preferred scholarly projects, like a commentary on Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*. But with the appearance of her article, a path forward in ethics began to come clear, particularly for Foot and Midgley.

Foot went first. Her contribution was to domesticate Anscombe's radical critique, turning it into a standard-model philosophical research program. Foot took Anscombe's suggestion – that philosophers return to the premodern conceptual vocabulary of virtue and vice – and extracted it from Anscombe's caustic and enigmatic presentation, casting it instead in the form of a series of measured, witty, highly professionalized journal articles, first pointing out some

<sup>43</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre, RCONT3 – G.E.M. Anscombe, T.S. Gregory to G.E.M. Anscombe, 5 December, 1956. In the ensuing controversy, Gregory insisted to Anscombe that he had recognized the irony immediately.

<sup>44</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, Letter to the Editor, *The Listener* 57 (28 February, 1957).

<sup>45</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy', *Philosophy* 33 (1958), 1–19.

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difficulties with Hare's theory (taken simply as linguistic analysis), then elaborating the premodern alternative she and her friends had been discussing for a number of years and that Anscombe had finally made unignorable. In so doing, Foot made it possible for other philosophers – including more conventional ones – to join in the work. Putting it in Kuhn's terms, Foot turned the 'revolutionary science' of Murdoch and Anscombe into 'normal science'.

Philosophers tend to associate Anscombe and Foot's ethical outlook with Aristotle more than with any other figure. But Aquinas was arguably more important in framing their contributions. Anscombe knew the writings of Aquinas, Aristotle's leading medieval interpreter, as well as any Aquinas scholar of her time. Perhaps her most important substantive contribution to Foot's work was her suggestion to Foot, during that fateful sabbatical, that she read Aquinas. As Foot took everything Anscombe said deadly seriously, she began reading: in particular the *Secunda Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*, where Aquinas discusses particular virtues and vices in detail. The revelation in these works, to Foot, was of how ethics could be objective: the result she had been seeking since 1945. Each virtue is praised by Aquinas for how it assists humans in the performance of their characteristic activities. Each vice is condemned (one of her favorite examples from Aquinas was 'loquaciousness') because of how it inhibits humans in the performance of their characteristic activities. Reading this, she knew at last what she wanted to say: not just to Hare, but to a kind of Nietzschean skeptic that she had always worried about and addressed in every piece of moral philosophy she wrote from then on. One could summarize her developed position thus: Hare's theory does not enable one to reply effectively to Nietzsche, whereas a Thomistic theory does. As she concluded a broadcast talk in 1957: 'We should be able to turn to the...moral philosopher for an account of the basis of the different kinds of virtues and vices, for their necessary connexion with human harm and good. This is just the sort of work that he should be able to do: but usually we are fobbed off with talk about the favorable attitude which anyone who calls anything a virtue must take up – as if this were enough'.<sup>46</sup>

With this broadcast, with a paper ('Ought and Is') at the Oxford Philosophical Society, and with two other widely discussed papers that came out of these preparatory exercises,<sup>47</sup> Foot came into her

<sup>46</sup> 'Immoralism', BBC Third Programme, 22 September, 1957.

<sup>47</sup> 'Moral Arguments' and 'Moral Beliefs', published in 1958 and 1959, respectively, in *Mind* and *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.

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reputation as Hare's foremost opponent. For the next decade, students (who love to see their teachers argue) would attend the lectures and seminars of each and try out the objections of the other.

Foot's reputation was well-deserved. But she achieved something at once vitally important and gently ironic. In her attack on Oxford moral philosophers, she became: an Oxford moral philosopher. It was Foot whom Hare approached in 1958, with the idea of teaching a course together. Foot had become, in certain respects, very like Austin. There was more than a passing resemblance between Austin's work and her criticism of Hare: that moral language was richer and more complex than Hare's theory allowed. As Foot said in the broadcast talk mentioned above: 'Those who accuse the present-day philosophers of fiddling their time away may be surprised at the suggestion that what we need is therefore more detail, and more attention to the meaning of moral terms. But this may well be the case'.<sup>48</sup> Foot's criticism was more effective than Anscombe's in opening up conversation because she was so respectable, so *au courant* even in rebellion.

If any of these women was an insider, it was Foot. This was of course a role to which she had been raised. If she was in lifelong flight from the class-consciousness with which she had grown up, she was also profoundly shaped by it. Her thoroughgoing and instinctive respectability enabled her to achieve things that her friends could not, even as it burdened her.

Trivially, often amusingly, her philosophical writings feature lots of examples and expressions drawn from etiquette and riding to hounds. More seriously and uncomfortably: Foot reflexively classed and ranked philosophers, including her friends. Anscombe was first, she was next, followed by Murdoch and Midgley. She dedicated her book *Virtues and Vices* to Murdoch, who was her dearest friend. But Murdoch does not appear in the index. About Midgley, Foot later remarked, 'Her mind doesn't quite work like most straight Oxford analytic philosophers.... I think she found her forte being witty and sane on television'.<sup>49</sup> And when she went to UCLA in the mid-1970s, she began to gather around her a group of colleagues and students whom she regarded, and sometimes spoke of, as 'the right sort'.<sup>50</sup>

Foot was in flight from this class-consciousness her whole adult life. There is a telling moment in a late interview, when she refers

<sup>48</sup> Op. cit. note 46.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Brown, 'Mary, Mary, quite contrary', *The Guardian*, 13 January 2001.

<sup>50</sup> Rosalind Hursthouse, conversation with author.

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to ‘Lady Mary Murray’ and then comments, ‘If you’re called “Lady Mary” somebody, you’ve got to be terribly grand, much grander than being called “Lady Murray”.... I hated it, this sort of knowledge: I can’t help it, I know this’.<sup>51</sup> It remained with her, not only as something she couldn’t help knowing and introduced for comic effect in her writings. It remained too in her oft-noted elegance of bearing and speech, which left her effortlessly at ease in Oxford society.

This brings us to one final effect of Foot’s insider status. That is, she did a vital if unremarked service simply in being Anscombe’s friend. Apart from being in a minority as a woman, no one could have fitted into Oxford society more easily than Foot. Foot alone was eventually invited to Austin’s Saturday mornings.<sup>52</sup> Without Foot as her friend and champion, it is easy to imagine someone like Anscombe – with her duffel coat and trousers, her cigars and her walleye, her sometimes coarse language and her seven kids helping raise one another under the disapproving stares of some of the St. John’s Street neighbors – it is easy to imagine her being completely isolated in Oxford, notwithstanding her brilliance. But Foot venerated her, and everyone loved Foot.

### 6. Midgley

I turn finally to Midgley. A principal interest of mine in this essay has been in the ways that *outsiders* were especially well-positioned to make key contributions to a transformation in our thinking about ethics. Midgley was as much an outsider as Murdoch or Anscombe.

She is often overlooked even by scholars who note the biographical connections and synergies of thought between Anscombe, Foot, and Murdoch. A number of factors have converged to keep Midgley’s work from being discussed alongside that of her friends. There is, first, the unusual shape of her career. Anscombe, Foot, and Murdoch had all taken posts at Oxford by the end of 1948. Midgley was briefly at Reading before marrying and resigning that post. She did not begin lecturing at Newcastle until the mid-1960s, pausing first to raise her three boys. Or again, consider their publication histories: by the mid-1960s, Anscombe had brought out most of the works for which she is famous, Foot had established herself as Hare’s leading critic, and Murdoch was turning away from

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Martin Gornall, Somerville College Special Collections, SC/LY/SP/PF/10.

<sup>52</sup> W. David Solomon, conversation with author.

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philosophy toward fiction. Meanwhile, the first of Midgley's more than a dozen books was still over a decade off, to be published when she was 59. It has been easy to overlook the generational tie between Midgley and her university friends.

The character of Midgley's work has likewise kept it from being discussed alongside theirs. As eclectic in her interests as Murdoch, and liberated from any professional pressure to concentrate her reading in one discipline, she began in her thirties to read extensively in the emerging field of ethology, as well as literary criticism, intellectual history, politics, and more. She became convinced that moral philosophers must *relate* various bodies of knowledge to one another if they are to achieve an adequate understanding of human life, human motivation, and (thereby) human success or failure. There was distinguished precedent for this kind of work, and Midgley knew it. For this is how Aristotle approaches ethics: as a biologist studying an animal of especially absorbing interest, exploring not only how this animal behaves and why, but also what challenges are set to it by its nature. This had become extremely uncommon, though, in the professionalized – even scholastic – environment of mid-twentieth-century philosophy.

A few years after joining the department at Newcastle, one of Midgley's colleagues urged her to offer an evening course on animal behavior and ethics through the university's adult-education program. It was the pivot-point of her career. In teaching these students, of varying ages and backgrounds, all of whom were enrolled simply because they were interested, Midgley began to work out a biologically grounded framework for talking about human nature and human motivation, a framework she had sought since at least 1951. Writing to her BBC producer that year, she had identified her great theme: 'the many-sidedness of human nature, and the inadequacy of *all* current official ways of regarding it'.<sup>53</sup> Now, in the space of a few years, she brought out her first scholarly articles, culminating in 'The Concept of Beastliness' in 1973.<sup>54</sup> That piece caught the attention of Max Black at Cornell and led to an invitation, first, to come to the States as a visiting scholar, and then, to expand her reflections on ethology and ethics into her first and most important book, *Beast and Man*.

The book begins with an appeal to think more carefully about the likenesses and unlikenesses between humans and other animals, and

<sup>53</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre, RCONT1 – Mary Scrutton – Talks File 1 – 1942–1962, 7 October 1951.

<sup>54</sup> Mary Midgley, 'The Concept of Beastliness: Philosophy, Ethics, and Animal Behaviour', *Philosophy* 48 (1973), 111–135.

to scrutinize the language in which we express these. The Western tradition has often been fearful or disgusted at our animality. But given that ‘We are not just rather like animals; we *are* animals’,<sup>55</sup> this is apt to leave us with a misleading sense of ourselves. To think about our lives is to think about our nature, and this cannot be understood in isolation from biology.

By Midgley’s own testimony, the heart of the book is its eleventh chapter. In that chapter, ‘On Being Animal as well as Rational’, Midgley offers an account, inspired by Darwin and contemporary ethologists, of the place of reason in human life. The details are complex, but the overall point is straightforward. Our evolutionary history has bequeathed to us a generous assortment of motives. It has moreover bequeathed to us conceptual and imaginative capacities that ramify the conflicts that would occur anyway between such diverse motives. We are distinctive in our ability to anticipate and fret over our conflicting motives, and even to think or imagine our way into new conflicts.

Any animal with a nature this complex and conflictual requires some means of organizing and directing its behavior: that is, of prioritizing and harmonizing its motives. For many animals, this is achieved by the operation of relatively simple, highly specified instincts. In her later book, *Wickedness*, Midgley offers the example of geese who hatch one group of young after another all summer long, then fly away, leaving their last brood to perish, when something – the temperature, the angle of the light – triggers their migratory instinct. For humans, by contrast, the same faculty that aggravates internal conflicts by allowing us to anticipate or even generate them also enables us to deal with them: to conceive, try out, and criticize approaches to living as whole and integrated beings. Midgley’s ethics is an ethics of self-integration.

Anscombe, Foot, and Murdoch had all recommended a retrieval of a biologically grounded way of thinking and talking about ethics. We need a return, they argued, to the conceptual vocabulary of virtue and vice, grounded in an account of what enables humans to flourish in the performance of characteristically human activities. But all this work was essentially promissory. Midgley – writing from the margins of the discipline, and unappreciated by any of her friends, save Murdoch – was the first to present a serious proposal for a naturalistic ethics of the kind recommended but not developed by the others. Indeed, she was the only one who could, as she was the

<sup>55</sup> Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man*, rev. ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), xxxiii.

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only one who knew enough biology and enough moral philosophy to try to relate the two fields. Whatever one judges about the details of her view, it clearly represents what it would mean to bring to completion the transformation initiated by Murdoch, Anscombe, and Foot.

### 7. Conclusion

Every part of this essay could be elaborated. It is a sketch, which I am elsewhere working on filling in. Just one more remark, in closing: it seems to me that contemporary philosophers – and contemporary Westerners in general – remain very much in the grip of the ideas Murdoch, Anscombe, Foot, and Midgley worked to transcend. I could cite as examples the theories of some of the most important moral philosophers writing today: Christine Korsgaard, for instance. But let me give a homelier example of the cultural infusion of these ideas: each of my children in turn has come home from primary school with a language-arts worksheet that's really a lesson in positivist value theory: an exercise in distinguishing 'facts' from 'opinions'. Never mind that one might have opinions about factual matters. The examples make plain enough that it is the fact-value dichotomy at work: the examples of 'opinions' are all judgments of good and bad, better and worse. To think that one design or policy or person or artifact is superior to another is to have an 'opinion'. And that's to be sharply distinguished from any 'fact'. In a linguistic and cultural context in which 'fact' is a loose synonym for 'reality', this is a little exercise for the children in moral subjectivism. Think again of what Foot wanted to find the words – and concepts – to say: that the Nazis were wrong. Well, my children were given to understand, that may be her *opinion*, but it can't be a *fact*.

But Foot and Anscombe and Murdoch and Midgley were right, and the curriculum authors are wrong. It is possible to reframe our thinking about these matters and to articulate how it could be a fact that the Nazis were wrong, that racialized disparities in criminal sentencing are wrong, that the sexual molestation of children is wrong, and a hundred other things. Anscombe's mentor Wittgenstein wrote, 'a picture held us captive'.<sup>56</sup> The picture of the fact-value dichotomy still holds us captive. The ongoing significance of the

<sup>56</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), s. 115.

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four insider-outsiders I have discussed lies in how they refused to accept that picture and in its place drew another.

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