

DIVERSITY READING LIST PRESENTS:

THE WARTIME QUARTET

A DRL READING GROUP BLUEPRINT BY ELLIE ROBSON, SASHA LAWSON-FROST, AMBER DONOVAN, ANNE-MARIE MCCALLION (THANKS: CLARE MACCUMHAIL AND RACHAEL WISEMAN)

LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE-HARD

INTRODUCTION

This reading list has been designed specifically to introduce undergraduates to the work of the Wartime quartet. It contains selected extracts from various texts, introductory readings and audio recordings alongside questions to accompany each extract, reading or audio recording. It has been written and put together by former members of In Parenthesis reading groups with the intention of inspiring future generations of IP reading groups to continue exploring the work of these wonderful women. With this in mind, we have each selected our favourite texts from the quartet and put together accompanying questions for them; we have for the most part only recommended extracts – as opposed to full texts – for this reading list as we are aware that the undergraduate workload can make it difficult to engage in reading groups such as this one. We very much hope that the addition of extracts does something to offset this and our questions function as a useful tool to facilitate your own discussions around the work of the quartet.

This reading list will be best utilised if the texts contained within it are followed week by week in the order that they are presented as the texts and extracts get progressively more complex as the weeks go by. The reading list begins and ends with work by Clare MacCumhail and Rachael Wiseman – an interview discussion in the beginning and the transcription of a talk at the end – which tackle the subject of these women as a unified philosophical school; they have been strategically placed at the beginning and end of this list in order to ensure that participants of the reading group are reading and engaging with each text with an eye to the bigger picture of the quartet’s unified philosophy. It is strongly recommended – even if participants wish to dip in and out of the other readings on this list – that these two pieces provide the introduction and the conclusion to the reading group.

In addition to this, the women are also presented as individual philosophers within this list. The list of extracts and accompanying questions begin firstly with an exploration of Mary Midgley’s work; specifically, her discussions of philosophical plumbing, ‘Beastliness’ and Gaia; before moving on to the work of Philippa Foot. Chapter 1 of Foot’s *Natural Goodness* appears twice during this list, the first appearance deals exclusively with a small extract and the following entry deals with the chapter as a whole. Readers can either choose to do one or the other, however it is recommended that readers do both as the accompanying questions provide very different discussion topics. If both are read together, it is recommended that the general questions – which pertain to the whole chapter – are looked at after the more specific questions. Following this, an extract from Foot’s *A Philosopher’s defence of Morality* is presented before transitioning into the work of Iris Murdoch. We provide accompanying questions for two chapters taken from *Existentialists and Mystics* including ‘Against Dryness’ and ‘The Darkness of Practical Reason’. This list closes with an exploration of the work of Elizabeth Anscombe; beginning with an extract taken from her seminal text *Modern Moral Philosophy*, then moving on to an extract from *Thought and Action in Aristotle* and closing with a presentation of her work on the First Person.

We all very much hope that you will get as much enjoyment out of using this list as we did putting it together.

CATEGORIES

History of Western Philosophy, 20th Century Analytic Philosophy, G. E. M. Anscombe, Iris Murdoch, Mary Midgley, Philippa Foot, Metaphysics & Epistemology, Metaphilosophy, Value Theory, Metaethics, Normative Ethics

AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:

<https://diversityreadinglist.org/blueprint/the-wartime-quartet/>

Topic 1. INTRODUCTION

WISEMAN, RACHAEL AND CUMHAIL, CLARE. *RE-WRITING C20TH BRITISH PHILOSOPHY: AN INTERVIEW WITH RACHAEL WISEMAN AND CLARE MACCUMHAIL DISCUSSING THE QUARTET.*

2018, Women in Parenthesis website.

Difficulty: Easy

ABSTRACT:

The history of Analytic Philosophy we are familiar with is a story about men. It begins with Frege, Russell, Moore. Wittgenstein appears twice, once as the author of the *Tractatus* and then again later as the author of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Between Wittgenstein's first and second appearance are Carnap and Ayer and the all-male Vienna Circle. Then come the post-second-world war Ordinary Language Philosophers – Ryle, and Austin. After that Strawson and Grice, Quine and Davidson.

The male dominance is not just in the names of the 'star' players. Michael Beaney's 2013 *Oxford Handbook of the History of Analytic Philosophy* begins by listing the 150 most important analytic philosophers. 146 of them are men. For women who wish to join in this conversation, the odds seem formidably against one.

Today we will be speaking about two of the four women who warrant an entry in Beaney's list – Elizabeth Anscombe and Philippa Foot. We will be talking about them alongside two other women Iris Murdoch and Mary Midgley. We think they should also be in the top 150, but our broader aims are more ambitious than increasing the proportion of important women from 2.7% to 4%.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY ANNIE MCCALLION)

1. Do you think Mary Midgley, Philippa Foot, Elizabeth Anscombe and Iris Murdoch would have become a philosophical school if the men at Oxford had not gone off to war?
2. How different, if at all, do you think your own philosophical educations would have been if the men of today were at war?
3. Do you think you would be more or less inclined to pursue philosophy as a career after your degree (or become a member of your own philosophical school)?
4. To what extent, if at all, do you think the task of the philosopher is distinct from that of the scientist?
5. Is the separation between philosophy and science an important one? If so, why? If not why not?
6. "Man is a creature who creates pictures of himself then comes to resemble those pictures": What pictures do you think are prominent within our contemporary culture and in what way do you think we resemble them?
7. Do you think consequentialist moral reasoning corrupts us?
8. How prominent do you think the picture of the philosopher as an enlightenment hero is today? To what extent has this influenced the way you have been taught to approach philosophy?
9. What does doing philosophy collaboratively mean to you?
10. What are some practical ways in which we could create a collaborative environment within this reading group?

Topic 2. MARY MIDGLEY

MIDGLEY, MARY. *PHILOSOPHICAL PLUMBING*

1992, *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 33: 139-151.

Difficulty: Easy

ABSTRACT:

Is philosophy like plumbing? I have made this comparison a number of times when I have wanted to stress that philosophising is not just grand and elegant and difficult, but is also needed. It is not optional. The idea has caused mild surprise, and has sometimes been thought rather undignified. The question of dignity is a very interesting one, and I shall come back to it at the end of this article. But first, I would like to work the comparison out a bit more fully.

COMMENT

This text offers an accessible and vibrant discussion of meta-philosophical concerns regarding the nature and purpose of philosophical enquiry. It raises questions about what philosophy is, and what philosophy is for. No prior knowledge is assumed, and the text would make for a fruitful starting point – or introductory reading to – the topic of metaphilosophy or philosophical methods. It will be particularly useful for sparking interest in philosophical methods and demonstrating to students the purpose and value of asking meta-philosophical questions. Very suitable for students that are new to philosophy, for example in a first year History of Philosophy module.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY ELLIE ROBSON)

1. What do you make of Midgley's analogy between plumbing and philosophy? Is it centrally a methodological comparison that she is trying to make?
 - Why you think the analytic philosopher would describe the philosophical plumber as 'undignified'
 - Midgley claims 'when trouble arises, specialized skill is needed if there is to be any hope of locating it and putting it right.' (139) Do conceptual problems need professional/trained philosophers, just like plumbing needs trained plumbers?
2. What does Midgley suggest is the key role of (philosophical) creativity, (or 'the poet') in the myth of philosophical plumbing?
 - (Hint.) Consider the claim that 'these new suggestions usually come in part from sages who are not full-time philosophers, notably from poetry and the other arts. Shelley was indeed right to say that poets are among the unacknowledged legislators of mankind. They can show us the new vision.' (140)
3. 'Great philosophers, then, need a combination of gifts that is extremely rare. They must be lawyers as well as poets. (141)
 - Do you think the roles of the 'lawyer' and 'the poet' may be combined to make the philosophical plumber? What traits does Midgley suggest we ought to take from both?
4. Midgley claims 'philosophising is not just grand and elegant and difficult but is also needed. It is not optional' (139). And 'It can spoil the lives even of people with little interest in thinking, and its pressure can be vaguely felt by anyone who tries to think at all. (140).
 - To what extent do you think human beings are naturally philosophical beings?
 - Do you think philosophy and human life are necessarily/inherently intertwined with one another?
5. Do you think an overly 'lawyerly' approach to philosophy is combative? And if so, is this approach to philosophy is counterproductive to philosophical progress?
6. Can you think of any examples of large-scale issues that have begun to work badly, resulting in a blockage in our thinking?

- (Hint.) Think of some contemporary problems. What about dualisms of sexuality and its effects on transgender individuals?
7. 'The specialized scientists who claim that nothing counts as 'science' except the negative results of control-experiments performed inside laboratories, and the specialized historians who insist that only value-free, non-interpreted bits of information can count as history.' (141)
 - Can you think of any examples of these kind of thinkers?
 8. What do you think of the broader analogy between water and thought that runs throughout this paper?
 - (Hint.) Consider the quote 'The conceptual schemes used in every study are not stagnant ponds; they are streams that are fed from our everyday thinking, are altered by the learned, and eventually flow back into it and influence our lives.' (141). And 'Useful and familiar though water is, it is not really tame stuff. It is life-giving and it is wild.' (149)

Fragment: From p. 113 “The general point...” to p. 122 “...in fact, invariably wicked”.

ABSTRACT:

Every age has its pet contradictions. Thirty years ago, we used to accept Marx and Freud together, and then wonder, like the chameleon on the tartan, why life was so confusing. Today there is similar trouble over the question whether there is, or is not, something called Human Nature. On the one hand, there has been an explosion of animal behaviour studies, and comparisons between animals and men have become immensely popular. People use evidence from animals to decide whether man is naturally aggressive, or naturally territorial; even whether he has an Aggressive or Territorial Instinct. On the other hand, many sociologists and psychologists still seem to hold the Behaviourist view that man is a creature entirely without instincts, and so do existentialist philosophers. If so, all comparison with animals must be irrelevant. On that view, man is entirely the product of his culture. He starts off infinitely plastic, and is formed completely by the society in which he grows up.

COMMENT:

This text offers a relatively accessible and vibrant discussion of the concept of human nature as well as what can be learned philosophically about humanity by examining it in relation to the surrounding environment. It would be suitable for political theory classes – especially in relation to discussions on the State of Nature, Animal Ethics or Environmental ethics. Background knowledge of existing theories on human nature would be helpful though are not necessary in order to access the text.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY SASHA LAWSON-FROST)

1. Why does Midgley bring up examples from ethology in discussing the concept of beastliness? What is she trying to show?
2. Why is it significant for Midgley that “most cosmogonies postulate strife in Heaven, and bloodshed is taken for granted as much in the Book of Judges as in the Iliad or the Sagas” (p115)? Is she right in taking this to be saying something important about human nature?
3. Do you think Midgley is right that “man has always been unwilling to admit his own ferocity, and has tried to deflect attention from it by making animals out more ferocious than they are”(p117)? Do you think you’re willing to admit your own ferocity?
4. Why would it be more natural to say “the beast within us gives us partial order; the business of conceptual thought will only be to complete it” (p118)?
5. What does Midgley mean by the “pre-rational”? Is this a concept which other philosophers/thinkers use as well? (p119)
6. Why is it significant for Midgley that the Gods are used as “scapegoats” in the Iliad (p120)? Is she right in taking this to be saying something important about human nature?

Fragment: Chapter 17: 'Individualism and the Concept of Gaia' (pp. 171-179).

ABSTRACT:

Crude materialism, reduction of mind to body, extreme individualism. All products of a 17th century scientific inheritance which looks at the parts of our existence at the expense of the whole. Cutting through myths of scientific omnipotence, Mary Midgley explores how this inheritance has so powerfully shaped the way we are, and the problems it has brought with it. She argues that poetry and the arts can help reconcile these problems, and counteract generations of 'one-eyed specialists', unable and unwilling to look beyond their own scientific or literary sphere. Dawkins, Atkins, Bacon and Descartes all come under fire as Midgley sears through contemporary debate, from Gaia to memes, and organic food to greenhouse gases. After years of unquestioned imperialism, science is finally forced to take a step back and acknowledge the arts.

COMMENT:

This is an easy text to read and so would be fine for less experienced philosophers. Midgley argues that Lovelock's Gaia constitutes a way of seeing the world (or myth) that has important consequences for multiple aspects of our lives (social, political, moral, etc.) by combating the unhelpful individualism she sees as stemming from the social contract myth. Whilst this text is easy to read, there is a lot going on under the surface which arguably conflicts with standard assumptions about philosophical practice (in particular, Midgley's pluralism and account of myths). As such, it is a great text for bringing these things to the fore and exploring a different view of what philosophy is for. It would be suitable for courses pertaining to environmental ethics, animal ethics or interdisciplinary discussions regarding the environment and ecology.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY AMBER DONOVAN)

1. What do you think about Midgley's writing style - in particular her use of metaphor and general emotive language?
2. What do you think is meant by a 'conceptual emergency' and do you think the 'right idea' is all we need in the way of a cure for such things?
3. Do you agree with Midgley's characterisation of our current situation (with respect to climate change) as a 'conceptual emergency'? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Midgley says that science is not 'an inert store of neutral facts'? In light of this, do you agree that the moral implications of scientific theories must be considered when we are deciding what to accept as true?
5. Why do you think Midgley says that we need Gaia in our social and personal thinking? Do you agree and can you see how this idea could/would influence these spheres?
6. How and why do you think science and imagination do/can/should fit together (if at all)?
7. Midgley contends that our moral, psychological and political ideas have been 'armed against holism'. Have they? Do you think more holistic thinking is key and if so, what do you think this would look like?
8. Do you think adopting the Gaian framework alone would be sufficient to achieve more holistic thinking - especially within academia - or do we need more than this?
9. What do you make of Midgley's aquarium metaphor?
10. Why does Midgley think there can be no grand unifying theory of everything? Do you agree?
11. Do you think that Gaia is intended to be a grand unifying theory of everything or is a set of windows looking in on the aquarium?

Topic 3. PHILIPPA FOOT

FOOT, PHILIPPA. *NATURAL GOODNESS*

2001, Oxford University Press.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

Fragment: Chapter 1 pp. 1-24.

ABSTRACT:

Philippa Foot has for many years been one of the most distinctive and influential thinkers in moral philosophy. Long dissatisfied with the moral theories of her contemporaries, she has gradually evolved a theory of her own that is radically opposed not only to emotivism and prescriptivism but also to the whole subjectivist, anti-naturalist movement deriving from David Hume. Dissatisfied with both Kantian and utilitarian ethics, she claims to have isolated a special form of evaluation that predicates goodness and defect only to living things considered as such; she finds this form of evaluation in moral judgements. Her vivid discussion covers topics such as practical rationality, erring conscience, and the relation between virtue and happiness, ending with a critique of Nietzsche's immoralism. This long-awaited book exposes a highly original approach to moral philosophy and represents a fundamental break from the assumptions of recent debates. Foot challenges many prominent philosophical arguments and attitudes; but hers is a work full of life and feeling, written for anyone intrigued by the deepest questions about goodness and human.

COMMENT:

This is an intermediate text which outlines and argues for the primary methodological differences between Foot's account of the relationship between reason and morality, and the standard (broadly Humean) approach against which she is arguing. Some understanding of this standard approach is required to get the most out of this text. The text is clear throughout and would make a good compliment to courses which deal with the Humean account of Action or 20th century discussions concerning meta-ethics.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY ELLIE ROBSON)

1. In her introduction, she states that she is rejecting the non-cognitivism of her analytic counterparts such as R.M Hare and A.J Ayer.
 - In what ways do you think these thinkers make up an analytic school?
 - And if they do, how do they differ from Foot's thought?
 - (Hint.) Consider: 'Meaning was thus to be explained in terms of a speaker's attitude, intentions, or state of mind' and 'thus it seemed that fact, complementary to assertion, had been distinguished from value, complementary to the expression of feeling, attitude, or commitment to action.' (6)
2. What it is for a moral judgement to be action-guiding? Must this be inherently practical?
 - (Foot regards the will as operating in action - in the actions we choose.)
3. Three types of practical rationality are discussed by Foot. She talks about preconceived ideas of practical rationality such as the view that 'rationality is the following of 'perceived self-interest; alternatively, that it is the pursuit, careful and cognizant, of the maximum satisfaction of present desires' (13)
 - Foot claims we must not think in this preconceived manner – and that a composite conception of practical rationality arises by looking at certain action in humans.
 - What do you think of this idea?
 - This appears to be a methodological point - do you think it is representative of a wider difference between traditional analytic philosophy and Foot's alternative approach?

4. An implication of Foot's theory is that the traditional distinction between the moral and the non-moral must disappear. What difference does it make if we remove the distinction between the moral and the non-moral?
5. Foot suggests that 'Life will be at the centre of my discussion, and the fact that a human action or disposition is good of its kind will be taken to be simply a fact about a given feature of a certain kind of living thing.'
 - However, she does not go into our human treatment of nonanimals, is this a mere oversight of her theory? Or do you think she retains an austere/narrowly human approach towards the animate world?
 - (Hint.) consider: 'the fact that moral action is rational action, and in the fact that human beings are creatures with the power to recognize reasons for action and to act on them. (24) – does this make the moral action exclusively human action?
6. 'These 'Aristotelian necessities' depend on what the particular species of plants and animals need, on their natural habitat, and the ways of making out that are in their repertoire. These things together determine what it is for members of a particular species to be as they should be, and to do that which they should do. (15)
 - To what extent/how does this imply a union of fact and value?
 - Does the precept of something 'living' provide a good ground for this union?

ABSTRACT:

Philosophers are often asked whether they can provide a defence against hostile theories which are said to be “undermining the foundations of morality,” and they often try to do so. But before anything of this kind is attempted we should surely ask whether morality could be threatened in this way. If what people have in mind is simply that the spread of certain doctrines leads to the growth of indifference about right and wrong there is no philosophical problem involved. So long as we treat the matter as a case of cause and effect it will belong rather to the psychologist than the philosopher, and we have no reason for questioning that correlations of this kind may exist. But this is not the assumption, or not the only one, for people undoubtedly do think that if certain doctrines could be proved then moral judgment would have been shown to be “nonsensical,” “meaningless,” or “invalid,” so that thereafter it would be not merely difficult but positively irrational to formulate and attempt to follow moral principles. It would be simple enough if the attack was supposed to be against some particular moral code, for there are recognized ways of arguing that a thing is not right but wrong. But when it is morality in general which is to be disproved or discredited it is difficult to see what this means or how it could be done. What would have to be shown is not that this or that is not right, but that nothing is—or not in the old sense so that attacking moral judgment is not like attacking a theory but more like attacking theorizing itself, which shows where the difficulty lies. If something is stated it can be denied or disproved, but a moral judgment does not contain statements except about what in particular is right or wrong. Yet many people, though they would probably reject a request for a justification of morality in the form of some argument as to why we should do our duty, feel that morality would be in a positive sense unjustifiable if certain supporting truths were knocked away from the structure. This may indeed be so, but we are unable to show that it is, or to explain the matter by appealing to “presuppositions” of morality, which besides being far too vague would too easily include much that was linked merely psychologically to the recognition of obligation. I propose, therefore, to look at some specific arguments which are supposed by those who resist them to constitute a threat to morality, and to ask whether this supposition is justified

COMMENT:

This text offers a persuasive and creative attack on the dominant meta-ethical views of the 20th century. Foot offers insightful reasons to reject the subjectivist, relativist and amoralist positions on ethics. As such this text would be suitable for intermediate level courses on moral philosophy, history of philosophy classes as well as – potentially – critical thinking courses, as Foot’s argumentational style in this paper would likely be illuminating to students when analysed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY ANNIE MCCALLION)

1. What does Foot mean when she states that any supposed correlation between philosophical theories that ‘disprove’ morality and people’s lack of regard for it would be a concern for the psychologist and not the philosopher?
2. What is Foot’s main objective in this piece?
3. On page 314, Foot writes, “In any case, if ethical terms were tied down in some way to particular moral codes this would mean that the moral philosopher should invent his own terms, for he is not concerned with any one set of values, but with moral valuation in general, and it is extremely inconvenient to have to talk about part of the function of an existing word”. What do you think she means by this? And do you agree with this sentiment?
4. What other areas of philosophy – if any – do you think a similar recommendation (as Foot’s one above) could be applied to?

5. (314-5) Foot suggests that if it were the case that the terms 'right' and 'good' were only applicable to a particular code – or had been entirely appropriated by a cultural majority – any moral reformer would surely have to go about convincing people of their intentions in a “roundabout way”. What does she mean to show with this example? Do you think that this analogy succeeds in demonstrating what she wants it to?
6. At the end of page 315 Foot draws out a distinction between application of moral judgements from the “situation which determined the meaning of the terms”. Do you understand what she means by this? If so, why does she draw out this distinction?
7. On page 316, Foot suggests that there is no “obvious” reason as to why disagreement regarding moral judgements should impact upon the perceived validity of those judgements. How does she argue for this and are you persuaded by her argument here?
8. On page 317, Foot maintains that the objectivist may feel as though moral judgements had been relegated to the subjective or relative if the aforementioned doctrines were to be accepted, however she cautions that “here we begin to feel confused, and must ask what would be meant by such expressions”. What does she mean by this?
9. Do you agree with Foot that the moral subjectivist combines the appearance of “daring” with the appearance of “respectability”?
10. What stood out to you most about this article?
11. What do you make of Foot’s writing style during this piece? Does it remind you of any other philosophers? If so, who?

Topic 4. IRIS MURDOCH

MURDOCH, IRIS. *AGAINST DRYNESS*

1961, *Encounter*. January issue: 16-20.

Difficulty: Easy-Intermediate

ABSTRACT:

The complaints which I wish to make are concerned primarily with prose, not with poetry, and primarily with novels, not with drama; and they are brief, simplified, abstract, and possibly insular. They are not to be construed as implying any precise picture of "the function of the writer." It is the function of the writer to write the best book he knows how to write. These remarks have to do with the background to present-day literature, in Liberal democracies in general and Welfare States in particular, in a sense in which this must be the concern of any serious critic.

COMMENT:

This text offers a vibrant reflection on the different writing styles within philosophy and literature throughout the centuries. It would be useful for courses which touch upon the subject of philosophical style, meta-philosophy or philosophical methods, as well as – more broadly – discussions which pertain to the importance of contextualising philosophy and situating thinkers within their surrounding political environments. Though this text is clearly written, it requires a good amount of background knowledge of the authors cited within the text and as such is probably best suited to intermediate or advanced students.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY SASHA LAWSON-FROST)

1. Murdoch describes how, on the existentialist and Humean pictures, "the only real virtue is sincerity" (p17). Why does Murdoch think this is insufficient? What does it leave out?
2. What reasons might Murdoch have in mind when she says "there should have been a revolt against utilitarianism; but for many reasons it has not taken place" (p18)?
3. Has there been a revolt against utilitarianism since 1961?
4. Why is Murdoch talking about politics in an essay about literature?
5. What does Murdoch mean by "a general loss of concepts" (p18)? (are we losing our concepts?)
6. Can you think of any 20th Century authors which would escape Murdoch's criticisms of 20th Century literature? (p18-19)
7. What is the difference between fantasy and imagination in Murdoch's vocab?
8. What does Murdoch mean by "the other-centred concept of truth" (p20)?
9. Do you think Murdoch is right that modern literature contains "few convincing pictures of evil" (p20)? What examples of literature do show us convincing pictures of evil?
10. What is the significance of this paper being described "a polemical sketch"?

ABSTRACT:

In his book, *Freedom of the Individual*, Stuart Hampshire argues as follows. In human beings (as opposed to things) power is a function of will and will is a function of desire. Some desires are “thought-dependent” in that they depend on stable beliefs which, if they altered, would alter the desires, and so such desires cannot be defined by purely behavioural criteria, since the subject’s conception of what he wants is constitutive of the wanting. We do not discover our thought-dependent desires inductively, by observation, we formulate them in the light of our beliefs. We have the experience of being convinced by evidence and of changing our beliefs and so willing differently, and there seems to be no set of sufficient conditions outside our thinking which could explain this situation equally well. [...] I wish to make an entry into Professor Hampshire’s argument at the point where he dismisses the doctrine of the transcendent will.

COMMENT:

This text offers an advanced-level criticism of Stuart Hampshire’s account of practical reason, it would be suitable for courses on the philosophy of action, philosophy of mind or philosophy of psychology. Since this text is very short, it would be best utilised as a supplement to Stuart Hampshire’s *Thought and Action* as knowledge of Hampshire’s account is necessary in order to follow this text. It could also be useful for facilitating/incorporating discussions of the imagination into any of the aforementioned potential courses.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY ANNIE MCCALLION)

1. Do you think there is anything to be said in favour of Hampshire’s view here that Murdoch may have missed or given insufficient treatment to?
2. (193) Murdoch writes of Hampshire’s view “We do not discover our thought-dependent desires inductively (by observation) we formulate them in light of our beliefs”. What is meant by this?
3. How is the term ‘belief’ in the above quotation being utilised and do you agree with this definition of it?
4. (194) “A man is free in so far as he is able to ‘step back’ from his data, including his own mind, and so to achieve what he intends” In what ways do you agree and disagree with this statement?
5. What do you make of Hampshire’s distinction between the passive and the active mind? Do you agree with Murdoch that this is a troubling distinction?
6. (196) “Science deals with the passive mind, and increases in scientific knowledge can be dominated by the agent’s ‘stepping back’ to review the situation. “ What is meant by this? Do you agree?
7. (198) Why does Murdoch insist that the imagination is “awkward” for Hampshire’s theory?
8. Do you agree with Murdoch on this?
9. (199) “The world which we confront is not just a world of ‘facts’ but a world upon which our imagination has, at any given moment, already worked ...” What does Murdoch mean by this?
10. (199) “To be a human is to know more than one can prove, to conceive of a reality which goes ‘beyond the facts’ in these familiar and natural ways”. To what extent do you think this quotation brings out an important juxtaposition between human knowledge and what we call ‘proof’? Do you think our conception of ‘proof’ ought to change in light of this?

Topic 5. ELIZABETH ANSCOMBE

ANSCOMBE, ELIZABETH. *MODERN MORAL PHILOSOPHY*

1958, *Philosophy* 33(124): 1-19.

Difficulty: Advanced

Fragment: P143 (beginning) to p148“...the thing to do!”

ABSTRACT:

I will begin by stating three theses which I present in this paper. The first is that it is not profitable for us at present to do moral philosophy; that should be laid aside at any rate until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology, in which we are conspicuously lacking. The second is that the concepts of obligation, and duty – moral obligation and moral duty, that is to say – and of what is morally right and wrong, and of the moral sense of “ought,” ought to be jettisoned if this is psychologically possible; because they are survivals, or derivatives from survivals, from an earlier conception of ethics which no longer generally survives, and are only harmful without it. My third thesis is that the differences between the wellknown English writers on moral philosophy from Sidgwick to the present day are of little importance.

COMMENT:

Classic text which raises key problems for any theory of moral obligation. Very short, although also very dense. It offers an advanced-level criticism of the dominant normative ethical theories of the 20th century (namely consequentialism and deontology). Since this is a seminal text, it would be suitable for history of philosophy courses, moral philosophy courses (especially sections pertaining to Aristotelian or Neo-Aristotelian Virtue ethics). It does require rudimentary knowledge of Consequentialism and Deontology and as such would be best utilised in second or third year undergraduate (or postgraduate) courses.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY ANNIE MCCALLION)

1. What are the three theses that Anscombe sets out to expound in *Modern Moral Philosophy*? Which of these is most striking to you?
2. Which parts of the abstract did you struggle most to read or understand? Why do you think that is the case?
3. Anscombe mentions that there are striking differences between the ethics of Aristotle and modern moral philosophy; what do you think is the most striking difference between the two?
4. Anscombe writes of Kant: “His own rigoristic convictions about lying were so intense that it never occurred to him that a lie could be described as anything but just a lie (e.g. as a lie in such and such circumstances)”. What do you think she means by this? Do you agree with the thought here?
5. Borrowing from Wittgenstein’s discussion of meaning, Anscombe writes of pleasure, “pleasure cannot be an internal impression, for no internal impression could have the consequences of pleasure”. Firstly, what do you take Wittgenstein to have meant by this observation about meaning? Secondly, what do you think Anscombe is trying to suggest about pleasure in light of this?
6. How does this differ from Bentham and Mill’s understanding of pleasure?
7. What is a “brute” fact? Can you think of your own examples of brute facts – relative to descriptions of everyday situations?
8. Why do you think Anscombe suggests (p. 4) that an account of “what type of characteristic a virtue is” is not a problem for ethics but instead for conceptual analysis? Do you agree with her on this?
9. What does Anscombe suggest is the legacy of Christian thought evidenced in modern moral philosophy? Why is this problematic in contemporary contexts?
10. Do you think there ought to be a distinction between foreseen and intended consequences of an action as far as moral responsibility is concerned?

1981. In *Collected Philosophical Papers, Volume One: From Parmenides to Wittgenstein*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Difficulty: Advanced

Fragment: Chapter 7 of *Collected Philosophical Papers: Volume 1*.

ABSTRACT:

Is Aristotle inconsistent in the different things he says about προαιρεσις, mostly translated “choice”, in the different parts of the Ethics? The following seems to be a striking inconsistency. In Book III (113a 4) he says that what is “decided by deliberation” is chosen, but he also often insists that the uncontrolled man, the ἀκρατής, does not choose to do what he does; that is to say, what he does in doing the kind of thing that he disapproves of, is not what Aristotle will call exercising choice; the uncontrolled man does not act from choice, ἐκ προαιρεσεως, or choosing, προαιρουμενος. However, in Book VI (1142b 18) he mentions the possibility of a calculating uncontrolled man who will get what he arrived at by calculation, ἐκ τουλογισμου ΤΕΥΞΕΤΑΙ, and so will have deliberated correctly: ὀρθως ἐσται βεβουλευμενος. Thus we have the three theses: (a) choice is what is determined by deliberation; (b) what the uncontrolled man does qua uncontrolled, he does not choose to do; (c) the uncontrolled man, even when acting against his convictions, does on occasion determine what to do by deliberation.

COMMENT:

This text offers an in-depth analysis of Aristotle’s account of choice and practical reasoning. This text would be suitable for advanced courses on Aristotle’s ethics or virtue ethics more broadly. It requires a good quantity of knowledge on Aristotle’s philosophy in order to be appropriately accessible and as such is recommended for postgraduate or advanced undergraduate students.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY SASHA LAWSON-FROST)

1. What is the difference between a general object of deliberation and a particular purpose in deliberation?
2. What is the difference Anscombe draws between one’s will and one’s desire on p144?
3. Anscombe says her presentation of the relation between choice and deliberation “must not lead us to think that matter for a 'choice' has only been reached when there is no more room for deliberation of any kind” (p145). Why might her argument initially make us think this?
4. How does Anscombe avoid this possible implication?
5. What does Anscombe mean when she says that, for Aristotle, no choice is purely technical (p146)?
6. What is the difference between the uncontrolled and the licentious man as she outlines in the last paragraph of p146?
7. Is it better to be uncontrolled or licentious?
8. Does Anscombe’s treatment of Aristotle’s account of deliberation here have any connections to ideas in her own philosophy that you might have come across?
9. How is Anscombe’s treatment of Aristotle here similar to, or different from, her treatment of other historical philosophers? (For instance, in Modern Moral Philosophy?)

1981, In *Collected Philosophical Papers, Volume Two: Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Difficulty: Advanced

Fragment: from p. 21 (top) to p. 25 (end) and p. 30 from '...It seems, then' (near the bottom) to p. 36 (end).

ABSTRACT:

In this paper, the author argues that the "I" that we often use to refer to ourselves, actually does not refer to an object, it does not refer to a non-physical mind, and it does not even refer to a physical body. Anscombe's conclusion will be that the "I" fails to be a referring expression at all. She then moves on, in light of this, to explore the relationship between our command of the first person and self-consciousness - thus demonstrating the pragmatic role of 'I'.

COMMENT:

This text is best suited to more advanced readers. Anscombe shows that 'I' is not a referring expression by taking the arguments to this effect to their logical conclusions, thus demonstrating their absurdity. She then moves on, in light of this, to explore the relationship between our command of the first person and self-consciousness - thus demonstrating the pragmatic role of 'I'. The text is quite dense and some knowledge of arguments to the effect that 'I' is a referring expression (as well as the common issues with these) is required. This text would be suitable for advanced courses on the philosophy of language, philosophy of mind or 20th c. analytic philosophy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY AMBER DONOVAN)

1. How does Anscombe's thought experiment with 'A-users' show why 'I' is more than a special sort of name for oneself (as A is)?
2. Do you agree that one difference between A-use and I-use is that true 'self-consciousness' is manifested by the latter and not the former as only with the latter do you self-consciously self-refer? Why/why not?
3. Why does Anscombe think that approaching the problem of self-consciousness by assuming that the 'self' is the thing to which 'I' refers and of which we are conscious is 'blown up out of a misconstrue of the reflexive pronoun' (myself)? Do you agree?
4. Do you agree that if 'I' were to refer to anything it would be a Cartesian ego or do you think the identification problem makes Russell's 'many selves' the better referent?
5. What peculiarities does Anscombe show to arise when we take 'I' to be a referring expression? Do you find these persuasive enough to abandon the notion of a referring 'I'?
6. According to Anscombe, I-propositions are never propositions of identity (though they may be connected with them). Thus, the pragmatic function of these propositions is not (simply) to identify one thing with another. Given this, what does Anscombe think their pragmatic function is? (particularly in light of the Baldy example) Do you agree?
7. Anscombe says that nothing shows me 'which body verifies that 'I am standing up'' and also that in a sensory deprivation tank I may entertain the thought that 'there is nothing that I am'. What does this reveal about her understanding of 'I' and its relationship to the phenomenon of self-consciousness?
8. Do you think 'I' is a pragmatic/linguistic manifestation of self-consciousness or that self-consciousness emerges through our being trained to self-consciously self-refer (e.g. use 'I')? (or neither/a combination of the two) Why?
9. What (if anything) do you think I-use in particular allows us to both do and make explicit to others that we are doing?
10. If you think I-use does allow us to do something unique to it, do you think this is a sufficient explanation for its misleading grammar (which gives the appearance of its being a referring expression) or do you think this unique ability must be the product of its having some equally unique referent? Why?

Topic 6. CONCLUSION

WISEMAN, RACHAEL AND CUMHAIL, CLARE. *A FEMALE SCHOOL OF ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY?*
ANSCOMBE, FOOT, MIDGLEY AND MURDOCH

2018, Women in Parenthesis website.

Difficulty: Easy

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (BY ANNIE MCCALLION)

1. After having read and thought about some aspects of their collective corpus yourselves, what do you think most prominently unifies the work of the quartet?
2. Is this theoretical unity more or less significant – do you think – when it comes to establishing them as a philosophical school than the historical-biographical connections between the four?
3. What is metaphysics? And why was Ayer so keen to diminish it?
4. In your opinions, is the philosopher apt to make substantive ethical contributions beyond merely the clarification of ethical language? If so, how important is that they do this?
5. Why might we be inclined to criticise Ayer's categorisation of 'value-free' language from the 'emotive'? Can you utilise anything you've read in this reading group to critique this?
6. In what ways did each member of the quartet respond to the Oxford moral Philosophy of their time?
7. From what you have read of their work thus far, how prominent do you think Wittgenstein's influence was over each member of the quartet?
8. How did the quartet utilise language as a means of addressing the Aristotelian question, how should I live?
9. Which of the six false opinions – from Anscombe's unpublished paper – listed on pages 12-13 do you think have been most prevalent in your own philosophy syllabuses?
10. The women of the quartet rejected the 'imagery' of the human which came along with the Oxford moral philosophy of their time; what imagery of the human do you think emerges out of what you have been taught during your philosophy degrees thus far?
11. What image or picture of human life do you think emerges out of the philosophy from the quartet?