

PHIL 9020-01
Fall 2023
Wednesdays 1:25–3:55pm
Classroom: Furman 106

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Moral Psychology

Course Description

This course is an intensive introduction to moral psychology from the mid-twentieth century to the present, focusing on key texts in the Anglophone analytic tradition. Moral psychology is rooted in the ancient idea that an understanding of the human soul (*psyche*) is fundamental for the study of ethics. Moral psychology aims to clarify fundamental concepts like desire, intention, reason, motivation, action, and emotion and, thereby, paint a philosophical portrait of human ethical life. The first portion of the semester will focus on the works of three philosophers who, in the mid-twentieth century, challenged reigning assumptions about the nature of moral agency: G.E.M. Anscombe, Philippa Foot, and Iris Murdoch. The latter portion of the semester will focus on a range of issues in moral psychology that have received sustained attention from the seventies to the present, including John McDowell's account of *phronesis* as a perceptual capacity, P.F. Strawson's influential account of the "reactive attitudes," Bernard Williams' distinction between "internal and external reasons," and some very recently published discussions of anger, love, and alienation. The goal of the course will be to gain an appreciation of several key figures, ideas, and debates that have significantly shaped the course of twentieth and twenty-first century moral philosophy.

Texts

Please obtain physical or digital copies of the following, available at the university bookstore:

1. G.E.M. Anscombe. 2000. *Intention*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
2. Philippa Foot. 2002. *Virtues and Vices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. John McDowell. 1998. *Mind, Value, and Reality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
4. Iris Murdoch. 1999. *Existentialists and Mystics*. London: Penguin.

The following recommended guidebook is also available at the university bookstore:

5. Rachael Wiseman. 2016. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Anscombe's Intention*. London: Routledge.

All remaining assigned texts will be available as PDFs on Brightspace.

Evaluation

Presentation (25%)

Once during the semester, students will give a brief presentation to the class on the week's assigned primary reading. Your presentation should be 10-15 minutes long. You should concentrate on a particular argument, idea, or portion of the text rather than attempting to cover the entire reading. I recommend both that you make use of secondary material and that you discuss the content of your presentation with me beforehand. As part of your presentation, please include at least one form of visual aid, whether a handout, PowerPoint presentation, use of the blackboard, or some other medium of your choice.

Reading Notes (25%)

Students will be divided into two groups, Group A and Group B. Each week that you see your group listed in the reading schedule below, you will complete a set of Reading Notes for that each week's reading. The point of these Notes is twofold: to help you to clarify your thoughts about some dense and tricky material as you would in preparing to teach it or write about it; and to get us engaged with the texts in a way that promotes real discussion. Notes should be submitted the day before class by 5:00pm via Brightspace. A template will be provided to you.

Reading Notes will be graded as follows: a "0" for missing, late, or inadequate notes, a "1" for satisfactory notes, and a "2" for especially thoughtful, thorough, and clear notes. If you turn in all your Reading Notes and get all "1's," you will receive a "B" for this portion of your grade. For each "0" you receive, your Reading Notes grade will decrease by one half grade (e.g., B to B-). For each "1" you receive, your Reading Notes grade will increase by one half grade (e.g., B to B+) to a maximum of A+.

Final Paper (50%)

A final paper (15 to 20 pages) is due one week after our final class meeting. It should be uploaded to Brightspace under "Assignments." Though the paper should engage primarily with texts assigned in class, you should also explore additional relevant literature in your paper topic area. I strongly encourage students to schedule a meeting with me to discuss paper topics in advance.

Accessibility

Vanderbilt University is committed to accessibility for all students. To receive accommodations students are to apply through the Student Access Center. The Center can be reached at studentaccess@vanderbilt.edu and is located in the Sarratt Building, Suite 216.

Academic Integrity

All students are required to make themselves familiar with the Vanderbilt University Honor Code. All cases of suspected misconduct in this course will be submitted to the Honor Council.

Course Schedule & Readings

Date	Primary Readings (year of original publication) * Background & Supplementary Readings	Assignments & Presentations
8/23	G.E.M. Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy” (1958) (PDF) G.E.M. Anscombe, “Mr Truman’s Degree” (1958) (PDF) * Rachael Wiseman, <i>Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Anscombe’s Intention</i> , chap. 1 and 2	
8/30	G.E.M. Anscombe, <i>Intention</i> (1957), §§1–19 * Rachael Wiseman, <i>Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Anscombe’s Intention</i> , chap. 3 and 4	Group A
9/6	G.E.M. Anscombe, <i>Intention</i> (1957), §§20–40 * Rachael Wiseman, <i>Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Anscombe’s Intention</i> , chap. 5	Group B
9/13	G.E.M. Anscombe, <i>Intention</i> (1957), §§41–52 * Rachael Wiseman, <i>Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Anscombe’s Intention</i> , chap. 6 and 7	Group A

9/20	<p>Philippa Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives,” in <i>Virtues and Vices</i> (1972)</p> <p>John McDowell, “Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?” in <i>Mind, Value, and Reality</i> (1978)</p> <p>* Immanuel Kant, <i>The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>, Section II (esp. Ak. 4:413–29) (PDF)</p>	Group B
9/27	<p>Philippa Foot, “Virtues and Vices,” in <i>Virtues and Vices</i> (1977)</p> <p>* Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> 1a2ae.55–6 (PDF)</p>	Group A
10/4	<p>Iris Murdoch, “The Idea of Perfection,” in <i>The Sovereignty of Good</i> (1964/1971) (collected in <i>Existentialists and Mystics</i>)</p> <p>* Mary Midgley, “Foreword to the Routledge Great Minds Edition,” in <i>The Sovereignty of Good</i> (1998/2014) (PDF)</p>	Group B
10/11	<p>Iris Murdoch, “On ‘God’ and ‘Good,’” in <i>The Sovereignty of Good</i> (1969/1971) (collected in <i>Existentialists and Mystics</i>)</p> <p>Iris Murdoch, “Postscript on Politics” (1966) (PDF)</p> <p>* Sophie Grace Chappell, “Inwardness in Ethics” (2022) (PDF)</p>	Group A
10/18	<p>Iris Murdoch, “The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts,” in <i>The Sovereignty of Good</i> (1967/1971) (collected in <i>Existentialists and Mystics</i>)</p> <p>* Anil Gomes, “Moral Vision” (2022) (PDF)</p>	Group B
10/25	<p>John McDowell, “Virtue and Reason,” in <i>Mind, Value, and Reality</i> (1979)</p> <p>* Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Book VI, chap. 3–13 (PDF)</p>	Group A

11/1	<p>P.F. Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment” (1962) (PDF)</p> <p>Gary Watson, “Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme” (1987) (PDF)</p> <p>* Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>, First Essay (PDF)</p>	Group B
11/8	<p>Bernard Williams, “Internal and External Reasons” (1980) (PDF)</p> <p>Christine Korsgaard, “Skepticism About Practical Reason” (1986) (PDF)</p> <p>* David Hume, <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i>, Book II, Part 3, §3 and Book III, Part 1, §§1–2 (PDF)</p>	Group A
11/15	<p>Bernard Williams, “Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame” (1989) (PDF)</p> <p>John McDowell, “Might There Be External Reasons?” in <i>Mind, Value, and Reality</i> (1995)</p> <p>* Kieran Setiya, “Introduction: Internal Reasons” (2011) (PDF)</p> <p>*</p>	Group B
11/22	Thanksgiving Break	
11/29	<p>Amia Srinivasan, “The Aptness of Anger” (2018)</p> <p>Agnes Callard, “The Reason to be Angry Forever” (2017)</p> <p>* Audre Lorde, “The Uses of Anger” (1981)</p>	Group A
12/6	Vida Yao, “Grace and Alienation” (2020) (PDF)	Group B
12/13	No Class	Final Paper Due by 11:59pm

Further Readings and Resources

Though its roots are ancient, it is only in the past sixty years or so that moral psychology has been recognized as a standard sub-discipline with its own themes, questions, and debates. In that time, a voluminous literature has proliferated. The following is a rough guide and far from comprehensive. It is restricted to themes that are explicitly covered in this course. Students are expected to engage with literature beyond the required readings, especially when preparing their final papers.

General Introductions and Edited Collections

Several of the introductions listed below concern recent developments in moral psychology driven primarily by empirical research. Though not our focus in this class, it may be helpful to have a sense of how the term “moral psychology” is used in this empirically-oriented context.

1. Alfano, Mark. 2016. *Moral Psychology: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity.
2. Doris, John M., and the Moral Psychology Research Group (ed.). 2010. *The Moral Psychology Handbook*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Doris, John M., Stephen Stich, Jonathan Philips, and Lachlan Walmsley. 2017., “Moral Psychology: Empirical Approaches.” In: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-psych-emp/>
4. Tiberius, Valerie. 2015. *Moral Psychology: A Contemporary Introduction*. London: Routledge.
5. Wallace, R. Jay. 2007. “Moral Psychology.” In: *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. Frank Jackson and Michael Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

G.E.M. Anscombe’s Intention

In addition to the guide by Wiseman included on the syllabus, I encourage students interested in Anscombe’s *Intention* to consult the following collection of essays and additional guidebook:

6. Ford, Anton, Jennifer Hornsby, and Frederick Stoutland (eds.). 2011. *Essays on Anscombe’s Intention*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
7. Schwenkler, John. 2019. *Anscombe’s Intention: A Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Philippa Foot

Though Foot was consistent on many issues throughout her career, her view of the relation between virtue and practical rationality changed dramatically later in her life. Her monograph, *Natural Goodness* develops an objective theory of morality rooted in the sorts of creatures we are. Though it is not included in our syllabus, it is a highlight of twentieth-century moral philosophy.

8. Foot, Philippa. 2001. *Natural Goodness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

9. Hacker-Wright, John. 2013. *Philippa Foot's Moral Thought*. London: Bloomsbury.
10. Hacker-Wright, John (ed.). 2018. *Philippa Foot on Goodness and Virtue*. Cham: Palgrave MacMillan.
11. Hähnel, Martin. 2020. *Aristotelian Naturalism: A Research Companion*. Cham: Springer.

Iris Murdoch

We are living through a Murdoch renaissance. In 2012, it was still necessary to make the case that Iris Murdoch was, in fact, a “philosopher,” as evidenced by the title of the volume edited by Justin Brookes, *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher*. Today, it is hard to keep up with the new articles and books appearing on her philosophy—as in Panizza and Hopwood’s 2022 volume, *The Murdochian Mind*, which contains 37 new essays on her work. There is a very active Iris Murdoch Society and Iris Murdoch Research Center (both run out of the University of Chichester in the UK) as well as an Iris Murdoch Podcast, available on Spotify, SoundCloud, Apple Podcasts, and most other places podcasts are found. Murdoch was also the subject of a 2001 film, *Iris*, starring Judy Dench and Kate Winslet as younger and older Iris Murdoch, respectively.

12. Brookes, Justin (ed.). 2012. *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
13. Conradi, Peter J. 2002. *Iris Murdoch: A Life*. London: Harper and Row.
14. Diamond, Cora. 2019. “A Picture of the Soul: Iris Murdoch’s Moral Psychology.” *ABC Religion and Ethics*. Available at <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/cora-diamond-picture-of-the-soul-the-moral-psychology-of-iris-m/11316086>
15. Diamond, Cora. 2010. “Murdoch the Explorer.” *Philosophical Topics* 38(1): 51–85.
16. Lovibond, Sabina. 2011. *Iris Murdoch, Gender, and Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.
17. Panizza, Silvia Caprioglio and Mark Hopwood (eds.). 2022. *The Murdochian Mind*. London: Routledge.
18. Murdoch is also the author of 26 novels. Due to the careful attention they pay to the inner lives of their protagonists, they are interesting to read alongside her philosophical writings on moral psychology. Four that I personally recommend are *Under the Net* (1954), *A Severed Head* (1961), *The Black Prince* (1973), and *The Sea, The Sea* (1978).

The “Wartime Quartet”

A group of women studying philosophy at Oxford in the 1930s and 40s—including Anscombe, Foot, Murdoch, and Midgley—have recently been referred to by some scholars as the “Wartime Quartet” or the “Philosophical Quartet,” due to their friendship, philosophical affinities, and time spent at Oxford while a great number of men were serving in the Second World War. There are now several resources dedicated to studying this group, including the question of whether they should be thought of as constituting a “school” akin to that of logical positivism, pragmatism, or Frankfurt School Critical Theory.

19. Lipscombe, Benjamin. 2022. *The Women are Up to Something: How Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley, and Iris Murdoch Revolutionized Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
20. Mac Cumhaill, Clare and Rachael Wiseman. 2022. *Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brought Philosophy Back to Life*. London: Penguin.
21. Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman also co-organize *In Parentheses*, a research collaboration that organizes conferences, reading groups, and hosts a website with many helpful resources: <https://www.womeninparenthesis.co.uk/>

Virtue

Beyond the pieces assigned on the syllabus by Foot (“Virtues and Vices”) and McDowell (“Virtue and Reason”) that explicitly address the topic of virtue, students interested in virtue-theoretical approaches in contemporary ethics are encouraged to look at the following:

22. Brewer, Talbot. 2009. *The Retrieval of Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
23. Foot, Philippa. 2001. *Natural Goodness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
24. Hursthouse, Rosalind. 1999. *On Virtue Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
25. MacIntyre, Alasdair. 2007. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. Third Edition. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.
26. Thompson, Michael. 2008. *Life and Action: Elementary Structures of Practice and Practical Thought*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

P.F. Strawson on the Reactive Attitudes

Strawson’s essay, “Freedom and Resentment,” is one of the most influential texts of the twentieth and twenty-first century philosophy. Although the stated aims of the essay have to do with metaphysical issues surrounding freedom and determinism, the notion he introduces there of the “reactive attitudes” has spurred a revised interest in moral emotions and sentimentalist approaches to ethics, as well new explorations of accountability, shared ethical life, and agency more broadly.

27. Darwall, Stephen. 2006. *The Second-Person Standpoint: Morality, Respect, and Accountability*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
28. Hieronymi, Pamela. 2020. *Freedom, Resentment, and the Metaphysics of Morals*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
29. McKenna, Michael and Paul Russell (ed.). 2008. *Free Will and Reactive Attitudes: Perspectives on P.F. Strawson’s Freedom and Resentment*. New York: Routledge.
30. Shoemaker, David and Neal A. Tognazzini (ed.). 2014. *Oxford Studies in Agency and Responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (The theme of this volume is “Freedom and Resentment’ at 50.”)
31. Wallace, R. Jay. 1994. *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Internal and External Reasons

As Williams points out in the opening of “Internal and External Reasons,” there is something misleading about the title: his aim is not to distinguish external reasons from internal ones, but to cast doubt on the very notion of the former. This move has framed debates about the nature of motivation, reason, and desire that are very much alive today.

32. Manne, Kate. 2014. “Internalism About Reasons: Sad But True?” *Philosophical Studies* 167(1): 89–117.
33. Markovitz, Julia. 2011. “Why Be An Internalist About Reasons?” In: Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*. Vol. 6. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
34. Millgram, Elijah. 1996. “Williams’ Argument Against External Reasons.” *Nous* 30: 197–220.
35. The current *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on Bernard Williams is both helpful generally and contains a section on internal and external reasons: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/williams-bernard/>