

THE GLADSTONE REVIEW

an occasional e-journal

October 2026: Issue No. 25

*Informal commentary, opinions, reviews, news, illustrations and poetry
for bookish people of philanthropic inclination*

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Editorial

Finding my feet with a recently-purchased new computer, I hope fewer gaffs will plague my type-setting efforts than occurred with its ten-year old predecessor. But learning the new rules is also a challenge, so I'll be wary of overconfidence

In this issue, two regular contributors (Penny Young and Jim Mephram) have again submitted very interesting articles, this time about two women, who were not only prolific novelists but also led distinctive 'other lives,' which attracted admiration by some and censure from others.

Other articles include a memoir on a distinguished local chemical engineer; news of my recently completed book, which has been many years in the writing – and probably (at nearly 500 pages) my last *magnum opus*- although, if so fortunate, I have others in mind.

Finally, also included are part 4 of my Octogenial |Reflexions series; and some news of recent additions to the Library stock.)

To book an appointment to visit the Library, please phone 07787 556 139 (or send an email including your phone number),

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2 IRIS MURDOCH ON MORALITY, ATTENTION, LOVE AND THE EGO

Iris Murdoch (1919–1999) was a British philosopher and novelist who studied at the University of Oxford and later taught there at St Anne's College. Influenced by thinkers such as Plato and Simone Weil, she argued that morality is not mainly about rules or decisions but more about how we learn to see others with clarity, love and humility.

In her book *'The Sovereignty of Good'* (1970), Murdoch places attention at the centre of morality. Attention is the disciplined effort to see reality truthfully rather than through self-centred assumptions. As she writes:

"Attention is the just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality."

Moral life, for Murdoch, begins when we shift our perception rather than simply change our behaviour. A major obstacle to this is the ego, which distorts how we see the world by placing our own desires and pride at the centre of reality. She describes it as:

"The enemy is the fat relentless ego."

The ego leads us to judge others unfairly or superficially, preventing genuine understanding.



For Murdoch, love is what breaks through this self-centred vision. It is not just emotion but a way of seeing others as real and independent of us:

"Love is the extremely difficult realisation that something other than oneself is real."

Love, therefore, is a moral discipline grounded in humility and accurate perception.

She illustrates this with the mother-in-law example. A woman initially sees her daughter-in-law as vulgar and immature. Over time, she consciously reflects on her bias and learns to see her as warm and sincere. The daughter-in-law has not

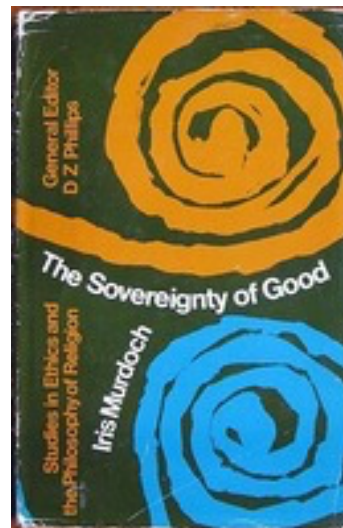
changed—only the mother’s attention has. This shows that moral progress often happens internally through changes in perception.

Murdoch’s ideas remain relevant today in a world shaped by social media and constant distraction, where quick judgements and ego-driven reactions are common.

Her philosophy encourages us to try and slow down, resist stereotypes, and pay careful attention before forming opinions about others.

In conclusion, Murdoch sees morality not as rule-following but as a practice of loving attention. By overcoming the ego and learning to see others clearly, we become more just, compassionate, and morally aware.

Jim Mephram



Jim is a retired headteacher living in Bristol. He now teaches Philosophy at both the Folk House and Stoke Lodge Adult Education Centre and runs the Bristol U3A Philosophy groups

3 SIR FREDERICK WARNER FRS (1910- 2010) **Former Southwell resident**

When my late wife, Barbara, and I moved to Southwell in 1999, Sir Fred and his wife, also, named Barbara, as close neighbours, put on a welcoming garden party. For some time, I was unaware of his field of expertise which led to his knighthood and fellowship of the Royal Society. But recently, sorting out some filing cabinets, I came across a cutting from a newspaper obituary, written 16 years ago and realised that my failure to recognise in this Review his considerable achievements needed to be rectified.

‘Ned’, as he was called by his friends, was a distinguished chemical engineer who is celebrated for his pioneering roles in the development of industrial safety, risk assessment, and environmental protection. He demonstrated a life-long commitment to environmental ethics and inter-disciplinary collaboration which influenced global standards through academia and his many consulting policy roles.

Yet for all his richly-merited status in chemical engineering, a branch of applied science still being in its infancy, he was born into harsh poverty, and for some years lived in a London County council flat (long since demolished) near St Pancras Station. But his sharp mind enabled him to win a scholarship to Bancroft School, an independent boarding school, where he was greatly influenced by his teachers in maths, physics, chemistry and history which led to life-long interests in poetry, churches, and monumental brasses, while his passion for music developed through violin lessons to participation in a jazz band, choir singing and

performances of Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. He was also a very robust (not to say, feared) rugby player!

From Bancroft he entered University College London, (where about 30 years later I was an undergraduate) and graduated in chemistry and physics in two instead of the usual three years. His university years were marked by extensive extracurricular activities when he served as president of the UCL Debating Society in 1931, the University of London Athletic Club in 1932, and president of the University of London Union in 1933, while playing rugby for the University team from 1931 to 1934. Politically active, he joined the Communist-affiliated Holborn Students' Group and participated in an anti-fascist disruption at the 1934 British Union of Fascists meeting in Olympia, which led to a violent confrontation. These experiences reinforced his commitment to social and ethical dimensions of engineering.

In the 1960s, Warner contributed to environmental efforts concerning the River Thames and developing a mathematical model of bio-oxidation processes in the Thames to assess sewage impacts; these contributed to the return of salmon populations and stand as a milestone in pollution control and ecosystem recovery. He also played an important role in the investigations of the Chernobyl disaster.

During the 1970s, he was involved in significant safety and environmental consultancies, such as advising on planning inquiries for projects like the Anglesey aluminium smelter and Yorkshire potash mine. A landmark involvement was in the 1974 Flixborough disaster, for which his firm consulted for the Court of Enquiry into the explosion, and he served as an expert witness, coordinating technical analysis that influenced subsequent UK safety regulations. Other work in the 1970s included effluent treatment for mine workings and baseline environmental studies for industrial sites. Merely listing his achievements would fill several volumes.



But quite apart from his devoted attention to professional affairs, which were recognised by his appointments as a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS), Founding Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering (FREng) and Pro-Chancellor of the Open University, his involvement in Church affairs was a cornerstone of his personal life, with regular attendance that began in his childhood deepening in retirement, when he engaged actively in national and international church affairs. These included membership in the European Ecumenical Assembly for Peace with Justice, diocesan activities, and service at local congregations such as St James Church in Brightlingsea and Southwell Minster.

In retrospect, I regret not knowing him better, because both of us were scientists, although of different fields. Towards the end of his life we had a few chance meetings when we discussed scientific developments but, even more relevantly, we both studied at University College London, where later in his life he often returned to participate in the lively discourse pervading the academic atmosphere there, which I consider to be my *alma mater*.

BM



4 THE MAKING OF A TRAVEL WRITER

This year sees the centenary of three exceptional women: Queen Elizabeth II, Marilyn Monroe and Jan Morris. Each one, in her own way, had a magnetic personality and was endlessly fascinating. Each of them had millions of words written about them, but it was Jan Morris who produced several million herself.

The first book of hers I read was *Conundrum*, an account of her life focusing on how she came to undergo sex-change treatment and surgery, a book that proved to be an inspiration and encouragement for many people in a similar situation and, as you can imagine in the early 1970s, set the nation's media by the ears. But Jan was already in the view of the media: as a *Times* correspondent, the 26-year-old James Morris had accompanied Sir John Hunt's expedition to climb Everest and he it was who had hot-footed it down the mountainside to relay the news to London of Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing reaching the summit, in time for the Queen's coronation in 1953. Apart from the hazardous and icy descent, this was not without difficulty as the nation's media like vultures were lying eagerly in wait to be the first to capture the scoop, and only accomplished via a complex telegraphy system involving multiple codes.



Thereafter, James continued to make waves, reporting for *The Times* on volatile situations across the world, including Egypt (the Suez crisis), Arabia, Israel/Palestine, Hong Kong (the handover), Africa and the USA, being particularly perceptive about global Americanisation and the ruin of local traditional culture.

Out of all this constant travelling and filing of reports emerged, over the years, a huge number of books (James/Jan was a great recycler) and she rapidly made a name for herself as a travel writer (a term she disliked, as apparently many travel writers do, finding it too narrow a description), many of her books inhabiting the best-seller lists for longer than it took her to write them. Wherever s/he was, whether entombed in ice and snow, whether in the burning heat of the desert, the typewriter could be heard clacking away. As she admitted later in life, she was a writing addict. The work load was prodigious: s/he set a target of 3,000 words a day; later reduced to 2,000.

What first inspires in someone the desire – perhaps the need – to travel and write about their experiences, their thoughts and impressions? In the young James's case it was watching through his telescope the ships sailing along the Bristol channel near his boyhood home and daydreaming about the exotic places they'd set out from or were going to. Being a foreign correspondent, first for *The Times* and later for *The Manchester Guardian* (as it then was), enabled him to fulfil these early dreams. And to hone his own style of writing. One of the criticisms levelled particularly at Jan is her inattention to strict historical accuracy. (But we all know the old adage about facts and a good story.)

What made her so popular with readers was the ability to make them feel, as she takes them by the hand, that they are there with her, seeing the sights, smelling the aromas, talking to people, soaking up the atmosphere, as well as learning about the place's history and culture. When I say 'popular' I don't mean that in the pejorative sense it's often used now: she was well-respected in literary circles as a writer and won multiple awards, including the Heinemann award for *Venice*, following the success of which she became the 'toast of literary London'. She herself would say she wasn't an academic (though a graduate of Oxford university), or especially a historian, though she did write a 3-volume history of the British Empire (*Pax Britannica*) to great (and continuing) acclaim.

She had the knack (the gift) of making you see a place through her eyes and perhaps love it as she did. Part of this gift is the ability to not pin a place down (it's this or it's that) but to reflect on its changing scenes and fortunes through time – which she does so well in *Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere* – so that the place shimmers as the present and the past interweave. For Jan history was a living thing; she takes us back in imagination as if we are part of the scenes being conjured up: artefacts in a museum are not described as in a catalogue but we view them as if mingling with people at the time who are attending, say, a grand reception in the original house and wondering at the opulence of all they beheld.

This gift may have a lot to do with her Welsh heritage, particularly with the Welsh idea of *hiraeth*, a longing for home, which can transmute into a longing for the unobtainable, for something just out of reach. As she herself came to recognise, the sex-change itself (which she always asserted was more spiritual than sexual), and the constant travelling, was perhaps a form of *hiraeth*, a search for self, which is always a search for home: part of the enigma of life. As she wrote in the Introduction to *Conundrum*:

'Sometimes down by the river, I almost think I have discovered the real purpose of my pilgrimage, the last solution to my conundrum. But then the light changes, the wind shifts, a cloud moves across the sun, and the meaning of it all once again escapes me.'

Penny Young

A slightly edited version of this article will appear in the Quill, edited by Rowena Edlin-White.



5 WHY DONATE TO UNICEF?

UNICEF HAS DONE MORE TO INFLUENCE LAWS, POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO HELP PROTECT CHILDREN THAN ANY OTHER CHARITY.

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6 OUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNICEF

ON OCTOBER 15th, 2026, THE TOTAL SUM RECEIVED FROM SALES AT GLADSTONE BOOKS OVER THE THREE PREVIOUS MONTHS, WHICH (slightly rounded-up) AMOUNTED TO **£500, WAS PAID TO UNICEF UK TO SUPPORT THE PURPOSES DESCRIBED IN ITEM 5 ABOVE. **Gift Aid adds 25% to the above amount.****



7 MILK AND HUMAN KINDNESS

A BIOETHICAL DISQUISITION

A brief summary of my recently published book

The seemingly all-encompassing explanatory power of genomics in illuminating many long-standing biological phenomena has failed to satisfactorily address some dilemmas. One such is the origin and practice of altruism in humans. The idea advanced here first caught my attention about sixty years ago when completing my PhD in biochemistry, and subsequently became an attempt to present a novel



proposal by invoking evidence from a wide range of disciplines, including the biological and medical sciences, history and philosophy of science, bioethics, anthropology, archaeology, primatology, sociology and the law. In 450 pages, envisaged readers are broadly well-educated but not overly familiar with either biology or philosophy. Comments of three anonymous reviewers include:

- *could become a classic,*
- *is detailed, comprehensive and erudite*
- *moral perspectives add a warm, human quality to the writing.*

Lactation, exerting major control over reproductive physiology in the 5,000 extant mammalian species, ranging from the 150 ton *Blue whale* to the 2 g *Pygmy shrew*, has not received merited attention in view of its crucial roles in infant development and its dietary significance in the adult diet (as milk and in dairy products like butter, cheese and yogurt). The low levels of breastfeeding (especially in the UK) may largely be due to lack of appreciation of its values for baby and mother alike - a deficiency the book aims to ameliorate.

The opening chapters of the book discuss cultural, scientific and commercial factors affecting people's perceptions of milk, its role in Darwin's evidence for evolution and the problems of *lactose intolerance*. Chapters in the middle third of the book employ my *Ethical Matrix* (EM) as a conceptual tool to facilitate ethical judgments, pertaining to, firstly, infant feeding and secondly intensive and organic dairying. In 2002, two leading UK philosophers selected one of my papers on the EM for inclusion in their book *Applied Ethics: critical concepts in philosophy* with the aim of demonstrating how "*the field of applied ethics has developed over the last 50 years, by bringing together those articles that have been seminal in the development of the subject*". In this book, the EM is used to assess the ethical acceptability of breast- and bottle-feeding and of organic and intensive systems of dairying.

Thirdly, the book examines my speculation that the origin of altruism (the 'kindness of strangers') in pre-historic tribal societies was due to a step change in the intense cooperation practised, at all levels of kith and kin e.g. in the Kalahari Desert - which were essential to promote tribal survival in their harsh environments. Without close emotional altruism and prolonged breastfeeding, such tribes could be eliminated as effectively as by the spread of a toxic virus.



To purchase copies (£20 hardback) email: info@gladstonebooks.co.uk.

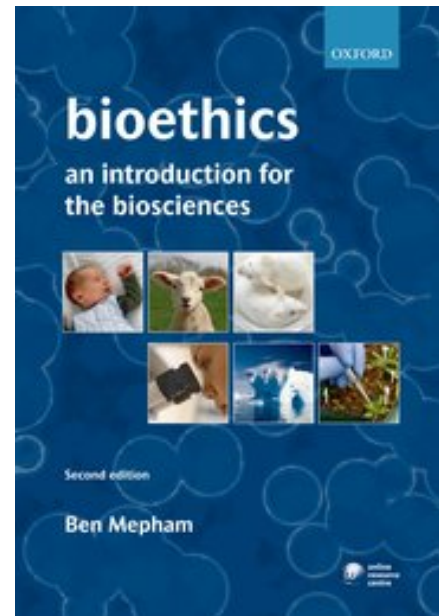
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8 OCTOGENARIAL REFLECTIONS: (PART 4)

1985-1995

In part 3, I described the changed emphasis of my philosophical deliberations from the more metaphysical focus on the nature of the **I**, which is generally considered to be the agency by which we explore the nature of ethical theories from an intellectual perspective - in contrast to the more practical concerns that guide our moral choices. This latter emphasis was brought into focus by the invitation by Oxford University Press for me to write this **Bioethics** text book, which was designed primarily for undergraduates in the biological sciences. But I soon realised that although these two approaches could be considered distinct, in reality they both needed to be involved in ethical reasoning.

Acknowledgement of this was due to my coming across *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, a textbook written by two US ethicists, who recognised that resolving many ethical dilemmas encountered in medicine entailed appeal to several fundamental principles, and finding the best balance between them for all categories, such as the patients, their relatives, the health workers and efficient uses of resources. In brief, the principles addressed were utilitarianism, deontology and justice. My concerns at the time were that similar ethical analyses should be applied to food production (e.g. food consumption (often causing heart disease, obesity & diabetes) farm animals (rights and welfare), and environmental pollution, sustainability etc.



This led to me designing an ethical framework which I call the **Ethical Matrix** to deal with a wide range of ethical concerns, and which two leading philosophers identified as *one of those seminal approaches in the field of applied ethics over the past fifty years*. The example below is a generalised matrix: in its use the terms shown would need to be specified more fully. Chapter 3 in **Bioethics** (above), which describes the Matrix more fully, is freely accessible on the OUP website.

Principle / Stakeholder	Consumers	Producers	Environment	Future Generations
Well-being	Health benefits	Economic security	Ecosystem impact	Sustainability
Autonomy	Freedom of choice	Operational freedom	Biodiversity	Resource availability
Justice	Fair access	Fair compensation	Environmental rights	Inherited quality of life

Each cell provides a space to evaluate how the principle in question affects the given stakeholder. But it's important to appreciate that the Matrix is not prescriptive, but a way of clarifying the reasoning process both to oneself and to others so that expression of judgments can be made explicitly.

On the basis of publications in academic journals the Matrix has been used in a wide range of enquiries to address ethical issues. A few examples are: *radioactive waste disposal*; environmental conservation ; *artificial intelligence research*; forest management policies; *institutional practices concerning agriculture and food*; methodologies involving people living with diseases and the wider public; assessing practices involving fisheries; *a tool for encouraging ethical debates*. But the **I** question has not been overlooked because all the fundamental principles on which the responses in the above cells appeal are rarely, if ever, totally objective. Take for example justice, which in my Matrix I call *fairness*. That comes down to assessments of **value**. Is it fair to distribute goods: randomly, equally, by lottery, effort or achievement etc. Because there are no crucial data, the **I** must have its reasons. But from where and how do they arise?

9 SOME BOOKS RECENTLY ADDED TO THE LIBRARY STOCK

A deficiency of the way I organise the time spent on Gladstone Books is the failure to produce a publicly-accessible catalogue. But sales made are often a consequence of chance findings in a wide variety of previously unknown books. As for other sales, all money paid for books is sent to support UNICEF's important work – see Item 5 above.

Even so, in this issue I have produced a list of five recently acquired books which might whet some people's appetites. [All are in good condition and offered at sale prices.]

- ❖ R McKeon (ed) *Introduction to Aristotle* Modern Library [h b, 700 pp] £5.00
- ❖ J Parkes (1968) *Travel in England in the 17th Century* Oxford University Press [h b, illus] £4.00
- ❖ Scottish Classics Group (2004) *Introducing Cicero* Bristol Classics Press [pb] £3.00
- ❖ C Stray (ed) *Gilbert Murray Reassessed: Hellenism, Theatre & International Politics*. Oxford University Press [h b] £6.00
- ❖ J Bishop (ed) (1965) *Wise, Wanton, Womanly: A verse anthology about Woman*. £4.00

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