

G.E.M. Anscombe (1919-2001) : l'utilitarisme et la condamnation judiciaire des innocents

It is left to modern moral philosophy- the moral philosophy of all the well-known English ethicists since Sidgwick¹ - to construct systems according to which the man who says "We need such-and-such, and will only get it this way" may be a virtuous character: that is to say, it is left open to debate whether such a procedure as the judicial punishment of the innocent may not in some circumstances be the "right" one to adopt; and though the present Oxford moral philosophers would accord a man permission to "make it his principle" not to do such a thing, they teach a philosophy according to which the particular consequences of such an action could "morally" be taken into account by a man who was debating what to do; and if they were such as to conflict with his "ends," it might be a step in his moral education to frame a moral principle under which he "managed" [...] to bring the action; or it might be a new "decision of principle," making which was an advance in the formation of his moral thinking [...] to decide: in such-and-such circumstances one ought to procure the judicial condemnation of the innocent. And that is my complaint.

"Modern Moral Philosophy" (1958), *Collected Papers*, 1981, vol III "Ethics, Religion and Politics".

N.B. : Article disponible en ligne en v.o. Il existe une version française sur le site « klesis » sous le titre « La philosophie morale moderne ».

¹ Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900), voir notamment ses *Methods of Ethics*, 1874. Moore fait donc partie du lot (cf. texte annexe au cours du 15/03/2012)