**特別講演要旨**

**“I discovered words and words were my salvation:  
Iris Murdoch and the Problems of Language”**

**George Hughes**

In my lecture I discussed Iris Murdoch’s involvement with language from two points of view. On the one hand I explored the topic through her involvement with the “linguistic turn” in philosophy in the 20th century. On the other hand I considered the language of the novels, focussing on her style in A word Child (1975).

I suggested first that Murdoch wanted to affirm a living reality beyond language. The “vitalist” project, however, typically ends up as an affirmation of conventional ideologies. Murdoch escapes the problems of vitalism through a critique of Oxford analytic philosophy. She rejects the English tradition in favour of continental models such as the one she found in Sartre’s existentialism. Sartre thus figures importantly for her as the key modern intellectual. I suggested that, even though she may have developed profound reservations about him, Sartre lies behind the creation of characters like Hilary Burde in A Word Child. Hilary represents Murdoch’s view of the importance of foreign languages in modern education: he also represents the tragic impasse in which the modern Sartrean subject is situated.

I then looked at detailed examples of the language of A Word Child. Hilary says that words are his salvation, but the full text shows his entrapment in false immature views of human relationships. I concluded that Murdoch only escaped from conventional ideology and the jargon of her philosophical field through her ability to dramatise problems of characters like Hilary. Murdoch was, at this stage of her career, much like the early Sartre, writing against literary style. Discovering words is, for her, creating a dramatic representation of the problems of language in her age.