The Iris Murdoch Review

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The Iris Murdoch Society

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The Iris Murdoch Review

The *Iris Murdoch Review* publishes articles on the life and work of Iris Murdoch and her milieu. The *Review* aims to represent the breadth and eclecticism of contemporary critical approaches to Murdoch, and particularly welcomes new perspectives and lines of inquiry.

The views and opinions expressed in the *Iris Murdoch Review* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the editors or the production team.

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Editorial Preface

Miles Leeson

THIS ISSUE OF THE *IRIS MURDOCH REVIEW* OPENS WITH a philosophical colloquium, republished for the first time since 1955, which sheds light on the philosophical climate of Oxford in the mid-1950s. It is important to have this back in print as even the Bodleian Library has mislaid its copy. Hannah Marije Altorf's introduction to the colloquium notes that this 'is a dialogue about men by men, with Murdoch as the sole exception,' that reinforces the privileged status of the middle-class white male philosopher of the time – a situation that has not entirely changed in the intervening seventy-odd years. Altorf highlights Murdoch's contribution to the debate where she firmly pushes back against the charge that metaphysical arguments have no inherent value and proposes that liberalism should not be taken for granted.

The essays that follow place Murdoch in dialogue with contemporary novelists and philosophers whose views put her beliefs into sharp relief and develop conversations that have been ongoing since Murdoch's centenary in 2019, not only concerning her status as a canonical writer and as a (non)feminist, but also with regard to her roles of student and teacher. These views are contested and controversial but the discussion of these thorny issues is important and timely. First, in her essay 'On Iris Murdoch as a Woman Writer' (a rejoinder to Jill Paton Walsh's essay 'Philosophy and the Novel', published in *Iris Murdoch Review* 3), Rachel Cusk asserts that Murdoch was not a woman's writer, but was instead a remote, distant figure: 'a lost source of strength; a lost and gifted mother, cloistered in philosophy and academe'. No doubt this view will strike many readers as dismissive and ill-informed but it is nonetheless an important intervention in the current critical debate. Cusk's essay merits serious consideration, especially in the light of the most recent work by Lucy Bolton on Murdoch and feminism in *The Murdochian Mind*, reviewed in this issue.

Following Cusk's laying down of the feminist gauntlet, companion essays by the philosopher Fleur Jongepier and Rebecca Moden engage with another contentious area of debate that was sparked by Valentine Cunningham's plenary lecture at the Centenary Conference (to be published in the forthcoming Palgrave collection *Iris Murdoch and the Literary Imagination*) concerning Murdoch's experience of

pedagogical relationships and the resulting engagement with transgressive love and affection. These essays highlight the ongoing necessity to respond to and challenge relationships that transgress healthy professional ethical boundaries. Jongepier questions how Murdoch's focus on loving attention to the other can apply to those who break with convention and moral boundaries in teaching. Moden reflects on Murdoch's own encounters with older male teachers, particularly her tutors Eduard Fraenkel and Donald MacKinnon, and extends the discussion to question Murdoch's own role as an occasional boundary-crossing teacher herself. Moden asks if these 'unsettling' relationships and 'diffused eroticisms' can be excused, and concludes that they cannot. For Murdoch, the erotic life is not easily separated from the life of the mind, nor from the practice of teaching – a disturbing aspect of her life and thought.

Reviews and reports, as ever, cover a substantial amount of ground. Daniel Read's masterly summation of Murdoch's afterlife in 'Murdoch and the Media' highlights the impossibility of mentioning every webpage or printed article that discusses her legacy and impact now. We have decided therefore this year not to include a 'Publications Update', since there is now too much to cover; moving forward the *Review* will only examine Murdoch-focused works, or those that bear substantial relation to her thought. However, this year we are delighted to bring you Nikhil Krishnan's comprehensive review of both major 'Wartime Quartet' biographies, alongside a review of the published Royal Institute of Philosophy Lecture Series of 2018–2019 which featured Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley and Murdoch. We also have reviews of a Murdoch-centred journal, a work on Murdoch written in Spanish, a quirky account of farming and philosophy by Scott H. Moore that includes an extended essay on Murdoch's theology, a work on Murdoch in relation to Plato and Kant as well as one in relation to Bob Dylan (her connections are eclectic!), reviews of key monographs by Gillian Dooley and by Paul Fiddes, and a review-essay of *The Murdochian Mind,* a landmark collection edited by Silvia Caprioglio Panizza and Mark Hopwood.

As worldwide COVID restrictions have eased over the year, we have gradually returned to in-person events, the most substantial being the recent Tenth International Iris Murdoch Conference at Chichester where I was delighted to see so many Iris Murdoch Society members, and welcome new Murdochians – two of whom, Arka Basu and Jamie Chen, have given their impressions of the conference. Other events have included an online colloquium organised by Silvia Caprioglio Panizza, an innovative exhibition at Kingston University by Carol Sommer, a walking tour of Murdoch's Oxford, and an important collaboration between Oxford Brookes University and the Samaritans convened by Gary Browning. Dayna Miller's report on the year in the Kingston University Archives reveals that work there is going from strength to strength, notwithstanding the pandemic problems, and we congratulate her and the team at the Archive on retaining their accredited

status. We are also pleased to include two pieces on Murdoch and friendship: Frank Egerton's memory of his connections with Iris and John, and Paul Hullah's account of his involvement with Iris and Yozo Muroya in the development and production of their edited *Poems by Iris Murdoch*.

Finally, this edition could not have been produced without the tireless work of Rebecca Moden and Daniel Read. Frances and I delegated a substantial portion of the editorial process to them, primarily due to co-editing the forthcoming *Iris Murdoch and the Literary Imagination* and organising the recent conference. We are indebted to their good humour and superb editorial skills.

University of Chichester, August 2022

Philosophy and Beliefs: A Discussion between four Oxford Philosophers: Anthony Quinton, Stuart Hampshire, Iris Murdoch and Isaiah Berlin

An introduction to the text by Hannah Marije Altorf

REPRINTED BELOW IS A COLLOQUIUM BETWEEN FOUR philosophers: Anthony Quinton, Stuart Hampshire, Iris Murdoch and Isaiah Berlin. This discussion took place in the spring of 1955 in Oxford, and was transcribed by Wallace Robson, at the time Tutor and Fellow of Lincoln College. The full text was first published in 1955 in *Twentieth Century*.[1] The conversation is not widely discussed in Murdoch scholarship. Maria Antonaccio uses it in *Picturing the Human* (2000) to introduce the importance of metaphysics in Murdoch's thought as well as her opposition to separating facts from values.[2] Cora Diamond mentions it at the start of 'Murdoch the Explorer' (2010) to develop the thought that Murdoch challenges not only what is and is not included in philosophy, but also the idea that philosophy's borders can never be fixed.[3] As far as I am aware, it has not been discussed more recently. Yet, it is worth revisiting because of its central question about the role of *Weltanschauungen* (or world-views) in philosophy, which is still relevant today, and also because of the renewed interest in the historical development of Murdoch's thought alongside her contemporaries: Mary Midgley, Philippa Foot and Elizabeth Anscombe. Recent publications by Benjamin J.B. Lipscomb and Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman on the lives and works of these four philosophers, now commonly designated the Wartime Quartet, have instigated renewed interest in making philosophy more inclusive.[4] This dialogue provides further insight into what it is to be a relative outsider in philosophical discussions.

The conversation considers a thesis put forward by Quinton. He holds that analytical philosophy is not dismissive of metaphysics, as is often thought, but rather that it is dismissive of *Weltanschauung*. By this he means 'recommendations

of a moral, political and religious order' (5).[5] What is more, Quinton argues, in this respect contemporary analytical philosophers are not that different from the 'great philosophers' of the past. Those philosophers may have written about these matters, or 'held attitudes to life', but these are not what they are known for (5). He finds support for his thesis by pointing to the different political or social beliefs held by philosophers of the same tradition: 'Russell, Dewey, Croce and Bergson [...] Kant and Mill [...] were all on the same side in social issues [... but] their philosophies (in the technical sense) are all utterly different' (6).

Quinton's thesis is challenged by his interlocutors. The dialogue which follows is not only of interest because of its content but also because of the way in which it is conducted. With regard to the latter, the contemporary reader will note immediately what seems hidden to the four speakers: this is a dialogue about men by men, with Murdoch as the sole exception. She is the only woman present, and if we recall that this is no different from Bryan Magee's *Men of Ideas* (1978) more than twenty years later, it may be surmised that this must have been all too common.[6] We can only speculate whether Murdoch was as aware of this fact as she showed herself to be in the 1962 interview with Harold Hobson, or whether she preferred to disregard it altogether, as she did so forcefully in the 1976 interview with Sheila Hale ('I realise I am lucky. I have never felt picked out in an intellectual sense because I am a woman; these distinctions are not made at Oxford').[7] The issue is, of course, not gender *per se,* but privilege. A dialogue without, as Quinton puts it, 'recommendations of a moral, political and religious order' can be refreshing for someone who is reminded of her gender and of exclusionary practices in almost every other aspect of life, whereas it will not be as significant for others. At the same time, she may be in a better position to observe any 'recommendations', such as, for instance, disparaging remarks on women or those without much learning (Murdoch's 'virtuous peasants').

It should therefore not be surprising that when we now turn to the content of the dialogue, we find that Murdoch's position differs from that of her interlocutors in two aspects. She explicitly values liberal conversations and also questions whether they are really without value. While the others question whether philosophy should be separated from its worldview or whether it has been historically, Murdoch questions whether it can be separated at all:

> The sort of rootless, uncommitted enquiry which we consider to be valuable is itself one of the organs of a liberal society. But we do no service to philosophy if we fail to recognise the points at which what the analysis brings to light are our own values. Equally we do no service to liberalism if we take our similarity of outlook for granted; as if it were preserved automatically by the use of the reason, instead of being something perishable and precarious. (22)

When Murdoch argues that liberalism should not be taken for granted, she sounds a warning about some of the problems that affect society today. With regard to contemporary philosophical practice, one is struck by the comment that analysis brings our values to the fore. As Murdoch puts it later in the dialogue: 'what philosophical concepts we use will be a function of what we regard as real and important' (24). For her, we begin with what we value, and this will be reflected in the concepts we use. Thus, even when Quinton's position at the start seems overstated, the conversation remains significant because it holds up a mirror. It makes one question how contemporary concepts emerge from what we consider 'real and important'. To what extent do our values decide what is of significance, and do we acknowledge this or do we ignore it at our own peril? (See, for example, 13–15.) As Kai Nielsen argues, severing questions of *Weltanschauung* from philosophy impoverishes both.[8]

For those familiar with Murdoch's writing, none of this will come as a big surprise. Yet, the specific terminology allows us also to speculate how her thoughts and ideas developed. The term *Weltanschauung* is central to the conversation, but it is seldom found in Murdoch's writings. A notable exception comes in another work from this formative period of her thought, *Under the Net* (1954), when Jake Donaghue describes Hugo Belfounder:

> I have never met a man more destitute than Hugo of anything which could be called metaphysics or general *Weltanschauung*. It was rather perhaps that of each thing he met he wanted to know the *nature* – and he seemed to approach this question in each instance with an absolute freshness of mind.[9]

The philosophical conversation between Quinton, Hampshire, Murdoch and Berlin can be understood to continue here, even when the distinction between metaphysics and *Weltanschauung* is disregarded. It may be of course that Murdoch is simply making jokes about ideas, as I think she often does. Yet, it is also possible to read this passage as a thought experiment. Quinton's proposition is embodied in a character generally considered to be one of Murdoch's 'good' characters. Interestingly, Hugo turns out to be even more spatially disconnected than the more existential Jake.

So, this conversation is worth revisiting in full not only given the renewed interest of the formative years of the Wartime Quartet initiated by recent publications, but also because it confronts our present practice and informs our history. Moreover, it questions the value of dialogue. At the end of the conversation, the views of these four philosophers remain unchanged. It makes one wonder how such a change would ever come about.

1 Anthony Quinton, Stuart Hampshire, Iris Murdoch and Isaiah Berlin, 'Philosophy and Beliefs: A discussion between four Oxford philosophers', *Twentieth Century* 157 (June 1955), 495–521. The full text can be found here: <https://berlin.wolf.ox.ac.uk/published_works/singles/bib59.pdf>.

2 Maria Antonaccio, *Picturing the Human: The Moral Thought of Iris Murdoch* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 29–31.

3 Cora Diamond, 'Murdoch the Explorer', *Philosophical Topics* 38:1 (2010), 51–85.

4 See Benjamin J.B. Lipscomb, *The Women Are Up to Something: How Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley, and Iris Murdoch Revolutionized Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) and Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman, *Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brought Philosophy Back to Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2022).

5 The page numbers used in this Preface refer to the conversation that follows it.

6 Bryan Magee, 'Philosophy and Literature: Dialogue with Iris Murdoch', in *Men of Ideas* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1978), 262–85. Reprinted in *Existentialists and Mystics*, ed. by Peter Conradi (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), 3–30.

7 Sheila Hale, 'Iris Murdoch Interview in "Women Writers Now: Their Approach and Their Apprenticeship"', in *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction*, ed. by Gillian Dooley (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2003), 30–32 (32). The Harold Hobson interview can be found in the same collection, *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction*, 1–8. For a discussion of these interviews, see Hannah Marije Altorf, 'Iris Murdoch and Common Sense Or, What Is It Like To Be A Woman In Philosophy', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 87 (2020), 201–220. (See, in particular, section 3, 'What is it like to be a woman in philosophy?'.)

8 See Kai Nielsen, 'Philosophy and *Weltanschauung*'. *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 27 (1993), 179–186. Nielsen hardly mentions Murdoch, but instead seems to think the main argument is between the three others.

9 Iris Murdoch, *Under the Net* (London: Penguin, 1964), 58.

The text of the conversation

ANTHONY QUINTON: IT APPEARS TO ME THAT MOST OF THE strong feelings that have been generated about contemporary analytic philosophy – what its opponents delight in calling 'logical positivism' – arise from a confusion which is common to both parties in the dispute. A kind of revolutionary illusion prevails, which imposes on the practitioner of analytic philosophy as much as their critics, both inside and outside philosophy. What has taken place, it seems universally to be agreed, is the elimination of metaphysics. Both analytic philosophers and their critics believe that the kind of philosophy now practised and taught at this University is something quite different from, or at any rate only a minute residue of, what has traditionally gone by the name of philosophy. The critics, of course, regard this as a disastrous state of affairs, and call for a return to what they take to be the great tradition of the subject. The key word here is 'metaphysics', and there is good reason for people to think this is the central point at issue. After all, the most widely read book of the most widely read analytic philosopher, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, by Professor A.J. Ayer, was presented as, primarily, an attack on traditional metaphysical philosophy. Nowadays Ayer is more circumspect – he wrote recently: 'My present view is that much of what appears as metaphysics involves the discussion of important points of logic'; and five of the essays in his latest book are described by him as concerned with problems of 'logic and metaphysics'; they are not about but in metaphysics.

The fact is that what analytic philosophers want to extrude from philosophy, and what their critics want to see put back into it, is *Weltanschauung*: recommendations of a moral, political and religious order. But both sides are labouring under a misapprehension. For *Weltanschauung* has never been the principal concern of those who would generally be agreed to be the greatest philosophers. I don't want to deny that there have been great men, great thinkers, and so in a very wide sense great philosophers, who have been essentially propounders of *Weltanschauungen* – Montaigne, Pascal and Nietzsche, for example, and the Hellenistic philosophers who flourished after the great age of Greek philosophy. Nor would I want to deny that many philosophers securely in the great tradition – Plato, Spinoza, Kant – held attitudes to life, and gave public expression to them as appendages to, or even parts of, their philosophy. But these attitudes to life are not what gives these men their importance in the history of philosophy. This can be clearly seen if we consider that there are equally great and traditional philosophers in whose work *Weltanschauung* does not appear at all – Aristotle, Duns Scotus and Descartes, for example.

In the philosophy of the great tradition, then, the presentation of attitudes to life is either secondary or absent. But what they did discuss is still discussed by contemporary analytic philosophers – substance, universals, truth, the nature

of logical and mathematical truths, our knowledge of the external world, the nature of mind, and the logical character of moral thinking. There has been a revolution all right; but it lies in the method of approach to philosophical activity and not in the subject-matter of the activity. What was formulated and discussed in psychological terms is now more commonly treated in a more linguistic fashion. Instead of attending to the actual process of thinking, philosophers now concentrate on the way in which thoughts are expressed; the results of processes of thinking. But to this transformation, which is of the greatest technical importance, the conventional objections to analytic philosophy have practically no relevance at all.

Stuart Hampshire: But surely the great philosophers were concerned in their philosophies with questions of *Weltanschauung*, almost without exception? And it was certainly more than a separable appendage to their philosophies; at least in their intention. Admittedly they also wrote about questions of logic and of logical analysis; largely the questions which we still discuss now. But they certainly thought of these questions as essentially connected with *Weltanschauung*, in any natural sense of this word. Personally I think they were right and that there is this connection between logic and *Weltanschauung*. It would be a very large change if philosophers now no longer thought there was, or should be, such a connection.

Quinton: *Weltanschauung* was never their central concern; or, at any rate, whatever may have been their ultimate intentions, it was never what they spent most time on, and is not what they are famous for. And there was, generally, no necessary connection between their technical philosophy and the *Weltanschauungen* they sometimes expressed.

I think that what the critics of contemporary philosophy often have in mind as an ideal is what I shall call 'the great liberal philosopher'; that is, a man who is both a professional philosopher and vigorously concerned with the principal moral and social questions of his time. The great liberal philosophers of the twentieth century have been Russell, Dewey, Croce and Bergson. Looking further back, Kant and Mill can certainly be put in this class. These thinkers were all on much the same side in social issues; all of them have taken a more or less liberal, permissive, stand in moral, political and educational matters. But their philosophies (in the technical sense) are all utterly different. Dewey is perhaps a kind of link between Russell and Bergson; and again Bergson, seen from a distance, has some affinities with Croce; but it would be hard to find two philosophers more utterly opposed, in a technical respect, than Russell and Croce.

Iris Murdoch: I think you are defining '*Weltanschauung*' rather too narrowly. It's only very roughly and in relation to a few general issues that the philosophers

you mention are 'all on the same side'. These general ideas may be what we would consider important ones – but it is also important that the terms in which these philosophers argue, and encourage others to argue, about morals and politics, contrast in striking ways. Their agreements on practical issues are narrow by comparison, and flimsy in so far as they emerge from conceptual backgrounds of a different type. Followers of Croce and followers of Russell see the world differently; and one would expect such people, even if they were in practical agreement at certain moments, to develop differently. In a shifting situation one could not rely on their agreeing.

Hampshire: I think that the point is that those whom we now recognise as the great philosophers, in our sense of 'philosophy', make their attitudes to life, their moral attitudes in the widest sense, rest on a groundwork of logical doctrine. This is the respect in which they differ from Nietzsche, and from other, possibly inspired, thinkers whom we would not now recognise as philosophers.

Quinton: Consider the matter historically. Let us take the case of Kant. The historical consequence of Kant' s philosophy was Romantic German idealism – Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. These Romantic idealist philosophers were politically reactionary and obscurantist; they put their technical inheritance from Kant to work in support of Romantic nationalism. But Kant himself was a liberal. I don't think myself, I admit, that he was quite such a milk-white progressive as Dr Popper makes him out to be: not just because of the concealment and disguise that the dismal political conditions in which he lived made necessary, but because of his rather hearty insistence on antagonism and conflict as indispensable conditions of human progress. This breezy activism comes out in his ethical writings, too, where he characterises the happy and indolent South Sea Islander (who is perhaps more an ideal than an anthropological reality) as 'immoral' in neglecting to develop his capacities. For all that, Kant was more of a liberal than anything else; and his philosophical successors were certainly not.

Isaiah Berlin: I cannot agree with Quinton. Of course there are thinkers whose general attitude – what you have called *Weltanschauung* – is stated in language so vague and 'emotive' that it does not, at least prima facie, seem to follow from any clearly held beliefs about the world which can be stated in definite propositions. But one cannot possibly generalise. Kant's liberalism (in particular his doctrine that one is forbidden to use other human being as means to one's own ends: that exploitation and degradation of others is against the moral law) follows from his ethical doctrines; and these are certainly capable of being stated in lucid philosophical prose; can be examined from a logical point of view; are susceptible of rational argument; and so on; they aren't just attitudes capable

of being conveyed but not stated in lucid terms. And the same, I should have thought, is true about Spinoza or Hobbes, whose moral and political views directly follow from their beliefs about the world. For if the latter are false, the former are affected directly: are logically undermined to some degree. So that I cannot see that a *Weltanschauung* is always and necessarily logically independent of the 'professional' doctrines of a philosopher. Indeed, this dependence is particularly notable in the case of the great classical philosophers from Plato to Russell. As for Kant's relation to Fichte and Hegel: no man's views can be made responsible for the use to which they are put. And anyway Kant might well have regarded the arguments of the Romantics as not merely abhorrent to him but fallacious.

Hampshire: Yes, I don't think we ought to judge a philosopher's intentions by his historical consequences. Fichte, Schelling and Hegel each had to modify Kant's logical doctrines in a characteristic way in order to arrive at their different *Weltanschauungen* – their different moralities, their different political beliefs, their differences in aesthetics. But the real point at issue is this. Kant, like his successors, did draw political, and other, conclusions from his philosophy – in the narrowest, most technical sense of 'philosophy'. If in the present state of opinion Oxford philosophers do not draw moral, political and other non-specialist conclusions from their philosophy, then your thesis, Quinton, that contemporary Oxford philosophy is in the main philosophical tradition will not stand up. It would be a great change if philosophy were now thought to be ethically neutral by philosophers themselves. And I think it would be a change for the worse; because I think it would be an intellectual error, and also a self-deception.

Quinton: I admit that in the past differences in philosophical viewpoint clearly did have important practical consequences. The different opinions of Thomists and Scotists in the later Middle Ages – differences about the respective provinces of faith and reason, of theology and philosophy – were connected with the principal political issue of the time: the controversy over the respective authorities of Church and State. William of Ockham, after all, who was a follower of Duns Scotus on the philosophical question about the limitations of reason in theology, was one of the most vigorous political pamphleteers on the anti-papal side; while Aquinas committed himself, without anything like the same degree of political engagement, to papal supremacy. I don't think there is any doubt that the philosophical views were normally associated with certain regular political consequences; and these proponents usually believed the philosophical views to entail these consequences. On the other hand, it was not necessary to draw anti-papalist conclusions from Scotist premisses; I don't believe that Scotus himself did so; and the same conclusions could have been drawn from quite different premises.

Hampshire: Leaving the historical point for a moment: are you saying that acceptance of the commonly accepted logical doctrines of contemporary philosophy has no relevance to one's moral beliefs or attitudes? That is, that no moral beliefs are excluded by logical doctrines, and that none are supported by them?

Quinton: I think – and I take it that this is the view of many contemporary philosophers – that there is no logical connection between philosophical doctrines and moral or political attitudes. What is more: I should want to argue that there is plenty of evidence to show that there is a practical gap between the two things as well. Generally speaking, furthermore, this lack of any uniform connection between a given philosophical standpoint and a given Weltanschauung has always been evident if the examples taken are not too close together in time. Over short periods the mere fact of their being all held by one forceful and admired person will lead people to accept or reject as a group a set of opinions which are, logically, quite heterogenous.

Thus Hegelian idealism was very often associated with its founder's patriotic authoritarianism. But T.H. Green was an intellectual ancestor of the Labour party, with his pleas for State intervention; Bosanquet was a philanthropic liberal; and McTaggart took a low view of the State altogether. And Marx, after all, began as a Hegelian, and retained many of Hegel's doctrines intact in a system which was thought to have political consequences diametrically opposed to the political outlook of Hegel.

Murdoch: I still think your view seems true only when one divides people into groups roughly, and on the basis of their attitude to a few simple issues. But the differences can't be treated as if they were of no practical importance. Your notion of the 'practical gap' is, I suspect, partly suggested by a powerful philosophical belief in the 'logical gap'.

This method of division, which overlooks deep ideological disagreement, is also implicit in 'liberal' procedures. We take a vote on a practical point, and what lies behind people's overt decisions is private and their own affair. But this is a sort of political norm and not a fact. Differences of conceptual approach, even though combined with perhaps temporary practical agreement, are ignored at our peril. In the Labour Party, for instance, it makes just the greatest difference in practice whether someone is a socialist of a T.H. Green type or of a Benthamite type.

Quinton: I will readily admit that certain philosophical views are more psychologically consistent with some moral and political attitudes than with others. But this is a contingent matter; and the psychological connection is usually less enduring than the philosophical view in question. This is a non-logical – but

not by any means illogical – association which might be explained, as I suggested before, by the powerful but impermanent influence of great men. So I do not think that this connection, being a contingent, temporary and psychological one, affects my point.

Berlin: But it is not just a question of psychological compatibility. If you think (like the French materialists) that men are nothing but material objects in space, determined wholly by fixed natural laws, your notions of value – of, say, what is good or bad – which you may trace entirely to, and even define in terms of, physical appetites of an unavoidable kind, will be very different (and properly so) from [the notions of] those who identify such values with the commandments of a revealed deity, or of one's own immaterial soul – commandments which may be disobeyed – or alternatively which you regard as unalterable in principle by education and environment. Ethical, political, aesthetic views seem to me capable of being logically connected with beliefs about the universe, or even with beliefs about logic itself (e.g. whether there can, or cannot, be a priori ethical proposition); even if they are not always so connected.

Hampshire: I agree. For the holders of certain philosophical views, certain alignments, as Berlin says, are altogether excluded, since for anyone thinking as a philosopher in certain particular terms, certain attitudes would be inconceivable, in the sense that there would be no place for them in that particular system of thought. They could not even be formulated. It is not merely a matter of logic; nor of psychological idiosyncrasy.

But may I now go back to one point in Quinton's original thesis? As I understood it, he was saying that modern philosophers, whatever some of them may have thought or said, were not really overthrowing 'metaphysics' – in the sense of overthrowing the traditional problems of philosophy. They were really limiting the scope and claims of philosophy, and particularly overthrowing the claim that there is, or can be, a connection between logic and *Weltanschauung*.

Quinton: I should prefer to put it like this. The so-called philosophical revolution was a real revolution; but it was primarily a *technical* one. There was not a change in the subject -matter of philosophy, but rather in the manner of formulating and discussing it. This change brought with it a clearer realisation of the relation – or more properly the lack of relation – between philosophy and *Weltanschauung*. A clearer realisation, but still not clear enough; since the metaphysics that the more polemically-minded philosophers thought they had eliminated was not very noticeably there to be got rid of. So they were not so much extruding *Weltanschauung* as they thought; but rather trying clearly to demarcate philosophy so as to exclude it.

But since they failed to distinguish *Weltanschauung* from metaphysics, they thought they had done a great deal more than this. Nevertheless, they continued in fact to concern themselves with the traditional problems of philosophy.

Hampshire: So analytic philosophers were really still dealing with metaphysical problems?

Quinton: Yes; though these were framed in slightly different terms.

Berlin: I think the analytic philosophers' claim – if they make it – to have divorced philosophy and *Weltanschauung* is a false one.

Quinton: There was no divorce because there had never been a marriage; at most, a series of impermanent liaisons.

Berlin: I really see no reason for believing this. Psychologically almost any view may be held together with any other view, I suppose; but that does not mean that this is justifiable; and one of the tasks of philosophers is, precisely to examine compatibilities of a given logical or metaphysical or scientific doctrine with ethical or political ones.

Hampshire: If, as Quinton seems to be saying, the analytic philosophers were concerned with removing the basis of other people's *Weltanschauungen*, how is it that they left thinkers like Nietzsche alone?

Murdoch: These people are not interfered with because they don't use what we would call philosophical arguments. Rightly or wrongly, they are not regarded as 'doing philosophy'. Whereas a thinker like Hegel, whose world outlook is supported by philosophical arguments, or rather is presented in terms of recognisable philosophical concepts, would be an object of attack.

Hampshire: You mean that sages like Nietzsche did not attempt to give any logical demonstration of their views.

Berlin: Yes; to the rigorous analytic philosopher they would be merely an intellectually harmless form of literature. And I believe that here the rigorous analytic philosopher would be mistaken. Napoleon (who invented, I believe, the opprobrious sense of the word 'idéologue') showed more insight, when he decided that what the positivists of his own time thought was positively dangerous to the security of his regime – whereas the Catholic doctrines of Bonald, who looked on him as a vile usurper, he thought were, if anything, favourable to his rule.

Murdoch: But I don't think that Quinton was saying that the analytic philosophers dismissed *Weltanschauungen* as not worth bothering about.

Hampshire: No; his point was rather that they objected to the logical manoeuvres designed to support *Weltanschauungen*.

Berlin: But I am still not clear, after all this talk of *Weltanschauung*, just what we have in mind: what counts as one. Let me take some doctrine at random. Phenomenalism, for instance; I mean the view that the world ultimately consists of systems of experiences, that there are no non-empirical lumps of stuff behind the scenes. Well: is phenomenalism a *Weltanschauung*?

Hampshire: Lenin thought it was. Or rather, he thought that a phenomenalist would have grounds, in his phenomenalism, for rejecting certain interpretations of history, and for accepting others. And therefore he attacked phenomenalism.

Berlin: But he attacked it because he thought it was simply untrue, not because it was a rival *Weltanschauung*; and as fallacies in one province might lead to denial of what he thought true and important in others, it must be refuted.

Hampshire: Surely Lenin saw it, and attacked it, as a rival *Weltanschauung*. The point of his assault on Mach was that acceptance of Mach's kind of phenomenalism would have made it impossible for people to talk in a Marxist way.

Quinton: But isn't Lenin's attack on phenomenalism just the clearest case of his astonishing crudity as a philosopher? His train of thought seems to have been this: phenomenalists like Berkeley deny the independent reality of the material world; this is to divert the attention of the working-class from their real, material interests to pie in the sky; therefore Berkeley and those who agree with him are enemies of the working class.

Berlin: I don't believe – indeed it is obviously not true – that phenomenalists always have been so very other-worldly; but I think that for Lenin it was a matter of nipping in the bud what he detected to be latent 'religious' tendencies among Marxists; he thought that the materialist propositions which he derived from Feuerbach, Marx and Plekhanov were not compatible with the (crypto-Kantian) tendencies of some Bolsheviks to divorce questions of ultimate ends from those of historical materialism. I should have thought that he was quite right. His 'refutation' is a poor intellectual performance; but his own motive for compiling it seems sound enough.

Hampshire: Surely the episode we have been discussing is itself enough to throw doubt on Quinton's original thesis.

Murdoch: May we go back a bit? I think that what lies behind Quinton's view is a current assumption, which I should call a 'liberal-scientific' assumption, to this effect: that there is the world of clearly established facts on the one hand, about which we are all in agreement, and there is the world of private personal attitudes on the other, about which we attempt to be tolerant. (Agnosticism here is a form of tolerance.) The early analytic philosophers were, as we know, particularly fanatical in insisting that we should take as real only the world recognised by natural science. The more austere forms of the Verification Principle condemned much of what we thought. We think that our philosophy has never entirely got over this prejudice, which is reflected in the recent and current uses of the word 'attitude'. Contemporary ethics, for instance, no longer connects moral judgments with emotions, but it connects them exclusively with consistent practical choice. Moral differences then are seen as differences in attitude in the sense of differences of overt choice, and not as differences of moral concept. But, as I suggested before, this determination to see differences as differences in voting is itself part of our liberal *Weltanschauung*.

Berlin: I still am not really sure what a '*Weltanschauung*' is supposed to be. I should have thought that the term usually meant general attitudes to life: such as optimism or pessimism; sensing purpose in all things, or the lack of it; monism or pluralism; what William James distinguished as 'tough-' or 'tender-'minded attitudes; and the like.

Hampshire: But apparently what the logical analysts want to say is either (1) that moral, political and aesthetic opinions are not subjects for rational argument, or (2) that arguments which would be recognised as philosophical, in the new and narrower sense, do not, or should not, occur when we are defending them.

I do not know whether most Oxford philosophers do now hold either or both these views. If they do, they seem to me to be wrong.

Berlin: These two views are very different. The technical revolution in philosophy is only relevant to the question in that it emphasises the independence of the 'opinions' mentioned from philosophy.

But my original argument was that whatever the relation may be between technical philosophy and *Weltanschauung* – and here, against Hampshire and Berlin, I would maintain that the analytic philosopher's insistence that there is no logical connection between the two is correct and helpful – a change of view about this relation does not constitute a revolution in philosophy of the kind

which some philosophers, and critics of philosophy, believe to have taken place. The logical detachment of philosophy from *Weltanschauung* is not specific to analytic philosophers; it was made clearly enough by for instance Dilthey, who was by no means of that school; and it does not constitute a rupture with the great tradition of the subject, because those who are generally recognised to be the chief ornaments of this tradition do not depend for their places in it on any *Weltanschauungen* they may have expressed. Professor Ayer is not, in this very wide sense, a new kind of philosopher, he is essentially interested in the same sort of things as Descartes. And if Descartes is a metaphysician, so is Ayer. Equally those who criticise Ayer's conception of philosophy will not find what they are looking for in Descartes.

Hampshire: I disagree with you both about Descartes and about earlier logical positivism – the philosophers of the Vienna Circle, whom Ayer followed very closely in *Language, Truth, and Logic*.

Descartes was concerned to reconcile the new mathematical physics with Catholic theology. His philosophy entailed a particular doctrine of the human soul, its relation to the body and its possible immortality; and of the relation of faith and reason. He was a distinctively Catholic philosopher.

The philosophers of the Vienna Circle were campaigning anti-clericals and rationalists, explicitly excluding whole systems of belief as empty, void of content, as scarcely statements at all, susceptible either of belief or disbelief. All rational discourse, in their philosophy, must approximate to scientific discourse – unless it is mere expression of feeling.

Wittgenstein, I admit, is an entirely different case; in his later teaching he explicitly repudiated the philosophy of the Vienna Circle. He made a wider and more emphatic separation between philosophy, in his narrow sense of the word, and *Weltanschauung* than any philosopher had ever made before. And I admit that he has had more influence in Oxford, and in English philosophy generally, than the Vienna Circle. But this separation is itself a logical doctrine, and one which entails important consequences outside philosophy. The way in which one discusses, and states, religious, moral and aesthetic opinions will change, if one agrees that philosophy is irrelevant to them. And the status of one's religious, moral and aesthetic opinions will change, in the sense that one will believe that there are compartments, walls dividing different kinds of enquiry, which one did not believe to be there before.

But I should have thought that the usual complaint about Oxford philosophy was that it is trivial in its subject-matter – all about grammar and words.

Murdoch: Aren't we dealing here with two quite different lines of attack on contemporary philosophy? The analytic philosophers of the 1930s were supposed

to be undermining religion and morals, because they seemed to suggest that there were no rational arguments which could be used to support religious or moral conclusions. Their activities, and those of the logical positivists proper, were not trivial. It was rather that their views had the important consequence of making morals and politics seem trivial, in the sense of non-rational. Linguistic philosophy, which descends from G.E. Moore's philosophy of common sense, and which goes in for a minute study of ordinary language, gives an appearance of being in itself a trivial activity, in that it involves detailed discussion of small points of actual usage.

Quinton: And the point on which the philosopher of ordinary language should seize here, in order to defend his procedure, is that this triviality is only apparent. Outsiders, after all, are not in the best position to judge the significance of specialists' researches. The points at issue between Locke and Berkeley might look pretty trivial; but their disagreement about material substance is connected with a quite untrivial-looking difference about the nature of scientific knowledge: does it give us a true understanding of the nature of things? or does it merely provide us with a set of convenient, since practically useful, schemes for the prediction of experience? And this is important because quite different views of the nature of admissible scientific hypotheses flow from it.

In one form, at any rate, these charges of triviality may be no more than ignorant philistinism; and as such are by no means peculiar to the domain of philosophy: though they seem to be specially frequent there. Historians, too, are exposed to the same kind of futile carping from those who seem to conceive the historian's function to be that of providing patriot-fodder, of lifting up our hearts by celebrating the glories of our national past. The same sort of criticism is recurrently made against theoretical economics.

Behind these naive complaints there is sometimes a serious point. And indeed current Oxford philosophy of the 'ordinary language' variety, could be seen as making just such a serious point against the classical logical positivists, the Carnapians with their simple faith in the absolute fidelity of *Principia Mathematica* to the implicitly recognised rules of valid thinking. But such points are best made by professionals; as put forward by uninformed persons they merely exasperate.

Murdoch: I think there is, or can be, point in the attack on the philosophy of ordinary language. We know how colossally important and valuable this method has been; but it does run a risk. The risk is that it may deter us from philosophical exploration in cases where this exploration is proper.

Moral and political philosophy, for instance, have not, I think, so far, been well served by the 'linguistic' method. The result has too often been that we are offered, as fundamental concepts definitive of moral or political thinking in

general, such watered-down conceptions as have become fixed in the everyday language of our society.

This is the kind of criticism that personally I would want to make. But I suppose the more general criticism is that the philosophy of ordinary language deals in problems that seem more 'verbal' than 'real'; that there is a deliberate evasion or problems with serious human consequences.

Hampshire: Certainly the linguistic sorting-out can be tedious; but something important may be discovered in the process; and this sorting-out of the provinces of the use of words is a very important aspect of modern philosophy.

Quinton: And after all, any serious intellectual discipline runs the risk of falling into a kind of pedantic frivolity. This is not at all peculiar to analytic philosophy. Consider Renaissance objections to Scholasticism; or the abuse of Aristotle and Aristotelian logic that is strewn through the pages of Hobbes, Descartes and Locke.

For this tendency to decadence there are a number of explanations, none of which is uniquely applicable to analytic philosophy. In the first place there is the commonly devastating effect of a man of genius; followers tend to follow the words rather than the example of a great thinker. Secondly, fiddling about is an occupational proclivity of academic persons – the outcome of diffidence, habituation, a narrow and perhaps rather smug environment, the sort of pompous self-sufficiency I am afraid I may have given expression to a little while ago. This, after all, is the inevitable concomitant of professionalism; if you provide the conditions in which learning and exactness can flourish, you also inevitably provide the conditions for scholasticism and aridity.

Berlin: I have no objection to pedantry or even 'aridity' as such. All true forms of scrupulous professional activity seem to involve this to some degree – it is almost a criterion of such professionalism. And philosophy is no more for amateurs than any other serious intellectual discipline. But I do think that modern positivists have done themselves unnecessary harm, in the eyes of the uninstructed, by advertising their methods as 'linguistic'. No doubt this was a tempting and perhaps necessary weapon in the early days, when the current philosophical jargon – and the vast inflation of language by Hegelians and their allies – needed a sharp and immediate antidote. But the impression has undoubtedly been given to the general public – or to those of them who wish to know what philosophers are saying – that whereas in the past philosophers dealt with important questions – moral, metaphysical, political – they have now peacefully abdicated from all this, and have retired from the dangerous open sea of public debate to the remote inland lake (some say an artificial pool for paper boats) of harmless verbal analysis; and are about as deeply concerned with the 'great problems' that trouble people, as philologists or grammarians.

This withdrawal never, in fact, occurred: or, if it did, only through very temporary misunderstandings of their task by natural pedants among philosophers, who really did become obsessed by an interest in words (like a lexicographer's) purely for their own sakes. It seems to me that what the radical revolution in philosophy during the last half-century did make clear – and there has been a great (and I should say, beneficent) revolution – is the proper subject-matter of philosophy. Thus one can now say much more confidently that what philosophy does not deal with are questions which are either empirical or formal. Empirical questions are dealt with by the special sciences, and, at its own level, by common sense; formal questions, by logical or mathematical techniques and the like. I think that we really are clearer today about the nature of philosophy.

One of the distinguishing marks of empirical questions – and formal ones also – is that they contain the indications of the kind of method by which they are to be answered, within themselves. An empirical, or a formal, question may be difficult to solve; but its very formulation makes clear what kind of method is called for – nobody looks for solutions to equations or chess problems in green fields, nor for questions about the composition of soils in books on mathematical logic.

The mark of specifically philosophical questions is that the way to solve them is not obvious at all The questions look genuine enough – questions like 'Are there real material objects or just subjective impressions?' or 'Had the world a beginning in time?' or 'Is there an immortal soul?' But one does not quite know how to set about looking for answers. Sometimes the questions do turn out to be in part factual or formal: when this becomes clear, the formal and empirical issues are gradually 'sloughed off', as it were, into special sciences (e.g. psychology or biology, astronomy or mathematics, as the case may be) and leave philosophy proper. This successive shedding is the history both of philosophy and of the genesis of the sciences. But what is left is philosophical: is neither a pure matter of '*Weltanschauung*' nor of its opposite.

Sometimes the problems are mere linguistic muddles – due to abuse of language; as logical positivists thought, and perhaps still think, all philosophical 'problems' are; at other times they are genuine, and soluble, questions. The ground under the philosopher's feet need not necessarily always be a quicksand. But of course what philosophers are talking about is not words qua words, but about concepts and categories: the most general and pervasive among them which particular uses of words constitute (for thought is largely a matter of using words). Words are not distinguishable from the concepts they express or involve: but it does not follow that all there is before us is 'mere words' – trivial questions of local usage.

Two fallacies have been uncovered in our day. First, it is now clear that philosophy is not (because all knowledge is empirical), therefore, as Hobbes and Hume and Mach supposed, and possibly Russell once thought, a kind of science. But neither is it a formal – a quasi-logical – activity. It consists in trying to clarify

and to answer, questions too general and pervasive to be treated by the textbooks of the sciences; and too much taken for granted to be examinable by common sense.

These problems alter as words and concepts alter. But their treatment cannot possibly be formalised and mechanised – i.e. turned into easily teachable 'techniques'. They must be dealt with as they come. Vast progress has been made in our day in throwing light on some of the most persistent and central of these great issues; especially by, for example, Russell; who nevertheless, despite his genius, seems to me mistaken about the nature of philosophy – his own most fruitful activity – since he thinks it helps or supplements or continues the work of the sciences. It does not do this: the most characteristic questions that philosophers try to unravel are not solved by discoveries of facts, as scientific problems are; they are not solved either by inductive or by deductive methods. No factual discovery, and no deductive exercise, will help me to understand why I cannot 'return' to the seventeenth century, or how I can be sure that I am not the only conscious being in the universe. But philosophical thought can, by examining and analysing ways in which we use symbols, i.e. the ways in which we think and communicate, answer just such questions; and so alter both someone's specific beliefs and his *Weltanschauung*, too. Which is exactly what Kant did for the nineteenth century.

Hampshire: I am sure that Berlin is right in saying that the term 'linguistic', as a label for modern philosophy, has been unfortunate.

Quinton: It may have been unfortunate, but I would defend firmly the main difference between the empiricism of the present day and the classical British empiricism of Locke and Hume. Where they, and the Mills, discussed thinking in psychological terms, as a manipulation of ideas, the modern empiricist treats it as the manipulation of words. Thought as expressed, and not thought as 'felt', is what they conceive their subject-matter to be.

Hampshire: But surely Berlin is right. It is not just words that the analytic philosopher is properly concerned with, the more or less contingent facts of language, but with concepts. And not just with any concept, but with those most general concepts or notions on which all thought and language depends. As philosophers, we are interested in the most general features of the whole apparatus of concepts, in the different categories of thought and knowledge. If we exhaustively analyse some particular concept, it is generally as an example of a type of concept, with a view to showing the place of this type in the system of our thought, its peculiar function, and its difference from other types. We want to arrive at a general view through the particular case.

There is, of course, always the possibility of mistaking the means for the end. Minute verbal analysis is only the means; although one may, for pedagogical purposes, fall into the habit of discussing this or that particular expression, and forget why one is interested in it, and what philosophical question one is trying to answer. Linguistic analysis seems to me philosophically boring when it becomes a routine, applied to any expression which is suggested, disinterestedly; there must be a philosophical question first, which will be by definition a question of great generality; and then we may pin it down, and render it more tractable and less vague, by examining a particular case of linguistic usage very carefully, as a specimen. And surely Wittgenstein and Moore have shown in their practice that we do become clearer about the traditional issues of philosophy in this way. But this method cannot be made a routine. It demands some insight, the selection of the right example and counterexample, the instinct for what is relevant.

But it might still be right to use the word ‘linguistic’ in explaining what has happened in the last fifty years. Although many of the questions which we try to answer are very much the same as the questions asked by Aristotle, Leibniz or Kant, we have a means of making these questions much clearer than they were before. To put it crudely, we are able to distinguish more firmly than earlier philosophers the difference between (1) talking about the use of words and concepts and (2) using words and concepts to talk about other things. The elaboration of this distinction in the last fifty years seems to me of immense importance, comparable with the development of mathematical logic, and with the new insight into the status of mathematics which the new logic has brought.

Now this distinction, in one of its forms, has wide importance outside philosophy itself – in ethics, political theory, in aesthetics and criticism. So I should certainly say that it must affect one’s *Weltanschauung*: that is, the terms in which one states moral, political or other problems, and the way in which one approaches them, and distinguishes them from each other.

This is a revolution, when all its consequences are taken into account. Whether one says that we are still discussing the same questions in a different form, or that we have replaced the old questions by new ones, seems to me simply a matter of how we decide to use the word ‘same’ here.

And there are other elements in the revolution, which also have large consequences outside philosophy For instance, the approach to philosophy through the traditional question ‘What can we know with certainty?’ has now, I think, been abandoned and disposed of. We have seen through it and now have other problems.

Quinton: I should like to supplement that by a little history. We must clearly distinguish between two kinds of analytic philosophy, both of which owe a very great deal to Wittgenstein, and both of which are, in quite different ways, ‘linguistic’.

In the first place there is the formalist view of Carnap, and the Vienna Circle. They saw their task as the purification and reconstruction of language on the model of the *Principia Mathematica* of Russell and Whitehead. This is the specially 'anti-metaphysical' kind of analytic philosophy, and the proper bearer of the name 'logical positivism'.

In the second place there is current Oxford Philosophy – the philosophy of 'ordinary language' – which is literal rather than formal in its bias; which seeks to remove philosophical perplexity by the achievement of a fuller understanding of the language we actually use.

Many opponents of analytic philosophy don't realise that there is a vigorous conflict going on between these two wings of the analytic 'movement'. What they have in common is the belief that philosophy is essentially critical (but then they share this with Kant); a concern with words; and the influence of Wittgenstein. But that last factor is not simple. For two, rather different, Wittgensteins are involved: the 'formalist' of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; and the 'literalist' of the *Philosophical Investigations*; the pre-1914 Wittgenstein who was under the influence of Russell, the great logical constructor, and the post-1929 Wittgenstein who was under the influence of Moore, to whom more than anyone, I think, the insistence on the ordinary meaning of words must be traced. Moore's main contribution was, so to speak, a posture; a method of approach to philosophical theses. It was left to the extraordinary intellectual fertility of Wittgenstein to put this method of approach effectively to work.

Moore and the later Wittgenstein constitute one main source of the philosophy of ordinary language as it is now practised at Oxford. But there was another, and to my mind less desirable, influence; one which may have something to do with those aspects of present-day philosophy which its opponents are most justified in disliking. This influence is that of the Oxford 'Realists' of the Edwardian epoch; Cook Wilson, Prichard and Joseph; who were the objects of some of Collingwood's most brisk invective. And back behind these can be traced the continued obsession of Oxford philosophers with Aristotle's *Ethics*: a tradition which goes back to the fourteenth century and is not extinct today.

This Cook Wilsonian flavour may account for the vein of 'scholarly', construer's hair-splitting which does give some cogency to the critics' charge of triviality. But I would urge again that this is not a necessary, as it certainly is not a universal, character of analytic philosophers. It is rather to be attributed to certain peculiar local conditions; the most important of which is the fact that nearly all professional philosophers in Oxford are, and have been, classicists. The only first-order disciplines in which they have had any advanced education are the study of classical languages and history.

Hampshire: I do not agree that the effect of classical learning has been bad, or has produced pedantry. there is an evident advantage is starting philosophy at

the beginning; and the beginning is with the Greeks. It is pleasant and useful to see the terms we still use (some of them) first coined, before they arrive in later centuries – the seventeenth, for instance – used, chipped and discoloured.

And I agree with Berlin at least that there is no simple or straight-line progress in philosophy, as there may be in a science: I think myself that there is an undulating, or wave-like motion forward, like that of the tide coming up; but we always need to draw back to earlier insights, after any wave of advance. It happens that some of the insights needed now, as a corrective to Russell's logic and to an obsession with British empiricism, are to be found in Aristotle: and particularly in Aristotle's *Ethics*.

A philosopher's discussion of morality must always fall within the framework of the logic which he recognises and which he has set out analytically in his more technical philosophy – in his philosophy in your narrower sense, Quinton. If you think, as I do, that Aristotle gives a truer and less superficial account of practical reasoning than is to be found in Hume, or in contemporary empiricists, then you will suspect that there is some serious deficiency in the logic, in the theory of language, and in the theory of knowledge of empiricism. Practical thinking is, after all, one half of our thinking, and it cannot be thrust into a corner when we are discussing the theory of knowledge or the concept of mind; any analysis of mental concepts, of the nature of thinking and feeling, or of the logical relations between behaviour and the inner processes of the mind, must be tested in its implications for morality: how do I, or should I, think of people in any actual moment of difficult decision? It seems to me, incidentally, that the French existentialists have been right to bring questions of ethics into the centre of the so-called theory of knowledge, and to consider questions of personality, and of our knowledge of other minds, and of self-knowledge, in the contemplative or speculative sense. And what one finds in Aristotle is an unbiased and analytical dissection of choice, decision, deliberation, and of the relation of thinking to acting; also, he makes just those untrivial verbal and grammatical distinctions, both in the *Ethics* and elsewhere, which we now expect from a philosopher. In that he is also, among other things, a great analytical philosopher.

It seems inevitable that innovators in philosophy, Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle no less than Descartes and Kant, should claim to discard all previous philosophy in the first moment of discovery; and then one goes back and lays the new discoveries alongside the old. Something of the old survives, something is also eliminated, appears now irrelevant and unnecessary. I suspect that it is particularly the more rationalist philosophers – Aristotle, Leibniz, Frege – with their more formal arguments about existence and identity, who will seem least irrelevant or superseded in the near future; while the theory of knowledge coming from British empiricism – from Locke, Berkeley, Hume – will seem comparatively irrelevant, at least to contemporary interests. You will admit that there is this other strand in contemporary analytical philosophy?

Quinton: I was not, of course, objecting to classical learning or to the study of Aristotle's *Ethics* as such, but rather to the narrowly philological frame of mind to which the former sometimes leads and to the habit of treating the latter as holy writ, a kind of obsessive fundamentalism which still has distinguished adherents. And I quite agree about the 'other strand' which you identify in recent philosophy. This is perhaps a return, under Wittgenstein's influence, to the highest issues of traditional metaphysics: a return from our native preoccupation with epistemology; a return in particular to the oldest of philosophical problems, that of substance. But a classical background is hardly ideal for the appreciation of Leibniz and Frege; while some knowledge of mathematics and of natural science and its history is essential.

The aim of my historical remarks, however, was to introduce a little more articulation into the idea of analytic philosophy; and perhaps this could be done more effectively by considering analytic philosophers as they are, rather than what has brought them into existence. For we have been talking as if there were one fairly clearly defined sort of person to whom the label 'analytic philosopher' applied. But if a closer look is taken at the people who are analytic philosophers in Oxford today, and at the kind of views they hold on what I still want to describe as essentially non-philosophical matters – I mean religion, politics and, in a wide sense, morals – my original thesis of the logical independence of technical philosophy and *Weltanschauung* is confirmed. For if we review the moral, political and religious standpoints of our colleagues and ourselves we must surely be struck by their variety. It is certainly at least as great as the variety to be found in donnish, or graduate, circles in general. There are atheists and Christians (Anglicans, Roman Catholics and others); Bevanites, and people who regret the abandonment of the Suez canal; pacifists, and people who would welcome a 'stronger' foreign policy – with all that that entails. It seems to me that we must either hold that analytic philosophy is compatible with any *Weltanschauung*, of that (say) our Christian colleagues are hypocrites, or the dupes of their own wishful thinking.

Murdoch: But you overlook the extent to which 'liberal' assumptions – those assumptions which underlie discussion in a tolerant society where views are excepted to be supported by arguments, and arguments of a certain type – are shared by all of us. From this particular point of view we are all as alike as peas, and our common philosophy is a symptom of our likeness – though we may also be alike in ways which may or may not show in our philosophical preferences, within the general framework of agreement. The sort of rootless, uncommitted enquiry which we consider to be valuable is itself one of the organs of a liberal society. But we do no service to philosophy if we fail to recognise the points at which what the analysis brings to light are our own values. Equally we do no service to liberalism if we take our similarity of outlook for granted; as if it were preserved automatically by the use of the reason, instead of being something perishable and precarious.

Quinton: But I think you in turn are not admitting the range of attitudes that seem in practice to be compatible with our philosophy; still less, the range that is perfectly possible. Admittedly, Oxford philosophers do not display the whole range of attitudes to life. Anti-Semitism, Baudelairean moral experimentalism, and Fascism have no adherents here to the best of my knowledge. But then there are very few anti-Semites, Baudelaireans and Fascists in the University, since to hold such views is to invite contempt or dismissal.

Or just consider for a moment our comparatively non-analytic philosophical colleagues. They seem to me to exhibit as many kinds of attitude to life as their philosophical opponents. Certainly there are more religious believers among them; but then I don't deny that there has been a psychological connection between analytic philosophy and 'rationalism' in the more comic sense of that word. Here the personal, extra-philosophical influence of Russell is perceptible.

To put the point in terms of an example. I could, as an analytic philosopher, idealise the State: on the ground that most people were weak, foolish and easily deluded; that there were ineluctable differences of political capacity between men; and that it was therefore desirable that political institutions should be so ordered as to take account of this. My philosophical views would prevent me from arguing from this position in terms of the Real Will of the Nation; but it's the opinions that matter here rather than the reasons produced for the purpose of justifying them.

Hampshire: But could a positivist be a Fascist? Or a Marxist? Not without inconsistency, I think. Of course he might support Fascists or Marxists for his own reasons. But this would not make him a Fascist, or Marxist. His general beliefs – what we earlier called his *Weltanschauung* – would be different; that is supposing, for the purposes of this argument, that Fascism, like Marxism, does involve general beliefs.

Quinton: I think a positivist could be a political authoritarian; and yes, perhaps, even a Fascist.

Berlin: I cannot believe that. Surely positivists, qua positivists, are committed to a kind of free, unhampered analysis of concepts and beliefs which Fascists must forbid.

Hampshire: There is, it is true, the example of Pareto, who used positivistic methods of argument to support authoritarianism. But it would be inaccurate to call him a 'Fascist', without qualification; even if he collaborated with Fascists for his own peculiar reasons, which were not theirs.

Quinton: To take up Berlin's point: in the case of such a conjunction of principles, their upholder would have to argue for the limited circulation of truth, the restriction of rational discussion to the elite.

Berlin: That is not enough to support your position. Here is one instance that occurs to me, which seems to make it untenable. The belief that there exist personal natural rights – sacred and inviolate – is philosophical enough; but it is not compatible with extreme outlooks like fascism or communism; nor with specific views of what 'existence' is – or how the word 'exists' is, or should be, used.

Murdoch: I agree, though I would not put it in this way: for what philosophical concepts we use will be a function of what we regard as real and important.

Berlin: To be historical again: the Churches have certainly thought philosophical doctrines dangerous to orthodoxy; the cases of Bruno, Spinoza, the existentialists show this sufficiently.

Attempts are sometimes made to prove that philosophical doctrines – if they are purely philosophical and not factual, or to do with *Weltanschauung* – cannot clash with theology. But these efforts are seldom convincing. Take the case of Osiander, the editor of Copernicus. Copernicus was dead, but his orthodoxy had apparently been impugned. Osiander tried to prove that Copernicus had not wished to say what 'really' occurs in space – that was a matter for metaphysics and theology – but only to improve methods of astronomical computation; a mere matter of mechanical technique, which could not clash with any view of what happens. And this seems an unplausible piece of obvious special pleading. Osiander may well have been a sincere son of the Church; but such attempts to show that one set of truths, being philosophical, cannot, in principle, contradict another – because they are theological or metaphysical or *Weltanschauungen* – never carry conviction.

Quinton: Yet Christianity has survived the general acceptance of Copernicus's hypothesis, and a great many other scientific discoveries which are literally incompatible with statements in the Old Testament.

Philosophy can have the sort of disconcerting effect on religious belief that nineteenth-century geology had on the Biblical doctrine of creation – though it will bear on methods of argument rather than on actual beliefs. Thus many philosophers of an empiricist persuasion have argued that no proposition asserting the existence of anything is capable of being demonstrably proved; and this rules out the proof of God's existence by the ontological argument. But Locke, who opposed the ontological argument, was a perfectly sincere Christian; and Christianity has survived the general abandonment of this mode of proof.

Hampshire: Discussing philosophical and theological questions in a certain vocabulary is itself enough to conflict with certain religious beliefs; we may show, in the manner and method of our discussion of them, that we do not take religious beliefs to be the kind of beliefs which ordinary believers believe them to be. The

way in which religious (or political) doctrines are argued for is itself an integral part of a whole system of beliefs. That is why an analytical philosopher who is a Catholic may have less in common with a Thomist, or existentialist, Catholic than with another analytical philosopher who is an atheist. The two analytical philosophers may agree to disagree in the same terms, and in the same tone of voice; intellectually they live in the same world. I think you underrate the degree to which Oxford philosophers sound strangely, even comically, alike, even if they think that they are different.

Quinton: You spoke, Hampshire, of 'the way religious beliefs are argued for'. I don't think this quite brings out, what I believe to be the case, that the purpose of arguments in religion is explanatory, or defensive, and not designed to effect conversions. They are a part of the polemical armoury, rather than means designed to entice the sceptic from his unbelief.

Berlin: But people may have been converted by religious 'proofs'. At least I do not see why they should not have been.

Quinton: Well, of such people I would have to say that as far as the validity of the proofs is an indispensable foundation for their beliefs, their religion, is really a sort of bad philosophy.

But is this a common case? 'Proofs' may effect a conversion, as Berlin says; but do they ever sustain the convert in his belief thereafter?

Hampshire: Surely Quinton would agree that, if you separate religion and morals from philosophy, it makes a difference to the way in which you meet the people who are defending a religion or a morality. If you deal with a religious opponent by saying 'We can't argue this, we are just made differently' – or if you say 'We must settle all moral questions for ourselves' – to assert or accept these as truisms is itself a challenge to certain moral principles and religious beliefs.

Berlin: Like the case of a man who says 'I am politically neutral'; for that is itself a political attitude. And to the statement 'I am morally neutral' some moralists would reply that neutrality in some circumstances was morally indefensible.

Quinton: They very well might; but does this matter for the point at issue? I don't decide whether a man is my co-religionist by seeing how he argues, but by whether I find him kneeling beside me at church.

Berlin: But the religious believer might accuse the analytic philosopher who attends his church, but argues that his subject is neutral towards religion, of insincerity.

Thus if the philosopher says ‘Nothing I say clashes with your beliefs’, the believer might reply ‘Let me be the judge of that. Your analysis of my words is not that of someone who believes what I believe.’

Quinton: The resolution of this dispute would depend on a decision as to whether the believer’s last remark was a religious or a philosophical one. In a way, indeed, that is what their dispute is about. And my own view would be that the question, into what sort a belief should be classified, surely is a philosophical question.

Berlin: Confusion arises if you try to separate religious and philosophical beliefs too strictly. One might suppose ‘2 plus 2 equal 4’ was neutral enough. But suppose a religion forbade adding; and, going beyond the Biblical veto on ‘numbering the people’, forbade the people even to think of numbers. Then ‘2 plus 2 equals 4’ might count as a religious belief – or an anti-religious one.

Of course that is an extreme case – ludicrously so – but there is no telling what a religion might not forbid, or ordain. To circumscribe its sphere in advance is often only a self-protective device adopted by philosophers who want to guarantee themselves some minimum freedom of thought or speech.

Hampshire: We must remember that this rigid division of beliefs into independent spheres or compartments is relatively new. Perhaps this is part of the ‘revolution’ we have been talking about. I think that, as a matter of historical fact, it is largely due to Wittgenstein’s influence, although it may be a misunderstanding of him. In any case, it is a philosophical thesis which needs to be defended by argument. From what logical doctrines is the principle of division derived? I have never seen anything like a sufficient demonstration that religious beliefs, moral and political attitudes (to use this question-begging word) and philosophical opinions should each fall tidily into their own compartment, each supported by their own kind of reasons, with no interconnection between them. Persons cannot divide themselves, and they must find some standard of rationality and honesty somewhere; they will want to connect, to fit together, what they believe, and to test their beliefs in every sphere. The evidence of history shows that they will always knock down barriers and compartments, from mere self-respect, or respect of reason and honesty.

People who are not philosophers have become more interested in philosophy in the last twenty years, because they know that, if there have been new insights in philosophy, these must have their importance elsewhere – in discussions of politics, of scientific method, of literary criticism and aesthetics, of psychology, of the interpretation of history, and so on. And such people are right: these insights are relevant, as the insights of Descartes and Kant were relevant; they suggest new and, as it now seems, clearer terms in which politics, literary criticism and

aesthetics, psychology, history and so on, can be discussed. If we say 'There is philosophy on the one side: my attitudes on the other', we make philosophy a private game, or part of the syllabus; and at the same time we trivialise our beliefs by calling them 'attitudes'.

Quinton: Oh, but I must make it clear that it's quite wrong to think that analytic philosophers mean to suggest that attitudes or beliefs are unimportant when they separate them off from philosophy.

I'd better say at once that for my own part, my moral and political views are much more important to me than my philosophical ones. To change the former would involve a much greater disturbance than to change the latter!

Murdoch: Perhaps it might help a little towards resolving the dispute if one emphasised that there were two quite distinct contentions here. We should separate the contention that there are no barriers to the use of philosophical methods – so that philosophy could, for instance, help to establish or discredit religious beliefs – from the different contention that in taking up a philosophical position we are frequently, or to some extent, taking up a moral position. One could maintain the second without maintaining the first.

Quinton: Certainly I would insist that one must distinguish 'positions' from the kind of argument that is used to support them.

If I may speak personally again: I am more in sympathy with the conclusions T.H. Green reaches, by a method of argument I reject, than those which G.E. Moore reaches, by a method of argument I am more inclined to accept.

Murdoch: So do you hold that all political differences are merely empirical or concrete?

Hampshire: Just differences about actual measures of policy?

Berlin: And do you really believe that all differences of what you call *Weltanschauung* are merely differences of character, temperament, disposition to act or feel in this or that way; that they involve no beliefs and assumptions which can be, and have been for centuries, analysed by philosophers?

Quinton: I believe, at any rate, that what sort of philosopher a man is does not tell you much about what he is like as a man. The differences between Mill and T.H. Green were philosophical rather than political; while the differences between Green and Bradley were political rather than philosophical. Yet, though Green and Mill were very different as philosophers, they were much more like each other,

as men, than were Green, with his public spirit and his nobility of character, and Bradley, with his invalid 's savagery and his ornate arrogance. And the Oxford philosopher today is no more one type of man, with one set of attitudes to the world, than he was in the late nineteenth century. There is not much more common to the analytic philosophers of Oxford beyond their living in Oxford and practising analytic philosophy.

On Iris Murdoch as a Woman Writer

Rachel Cusk

IRIS MURDOCH, THOUGH A WOMAN, WAS NOT A WOMEN'S writer. Writing as she did through the pre-eminent decades of feminist politics and transformative female experience, is this a sin of omission? And if so, how serious an omission should we judge it to be? If one can entertain the concept of a writer's 'career', then Murdoch's makes an interesting comparison with that of Doris Lessing, whose trajectory, though more artistically vicissitudinous than Murdoch's, has nonetheless brought her to a position of greater – indeed virtually unassailable – cultural centrality. Centrality is not what every woman artist looks or hopes for, but for the woman reader the cultural positioning of female concerns is important. Of course, there are readers who wish the politics of their womanhood to be transcended or ignored, just as there are writers prepared to transcend or ignore them. The question is whether, in the end, this sidestepping of the issue harms the chances of an artist's work surviving, and more interestingly whether it harms the work itself.

'Women's writing' is defined by, and is distinctive for, its inalienably personal connection to lived life. The woman writer's artistic choices – to transcend or to engage with the fact of her sex – are also, to an extent, her choices for living. The life of engagement has no particular prerequisites: Virginia Woolf, for instance, was neither a mother nor a domesticated wife in the usual sense, yet she lived what by her own lights was an ordinary life. She spurned the intellectual shelter of academic institutions; she lived, and hence she wrote, as a woman. And indeed, the value to all creative artists of living an engaged life – a life that is engaged with ordinariness even if it cannot itself be ordinary – is inestimable, for it offers possibilities of a different, more lateral kind of transcendence, the transcendence of self. Tolstoy, Joyce, Lawrence, Chekhov, even Philip Roth and John Updike: a reader is as, if not more, likely to find accurate representations of ordinary female experience in the works of these male writers than in those of their female counterparts, because the woman writer often fears – in life and in art – the female 'ordinary' as a place of entrapment and mediocrity. She attempts to transcend it by allying herself with

culture at a different level, with worlds of information, history and intellect. Yet these worlds were created by men; their values are male values; entering them, the woman writer loses her connection to her womanhood and hence to personal truth. Or else, like Simone de Beauvoir, she uses her position in male culture to intellectualise female experience in a courageous and exhausting enterprise.

People do not, of course, choose their lives: they are driven into them by that about them which is unknown to themselves. Jill Paton Walsh mentions Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*: for me the play is not so much about fate or morality as about the function of the unconscious in the formation of personal identity and its veiled governing of personal behaviour. For the artist this definition of 'fate' is both hope and limitation: it gives rise to creativity while limiting the sphere of the creation. What Paton Walsh calls the 'placing' of information in Murdoch's novels and novels generally is the writer's attempt to evade or outstrip this fate, to enlarge the sphere of the creation, to take it beyond the limitation of self. But like a skin graft or a prosthetic limb, placed information often doesn't 'take'; eventually it comes away from the body of the book, because it isn't organic and doesn't live in time in the same way. 'One is not only a little individual, living a little individual life,' D.H. Lawrence wrote. 'One is in oneself the whole of mankind, and one's fate is the fate of the whole of mankind': in this assertion of the total significance of the self, Lawrence was seeing a different kind of future for the novel, but he was also redefining the artist's role in the light of Freudian theories of consciousness, and imagining what the texture of this consciousness might be. According to this definition, the more stringently personal the artist, the greater the sphere of his creation.

Yet the woman artist often treats self as the obstacle to a wider view, as the very opposite of a particle of man- or womankind's DNA. Her use of placed knowledge may be not an act of enlargement but of aggression against herself. And more generally what Paton Walsh calls the 'stuff' in novels, the information that gives the novel 'the look of reality', can also be what brings about its ultimate unreality. All artists are at risk of using 'stuff' to guarantee the impersonality of their creation. As the painter Paula Rego said, 'there is always shame in the creation of a work of art'. And indeed in the history of visual art the struggle between institutional or public and personal forms of knowledge is particularly distinct. The impersonality of 'stuff' is used as a defence against shame, as a way of distancing or dissociating the creation from the self who created it. The problem for the woman writer is that so much 'stuff' is inherently male: she cannot write about war, for instance, or paid work or politics without creating a kind of silence, an absence, in her prose. The silence is that of personal identity, of identity as partly the product of history. This absence, this silence, is capable of destroying the integrity of a work of art if it is not given some form of space or representation; if, like a black hole, it becomes anti-matter. Lessing deals with this issue in *The Golden Notebook* by

means of creating, through the different 'notebooks', a structure that replicates the discontinuity or compartmentalisation of evolving female identity. There is 'knowledge' in *The Golden Notebook*, and a lot of it, but it is knowledge held by woman, and the precise means by which she has acquired it in the modern era is the novel's profoundest theme.

The idea that a woman artist is not free to create without acknowledging the fact of her womanhood is abhorrent to many people; so too is the notion that this stipulation applies as much to the life as to the work. Murdoch presumably wished to live as an intellectual, an academic, unfettered and equal precisely where women have traditionally been constrained and inferior. Paton Walsh says that 'the author does not necessarily know why things are in a novel'; she refers to Murdoch's conversation with Frank Kermode, and to Murdoch's refusal to surrender clues to the mystery of her creation. To me this refusal is significant – as is Murdoch's remark that Kermode is applying 'too much theoretical weight' – not because it represents a defence of the unconscious basis of creativity but because Kermode's questions probe the seam between art and life and find it unusually sensitive in Murdoch. Either the writer truly doesn't know 'why things are in a novel', or she does and is unafraid to say. The fear of things becoming 'theoretical' is a fear for the integrity of the work's connection to life; and Murdoch had a deep understanding of the role of truth in art. Her defensiveness, like her declaration that she was not a philosophical novelist, suggests that she experienced something of this fear herself.

'I have feared the possibility of an overwhelmingly powerful pain-source in my life,' says Charles Arrowby in *The Sea, the Sea*. 'What a queer gamble our existence is. We decide to do A instead of B and then the two roads diverge utterly and may lead in the end to heaven and to hell. Only later one sees how much and how awfully the fates differ. Yet what were the reasons for the choice? They may have been forgotten. Did one know what one was choosing?' These phrases come from the mouth of someone extraordinary, Arrowby the famous theatre director who has kept uniquely free of the usual 'gambles' of human existence, the flesh and blood cycles, the ordeals of communality to which the individual subjects his or her spirit and consciousness. Imagining these instead as the words of an ordinary housewife, one sees both Murdoch's brilliance as a writer and her limitations. And in turn she created brilliant, limited people as her mouthpieces, not ordinary ones. Yet her knowledge, being knowledge of the truth, by rights belongs to everyone. A writer like Tolstoy would have given these words to an everyman, or even an everywoman. Tolstoy was catastrophically eccentric on the subject of 'why things are in a novel': his engagement with living was all-encompassing. Reading Murdoch, one wishes her life had encompassed more, that her tremendous gifts had been fed by more personal sources of knowledge. The woman reader comes to the woman writer with a question: to what extent can my feelings of powerlessness

be made powerful? And: can my historical sense of silence be vocalised? These are important questions, but the woman writer retains the right and dignity of choice in how she responds to them. She can transcend or she can engage; what she mustn't do is disparage. Murdoch wasn't a disparager, but her remoteness from these questions creates a sense of lost parentage in the woman writer looking for literary forebears. A lost source of strength; a lost and gifted mother, cloistered in philosophy and academe.

This essay, 'On Iris Murdoch as a Woman Writer', was written by Rachel Cusk in 2012. The editors at the Iris Murdoch Review *commissioned the piece as a response to Jill Paton Walsh's 'Philosophy and Fiction' (published in the* Review *in 2011) and it was to be included in an edition focusing on feminism that, over time, did not materialise. We are pleased to be able to present the essay in this edition. The paper is presented here exactly as Cusk originally supplied it. As such, it does not follow our current style.*

Iris Murdoch and Transgressive Love: On Loving and Unloving Philosophers

Fleur Jongepier

IN THE SUMMER OF 2020, I FELL IN LOVE WITH IRIS MURDOCH. I publicly confessed my feelings for her in a short essay, in which I wrote about how some of the things she said about ethics and aesthetics left me smitten, about how I wished I could have known her when I was younger, about what it is like to fall in love with a female philosopher, about how I felt I needed to love her for my own academic well-being.[1] Now, about a year later, I am still in love with her. We have been on some excellent holidays together and I have read a number of her novels and many more of her essays. We struggle sometimes, as lovers do. We have our disagreements about all kinds of philosophical topics, and we quibble about our differences in our philosophical temperament and attitude. For instance, I feel she sometimes takes rather boring philosophers too seriously and that her writing is at its best when the distance between her and these philosophers is at its greatest – when she just forgets about them, does not try to be like them, and speaks in her own, unmistakable voice. She also bores me, occasionally, but then she always goes on to say something so painfully true and says it with such elegance and creativity that the butterflies explode in my chest exactly as they used to.

My love for Iris is not a romantic type of love.[2] There are many types of love: we can love our partners, our children, parents or friends, as well as artists and particular works of art.[3] And then there is philosophical love. To speak from experience, philosophical love involves being passionate about a philosopher and/or their work, being disappointed when they say something silly or boring, happy when they appear on a podcast you love, and involves caring about their ideas, arguments and style. Being in philosophical love is exhilarating. It is also a rather curious state to be in. Like most other forms of love, it can make one blind to someone's flaws, which of course is an unfortunate thing to happen, epistemically speaking, to an academic. Or is it? Also, less innocently, philosophical love has a dangerous side. At least, if one falls in philosophical love with a living male

philosopher who is unable to direct such passionate energy in the right direction and instead directs it at his own 'fat relentless ego'.[4] Philosophical love can be a beautiful, but also a dark, egocentric beast. That, in any case, is the story I want to tell. It is a story about the value of losing oneself in intellectual passion, and a story about male professors failing to see it was not about them, or did not have to be. The second half of the story is heavily indebted to Amia Srinivasan's 'Sex as a Pedagogical Failure' (2020), which has been a great source of both anger and consolation.

My love for Murdoch takes a distinctly Murdochian shape. Love, she writes, involves a type of attention that is selfless, and loving attention involves seeing another without the noise of one's own egoistic concerns. Murdoch thought, and I believe quite rightly, that the 'fat relentless ego' is incredibly hard to set aside or overcome, and that it is, as she argues in 'The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts' (1970), a '*task* to come to see the world as it is', to see another as they really are, that is, without one's own fears and hopes and passions getting in the way, tainting one's view (*EM* 375). Philosophy itself – or indeed falling in love with a philosopher – can put one in a position of selfless attention. In a beautiful passage in the same essay, which is worth quoting in full, Murdoch gives the example of learning a language:

> If I am learning, for instance, Russian, I am confronted by an authoritative structure which commands my respect. The task is difficult and the goal is distant and perhaps never entirely attainable. My work is a progressive revelation of something which exists independently of me. Attention is rewarded by a knowledge of reality. Love of Russian leads me away from myself towards something alien to me, something which my consciousness cannot take over, swallow up, deny or make unreal. The honesty and humility required of the student – not to pretend to know what one does not know – is the preparation for the honesty and humility of the scholar who does not even feel tempted to suppress the fact which damns his theory. (*EM* 373)

The humility Murdoch speaks of here is tied to the selflessness it enables. Scholarly humility involves acknowledging one's own limits or indeed that something is 'alien' to oneself.[5] Enjoying art can have the same effect. 'In intellectual disciplines and in the enjoyment of art and nature', she goes on to say, 'we discover value in our ability to forget self, to be realistic, to perceive justly' (*EM* 374). One of the best things about falling in love with Iris is how she has led me away from myself.

For most philosophers, though, I think this might be a rather rare experience. The ability to 'forget self' will probably also depend on one's personality and temperament. And there will no doubt be philosophers who experience humility

quite often – too often or too deeply, perhaps. However, a quick look around the discipline and the people in it reveals a plethora of competitive urges and self-serving tendencies, with occasional – or should we say widespread – arrogance and machismo. Many philosophers write papers not, principally, out of genuine, selfless interest or curiosity, but for strategic reasons having to do with what gets published in contemporary journals and thus what gives them the edge in terms of getting a job or securing tenure. Importantly, though there are certainly some 'fat relentless ego[s]' in philosophy, the overall lack of selfless attention in the discipline is due to the more general academic climate in which scarcity of job opportunities drives unhealthy competition, and in which self-serving behaviour is typically, if implicitly and unreflectively, rewarded.

Falling in love with Iris, becoming passionate about a philosopher and her work, and the experience of being led away from myself, away from what best served my CV, away from what would make my academic profile coherent (as working on Murdoch is quite hard to fit into my ongoing project on algorithms and autonomy), has been liberating. And it has been liberating in the way that Murdoch speaks of freedom as an expression of love because it put me in a position to 'forget self'. It is hard to remember the last time I was non-instrumentally interested, or indeed infatuated, with a philosopher or their work. It is hard to remember in part because it is difficult to tell, from introspection alone, whether one's academic interests are authentic or adapted towards what is achievable. Many of us simply cannot afford to forget self, to forget CV, to forget tenure, to forget a permanent job, to forget social stability. Murdochian love is, or should be, at the very heart of what science is about: losing oneself in intellectual passion and curiosity. But tragically, there is little room for Murdochian love in academia.

Love is blind, or so goes the saying. But should it be? And should philosophical love be blind? What do we even mean exactly when we say love is blind? Typically, the phrase is taken to mean that when in love one fails to properly see the other's imperfections or faults. Berit Brogaard claims that

> When we are madly in love, we close our eyes to the truth or edit it carefully before taking it in. We overlook obvious faults of character and personality. We leave our children, max out our credit cards and throw away friends, family and career. We put up with bad manners and rude behaviour, even violence. Alas, knowing just how costly crazy love can be doesn't deter it from digging its claws deeper into our flesh.[6]

Brogaard centres her discussion around Leslie Morgan Steiner's memoir *Crazy Love*, in which Steiner describes her abusive relationship with her ex-husband Conor and how, due to the blindness of love, she was unable to leave him. Brogaard rightly points out the dangers of blind and irrational love.

One might wonder, though, whether blind love is really love at all. With Murdoch's notions of unselfing and loving attention in mind, we might want to resist this thought. After all, Murdoch underscores the importance of our ability to see reality for what it is. To love someone, then, is precisely not to be blind but rather to see them as they really are. In this context, commentators often point to Murdoch's famous example of a mother-in-law who comes to see her daughter-in-law in an entirely new light – a change that occurs entirely in the mother-in-law's mind. Without the daughter-in-law behaving differently, the mother-in-law comes to see her no longer as vulgar and rude but spontaneous and delightfully youthful. The mother-in-law's 'just and loving gaze' (*EM* 327) allows her to see her daughter-in-law 'as she really is' (*EM* 329).

It is natural to think that loving attention always involves shedding a positive light on someone and focusing on the good in the other person. Susan Wolf, however, tells us this is a mistake. The 'best kind of love', she writes, is 'an attentive love that can accommodate acknowledgment of flaws in the beloved'.[7] To love is thus not to be blind to another's faults, to look away from them or mould such flaws into something lovable, but rather to know another's faults and to love them 'completely and wholeheartedly' in spite of them or, better, because of them.[8] Clearly, a person's faults, and their bad or even vicious tendencies, form a good reason not to love them. For instance, Steiner's relation to her abusive ex-husband was not the right kind of love, if it was love at all. 'For love to be grounded in reality it must be based on an accurate perception of the beloved, not fantasy, reverie or illusion', Brogaard writes, in Murdochian spirit.[9] Steiner instead rationalised the beatings and bruises, as do many women locked into coercive relationships they cannot safely escape. In any case, despite there being obvious and extreme cases in which a person's faults gives one reason not to love them, even to hate them, there is often a thin line between loving someone despite their flaws and falling out of love with them because of those flaws. With regard to Iris, I am still safely on the affectionate end of the spectrum. I am not as unreservedly infatuated about everything and anything she says and does – not anymore. The crush I had on her has made room for deeper, more robust feelings. She has flaws and I know that she does, and I love her all the same.

We do not need to see the object of our love in a wholly positive light. To this extent Wolf is, I think, right to point towards the limits of what she calls the 'positive light' view of love, which is the idea that 'insofar as one loves someone, one thinks well of [them], and that any awareness of faults or negative qualities is indicative of an attenuation of love'.[10] The 'best kind of love', she writes, 'is an attentive love, that sees its object as it really is, and can love completely and unreservedly even in light of that knowledge [of their flaws]'.[11] In other words, loving attention is not attending to someone in a positive way, thinking well of them, but is precisely, as Murdoch puts it, a 'just' gaze which involves seeing someone, and loving them, for

what they really are (*EM* 329). Unless they are angels, this means we also attend to their flaws.

In reaction to Wolf's claim that Murdochian love should not be blind, Julia Driver instead emphasises that 'some flaws ought not to register'.[12] She goes on to say that: 'One can love another aptly even when one does not see all of their flaws, as long as those flaws are not an element of the person's true self – that is, those flaws do not speak to their core set of values and commitments'.[13] Despite evidence to the contrary, a loving friend might not see her friend's habit of engaging in namedropping during a discussion, a loving father might be blind to the fact that when his daughter visits she never helps with the dishes, a loving partner might not see that her partner frequently flirts with others. In one sense, the friend, daughter and partner 'really' have these bad habits or character traits. In another sense, though, they need not be expressive of their reality, and it is understandable for that reason to be blind to them.

There are many flaws that we in fact have – that Murdoch, too, in fact has – but we must not make the mistake of interpreting the notion of 'realistic' perception along empirical-descriptive lines. Of course, the alternative interpretation proposed by Driver – that realistic perception is tied to seeing the person's core set of values and commitments or 'true self' – is metaphysically and epistemically challenging, and also introduces a significant risk of self-deception: of mistaking what the other's core set of values and commitments is. In such a case, love again becomes problematically blind. However, it is plausible that a certain degree of blindness in love is acceptable and that true love sometimes requires it. This means that love can, and sometimes must, involve being epistemically vicious, that is, being occasionally gullible, dogmatic, prejudiced, closed-minded or negligent.[14] Though these intellectual character traits are typically and rightly described in a negative light, as features of the mind that make us into bad thinkers, connecting love to epistemic vices illustrates their potentially positive role. If love allows for or even requires a certain degree of blindness, then love requires, at least sometimes, ignoring or not taking seriously the available evidence. This goes not only for loving our friends, partners and parents but also for philosophical love. Although I can see some of Iris's flaws, I am undoubtedly blind to others. Such blindness can be a good thing. It can be good to overlook a philosopher's imperfections and mistakes, both in matters of style as well as content or argument. To be blind, on occasion, is what keeps one's intellectual perseverance and passion in place, it is what helps to keep us motivated. I would venture to say that in order to write a good PhD thesis, one ought to 'suffer' from a solid degree of dogmatism and other epistemic vices.

One might wonder whether the intellectual habits that I am describing should be understood as epistemic vices at all, given that the latter need to qualify as character traits and it is questionable whether the sort of dogmatism or

narrow-mindedness that may accompany philosophical love qualifies. Whether they count as epistemic vices will depend on whether epistemic viciousness can be domain-specific, for instance if one can be epistemically vicious, say narrow-minded, in one domain (politics) but not in others (work). When it comes to philosophical love, it seems one is epistemically vicious (somewhat dogmatic, say) with respect to a particular philosopher and/or their work. Perhaps it stretches the notion of epistemic vices too far to say that philosophical love really involves epistemic vices, but if so, I would not lose much sleep over it for the point is then simply that paradigmatically epistemically bad activities or ways of thinking may sometimes be epistemically (and otherwise) desirable.

The kind of epistemic vices that are often part of philosophical love can thus, paradoxically, also make one epistemically virtuous. To be blind to sloppy sentences or a hastily formulated argument allows one to keep a clear view of, and get insight into, the philosopher's bigger picture or the underlying story or framework – the philosophical equivalent of Driver's core values and commitments. And so, it can be acceptable, desirable even, to be (wilfully) ignorant or to be positively biased towards a philosopher's main line of argument. All of this contrasts with a rather dominant way of doing philosophy, call it the 'dissecting method', that tries to anatomise a philosopher's work and attempts to lay everything bare in order to be able to subject it to the most detailed, critical scrutiny; to actively seek out all of its flaws. The alternative Murdochian picture sketched here – despite Murdoch herself perhaps having been in favour of the dissecting method herself at times – points to a more constructive, indeed more loving, way of doing philosophy, one that crucially involves cutting a philosopher some serious slack.

Both Wolf and Driver set up their claims about whether or not love allows for a degree of blindness as somehow being mutually exclusive: either it does or does not. I find it more plausible to think, however, that what characterises Murdochian love is a realistic yet soft focus, and that a soft focus can take on different forms. It can involve seeing another person's imperfections and knowing them better – perhaps better than they know them themselves – and still loving them (Wolf), or it can mean that at least sometimes we are blind to them (Driver). Both can be loving ways of attending to the other – as long as we are able to see the other as they really are – and, in so doing, diverting attention away from the self.

When we think love, we are often tempted to think warm thoughts. But love generally can lead one to dark places as has been pointed out above with Steiner's memoirs, and philosophical love is no different. Murdoch, too, is well aware of this, writing in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992) that a love relationship can prompt unselfing and enable the lover 'to see, and cherish and respect, what is not himself' yet can also 'occasion extreme selfishness and possessive violence, the attempt to dominate that other place so that it can no longer be separate'.[15]

Murdoch was not talking about philosophical love, though. In 'Sex as a Pedagogical Failure', which must be one of the most moving philosophical articles I have had the (dis)pleasure of reading in my career, Amia Srinivasan has laid bare the deepest forms of degradation to which philosophical love can lead.[16] Though philosophical love shares many important elements with romantic love, and is for that reason love proper rather than love in scare quotes, philosophical love is at the same time also defined precisely by the way it is, and ought to be, deeply unlike romantic love. It is when the two forms of love become confused and conflated that the darkness sets in, that a pupil's intellectual emotions get stifled, that her capacity to love romantically and philosophically get derailed. Srinivasan makes this painfully clear by discussing a case in which a student's intellectual passion was not recognised for what it was – intellectual passion – by her professor, who instead sexualised the way she complimented and admired him as a teacher. I am not going to rehearse the specifics of the case here, since it is the more general pattern that I am concerned with, as is Srinivasan. The more general pattern is that a student might, in expressing her intellectual passion, send mixed messages or even be confused herself about what she feels or wants, and that a professor subsequently fails to protect their pedagogical relationship by failing to set appropriate boundaries.

The pattern discussed by Srinivasan is typically, though not necessarily, gendered, since 'it is overwhelmingly male professors who sleep with their overwhelmingly female students' (Srinivasan 1137). Most male students, when they passionately look up to their professor, react by 'wanting to be like them' whereas, tragically, as Srinivasan explains, 'women are taught that it is not envy they feel, but desire: you must *want* him, it cannot be that you want to be *like* him' (Srinivasan 1136). That the phenomenon of pedagogical relationships being violated is gendered in this way is no surprise, Srinivasan rightly points out, as the phenomenon of teacher-student intimacy or sex simply piggybacks on existing societal and patriarchal norms. This is also why matters of consent in these cases are beside the point, which is one of Srinivasan's core claims. Even if intimate contact were consensual – and even if, as is highly unlikely, the consent was authentic and not the result of invisible pressures or coercive dynamics – then it is still morally problematic conduct, in the same way that a GP or therapist having sex with their patient is morally problematic. It is a violation of their professional duty and integrity, and in the case of student-professor sex, the failure is of a pedagogical nature. This makes it clear why the responsibility falls on the professor, and the professor alone: it is his task – the essence of his task – to teach her, to inspire her intellectually, and thus to protect their pedagogical relationship.

We can, and should, moreover, recognise the agency of the student, and not fall prey to an infantilising attitude. We do not have to deny that the female student could have made the first move and that she may have had (genuine)

romantic feelings for her professor at the time.[17] That is also why we need to have conversations about these topics with students rather than merely about them; we can acknowledge the agency of the student and still insist that it is the professor's task to resist any form of intimacy and to 'positively redirect the student's desires in the proper direction' (Srinivasan 1134). In the light of the professor's core pedagogical duty and the gendered background against which a student becomes romantically confused in the first place, any other response will inevitably end up blaming the victim.

The harm done to students whose professors abuse their pedagogical relationship is enormous and is multi-faceted. Many will suffer from serious mental and physical health problems as a result, they will have trouble trusting other people in general, and will struggle engaging in new romantic relationships. Many will come to fear, or even become repulsed, by the institution of the university as such. A student will, in response, typically also be robbed of her love for philosophy. Betrayal, as Srinivasan mentions, is an emotion frequently reported by many students who were involved in consensual-yet-inappropriate relationships. It is not just the betrayal of a lover that is at stake, but also 'the betrayal of the trusted authority figure who fails to live up to the implicit terms set by the [...] pedagogical relationship' (Srinivasan 1123). A professor's pedagogical failure not only often results in anxiety, fear and depression but also robs the student of her capacity to be intellectually passionate about a subject, about 'an authoritative structure which commands [her] respect' (*EM* 373).

For Murdoch, as we have seen, intellectual love allows for a way of unselfing. But the student in the situations described above cannot afford to 'forget self'. She is likely to keep checking her intellectual interests against her own 'egoistic' desires, to question her own (true) motivations, to focus on herself, to put herself in the middle of her attention, simply as a form of self-protection. This may also point towards a possible tension or complexity in Murdoch's approach. For Murdoch, egoistic and selfish concerns are best overcome, but this is not always the best advice, as some people would do better to focus on themselves a little more rather than less.[18] On the other hand, one might also say that this is precisely what makes the student's situation so tragic: apart from everything else, her capacity to unself, and the freedom that comes with it, is also undermined.

Aside from the harm suffered by the student, there is also an important Murdochian component to understanding the professor's failure. Srinivasan points out that a professor's inability to draw boundaries is connected to a form of narcissism. The professor must, she writes,

> resist the temptation to allow himself to be, or make himself, the narcissistic receptacle of his student's desires. I am not saying that teaching can or should be entirely free of narcissistic satisfactions. But

> there is a subtle and important difference between enjoying the desires one ignites in one's students before, or at the same time as, turning them away from oneself – and making oneself their wholly consuming object. This latter sort of narcissism is the enemy of good teaching. (Srinivasan 1135)

The narcissistic professor, in other words, has a truly 'fat relentless ego'. When cases of pedagogical failure rise to the surface, such narcissism often becomes evident in the egoistic and aggressive ways in which such professors typically protect themselves, armed with lawyers and attempting to silence the few that speak. But narcissism is particularly present, though less visible, in the way the professor responds to the student's erotic or confused energies in the first place. It is the professor's narcissistic way of interpreting such energies that turns her question 'Do I want to be like him, or do I want him?' into the latter (see, for example, Srinivasan 1134).

It may be tempting here to think of the narcissistic professor who fails to redirect his student's energies in the proper direction as an anomaly, as an exception, as not us. But the phenomenon of passionate compliments coming one's way from a younger student, and of feeling as a result invigorated, admired and seen, is no doubt universal. Such muddled intellectual-romantic passions could have a significant impact on some professors, especially those whose own romantic relationships have become worn and dispassionate. We should not fool ourselves into believing that it is not nice to be the object of another's erotic attention; nor should we fool ourselves into thinking that this attention was imagined, or inflated, by the perceiver.

At this point an uncomfortable question presents itself in relation to the love for philosophy that narcissistic professors undermine in their students and to Murdoch's moral story about love. So far, I have been discussing mostly personal loves and the intellectual, romantic or in-between shapes they can take. I have also discussed how one can love someone despite their flaws as well as how such flaws can give reason to stop loving someone. But Murdoch's interest in love transcends these personal relationships: love is supposed to be a more general moral attitude. The uncomfortable question is whether the narcissistic professor ought to be loved, and what Murdoch would say about a case like that. Wolf discusses exactly this tension:

> Murdoch is fully aware that careful attention to Hitler, or Stalin, or Saddam Hussein will have to yield judgments of their coldness, their cruelty, their megalomania. Still, there is a strong, predominantly Christian, tradition that takes the moral ideal to be an attitude of love toward everyone, even one's enemy, even Hitler, and it is not clear to

> me where Murdoch stands with respect to this ideal. Whether one is attracted to this ideal is perhaps a matter of temperament. It is not my temperament.[19]

Nor is it mine. When I think about the cases of sexual intimidation in academia at large and closer to home; the number of professors that I know, some quite well, who failed in their pedagogical duties to redirect such attention; I cringe at the thought that I must somehow love them. I cringe at the thought that it would be somehow better – that I as a person would be better, more virtuous – if I were able to curtail the pain and anger I feel about the harm inflicted on those students and all those caught in the slipstream, including myself, of those who abuse or simply fail to recognise their position of power. I would rather see my ability to love them as a form of weakness, a form of emotional surrender, than anything else. But then again, I cannot even properly conceive of such a scenario and am probably, in trying to imagine such a scenario, mistaking love for defeatism.

Against the thought that we should ideally love humanity, which means loving all individual human beings, for which neither Wolf nor I have the temperament, Wolf presents an alternative. She suggests that rather than universal love for humanity, loving attention is the central moral ideal, and Murdoch's loving attention 'tells us to lovingly *attend* to everyone, without telling us especially to love each of them'.[20] I think this is an improvement, and also resonates with a valuable lesson I have learned through practising mindfulness, which is to look upon the world – which happens to include my mind and my heart, including the more negative and obsessive thoughts – with a kind of playful curiosity. I do not have to love or even like my own bouts of depression or panicky thoughts, but I can be interested in them, even marvel at them or laugh at them compassionately at my best moments.

However, this mindful attitude does not really solve the Hitler issue nor the issue of the professor who transgressed pedagogical boundaries. For I am not even interested in them, not really, not in the way that Wolf has in mind. For the type of loving attention that Wolf has in mind, which need not involve loving all individuals, does include 'trying to understand "what makes him tick," trying to see things from his own point of view, in a way that makes sense of his possibly different values and thoughts and reasons'.[21] But I do not really want to know what makes the professor tick, or see things from his perspective, though I cannot always help myself. This is partly because, when inappropriate behaviour is brought to the surface, it is his perspective, his weaknesses, his wreckage at home, that will get most of the attention, if only because the anonymous student has much less of a voice, and often none at all. Kate Manne coined a neat term for the lopsided direction that such failed loving attention often takes: himpathy.[22] My restriction of loving attention is an attempt – a naïve one, I will admit – to compensate for the existing imbalance.

But here we arrive a fork in the road. It might be the case, as suggested just now, that we have stumbled upon the limits of loving attention. It might equally well be the case though that it is I who falls short, morally, in my inability to love or lovingly attend to particular members of the human species. Maybe I should be able to understand what makes them tick and to try to see things from their point of view. Nonetheless, quite a number of people I know have, in reaction to media coverage of cases, been able to adopt the professor's perspective in one way or another. In some cases, I suspect himpathy is doing a lot of the work in the background – but not in all cases, or not necessarily so. In other cases, I suspect, and fear in myself, that trying to see things from the professor's point of view is often very much in one's own interest. Remaining angry and hurt and resisting empathy takes a lot of effort and energy. At some point, one gets weary, and one would rather spend that energy on other things in life. Moreover, if the colleague remains in one's professional context, attending to this colleague and relating to him more empathetically may well be more prudential. I almost envy those who, by being interested in what 'makes him tick', experience a lot less emotional friction in the workplace. Needless to say, the motivation is in this case probably far too self-directed to count as Murdochian attention of the right sort. Yet, despite the fact that loving attention for misbehaving philosophy-professors is often, I suspect, either himpathy-based or a form of unconscious self-protection, it need not be. One might lovingly attend to the various misbehaving philosophers and one might be – perhaps I may be – a better person for it.

I do not think I would be – I choose the other fork in the road. I am quite aware of the risk of moral self-deception here; of seeing myself in a more positive light than is justified. It is one of the many things about Murdoch that I admire: her belief that self-reflection might not only fail to facilitate virtue but positively undermine it. I think she was right about that too, so I am aware of the danger when it comes to my own moments of self-reflection when perhaps I should have been attending more carefully to the world. Nevertheless I cannot help but think, considering the scale of lovelessness in philosophy across the globe, that Murdoch may have underappreciated the importance – prudential and moral – of self-directed attention, and may have overappreciated not just the psychological difficulty of loving attention but also its moral desirability.

The alternative view, a less loving one at first sight, is that it is permissible not to love – not even to lovingly attend, not even to be genuinely interested in – certain individuals. In fact, I would dare to suggest it is not just permissible or excusable but sometimes – and the particulars here will be key – the virtuous thing to do. It is the virtuous thing to do because, in some cases, lovingly attending to certain others might come at the cost of loving oneself. Self-love is a prerequisite for loving others. A type of self-love is needed that values each individual's unique perspective on the world; that encourages each of us to trust our own perspective,

to feel our own feelings and recognise our own desires before seeing them in others. One needs a place to love from, a place that does not have a 'fat relentless ego' preoccupied with its own desires, a place that feels sufficiently anchored. This is a healthy type of self-love, which is threatened by the egoism of the narcissistic professor. The student, in any case, had better not be advised to try and lovingly attend to the professor who misused their pedagogical relationship. Unselfing is a virtuous ideal to strive towards, but for some in the non-ideal world, the self needs attending to first. Second, directing attention away from the abusive professor may be the virtuous thing to do because, despite the fact that there are no bounds to loving attention, some people get ample loving attention as it is, whereas others – as in the case of the abused student – remain unseen, sometimes literally so, in having to remain anonymous. Not being interested in the narcissistic professor is, I would even venture to say, the loving thing to do. It is a way of loving the students, of seeing reality.

Is it really so strange to think that, if Murdoch's aim is to see reality, having a blinkered view might put one in a better place to see it? When Murdoch lists a number of difficult questions in 'The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts', such as whether an 'unhappy marriage be continued for the sake of the children' or whether an 'elderly relation who is a trouble-maker be cared for or asked to go away', she writes that 'the love which brings the right answer is an exercise of justice and realism and really *looking*' (*EM* 375). The danger, of course, is the relentless ego lurking in the background, with its 'consolations of self-pity, resentment, fantasy and despair' (*EM* 375). Make no mistake: in trying to relate morally to sexualised pedagogical failures in academia, I feel both resentment and despair. I am convinced, though, that emotions like these, including anger, can also put one in a position to see more clearly, to see reality as it really is. In another excellent paper, Srinivasan discusses, as writers such as Audre Lorde did before her, how anger can be a great source of moral and political knowledge. Srinivasan writes that 'getting angry is a means of affectively registering or appreciating the injustice of the world, and [...] our capacity to get aptly angry is best compared with our capacity for aesthetic appreciation'.[23] Here, an almost Murdochian analogy is made between experiencing anger as a moral emotion and appreciating art, though I am not so sure Murdoch would welcome the comparison. Yet anger can, like art, put us in a position to appreciate the world in a certain way and can, I believe, put us in a position to see the world for what it is.

My relationship status with Murdoch should perhaps currently be described by the colloquial phrase: 'it's complicated'. In standing up for the hurt ego, and the role that egoistic perception and even anger might play in attaining a just gaze, I might have ended up dragging Murdoch along avenues where she does not belong. It is only because of loving her philosophically that I have been unwilling to let go of a Murdochian perspective, and I can only hope that I will not have to.

1 See Fleur Jongepier, ‘On philosophical love (or why I fell in love with Iris Murdoch)’, *Digressions and Impressions*, 23 July 2020 <https://digressionsnimpressions.typepad.com/digressionsimpressions/2020/07/on-philosophical-love-or-why-i-fell-in-love-with-iris-murdoch.html> [accessed 31 May 2021].

2 Since ‘Murdoch’ sounds too cold to my ears, I use ‘Iris’ when discussing my love for her, and refer to her as ‘Murdoch’ in more scholarly passages.

3 See also Hans Maes, ‘Truly, Madly, Deeply: On What It Is To Love a Work of Art’, *The Philosophers’ Magazine* 78 (2017), 53–7.

4 Iris Murdoch, ‘On “God” and “Good”’, in *Existentialists and Mystics,* ed. by Peter J. Conradi (New York: Penguin, 1999), 337–62 (342), hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *EM*.

5 See also Martin Lenz, ‘On Shame and Love in Academic Reading and Writing’, *Handling Ideas*, 29 April 2021 <https://handlingideas.blog/2021/04/29/on-shame-and-love-in-academic-reading-and-writing/> [accessed 31 May 2021].

6 Berit Brogaard, ‘Love Shouldn’t Be Blind or Mad. Instead One Should Fall Rationally In Love’, *Psyche*, 6 July 2021 <https://psyche.co/ideas/love-shouldnt-be-blind-or-mad-instead-fall-rationally-in-love> [accessed 31 May 2021].

7 Susan Wolf, ‘Loving Attention: Lessons in Love’, in *Understanding Love: Philosophy, Film, and Fiction*, ed. by Susan Wolf and Christopher Grau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 369–86 (376).

8 Wolf, ‘Loving Attention: Lessons in Love’, 374.

9 Brogaard, ‘Love Shouldn’t Be Blind or Mad’.

10 For a discussion of the positive light view, see Wolf, ‘Loving Attention: Lessons in Love’, 371.

11 Wolf, ‘Loving Attention: Lessons in Love’, 375.

12 Julia Driver, ‘Love and Unselfing In Iris Murdoch’, *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 87 (2020), 168-80 (177).

13 Driver, ‘Love and Unselfing in Iris Murdoch’, 178.

14 For more information on what this term ‘epistemically vicious’ can mean, see: Ian James Kidd, Heather Battaly and Quassim Cassam (eds.), *Vice Epistemology* (Routledge University Press, 2020).

15 Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992); (London: Vintage, 2003), 17.

16 Amia Srinivasan, ‘Sex as a Pedagogical Failure’, *Yale Law Journal*, 129: 4 (2020), 1100–1146, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as ‘Srinivasan’. The only other material I found more distressing, yet inspiring to the same degree, is Susan Brison’s *Aftermath*: *Violence and the Remaking of a Self* (Princeton University Press, 2003).

17 Though, as Srinivasan points out, research shows that ‘participants toward consensual faculty-student relationships in which they had been involved were significantly more negative in retrospect, with students coming to see past encounters as ‘extremely exploitative and harmful’ (Srinivasan 1124–5).

18 This theme is beautifully taken on by Lotte Spreeuwenberg in her (unpublished) paper ‘The Loving She: On feminist ethics and Iris Murdoch’s loving attention’.

19 Wolf, ‘Loving Attention: Lessons in Love’, 382.

20 Wolf, ‘Loving Attention: Lessons in Love’, 382.

21 Wolf, ‘Loving Attention: Lessons in Love’, 384.

22 See Kate Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

23 Amia Srinivasan, ‘The Aptness of Anger’, *Journal of Political Philosophy* 26: 2 (2018), 123–144.

Blurred Lines: Iris Murdoch's Pedagogical Relationships

Rebecca Moden

FLEUR JONGEPIER'S ESSAY, TITLED 'IRIS MURDOCH AND Transgressive Love: On Loving Iris and Unloving Philosophers' (33–45), which explores the concept of philosophical love and compels attention to its dangers, makes for disturbing reading. Inspired by Amia Srinivasan's 'Sex as a Pedagogical Failure' (2020), Jongepier focuses on the paradigm, and the reality, of the professor of philosophy who abuses his position.[1] The 'general pattern' is that of the student whose love for philosophy is somewhat incoherently expressed, and of the professor who, seeking narcissistic self-gratification, fails to set appropriate boundaries and to redirect the student's energies towards philosophy. Instead, the professor encourages the student's energies to centre on himself, sexualises them, and so violates the pedagogical relationship. The student's psychological and physical well-being and her attitude to sex and relationships are damaged, as are her educational and intellectual development, and her love for philosophy. Jongepier acknowledges the existence of variations on this pattern: these – including the controversial example of the student who may appear to initiate, and/or willingly engage in, such a relationship – are explored further by Srinivasan. Jongepier, like Srinivasan, is adamant that in cases of sexualised pedagogical failure, though the student has agency, 'the responsibility falls on the professor, and the professor alone [...]. In the light of the professor's core pedagogical duty and the gendered background against which a student becomes romantically confused in the first place, any other response will inevitably end up blaming the victim' (39–40).

Jongepier strives to articulate her position on the violated pedagogical relationship by perceiving it through the lens of Murdoch's philosophy. She interrogates what is meant by Murdoch's concept of 'loving attention', observing that it is characterised by 'a realistic yet soft focus' (38), and detects 'a possible tension or complexity in Murdoch's approach' (40): does the narcissistic, abusive professor merit our loving attention? If we struggle to give it, are we morally lacking? Would loving attention to the student, or to ourselves, be more virtuous? Jongepier concludes: 'In standing up for the hurt ego, and the

role that egoistic perception and even anger might play in attaining a just gaze, I might have ended up dragging Murdoch along avenues where perhaps she does not belong' (44). Although Jongepier's love for Murdoch remains intact, it has been seriously challenged.

Jongepier's essay is disquieting, not only because it exposes the abusive nature of such failures in pedagogy, but also because Murdoch's moral philosophy is brought into play to negotiate a potentially compromising way of thinking about them. Murdoch's personal history vastly complicates the issues raised by Jongepier: namely, her relationships with her tutors Eduard Fraenkel and Donald MacKinnon, whilst studying at Somerville between 1938 and 1942, and later with her students David Morgan and Rachel Fenner (née Brown) at the Royal College of Art (RCA), where she taught between 1963 and 1967. Murdoch's remarks about her relationships with her tutors in her journals and letters, her claim, in her 1948 journal, that she had 'the power to seduce anyone', and Richard Eyre's representation of the young Murdoch as a sexual predator in *Iris* (2001), problematise the idea that she might have been a victim of sexual harassment (a term which did not then exist).[2] Though Morgan expresses gratitude, in *With Love and Rage* (2010), for his turbulent relationship with Murdoch, it could be argued that Murdoch's handling of her emotional entanglement with Fenner contributed to the latter's increasing distress and depression.[3] It might seem difficult to equate Murdoch's philosophy, centred on the pilgrimage to become morally better, with these relationships, some of which caused considerable suffering to others. Jongepier remarks that just and loving attention does not necessitate seeing the loved one 'in a wholly positive light': she suggests that maybe we can acceptably be blind to the loved one's imperfections (36). How blind can, and should, we be to Murdoch's imperfections? How might our view of Murdoch be affected by consideration of her tutors' imperfections, and their impact on her? Falling out of love with Murdoch would indeed be devastating. Nevertheless, her relationships with her tutors and students have not yet received sufficient scrutiny, and require re-evaluation in view of the discussion instigated by Jongepier. This essay seeks to explore and contextualise Murdoch's pedagogical relationships, to draw out some of the ways that these relationships mark her novels, and to consider their implications for the ways Murdoch might be perceived.

The German-Jewish classical scholar Eduard Fraenkel (1888-1970) and the Scottish philosopher and theologian Donald MacKinnon (1913-1994) shaped Murdoch's intellectual development and her subsequent relationships, and appear repeatedly in her novels. The mysterious 'Professor' character in a 1945 novel draft is, Peter J. Conradi says, 'an Oxford classicist' who 'struggles with being incarnate, being attracted to girls, and appears a cross between Fraenkel and MacKinnon'.[4] Max Lejour in *The Unicorn* (1963), Barnabus Drumm in *The Red*

and the Green (1965), John Robert Rozanov in *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983) and Levquist in *The Book and the Brotherhood* (1987) are among the later characters inspired by Fraenkel, MacKinnon, or both. Murdoch's formative experiences with Fraenkel and MacKinnon had an enduring influence on her perception of the pedagogical relationship, and would have particular resonance years later, when she became a tutor at the RCA.

Having been dismissed from his Chair at Freiberg under antisemitic legislation, Fraenkel sought refuge in England in 1934 and became Corpus Christi Professor of Latin. He introduced a long-running weekly seminar in which the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus was meticulously dissected. His scholarly rigour was legendary, and the seminar, which Murdoch described as 'terrifying', has been likened to 'a circle of rabbits addressed by a stoat': dons and students alike received sharp reprovals for errors (*IMAL* 615n35, 116). Fraenkel was in the habit of inviting certain students, always female, from the seminar to individual evening tutorials in his college rooms.

Murdoch's Somerville tutor Isobel Henderson sent Murdoch to the *Agamemnon* seminar in her first year, emphasising that this was a 'great privilege' and mentioning too that Fraenkel would 'probably paw [her] about a bit, but never mind'.[5] Henderson's tolerance was not unusual: Benjamin Lipscomb observes that although Fraenkel's 'shocking impropriety' towards women students was well-known, the 'general opinion on Fraenkel by the women of Oxford seems to have been that he had an aggravating habit, like a tendency to interrupt, not that he was a predator'.[6] Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman note that Murdoch was indeed 'pawed' by Fraenkel; they comment simply that 'she claimed not to have minded' (*MA* 41). John Bayley describes Murdoch's view of Fraenkel as 'fond and reverential', and adds:

> In those days there had seemed to her nothing odd or alarming when he caressed her affectionately as they sat side by side over a text, sometimes half an hour over the exact interpretation of a word, sounding its associations in the Greek world as he explored them, as lovingly keen on them as he seemed to be on her. She had been pleased it was so, and revelled in the sense of intellectual comradeship she felt. That there was anything dangerous or degrading in his behaviour, which would nowadays constitute a shocking example of sexual harassment, never occurred to her.[7]

Bayley's account emphasises the young Murdoch's naïveté and her passive acceptance of Fraenkel's sexual advances. The reliability of Bayley's memoir may be somewhat affected by his desire to present both himself and Murdoch as fundamentally innocent.[8] Nonetheless, a rather schoolgirlish and formal letter

from Murdoch to Fraenkel, written in 1940 from her parents' home, lends support to his account.[9]

Fraenkel and Murdoch remained in touch after she had graduated. At some point a rift occurred – possibly, as Conradi suggests, because Fraenkel did not appreciate her characterisation of the Platonist philosopher Max Lejour in *The Unicorn*, evidently based on him. Lejour's physical appearance, his 'plain-song lilt' of Aeschylus's chorus about learning by suffering overheard by his 'star pupil' Effingham Cooper, and Effingham's recognition that 'Max had been his first real glimpse of a standard', link him directly to Fraenkel.[10] So, too, do Lejour's 'paw-like' hands, 'which had inspired Effingham as an undergraduate with irrational fears' (*TU* 112).[11] Desiring reconciliation, Murdoch wrote to Fraenkel in January 1966. She recorded their meeting in her journal on 5 February:

> I went to his room in Corpus. He greeted me, all was as usual, the burgundy, the cigarettes. Later I wept & he embraced me. [...] I felt great love for him, & shame & *surprise* at my senseless dereliction. [...] Great teacher, great man.[12]

Two days later, she wrote to Fraenkel: 'you are something very precious and permanent in my life [....] You have always given me, ever since the days of the Agamemnon class, a vision of excellence. More simply, I love you' (*LOP* 313). Her journal entry stated: 'I love him, & love him physically too. It was marvellous to touch him again' (J10 35). They maintained contact thereafter, and Murdoch dedicated *The Time of the Angels* (1966) to him 'as a token of friendship and gratitude' (*LOP* 318). Fraenkel took his own life in February 1970, a few hours after the death, by natural causes, of his wife Ruth. Murdoch's poem 'The Agamemnon Class, 1939' (1977) immortalises his seminar.[13]

How are we to view Fraenkel's treatment of his women students, and Murdoch's response to it? Conradi claims that 'Iris did not mind Fraenkel putting his arm about her, or stroking hers. This was before the days when such demonstrativeness was deemed gross moral turpitude. Fraenkel "adored" Iris; Iris "loved" Fraenkel. [...] Their relation was chaste' (*IMAL* 115). Conradi seems here to minimise the extent of Fraenkel's behaviour and to imbue it with nostalgia. There is, in fact, much evidence revealing that Fraenkel went rather beyond arm-stroking; also, that Murdoch was by no means the sole recipient of his advances. The philosopher Mary Warnock (née Wilson) endured Fraenkel's habitual groping of her during tutorials in 1942–1943. Her biographer Philip Graham states: 'Mary's grooming as a Fraenkel girl began as early as her first term. While he was talking to her, for example, about the ancient Greek poets and dramatists such as Pindar or Menander, Fraenkel would begin to fondle her thighs and breasts'.[14] In *A Memoir: People and Places* (2000), Warnock recalls that Fraenkel wanted 'kisses and increasingly constant

fumblings with our underclothes'.[15] Her journal entry of 17 November 1942 records 'utter hell' in Fraenkel's room: 'God, it was awful [...] I thought I was going to die or to weep he was very nice and comforting but God, it was hell [*sic*]'. On 14 December she wrote: 'Oh God, what a nightmare. I c[ou]ld murder Fraenkel' (*MW*). As a form of protection, Warnock invited a friend, Imogen Wrong, to join her tutorials; this strategy backfired as Fraenkel, undeterred, almost immediately arranged separate tutorials for them both.

Fraenkel was eventually reported, he was confronted by two female dons in August 1943, and his sexualised behaviour ceased. Warnock was no longer invited to individual tutorials. Her journal entry of 21 September 1943 reveals her acute sense of guilt and shame: 'I am still haunted by my sin, my particular sin with Fraenkel [...]. Also, by the fear that somehow I am different because of it and shan't be prepared to be so shocked by it in the future. [...] I can't satisfy myself that I am forgiven, that is all' (*MW*). In much later life, Warnock minimised the episode, claiming that 'the impropriety of [Fraenkel's] behaviour seemed utterly trivial compared with the riches he offered us, and the vast horizons he opened up' (*MPP* 84). The younger Warnock's journals nevertheless attest to the trauma she experienced as a direct result of Fraenkel's actions. Her memoir also acknowledges the long-term damage done to Wrong, who 'thought it had had a lasting and bad effect on her attitude to sex' (*MPP* 84).

Murdoch's continuing contact with Fraenkel after she had graduated, her warm remarks about him in her journal and letters, and Bayley's account quoted above, all encourage the suppositions that, unlike Warnock and Wrong, she had not been distressed by Fraenkel's behaviour and that it did not significantly affect her. Graham remarks that 'Murdoch seems to have taken this in her stride' (*MW*). This view endorses the popular image of the young Murdoch – confident, captivating, bohemian, engaged in multiple simultaneous relationships – presented in Eyre's film.

A quite different image of Murdoch is also plausible: that of a somewhat naïve young woman, sheltered whilst at Badminton, and eager for experience. Conradi comments that, on arrival at Oxford in 1938, being able to 'play-act the role of a student [...] gave Iris confidence at a time when she "needed it badly"' (*IMAL* 82). She was watchful, still finding her way in her studies, her social life, and her relationships. Though she would rapidly acquire experience, she had not yet become adept at managing and compartmentalising her relationships, and at blurring the boundaries between friendship, love, and sex. Her first romance, in 1937, had taken place by correspondence, and soon modified into friendship. She was not to lose her virginity until early 1943, by which time she had left Oxford and was working at the Treasury. Many of her Oxford peers fell in love with her, and she had romantic friendships with them. Most young men and dons were soon called up. Murdoch (who had revered her schoolteachers) would surely

have been flattered by the notice given to her by the eminent, charismatic and immensely influential Fraenkel, and by his extravagant praise of her: he described her as 'the only truly educated person of her generation' (*IMAL* 119-20). Her propensity for discipleship has been well-documented.[16] Conradi contends that, 'Reverencing her father, Iris thirsted for fatherly guidance for the intellectual she was becoming'; he names Fraenkel as the first of her father figures (*IMAL* 522). She would have been attracted by Fraenkel's Jewishness, and by the suffering he had endured. These factors made Murdoch peculiarly vulnerable to Fraenkel's exploitation.

Murdoch was, furthermore, a product of her time. Although we are now living through an era which is demanding clarity, understanding of what constituted sexual transgression was then more uncertain. The boundary between teacher and student was not plainly defined. Relationships between female undergraduates and their (often much older) male tutors were fairly commonplace and, being deemed personal matters, no attempt was made to regulate them. Srinivasan contends that such relationships have 'much to do with how men and women are taught to relate to power' under patriarchy (Srinivasan 1137). The fact that Fraenkel's habits were known to other dons but in general condoned is also underscored by patriarchy, and is indicative of women's unequal status in the university and the wider world. Women students who objected to Fraenkel's sexual advances had no real agency; if they dared to complain, they risked being deprived of the great intellectual opportunities provided by his tuition. Worse still, they risked being blamed themselves. Murdoch and her peers had been warned by the Dean, on arrival at Somerville, to 'be careful how you behave': 'the women are still very much on probation in this University' (*IMAL* 82). Unsurprisingly, Warnock states, 'it never occurred to us for a moment that there was anything we could possibly make a public fuss about' (*MPP* 81). There was, in any case, no vocabulary to name what was happening. The term 'sexual harassment' did not exist until the early 1970s. The traumatised Warnock, in her journal, can only describe Fraenkel's behaviour indirectly as 'sin', 'it', and a 'thing'. Henderson's term, 'pawing', is conducive to patriarchy because it makes Fraenkel's actions seem inconsequential, even comic. Murdoch's innocent and passive acceptance, as described by Bayley, of Fraenkel's sexual advances presents her as a product of gendered socialisation. Fraenkel's sexual harassment was a failure of both pedagogy and patriarchy, though Murdoch may not have recognised it as such.

Fraenkel's habitual engagement in sexualised behaviour towards women students had been public knowledge since the 1990s, yet it was not until late 2017, in the climate of #MeToo, that it became a major controversy, when Corpus Christi's undergraduate student body called for the college's 'Fraenkel Room' to be renamed. The memoirs by Warnock and Bayley were key evidence for these demands – ironically, because, as Jaś Elsner remarks: 'Neither of these texts was

intended to bury Fraenkel but rather to praise him' (*RF* 333). Warnock, having apparently forgotten the shame and guilt recorded in her journal in the early 1940s, stated that she was 'horrified' by the call and hoped the undergraduates would learn 'some sense of proportion' (*MW*). She was not Fraenkel's sole defender, yet Corpus Christi eventually decided to rename the room, in tacit acknowledgement that 'Fraenkel had, at a period in his Oxford career, harassed students sexually, in a manner that has never been appropriate, that he and his victims knew was inappropriate, and that in certain cases may have caused real damage' (*RF* 330). It was recognised that, although changing *mores* affect the ways that evidence is interpreted, harassment is and always has been unacceptable.

As the voice of the younger Murdoch during the period of Fraenkel's tuition is largely lacking, it is difficult to assess exactly what she then thought and felt about him. Her wartime journal is missing (probably destroyed by her). Her later journal entries and comments in letters express love and adulation for Fraenkel – however, the example of Warnock demonstrates that recollections in later life can be unreliable. A heated argument between Murdoch and Stuart Hampshire in 1969 illustrates that by this point she had come to canonise Fraenkel. Hampshire viewed Fraenkel as 'a frail human being with ordinary imperfections [...] as well as a great scholar' and he 'feared that Iris could not see the human being at all, just this "golden figure"' (*IMAL* 495). Jongepier discusses Susan Wolf's idea of the 'positive light' view of love and contrasts it with the just, loving attention extolled by Murdoch (36). Ironically, with regard to Fraenkel, Murdoch was perhaps not clear-sighted enough, and her desire to see Fraenkel in a positive light may have obscured some of his faults.

Murdoch took a further opportunity to venerate Fraenkel in *The Book and the Brotherhood*, when Gerard Hernshaw visits his old tutor, the Jewish classicist Levquist, in his college room – Fraenkel, and the Fraenkel Room, 'to the life', as Valentine Cunningham observes.[17] Gerard feels 'a strong impulse to move round the desk and seize Levquist's hands, perhaps kiss them, perhaps even kneel down'.[18] Elements of Fraenkel are, furthermore, discernible in the historian Lucas Graffe in *The Green Knight* (1993). Lucas is 'savage and ruthless, not hesitating to wound' but is nonetheless deemed 'a good and exacting teacher, a great scholar', and his young student Sefton Anderson (who, with her two sisters, is believed by Anne Rowe to represent 'a composite picture of Murdoch herself')[19] loves him with 'a profound reverential passion. If permitted she would have bowed to touch his feet'.[20] Sefton excuses Lucas's sadistic treatment of her, 'the memory of which she cherished', and castigates herself for her own 'contemptible' feelings (*GK* 275–276). Whilst reverencing Fraenkel, Murdoch, like Warnock, readily attributed guilt to herself, as indicated by the sense of 'shame' recorded in her 1966 journal and, obliquely, by her characters' emotional responses to their tutors. Murdoch's vision of Fraenkel as god, herself as guilty supplicant – which became more

pronounced as time went on – would have been more palatable to Murdoch than the possibility that her father-figure and teacher had been capable of violating the pedagogical relationship for his own narcissistic pleasure.

The young Murdoch's response to Fraenkel's sexualised behaviour was conditioned by social *mores*, by Fraenkel himself, and by pre-existing qualities in her own character. Fraenkel's abuse of the pedagogical relationship – possibly Murdoch's first sexual experience with a male who was not her contemporary – set her on a trajectory of often-destructive relationships with older, intellectual, sometimes tyrannical men, usually officially or unofficially acting as her tutor, as she repeated variations on the dynamic which Fraenkel had instigated. These relationships culminated in a three-year affair with the egotistical, power-obsessed Elias Canetti, until she sought emotional refuge in marriage to John Bayley in 1956. Murdoch's comment in July 1966 (to David Morgan) that 'The best teachers are a trifle sadistic' was evidently inspired by Fraenkel, with whom she had then just been reconciled (*IMAL* 116). It invokes an image of the teacher forcing the student into acquisition of knowledge, as Fraenkel did by means of his demanding teaching methods, humiliation of ignorance and refusal to accept less than scholarly excellence. It also imbues the pedagogical relationship with a disturbingly sexual undercurrent. Arguably, Murdoch's controversial endorsement of the concept of erotic pedagogy – which can be traced back at least as far as Socrates – stems from her history with Fraenkel. It affected her ensuing relationship with Donald MacKinnon, and in the 1960s it contributed to her emotional and moral difficulties with her students at the RCA.

MacKinnon studied divinity at New College, Oxford, then between 1940 and 1947 he tutored at Oxford, becoming a lecturer in philosophy in 1945. In his determination to confront fundamental issues and to prioritise truth over tidiness, MacKinnon offered an alternative to A.J. Ayer's logical positivism which spoke to the moral problems of his age. MacKinnon's teaching was marked by his charisma, his passion, and his eccentricities, which included chewing on razor-blades and rolling himself up in a rug during tutorials: notwithstanding an element of conscious buffoonery, these habits indicate MacKinnon's intense desire to get to the crux of a problem, as well as being suggestive of mental strain. MacKinnon was a pacifist and a conscientious objector, but the guilt occasioned by his awareness that others were suffering on active service eventually made him attempt to sign up. He was, however, rejected on medical grounds, and in an effort to alleviate his guilt he threw himself into his work. He took on three times as many students as was usual, and spent many hours listening to and counselling them as well as teaching them. Conradi remarks that 'Detractors saw him as a cut-price English version of Simone Weil' (*IMAL* 125); Philippa Foot, who was taught by him and maintained a lifelong friendship with him, described him as 'holy', defining holiness as 'an absolute lack of sense of proportion' (*IMAL* 127).

This inability or unwillingness to maintain a sense of proportion was a key factor in MacKinnon's pedagogical failure in relation to Murdoch.

MacKinnon began tutoring Murdoch in 1941. His philosophy and personality were immensely attractive to her. She lavished praise on him in her letters to Frank Thompson, describing him as a 'jewel' in December 1941,[21] and adding in January 1942:

> It's good to meet someone so extravagantly unselfish, so fantastically noble, as well as so extremely intelligent [...]. He inspires a pure devotion. [...] Sorry if this sounds like a superman – There are snags – such as the fact that he's perpetually on the brink of a nervous breakdown (due, according to popular theory, to the fact of being unhappily married.) (The merest surmise.) He is perpetually making demands of one – there is a moral as well as an intellectual challenge – & there is no room for spiritual lassitude of any kind. (*WW*, 105–6)

She and MacKinnon became very close, and continued to spend time together after Murdoch had left Oxford for the Treasury. In September 1943 MacKinnon's wife Lois (who had herself been MacKinnon's student prior to their marriage in 1939) insisted that her husband break contact with Murdoch. Recognising that his relationship with Murdoch had become a threat both to his marriage and to his religious faith, he did so.

In the summer of 1946, Murdoch returned from a period working abroad with United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Severely depressed, in the wake of several painful relationships and a rejected visa application which resulted in the loss of both a fellowship at Vassar College and the possibility of a Cambridge studentship, she was reduced to living at her parents' home with no income and uncertain prospects. She contacted MacKinnon and he came back into her life, organising a visit to Malling Abbey in October 1946, and agreeing to supervise her studies. In April 1947, during Holy Week, they had a four-hour meeting: MacKinnon described that week as 'a kind of agony' which he would 'never forget' (*IMAL* 256). That same spring MacKinnon was appointed to the Regius Chair in Moral Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen. He and Lois moved to Aberdeen, remaining there until 1960, when he took a post at Cambridge that he held until retirement. He and Murdoch met once more, by chance, briefly and awkwardly, in Cambridge in 1963. 'He looked at me as if I were a ghost and we exchanged about four sentences of the "How are you" kind, and then he hurried away. I felt so terribly sad', Murdoch told Phillipa Foot (*LOP* 249).

Interpretations of the dynamics of the MacKinnon-Murdoch relationship vary quite markedly. Some critics emphasise Murdoch's part: for instance, Fergus Kerr laments that 'her infatuation with MacKinnon is just about all that anyone

remembers [...] of MacKinnon's years at Oxford'.[22] Such an interpretation obscures MacKinnon's feelings, and absolves him from responsibility. Recent criticism tends to take a more balanced view. Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman comment that 'Iris and Donald were mutually infatuated by the time she took her finals' and that when they resumed contact in 1946 they soon 'fell back into their pattern of infatuation and hysterics' (*MA* 108, 178). Conradi contends that MacKinnon 'was obsessionally in love with Iris' (*FB* 183). Critics sympathetic to MacKinnon often emphasise his strong sense of responsibility and desire to help Murdoch – and, conversely, Murdoch's demandingness. Lipscomb, for example, states that by mid-1943 Murdoch had become 'increasingly dependent' on MacKinnon:

> She spent hours in his office, weeping over her spiritual uncertainties, her misdeeds, her loneliness, making him her confidant and confessor. Both Murdoch and MacKinnon described their interactions to others as a melodrama with Murdoch playing Mary Magdalene to MacKinnon's Jesus. Intensely conscientious, MacKinnon felt increasingly responsible for Murdoch and was drawn into an intellectual and emotional intimacy beside which his marriage looked remote. (*WUS* 114).

Lipscomb's account suggests that Murdoch forced the reluctant MacKinnon to give her attention and affection; he goes on to state that Murdoch's 'devotion and neediness were more intense than ever' in 1946–1947 when their relationship again reached crisis point (*WUS* 115). Murdoch was undoubtedly both devoted and needy; she was also becoming progressively more depressed, erratic and vulnerable. Frances White draws attention to Murdoch's 'uncertainty and mood-swings' during this bleak period; in a letter of 6 September 1946 to her friend Hal Lidderdale she admits that she had been contemplating suicide (*LOP* 81).[23]

MacKinnon's role as tutor was not very clearly defined, he was fairly inexperienced at teaching, guilt-ridden because he believed he had unjustly escaped suffering in the war, and he seems to have meant well, wanting to support Murdoch on both an academic and personal level, as he was accustomed to doing with his other students. But the fact remains that MacKinnon failed to protect the pedagogical relationship by setting suitable boundaries, and thus permitted a highly inappropriate, troublingly dependent relationship to develop, in which matters intellectual, religious and erotic were dangerously blended. He had encouraged, or at least not dissuaded, Murdoch from discussing difficulties in her love-life during tutorials. He 'feared for Iris's soul', prayed over her, strove to convert her to Christianity – all this while he was meant to be teaching her (*IMAL* 174). His intimacy with Murdoch caused much pain to Lois, who observed that her husband perceived Murdoch as his sacred love, whilst she herself was his profane love (*IMAL* 256). It seems likely that he would have been flattered, even

if unconsciously, by Murdoch's adulation of him as a Christ-figure; perhaps he believed that he alone could 'save' her. Arguably, by permitting Murdoch to become psychologically dependent on him, MacKinnon worsened her mental health.

In her 1946–1947 journals, Murdoch assiduously notes MacKinnon's philosophical remarks, and his significant impact on her approach to philosophy is evident: 'Philosophy is nothing to me if it is not my whole life', she wrote on 20 March 1947.[24] Jongepier, drawing on Srinivasan, remarks that whereas male students who admire their professors generally seek to emulate them by striving to become professors, female students are socially conditioned to interpret their feelings as desire for the professor himself. This explanation illuminates the 'strange and vivid' dream recorded by Murdoch on 21 January 1947, in which MacKinnon makes a plaster cast of Murdoch's body, then kisses her, causing her to be 'filled with joy'; this image then merges into the image of her father returning home (J3 42). A few weeks later she notes: 'The thought came to me yesterday that my love for D. will always be a source of profound joy to me, beyond all the conflicts and paradoxes, even when I can't see him. This brought me great peace' (J3 79). In May she states: 'Profound depression today after a letter from D' (J3 219). Presumably this letter informed her that he was to move to Aberdeen.

Murdoch's journal entries point to MacKinnon's failure to maintain an appropriate pedagogical relationship with her, and to the strong feelings which she had developed for him. They also reveal that she viewed him, foremost, as an idealised father figure, not as a lover. The image of the father is tinged with eroticism – and both Murdoch and MacKinnon seem to have discovered a degree of sado-masochistic pleasure in their anguished conversations – but this was nonetheless, for Murdoch at least, a relationship of 'innocent tenderness' (*IMAL* 421). She denied that MacKinnon was in love with her. Their relationship was chaste. Murdoch does not appear to have been concerned by the pain that the relationship was causing Lois (she and Lois never met, and so perhaps Lois did not seem quite real to Murdoch), or to have viewed herself as a serious threat to MacKinnon's marriage. She seems naïvely to have envisaged their relationship continuing as it was: she as MacKinnon's disciple, he as her just judge.

Many of Murdoch's attachments might be understood as substitutions for her father, her earliest love.[25] '[O]ne might say that she won the Oedipal struggle too easily, becoming her father's delight while her parents' very amicable marriage was apparently almost totally asexual', Martha Nussbaum comments.[26] Freud's theory of transference, in which the patient unconsciously projects feelings associated with parents – often admiration, infatuation, and a strong desire to please – onto the analyst, may apply, Srinivasan observes, to the pedagogical relationship (Srinivasan 1121). Freud insists that 'the analyst responds but does not respond *in kind*' (Srinivasan 1122). If effectively managed by the analyst, transference can function as a tool in the therapeutic process. Likewise, the professor should

assume that 'what [the student] really desires is not the professor at all but what he represents' and should use transference to further the pedagogical process (Srinivasan 1122). He should 'simply treat the student as if her erotic energies were already directed at learning – thereby, one hopes, making them so' (Srinivasan 1126). It is plausible that Murdoch was projecting onto MacKinnon her repressed emotions regarding her father, yet MacKinnon did not manage – perhaps did not recognise – the transference taking place. Though he made efforts to support Murdoch as she strove to refocus her energies on her education, he proved unable to sustain them.

In her journal entry of 31 July 1947, Murdoch tranforms the Orestes myth into a fantasy of reunion with MacKinnon, her lost father-figure. The tormented Orestes is living in exile. He cannot clearly see his father Agamemnon, 'the innocent one, sinned against', because his mother Clytemnestra has veiled Agamemnon from Orestes' sight by substituting the 'accursed form' of her lover Aegisthos. Orestes kills Aegisthos and Clytemnestra, and Agamemnon is restored to him: 'he *sees* him again, no longer blinded by self hatred & remorse', and experiences 'a healing repentance'. Murdoch notes: 'All of this is highly autobiographical'.[27] Conradi has identified Murdoch's cast: he names Murdoch as Orestes, MacKinnon as Agamemnon, Lois as Clytemnestra and, tentatively, Murdoch's ex-lover Tommy Balogh (with whom she had an affair during 1943–1944) as Aegisthos.[28] Murdoch's hyperbolic early descriptions of MacKinnon as 'jewel', 'superman' and 'Jesus' suggest that she had from their first encounter begun to draw him into her personal mythology. Similarly, she came to mythologise Fraenkel as a 'golden figure'. Mythic forms, some of which became integrated into her novels, enabled Murdoch to try to process and come to terms with these father-figures whose power over her she only partly understood.

Murdoch modified her idealised vision of MacKinnon somewhat when she received a flurry of letters from him in late 1965, provoked by his reading of *The Red and the Green*. These letters revealed that MacKinnon had constructed his own myth, which differed markedly from Murdoch's: he had come to demonise Murdoch while absolving himself. MacKinnon resented her characterisation of Barnabus Drumm, an unhappily married scholar generally considered a 'holy fool'. Murdoch was, she wrote in her journal on 1 November, 'completely stunned' by MacKinnon's revelation that he and Lois were 'very upset' by her portrayals of Barnabus and his wife Kathleen, and by MacKinnon's description of them as 'a final comment on his foolish fantasy-ridden distorted efforts to help me in 1947'. She maintained: 'I had not even *thought* of Donald in connection with Barney' (J10 11). On 6 November she notes a second, 'sickening' letter in which MacKinnon blamed Philippa Foot, as well as Murdoch, for attempting to 'drag him down' prior to his departure for Aberdeen, and emphasised his current happiness with Lois. Murdoch reflected that she could not '*think* about D[onald] & his wife & never

did even *then*, out of piety' (J10 12–13). Regarding yet another letter, received on 15 November, she wrote: 'What rot he talks. This endless brooding on his "guilt" in 1947. He so misconstrues the past. I feel exasperated & sad. How *can* he believe I meant to hurt him' (J10 17). Her distress and frustration about MacKinnon may have prompted her to seek reconciliation with Fraenkel – her first father-figure – a few weeks later. Notwithstanding, Murdoch went on to create John Robert Rozanov in *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983) who, Conradi observes, recalls the 'magisterial and menacing aspects of MacKinnon' (*IMAL* 440). Rozanov represses his troubled pupil George MacCaffrey's passionate desire to maintain contact with him. He writes an 'intemperate letter' to George containing 'wild phrases' and 'vituperation', which functions as a 'violent exorcism'; he 'needed to feel that he had thereby finally finished with George and could forget him'.[29] Rozanov's letter might be viewed as an extreme version of MacKinnon's letters, and it points to Murdoch's resigned acceptance of MacKinnon's attitude. MacKinnon's animosity for Murdoch crystallised into permanence. Reportedly, in 1992, at a formal dinner at London University, MacKinnon remarked of Murdoch: 'There was real evil there' (*FB* 183). Murdoch never knew of this. Although physically absent to her, MacKinnon continued to be a vastly significant presence throughout Murdoch's life.

MacKinnon's (and less overtly, Fraenkel's) formative, and enduring, influence on Murdoch is evident in her relationships with two students at the RCA, where she taught General Studies in the mid-1960s: David Morgan and Rachel Fenner. In 1963 Murdoch was aged 44, a well-known novelist who also had several philosophical works to her name, increasingly in the public eye. By now she had been married for seven years to John Bayley, and had had relationships with numerous lovers both male and female. Murdoch was also an experienced teacher, having taught philosophy for 15 years at St Anne's, where she had become accustomed to borrowing MacKinnon's teaching techniques and emulating his eccentricities. With Morgan and with Fenner, she enacted MacKinnon's favoured role, that of the teacher as counsellor and confidante: a dangerous role that invited intimacy and blurred the parameters of the pedagogical relationship. Jongepier is clear that responsibility for the integrity of this relationship 'falls on the professor, and the professor alone' (39). Although Murdoch's relationships with Morgan and Fenner were largely chaste, they were erotically charged, and this, together with her level of emotional involvement in both students' lives, might seem to indicate a transgression of pedagogical boundaries which cannot be easily excused.

Murdoch got to know David Morgan, then a final-year painting student aged 25, in spring 1964, when she began overseeing his dissertation. They soon became close, and their relationship continued after Morgan completed his RCA studies, in summer 1964, and began teaching. Murdoch took vicarious pleasure in the details of Morgan's intrigues; in particular, his painfully drawn-out triangular

relationship with two female art students. In one of their first meetings, Murdoch set the ground rules, which 'would *not* include sleeping with her but did, that evening, involve kissing', Morgan recalls (*WLR* 12). The kissing in their early meetings attracted salacious journalistic interest, and its significance has perhaps been overemphasised. Murdoch increasingly played the role of mentor to Morgan – admonishing him, offering moral guidance, exhorting him to paint, providing financial support and helping him to find a teaching job. In 1965 he angered her by making indiscreet comments to another student about their friendship; it did not fully recover, and over the ensuing years their meetings gradually became less frequent, though they continued until near the end of her life.

As her connection with Morgan waned, that with Fenner intensified. Rachel Fenner (then Rachel Brown) studied sculpture at the RCA between 1962 and 1966. Murdoch supervised her dissertation in 1964 and a close friendship soon developed, which continued after Fenner left the RCA, aged 26. Fenner frequently turned to Murdoch for emotional support and advice. Murdoch encouraged Fenner to marry and she did so in early 1965, though she experienced much unhappiness as a result. Murdoch did not reciprocate Fenner's wish for a more intimate relationship but they remained friends, corresponding until the mid-1970s when Fenner's work and family began increasingly to preoccupy her, and maintaining intermittent contact thereafter.

There are unsettling aspects to Murdoch's involvements with Morgan and Fenner which appear to threaten the integrity of the pedagogical relationship, and which, more broadly, might seem incompatible with Murdoch's philosophy of moral progression towards the Good. Her intimacy with Morgan was motivated not only by her wish to help him, but also by her desire to experience at first-hand the bohemian wildness of the RCA and by a voyeuristic interest in his personal life. Conradi observes that she was 'shocked, fascinated, delighted and appalled [...] by the amorality and anarchism of the students' and that 'a novelist's voyeuristic frisson was mixed up with the real help she gave' (*IMAL* 471, 475). Morgan even detects a note of voyeurism in relation to his girlfriend's abortion, about which Murdoch advised the couple: she had 'out of compassion, not only taken on the misery, but also *thrilled* to it vicariously' (*WLR* 110). In the permissive atmosphere of the RCA in the mid-1960s, divisions were not clearly demarcated between staff and students: tutors were as likely as students to engage in iconoclastic, scandalous behaviour. Murdoch was exhilarated by her new environment, and her entanglement with Morgan appears to have been, as Rowe suggests, 'partly an aspect of [her] own liberation'. To Rowe, the 'sexual *frisson* underlying Murdoch's largely chaste relationship' with Morgan was 'perhaps generated and certainly only made permissible' by the RCA's bohemianism. Although Rowe contends that Murdoch's transgression of boundaries enabled her to experience behaviour which she could 'subject to moral questioning in her art', and thus make her art express

more truthfully the reality of human experience, it nonetheless indicates a rather disturbing degree of self-indulgence on Murdoch's part (*WLR* xvi).

Furthermore, Murdoch's intimacy with Morgan caused some distress to others: notably, Morgan's girlfriend, whose jealousy manifested itself in increasing insecurity and a physical attack on Murdoch, and a fellow student who, being concerned that he might fail his thesis, was outraged by Morgan's flippant comment that he (the student) was sure to pass because of Morgan's 'connections' (*WLR* 21). Murdoch was incensed, stepped in to rescue the situation, and told Morgan in April 1965:

> I care very much for my professional scrupulousness and you could not have hurt or damaged me more vitally than in making me fail (or seem to fail) one of my pupils. I have always been very careful as a teacher. But clearly the worst and most foolish thing I ever did was to make friends with you.
>
> I'm not going to 'abandon' you (unless you wish it) but we must make another start on a different basis. (*LOP* 299)

The friendship foundered as a direct result of this episode. Murdoch was angered by Morgan's indiscretion, which threatened her professional reputation and her self-image – she wrote to Brigid Brophy in spring 1965, 'I am still wretched about my lost sheep [...]. This sort of failure makes one realise how much one is both inspired and duped by an image of oneself as the good shepherd' (*LOP* 293). Ironically, the year before, Murdoch had been responsible, Morgan believes, for arguing his grade up from a Pass to a 2:2 during the moderation of the 1964 Painting School degree show.[30]

Aspects of Murdoch's relationship with Fenner are also problematic. Murdoch's letters of early 1965 indicate that Fenner had admitted an attraction to her. Although Murdoch did not reciprocate, she hoped that they would achieve a permanent long-term friendship. However, Murdoch was not wholly successful at placing the relationship on an appropriate footing, and Fenner's feelings for Murdoch became more intense. Murdoch acknowledged her failing in May 1966:

> [O]f course you make no 'difficulties' for me at all, except the very general one of posing me with a moral problem! (I am afraid you can't bag all the responsibility! I am obviously responsible too for having let these things happen and continue to happen.) Naturally I am 'cautious' – it would be disgraceful not to be. The situation is largely (I think) made OK by the (I believe exceptional) degree of your integrity. That it makes you (at times) unhappy perhaps should be treated as a kind of technical problem. For the rest one must trust to the gods. (*LOP* 318)

Murdoch strove to restate the boundaries of the relationship, recognising, too late, that she should not have permitted these boundaries to have been transgressed in the first place. Certain rather ambiguous, intimate remarks in her subsequent letters, which seem at odds with her desire for a strictly platonic relationship, may have further distressed Fenner by giving her false hope. In June 1966, for example, Murdoch wrote, 'Forgive what in me is not adequate to your needs. I do love you'; in October 1967, 'I hope you're prepared to blunder on. You know that I am deeply attracted to you' (*LOP* 320, 346). The latter remarks were made just as her affair with Brigid Brophy was ending; perhaps Murdoch was seeking to bolster her self-esteem. The letters also reveal that Fenner was becoming increasingly depressed and unhappy, and Murdoch's variability may have been a contributing factor. 'The best teachers are a trifle sadistic', Murdoch had told Morgan, and a hint of sadistic enjoyment is indeed present in her observation to Fenner, in a letter of June 1968, that: 'Any close association is almost certain to involve pain, and as often as not more bloody pain than pleasure' (*LOP* 366). Murdoch's often-repeated encouragement to work evidences her wish to reorient Fenner's energies, however, and her habit of signing off letters as 'your old teacher' and of addressing Fenner as 'child' suggest that she did wish to achieve a certain level of detachment, though she was not always consistent. Her teacherly role is likewise blended with an element of sadism in her remark to Morgan: 'I shall never stop regarding you as my pupil. (You may suffer for this from time to time.)' (*WLR* 131).

By the 1960s Murdoch had become well-accustomed to blurring the parameters of her relationships. 'I'm afraid I do rather dig diffused eroticisms that last forever', she wrote to Brigid Brophy in July 1967 and, in October, to Georg Kreisel: 'I can't divide friendship from love or love from sex – or sex from love etc. If I care for somebody I want to caress them' (*LOP* 341, 347). Conradi observed, in a letter to Morgan:

> She took the view that even the most virtuous apprehension of another human being need not necessarily exclude an erotic element. [...] She believed that this erotic element could be implicit rather than explicit and, if expressed at all, should be so only up to defined limits, one primary duty of the good moral agent being to sublimate 'low Eros'. A difficult feat, one extremely liable to misunderstanding or misrepresentation by outsiders – but one she had the courage to learn to carry out. (*WLR* 120)

Murdoch's vision of diffused eroticism is, in part, wrought out of her early formative experiences with Fraenkel and MacKinnon, and it is morally problematic: who decides whether this 'erotic element' should be expressed, who defines the 'limits' of its expression, how are these 'limits' to be defined, and who

is responsible for maintaining them? How can the suffering of those involved, and of others, be avoided? In her novels, Murdoch interrogates her beliefs by exploring different forms of transgressive love, and she repeatedly returns to the pedagogical relationship, subjecting it to searching interrogation as she approaches it from different angles. She explores not only the dynamic between the older male teacher and younger female student, but also considers same-sex relationships, incestuous relationships, and relationships across substantial age gaps. In her art, as in her life, she was unafraid of entering dangerous territory, perhaps most controversially in her representation of the schoolmaster Michael Meade's relationships with his fourteen-year-old pupil Nick Fawley and, years later, with eighteen-year-old Toby Gashe, in *The Bell* (1958). Jongepier questions whether the abusive professor is worthy of our loving attention: in *The Bell*, Murdoch makes plain her belief that he is. She compels her readers' attention to Michael, and moreover creates empathy for him, by means of her loving depiction of his troubled consciousness. She also depicts the catastrophic consequences which ensue from Michael's inability to refrain from acting on his desires. 'He did once hold my hand', Murdoch said of MacKinnon (*IMAL* 257): that moment is echoed in the touch of hands between Michael and Nick which brings about Michael's departure from school-teaching, the end of his hopes of ordination and, indirectly, Nick's suicide years later. John Ducane, the protagonist of *The Nice and the Good* (1968), declares, 'I will be no man's judge': here, as elsewhere in the novel, his voice merges with his creator's.[31] Murdoch's largeness of vision expresses and engenders compassion for all of her characters, and guides readers into morally beneficial self-scrutiny of personal values.

Murdoch had learned from the MacKinnon episode, and by the mid-1960s she was wiser and more experienced. With Morgan and Fenner she did not, by and large, make the mistakes that MacKinnon had made. She made concerted efforts to prevent both relationships from lapsing into the 'infatuation and hysterics' which had characterised her entanglement with MacKinnon (*MA* 178). The religious dimension of that relationship had generated a 'heady cocktail of dramatic intensity, religious and erotic passion and guilt'; this was markedly absent from her relationships with Morgan and Fenner (*IMAL* 256). She had her own moral code, though it was unorthodox and imperfect, and she did not permit her intimacy with either Morgan or Fenner to cross the boundary which she had set. Murdoch's mythologisation of her teachers veiled the reality of their transgressions; conversely, she kept striving to perceive Morgan and Fenner with greater accuracy. She came to realise how little she actually knew Fenner – her letters repeatedly remark on this – and she became more aware of Fenner's suffering. She began to see that Morgan was more damaged that she had thought, acknowledging her illusions about him in her journal: 'A puzzling boy. He is much more chaotic & incoherent & inarticulated [*sic*] than I thought at first. [...] I am

probably too romantic about painters – I want to project my own dream life as a painter' (J10 9).

Attention to Murdoch's pedagogical relationships compels re-evaluation of Murdoch herself. It encourages a more nuanced, more objective, and more critical view of her, which takes into account her moral shortcomings. Peter Conrad, reviewing Conradi's *Iris Murdoch: A Life* in 2001, observes that 'All her life, people deified her', and that 'She is becoming harder to understand, now that the process of sanctification is under way'.[32] Nonetheless, a more complex, multi-faceted image of Murdoch has emerged over the past twenty years. Though the attempt may test our love for her, we need to keep striving to perceive her as she really was, as far as that is possible: to perceive her not as a saint, but as a loving, deeply compassionate yet undeniably flawed individual, indelibly marked by her early pedagogical experiences.

1 Amia Srinivasan, 'Sex as a Pedagogical Failure', *Yale Law Journal* 129:4 (February 2020), 1100-46, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as Srinivasan.
2 Iris Murdoch, 12 December 1948, 'Journal, 13 February–17 December 1948', KUAS202/1/6, Iris Murdoch Collections, Kingston University Archives, J.
3 David Morgan, *With Love and Rage: A Friendship with Iris Murdoch* (London: Kingston University Press, 2010), hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *WLR*.
4 Peter J. Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), 171, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *IMAL*.
5 Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman, *Metaphysical Animals* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2022), 39, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *MA*.
6 Benjamin Lipscomb, *The Women are Up to Something* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 35–6, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *WUS*.
7 John Bayley, *Iris* (London: Duckworth, 1998), 49.
8 For a discussion of the theme of innocence in Bayley's memoir, see Peter J. Conradi, *Family Business* (Bridgend: Seren, 2019), 169, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *FB*.
9 See *Living on Paper*, ed. by Anne Rowe and Avril Horner (London: Chatto & Windus, 2015), 16–1, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *LOP*.
10 Iris Murdoch, *The Unicorn* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963), 95, 82, 110, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *TU*.
11 Valentine Cunningham traces imagery of pawing hands in Murdoch's novels and views this imagery, associated with Fraenkel, as part of her exploration of the paradoxical, inextricable mix of good and evil in life and art. See Valentine Cunningham, 'How Good?', in *Iris Murdoch and the Literary Imagination* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming 2022).
12 Iris Murdoch, 5 February 1966, 'Journal, February 1964–18 March 1970', KUAS202/1/10, Iris Murdoch Collections, Kingston University Archives, 33, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as J10.
13 Fraenkel may have found a curious means of legitimising his behaviour towards his women students. Jaś Elsner contends that Fraenkel presents 'a remarkable whitewash of the negative aspects of the power relations of older men and younger women including especially his own, through the prism of scholarly commentary on Aeschylus'. Elsner observes Fraenkel's apparent blindness to Cassandra's abuse, and his 'extraordinary level of identification' with the 'gentleman' Agamemnon, whose relations to Cassandra are, according to Fraenkel, 'at all points entirely honourable'. Fraenkel was conflating art and life, denying Cassandra's abuse whilst simultaneously translating this abuse into reality. See Jaś Elsner, 'Room with a Few: Eduard Fraenkel and the Receptions of Reception', in *Classics and Classicists: Essays on the History of Scholarship in Honour of Christopher*

Stray, ed. by C. Pelling and S. Harrison (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 319–47 (339, 336, 338–9), hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *RF*.

14 Philip Graham, *Mary Warnock* (Open Book Publishers, 2021) <https://doi.org.10.11647/OBP.0278> hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *MW*.

15 Mary Warnock, *A Memoir: People and Places* (London: Duckworth, 2000), 79–81, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *MPP*.

16 See Peter J. Conradi, 'Holy Fool and Magus: The Uses of Discipleship in *Under the Net* and *The Flight from the Enchanter'*, in *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher,* ed. by Justin Broackes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 119–133.

17 Valentine Cunningham, 'How Good?'.

18 Iris Murdoch, *The Book and the Brotherhood* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987), 26.

19 Anne Rowe, '"The Best Moralists are the Most Satanic": Iris Murdoch – On Art and Life', in *Murdoch on Truth and Love,* ed. by Gary Browning (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 21–42 (27).

20 Iris Murdoch, *The Green Knight* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *GK*, 272.

21 Peter J. Conradi, ed., *Iris Murdoch: A Writer at War: Letters and Diaries 1939–45* (London: Short Books, 2010), 101, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *WW*.

22 Fergus Kerr, 'Remembering Donald MacKinnon', *New Blackfriars* 85: 997 (May 2004), 265–269 (266).

23 Frances White, *Becoming Iris Murdoch* (London: Kingston University Press, 2014), 39.

24 Iris Murdoch, 20 March 1947, 'Journal, 4 June 1945–12 May 1947', KUAS202/1/3, Iris Murdoch Collections, Kingston University Archives, 100, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as J3.

25 See Peter J. Conradi, *IMAL*, 521–2.

26 Martha C. Nussbaum, 'When She Was Good', *The New Republic* (31 December 2001) <https://newrepublic.com/article/122264/iris-murdoch-novelist-and-philospher> [accessed 28 July 2022].

27 Iris Murdoch, 31 July 1947, 'Journal, 4 June–16 November 1947', KUAS202/1/4, Iris Murdoch Collections, Kingston University Archives, 28–29.

28 Peter J. Conradi, note to Iris Murdoch, 31 July 1947, 'Journal, 4 June–16 November 1947', 28–29.

29 Iris Murdoch, *The Philosopher's Pupil* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1983), 422.

30 Morgan remarks: 'She may genuinely have thought my work merited more than a Pass. At the worst, it was an example of the way she sincerely overestimated all her friends' abilities'. David Morgan, correspondence with the author, 23 July 2022.

31 Iris Murdoch, *The Nice and the Good* (London: World Books, 1968), 276.

32 Peter Conrad, 'Who Really Knew Iris?', *Guardian*, 16 September 2001 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/sep/16/biography.highereducation> [accessed 28 July 2022].

Review of *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 51:2 (Fall 2018), edited by Rossitsa Terzieva-Artemis

Gary Browning

How is Iris Murdoch to be read? It goes without saying that we should read her as much as we can. But with what attitude? And to what purpose? There are different styles of reading, and different purposes. We might separate Murdoch's philosophy from her novels, and hope that philosophers and literary critics will furnish specialist readings of the two literary forms. Hence philosophers can come up with precise analyses, delivering close-grained arguments clarifying Murdoch's use of concepts, and literary critics can be entrusted to review the novels according to critical formulas, perhaps tracing literary affinities between Murdoch and preceding or succeeding writers. The upshot is likely to be clear-cut and rewarding, but the snag is that Murdoch's idiosyncratic crossing of boundaries between fiction and philosophy goes unrecognised. Murdoch herself did not pull literary punches, and titles of her books announce contentious agendas. *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* and *The Sovereignty of Good* let readers know at the outset what they are about. In both cases she was clearly saying something against the grain of contemporary moral and philosophical theory. Metaphysics and the Good matter in ways that other philosophers tended to neglect. We cannot put them to one side in the interests of decorum or conventional pieties. Likewise, *The Good Apprentice* signals its tracking of moral development. It may be a conventional coming of age saga, but it is a coming of age that is about realising the Good, which is far from routine.

The title of the journal issue under review, a special edition of *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 'Reading Love with Murdoch: Philosophy and Literature in the Work of Iris Murdoch', intimates its reading of Murdoch as a philosopher and a novelist. The authors of its eight essays work with her two forms of thinking and writing to consider Murdoch's central preoccupation, love. What is more, a number of the essays are highly successful in showing how Murdoch at times operates as a philosopher and novelist simultaneously. Rossitsa Terzieva-Artemis's

'Introduction' sets out clearly the themes of the essays and links between them. In reviewing the collection, I will limit myself to the essays that most struck me on reading them, linking my commentary, where possible, to the other essays in the journal. The essays by David Fine, Rebecca Moden and Hank Spaulding, in particular, show us how Murdoch's philosophy is entwined with her novels.

A Fairly Honourable Defeat is a wonderful novel. It is more than an entertainment, though it is simultaneously both comic and tragic. Vanities are aired that lead on inevitably to humiliation and disaster. As well as the surface fireworks, it reveals something deep about the human condition, namely that a conventional marriage and worldly success are not enough to guarantee order and contentment when malign influences line up against them. Murdoch's philosophy informs the novel, but it does not operate as something external to the plot or the experience conjured up by the narrative. Philosophy does not claim a separate and superior standard of truth. Rather, philosophy for Murdoch is more a matter of attention to the realities of lived experience. In *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, Rupert Foster, a vain, self-satisfied, middle-aged civil servant, who is writing a Platonic tome on philosophy, is tricked into falling for his wife Hilda's sister, Morgan Browne. The latter is a modern theorist of linguistics who likewise falls for Rupert due to the machinations of Julius King, a malign cynic, who believes that all love is liable to be overturned by a few deceptions. Neither Morgan's theories nor Rupert's philosophy are a match for Julius; they both fall short of the real stuff of life and love.

This novel is central to both Athanasios Dimakis's essay and David Fine's essay, though their perspective is not that of the heterosexual couples discussed above, but of Simon Foster and Axel Nilsson, a homosexual couple. Dimakis's essay – the sixth in the journal – appears immediately before Fine's, exploring the Apollonian themes within *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*. He discusses the importance of the *kouros* to Axel and Simon's burgeoning relationship in Athens. By the end of the novel, they have become 'light-exuding Athenian lovers and *kouri* themselves' (112). For both Dimakis and Fine, Murdoch's novel overturns the readers' expectations by focusing on the lives of this queer couple. For the former, the novel presents the reader with a unique experience of paraphilia. For the latter, the novel alerts us to how queer love does not need to be examined through the lens of queer theories but can, instead, be approached within the ordinary, everyday orbit of events. For Murdoch, theory is not to be abstracted from the real. Fine shows how Murdoch's philosophy is about attention to what is real rather than a theoretical box of tricks. Likewise, the honourable defeat that is alluded to in the title signposts how, unlike that of the heterosexual couple of the novel, the love of Simon and Axel somehow survives the onslaught of Julius's tricks. It is a victory of sorts or at least an honourable defeat, and the honour of this defeat does not depend upon philosophical endorsement that is abstracted from ordinary life. Axel learns how to

be less stuffy and controlling, while Simon becomes more honest and courageous.

The question of how love is to be considered and understood is also the subject of Margaret Guise's opening essay, which takes Murdoch to be a 'phenomenologist of love' (4). Hannah Marije Altorf's and Hank Spaulding's essays follow Guise's in uniting Murdoch's art and philosophy in their quest to capture the tensions and wholeness of experience as well as the importance of relationships for moral development. More comparatively literary readings are then undertaken by Fiona Tomkinson, Rebecca Moden and Farisa Khalid. Tomkinson compares *The Time of the Angels* and *A Word Child* to the works of William Blake, T. S. Eliot and Heidegger, and their Modernist accenting of contingency, fragmentation and multiplicity. Moden focuses upon perception within Murdoch's fiction in an essay entitled 'Colors of Consciousness in the Novels of Iris Murdoch'. Lastly (after Dimakis's and Fine's essays), Khalid reviews Murdoch's engagement with organised religion and lay religious communities in *The Time of the Angels* and *The Bell*, both of which, she argues, see Murdoch contribute to the genre of ecclesiastical fiction.

Moden's essay repays close attention because it reveals how Murdoch's remarks on colour in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* are neither accidental nor isolated. The role of seeing, and seeing acutely, is illustrated for Moden in *The Good Apprentice*. She analyses how attending to colour plays a key role in our getting clearer about things. She tracks the changing perspectives of Edward Baltram as he develops understanding by straining to see things clearly. Strain is a word which highlights the mix of emotion and reflection that accompanies Michael Meade's intoxicating love for a young Nick Fawley in *The Bell*. Hannah Marije Altorf aligns this experience of Michael and Nick, talking as two lovers in *The Bell*, with the image of the great hall of reflection that is invoked in both *The Fire and the Sun* and *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* to depict how art, literature and philosophy engage with a disconcerting range of experiences that are often in tension with each other. These tensions are what animate the novels, providing the spur for human development. This development may be styled erotic and perhaps as an ascent of love. Human development through love is what Spaulding sees as inspiring John Ducane's pilgrimage in *The Nice and the Good*. For Spaulding, Ducane's moral development toward the Good is enabled by his progression from the halting disturbed relationship with Jessica Bird, via the bourgeois social relationship with Kate Gray, toward the generous and loving relationship with Mary Clothier. Certainly, Ducane's character develops and appears to map a movement towards the Good, which is analysed in more abstract language in *The Sovereignty of Good*. I would perhaps suggest that the clear-cut ascent to goodness that is depicted by Spaulding is not so easily mapped and that Murdoch suggests that the good cannot be entirely separated from the nice. She says as much in her journal.

Murdoch can be understood in multiple ways. There are outstanding works of philosophical analysis, which scrutinise the logical behaviour of Murdoch's

framing of concepts, such as attention and moral vision. Literary studies attend to what is distinctive about Murdoch's style, and historical studies – from Peter J. Conradi's excellent biography to recent explorations of her relations with fellow female philosophers, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley and Elizabeth Anscombe – relate Murdoch to the historical contexts within which her remarkable intellectual and literary powers were developed. All routes to understanding Murdoch, however, must recognise the significance that she placed upon love, which is reflected in the title of this special edition of *Studies in the Literary Imagination*. Terzieva-Artemis's 'Introduction', and a number of essays, highlight how love matters for Murdoch, and how philosophy and literature are combined in tracking and expressing love and its pitfalls. This is a journal edition well worth reading, and its close, attentive reading of Murdoch's fiction is epitomised by Fine's illuminating essay.

Review of María Gila, *Iris Murdoch. La hija de las palabras* (Córdoba: Berenice, 2021)

Ramón Luque Cózar

IN RECENT YEARS, AND PARTICULARLY SINCE THE CENTENARY of her birth in 2019, academic scholarship on Iris Murdoch has been increasing, as illustrated by the growing number of presentations, articles and symposiums on her work. *Iris Murdoch. La hija de las palabras* [*Iris Murdoch: The Daughter of Words*] is the second book written in Spanish that analyses Murdoch's oeuvre. It is the adaptation of a brilliant doctoral thesis by María Gila that analyses Murdoch's work from a moral and philosophical perspective, always comparing her philosophical writings with her novels on issues such as duty, responsibility, suffering and death. Gila analyses plots and characters from such novels as *The Bell*, *An Unofficial Rose*, *An Accidental Man*, *The Book and the Brotherhood*, *The Black Prince*, *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine*, *The Sea, The Sea*, and *A Word Child*.

Gila studies the impact that Murdoch's philosophy has on her novels, following a path already traced by previous works, such as *Language Lost and Found: On Iris Murdoch and the Limits of the Philosophical Language* (2013), by Niklas Forsberg and *Iris Murdoch, Philosophical Novelist* (2010), by Miles Leeson. Gila identifies with their approach, an approach that retains freshness because it appears to disagree with Murdoch's diktat that her fiction and philosophy are separate endeavours. For Gila, then, 'we should not seek her novels to reflect her ethical proposals but rather the empirical aspects of her philosophy as starting points in the construction of her novels' (45). (Translations are my own.) In other words, she proves that Murdoch's novels are not a literal expression of her philosophy, but a 'playing field': Murdoch's novels are imitations of life in which the characters face the world, not always accepting the philosophical proposals or moral questions that she poses in her philosophy.

Perhaps Murdoch was never a novelist like Sartre, a philosopher whose narratives were, above all, a means to express his ideas in a direct manner. As

Gila points out, for Murdoch, literary writing is a creative discipline, the main objective of which is art. Of course, her philosophical ideas are reflected in her novels, but in a more 'open' and indirect way. Gila's book begins with an excellent portrait of Murdoch's personality, briefly recounting her life, her experiences, and her intellectual evolution as a philosopher and as a novelist. She then recalls themes and arguments into which Murdoch's work delves deeply: the opposition between 'imagination' and 'fantasy', and Murdoch's recurrent M and D example concerning moral progress linked to the ethics of vision, which is based on the two great influences on Murdochian thought, Plato and Simone Weil. In this chapter, Gila, supported by *The Sovereignty of Good*, once again highlights already familiar arguments which are characteristic of Murdoch, such as the exclusion of the idea of 'purpose' when referring to the Good, that is, 'being good for nothing'.

Gradually, Gila approaches two influences that she considers essential in Murdoch (and were also essential to other authors like Ben Obumselu and Gerard Mannion): Jean-Paul Sartre and Arthur Schopenhauer. Drawing on the work of the French philosopher and on Murdoch's monograph, *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (1953), Gila highlights again the possibility of moral progress that Sartre denies in his famous essays *Being and Nothingness* and *Existentialism is a Humanism*. For Sartre, there is no alternative between assuming absolute freedom or taking refuge in an invented determinism. But, for Murdoch, there is an alternative path. It consists of the creation of values (values that are subject to change) and in our inherited collective vision of the world, as she maintains in her study of Sartre. Not everything is, therefore, subject to prejudice or 'bad faith'. Gila establishes Sartre's influence on Murdoch's work, primarily as a refutation of many of the French philosopher's arguments.

As for Schopenhauer, Gila places special emphasis on points of connection such as the consideration of selfishness as a distinctive trait of mankind, something evident in many characters in Murdoch's novels. Murdoch appears to follow the German philosopher, especially when in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* she correlates attention with compassion. Schopenhauer's mysticism is close to all this when it comes to real moral and intellectual progress. That is to say, Schopenhauer ensures that the main objective of the human being is selfishness, but he clarifies that it can be counteracted by compassion, a natural, mysterious and intuitive ability. This approach is close to Murdoch's moral improvement, but with an important difference according to Gila: Schopenhauer preaches a disappearance of individuality and promotes an identification with the whole. But Murdoch seems to base this ability more on knowledge of reality and the appreciation of diversity.

Gila's analysis of their respective interpretations of mysticism is exhaustive: she clarifies that while Schopenhauer fully trusts the mystical virtues, Murdoch values them but also questions them and this is reflected in aspects of her literary

work. She gives the example of Tallis Browne in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, one of the best known 'holy' characters in Murdoch's oeuvre. Indeed, Tallis is a true saint, but for Gila it is clear that Murdoch also characterises him as a man who leads a disastrous personal life: a failed marriage, and a house full of dirt and disorder. Another character says of him that 'his holiness is depressive', that it goes against life in a certain way. Gila emphasises that lack of selfish and material interests and the renunciation of pleasures and ambitions can be profitable features in moral life. But if this behaviour is exaggerated, it can turn into masochistic egoism. Tallis's depressive reverie prevents him from fixing all the chaos around him. In other words, maybe Murdoch suggests that a little selfishness would not be wholly undesirable in life.

Gila provides another example of this supreme unselfishness: Lisa Watkins, in *Bruno's Dream*. Lisa is in love with her brother-in-law, but she respects her sister. In addition, she is a committed teacher, she is part of a religious order, and treats the decrepit Bruno without fear or rejection. But Murdoch makes Lisa a little selfish when she finally walks to Danby's room and tells him that she is giving up being an angel to be a woman. She says that she wants affection, love, laughter, happiness and to feel like a real woman in a love story. Lisa, therefore, 'opts for happiness and that always involves some selfishness' (127). Gila maintains that Murdoch is putting some limits on compassion. According to Gila, Murdoch's literary work proves that many morally mediocre people succeed in life. However, 'saints' often fail in their relationships and in managing their personal lives. For this reason, Murdoch emphasises everyday life and its practical tasks, preventing the mistakes of extreme morality. These mistakes, Gila recalls, have been made by other characters, such as Michael Meade in *The Bell*, Cato Forbes in *Henry and Cato* and Bellamy James in *The Green Knight*. They are aspiring saints who, blinded by this effort, live focused on themselves and fall into masochism, 'confusing suffering with the path to virtue' (129). They forget more mundane, convenient and practical matters and refuse to accept the happiness that life offers them. Cato's and Bellamy's renunciation of sex could be examples of this.

Gila's analyses may at times be controversial or provocative, but these examples are proof of the breadth and depth of her book on Murdoch. We also find in her work a rigorous analysis of duty and guilt. Gila's lengthy final chapter is titled 'Embrace the Void'. She argues that Murdoch advocates for the need to make sense of our existence, to build a moral life, in a world without God. The lesson we should draw from the void would be to remember our mortality. It would help us to be more humble. This idea is reflected in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* and connects with Murdoch's novels as well, especially *The Good Apprentice*. In this way, in the former, Murdoch says that human progress consists of stopping filling voids with lies and falsehood. In the latter, the characters of Stuart and Thomas encourage Edward to follow this path.

The relationship between the ethics raised in Murdoch's philosophy and her novels is always complex. As Gila maintains, it can sometimes give the impression that Murdoch's literary work leads to a moral relativism that would conflict with the high moral standards of her essays. But this is not the case: in the novels, Murdoch seeks to reflect reality, the reality of a world in which we may not receive an award for a good deed or a punishment for a bad one. A reality in which morality lacks guarantees and in which everyone does what they can. Murdoch raises moral issues in her essays but does not 'moralise' in her novels. However, the realism of her narratives does not soften the claim of virtue of her philosophy.

María Gila's book is a compilation of Murdochian themes extensively treated in previous scholarship. But it has two great qualities. It is a work of distinct intellectual honesty, drawing very suggestive conclusions from Murdoch's world as well as from new, perhaps debatable, but surprising and intelligent, perspectives. Being written in Spanish, moreover, it will help many of Murdoch's readers in Spain to delve deeper into the meaning of her work.

Review of Scott H. Moore, *How to Burn a Goat: Farming with the Philosophers* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2019)

Frances White

'The unexamined life is not worth living'
Socrates

'A MORAL PHILOSOPHY SHOULD BE INHABITED', CLAIMS IRIS Murdoch in *The Sovereignty of Good*. This idiosyncratic book by Scott Moore – a philosophical farmer or farming philosopher – explores the inhabitation of moral philosophy and of Christianity (his professed faith) in an American agrarian context. Scott and his wife Andrea (herself the daughter of farmers and the guiding light behind their joint venture) moved with their family in 2011 to a ten-acre small-holding in Crawford, Texas, to which they gave the name Benedict Farm in acknowledgement of a sense of blessing (*benedictio*) and because the life of the farm hopes to reflect the rule of St Benedict (xiii).

The genesis of the book was emails to Scott and Andrea's friends describing, with frequent hilarity, the steep learning curve they have embarked on and the trials and tribulations of agricultural work. This is a very funny book, filled with charming and amusing stories of goats, geese, lambs, guinea fowl, hens, pigs, cows, donkeys and mules, not to mention spiders and snakes. It is down to earth, concerned with very basic matters such as septic tanks, the stink of skunks and shit – as Scott points out, 'it's not a cuss word. It's shit. Few things in life are an important as learning to call things by their proper names' (5). But it is far more than that. Among the vignettes and two-page entries, which have the style of a thought for the day, are some seriously weighty essays on philosophy, theology,

literature, technology and agriculture, which discuss how these interact and impact on life in twenty-first century America and beyond. Living, as we do, in the fear of imminent ecological world-destruction, as well as the gross inequity of the distribution of resources and the loss of traditional labour through the rapid growth of technology, these are not abstract problems being pondered by an academic, but vital practical issues being wrestled with by a committed citizen of the world and of the Church. Scott's faith is not a bolt-on extra but forms the bedrock of all he thinks and does.

Seminal essays are 'Homecoming and the Future of Higher Education' (21–8) in which the benefit and practicality of an agrarian education is evaluated; 'Farmers, Christians and Intellectuals' (61–74) in which Scott argues bravely and powerfully for his religious beliefs, both for their rationality and their enhancement of life; 'Wendell, Gene and Joel: On the difficulties of Theology and Agriculture' (103–114) which further explores variant connections between faith and farming; and 'Back to the Rough Ground: The Consolations of *Techne*' (139–153) in which Scott distinguishes *techne*, 'one of the fundamental intellectual virtues or ways of knowing [...] the root [of] technical, technique, and technology' (139), from *phronesis*, 'prudence of practical judgement' (141). He explains succinctly:

> These two are often and easily confused. Learning to operate a chain saw will help me cut down a tree, but it will not help me decide which trees need to be felled for the good of the farm. (141)

The final essay is 'Farming with the Philosophers: Work, Leisure, Wonder, and Gratitude' (179–192), which sums up the vision and lifework of Scott and Andrea at Benedict Farm. However, the Appendix forms another essay in itself, and this easily overlooked, apparent afterthought to the main text of *How to Burn a Goat* offers a substantial contribution to the field of scholarship concerning Murdoch and theology and is essential reading for students of Murdoch's work.

Scott (like his father before him) is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Great Texts at Baylor University and this little book is saturated in his lifetime of wide reading and passionate teaching. His thoughts and arguments draw not only on Murdoch but also on mainstream Western Philosophy: Aristotle, Aquinas, Boethius, Boswell and Dr Johnson, Thomas Carlyle, William Cobbett, Freud, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Heidegger, Husserl, Marx, Merleau-Ponty, John Stuart Mill, Montaigne, Nietzsche, William of Ockham, Plato, Richard Rorty, Socrates, Max Weber, Simone Weil and Wittgenstein all contribute. From the world of literature appearances are made by Robbie Burns, G.K. Chesterton, Czeslaw Milosz, Beatrix Potter's Mr McGregor, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, Alexander Pope, Shakespeare, John Steinbeck, Tolstoy, E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web* and P.G. Wodehouse's Empress of Blandings – a rich and eclectic cast

list – and of particular pleasure to this reviewer is the appreciation shown for the wide-ranging fiction and moral vision of Alexander McCall Smith (89-92). Scott's whole project, in his life on the farm and his teaching in this book of reflections on it, is in dialogue with thinkers and practitioners of agriculture, ethics and theology who will be more familiar to American than to British readers: Jacques Barzun, Robert Bellah, Wendell Berry, Richard Carlson, Joseph Dunne, Mark Essig, Wes Jackson, Paul Griffiths, Gene Logsdon, David, W. Orr, Walker Percy, Josef Pieper, Joel Salatin, and Leonard Scheff and Susan Edmiston. This book seemed to me like a one-off original sport of literature, but it is clearly written in a well known and loved tradition of American writing: Scott is the literary descendent of Wendell Berry *et al*. Drawing all these inspirational writers together in such lists may make *How to Burn a Goat* sound overwhelmingly erudite, but that is not how it reads. Not only does Scott wear his learning lightly, but also it is because all these writers – ancient and contemporary – speak so directly to the issues which confront him, and all of us today in the twenty-first century, that their insights and words remain of live relevance to us.

I cannot do full justice to this rich collection in a short review, but can only pick out some features of note, particularly in this context for Iris Murdoch readers, to whom Scott has long been known as a Murdoch scholar. Murdoch first enters Scott's discussion when he comments on how much he has learnt about humility from her with regard to 'the fat relentless ego' versus 'virtuous consciousness' (67-8); also about the reality that is only possible when one sees the world as it is (67). He analyses how she 'subverts our selfish intuitions' and parenthetically notes the paradox of calling on her work in a theological reflection when 'Murdoch quite explicitly denied the existence of the traditional understanding of God' (68). It is his sense that 'Murdoch's atheism is a curious phenomenon and [that] addressing it satisfactorily is far beyond the scope of the current essay' (68) that makes Scott direct the reader's attention to the postponed engagement with it in the Appendix. Notwithstanding her apparent banishment outside the body of the main text, Murdoch and her words crop up again and again as she articulates for Scott many truths about his experience of being human. In 'Ockham, Iris, and the Show Cattle' (97-101), this concerns the stories that we tell about ourselves and the fact that 'it is a task to come to see the world as it is' (97). In 'Saving Spiders' (125-8) it is to do with the fact that:

> Anyone who has read even a little bit of Iris Murdoch's fiction knows that one of the marks of moral sensitivity is the willingness to look out for the tiniest creatures in our community, Iris's characters, at least the good ones, are forever 'saving spiders' and rescuing other insects. (125)

Scott cites Dora Greenfield in *The Bell*, Moy Anderson in *The Green Knight*, Gabriel McCaffrey in *The Philosopher's Pupil*, Charles Arrowby in *The Sea, The Sea*, Gracie Tisbourne in *An Accidental Man* and Hilda in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* as well as Jake Donaghue in *Under the Net* in his ensuing discussion of this point.

In the Appendix (which is what gives this otherwise oblique collection of writings specific significance to Murdoch studies) Scott publishes the paper he gave at the 8th International Iris Murdoch Conference at the University of Chichester in 2017, 'Iris Murdoch's Vexed Relationship with Christian Faith' (193–202). In it he grasps the nettle of Murdoch's theological discourse as found throughout her philosophy and fiction. He challenges the lack of clarity and consistency to be found in her statements about God and Good, opening up the debate by arguing that her declarations about the impossibility of God render the parallel claims Murdoch makes for the absolute existence of Good equally slippery and unstable. He traces her spiritual meanderings throughout her life, concluding that it was the secular intellectual scene in the Oxford of her day in general, and the influence of her naturally atheistic husband John Bayley in particular, which caused her to adhere to their anti-religious stance, despite the counter-influence of other friends such as Elizabeth Anscombe. I am surprised that in this context Scott names Eric Mascall, Basil Mitchell, Austin Farrer and Michael Ramsay, but not Donald MacKinnon or Lucy Klatschko (who became Sister Marian), both of whom would seem to me to have had far more impact on Murdoch's continuous wistful religious leanings, which found expression in her choice of ending – from Psalm 139 – for her published version of her Gifford Lectures, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992).

Be that as it may, this is a book I have shared widely with others as I cannot fail to be impressed by the achievement, enthralled by the apologetics (both religious and cultural), and entertained by the escapades of this philosophical farmer and his animals. Scott's work simultaneously enlightens and delights the reader. I warmly recommend it.

Review of the *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 87 (July 2020), edited by Anthony O'Hear

Megan Jane Laverty

'A CENTENARY CELEBRATION: ANSCOMBE, FOOT, MIDGLEY, Murdoch' is a collection of fifteen papers that were presented as part of the Royal Institute of Philosophy's 2008–2019 annual lecture series in London. Anthony O'Hear, the editor of this collection, explains the motivation for this series was that 2019 marked the centenary of the birth of Elizabeth Anscombe (1919–2001), Mary Midgley (1919–2018) and Iris Murdoch (1919–1999), with the centenary of the birth of Philippa Foot (1920–2010) following just one year later. The consistency of these philosophers' concerns makes for a thematically unified and highly engaging book, and the lineup of contributors reads like a veritable 'who's who' of commentators: Jennifer A. Frey, John Hacker-Wright, John Haldane, Sabina Lovibond, Gregory S. McElwain, Anthony O'Hear, Candace Vogler and Rachael Wiseman. These commentators plumb the depths of the Wartime Quartet's philosophies by showing their arguments in the best possible light, while also pointing out their problems and inadequacies. In the review that follows, I begin with a few remarks on the recent scholarly developments on these four philosophers' work, and then offer some reflections on the three essays in the volume that address Murdoch's philosophy in particular.[1]

Since 2019, scholarship on the Wartime Quartet has burgeoned to include Benjamin J. B. Lipscomb's *The Women Are Up to Something: How Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley, and Iris Murdoch Revolutionized Ethics* (2021), Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman's *Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brough Philosophy Back to Life* (2022) and Nikhil Krishan's *A Terribly Serious Adventure: Philosophy at Oxford: 1900-1960* (forthcoming 2023). Other welcome additions include *The Anscombean Mind* edited by Adrian Haddock and Rachael Wiseman (2021) and *The Murdochian Mind* edited by Silvia Caprioglio

Panizza and Mark Hopwood (2022). There can be no doubt that the Wartime Quartet is moving from the margins of the history of analytic philosophy to its centre. Moreover, there is a growing sense that an awareness of Anscombe, Foot, Midgley and Murdoch's philosophical interrelatedness is requisite for the study of any one of their philosophies.

Lipscomb's scholarship on the lives and philosophies of the Wartime Quartet has played a critical role in this development. It is rare for philosophers to write about the lives of other philosophers, let alone a group of them, which makes Lipscomb's scholarship even more striking. His essay, 'The Women are Up to Something', introduces the collection and, along with the scholarship that follows, positions this edition of the *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* on the cusp of a new period, characterised by an appreciation of the Wartime Quartet's philosophical interrelatedness and shared historical context – themes developed by other contributors to the volume, especially Clare Mac Cumhaill and Julia Driver. Lipscomb's essay is a delight to read because its narrative form is replete with details drawn from radio broadcasts, letters, diaries and memoirs. He begins with some of the historical context that unified the Wartime Quartet – their educational background, their studies at Oxford and Donald MacKinnon's mentorship – and describes how they all came of philosophical age in World War Two, which inspired their conviction that morality '*must* be real' (170), as Julia Driver will later go on to explore. Lipscomb demonstrates how Anscombe, Foot, Midgley and Murdoch were all called upon to respond to the philosophical orthodoxy of their day, namely that all 'values are human projections onto a value-free reality' (11). In the light of his view that A.J. Ayer – and later, R.M. Hare – 'set them their task' (12), Lipscomb interprets the Wartime Quartet's discrete philosophical endeavours as a coordinated effort to retrieve 'a naturalistic account of ethical objectivity' (7). Together they would initiate a philosophical turn away from positivist value theory to ethical naturalism (26).

Thus, Lipscomb artfully weaves together their unique contributions to a common, emergent, largely implicit, project (16). Murdoch's appreciation for the affinities of French existentialism and British philosophy allowed her to diagnose the ethical theories the Wartime Quartet sought to reject. Under the cultural influence of 'a deeply internalized Romanticism' (18), these theories idealise the authentic individual who summons 'courage and honesty' to stare 'into the abyss, into the icy valuelessness of it all' (17). With this 'Murdochian diagnosis' in hand, Anscombe wrote her landmark article 'Moral Modern Philosophy', calling for contemporary philosophy to 'be abandoned in favor of an attempt to reappropriate the premodern approach of Aristotle and Aquinas' (23). And with the appearance of Anscombe's article, 'a path forward began to come clear, particularly for Foot and Midgley' (23). Foot's 'contribution was to domesticate Anscombe's radical critique, turning it into a standard-model philosophical

research program' (24). She was the 'more effective [...] in opening up conversation' with the Oxford philosophers (25). Midgley, with her intimate understanding of ethology, proposed 'a naturalistic ethics of the kind recommended but not developed by the others' (28).

Lipscomb is inclined, however, to overlook some of the important differences separating the four. For example, he portrays Murdoch as a naturalist about ethics, whereas her sympathies were with Plato and Immanuel Kant, as well as other philosophers in both Western and Eastern traditions who sought a transcendental ethics. Moreover, his claim that it was the Wartime Quartet's status as 'insider-outsiders' (16) that allowed them to transform our thinking about ethics does not wholly account for the fact that, as Hannah Marije Altorf argues in 'Iris Murdoch and Common Sense Or, What Is It Like To Be A Woman In Philosophy', Murdoch deliberately assumed the position of the outsider in academic philosophy, heeding the voices of non-academics: peasants, workers, schoolteachers, mothers, and aunts.[2]

According to Altorf, this strategy comprises 'Murdoch's attempt to make philosophy more inclusive' (215). Altorf examines *In Parenthesis* in the context of Murdoch's experience of being a woman in philosophy, explaining that Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman initiated the project to study how a cohort of female philosophers could have been so integral to analytical philosophy and nonetheless excluded from much of its historical record. While acknowledging the role of historical context in both the success of this cohort and its oversight, Altorf nevertheless argues that there is 'a more direct challenge to philosophy's method, goals, or to the questions it asks' in Murdoch's philosophical practice, which Altorf frames using the Kantian/Arendtian idea of the *sensus communis* (207).

Altorf reminds us that appearances can be deceptive. Murdoch avoided directly talking or writing about gender, giving the impression that 'philosophy is gender neutral' (211). Yet, we know from Peter J. Conradi's biography, as well as other interviews with Murdoch, that she experienced sexism and was acutely 'aware of gender [...] discrimination' (212). Altorf concludes that, despite appearances, Murdoch valiantly resisted sexism and gender stereotypes in her sustained 'attempt at [philosophical] inclusivity' (214). Murdoch understood that philosophy must not abandon its commitment to what is made common through conversations, vis-à-vis 'a shared investigation of experience', if it is to include those at risk of not being taken seriously (220). Altorf's non-analytic analysis is invaluable for Murdochian scholarship, especially as Murdoch's stature among analytic philosophers grows. Altorf attends to those politically sensitive issues frequently neglected in analytic philosophy, such as the discipline's history of exclusivity, 'its combative forms of arguing', and the contemporary academic funding structures that have driven departments to prioritise research over

teaching and have led to disciplinary compartmentalisation; she urges us to do better than we currently do (208).

In her essay, 'Love and Unselfing in Iris Murdoch', Julia Driver isolates three interrelated dimensions of unselfing internal to Murdoch's notion of attention: seeing the world with clarity, 'letting go of our egocentrism in the presence of beauty' (173), and imaginatively engaging with others (174). As Driver notes, the outward-facing character of unselfing has resulted in misdirected criticisms and misinterpretations of Murdoch on love, such as those by Christopher Mole and Susan Wolf, respectively. Mole criticises Murdoch for not attending to our mental states because he misinterprets her as thinking that introspection and contact with reality are inimical to one another. On the contrary, Murdoch argued explicitly that 'critical reflection on ourselves does involve considering our relation to the world' and vice-versa (176). Love is a case in point: it takes us out of ourselves while compelling consideration of whether our character warrants 'love in return' (177).

Driver uses love to explore the distinction 'between seeing clearly and overcoming our egoistic tendencies', the first dimension of unselfing in contrast with the second and third (177). Lovers can, indeed, overcome their egoistic tendencies, while not seeing clearly one another's flaws. Conversely, they may see one another's flaws all too clearly, yet love one another despite them. Wolf attributes this second view of love to Murdoch. Driver, however, interprets Murdoch as offering a middle way between these extremes: love and unselfing are a matter of clear perception, but clear perception is not a matter of knowing everything there is to know about a person (or oneself). Love can be clear-sighted as well as overlook those flaws that 'are not an element of the person's true self' (178). In other words, there is room within seeing clearly to overlook flaws incidental to the beloved's '*core* set of values and commitments' (178).

It is noteworthy that Driver's interpretation frames Murdoch's M and D example. M, realising that her core values may not be D's core values, seeks to see D for who she really is. The behaviours of D that originally appeared as flaws – when framed by M's values – dissipate when framed by D's values. Although D's behaviour remains unaltered, M now recognises that D is more than the behaviours she originally found irksome and that those seemingly irksome behaviours do not reflect D's true character. Initially deceived about D's character, M was able to overcome that deception through the effort to see more clearly through the lens of D's own core values. While we can be deceived about the other's character, overcoming such deception is what is involved in 'maintaining our contact with reality' (180).

Sabina Lovibond's essay, 'The Elusiveness of the Ethical: From Murdoch to Diamond', is a *tour de force*. Lovibond sees Murdoch and Cora Diamond as the two main representatives of a tradition of dissent in twentieth-century moral

philosophy. This tradition takes up 'the inadequacy of our customary ways of talking about "morality," "moral thinking," "moral language" – and consequently "moral philosophy," the branch of philosophy whose business it is to reflect on these things' (181). More specifically, both Murdoch and Diamond object to what the latter calls 'the "departmental" conception of morality' (cited on 183). In short, this is the idea that morality is only one aspect of human life and thought – that moral value is one value among many – which, as Lovibond notes, reflects our ordinary ways of speaking (see 184). In opposition to this conception, Murdoch and Diamond maintain that morality is everywhere. The moral life, they argue, 'is something that goes on *continually*' (cited on 182); 'it is the life concerned with *values*' (186). Lovibond analyses their 'morality is everywhere' view into three elements: value as all-pervasive, value and morality as interchangeable, and a conception of the moral as inescapable (198). Briefly stated, she argues that while the first element is compelling because it promotes value-pluralism and is supported by ordinary experience, when it combines with the second and third elements the 'morality is everywhere' view becomes far less plausible and appealing.

Lovibond differentiates Diamond's 'more sharply focused scepticism' from Murdoch's 'maximalist form' of the 'morality is everywhere' view by prising apart the idea of value as all-pervasive from the idea that all value is constitutionally moral (190). The idea of value as all-pervasive fosters value-pluralism and the aspiration to become a person 'on whom nothing is lost' (cited on 188). The maximalist form of the 'morality is everywhere' view, however, inclines towards an 'imperialism of the "moral"' that is disconcertingly reductive and moralistic (199). It is reductive in that it reduces the great diversity of values (for example, aesthetic, artistic, intellectual and educational) into 'a subdivision of the "moral"' (187). It is moralistic, not in the way we ordinarily think of it as a tendency to make moral judgments of others, but in the sense that it betrays 'a lack of attunement to *values other than the moral*' (188). Lovibond illuminates how Murdoch's maximalist form of the 'morality is everywhere' view detracts from our ability to imaginatively share in the subjectivities of fictional characters by committing us to 'a final resting-place' before we have even begun (196).

Lovibond exposes the internal diversity of the domain of value by exploring 'the multiplicity of evaluative positions' (189) found in literary depictions of 'possible (small-scale) human situation[s]' (191): one from Anthony Powell's *Casanova's Chinese Restaurant* (1960), one from Colette's *Chéri* (1920), and one from Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* (1904). Lovibond begins with the passage by Powell because it is the least morally ambiguous. Although, its first-person narrator is 'having an aesthetic moment', his description of it provides us with 'a *moral* snapshot' of how things stood for his companion at the time of his memory (191). The passage by Colette is more challenging. It depicts Léa, a middle-aged

woman, who is dreaming about a life deprived of the sexual attentions of her handsome and much younger lover. Lovibond points out that if Léa's musings about her old age are to have any moral significance, then 'the point must be that the contents of one's consciousness are such as to *situate* one morally, for better or worse' (192). Yet, in the light of Colette's 'unwavering coolness and dryness' (193) Lovibond concludes:

> It is as if the question were being put: 'Morality, yes, we have known about that from our early years – we are familiar with its demands, at least the more obvious ones, and you should not infer that we hold them in any disrespect – but what *else* goes on in the mind? Aren't we allowed to acknowledge that as interestingly differentiated?' (193)

The third passage by James is even more dissonant. It is taken from Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* and portrays Maggie Verver's remarkable triumph over the adulterers: her husband and her friend, who is also her father's wife. In the words of Lovibond, we see 'the (slow-burning) joy of victory in a power-struggle', which reveals both the ubiquity of value and the 'complex, nested (or perhaps fractured) mode of its manifestation' (194). Lovibond concludes that if the passage reveals anything about the moral quality of Maggie's consciousness, it is 'in the guise of a strange, impressive and faintly sinister moral *phenomenon*' (195).

Lovibond deftly discloses a significant gap that separates someone seeking to be a person 'on whom nothing is lost' – someone for whom value is ubiquitous but not necessarily moral – and someone committed to the 'daily, hourly minutely attempted purification of consciousness' – someone for whom value and morality are interchangeable (200). In the case of the former, imaginative literature can contribute to our becoming a person 'on whom nothing is lost'. In the case of the latter, imaginative literature is dubiously sought as 'an aid to becoming *morally better* people' (196). Lovibond favourably describes the former as more disinterested and less instrumental than the latter; the latter, she thinks, misrepresents why studying the humanities is valuable.

Lovibond attributes Murdoch's insistence on the purification of consciousness to a preoccupation with original sin that, in turn, contributes to 'the confessional or penitential atmosphere of much of her [Murdoch's] mature writing' (199). If what Lovibond has in mind here is Murdoch's 'religious attitude', as explored in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Moral* (1992), then I agree.[3] For Murdoch saw herself as engaged in 'a rediscovery of religious modes of thought deep inside morals' (*MGM* 304). I would go further and add to Lovibond's account Murdoch's preoccupation with moral change (see *MGM* 521). As Driver and others have noted, 'one of the distinctive features of Murdoch's philosophy, [...] is her pursuit of an answer to the question "How do we make ourselves morally better?"' (169). Murdoch

was disappointed by the philosophical accounts that parse moral change into additions or refinements in an individual's knowledge, skills and dispositions. In such accounts, knowledge, skills and dispositions are understood as resources for improvements in deliberation and behaviour, as if the better and greater the additions and refinements, the more likely the person would be 'to behave better in our day-to-day life' – a formula Murdoch criticised for being reductive and unrealistic (197).

In Murdoch's philosophical universe, moral change is less straightforward and transparent. She conceives of it as more like a conversion, one that happens either suddenly or after 'some lengthy ascesis' (*MGM* 486). It can be motivated by a spiritual or moral aspiration to reach beyond our own egoism and to unveil reality (see *MGM* 539). Examples include those occasions of unselfing that permit us to see others (and ourselves) clearly and with compassion, as Driver relates; or those that empowers us to live and work outside conventional structures of authority and power in order to converse and commune with the powerless, as Altorf describes. According to Murdoch, moral changes such as these 'make sense of the notion of our being always "in the presence of God [or Good]", being at every moment mobile between good and bad and attracted in both directions' (*MGM* 521). Thus, while it might be impossible to discern the moral significance of each passing moment of consciousness, the moments themselves are nevertheless 'all the time building up our value world' (*MGM* 305). I interpret Murdoch as suggesting both that it is in the light of moral change that value is illuminated as having a moral dimension, a relation to the Good, and that perhaps the only way to fulfill the salvatory promise of moral change is to first imbue everything – thought, experience and values – with the moral potency that is to come. And if someone were to ask which comes first, either the reality of the Good itself or moral changes that convince us of its reality, Murdoch would respond that they are mutually informing – as is the case with any good metaphysical argument, a 'process [that necessarily] involves connecting together different considerations and pictures so that they give each other mutual support' (*MGM* 511).

1 I am grateful to Lawrence Blum, Justin Broackes, Evgenia Mylonaki, and Victor Seidler for ongoing conversations and correspondence about Iris Murdoch's philosophy.

2 See also Hannah Marije Altorf, 'After Cursing the Library: Iris Murdoch and the (In)visibility of Women in Philosophy," *Hypatia* 26:2 (2011), 308-402.

3 Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Penguin, 1993), 301, hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text as *MGM*.

Review of *Aesthetic Experience and Moral Vision in Plato, Kant, and Murdoch: Looking Good/Being Good* by Meredith Trexler Drees (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021)

Lyra Ekström Lindbäck

SOME PASSAGES BY IRIS MURDOCH HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED SO often that most of us probably know them by heart. There is the M and D example. The kestrel anecdote. The paragraph that says that art is like morals because it is love. The scene with Dora in The National Gallery in *The Bell*. What they have in common is a certain optimism regarding morality and/or art: if we pay attention, we become more selfless and thus more truthful, and aesthetic experiences may assist in this moral transformation. All of these quotations are deployed in Meredith Trexler Drees's *Aesthetic Experience and Moral Vision in Plato, Kant, and Murdoch: Looking Good/Being Good,* a book based on her PhD dissertation from 2014. There is, of course, nothing wrong with discussing these examples: but mere explication of their meaning has been done so many times before that one must bring something explicitly new to the table in order to motivate their discussion. From the perspective of Murdoch scholarship, Drees unfortunately fails to do so.

However, this book is not primarily meant to be a study of Murdoch. In fact, Drees's main aim remains unclear to me. As the title suggests, the interest is almost equally divided between Murdoch, Kant and Plato. These philosophers are discussed both separately and together, although it is not evident whether the purpose is exegetical, comparative, or simply to provide a background for the writer's own view. In the brief introduction, Drees states:

> The main themes involved include the question as to whether aesthetic experience may give rise to moral progress, questions about whether

> aesthetic experience can be used in moral education, the recent debate concerning whether or not aesthetic and ethical evaluations 'go their separate ways', questions about whether the moral content of a work is relevant to its aesthetic value, and the question as to whether beauty is intrinsically connected with moral value. (1)

There is no conclusion or summary chapter, which might have helped a reader to bring all of these different questions – discussed in relation to very different thinkers from different times – together into a whole.

The central thread is instead a certain stubborn optimism concerning how aesthetic experience makes us into better people; a spirit that has been very common in scholarship on Murdoch. That Drees starts off with Plato is somewhat more surprising. Famous for his moral suspicion of art, which is briefly noted in this book, Plato is nonetheless presented primarily as someone who thought that beauty is morally educational. The fundamental problem here – that Plato never connects beauty to art or mimesis – is not discussed by Drees. At times, she could – to borrow a term that Murdoch applies to Simone Weil in a review of her *Notebooks* – be accused of 'whitewashing' Plato, particularly his views on art.

Nonetheless, Drees is detailed in her summaries and diligent in her reading. A reader more sympathetic to the view she seeks to propagate – that aesthetic experience makes us better – might be more forgiving concerning the issue that this is not, as she claims, a question explored by the book, but rather a statement reinforced. Her outline of Kant's aesthetics is extensive and thorough, and what she calls the 'underappreciated' link between the Kantian sublime and morality, evidently inspired by Murdoch's interest in the Kantian concept of *Achtung*, is well described. She also points out an interesting and often ignored passage in the third *Critique* where Kant claims that '[t]he beautiful prepares us for loving something, even nature, without interest; the sublime, for esteeming it even against our interest' (§29). The question of whether aesthetic experience may relate to love is much debated in Kant studies, something Drees unfortunately fails to bring up. Exactly how and what and when her discussions are supposed to add to the current research is sometimes obscure, but doing justice to the vast amount of secondary literature on Plato, Kant and Murdoch within the scope of a PhD project is a huge undertaking. Among these, Drees is evidently best acquainted with the scholarship on Kant, but even here, her scope is often so wide that she fails to indicate to the reader where she actually makes a new contribution.

With regard to Murdoch, many relevant discussion partners have been missed. Textually, the long chapter entitled 'Aesthetic Experience, Moral Vision, and "Unselfing" in Iris Murdoch' consists mainly of an extensive account of some of Murdoch's most central notions, such as attention and the distinction between fantasy and imagination, which have been treated many times before. Drees

enforces her view by referring to Maria Antonaccio's *Picturing the Human*, but fails to address how Antonaccio's interpretation has been challenged and nuanced by later scholars such as Hannah Marije Altorf, Silvia Caprioglio Panizza and Niklas Forsberg. Therefore, her conclusions are at times very flat and unsurprising. On the basis of the M and D example, Drees states: 'This is what Murdoch means by a just and loving perception of another person, in all of that person's particularity and complexity; learning to attend to other individuals is learning to really see the good in another person, and to see that person not simply as an extension of oneself' (115). One does not really require new secondary literature on Murdoch in order to arrive at that interpretation.

That 'aesthetic experience' may contribute to moral progress is a much noted aspect of Murdoch's thought, and Drees includes everything from sublimity in art to paying close attention to other people within this category. She rarely goes into detail or gives concrete examples (despite citing that suddenly apprehending a kestrel might make us temporarily forget our self-centred concerns). Regarding fantasy and imagination, for example, she seems content with the conceptual distinction as an 'explanation' of the difference in practice. She fails to address the suspicion of the consolatory and 'magical' character of art that Murdoch has inherited from Plato, and states (incorrectly) that according to Murdoch, '[a]rt and nature cannot be for us to satisfy their egos; they resist that' (134).

Even though there is a (very short) chapter entitled 'Morally Troubling Art', this does not bring up the problems concerning most art – which Murdoch and Plato both address, such as the seductions and comforts of art, or the problem of false enlightenment – but focuses only on evidently problematic art such as Nazi films or sexist lyrics. Drees does note that 'all aesthetic experience, on the level of its formal, attractive qualities, involves a presentation of something as if it were good' (197). But the as if-character of the aesthetic does not seem to bother her, as it did Plato and Murdoch. As if-good is equated to truly good. Instead, she simply makes a distinction between content and form, and concludes: 'When art gives rise to immoral behavior, it is because it presents, in some sense, a false message, and the viewer mistakes that message to be true in light of the element of goodness that is presented by the aesthetic qualities of the object' (198). A beautiful Nazi film may be troublesome, but simply remove the Nazi content, and the problem is solved! Indeed, I envy Drees for living in a world where what is true or false, and good or bad, is so evident and simple.

As this review is aimed at Murdoch scholars, I leave the details of the Plato and Kant interpretations aside. But the last chapter 'Moving Beyond Murdoch: Kantian Religion as Moral Empowerment', which has been added after the defence of the PhD dissertation, is in part also an interesting provocation for Murdochians. It is concerned mainly with Kant's view of religion, as described in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. More specifically, Drees suggests that Christ (who

in this work is indicated but not mentioned by name by Kant) may be thought of as the embodiment of the ideal of perfection. She makes the somewhat contestable point that morality, according to Murdoch, does not make us happy (an interesting point which, however, would have required much more support in order to be argued successfully, if it can at all be done), and claims that Kant's view in contrast is a 'dream for happiness' which 'leaves room for hope' (232). Christ is here presented by Drees as the much needed 'image of a greater perfection that allows us to emulate, not only an ideal but also a person' (246). I am not very familiar with Kant's theological writings, but it strikes me as odd that Drees does not bring up the passage in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* where he says that not even Christ can replace our idea of moral perfection, and that '[i]mitation has no place at all in matters of morality' (4:408-9). It seems hard to square her interpretation of *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* with this quotation. Neither does she, in this chapter entitled 'Moving Beyond Murdoch', bring up Murdoch's discussions of Kant's view on the relationship between morality and faith (see for example Chapter 16 in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*).

Furthermore, if she wishes to argue that 'the Murdochian Idea of Perfection can be expanded to the idea of a perfect person' (246), i.e. Christ, she should bring in Murdoch's discussion of this figure in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. But addressing Murdoch's rejection of religion solely out of her interpretation of the Ontological Proof, Drees seems ignorant of how Murdoch's suspicion of religion aligns with her suspicion of art. In Chapter 4 of *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Murdoch discusses the ambiguous consolatory and base aspects of art especially in relation to Christianity, and 'how understanding what art is, its charms, its powers, its limits, help us to understand religion' (83). Any book discussing Murdoch's view of the relationship between aesthetics and morality, and ending with the Christ figure as a proposed amendment to it, must at least bring up these problems.

In failing to do so, *Aesthetic Experience and Moral Vision in Plato, Kant, and Murdoch* fails to convince of what is both its starting point and its conclusion, namely that 'beauty begins the moment we decide to choose our true selves' (247). This could perhaps be empowering as an inspirational quotation. But as research, it is unsatisfactory, especially from a scholar who – if she narrowed her focus – would evidently be capable of more.

Review of *Dylan at 80: It used to go like that, and now it goes like this*, edited by Gary Browning and Constantine Sandis

Kent Wennman

ANOTHER BOOK ABOUT BOB DYLAN? IS THAT REALLY necessary? According to the internet there are hundreds of books about Dylan on the market. For a reader like myself, who is reasonably well-informed about the life and career of Bob Dylan, the legends and myths (some of them concocted and spread by Dylan himself), it is a valid question. Do I really need another book about Robert Zimmerman?

Usually, when reading about male legends in popular music, one needs to turn a blind eye to the stories about drugs, women and money and to disregard the myth-making often done by the subject himself. For someone who is only interested in the music, these stories can be somewhat frustrating. If we were to mention the biggest star of them all, for example, I would note that I have only read two books about Elvis Presley that meet my standard, and I know for a fact that Bob Dylan agrees with my judgement here. But I am a very sceptical reader of books about musical heroes.

As it happens, my misgivings come to shame a few pages into the prologue, where we find a very well-written introduction by the editor Gary Browning: I instantly realise that this is not the ordinary Bob Dylan book with tiresome retellings of his hobo youth, the folk singer turning electric, the motorcycle accident, the Christian period, the never-ending tour, and so on. Instead, it is a book with interesting and eye-opening essays by people from a wide range of professions, who all have one thing in common: Bob Dylan has been, and still is, a game changer for them. The book offers an amazing collection of essays – brilliantly assembled by the editors – by professors, musicians, artists, philosophers, teachers, researchers, authors, concert promoters, photographers, critics, actors and lyricists. Throw in a judge and a poet and you realize this book is eclectic, to say the least. Clearly, this

multifaceted and dynamic book is a real labour of love, one initiated by passion for the subject.

The broad intellectual range of contributors, however, also means it is not a book for the beginner. Not only is there no life story, there is also no chronology, no index of records, nor a list of milestones. But the major reason why this book is not for those who wish to discover the basic facts surrounding Bob Dylan's life is the substantial variety of work dedicated to writers, artists, thinkers, and so on, who one way or another influenced, or were influenced, by Dylan. The names flashing by include Dylan Thomas, Rimbaud, William Zanzinger, Hattie Caroll, Woodie Guthrie, Emmet Till, Shakespeare, Picasso, Sam Cooke, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and John F Kennedy. As a guitarist I was also happy to find a chapter about Dylan's Stratocaster. Yes, this book spreads like wildfire in all directions, and it is a very satisfying read that makes you feel like you can only guess at the incredible scope of Bob Dylan's universe. This is the first book about a musical legend that broadened my landscape in a way I could never have anticipated; it makes you curious and at the same time dizzy.

There is also a short chapter (far too short for my liking), titled 'Unselfing in Bob Dylan and Iris Murdoch', where Fleur Jongepier, a Dutch professor of ethics, discusses the selfless way of attending to the world and the method of unselfing, concepts familiar to most Murdoch readers. Fleur is also saying something important to the other contributors to this book. Indeed, she offers a message to all of us who make too much of what Dylan (or Murdoch) wrote, meant, said or did not say. I think there are times when we can all be guilty of this; I hate to admit it, but there can be too much analysing. Sometimes one needs to accept that a sentence in a song or a book is there just because it felt good to write, or it rhymed, or it fitted the flow of the art-form. It might not have more depth than that. Fleur concludes that 'loving art and loving Dylan in particular likewise requires not trying to figure out who he "really" is, because the aesthetic value lies in trying to catch him whilst moving, which means being content with never quite catching him at all' (203). Reading this, I was instantly reminded of how, during Iris Murdoch Conferences, however enjoyable they have been, I sometimes get the feeling that maybe we are making too much of Murdoch's writings. I wish Fleur Jongepier would develop this line of thinking into a whole book.

In 1994, when Bob Dylan reviewed the first volume of what would later become Peter Guralnik's two-volume biography of Elvis, he concluded that *Last Train to Memphis: The Rise of Elvis Presley* (1994) would cancel out all the other biographical works on the King of Rock and Roll. I would not say that *Bob Dylan at 80* cancels out all other books about Bob Dylan, but it will definitely have its place in my collection of must-have books.

The Women are Up to Metaphysics

Benjamin J. B. Lipscomb, *The Women are Up to Something: How Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley, and Iris Murdoch Revolutionized Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021)

Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman, *Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brought Philosophy Back to Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2022)

Nikhil Krishnan

One greets these two splendidly titled books like patient commuters whose long wait is finally gratified with not one but two buses arriving more or less at once. Some potential readers will have long wondered why a group biography of the four great female philosophers who came of age in the wartime years does not already exist. Happily, such readers need not choose between these books. They are both admirable, and distinctive enough to be both worth having.

Both books cover the women's early careers in detail; Benjamin Lipscomb's book, *The Women Are Up to Something*, includes more discussion of their later careers, while Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman's *Metaphysical Animals* has more detail on their formative years. In both books, we get attractive pictures of the great philosophers as curious and earnest children. We follow them to Oxford, where they first meet and become friends. The early years of the Second World War are the background to their discovery of philosophy and their own philosophical voices. We learn about their activities during the war itself, their jobs and personal relations as well as the encounters that will shape their later philosophical writing. The tensions between the women are described with sensitivity, their intimacies set out without prurience, and their anxieties

conveyed with compassion. It is a hard act to pull off, but both books do so with great assurance. Both books contain extended passages of philosophical exegesis that consistently strike the right balance between accessibility and rigour. They are able, as intellectual biographies do not always manage, to get it right without dumbing it down.

Both books are about friendships – friendships that came to be as powerful a force in the lives of these women as the other relationships they had (with lovers, husbands, colleagues and children). At the very least, these friendships involved enormous respect on the part of each woman for the gifts and work of the others. The books suggest that they also involved a great deal more: an alliance between the women to do philosophy in a spirit marked by an earnestness and moral seriousness culpably lacking in the work of their male contemporaries.

More provocatively, the books also suggest that the four women converged on a set of theses, positive and negative. The convergence, the biographers propose, warrants talk of their constituting a heterodox 'school' of philosophy, one with at least as much claim to coherence as the other schools regnant in the same period: existentialism, logical positivism and ordinary language philosophy.

Of these, it is logical positivism that supplies the women with their target in its most objectionably concentrated form. Positivism, Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman write, was a task begun by a bunch of brash 'young men' who aimed to 'kill off the subject formerly known as "philosophy"' – that is to say, to dismiss as nonsensical the forms of 'speculative metaphysical enquiry' that had been the mainstay of the subject since its earliest inception. The only respectable enquiries were either empirical ones or forms of 'clarification and linguistic analysis', all done 'in the service of science'. The world was denuded of value and meaning, 'the old philosophical picture of man as a spiritual creature whose life is oriented towards God or the Good' declared to be so much nonsense (*MA* x).[1]

In Lipscomb's equally compelling words, the view against which the women set themselves was one that depicted the world as 'cold, pitiless, bereft', where the only exaltation is 'in beholding the bleakness of it all, or in having steeled oneself to look without flinching' (*WUS* 19). In his evocative (if deliberately anachronistic) phrase, the women were opposed to the 'Dawkins Sublime'.

The most obvious difference between the books is not of scope, but style. To appropriate a pair of terms that Iris Murdoch once used for the novels of the post-war era, Lipscomb's *The Women are Up to Something* is 'crystalline', while Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman's *Metaphysical Animals* is 'journalistic'. Lipscombe's book is relatively concise, elegant, its prose stately, the narrative pruned to its essentials. Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman, by contrast, revel in the incidental detail, their tone more affectionate, less impartial.

Both styles have something to commend them. The virtue of the crystalline style is the order it is able to impose on a surfeit of archival material. Indeed,

Lipscomb's arrangement is, despite a couple of confusing experiments with a non-chronological arrangement of the narrative, shapelier. But his style comes with the risk of oversimplifying the irreducibly complicated details of the women's lives, and loses out on those moments of messiness that remind us that these are human beings we are reading about, not Greek statues. There are times, as Elizabeth Anscombe is supposed to have urged in defence of her famously slovenly housekeeping, when one must remind oneself that 'dirt doesn't matter'; a little mess is simply the cost of living an ordinary human life (*WUS* 161).

With Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman, the risk is that the reader is simply flooded with seemingly inconsequential detail, or detail whose significance will be lost on anyone not already possessing a firm grasp of the material. Some readers will have reservations about the extremely free use of that dubious grammatical mood, what one might call the 'biographical subjunctive', with speculations preceded by an equivocal 'perhaps': Philippa would have seen, Iris might have expected, etc. There is enough solid research here, carefully sourced and corroborated, to dispel any fears that the authors will be cavalier about known truths, but readers should be aware that there is a fair amount of creative reconstruction here, not always labelled clearly as such.

A conspicuous stylistic choice in *Metaphysical Animals* is to refer to the principal figures by their first names. Initially, all the talk of 'Iris', 'Mary' and 'Philippa' makes one think of what Anscombe – I for one dare not call her Elizabeth! – is supposed to have said on being told that a certain evangelical claimed to have a personal relationship with God: 'what bloody cheek!' (*WUS* 145n). One feels the contrast acutely when we read a judicious footnote from Lipscomb where he stresses his attempts to allow his readers to make up their own minds about Anscombe in particular: as with Socrates, he says, if you do not see how she could inspire equal measures of reverence and loathing, 'you have not understood' (*WUS* 261n). But the intimacy of Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman's tone comes to feel an organic part of the authors' approach to their material, a tone that allows us to see them as human, vulnerable women making their way in a hostile world.

Both books make a strong case for the inclusion of Mary Midgley, the philosopher whose canonical status is the most precarious, in the story: not just because of her contingent personal connection with the other three, but because of how much she seems to have shared with them in terms of temperament and intellectual formation. Moreover, the books are excellent pieces of advocacy on behalf of Midgley's works, written relatively late in her life in comparison to the others. In particular, they bring out the originality of her borrowings from zoological writing, within a discipline whose practitioners, in that period, were scientistic in their self-conception but rarely bothered reading any actual science.

Even those whose interest is principally in Murdoch will find in both books plenty to keep their attention. Although both books are reliant on Peter J.

Conradi's important biography and the correspondence he himself drew upon, the fact that the books are written by philosophers makes a substantial difference to how her philosophical achievements are treated. The authors of both books make a persuasive case for seeing Murdoch not as a lone heretical figure in an academic mainstream hostile to her and her concerns but as a central figure within a powerful heterodoxy that deserves to be taken seriously as an alternative tradition in twentieth-century Anglophone philosophy.

The result is that Murdoch can seem like a philosopher who wrote the occasional novel rather than a novelist who once moonlighted as a philosopher. But the shift of emphasis serves as a salutary corrective to the view – advanced by some, such as A. N. Wilson, who should really know better – that her philosophical achievements were slight. Along with such books as Justin Broackes's *Iris Murdoch: Philosopher* and the important new volume edited by Silvia Caprioglio Panizza and Mark Hopwood, *The Murdochian Mind*, these biographies make it clear just how serious a philosopher she was, and rightfully place her among her British philosophical contemporaries.

In short, both books are well worth owning and reading for any reader with an interest in these figures. If I devote the rest of this review to points of disagreement with the authors, I do so despite having the greatest admiration for their achievement.

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Locke's *Essay* famously distinguished two intellectual virtues. 'Wit', he said, lies in 'the assemblage of ideas, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy'. 'Judgement', by contrast, 'lies [...] in separating carefully, one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another'.[2] Wittgenstein, with his gift for cutting right to the point, put the same distinction more concisely: 'Hegel seems to me to be always wanting to say that things which look different are really the same. Whereas my interest is in showing that things which look the same are really different'.[3]

The main grounds for my discontent with these books can be put in roughly those terms. The authors, anxious to justify treating the four women together, have a tendency to emphasise their (real) similarities over their (equally real) differences. Keen to portray them as heroines against a hostile mainstream, they end up obscuring the real continuities between their concerns and those of their supposed enemies. Against that decision, I urge the following: showing the women more explicitly as disagreeing on as much as they agreed on would have brought out their individuality. Moreover, adopting a more generous characterisation of

their opponents would not have been to the women's discredit. These complaints may indeed be put in Murdochian terms. Readers familiar with her essay 'The Idea of Perfection' will know of her famous parable of the loving mother-in-law, who comes to see her daughter-in-law not as 'vulgar but refreshingly simple, not undignified but spontaneous, not noisy but gay, not tiresomely juvenile but delightfully youthful, and so on'.[4] How might the stories of the four women go, were they told with more of an eye to Murdoch's injunction to look more justly?

In the first place, one might ask what logical positivism looked like to those who found in it not a complacent dismissal of traditional philosophy but a considered response, articulated in explicit arguments, to the achievements of modern physics and a political response by left-wing thinkers to the failures of the old politics? Ernest Nagel's classic account of the Viennese context in which it emerged brings out very powerfully just how much positivist ideas did to encourage a sense of accountability in philosophical speech. 'Traditional speculative philosophy', as he put it, 'frequently cultivates mystification and conscious irrationalism', and was often the basis for a reactionary politics.[5] It is simply unfair to the serious political risks the positivists took on – many of them openly socialist and anti-Fascist – to present their philosophy as a retreat from life and society. And even those who think the tradition an unhappy turn in modern philosophy must reckon with the force of its actual arguments, even when stripped of the polemical garb that gave them their initial notoriety and seductive power.

Positivism would have provided a more impressive target if it were not represented in the pages of both books principally by the words, and in the person, of A.J. Ayer – by no one's account its ablest exponent. But even Ayer himself is owed a slightly better treatment than the one he receives. Cocky and uncharitable to metaphysicians he undoubtedly was. Moreover, the influence on lazy undergraduates of what Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman at one point nicely term the 'conversation-killing' weaponisation of the words 'I don't understand' was wholly regrettable (*MA* 70). But a reader relying entirely on their account will be surprised to find, on inspecting the original works, that his position did not consist entirely in brash declarations and dismissals.

Even Ayer's most polemical work, the youthful *Language, Truth, and Logic*, is a book dense in argument. The objection to empirically unverifiable statements emerges from a fully articulated theory of linguistic meaningfulness, and the application of that theory to ethical statements does in fact capture something important about a genuine feature of human experience: the apparent intractability of ethical disagreements. I happen to agree with Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman that the arguments fail; Ayer himself appears to have come to that view later in his career. But without a robust sense of what the arguments were, of the intellectual grounds that people had for taking them seriously, the

achievements of the women (especially Foot's 'Moral Arguments' and Anscombe's magnificent 'On Brute Facts') in refuting them seem altogether less impressive.

The use of Ayer's positivism as the women's representative target rather overstates the positivistic character of Oxford philosophy even in the 1930s. It is true to say that positivism was the focus of much discussion, but not quite accurate to present the period as one in which its doctrines were widely accepted. The so-called Brethren – a group convened by J.L. Austin and Isaiah Berlin in their rooms at All Souls College – frequently discussed positivist claims, but at no point did positivism ever become the orthodoxy. Indeed, Ayer and positivism had no more dogged opponent at their meetings than Austin.

Austin himself comes out of both books a rather contemptible creature. Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman suggest that what little was valuable in Austin's work was most likely the product of the unacknowledged influence of Wittgenstein's *Blue Book*, a compilation of notes dictated to a select group of his students at Cambridge that made its way, probably without Wittgenstein's permission, to Oxford (*MA* 169). The authors are inclined to accept Anscombe's grounds for disliking Austin. 'For Wittgenstein and Anscombe', as Lipscomb summarises it, 'philosophy was a spiritual activity. Anscombe was maddened by Austin's lightness, his unseriousness' (*WUS* 144). The authors of both books seem to agree with Mary Warnock's characterisation of the difference between them: even where the methods were similar in the attention they urged to the ordinary uses of words, there was a difference of style, and 'matters of style', as Warnock is quoted as saying, 'can go very deep' (*WUS* 143). Anscombe seems to have loathed Austin's jocularity – 'urbane and witty, dismissive both of grand ambitions and dour sobriety' – preferring Wittgenstein's earnestness, his vision of philosophical therapy as 'aiming at healing or liberation from tormenting, entrapping thoughts' (*WUS* 143).

The authors of both biographies seem to find Austin's irony particularly objectionable. Wittgenstein was ironic in his way, occasionally even funny, as indeed was Anscombe, whose critical writings often rise to impressive pitches of indignant sarcasm. But Austinian irony is cool, exquisitely controlled, and lacks at least on the surface the connection with basic human concerns that Wittgenstein's disciples found in his work. It is surprising to find that the authors simply accept this characterisation of his work, and of his irony. On the received account, Austin, obsessed with the tracing of minor distinctions between the uses of ordinary English words ('by mistake' and 'by accident', for instance), lacked an interest in the wider context of human life that gave these distinctions their significance. Moreover, that account goes, despite the democratic pretensions of the method, it was in fact exclusive and parochial. As Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman summarise the criticism, 'what Austin's team were really describing was how English was spoken by men who got a First in Classical Greats at Oxford'

(*MA* 168). Cheap shot though it is, it captures an important line of criticism that cannot be dismissed. Both books reveal important sociological facts about the milieu of mainstream Oxford philosophy: of course, its overwhelming maleness and all the objectionable cockiness it encouraged, but also its upper-middle-classness, its public schoolness, and (though neither book makes much of race) what might be called its whiteness.

One of the meanings of the phrase in Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman's rich and suggestive subtitle – 'bringing philosophy to life' – is that Anscombe *et al* brought philosophical speculation closer to the ordinary conditions of human life, as opposed to their opponents, who took it further away. Their influential teacher Donald MacKinnon is quoted as terming the positivists' vaunted 'elimination of metaphysics' nothing less than 'an assault on man in the interests of a method' (*MA* 51). Austin, anti-positivist though he was, was supposedly no better: 'Just as Freddie Ayer had used the Criterion of Verification to reduce the Idealist and Realist metaphysicians to silence, J.L. Austin used the Criterion of the Dictionary to limit philosophers to the language of the plain man and the omnibus'. Against the Austinian Criterion, Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman urge a Wittgensteinian alternative: 'for Wittgenstein, a dictionary was a tool that could be used to settle the definition of a word only after almost everything about language and life was already understood' (*MA* 169).

Need Austin have denied that? Did he? My own view – one that I share with such present-day champions of Austin as Avner Baz, Nancy Bauer and Cora Diamond – is that he did not. Like Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman, these philosophers are fully in favour of philosophy being brought 'back to life' – back to the world of lovers and friends and children. But they see that impulse as equally central to Austin's project. There is a tension in Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman's account that is never fully resolved: why assume that the project of returning philosophy to life is the same as returning it to metaphysics? Roughly: because human beings are 'metaphysical animals'. But surely a good deal of metaphysics, starting from Plato, has itself been an attempt to escape human life? If so, would the anti-metaphysician not have just as a good a claim to be bringing philosophy back to life? Austin's emphasis on words as tools that we 'do things with', of language as a tool for taking responsibility, does precisely what Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman rightly commend. Why then do they not see in him an ally rather than an enemy?

The point may indeed be, as Warnock suggested, a matter of style. But even so, the line between Wittgenstein depth and Austinian jokiness should not be drawn so sharply. It is too reliant on an assumption we have reason to mistrust anyway: that depth and seriousness must manifest themselves as humourlessness or tortured intensity. Stanley Cavell is not, as far as I could see, mentioned in either book, but I am surprised that anyone writing now could present as uncontroversial the orthodox view of Austin as a sort of little-English parody of Wittgensteinian

depth. In Cavell's telling, the ulterior purpose of Austin's attention to subtle linguistic distinctions was to bring the human animal to a better awareness of the human voice. The appearance of superficiality was an aspect of the 'mask' he donned to obscure the moral vision behind his methods, his demand that his audience come to philosophy prepared for 'patience and co-operation, not depth and upheaval'. His bourgeois, academic manner, so rarely associated with depth, 'served as a counterpoise to Wittgenstein's strategies of the sage and the ascetic'.[6] But however apparently different they were, their therapeutic ideals were not so different after all.

That leaves the charge that Austin was personally rebarbative. If Austin was indeed (as there is much evidence for supposing) often a bully who could not resist the blandishments of power – if only over the younger colleagues in his so-called *Kindergarten* – that will not serve to distinguish him from Wittgenstein, whose own terrifying exercises of power and domination are even more legendary, indeed catalogued in both books. But it is hard to avoid the impression that Wittgenstein's bullying is shown, in both books, rather more indulgence than Austin's, perhaps because he had the grace to be deep while he was at it. But a profound bully is still a bully. Austin may have failed to realise the democratic potential of his own methods – peers sitting around a table with dictionaries rather than watching terrified as a genius clutches his temples in agony. But that democratic potential was real, and is surely a better and more realistic model for what a co-operative, collaborative philosophy today might look like than anything Wittgenstein ever managed.

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My reservations, then, might be summarised as follows: there is no way of drawing a line – on stylistic, doctrinal or other grounds – that will neatly put the goodies on one side and the assorted baddies on the other. If the criterion for being on the side of the angels is an antipathy to positivism, then that will put Susan Stebbing on the wrong side, and Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman at least are keen to count her among the goodies. If the criterion is a belief in the 'spiritual nature of man', then it takes a real strain to accommodate Foot and Midgley, certainly in their early years, on the same side as Murdoch and Anscombe. If the criterion is a commitment to some form of Wittgenstein-inflected Aristotelianism, it is the Platonist, Murdoch – who is not easily described as any sort of 'naturalist' – whose place in the Wartime Quartet becomes suspect.[7]

The more one starts to look at the grouping, the less it seems to be justified on purely intellectual grounds. There certainly are what Wittgenstein famously called 'family resemblances'. But if family resemblances are what we are looking for, then the family contains brothers as well as sisters. There are also – to use

another Murdochian metaphor for complex intellectual affinities – a good many first- and second-cousins jostling for a place in the family photograph.[8] Austin and Anscombe will turn out to be closer than one would expect in their antipathy to positivist ideas about 'sense data' (recall that Murdoch explicitly praised Austin's *Sense and Sensibilia* as 'a detailed and brilliant exorcism of the notion of the sense-impression').[9] Some of Foot's early work, in particular what can seem her anomalous paper 'Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives', will fit nicely alongside the work of R.M. Hare in exposing the limits to the rational demands of morality.[10] In their serious interest in the history of philosophy, the women are closer to such figures as Hare and Gilbert Ryle (who both wrote scholarly books on Plato) than to Wittgenstein, who is quoted in Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman's book as saying, proudly, 'Here I am, a one-time professor of philosophy who has never read a word of Aristotle!' (*MA* 203).

In the same spirit, the books might then make more of the differences between the four women. We are told, intriguingly, of conversations that might have taken place between Foot and Anscombe on the subject of theism: for all her influence on her younger Somerville colleague, Anscombe never managed to make a convert of her (*MA* 161). It might have been interesting to reflect, in a similar vein, about what Murdoch, whose novels present such sympathetic portrayals of male homosexual relationships, made of Anscombe's unequivocal condemnations of homosexuality.

Similarly, although Midgley's interest in matters zoological can be accommodated within a picture of her as an Aristotelian naturalist, it is still remarkable that she was the only one of the four to take any serious interest in the findings of the natural sciences. Anscombe's interest in the 'natural history' of man was, in Michael Thompson's useful phrase, part of a project in analytic (or 'Fregean') naturalism.[11] Foot's *Natural Goodness* is more interested in the structure of our concepts and the language of natural description than anything one might learn from a zoologist about the behaviour of wolf packs. Murdoch, who gave Midgley's *Beast and Man* a warm recommendation, also earned some notoriety for asserting that 'it is and always will be more important to know about Shakespeare than to know about any scientist'.[12] There was room here for a story that made more of these divergences in their thought, which might itself have provided more friction, and more dramatic tension, than is supplied by a story where the opponent is always some smug public schoolboy needing to be shown a little reality.

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One can see that the picture resulting from this alternative approach, messy on the inside and vague around the edges, is bound to be unsatisfactory to publishers seeking the comforts of a moral fable with moustachioed villains defeated by

plucky heroines. Jennifer Frey, reviewing the two books with a scepticism similar to mine about the prospects of finding any deep unity in the women's projects, has helpfully suggested that 'if anything binds these women together into a meaningful unity, it is the intellectual friendship between them'.[13] But there is in fact another reason, a feminist one, to sustain the fiction of unity – and the myth of a school – even when the evidence only supports something much weaker.

The authors can quite reasonably say that the women's feminism is not so much asserted in the books as simply embodied by them. In the relentless way in which they expose historical patterns of exclusion and gatekeeping, in their sensitivity to the gendered aspects of philosophical practice, the books are indeed quietly but resolutely feminist. The idea of a school of philosophy containing these four philosophers and no one else is of course a fiction. But then, so is the idea that there was ever such a thing as 'ordinary language philosophy' as a unified and systematic project run out of an Oxford common room, or a single thing called 'existentialism' with its headquarters in some smoky Parisian café. So, one might conclude, if the men can help themselves to the fiction of a shared project, why not offer the same possibility to the women too? Philosophical schools are not, in any case, what metaphysicians call 'natural kinds'. They can, nevertheless, be useful explanatory categories, unifying disparate phenomena and improving our ability to see thematic similarities and stylistic continuities that the orthodox historiography of the discipline has made invisible.[14] The risk of such mythologising – a great feat of Lockean 'wit' – is that a story about two ways of doing philosophy must be treated as identical to the story of women's philosophy as opposed to men's. But the stories are different, and not to distinguish them amounts to a failure of Lockean 'judgement'.

These two books, quite apart from the attention they will attract to the works of the four women, presents a vision to students of philosophy – female students in particular, but also to anyone who feels marginalised by the norms of the twenty-first century mainstream of the discipline – of other possible sets of norms, of other possible canons. I have argued that these biographies by Lipscomb and by Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman exaggerate the extent to which we are forced to choose between the clever, cocky men and the thoughtful, humane women. But like other such exaggerations, what they help us to see really is there to be seen.

1 As this is a dual review of Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman's *Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brought Philosophy Back to Life* and Benjamin J. B. Lipscomb's *The Women Are Up to Something: How Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley, and Iris Murdoch Revolutionized Ethics*, parenthetic quotations to the texts will be differentiated by two abbreviations, *MA* and *WUS*, respectively.

2 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689); (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), ed. by Peter Nidditch, Essay II, Chapter 11, Section ii.

3 Maurice Drury, 'Some Notes on Conversations with

Wittgenstein' in *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, ed. by Rush Rhees (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 91–111 (94).

4 Iris Murdoch, 'The Idea of Perfection' in *Existentialists and Mystics*, ed. by Peter J. Conradi (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997), 299–336 (313).

5 Ernest Nagel, 'Impressions and Appraisals of Analytic Philosophy in Europe. I', *The Journal of Philosophy* 33: 1 (1936), 5–24 (9).

6 Stanley Cavell, 'Austin at Criticism' in *Must we mean what we say? A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1969), 97–114 (112).

7 For a more detailed development of this line of criticism in relation with Lipscomb's book, see Kate Manne, 'The Nice and the Good', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 11 February 2022.

8 The metaphor of cousinhood appears in Iris Murdoch, 'The Novelist as Metaphysician' in *Existentialists and Mystics*, 101–107 (102).

9 Iris Murdoch, 'The Idea of Perfection', 319.

10 I have previously argued for seeing Hare and Foot as (for a time) closer than is usually acknowledged: see Nikhil Krishnan [Nakul Krishna], 'Volunteers and Conscripts: Philippa Foot and the Amoralist', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 87 (2020), 111–125.

11 Michael Thompson, *Life and Action: Elementary Structures of Practice and Practical Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2008). See also the useful discussion in John Hacker-Wright, 'What is natural about Foot's ethical naturalism?', *Ratio* 22: 3 (2009), 308–321.

12 Iris Murdoch, 'The Idea of Perfection', 327.

13 Jennifer A. Frey, 'The Somerville Quartet', *The Point Magazine*, 26 April 2022.

14 For scepticism about the idea of a philosophical school as applied to mid-century analytic philosophy, see Aaron Preston, 'Conformism in Analytic Philosophy: On Shaping Philosophical Boundaries and Prejudices', *The Monist* 88: 2 (2005), 292–319.

Review of *The Murdochian Mind* edited by Silvia Caprioglio Panizza and Mark Hopwood (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022)

Gillian Dooley

10 JUNE 2022: I HAVE BEEN HONOURED WITH THE TASK OF reviewing *The Murdochian Mind*, which was published late last week. The editors of the *Iris Murdoch Review* (*IMR*) offered to wait for my review and publish it next year, but that did not seem fair to the Murdochian world, so I am on a deadline. Can I read and appreciate 37 chapters (arranged into five parts), and write a review, in four weeks? The best way, as I see it, is to read two chapters each day and, at the end of each part, to write about impressions so far: a progressive review.

This is the latest publication in the series 'Routledge Philosophical Minds', following five predecessors: *The Gadamerian Mind*, *The Lockean Mind*, *The Anscombean Mind*, *The Bergsonian Mind* and *The Jamesian Mind*. The series aims to 'present a comprehensive survey of all aspects of a major philosopher's work', in particular of philosophers 'who tower over the intellectual landscape and have shaped it in indelible ways'. They admit that the impact of these individuals is 'so significant that it is difficult to capture it in one place' (ii). Difficult, but that does not mean that it should not be attempted. The epigraph to *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* is, after all, 'Une difficulté est une lumière. Une difficulté insurmontable est un soleil', from Paul Valéry's *Mauvaises Pensées et Autres* (1941). So Caprioglio Panizza and Hopwood have bravely undertaken the task of compiling a huge and comprehensive collection of essays on Murdoch, with a dazzling cast of contributors.

Part One, 'Reading Murdoch', contains seven chapters and already those seven chapters contain multitudes. The immediate attraction of these chapters is their variety. Even though the titles of chapters 2 to 5 all begin 'How to read …' – each one of them concerning one of Murdoch's philosophical works – each of

these scholars has approached the task of instruction and induction in a quite different way. As the editors write in their introduction, 'one of the reasons that the Murdochian philosophical world is so attractive is that Murdoch was deeply aware of the personal nature of philosophising, and unafraid to talk about it' (1). This is an essential feature of Murdoch's work and a theme which recurs throughout the book.

Chapter 1 is by Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman, the authors of the recently published book *Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brought Philosophy Back to Life* (2022) on the female philosophers that comprised the Wartime Quartet, including Murdoch. They give a detailed account, in this chapter, of the influence on Murdoch of Gabriel Marcel, a 'Christian existentialist philosopher and playwright' (27), during the years immediately after World War Two when she was a fellow at Cambridge. Elizabeth Anscombe, another of the 'metaphysical animals', was also at Cambridge and Murdoch persuaded her to provide an introduction Wittgenstein. The impact of these encounters on the development of Murdoch's philosophy is explained with reference to her journals and her reading history, in an engrossing account of the development of the 'strikingly original and embracive project' (31) that Murdoch arrived in Cambridge ready to pursue in 1947.

In the second chapter, the first of the 'How to Read ...' series, Justin Broackes provides a useful and lucid clarification of what Murdoch is both for and against in *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970). He frames his insights as various kinds of 'map', including an illuminating table titled 'An Outline of Murdoch's "Idea of Perfection": a Dialogue concerning Two Great World-Pictures' (47). He also confesses that '[r]eading Murdoch I've often found her saying something that seems either maddeningly vague or broad' (49), but goes on to work through the reading process during which he discovers that what she is doing is:

> introducing new concepts, or stretching old concepts. And once the reader adjusts her understanding to make sense of the statement, the statement looks very decently well expressed: and it may even be hard to realize how opaque it can seem to a person with only the previous understanding. But before one has made the adjustment, the argument, even the view, can pass by without being recognized for what it is. (49)

I found this a striking and very useful piece of advice: Broackes emphasises the importance of reading patiently and with proper attention – a lesson many of us could profit from.

Next, David Robjant takes on the task of instructing us how to read *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* (1977), that 'grand inquisition

upon the sins of art and its consumption, upon the corruptions of artists and of consumers of artists'. With wit and acuity he takes us through the intricacies and contradictions of Murdoch's 'grand trial of art'. In this trial, 'Plato is cast as the principal accuser, but as we later discover he is equally necessary as the accused' (55). Using this irresistible metaphor of legal proceedings to structure his argument, Robjant records Murdoch's equivocations as she navigates these uncertain waters, mounting a defence for art which is 'hardly unambiguous': 'Art is us, in ways that the charge sheet, in its very length, itself helps to emphasise' (57).

Art is us: we are all storytellers, and all storytelling is art. And, as Murdoch points out many times, this includes Plato: Plato is the storyteller *par excellence*. Robjant concludes that 'the defence ultimately enters a plea of humanity' (66). Art is us. Three words, seven letters, worth remembering.

Chapter 4 seems to draw threads from what has come before, although I doubt that the authors have consulted directly with each other. What I think is happening is that a coherent though not monolithic picture of Murdoch's mind is emerging, and the reader begins to be struck by the way these already very diverse ways of reading and explaining her works create that picture. Hannah Marije Altorf's mission is to explain how to read Murdoch's philosophical dialogues, *Acastos*. She relates their genesis in a request from theatre director Michael Kustow after he had read *The Fire and the Sun*. Murdoch declared it to be impossible to write these dialogues, but she nevertheless rose to the challenge.

Altorf then goes on to consider the dialogues, very properly, as works of dramatic art, looking at form, character and setting, before discussing their structure and argument: 'the dialogues deserve a more prominent place in Murdoch scholarship, because they [...] allow for a different, more intimate as well as more diverse, encounter with ideas' (69). They are not perfect, she concludes, but they are attempting something unique in the landscape of contemporary philosophical writing. Murdoch is foregrounding the problem of its lack of diversity – not solving it, but stating it – casting on it the sunlight of insurmountable difficulty.

Mark Hopwood, one of the editors of this volume, has taken on the immense challenge of instructing us how to read Murdoch's last work of philosophy, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (*MGM*). At least one whole book has already been devoted to this endeavour, so to attempt it in a twelve-page chapter is a valiant undertaking. He has taken the approach of using what he calls Murdoch's 'framing passages' (81) throughout the book to consider three questions:

1. What is Murdoch trying to do in MGM?
2. Why is this task (a) so important, and (b) so difficult?
3. In light of Murdoch's goals in MGM, how should we approach the text as readers? (81)[1]

Hopwood also refers to the Valéry epigraph. As he says, 'MGM is an extraordinarily original and ambitious piece of philosophical writing' (81), needing to be approached on its own terms, and he writes with the worthy aim of making *MGM* not less difficult, but more approachable.

Frances White starts us on a new track in Chapter 6: not 'how to read' but 'how Iris Murdoch can change your life'. I suspect many readers of the *IMR* will identify with this formulation: many of us have been deeply influenced by Murdoch's novels and her philosophy. White sets out to explain what Murdoch aspired to as a writer. She traces Murdoch's impact, recorded in works by her personal friends, in her correspondence – which was voluminous and directed not only to her close friends but also to her fans worldwide – and in essays and books published after her death. While cautioning us against hagiography, White contends that Murdoch was still 'a woman with a message, a writer on a mission' (100), and one who left a substantial legacy to future generations of readers.

The final chapter in Part One leads on perfectly from White's essay. Theologian Stanley Hauerwas writes about 'Murdoch and Me' in what he calls 'a personal reflection' (108). Hauerwas, who tells us that he has recently passed his 80th birthday, recounts presenting a paper titled 'Murdochian Muddles: Can We Get Through Them If God Does Not Exist?' in Murdoch's presence in Chicago in May 1994, and her subsequent bewilderment at his difficulties with her philosophical position on religion. This frank and disarming short memoir testifies to the importance of Murdoch as a philosopher to disagree with: she has influenced him profoundly. There is a sentence in *The Sovereignty of Good*, he said, that he not only loves, but has made a career out of. But characteristically he has felt the need to rewrite her sentence. He concludes that 'Murdoch is over everything I have thought and written' (111).

17 June: Part Two of *The Murdochian Mind* moves to exploration of 'core themes and concepts' in Murdoch's philosophy. The nine chapters in this part do not display quite such a variety of approaches, and getting to grips with these concepts is sometimes challenging for the non-philosophical reader. In Chapter 8, although he admits that 'not many people think of Murdoch as a philosopher of language' (115), Niklas Forsberg goes on to elucidate Murdoch's relations with 'Thinking, Language, and Concepts'. Language, as he says, is a 'pervasive and recurring theme' in her philosophical work, one that can be found 'almost everywhere' (116).

Perhaps the most strikingly rhetorical of this series of chapters is Sophie Grace Chappell's 'Inwardness in Ethics'. She sets out in the first section of her chapter a manifesto about philosophy which anyone who knows the first thing about Murdoch will soon understand is a summary of all that she did not believe. Chappell then begins her second section by saying, 'Perhaps no actual philosopher

has ever signed up for exactly the Manifesto that Section 1 presents' (130). And, of course, she clearly differentiates Murdoch's views from this 'systematic moral theory', and she also adds, satisfyingly, 'I entirely and unreservedly reject it' (13). Chappell uses the Valéry epigraph to *MGM* to structure her argument in a most enlightening way.

Anil Gomes takes on the task of 'clarify[ing] the role played by the metaphor of vision in Murdoch's philosophical thinking' (142). This is no mean task and he is keen to distinguish between the concepts of 'moral vision' and 'vision which is itself moral' (144). Gomes also emphasises the centrality of metaphors for Murdoch's philosophical thinking – and he also refers to the sentence from 'The Idea of Perfection' (1962) which was life-changing for Hauerwas: 'I can only choose within the world I can *see*, in the moral sense of "see" which implies that clear vision is the result of moral imagination and moral effort' (147).

The chapters that follow in a way reprise the same themes from very slightly different angles. Silvia Caprioglio Panizza's chapter is on 'Attention'; she notes, acutely, that 'perhaps too much focus on a concept, or a phenomenon, makes it lose its familiar intelligibility'. Inevitably, she brings the concept of vision and its metaphorical weight into her discussion of attention. Caprioglio Panizza also discusses some of the problems with 'attention and the accompanying unselfing' as Murdoch seems to advocate it. She brings Murdoch into discussion with Simone Weil, but differentiates them: 'Murdoch's gaze on human individuals is a tender and tolerant one, as befits a novelist perhaps. Weil's is uncompromising and fiery' (164).

Chapter 12 brings us to Christopher Cordner's discussion of 'Love' – an enormous subject for Murdoch; one which she herself said was her main subject as a novelist.[2] Cordner goes deeply into the question of the nature of Love, for Murdoch, and the apparent contradictions and difficulties with what this might actually mean, again discussing Weil's immense (but not unquestioned) influence on Murdoch.

Maria Silvia Vaccarezza then takes on the subject of 'Virtue', asking, at the very start, 'Was Iris Murdoch a virtue ethicist?'. She decides, surprisingly, that the answer could be yes – 'namely, a Buddhist-inspired one' (190), and further that she could be seen as 'a (reluctant?) Kantian virtue ethicist' (191), or even 'an Aristotelian virtue ethicist' (192). I leave it to the philosophical community to adjudicate on these proposals. Indeed, Vaccarezza begins her conclusion by saying: 'The three paths I proposed in this chapter are not meant to be rivalrous or mutually exclusive, nor as a way to confine Murdoch's thought within rigid limits. She is far too polyhedric a thinker to be so enclosed' (194).

By this time the Murdochian mind has been pretty thoroughly examined. Although, of course, the authors would not have been writing these chapters in sequence, knowing what the others had said, there is a lot of continuity and

some overlap in these essays: they immerse the reader in all the complexities and ambiguities of Murdoch's thought, which can sometimes appear 'maddeningly difficult' as she writes her way towards an understanding of these ideas (8). In Chapter 14, Craig Taylor valiantly tackles 'The good', referring from the start, once again, to its metaphorical force: 'All philosophy, and especially, she thinks, moral philosophy, uses metaphors as a way of understanding our human condition' (197). Metaphors are not decorative but, to Murdoch, fundamentally important in thinking about the human condition.

Taylor, amidst his discussion of The Good, this 'absolutely central' (197) concept for understanding Murdoch's moral philosophy, mentions the Ontological Proof, which is the subject of the next chapter in Part Two, by Nora Hämäläinen. She begins by stating candidly that 'this chapter is born out of my puzzlement over Murdoch's discussion of the ontological proof' (209) in *MGM*. At the outset of this very thorough and thoughtful consideration of Murdoch's aims in deploying and exploring the Proof, Hämäläinen points out that Murdoch is not interested in solving logical puzzles: on the contrary, '[s]he is someone who explores, elaborates, investigates, illustrates, and particularises, and who uses various forms of argument for all these purposes' (209).

Chapter 16, the last in Part Two, broadens the picture somewhat. Sandra Laugier's title is 'Care for the Ordinary'. In this chapter, Laugier aims 'to account for [Murdoch's] present influence and importance' in respect of 'the ethics of the particular; the ethics of care; the ethics of importance and mattering' (223). The discussion ranges beyond the minute and careful examinations of the previous few chapters to look at Murdoch in the context of other thinkers – of what she took from Wittgenstein, for example – and beyond to intersections of her thought with Cora Diamond and those who not only discuss and interpret her work but also build upon it.

21 June: Part Three has eight chapters devoted to Murdoch's 'critical encounters' with eight other philosophers. The first of these is Plato, which is no surprise. What readers might find surprising is that Catherine Rowett taxes Murdoch with a certain carelessness in her discussions of Plato. Murdoch 'found a kindred spirit' in Plato (239), Rowett writes, but then points out that her approach to his writings was that of a 'magpie, plucking an isolated quotation' (240), and that she had an abiding 'habit of attributing Socrates' words to Plato' (241). Her reference to art in Plato's *Laws* is a 'somewhat breathless summary' (241). Rowett points out several instances of Murdoch giving the wrong citation for a Plato quotation, or failing to give a reference at all. (This is not an uncommon sight to readers familiar with Murdoch's philosophy.) In her conclusion, she emphasises the 'two problematic and surprising aspects of Murdoch's approach to Plato' (250): her 'remarkable blindness' (particularly for a novelist) to the status of Plato's views

versus those of his characters in the dialogues, and her 'surprising acceptance and apparent endorsement' of the 'dominant narrative' about Plato and the Forms, which Rowett believes undermines Murdoch's own position and confirms the 'Rylean orthodoxy' that she wanted to challenge (250).

Melissa Merritt, in Chapter 18, takes up the 'delicate, complex topic' of Murdoch's relation to Immanuel Kant (253). Like Rowett, she is not uncritical of Murdoch's 'sweeping and idiosyncratic approach to intellectual history' (253), which offers a 'sprawling genealogy [which] is bound to raise the hackles of scholarly caution' when discussing Natural Law morality (254). Kant's theory of the sublime was obviously a very important influence, and Merritt credits Murdoch with attempting to adapt the conception 'without falling into the presumption of easy sense-making, and the sorts of consolation it provides' (263). She is more forgiving than Rowett, attributing to Murdoch a good reason 'to endorse her provocative conclusion that we may need good art more than philosophy to develop properly as human beings' (263).

Gary Browning next takes on Murdoch's 'complex' relationship with Hegel. We begin to see a new trend in this part of the book: in these chapters Murdoch is often quite freely criticised for failures in interpretation, or inattentive readings. Browning traces Murdoch's affinities and disagreements with Hegel, in fields such as phenomenology, metaphysics and history, but compares Hegel's 'orderly and systematic' writing with Murdoch's text, which 'betrays no overriding principle of organisation' (275). Browning is again more tolerant of Murdoch's somewhat chaotic approach: he believes that she 'styles her philosophy neither as absolute nor as establishing an enlightening procedure, or at least not a procedure which is anything other than fallible in resolving problems and tensions' (277). And he even allows that Hegel's philosophy, as displayed in Murdoch's writings, 'appears more imaginative and experientially insightful than is standardly acknowledged' (278).

Michelle Mahony has been interested in Heidegger and Murdoch since her student years. She links her reasons for her admiration of Murdoch to the fact that she found herself in favour of 'Heidegger's breaking down of the traditional divisions in philosophy' (280). Therefore, as she recounts in Chapter 20, she was keen to investigate Murdoch's Heidegger manuscript in the Kingston University Archives. One of her main questions is 'if we consider each philosopher's accounts of the order of activity of meaning-making, how is Murdoch's account the undoing of Heidegger's?', contrasting Heidegger's restricted view with Murdoch's, which is 'expansive because she holds that meaningful expressions are in the ordinary activity of immersive life' (281). Although both philosophers wrote about art, Murdoch 'reverses […] Heidegger's position' that value exists only outside people's everyday experience, believing in the importance of art to communicate values. For Murdoch, the fact 'that art is unafraid of real moral experience is crucial to

its contribution to living life' (283), but she nevertheless takes 'the loveless and heroic philosopher seriously' (287) in her commitment to shedding 'light in the darkest of places' (289).

Jean-Paul Sartre was obviously a huge influence in Murdoch's philosophy, and she wrote the first monograph on him in English. In Chapter 21, Alison Scott-Baumann makes some interesting observations about his influence not only on Murdoch's philosophy but also on her fiction. Scott-Baumann follows Declan Kibert in seeing her 1965 novel *The Red and the Green* as an instance, 'in this early novel [of] making use of Sartrean techniques which she had already denounced' (296). The fact that *The Red and the Green* is Murdoch's ninth published novel casts some doubt on the description of it as an early work in which she had not yet broken free of the Sartrean shackles. Scott-Baumann is certainly right to recognise that Murdoch rejected most -isms and ideologies, but she nevertheless finds traces of liberalism in the 'liberal conversation' (301) in her novels. Scott-Baumann herself follows the Murdochian tradition by deploring the dependence in modern life on computers and social media which is apparently making 'personal, spoken discourse among co-present people [...] more difficult, more precious and even more vitally important than it was' for Sartre and Murdoch (303). In any case, she claims that Murdoch's disagreements with Sartre were 'refreshing' for her as it gave her 'someone with such strong views to kick against' (302).

Eva-Maria Düringer takes on another of Murdoch's essential intellectual relationships with a figure of the recent past, Simone Weil. Düringer opens Chapter 22 with the bold, but not controversial, statement that Weil's 'influence on Iris Murdoch can hardly be exaggerated' (306). Düringer does not spend a lot of time on the concepts of attention, unselfing and void, which Murdoch adopted from Weil. She chooses instead to focus on affliction, a topic which 'is central to Weil's thinking and her treatment of it both fascinated and irritated Murdoch'. Düringer contends that Weil's influence is 'immense' but not uncontested (307). She adds that it is a subject which has not yet received sustained attention. Düringer resorts to novels including *The Black Prince* (1973) and *The Message to the Planet* (1989) to illustrate Murdoch's critique of Weil's ideas about affliction. And indeed one could cite several instances of Murdoch's 'seeker' characters – for example, Cato Forbes in *Henry and Cato* (1976) and Bellamy James in *The Green Knight* (1993) – being advised that death, not suffering, is the ordeal that is most important and difficult to face.

In Chapter 23 we are at last with Wittgenstein, who was such a presence in Murdoch's world. Anne-Marie Søndergaard Christensen begins her chapter by asserting that Murdoch 'had a complicated view of Ludwig Wittgenstein, both personally and philosophically' (318), and that he 'appeared in the roles of both ally and opponent' (318). My favourite Murdoch quote about Wittgenstein is in her 1976 interview with Michael Bellamy:

> I'm a great admirer of Wittgenstein, and I suppose I am myself, in a way, a Wittgensteinian; but if I am a Wittgensteinian, I am one in a proper, as it were, negative sense. It isn't that one has got any body of theory, but one has got a style and a way of looking at philosophical problems. He's a great philosopher.[3]

Christensen does not quote this passage – in fact it doesn't appear anywhere in the book, as far as I can see. It seems to me that it supports Christensen's view that 'what Murdoch makes visible is how moral philosophers are themselves moral subjects' (327), and that both these philosophers 'show how the activities of attention and thinking are *practical* activities in morality as well as in philosophy' (328). And Christensen also boldly 'risks the claim that if you run through a number of your favourite works of fiction, the struggle to respond appropriately to the moral importance of the unique will probably appear in a number of them' (325). She links this with a claim that 'Murdoch's substantiation of the moral self – especially in terms of the importance of attention and the need for continuous moral improvement' – is in tune with some of Wittgenstein's 'reflection on philosophical method' (324).

And lastly in this part, Robert Stern stages an imaginary encounter between Murdoch and the Danish philosopher and theologian K.E. Løgstrup, who Stern believes to have been unaware of each other's work, though they were contemporaries,. Stern explores their common ground on subjects such as attention and unselfing. This is an absorbing study in speculation – another example of where 'disagreement among intellectual allies is often more enlightening than differences between enemies who merely talk past each other', in this case leading to the insight that 'the common ground between Murdoch and Løgstrup can help make their divergences more illuminating' (331).

27 June: And so on to Part Four, 'Art, religion, and politics'. In Chapter 25, Chiara Brozzo and Andy Hamilton address Murdoch's attitudes to art in her philosophical writings, arguing 'that Murdoch's views about art, though traditionally linked to Plato, are more compatible with Kant's thought than has been acknowledged' (347). They question her interpretation of Plato, explaining the differences that the Enlightenment brought to the concept of 'fine art': 'the Greek conceptual system did not properly distinguish aesthetic and non-aesthetic arts' (349). They conclude their chapter with an examination of Murdoch's views of 'bad art', in which they detect the influence of Freud (357). Her 'separation between good art and "self-consoling fantasy" or entertainment is too strict' (358); her claim that most consolation is 'fake' is 'too strong' (358). Indeed, Murdoch's views on art and its relationship with morality are full of ambivalence and ambiguity.

Chapter 26 brings us to the perennial question of whether Murdoch is a 'philosophical novelist'. Miles Leeson, whose book on the subject was published in 2010, provides a useful historical survey of the debate on this question. Leeson claims that 'every literary critic [...] writing at length on Murdoch in the last 50 years has grappled with this question' (363). He also points out the protean nature of her fiction, despite the fact that her aims 'remain relatively stable throughout': her crossing of genres and modes of writing make it difficult to classify her as a particular type of writer (363). The answer I would give to the question – that it depends on what you mean by a philosophical novelist – has, not surprisingly, occurred to Leeson as well. He concludes by declining to make a declaration either way: 'Murdoch's ability to cross borders, and to cover an enormous amount of ground across her writing [...], is testament to the enduring appeal of this question' (373) – and, I would add, its ultimate insolubility.

Rowan Williams' chapter on 'Writing morally' is interesting for many reasons. One is the direct, unmediated approach to the question. Most of the other authors have cited predecessors to a greater or lesser extent, but the only 'secondary' source Williams quotes is a review of *MGM* by Alasdair MacIntyre. Otherwise, this piece is a short, though well-informed, essay that asserts, from the start, that 'the Murdochian mind is always the mind of an artist' and that 'it is in the novels that she lays out most fully the lines of her distinctive moral imagination' (376). Williams is not uncritical, but he claims that 'the Murdochian novel is, like the Murdochian fictional sage, a necessary disappointment' (378). Looking at exchanges about moral questions in several of the novels, he detects 'a constant scepticism about what could count as a teaching of the moral life' and 'a sense of the simultaneous frivolity and gravity of fictional writing as a moral exercise' (380).

The three chapters that follow discuss Murdoch's vexed relations with various faith traditions. Elizabeth Burns begins her essay on Christianity with the observation that 'Murdoch's attitude to Christianity may be described as ambivalent' (382). Her position that one could reject the idea of a personal god without rejecting the moral teachings, and even the narratives, of Christianity raises objections from many commentators – including Hauerwas in this volume – because the idea of a personal god is an essential feature of Christianity. But Burns argues that 'since Murdoch already claims that both "God" and "Good" are metaphors, divine personhood may also be regarded as a metaphor' (392).

In Chapter 29, Christopher Gowans addresses the question of Murdoch's philosophical 'affinities with Buddhist thought and practice', as well as their differences (397). He summarises Peter J. Conradi's account of her 'esteem for' Buddhism, which did not amount to a desire to become a Buddhist in any institutional sense – she 'was not a joiner' (396). Gowans does not necessarily aim to show that Murdoch's stated views of Buddhism are steeped in a deep understanding, but rather suggests 'that there are several resources in Buddhist

self-cultivation philosophies that could respond to the central concerns of Murdoch's self-cultivation philosophy, though she was probably unaware of them' (397).

Judaism is less prominent as a source of philosophical or religious concepts in Murdoch's life. As Victor Jeleniewski Seidler notes in Chapter 30, however, her early reading of Martin Buber remained influential, though not uncontested, and her personal knowledge of several Jewish individuals gave her an interest in and sympathy for the Jewish faith beyond the intellectual. To this end, Seidler gives an account of the relationship between Murdoch and Franz Steiner, which was intimate both physically and intellectually, before moving on to a discussion of the main threads of Buber's thought and Murdoch's 'troubled', 'fraught' readings of him, still a significant presence in *MGM*. Seidler concludes, perhaps despite herself, and perhaps also encouraged by her study of Simone Weil, that Murdoch was constrained by the Christian world-view that prevented her from understanding how a 'less Christian path could have allowed her to sustain her earlier insights into the relationship with ethics and politics' (421).

Politics is the focus of Lawrence Blum's chapter, in which he charts her sympathetic view of socialism in the early essay 'A House of Theory' (1958) and her gradual move away from Marxism to the position in *MGM*, by which time 'she sees the individual-moral and political domains as governed by very different norms and principles' (427). Blum offers an alternative to 'Murdoch's civic vision' in the work of John Rawls, although Murdoch 'shows no evidence of being aware of his work' (430). Rawls, Blum claims, 'is an important reference point for situating Murdoch's admittedly minimally systematic reflections on politics' (430). Nevertheless, he sees Marxism as having an enduring influence on Murdoch's philosophy, even using the example of David Crimond's book in *The Book and the Brotherhood* (1987) to affirm the importance of Marxism to Murdoch 'as a permanently valuable intellectual resource and touchstone for serious philosophical endeavour' (433). I am reminded of her attempts to engage her Marxist friend Brian Medlin in political discussions, which he usually deflected, and also of her extended labour in 1992 to write a detailed review of his book *Human Nature, Human Survival*.[4]

The last chapter in Part Four is Lucy Bolton's extraordinarily useful discussion of feminism. She almost immediately addresses a problem which has troubled me throughout the discussions, in this book and elsewhere, of the importance of outward-directed attention and denial of the ego in her philosophy. Many of the examples she gives of selfless or saintly people are women 'in private life and in the domestic sphere' (438). How does this square with the power inequalities inherent in almost every human society? 'The drive to eliminate ego, to work towards cultivating a loss of self, would seem to be the very type of self-denial or self-abnegation and martyrdom that feminism has identified as imprisonment and subjugation of women' (438). When Murdoch recommends mothers of

large families as examples of unselfish goodness, I cannot help thinking with a shudder of my own beautiful, clever mother who suppressed all her own talents to serve her large family, and what it cost her, and indeed us, who unthinkingly accepted her sacrifice as the most natural thing in the world. Bolton cautions against a 'consideration of her woman characters […] as a collection of evidence of Murdoch's attitude towards women' (440). However, the fact that she could depict such women so poignantly, over and over, in her novels does at least show that she was aware of the problem. But 'Murdoch's call to overcome the "fat, relentless ego" is not a decree to be submissive, far from it' (443). The idea is to 'see more clearly' not only one's own oppressive views but also 'those of others which lead to discrimination, oppression, and suffering' (443). My question, which is addressed but to my mind not quite settled in Bolton's chapter, is how this operates in a world where the 'fat relentless egos' of others are operating unrestrained.

Of course this, like many other questions in Murdoch's philosophy, will continue to generate discussion – as she said, she has no 'body of theory' but 'a way looking at problems'.[5] Bolton includes a wonderful quotation from Mary Midgley about the female philosophers at Oxford, who were able to flourish because 'there were fewer men about then', and that those who were left 'were all more interested in understanding this deeply puzzling world than in putting each other down'. It is sobering to think what those 'clever young men', who would have otherwise been encouraged 'to compete in winning arguments', were going through instead (440). Did it really require internecine world conflict to burst this particular bubble and make philosophy confront reality?

30 June: This astonishing book concludes, in Part Five, with five chapters on 'Contemporary moral issues'. Lucy Oulton's chapter on 'Nature and the environment' is a wide-ranging and illuminating discussion of the 'deep strain of ecological awareness' among Murdoch's many themes, although it is not a term she would have used. Oulton point out that the famous hovering kestrel 'is aloft, hunting prey, maintaining its lift by exploiting the rising thermals': with ecology in the reader's mind, 'the hovering *falco tinnunculus* becomes more than "material referent"' (453). Oulton brings contemporary ecological thought into fruitful conversation with Murdoch's ethics:

> A Murdochian ethics of loving attention to alterity and difference would usefully find its way into the lexicon of those tasked with the urgent attempt to change hearts and minds as we tackle our environmental crisis. (464)

Tony Milligan writes in Chapter 34 about 'loving attention to animals'. He notes that her 'approach to love tends to be inclusive', reaching beyond the human

world, and that this is 'relatively unusual' (468). He notes the many 'ambiguities and peculiarities in Murdoch's approach to love' which could be seen not as a weakness but 'as an intriguing strength' (469). Milligan distinguishes 'two kinds of love' in Murdoch (470) – broadly speaking, of course. But in particular he tackles questions like what it can mean to love inanimate objects such as stones, as well as non-human animals. He talks of 'love that is down on all fours with every other emotion': 'Valuing, desiring, and loving [...] merge together as they do throughout Murdoch's texts in an inconveniently strong way' (471). Drawing examples from both the novels and the philosophy, Milligan moves through the various questions posed by notions of loving outside the human realm, complicating and enriching 'our oversimplified accounts of emotion' (477).

Anna Bergqvist's chapter on psychiatric ethics aims 'to develop Murdoch's work on moral perception in this novel direction' (479) – somewhat against the grain, perhaps, given Murdoch's own distrust of psychiatry. Bergqvist, however, uses Murdoch's concept of attention to particulars in the therapeutic encounter in a way I did not expect – from the point of the view of the therapist rather than the 'service user': 'acknowledging suffering as part of the wider practical context of a person's life *as* the person they are is,' she maintains, 'an important aspect of the first-personal sense of being understood – of being visible and present to the other *as* me' (489). In Murdoch, Bergqvist sees an affirmation that 'there is no *single* "voice" of the ordinary lived "service user" experience' (490).

Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon begins Chapter 36 on 'Moral injury' with a reference to the Valéry epigraph to *MGM*. His chapter takes us into Murdoch's void, pointing out that 'here, at the end of MGM [...] one can see the double-sided resonance' of these lines. 'Light [...] not only provides clarity; it can also burn' (494). Murdoch's insistence that we 'experience the reality of pain and not fill the void with fantasy' drives 'the chapter's all too short enquiry into the dangers of suffering to the moral life' (495). The *MGM* chapter on Void is, as he points out, brief and could be viewed 'as a failure, as thoughts undercooked and unresolved, with its passive voice and unnamed interlocutors. It can alternatively be viewed, however as an invitation' (503). Murdoch's questing does not try to give answers but to explore 'questions, suggestions, and even hesitations' (503).

The last word is afforded to Megan Jane Laverty on 'Civility'. We are out of the depths and into the quotidian world of encounters with strangers across counters, as officials or customers, as well as the more intimate relationships in our lives. Laverty describes 'courteous interactions' that 'involve the mutual acknowledgement and gracious accommodation of particular others' (508). Even these interactions can be fraught with difficulties, as she acknowledges: behaviour intended as courteous and friendly might be regarded with suspicion, as intrusive or presumptuous, but it is still essential to make the effort to invest even the most fleeting of interactions with the Murdochian value of openness to other people.

This chapter, number 37 of 37, ends by 'Taking our leave', and Laverty's last sentence is 'When it comes to attending to individuals, no occasion is too trifling and no effort is too small' (516) – a perfect way to end this enormous undertaking.

The Murdochian Mind is a whole three-day conference between covers. Caprioglio Panizza and Hopwood have brought together 37 – more than 37, actually, as some chapters are co-authored – Murdoch scholars in an enterprise which, although encyclopaedic in its scope, does not have the illusory neatness and completeness of an encyclopaedia. It has more of the provisional and exploratory nature of a conference, and there are many examples of the authors speaking to each other, quoting, discussing and answering each others' work. I have many questions – I would have been the first in the audience with my hand up after many of these papers. But as I think is obvious from my brief and necessarily inadequate summaries of the many contributions to this book, every one of these topics is inexhaustible and each author approaches them differently. Murdoch herself thought that philosophy was '*too* difficult for humans', and an enduring image I have (from a video still on my shelf) is of her patiently sitting with Krishnamurti, questioning him for hours, straining to connect across the cultural and intellectual gulf that separated but did not alienate them.[6]

The 2022 Iris Murdoch Conference took place while I was working on this review. Interleaved with my reading were emails and social media posts making me feel that, while I am on the other side of the world, the conversations are continuing wherever Murdochians meet, in person, on paper, or online. Books like this one enrich these conversations, and I congratulate Caprioglio Panizza and Hopwood – Silvia and Mark – on the enormous intellectual and organisational feat they have accomplished in bringing this book together.

1 Abbreviations to *Metaphysics as Guide to Morals* are unitalicised in *The Murdochian Mind*.

2 W.K. Rose, 'Iris Murdoch, Informally, 1968', in *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction*, ed. by Gillian Dooley (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2003), 16–29 (25).

3 *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction*, 52.

4 Murdoch's review was published in full for the first time in *Never Mind About the Bourgeoisie: The Correspondence between Iris Murdoch and Brian Medlin 1976–1995* (2014).

5 *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction*, 52.

6 Iris Murdoch, letter to Brian Medlin dated 12 May 1986, in *Never Mind about the Bourgeoisie: The Correspondence between Iris Murdoch and Brian Medlin 1976–1995*, ed. by Gillian Dooley and Graham Nerlich (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 7.

Review of *Listening to Iris Murdoch: Music, Sounds, Silences* by Gillian Dooley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022)

Janfarie Skinner

SIGNIFICANT CRITICAL WORK HAS BEEN PUBLISHED ON HOW Iris Murdoch links vision to morality and on her engagement with the visual arts. Now, in this important in-depth study, Gillian Dooley turns our attention away from the vocabulary of seeing and looking and invites us rather to attend, to listen to, and to hear, the sound world in Murdoch's fiction. Dooley does not ignore the philosophical works and identifies the music-related ideas they contain but her project engages primarily with the fiction. She aims to encourage the reader's appreciation of the rich sensuousness of Murdoch's prose; she believes attention to the music, the sounds and the silences will be rewarded with a new way of reading the novels. Their narrative urgency can cause us to read swiftly but Dooley wants us to slow down sufficiently to notice the details. She does not claim that the fiction is structured on music 'in any deep way' but she illustrates through close readings from more than half of the twenty-six novels, and from the one short story 'Something Special', how musical allusions and inter-texts function to amplify themes and deepen characterisation. She examines Murdoch's singers and their singing, and suggests intriguing relationships between music and gender. The study extends beyond music to explore interpretations of the soundscapes and the varieties of silence in Murdoch's world. It also introduces the lesser-known area of her creativity, her few collaborations with composers, and looks at the ongoing influence of Murdoch's words on current poets and musicians. This book is also a rare example of appendices being as fascinating and as impressive as the main text. In the first appendix Dooley records and contextualizes all 'instances of pieces of music referred to in some way in Murdoch's fiction' (158). In the second she lists and categorises the contents of Murdoch's large sheet music collection held in the Iris Murdoch Collections at Kingston University Archives.

Dooley is well-known to many Murdoch readers and scholars from her contribution to conferences both as speaker and musical performer. She has published widely on Murdoch and other authors. Her musical knowledge and her deep understanding of the art of performance resonate throughout this work, enabling her to give wider contexts to named musical pieces, to the significance of lyrics and composers, and to the practice and psychology of singers. In extending the study to sounds and silences she also acts like a sound engineer, helping the reader to hear as well as to see what is going on.

A particularly striking example of the book's approach is the close reading of the scene in *The Unicorn* where Denis Nolan sings (and the novel includes the words of) an old Manx ballad called 'The Fuschia Tree'. The performance produces an extreme reaction in Hannah Crean-Smith which then triggers a series of events that results in the deaths of four characters. Dooley notes that the scene is placed in the physical centre of the book, at the epicentre of the story, and shows there are correspondences between the story told in the ballad and the plot of *The Unicorn*. She does not push this reading too far but argues that the song has 'an emotional charge which resounds throughout the novel, echoing themes of captivity, capture, longing, deprivation, loss and absence' (26). In this and other examples we are shown how Murdoch exploits the power of song to influence emotions and behaviour.

The biographical element of music in Murdoch's own life is teasingly unresolved. We know that she did not claim to understand music on an intellectual level but that she loved to sing (she never forgave the Oxford Bach choir for rejecting her) and that her mother, Irene, gave up a potential professional singing career when she married. Murdoch seems to have mourned this sacrifice and the novels are full of women who become invisible, who marry and give up careers (*The Good Apprentice*), women who are forbidden to sing (*The Message to the Planet*), musical women who marry men who dislike music (*Jackson's Dilemma*). There are also, Dooley observes, a surprising number of silent pianos. The picturing of subservient musical wives, the great variety of sheet music owned by, or surely bought for, Irene Murdoch (listed in Appendix 2), and the fact that half the music references in the fiction are to vocal music, combine to suggest there is scope for further work on the maternal influence. Irene's quiet but tuneful ghost haunts the novels.

Dooley identifies classical composers who feature notably. She has found some 200 musical references altogether and eight composers who have more than a single mention; Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Purcell and Wagner are all important. She offers an extended and convincing reading of the ways in which the music of Tchaikovsky circulates in *The Time of the Angels*, intensifying the drama as a good film soundtrack does. She is insightful on the links made in the novels between music and sexuality, cross-dressing, androgyny (Morgan in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat,* Lizzie in *The Sea, The Sea*, Emma in *The Philosopher's Pupil*). She sees an

expression of social criticism in the representation of the suppression of female creativity and shows how music is regularly invoked to provide a context, an analogy, a metaphor or an illustration.

Music is Dooley's area of expertise but it was a wise choice to expand her study to embrace the sounds made by people and by ambient sounds (for example, water, wind, traffic) though these areas are not exhaustively explored. She discusses silence as a concept and the silences which occur in social situations. She looks at how and why silence is 'an almost palpable force' in *The Sacred and Profane Love Machine* (105), an aesthetic choice in *The Black Prince*, and a philosophical position in *Under the Net*. *Bruno's Dream* includes the final silence of death. There is much to be explored in the noises Murdoch's characters make and in the sounds that surround them. If we do not hear we may miss out: when we attend we may read differently. Dooley is very good on voice, rhythms, accents. She reminds us (I had forgotten; did I ever notice?) that Jesse Baltram in *The Good Apprentice* has a Stoke-on-Trent accent. The welcome analysis of 'Something Special' shows the importance of being aware of the cadences and the rhythms of Irish accents in the characters' speech.

The musical settings of Murdoch texts are the least known elements of her output and the hardest to find. In the chapter discussing the five significant examples of words set to music Dooley contributes significantly to Murdoch scholarship. She is interested in how the music transforms Murdoch's words and describes the creation and production of the five works. 'The Servants' is a collaboration with William Mathias based on the play 'The Servants and the Snow'; it was performed by the Welsh National Opera in 1980, with a vocal score and orchestral accompaniment published in 1981. 'The One Alone' is a radio play with music by Gary Carpenter; a five-part cantata 'The Round Horizon' was a collaboration with Christopher Bachmann created for Badminton School's 125th Anniversary Concert; the song-cycle of 'A Year of Birds' with music by Malcolm Williamson was produced for the 1995 Proms. In 2019 'Forgive Me', an In Memoriam choral piece for unaccompanied voice by Paul Crabtree, was performed at the Portsmouth Festival. More recent work and ongoing influences are included in this chapter, acknowledging the poetry with music of Paul Hullah and the songs of Kent Wennman. In researching and reflecting on all of these, Dooley was able to benefit from direct contact with several of the practitioners and composers.

The overall argument of the book is set within a critical context, referencing existing work in the field, but the author can claim an originality of thought and treatment – and this is a positive example of a critic harnessing specialist knowledge to interpret and illuminate. Both scholarly and entertaining, it will be accessible to a general reader, although it is most likely to be of interest to those already reasonably familiar with Murdoch's fiction who will surely find they hear things in the novels which they have never heard before.

Review of Paul S. Fiddes, *Iris Murdoch and the Others: A Writer in Dialogue with Theology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022)

Anne Rowe

WHILE INFORMATION ABOUT IRIS MURDOCH'S SOMETIMES tortuous relationship with Christianity and her eclectic theological interests is available from a variety of sources, including interviews, essays and biographical publications, a sustained and specifically targeted investigation into her lifelong dialogue with theology is long overdue. Paul Fiddes's important study, that considers Murdoch's relationship to relevant 'Others' (who are the makers of theology, and philosophers and creative writers who took an interest in theology), builds on existing scholarship and explores fresh and often unexpected avenues. The book comprises four previously published essays on links between Murdoch and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida and Gerard Manley Hopkins, each of which has been revised and reprinted in this collection. Two new essays, the first exploring Murdoch's links to modern theology and the second expanding her dialogue with Simone Weil, are published here for the first time. While Murdoch herself acknowledged personal interest in four of Fiddes's subjects, he concedes that she did not engage in any direct way with either Gerard Manley Hopkins or Julia Kristeva. Nonetheless, correspondences within their work, he argues, produce significant insights into the larger theological issues he explores in his book. He suggests that, in responding to the opening of the self to mystery and love, creative literature makes it a legitimate source 'to assist in the *making* of theology' (3). In this vein, Murdoch's novels and philosophy form an internal dialogue with all these writers that enriches, in turn, the dialogue which theologians themselves construct.

Murdoch scholars not systematically trained in philosophy or theology will find a work of literary criticism written in such accessible language, and with such clarity of thinking, that hitherto shadowy areas of Murdoch's theological thinking

emerge into the light. Her engagement with Anselm's Ontological Argument, for example, is illuminated in a few magically clear sentences: 'we recognise and identify degrees of goodness in life, and such experience both makes the idea of a greatest good conceivable and enables us to intuit that a hierarchy of value must lead to a necessarily supreme value' (63). Fiddes does not shy away from taking his readers directly back to such basics, and complex abstract theological positions are illustrated by means of patient and detailed analyses of Murdoch's novels. His discussions are informed by reference to Murdoch's published philosophical works, her letters and her annotations to copies of theological texts, now held in the Iris Murdoch Collections at Kingston University Archives. These annotations provide a glimpse of her attempts to interpret the writing of established theologians in her own terms. Her copy of Paul Tillich's *Systematic Theology*, published in 1979, for example, bears marginalia that suggests her grappling with his understanding of the tension between ethical freedom & tragic destiny is for her simply about original sin.

Many familiar themes and tropes within Murdoch's novels are explored in relation to related theological concepts: the contingent; the 'thinginess' within her novels; the symbolism of stones and their myriad appearances there; the dangers of art being used as both 'black' and 'white' magic with the capacity to enlighten or corrupt. These, and many other themes, are re-ascribed to theological contexts. Fundamental issues over which Murdoch pondered throughout her working life are revisited through this new framework: the dialogue between 'God' and 'Good' and its relation to modern theology includes Murdoch's response to the 'Death of God' movement in the 1960s, and her quarrels and fears about it, which are explored in *The Time of the Angels* (1966). In this context, Fiddes suggests that Murdoch tests the more 'radical' kind of demythologising represented by Don Cupitt in the character of Thomas McCaskerville in *The Good Apprentice* (1985): 'Thomas is a highly complex character', he argues, 'and Murdoch creates an ambivalence in the reader's response to him which [...] may reflect her own ambivalence towards Cupitt's ideas' (59). This is just one example of the ways in which Fiddes offers radical and transformative ways of reading Murdoch.

The two central chapters dealing with theories of the sublime and the beautiful vicariously bring the work of Julia Kristeva and Gerard Manley Hopkins into conversation with Murdoch. Fiddes begins by covering essential ground with discussions of the ways in which Charles Arrowby's visions of the sublime in *The Sea, The Sea* (1978) and Effingham Cooper's immersion in the bog in *The Unicorn* (1963) echo Kant's theories of the sublime. He then, more innovatively, moves on to locate philosophical and theological links between Murdoch's novels and Hopkins's poems. Here, he suggests, both writers explore ways in which theories of the sublime can be transformed into a theory of art, thus contributing to what he identifies as a 'theology of the sublime'. It is rarely that such theologically dense

discussion is so affectively moving, for example when Fiddes suggests parallels between Hopkin's poems and Murdoch's sense of the 'positive sublime' (104) as evoked in Cato's vision of the hovering kestrel in *Henry and Cato* (1976). Unless we find 'God's better beauty, grace' through 'mortal beauty', beauty itself can become an occasion for dangerous and idolatrous absorption into the world. In a stanza from 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' in which Hopkins finds this grace of God dwelling in the beauty of nature:

> I kiss my hand
> To the stars, lovely-asunder
> Starlight, wafting him out of it; and
> Glow, glory in thunder;
> Kiss my hand to the dappled-with-damson west;
> Since, tho' he is under world's splendour and wonder,
> His mystery must be instressed, stressed
> For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand. (104)

While, for Hopkins, this moment is linked to his belief in God, Fiddes illustrates Murdoch's originality in linking her own vision of sublime ascesis to the apprehension of the mystery of our being. Such a moment is present too in *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980) when Tim Reede intuits in the 'Great Face' in the rocks of Provence that 'there was absolute truth in the thing, something of wholeness and goodness which called to him from outside the dark tangle of himself' (114).

In Fiddes's discussions of how theology, against the drift of postmodern thinking, affirms the reality and truth of the world, he explores Murdoch's antipathy to the work of Kristeva, illustrating not only what divides these two women philosophers but also what unites them. In his discussion of Murdoch's curious account of Derrida's work that appears in the chapter on 'Derrida and Structuralism' in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Fiddes explores the possibility that she, seemingly wilfully, misunderstands him. Murdoch regards Derrida as highly dangerous in his determination to bring metaphysics to an end, when she herself understands metaphysics to be a guide to morals (136). Ultimately, for Fiddes, Murdoch puts her finger unerringly on a contradiction in Derrida's thought, however, by suggesting that he does indeed have a sort of metaphysic. Fiddes's subsequent illustration of Derridean aspects of Bradley Pearson's character in *The Black Prince* (1973) articulates his contention that Murdoch and Derrida are philosophically closer than Murdoch imagines.

The final chapter, dedicated to the enigmatic relationship between Murdoch and Weil, focuses closely on Murdoch's radio broadcast on Weil in 1951, and freshly interprets the many ways in which Weil's three elements of 'affliction', 'gravity', and 'attention', and her investigation into 'the void' and 'the passion', weave their

way through Murdoch's thinking. While Fiddes argues that 'a bundle of ideas from Weil' can in fact be traced back as far as *Under the Net* (1954), his focus falls on Murdoch's second novel, *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956), which he identifies as the novel that most significantly illustrates Weil's influence on Murdoch at this time. Fiddes's discussion of characters who suffer affliction, and who typify Weil's observation that those afflicted aim to pass their suffering on to others, offers an enlightening insight into the nature of Mischa Fox's evil. Fiddes also moves critical analysis of Murdoch's work into new theological territory by providing a thought-provoking discussion of whether Christ suffered *malheur* in the same way that any real or fictional character does. These ideas segue into an exploration of how, in *The Unicorn* (1963), Murdoch investigates the mistaken view that suffering purifies, and how this sentiment is itself an imaginary consolation. The solution towards which Murdoch is working at this time, Fiddes argues, is that 'Christ is not essentially a representative of human suffering but of the need to face death in the fullest sense' (179).

The final chapter largely comprises Fiddes's 'reworking' of Murdoch's penultimate novel *The Green Knight* (1993), which he identifies as not only 'evidence of an artist at the height of her powers' (192) but also 'her most theological novel' (204). This chapter elucidates the esoteric relationship between its plot and the Middle English poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and only a critic with such extensive expertise in many disciplines could identify so well the entangled theological dialogues within this complex and multifaceted novel. Most notable are the ways that the mystical Peter Mir is, like the Buddha, classified as an 'avatar' and that the appearances of angels are magically identified as 'signposts to the one Good'. 'The point', Fiddes suggests, 'is that in the sliding scale of meaning from one sense of "angel" to another, all human beings can become "messengers of the Good", witnessing to those who are actually incarnations of the Good' (95).

There is little to disappoint in this excellent work of scholarship, although I would have liked more thoughts on Murdoch's ambivalence about the impact of Christian iconography on the human mind. I was also surprised that Fiddes cites 'Murdoch's *own* favourite image of the needful death of the ego' as 'the painting of the flaying of Marsyas by Domenichino' (62), when in fact, Titian's last great painting of the myth was the primary focus for Murdoch's meditation on the annihilation of the self that turns suffering into joy, and was the painting in front of which she experienced her own moment of sublime ascesis. There are small errors that would have been best avoided: Murdoch's *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* is referred to as 'Romantic Realist', Miles Leeson is misnamed, and there are moments when Fiddes's knowledge and enthusiasm for the work of other writers causes him to temporarily lose sight of his dialogue with Murdoch (although such detours are easily forgiven for the illuminating insights they provide into the work of writers with whom one may be unfamiliar). Despite these slight flaws,

this is an illuminating and thought-provoking study of Murdoch's engagement with theological issues, and it greatly enriches the reading of her novels. Weil's theory that truth in scholarship comes through patient waiting is commended by Murdoch, who states in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* that that 'understanding comes to us out of the dark of non-being, as a reward for loving attention' (505). There is a significant reward for readers here, a reward that emerges out of Fiddes's own immersion in a loving attention to detail.

Report on Frances White's Iris Murdoch Society Christmas Lecture, 'The story of Christ's birth "may be a good thing to have in one's life"', 21 December 2021

Rachel Hirschler

On the evening of the 2021 winter equinox, Iris Murdoch enthusiasts gathered via Zoom to hear Frances White's engaging and thought-provoking Christmas lecture. Following Anne Rowe's excellent inaugural lecture last year, which gave a marvellous insight into the significance of Christmas in Murdoch's life and work, White continued the exploration of its importance through further study of Murdoch's journals, correspondence, poetry, neo-theology, and novels.

Presenting images of Christmas cards from the Iris Murdoch Collections at Kingston University Archives, inscribed by Murdoch with fond greetings to friends, White opened the lecture in a festive, entertaining way. However, Murdoch's message in a Christmas aerogramme to Philippa Foot in 1989, 'I'd be very shocked to be suspected of approving of God [...] and indeed regard Him as an obstacle to the spiritual life', led White to pose the more challenging question of why a sworn atheist would suggest, in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992), that the story of Christ's birth 'may be a good thing to have in one's life'.

This paradox was considered in the light of Murdoch's relationship with the radical theologian and former priest Don Cupitt. In a close reading of her unsettling poem 'A Christmas Carol', White identified elements that chime with Cupitt's opinion that modern Christmas traditions are, as he expressed in a 1996 article in the *Independent*, 'the Disneyfication of Christianity'. Even though he admires her, Cupitt nevertheless criticises Murdoch for clinging on to religious stories while dismissing the Christian faith. White argued that Murdoch's views were characteristic of her time: she was troubled by the impact

which the increasing rejection of God and religious doctrine could have on the morality of post-war society. Quoting from Murdoch's philosophy, White illustrated her belief in the symbolic power of biblical stories and a connection between spirituality and literature.

The cycle of the seasons was also important to Murdoch and her many observations of the natural world in her journals reflect her engagement with it. In her poem 'December', from *A Year of Birds* (1978), natural imagery is interwoven with Christian symbols as Christ's birth approaches. Christmas, as part of this rhythm of life, also lies at the heart of *The Book and the Brotherhood* (1987), which is divided into three seasonal parts. White highlighted characters' emotional responses to seasonal traditions in this novel and in *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), where a death at Christmas also marks the passage of time. Turning to *A Word Child* (1975), White proposed that Murdoch deliberately uses Christmas morning, at the end of the novel, to break the cyclical nature of the narrative and release Hilary Burde from his entrapment in his similarly cyclical behaviour. Although it is an ambiguous conclusion, it is perhaps the pivotal moment of his redemption.

The optimistic note on which this lecture concluded was most welcome after a second year of living through a pandemic with its restrictions and uncertainties. And maybe Christmas is indeed a 'good thing to have in one's life' in such difficult times.

Report on ‘Ethical attention: Iris Murdoch in philosophical dialogue’, an online workshop, 4–5 February 2022

Lucy Oulton

The aim of the online workshop, a joint initiative between the Centre for Ethics in Public Life, University College Dublin (CEPL), and the Centre for Ethics, Univerzita Pardubice (CE), was to interrogate the ethical dimension of attention. At the centre of all the discussions was Murdoch’s notion of moral perception that she believes has the potential to provide the vision and motivation for just action, albeit through the significant work that is demanded of attending to the other. Seven richly conceived papers were presented over the course of two days: they converged on the ethical dimension of Murdochian attention and into dialogue with other philosophers, artists and writers according to each contributors’ own research interests.

Eva-Maria Düringer (Universität Tübingen) began by taking the concepts of attention and unselfing that connect Iris Murdoch to Simone Weil, highlighting where the two philosophers’ conceptions diverge. She explained that Murdoch’s less radical conception of unselfing – the total annihilation of personality not being Murdoch’s endgame – encounters problems in demanding merely a reduction of self. In acknowledging that self can warp one’s vision, Düringer began by asking two key questions. Should self somehow be excluded from the attending subject? And should self ever be the object of attention? She was asking in what sort of circumstances it might be appropriate to pay attention to this reduced and not-so-interesting self. And, in those particular circumstances, she questioned how it might be possible to attend to the personal lives of others, yet avoid being overbearingly patronising or, indeed, being subsumed by the attendee’s own ‘fat relentless ego’. Should one never look at oneself or should one do so for moral improvement? This was a fascinating talk that explored why the personal, while being a hindrance to Weil, is far more important to

Murdoch. This has implications for the different value each writer places on imagination; where Weil seems to regard it as synonymous with fantasy, for Murdoch imagination provides a vehicle with which to access truth. Düringer went on to illustrate her fascinating and insightful talk with reference to Bradley Pearson's treatment of his sister Priscilla in *The Black Prince* (1973), asking, 'what should Bradley have done?'. Düringer concluded by suggesting that there were indeed circumstances in which one might attend to oneself in order to work at being morally better, and that imagination might just be the ideal tool.

Kamila Pacovská (CE) suggested in her paper that the Murdochian account of virtue, while stemming from Weil's conception of loving attention to the reality of other people, fails to pursue Weil's ideals of virtue, goodness and saintliness in connection with those who are most afflicted. Pacovská examined the circumstances in which the greater temptation might be to recoil from attending to the afflicted. She drew a distinction between non-acting action – 'I had to' – and good action, as engendered in creative attention when responding to such morally demanding situations. Pacovská went on to distinguish between the different types of attention and the concomitant demands made in understanding a person who is profoundly afflicted. Where Murdochian attention might seem insufficient in such a case, Weilian suffering perhaps teaches deeper compassion. Pacovská's talk illuminated this particular categorical difficulty in attending to such cases of affliction.

Silvia Caprioglio Panizza (CE and CEPL) examined both the correlation and divergence of principle in Murdochian unselfing and Weilian decreation and noted, like Düringer, that Murdoch's account does not (quite) require the erasure of self that Weil demands. Murdoch's secular Platonic metaphysics, on the one hand, and Weil's Kabbalistic religious position, on the other, go some way to explain their divergent perspectives, according to Caprioglio Panizza. She went on to suggest that, while Murdoch finds Weil's radical position attractive, the annihilation of the subject in consideration of the object of attention also evidently worries her and this is most apparent in Murdoch's discussions of Zen Buddhism in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992). Caprioglio Panizza argued that Zen Buddhism is a practical way to think about attention and what happens to the self even though Western philosophy, with its tradition of negotiating interests, needs an other in ethics. Murdoch's problem is that self has an epistemic role. Reality requires an other and the other needs a self so, as Caprioglio Panizza suggested, it is perhaps more helpful to think of unselfing as removing selfishness rather than self. Caprioglio Panizza went on to offer some reasons for keeping the self: it helps us see a reality that could not start without self-improvement, it is not only a source of fantasy but also a source of politics and society, and it can be morally useful in imaging past experience. She suggested that these all offered ways in which self could contribute to

perception. Caprioglio Panizza's talk then moved to questions of how Zen Buddhism (referencing Murdoch's own interpretation of Zen in *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*) might contribute to a clarification of what happens to self in the process of unselfing, and the difficulties there in the purification of self of explaining agency. Caprioglio Panizza offered a very thought-provoking discussion of what Weil, Murdoch and Zen can bring to our understanding of unselfed attention.

Susanne Schmetkamp (Universität Freiburg) focused on Murdochian attention and the connection Murdoch makes between ethics and aesthetics. Schmetkamp argued that the change in consciousness engendered by attending to the flight of the kestrel heralds a change from egocentric to aesthetic attention. And this newly allocentric, non-instrumental perspective, she argued, has ethical impact. Schmetkamp suggested that Murdoch offers depressing pictures of ignorance and ego, but these are set in contrast with the efforts we can make in attending to the moral reality before us and in a commitment to the existence of other beings. Schmetkamp began with a rich discussion of visual metaphors, but stressed the personal. What we recognise is often personal, what we notice is salient to us. Attention often has a selfish character when it is affirmed by this egocentric perspective. Schmetkamp compared self-directed attention with aesthetic attention – which tends to happen by distraction as we experience something as it appears to us. The moment must not be classified or evaluated for its own sake but it is also not a passive process: she decides to follow the kestrel. Schmetkamp's engaging talk then went on to discuss how such experiences might engender a change of perspective and moral improvement, arguing for the significant influence of aesthetic attention on moral behaviour.

Antony Fredriksson (CE), in his discussion of ethical attention, compared Maurice Merleau-Ponty's and Murdoch's interpretations of the work of Paul Cézanne and the wider Impressionist movement's experiment with new ways of perceiving. Both philosophers assert that Impressionist painters guide the attention of the viewer rather than attempting to reconstruct idealised visual depictions of the world that they see. Both philosophers emphasise the great value of aesthetic attention but, as Fredriksson explained, their approaches differ quite considerably. Murdoch tends to stress the significance of the cultivated self and the developing intellect on a path to moral improvement, whereas, Merleau-Ponty, in stark contrast, embraces the embodied brute and is more concerned with the pre-reflexive state of engagement and perception through the body. Fredriksson discussed intersubjective perception and how, for Murdoch, the self seems more fixed but, for Merleau-Ponty, the self is extended, always oriented and immersed. This conception engenders questions of how one might draw boundaries or distinctions between self and other. If it is a question of intersubjectivity, what or who is the other? Through art, the personal becomes

a common vision and informs how we live in a shared world, and Fredriksson argues that Murdoch caters to this view. Fredriksson's richly visual presentation led to a discussion of the value of shared attention, of communal perceptions and, with reference to Cézanne's artistic legacy, what art has the potential to teach us.

Diego D'Angelo (Universität Würzburg) also connected Merleau-Ponty via Jean-Paul Sartre to Murdoch in a paper on the capacity of attention to shape a shared world. Just as Merleau-Ponty influenced Sartre's thought, so Sartre influenced Murdoch. In *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (1953), Murdoch interrogates the existentialist notion of attention to oneself that brings about a concomitant alienation from the world. Merleau-Ponty's concept of attention is not purely intellectual: objects shape our attention, and this registers, D'Angelo argued, as a manner of being-in-the-world through the body, which is essentially creative. We do not decide; we are attracted. Merleau-Ponty's attention opens up the field of experience, and has a function in shaping the world we inhabit. D'Angelo said that Murdoch makes a similar point which is more clearly stated in her fiction. He drew attention to *Under the Net* (1954), where Anna offers enough attention to her lovers without renouncing her freedom, while Jake Donoghue takes the entire novel to learn the painful lesson that Anna is a separate being. In the end, attention makes reality meaningful for Jake. However, D'Angelo argued, it is the inconspicuous Mrs Tinkham who should be considered the hero of the piece because of the attention she gives to the world: she attends to Jake, she notices that Anna is singing on the wireless, it is she who is puzzled by the unlikely appearance of the new-born kittens.

Danielle Petherbridge (CEPL) completed the workshop with an insightful paper that examined the role of affect and attention in understanding habitualised forms of perception that affect the manner in which people remain unseen. She employed Charles Johnson's phenomenological depictions of racialisation to draw attention to the often sedimented habits of seeing and, as such, demonstrated a very pertinent application of ethical attention. Petherbridge discussed the work of Edmund Husserl, focusing on his notion of the body as central to the way we read the world, alongside his insistence on the significance of intentionality, bodily motility and the turning towards of the intentional act. She highlighted Husserl's concern with the affective allure of the object and the need for an openness to this allure. She also drew on Axel Honneth who foregrounds recognition, where the perceived worth of persons is intrinsic to how we perceive. Petherbridge discussed the role of empathy and the affective attunement engendered in our ethical capacities for attention. She noted the tension between the phenomenologist's standpoint, and Murdoch who assumes attention is always ethical. Petherbridge finished by remarking on the never-neutral cultural norms that shape what we see, on the implicit valuing of the experiential field and on the challenge for remodification.

Silvia Caprioglio Panizza (CE and CEPL), Danielle Petherbridge (CEPL) and Anthony Fredriksson (CE) organised a dynamic and engaging event. Beginning with Murdoch and Weil, each paper informed the next, and built an enriching set of dialogues with selected philosophers, writers and artists. The net result was a wonderfully stimulating and thought-provoking workshop of excellent papers and interesting discussions, and thanks are due to the organisers and participants for opening up the event to a wider audience.

Report on Carol Sommer's Exhibition, 'Will the Real Iris Murdoch Please Stand Up?', Kingston University, London, 7 March 2022.

Wendy Vaizey

A UNIQUE EXHIBITION, 'WILL THE REAL IRIS MURDOCH Please Stand Up?', opened at the Kingston University Archive on 7 March 2022. A collaboration between Darlington-based artist Carol Sommer, the Archive, and lead-archivist Dayna Miller, this exhibition – the first the Archive has been able to run for two years – opens a fresh and inspiring window on Murdoch and her work. It is also the first ever in the Archive's new Town House building, winner of not only the 2021 RIBA Stirling Prize but also the highest European accolade, the 2022 EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture – the Mies van der Rohe Award.

The material on display arose initially from a series of workshops exploring Murdoch's novels, letters, journals and poems, run by Carol Sommer and the Archive in the autumn of 2019. Sommer's distinctive angle was to ask participants to explore Murdoch's writing from a social media perspective that would not, of course, have been available to Murdoch at the time; the project then continued on social media, with 70-plus online contributors. Most notably, quotations from her novels, poems or letters were overlaid on selfies and framed as memes or Instagram posts, sometimes postcard-sized or blown up to posters.

These were displayed in juxtaposition with items from the Archive that would be striking enough on their own but, in relation to the images, gave rise to perspectives which could be funny, sad, weird, exhilarating or dramatic. Snippets of narrative, freshly embedded in the subsequent twenty-first century, invited immediate responses. In Ruby Caits's contribution, a mirrored selfie of a woman with a self-possessed, enigmatic expression is overlaid with the text 'She said nothing, but

as the speedometer needle reached seventy, she felt herself to be in paradise', prompting the rejoinder from one viewer, 'but it turned out there was a 60 MPH variable speed limit'. Some of the Murdoch quotations came via another project of Sommer's, her book *Cartography for Girls: an A-Z of Orientations found within the Novels of Iris Murdoch* (2016). This book is an alphabetical list of 'orientations' of the female characters from Murdoch's novels, using Murdoch's term 'orientation' as a means of describing female subjectivity.

Sommer's patient practice of pulling out individual phrases for examination in a more visual environment creates an encounter with each phrase, in temporary and conspicuous isolation, that cultivates and refreshes attention. This proved a worthwhile and entertaining collaboration of artist, archivist and community. The role of the archive material, and the archivist Dayna Miller, is clearly integral to the accumulation and proliferation of meaning, both contextualising it and bringing it back to its sources. This exhibition ran until 5 July 2022.

Examples of the images used in Carol Sommer's exhibition, as well as a short video taken by the organiser herself, can be found on her Instagram account @cartography_for_girls

Report on ‘Metaphysical Animals, Oxford Walking Tour’, 1 April 2022

James Jefferies

A SUNNY SATURDAY, A SPRING AFTERNOON IN OXFORD, plenty of things to do, but what about a walk around the city, retracing the steps of Iris Murdoch during a formative part of her life? Well, thanks to the recent publication of Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman’s *Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brought Philosophy Back to Life* (2022), some of us had the opportunity to do just that, exploring some of the locations mentioned in the book. *Metaphysical Animals* tells the story of Iris Murdoch, Mary Midgley, Philippa Foot and Elizabeth Anscombe’s time together, mainly in Oxford but also in London and Cambridge, from the late 1930s through to the mid-1950s. It mixes historical events with the development of their philosophical ideas during this time and is reviewed elsewhere in this edition of the review.

Our walk, led by the inimitable Ana Barandalla, began at the post-box outside the Bodleian Library. The walking group was a mix of people who knew Oxford as well as those who knew a lot about the various philosophers themselves, and they were able to add to what Ana had to say (and sometimes disagree, but more on that later!). We walked through the Bodleian courtyard to stand as near as we could get to Convocation House. Here we heard about the time when Elizabeth Anscombe presented her case to the University of Oxford’s Convocation against awarding an honorary degree to Harry Truman, on the basis that his order of an atomic bomb attack in Japan amounted to murder. This story begins and ends *Metaphysical Animals*. The building next to the courtyard was also where Iris and Mary sat their Mods exams – passing with Seconds and then going on to Greats – in March 1940 when the winter was incredibly cold; they both took hot water bottles in with them to stop them freezing.

The next stop was to where Iris lived for a few years in the early 1950s – an unfurnished flat at 13 King Edward Street that cost £7 a month, with a landlady ‘destined to be killed with a hatchet’. Iris lived here after she had to leave 58 Park Town; not actually her fault this time, but due to a misunderstanding with the landlady about a herring soup which Elizabeth had cooked! I could imagine a

disgruntled Iris peering out of the window, wondering what this group of people were doing outside her flat. Next was the location of the Lyons tearoom where Iris was looking to add to the philosophical discussion of words and their value, like 'rude', by saying how 'some people might sometimes describe Elizabeth as "rude"'. While this was a generally understood position among the friends, Elizabeth took it as an insult and left the Lyons tearoom. Sadly, the tearoom is no longer there.

Philippa Foot noticed a poster for the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (Oxfam) on George Street in the 1940s and became a volunteer for the organisation. Our next stop, then, was the original Oxfam shop on Broad Street and we squeezed on the pavement to peer through the window. Philippa kept up her involvement with the organisation and became a trustee. From Broad Street, we doubled back up St Giles towards the Ashmolean where there was room for us to congregate on the steps. Unlike Iris, Mary needed a viva to pass her Mods and Greats degree. Apparently this was due to other students (probably including Elizabeth) who did very well in certain parts of the degree, but paid little attention to other parts, making it very difficult to grade correctly. Mary's viva took place in the Ashmolean.

We continued up St Giles to Blackfriars Priory, a Dominican religious community where Elizabeth and her fiancé went to talks and discussions around the concept of a 'just war' and the Catholic Church's position on the matter. They produced an anti-war pamphlet which ended up causing a letter of complaint to arrive on the Prior's desk, meaning that the pamphlets could no longer be distributed. We wiggled about from Blackfriars, down Pusey Street and then right on to St John Street where we found the house where Elizabeth lived from 1942 to 1969/70. The house was once owned by St John's College, and Elizabeth initially had a box room on the top floor. The house had no hot water, heating or inside toilet; part of the ceiling had collapsed in one room and had not been repaired. In 1949 the house was renovated following a visit by the college bursar. After the renovation, Elizabeth gained a larger room on the first floor, where the four women would sometimes meet. Iris was a frequent visitor and stayed into the early hours drinking wine and brandy.

Elizabeth and Iris had a significant falling out in November 1948 at a party there, Elizabeth taking herself off to Dublin to meet Wittgenstein and clear her head. Later, in 1950, Wittgenstein himself moved into the attic of the house, although by this time he was quite ill, and stayed there until he moved to Cambridge in February 1951 before dying in the April. I really felt the history of this place, standing outside and imagining all of the changes and events which had gone on inside, a real classic 'if these walls could speak'. From there, we made our way across to Keble which is where the Wartime Quartet had their tutorials with Donald MacKinnon. All of the Quartet would acknowledge their indebtedness to him, and it was he who put it to them that humans are metaphysical animals. Iris and Donald were also infatuated with each other for a time, causing much suffering for Donald's wife, Lois.

Leaving Keble behind, we returned to one of Elizabeth's locations, St Aloysius' Church, which was her place of worship after she became a Catholic in 1938. We were unable to go inside, but we did hear that in 1949 she was shaken when a fellow churchgoer complained about her attire, namely her trousers. She was at peace with the complaints from the University about what she wore, but not from the church. Fortunately, she found a priest who reassured her that all was well. Interestingly, Iris also knocked on the door of the church in her early days at Oxford, but there was no answer!

Just around the corner from the church is Somerville College, which was a central location for all four of the women as it was Iris, Mary and Philippa's undergraduate college. Although Elizabeth was at St Hugh's, it was at a Somerville dinner that she met Iris and Mary. As we stood outside Somerville, the sun disappeared, it started to snow, and we sheltered in the archway of the lodge. The porter on duty said that we could have a look around the college grounds as long as we were quiet, which was a very kind offer, and we took it up. We gathered in the garden where a discussion started around Wittgenstein's attitude to women and whether the book was treating the men in the story unfairly. This seemed to be more of a discussion for the pub rather than during our walking tour and, once it started getting a bit lively, I rolled out my teacher's voice to recommend that we moved along to the next location. I was a bit concerned that, after having been made so welcome, we might be thrown out of the college for being noisy!

We continued up Woodstock Road, past the Royal Oak where Iris had her first alcoholic drink, a gimlet. We did not stop for a drink here as time was short, so we marched up to St Anne's: a familiar college for those of us who attended the Centenary Conference. Iris and Mary both applied for the role of philosophy tutor at the college; Iris got the job and Mary consoled herself by sitting in the garden of Philippa's house, decapitating irises! The penultimate journey up to St Hugh's was a bit of a trek, but we made it there for the turning point of the walk; from here on we would be heading back towards the centre of Oxford. Sadly I needed to leave the walk here to catch my train, but the group continued to Park Town to see the various addresses where the Quartet lived, before finding a pub for a drink to end the walk.

It was fascinating to be able to stand in the places where the Quartet had stood many years ago. Although Oxford has changed a lot over the years, there is still plenty of character in the buildings, which remain largely unchanged. This, along with Ana's storytelling, made it easier to imagine Iris trying to get past our group blocking the pavement on her way to her next romantic conquest. If you are yet to read *Metaphysical Animals*, I would recommend it for the history, the philosophy and the insights into the lives of these four remarkable women. You can also visit the companion website (https://mappingthequartet.org), which has many of the locations from the book on interactive maps along with the option to create an account and make connections with fellow scholars and enthusiasts of the Quartet.

Report on ‘Listening and Attending to Others: Iris Murdoch and the Samaritans’, a panel discussion as part of the Think Human Festival, Oxford, 9 April 2022

Anne Rowe

THE PANEL COMPRISED GARY BROWNING, PROFESSOR OF Political Thought at Oxford Brookes University; Matt Williams, Director of Oxford Samaritans; Alison Gomm, also from Oxford Samaritans; and actress Annette Badland, Patron of the Iris Murdoch Society. Browning explained that his aim was to champion the act of listening in the wider community in the context of COVID and the current threat of war, and to highlight the importance of listening in the work of the Samaritans. He explained how such deep attending to the reality of others links crucially with the philosophy and fiction of Iris Murdoch.

Browning explained that Murdoch’s novels are an unusual mix of storytelling, politics and moral philosophy, and observed how mindful Murdoch was of the lived experience of people in the second half of the twentieth century. Her support for new sexual freedoms led to her consideration of the dangers of relying on individual choice: Murdoch, he explained, wanted to focus on the inner world, the world that is so important to the Samaritans. He illustrated this point with reference to one of the most famous examples of attention in Murdoch’s moral philosophy: the story of how the antipathy of a mother (M) to her daughter-in-law (D) can be transformed through the power of deep unbiased attention to the other. Vision and attending, not choice, was for Murdoch at the heart of morality.

Annette Badland illustrated this practice with extracts from four novels. The first, from Murdoch’s 1978 Booker Prize-winning novel, *The Sea, The Sea*, recounts the biting remorse of the narrator, Charles Arrowby, over the death by drowning of young Titus Fitch, who was living in his care. Bizarrely obsessed by his own

desire for a long-lost teenage love, Arrowby fails to attend to Titus's suffering and humbly, here, records his own failings. The reading informed a panel discussion of the difficulties of paying attention, of how easily the desire for self-gratification can overpower the necessity to attend to the pain of others, however obvious that pain may be.

The second reading, from *The Bell* (1958), presents the conversation between a self-regarding would-be priest, Michael Meade, and a wise Abbess who warns Michael that he should be attending to someone close whose needs are urgent. However, the temptation to transform the meaning of her words to absolve himself of the responsibility of acting is too strong, and leads to another death. The ensuing discussion focused on the mental process of transforming words into what one wants to hear and on how listeners must learn to annihilate the ego in order to listen truthfully to others.

The third reading, from Murdoch's *An Accidental Man* (1971), describes how Ludwig Leferrier, preoccupied with his own internal drama, deliberately ignores Dorina Gibson Grey when he passes her, distraught, in the street. The echo of the biblical Good Samaritan who does not pass by the suffering of a fellow traveller was implicit and poignantly informed the reading. In relation to the ignoring of another's pain, Badland alluded to how young people today, travelling with Airpods and iPhones are now so much more liable to be isolated from the world in this way, not seeing or responding to the obvious needs of others. She speculated that perhaps Covid has made us more focused on ourselves because we live in survival mode and have perhaps lost that sense of attention to others as a result. Browning pointed out that, also, some people simply do not possess a natural instinct to connect with others, so making a start on this road can be difficult.

Matt Williams explained the special role of the Samaritans as attenders and listeners and reported that 163 such well-trained volunteers are based in Oxford, habitually making attempts at selfless listening when they are approached for help. He acknowledged the difficulty of the task of listening to the suffering of others, and how painful it can sometimes be. Samaritans also have to deal with the dangers of giving advice, with the fear of interfering, and have to learn how not to give pat answers or appear robotic. Always there is the fear of making mistakes but the training of Samaritans covers, in Murdochian mode, how to take oneself out of the situation one is attempting to help alleviate. Samaritans can draw on this training and work to find a common humanity. They are all, at their core, listeners.

Alison Gomm talked especially about the Samaritans' Prison Listening Scheme, which has operated since 1991 and trains prison inmates to listen to fellow offenders. Prisoners can often be better listeners because they understand the prison regime and the environment, and the problems that are particular to prisoners. Her evocation of the bleakness of the prison environment, the loss of freedom and privacy, as well as the loss of responsibilities and any contribution to

society, was deeply affecting. She stressed that such prison listeners can themselves grow by listening and empathising with the problems of others.

A range of questions and contributions from the floor rounded off the event. Audience members shared concerns about knowing what to say in situations where attention to extreme human suffering was required, and how we must learn to become aware of when we need to stop and listen. The discussion ended with the plea for everyone to learn to become a good Samaritan, and not be afraid to stop when someone we pass in the street is clearly distressed and say, simply, 'Can I help?'. Heart-warming stories were told by members of the audience who had themselves been helped by Samaritans to emerge from the darkest of corners and had survived to tell their own stories and and to encourage others.

The event closed with Annette Badland's final reading from Murdoch's 1969 novel *Bruno's Dream*. As the dying octogenarian Bruno Greensleave reflects on love, death, remorse and reconciliation, he finally realises how far the truth of his life had been distorted by self-generated fantasies. The light dawns on him that he has all along been loved but has not paid sufficient attention either to see it or appreciate it. Bruno's final words, that 'love was the only thing that existed', closed what was a deeply moving, and sometimes sobering, reminder of the necessity to listen and attend to others. It had also become very clear how closely the humanity that underlies the work of the Samaritans is aligned with the philosophy and fiction of Iris Murdoch.

Report on the Tenth Iris Murdoch Conference, University of Chichester, 24–26 June 2022

Jamie Chen and Arka Basu

THE TENTH INTERNATIONAL IRIS MURDOCH CONFERENCE brought together a vibrant community of scholars, enthusiasts, visual artists, theatre personas, film producers, accountants, and musicians – indeed a company sufficiently singular and diverse to fill several Murdoch novels – in the midst of an enduring global pandemic. The decision to focus on place and space as a moderating theme was a felicitous choice. Murdochians who had met each other in cyberspace during the Virtual Conference of 2021 now found themselves breaking bread at breakfast, exchanging notes during presentations, shouting over the best of British pop inside boozy churches, or mulling over the remains of the day with a sense of anticipatory nostalgia. Such intimate proximity provided the ideal stage to introduce exciting new research, indulge in invigorating discussions, and forge friendships and intellectual alliances over the course of three unforgettable days – this will become clear, below, in our reflections on each other's papers and on some of the papers and experiences that captured our attention throughout the conference.

Jamie's Reflections

Despite everything that has been said about British weather, conference attendees were shocked by three days of sunshine. The conference kicked off with an extensive city tour, mapping Chichester from its Roman foundations to its recently-acquired graffiti, from the ostriches on Harry Peckham's manor-house-turned-gallery to the pig pound where locals would go to pick up stray swine. The tour acted as a reminder of how time reverberates in space, from the bust of Charles I looking down from the Market Cross, to the effigies in the Chichester Cathedral that inspired Philip Larkin to write 'An Arundel Tomb' (1956) centuries later.

Re-reading Arka Basu's conference paper, I am struck by how the conference echoes Murdoch's 1943 letter to Frank Thompson, when she expresses a desire to

'escape from the eternal push & rattle of time into the coolness & poise of a work of art'. The conference brought together Murdochians of several generations, and despite the push and rattle of railway strikes and a lingering global pandemic, we were able to find community in the coolness and poise of Murdoch's art and philosophy. Starting off the conference, Paul Hullah's plenary evoked the time and space of Murdoch's poetry, tracing the influences of Christina Rosetti, John Keats, and Philip Larkin – some of whom left their footprints in the Chichester cobblestones that we had trodden on on our city tour the day before. Hullah considered how Murdoch viewed poetry as a 'catalyst and conduit to truth', sharing his readings of her poetics as an aesthetically moral and morally aesthetic practice. Hullah's presentation drew on his personal experiences working with Murdoch, as he and Yozo Muroya edited the collection *Poems by Iris Murdoch* (1997). It also provided a valuable resource to scholars and a moving insight into her final years as she struggled to present the right words to her readers.

Given that the conference took place, once again, in person, many of the first-day presentations also examined what it means to be 'in community': Rob Hardy introduced John Bayley's writing as an 'indispensable tool to mourning as a process', reflecting on Bayley's fiction and non-fiction work through his (and, by extension, the community's) loss. David J. Fine's '#I,Too' responded to Valentine Cunningham's past keynote on ethics in Murdoch's public and private life, emphasising how 'Murdoch's refusal to judge her characters is what makes her relevant today'. Arka Basu discussed ways in which the violent social and political consequences of the Second World War permeate the narratives of Murdoch's early novels, providing a look into how public systems of power permeate our private spaces. His presentation revealed how institutional dynamics infiltrate intimate contact in Murdoch's post-war narratives, how 'kisses could be so much like blows', as John Rainborough discovers in *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956).

Considering the places and spaces in which Murdoch's work is written and read, Robert Cremins focused on the inherent Irishness of Murdoch's only short story 'Something Special' (1957). Cremins's analysis identifies the sense of alienation and defeat in the narrative, reading it as a 'restless story about restlessness' in its psychological dislocation from Ireland. Michela Dianetti's sweeping survey of the imprint of Simone Weil's philosophy of affliction in Murdoch's *The Sea, The Sea* (1978) and Elsa Morante's *La Storia* (1974) raised important questions about the viability of saintliness in a world shaped by deific retreat. Moving beyond the page, Elin Svenneby's paper 'Leaving space for the Norwegian reader: reflections on writing *Iris Murdochs velvalgte ord*' was read to the conference audience by Frances White. Svenneby comprehensively laid out the concerns of translating Murdoch's work, pointing to the pleasures and problems of writing for an audience that may not understand specific references (London's geography, for example).

Arka's Reflections

A pressing concern of Jamie Chen's persuasive treatise on the metadramatic import of the *The Black Prince* (1973) was the spatial metamorphosis of a work of art in changing mediums of delivery. Chen's paper was informed by her inspection of the original Collins No. 18 notebooks in which Murdoch composed her handwritten manuscript of the novel (presently stored in the University of Iowa's Special Collections) and the dramatic rendition of the novel at the Aldwych Theatre in 1989. She provided a comprehensive exploration of the text's unity of content and form, its generic mutability, and its protagonist's uneasy substitution of Eros for art in his search for an untampered thing of beauty, which put hackneyed Shakespearean readings of the text to shame and invited its critical exposure within new and promising critical spaces. Tatevik Ayvazyan's presentation provided an inside look into the adaptation, by Rebel Republic Films, of Murdoch's *The Italian Girl* (1964), which is currently in development, discussing the careful attention to detail that has gone into designing the Narraway house, the primary setting of the 1964 novel. Lucy Bolton's thoughtful presentation '*Dreams of A Life*: Film as Murdochian Ethics of Care' assessed Carol Morley's 2011 drama-documentary film, posing a number of vital queries about the moral implications of representation in an age of digital alienation.

In the afternoon, the conference cohort was treated to a replay of Murdoch's hauntingly poignant radio play *The One Alone*, unheard *en masse* since its original feature broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on Friday 13 February 1987. The play was introduced by Gary Carpenter, its composer, who spoke briefly about its turbulent production history, Murdoch's resistance to artistic licence, and his relentless effort to have this *parlando* of goodness, truth and suffering replayed on-air in recent years. In the evening, Cathy Mason's inspection of Murdoch's sceptical reception of moral facts and Amy Ward's examination of the addictive design of social media infrastructures in relation to Murdoch's ethics of attention demonstrated that Murdoch's thoughts occupy as relevant a space in today's cultural discourses as they did nearly half a century ago. Concluding the day, Silvia Caprioglio Panizza and Mark Hopwood's edited collection *The Murdochian Mind* (2022) was launched with ample fanfare and much toasting, opening the night to more celebration.

Scott Moore's magisterial discussion of the timeless quarrel between philosophy and poetry completed the final day of the conference by posing three pressing questions for our time: 'Is there a story of the world?', 'Is it a tragic story?' and 'How do we tell it?'. Moore's absorbing paper addressed the shortcomings of the reductive 'showing/saying' dichotomy associated with the epistemological objectives of art and philosophy, positioning Murdoch's *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992) as a cypher to understanding the reconcilable differences between the two mediums, and to accepting that perfect reconciliation may not always be possible. The eventful afternoon continued with a compelling co-authored

presentation by Evgenia Mylonaki and Megan Laverty on Murdoch's views on the essence of religious practices, the ubiquity of contingency, the primordial position of goodness, and the place of death in moral life.

One of the final panels of the conference, 'Iris Murdoch's Virtual Spaces', demonstrated the diverse range of projects that are in dialogue with Murdoch's writing. Carol Sommer presented her work in progress, 'Sometimes She Tried to Think About Painting', a short film featuring Sommer holding objects while standing in various settings in the British countryside. Sommer's chosen props and locations compel the audience to consider how film seeks to evoke forces beyond the frame. Rivka Isaacson's project introduces Murdoch's narrative strategies to protein structures, while exploring the potential of humanist elements in scientific education. James Jefferies explained how software can apply computational literary analysis to Murdoch's novels, helping scholars navigate her writing with greater ease.

As the conference proceedings were coming to an end, Aili Pettersson Peeker's timely arrival allowed the wheel of fortune to turn just a little longer. Peeker's illuminating paper on 'kestrel moments' in everyday life was a provocative inquiry into the practice of empathy, and raised the issue of whether empathy might, on occasion, be self-serving. The gala conference dinner followed in its wake at Wildwood, where in addition to delectable food and drink, the gathering was graced by the presence of Iris Murdoch Society's patron, Annette Badland. A talk on Murdoch's love for pubs accompanied this three-course affair, with Badland and Anne Rowe putting on a performance of Tim and Daisy from *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980), bickering about their relationship until visiting the pub was eventually proposed – a proposal that was readily accepted by several dinner guests.

The performance hailed *Iris Murdoch's Beermats,* a collection of writing soon to be published by Unbound. Badland and Rowe's introductory descriptions of Murdoch people-watching in pubs and having crapulent conversations with friends found its echo throughout the conference, as Murdochians continued their own analysis of her in various Chichester pubs. Perhaps we have also imbibed Murdoch's spirit, as we spent the three days in dedicated discussion of the role of the good and the beautiful, exchanged contact details, and expressed exasperation about the new pastel façade of the Pillars of Hercules in London – which we thought was neither nice nor good. We thought that Murdoch might share this sentiment, among the many others we had exchanged over the three days, and 'tis the thought that resonates until the next conference.

Murdoch in the Media

Daniel Read

THE ONLINE COMMUNITIES SURROUNDING IRIS MURDOCH and her works have, over the last year, grown to 7,881 followers on Twitter (@IrisMurdoch), 2,112 members on the Iris Murdoch Society Facebook page and 723 followers of the Iris Murdoch Society Instagram account. The Kingston University Archive Instagram account, which often posts about the Iris Murdoch Collections, has grown to 661.

The Iris Murdoch Society Blog has had another ten posts this year, including by Robert Cremins, Cathy Mason and John Potter. The blog has been keeping readers up to date with recent developments in the Iris Murdoch Research Centre, like the launch of the Palgrave 'Iris Murdoch Today' series and the books within it, the unique *Iris Murdoch's Beermats* project, or the award of the Barbara Stevens Heusel Research Fund for Early-Career Scholars to its newest recipient, Michela Dianetti.[1]

The Iris Murdoch Society Podcast has continued its success this year, with over 30,217 listens via Soundcloud; those listening via Apple Podcasts and Spotify take this number to well over 20,000. Podcasts have focused on topics such as childhood, the common reader, the 2001 film *Iris*, Peter Pan and religion. This year, listeners have been able to hear closer engagements with Murdoch's philosophy, including considerations of Sartre and of her magnum opus *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992). There has been an increase in podcasts with authors of recent publications, like Paul Fiddes's *Iris Murdoch and the Others* (2021) or Silvia Caprioglio Panizza's *The Ethics of Attention: Engaging the Real with Iris Murdoch and Simone Weil* (2022). A special episode concerned Elizabeth Bowen, and one even offered a virtual tour of the Wallace Collection.

Murdoch has also figured prominently in other conversations, interviews and podcasts, either on radio or online. On 16 May 2021, Peter J. Conradi appeared on the BBC Radio 4 series *Something Understood*, discussing *The Unicorn* (1963) and 'the role of spirituality without God, in tempering the excesses of materialism and atheism in our modern world'.[2] The next day, on *Woman's Hour*, the Turkish novelist and political commentator Ece Temelkuran discussed her book *Together: 10 Choices for a Better Now* (2021). She lauded Murdoch's conception of attention

over anger: attention is 'a central moral stance [that] has been explored by brilliant moral thinkers, such as Iris Murdoch; it's an idea that anger, despite its empowering deliciousness, has its limits'.[3] Temelkuran repeated her praise of Murdoch in an episode of the *Philosophy For Our Times* podcast focused on 'Why do we want to be good?'.[4] The *Five Questions* podcast series run by Kieran Setiya included episodes with Anil Gomes and Lawrence Blum; the series always starts and ends with Murdoch's well-known statements from 'On "God" and "Good"' that 'To do philosophy is to explore one's own temperament' and that 'It is always a significant question to ask about any philosopher: what is he afraid of?'.[5] Later in 2021, Anil Gomes also appeared alongside Anne Rowe and Miles Leeson on an episode of BBC Radio 4's *In Our Time* dedicated to Murdoch. The contributors, focusing on her life and her writings, captured Murdoch's complexity as well as her prescient value for contemporary aesthetic, philosophical and socio-political issues.[6] In February 2022, one of the staff at *The New York Times* podcast, John Williams, endorsed Murdoch's fiction, encouraging people to read *The Black Prince* (1973) over *The Sea, The Sea* (1978).[7]

Somewhat related, and on a more light-hearted note, Murdoch has also been appearing more often in quizzes, like the television series *University Challenge* and *Pointless*. Murdoch also appeared in multiple quizzes and puzzles in the *Guardian*, including Alex Bellos's Monday puzzle,[8] Olav Bjortomt's Tuesday quiz and Wednesday quiz,[9] Martin Belam's Thursday quiz,[10] and Sonia Rykiel's Weekend quiz.[11]

As with last year, this was another popular year for 'listicles' (articles based on lists), not least of all the 'Big Jubilee Read', the campaign listing 70 books to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II. Murdoch's *The Sea, The Sea* (1978) was one of ten books of the 1970s chosen from a reader's choice longlist by a panel of librarians, booksellers and literature specialists.[12] The choice of this novel, however, prompted somewhat of a backlash. Alexander Larman at *The Critic* – who felt that the list had been slightly 'tokenistic', 'gesture[d] toward populism' and seemed to prefer 'literary novels that were turned into major films' – suggested that Murdoch had been 'included for the wrong book': 'Iris Murdoch makes the cut for *The Sea, The Sea*, but a more fitting choice would have been *Under the Net* or *The Bell*'.[13] *Vanity Fair* and *The Irish Times* clearly disagreed, with *The Sea, The Sea* appearing in their own celebrations of '50 Years of Women's Writing' and '12 Books By Irish Authors to Read This Month in Honor of St. Patrick's Day', respectively.[14] Indeed, the Booker Prize-winning novel would go on to make the cut for numerous listicles this year, including Ria Pandey's 'The best fiction books of the 1970s',[15] the Vogue Editors' 'Favourite Beach Reads Of All Time',[16] and Emma Temple's 'Good books for bad moods'.[17] Temple believes the book is a good read for the heartbroken, but warns that we should consider it 'a manual for what not to do, no matter what, no matter how bad you feel'.[18] Other listicles took Larman's

advice, and chose different novels for their lists: Allison Pearson chose *The Black Prince* for 'The real best reads of Her Majesty's reign';[19] James Marriott listed *The Bell* among *The Times* authors' own 'Jubilee books special';[20] the *Telegraph* reporters listed *Under the Net* as one of the '100 best books that make good holiday reads for summer 2022'.[21] *The New York Times*'s Molly Young suggested *Under the Net* was 'a fine place to start' if 'you're Murdoch-curious'.[22] A more unique example of the listicle format came from Pakistani writer Taymour Soomro, whose recent novel, *Other Names for Love* (2022), adopts a patriarch's point of view to explore its 'nebulous' problems: 'Stories about patriarchs', he perceptively notes, 'are of course stories about power and oppression but they are more interestingly stories of resistance, of loss, of loneliness, of inheritance'. He names *The Sea, The Sea* as an example of such a story; its 'great power', claims Soomro, 'is to show us the world and his history from the perspective of the patriarch, but also to show us the depths and shallows beyond: his deceit, his delusion'.[23]

Alba Correa, writing in Spanish *Vogue* on 17 August 2022, was clearly correct in saying that *The Sea, The Sea* had been somewhat of a 'viral phenomenon', capturing the imagination of people across multiple media platforms.[24] If you were wondering why this phenomenon was occurring, however, the cultural critic and historian Isaac Bulter's brilliant article gave reasons five months earlier. Murdoch's refusals to moralise, to 'take sides' or to didactically voice 'her own beliefs', Butler argued, set her novels apart from contemporary 'claustrophobic' writers. Unlike them, her inherently open novels 'stop short at catering to reader's comfort' and, in so doing, allow us to become 'active participants in the reading process', inexorably drawing us in to her 'provocative, singular, strange, and beautifully constructed books'.[25]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, we discovered, this year, that Murdoch's writings are important for a great many other creative individuals, including actors, comedians and writers. In interview with Michael Hogan for the *Guardian*, David Thewlis listed Iris Murdoch as one of his favourite authors.[26] Asked about her favourite author or book, Sara Pascoe said: 'It's so hard to pick a favourite, but the author I always return to is Iris Murdoch. I love how she creates the imperfect psychology of her characters, fallible people living through dramas of their own creation. Her writing is so, so intelligent'.[27] Writers both established and new, including two of our contributors from last year, Jaki McCarrick and Han VanderHart, spoke of the importance of Murdoch's writings.[28] The Whitbread-nominated novelist Barbara Trapido admitted that *Under the Net* 'changed [her] as a teenager'.[29] Prolific writer Stephen King suggested that – despite the fact that such tasks are 'slightly ridiculous' – Murdoch's *The Sea, The Sea* could be named among his top ten favourite books.[30] A growing collection of emergent novelists also mentioned the impact of Murdoch on their writings. We learnt that the author of *Crossroads* (2021), Jonathan Franzen, is an Iris Murdoch fan,[31] that Murdoch 'open[ed] up a

new way of looking at the world' for Kim Fay,[32] and that Alex McElroy believes *The Sea, The Sea* to be a mind-blowing 'masterclass of self-deception'.[33] Declan Fry, writing for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, notes that Diana Reid's novel, *Love and Virtue* (2021), is 'firmly situated within Dame Iris's school', a potentially unsurprising statement considering that Reid wrote a thesis on Murdoch's novels and that Reid is readily compared to the novelist Sally Rooney – and 'there is not enough said about the debt Rooney herself owes to Iris Murdoch'.[34]

Another striking mention of Murdoch, given one of the subjects of this edition of the *Review*, occurred in an interview with Julia May Jones about her recently published novel, *Vladimir* (2022). Jones spoke of her indebtedness to Murdoch: '*The Sea, The Sea*, *A Severed Head*, *The Philosopher's Pupil* in a way – were all books I was thinking about'.[35] She also, earlier in the interview, spoke about the ways in which women writers are judged differently from male writers:

> I feel like we [readers] have a certain resistance to ambiguity of thought, particularly in women – I think potentially in anyone who we're not used to seeing have ambiguity of thought. With characters in Updike and characters in Roth, we didn't then view the books as advocating for their behaviour, for example. I think it's harder for women. I was recently reflecting that Iris Murdoch, for the most part, her characters are men, and my guess is that she might have done that to avoid the complications that come with being a woman writing about a woman and then having that immediately ascribed to what you think as an author.[36]

Jones's statement here resonates not only with Cusk's paper in this edition of the *Review* but also with Murdoch's own discussions of what it means to be a woman writer, many of which can be found in Gillian Dooley's edited collection, *From A Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction* (2003).

Writing a report on Iris Murdoch's appearances in 'the Media', as may have been clear from the sprawling nature of this report, is becoming increasingly difficult. It is no exaggeration to say that my laptop – fans whirring at full pelt – strained under the digital weight of trying to gather article upon article and link upon link that mentioned Murdoch. Perhaps this challenge is not new – this is, after all, my first time writing this report. The 'Murdoch in the Media' report has, in the past, been joined by a 'Publications Update', which offers a round-up of some of the recent publications not mentioned in the *Review* as well as a collection of some of the longer articles dedicated to Murdoch's writings. This task, however, is also becoming insurmountable. A Google search for 'Iris Murdoch' in News between 1 May 2021 and 10 August 2022 gave me a total of 6,330 results to review; at page 15, I gave up.[37] What is clear is that Murdoch's name is

now appearing in a wide variety of locations, be they blogs, journals, newspapers, periodicals, podcasts or websites. Within a page of ten search results there were, on average, about six where Murdoch (or one of her works) appeared as a central subject or interlocutor, and roughly four where she appeared either as a passing or reinforcing reference. The overwhelming number of mentions – detrimental to the task of creating an easy overview – is both humbling and reassuring: the fact that I could not hope to gather all available information offers pleasant proof that interest in Murdoch is growing exponentially following the renaissance of the last five years. I invite everyone to get searching for the articles I am sure to have missed.

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3 Emma Barnett, 'Griff, Typo-Squatting, Ece Temelkuran, Windrush Compensation Scheme, Public loos', *Woman's Hour*, BBC Radio 4, 17 May 2021 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000w4ng> [accessed 12/8/22].

4 Mark Salter, 'Why do we want to be good? | Ece Temelkuran, Alison Milbank, Peter Sjöstedt-H', *Philosophy For Our Times,* from the *Institute of Art and Ideas*, 24 August [accessed via Apple Podcasts, 20/7/22].

5 For these two podcasts see Kieran Setiya, 'Anil Gomes', *Five Questions*, 2:20 (22 June 2021) <https://anchor.fm/kieran-setiya/episodes/Anil-Gomes-evokoj?fbclid=IwAR0yJmPm996pVlo93NCBaTnOgFt6ka8-7Oop8A47JO6Xpn5kT7dlE-M5OMM> and Kieran Setiya, 'Lawrence Blum', *Five Questions*, 2:24 (20 July 2021) <https://anchor.fm/kieran-setiya/episodes/Lawrence-Blum-e12lu38?fbclid=IwAR2AmeT0c39J31m74vmUfwBcNmZM_TxESTdyM-cM2FkU_ybhZLSrc2cYNS8> [accessed 8/8/22].

6 Melvyn Bragg, 'Iris Murdoch', *In Our Time*, BBC Radio 4, 21 October 2022 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0010q90> [6/7/22].

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8 Alex Bellos, 'Did you solve it? Logical philosophers', the *Guardian*, 23 Aug 2021 <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/aug/23/can-you-solve-it-logical-philosophers> [accessed 10/8/22].

9 See Olav Bjortomt, 'The Times Daily Quiz: Wedensday August 18, 2021' <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-times-daily-quiz-wednesday-august-18-2021-8ht5nww6w> and Olav Bjortomt, 'The Times Daily Quiz: Tuesday April 5, 2022' <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/the-times-daily-quiz-tuesday-april-5-2022-mj6kzscvw> [accessed 10/8/22].

10 Martin Belam, 'Glamorous sculptures, champion cheese and the secret of Uranus – take the Thursday quiz', the *Guardian*, 10 Mar 2022 <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/mar/10/the-guardian-thursday-quiz-general-knowledge-topical-news-trivia-46> [accessed 10/8/22].

11 Thomas Eaton, 'What was the "poor boy", designed by Sonia Rykiel? The Weekend quiz', the *Guardian*, 24 July 2021 <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/jul/24/what-was-the-poor-boy-designed-by-sonia-rykiel-the-weekend-quiz> [accessed 10/8/22].

12 The full list can be found at <https://readinggroups.org/big-jubilee-read>.

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irishtimes.com/culture/books/celebrating-50-years-of-women-s-writing-the-second-half-of-the-1970s-1.4856390> [accessed 8/8/22] and Keziah Weir, '12 Books By Irish Authors to Read This Month in Honor of St. Patrick's Day', *Vanity Fair*, 16 Mar 2022 <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2022/03/12-books-by-irish-authors-to-read-this-month-in-honor-of-st-patricks-day> [accessed 8/8/22].

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18 Temple, 'Good books for bad moods'.

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February 2022 <https://lithub.com/we-get-to-be-young-only-once-on-my-life-changing-discovery-of-laurie-colwin/> [accessed 8/8/22].

33 Unknown author, 'Alex McElroy on R.L. Stine, Casey Plett, and a masterclass of self-deception', 16 February 2022 <https://lithub.com/alex-mcelroy-on-r-l-stine-casey-plett-and-a-masterclass-of-self-deception/> [accessed 6/8/22].

34 Declan Fry, 'Is moral posturing today's crack cocaine? A new novel digs deep', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 September 2021 <https://www.smh.com.au/culture/books/diana-reid-s-tale-of-today-s-crack-cocaine-moral-posturing-20210920-p58t4w.html> [accessed 8/8/22].

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37 The previous report on 'Murdoch in the Media' gave up-to-date numbers on community engagement, but its focus on online publications, or publication in newsprint, went up to around May 2021, so this report tries to fill in some of those gaps.

Update from the Archive 2022

Dayna Miller

WE BEGIN THIS YEAR'S UPDATE WITH THE WELCOME NEWS that Kingston University Archives have retained accredited status. This means that since first gaining Archive Service Accreditation in 2017 we have continued to meet the UK standard for archives, which includes caring for collections, providing access, and showing resilience and the ability to manage change. After many months' work we submitted our review application to The National Archives at the end of March and this was followed by an assessment visit in May. We then had what seemed like a very long wait until the Accreditation panel met in July. The panel 'recognised how well Kingston University Archives and Special Collections had managed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the progress made during this period'. It was very gratifying to receive such positive feedback and it is testament to the hard work of the Collections Team and to all the researchers who have supported the Archive and kept us on our toes!

In addition to preparing for the accreditation review we have also been working to regain our pre-COVID momentum and encourage a return to in-person appointments. We have gone some way to achieving this and have been pleased to welcome 290 visitors to the Reading Room in the last twelve months. We have very much enjoyed catching up with regular researchers and meeting others for the first time, and we extend particular thanks to those who journeyed to the Archive from as far away as Ireland, Sweden, Canada, the United States and New Zealand. We have hosted 11 group visits, including sessions with Fine Art, Art History, and Creative Writing students from the University as well as youngsters from local organisations Anstee Bridge and Kingston Young Carers. Over 1,600 items from our collections have been viewed during this time, with 70 percent of those coming from the Iris Murdoch Collections, Peter Conradi Archive and Denis Paul Archive. We have also received more than 400 enquiries, almost half of which relate to Murdoch.

At the start of the 2021/22 academic year, we were delighted to work with Miles Leeson and Frances White on 'Iris Murdoch: A Writer's Life'. This exhibition, held at the University of Chichester, celebrated the fifth anniversary of the Iris Murdoch Research Centre and provided library visitors with an opportunity to see

some gems from the Iris Murdoch Collections. Following this, and just in time for Women's History Month in March, we were thrilled to launch 'Will the Real Iris Murdoch Please Stand Up?', our long-awaited exhibition with Carol Sommer. After a pandemic-induced delay, it was wonderful to finally see the display take shape and to look back on the selfies we created in 2019, all the while learning which adhesives not to use when attaching posters to glass! The final result was fantastic, however, and more than fitting for our first exhibition in the Town House. We also received some lovely comments in our visitors' book, a few favourites being:

> '...a great journey through the thoughts of Iris Murdoch.'
>
> 'Inspired me to look at her life and work more carefully.'
>
> 'MUST READ THE BELL!'

Thank you to everyone who visited the exhibition, to Frances for opening it officially, and to Carol for everything else! Here's to more joint projects in the future.

So, from the excitement of exhibitions, we turn to the complexity of copyright. As Murdoch scholarship continues to grow, and archival material is referenced more frequently, we have received a rising number of queries relating to copyright within the Iris Murdoch Collections. In 2016 Kingston University was very fortunate to be gifted the copyright to many of Murdoch's works, including letters, journals and notebooks, wherever they are held. However, there is much within the Collections that remain protected by copyright outside the University's ownership. Thus, with copyright exceptions and differences between the use of published and unpublished material as well, this can be a complicated area, but we are here to help. Researchers are encouraged to contact the Archive with any questions about how, or in what circumstances, they should seek permission to quote from or reproduce archival material created by, or relating to, Iris Murdoch.

Talking of Murdoch scholarship, we have been very grateful this year to receive copies of recent publications to add to the Archive's growing Reference Collection, including:

- 'Reading Love with Murdoch: Philosophy and Literature in the Work of Iris Murdoch', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 51:2 (Fall 2018). Kindly donated by Miles Leeson.
- Iris Murdoch, *A Jo Uralma* (Budapest: MMA Kiado, 2021) – a Hungarian translation of *The Sovereignty of Good*. Kindly donated by Dávid Sándor Szőke.
- Iris Murdoch, *Det Godes Suverenitet* (OSLO: Cappelen Damm, 2021) – a Norwegian translation of *The Sovereignty of Good*. Kindly donated by Elin Svenneby.

- Elin Svenneby, *Iris Murdochs velvalgte ord: filosofi og fiksjon* [*Iris Murdoch's best-chosen words: philosophy and fiction*] (Oslo: Emilia Press, 2019). Kindly donated by Elin Svenneby.
- Benjamin J.B. Lipscomb, *The Women are Up to Something: How Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley, and Iris Murdoch Revolutionized Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). Kindly donated by the publisher.
- Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman, *Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brought Philosophy Back to Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2022). Kindly donated by the authors.
- Two copies of *De Groener Amsterdammer*, 146: 6 (10 Feb 2022), featuring 'The Philosophy of Love' – a profile of Iris Murdoch by Arthur Eaton. Kindly donated by Edith Brugmans and David Robjant.

We also very much appreciate the ongoing support of Mrs Audi Bayley and the Iris Murdoch Society, as well as individual donors, whose generosity continues to enrich our collections. Archival material and objects we have received this year include:

- Costume jewellery and a wristwatch belonging to Iris Murdoch. Kindly donated by Mrs Audi Bayley and presented by Anne Rowe.
- Photographs of Iris Murdoch. Kindly donated by Peter J. Conradi.
- A typed master copy of Frederic Raphael's screenplay for *A Severed Head*, revised by Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais. Kindly donated by the Iris Murdoch Society.
- Two programmes for *A Severed Head* at the Criterion Theatre, 1963 – including the opening night souvenir programme. Kindly donated by Christine Wise.
- A collection of interviews with, and articles about, Iris Murdoch, c. 1980s–2000s. Kindly donated by Simon Watney.
- A letter written on aerogramme paper. Kindly sent to the archive by Gillian Dooley. Aerogrammes are particularly prominent in Murdoch's letters to Philippa Foot. Though discontinued by Royal Mail in 2012, as of January 2022 they were still available in Australia, and it was great to receive a current example of this declining letter-form.

Looking towards the new academic year we are once again hoping to move all of our collections into the Town House. Unfortunately, our plans to do this in September 2021 and January 2022 were postponed due to ongoing environmental monitoring of the store area. Conditions have certainly been tested this summer, but we go into autumn with optimism that things are heading in the right direction. Since

our last update there have been significant changes within the wider University structure, and we will therefore continue to work on raising awareness of the Archive throughout the institution, with the key aim being to embed the Archive within all aspects of University teaching and learning. We look forward to building on the positive outcome of the Archive Service Accreditation review and addressing areas for improvement over the next two years before our full reaccreditation assessment in 2024. In addition, we hope to further our outreach programme, and we welcome contact from organisations, groups and individuals who would like to arrange a visit. Thus, we end this update going into what promises to be another busy year and we hope that you'll join us along the way.

For general enquiries and appointment requests, please email archives@kingston.ac.uk

To search for objects, documents and unpublished archival material, please visit the archive catalogue at https://adlib.kingston.ac.uk

Books and audio-visual collections can be found in our main library catalogue at https://icat.kingston.ac.uk

To keep up with news and events, please check out our Blog https://blogs.kingston.ac.uk/asc and follow us on Instagram @kingston_uni_archives

Memoir: John and Iris

Frank Egerton

During the final years of the twentieth century, I was lucky enough to spend some time with John Bayley and Iris Murdoch. Although my first meeting with Iris was not perhaps the most auspicious, the warmth, generosity and kindness of the Bayleys had a profound effect on me and in many ways transformed my life. I first met them in 1984, when I was living in Steeple Aston and was working as a trainee land agent. I had been studying for A and S Levels in English Literature in my spare time and desperately wanted to give up my job and read the subject at Oxford but did not have much idea about how I was going to achieve this. I had written to several colleges but none seemed to offer any hope of accepting a mature student. Someone at the local pub, the Red Lion, suggested I might ask the advice of Professor Bayley, who lived in the village.

I wrote a letter and heard nothing for a couple of months, by which time I assumed he was too busy to help. But then a note arrived saying that he had been in America with his wife Iris, and would I drop round one afternoon. When I knocked at the door, Iris appeared after a long delay. She seemed distracted and I imagined I had interrupted her work. My embarrassed and characteristically long-winded explanation of why I was there did not help matters. 'You want to see John?' she said with some exasperation. 'You're one of his students.' 'No,' I said but she had gone inside. When John arrived, I could not immediately see his face because he was putting on a jumper in which there were more holes than one would have expected. After a struggle, his head popped through and he said, 'A bit déshabillé'.

We talked about my plans and I was struck by how interested in them he seemed and how gently encouraging he was. He said he would think about who might consider an application from a mature student. He would speak to his colleague at St Catherine's, Michael Gearin-Tosh. Could I send them some examples of my essays? Colleges were reluctant to offer places other than to school-leavers because of the impact of Mrs Thatcher's cuts. But there might be some who would. In the end he and Michael suggested I get in touch with Stephen Wall at Keble. Stephen said that the college would consider an application but only if I sat Oxbridge Entrance Examinations, rather than following the out-dated and less demanding

entry procedures for mature students. I gave up my job, enrolled with a private tutor and, after months of gruelling but exciting work, sat Oxbridge. I ran out of time on the essay paper and spent an agonised sleepless night believing I had blown my chances, but the two essays I did complete, together with the pieces I wrote for the close reading paper, were strong and I got a place.

I saw John again a few times when I was at Oxford and he always wanted to know how I was getting on. I loved Oxford and studying English. After I graduated, I wrote to him again, this time to ask him for advice about my ambition to become a novelist. Over the next five or so years I would meet with him regularly and he would read and comment on successive drafts of novels, although it was only towards the end of that period that he suggested I might like to meet Iris again. When he and I met we generally did so at St Catherine's for lunch. Sometimes he would help himself to cheese, which went into his pocket, wrapped in a napkin, 'For Iris'.

I wrote five first-draft novels and hoped each time I sent him a typescript that he would say I was producing work that was publishable. He did like the second one, but I could not think how to develop it, so I wrote another and another. John never really said very much that was specific in respect of the detail of my writing but he did make overarching comments about tone and structure, for example, as well as such matters as the way characters said things and their likeability ('Why would anyone want to spend time with him?'). He also told me that he had started writing fiction again, for the first time since the publication of his debut novel, *In Another Country*, in 1955. He was working on a novel called *Alice*: 'A late flowering, perhaps'.

His approach to discussing my work was characteristic of that of his generation, I would say. He did not want to prescribe what I should be doing. Instead, he wanted me to think through what I felt I should improve on and how I would go about doing so, under his broad direction. Always he gave me time, which was incredibly valuable. However, he never let me have any illusions about how difficult it was to actually make money out of writing fiction.

There was nevertheless a sense of him not fully understanding who I was as both a person and a writer and of him being intrigued to know more about me. I also did not fully understand who I was myself, although I felt strongly that writing fiction was helping me to find out. Once, the tutor I had worked with for Oxbridge had said that John and Michael wondered if I had been psychologically abused when younger. John never mentioned this to me and I concluded that he and Michael were picking up on my general lack of confidence, which I accepted as an essential want in my personality.

It was in 1993 that John told me that Iris had read the drafts that I had sent him over the years and he asked if I and my girlfriend, Jess, would like to come to supper with them. I was bowled over. By this time they had moved to Charlbury

Road in Oxford. It was a lovely evening, and my initial nervousness was soon dispelled. As well as Jess and myself, the guests were Michael and two other dons. There was a fair amount of Bulgarian red wine and a great deal of conviviality. There were pork pies and cold meats and salad (tomatoes mostly but also eggs and lettuce). Guests circulated from time to time and I was next to Iris on two occasions. We spoke about Ireland – my mother had lived near Kildare as a child – and Jess and I visited Belfast a couple of times each year to see her younger sister. But there came a point where Iris drew this conversation to a close, saying the Irish political situation was difficult. She seemed not to want to discuss literature much, although she was interested in my Welsh ancestry and the evocations of the natural world in my elusive second novel, together with its elements of myth and magic. She suggested – firmly – that I should read John Cowper Powys. I will always be grateful for this recommendation. We also talked about the process of writing. At one point she asked me how I kept track of the narrative. She mimed flicking back and forth through a manuscript. She emphasised the importance of continuity and developing the story in a thorough way. At the time, I took this simply as sound practical advice – and it has stood me in good stead, as a writer and when teaching creative writing at Oxford. With hindsight, I wonder if what she mimed was something that she was conscious of needing to do more as she grew older. There was something intense and urgent about this part of the conversation. Later, when the port was circulating, she came and sat next to me and held out her closed hand. When she opened it, there was a small apple which she urged me to take. It was from a friend's garden. The port came from a store somewhere outside. It was served in large glasses and as one drank a curious spikey sediment appeared, like tiny plum-coloured spillikins. No one took any notice. As we left, I glanced through a door to a room lit only by the streetlight outside, and noticed how the dust made the surfaces look like a landscape muffled by snow.

After that evening Jess and I saw John and Iris a number of times. At book launches for their friend Angela Huth and for John's novel *Alice*. We went to the theatre with John, Iris and Peter Shaffer. John and Iris came to supper with us in our tiny flat on Osney Island. We walked down the street to visit our allotment before we ate. During the meal, which involved a lot of home-grown produce, Iris was particularly interested in talking about food with Jess and about the dress design company AnnaBelinda which Jess managed. Again she was interested in ancestry – Welsh and Scottish on Jess's side – and what her forebears had done. When we were married at Binsey church, we had our party in the evening at the Waterman's Arms and John and Iris came for an hour or so. Iris spent much of the time talking to a friend's sister who had no interest in books and who did not know who Iris was. They looked to be having a wonderful conversation which involved a lot of laughter.

We never saw Iris after that time. When I next met John he was distracted and looked exhausted but did not say what was wrong. After Iris died, I went to Blackwell's bookshop to a reading John gave from *Elegy for Iris*. We shook hands at the signing table. It took me a long time to reach it. Readers, mostly older men, were queuing to shake his hand and to talk to him, grateful that he was giving them a voice and putting into words what they were going through. Sometime later John read at the Oxford Union, where I was working as a library cataloguer. Afterwards I joined him and the committee for supper at the Cherwell Boathouse restaurant. I gave him a copy of my first novel *The Lock*, which had a quote from him on the cover. It had been reviewed in *The Times* and the *Spectator* and in other publications. It was such a happy moment. I also met John's second wife, Audi. I noticed that he still wore second hand clothes – but from a more upmarket shop, I felt. He looked wonderfully well. That was the last time I saw him, although I received one or two cards before he died.

Afternoons with Iris: How *Poems by Iris Murdoch* Came About

Paul Hullah

THOUGH IRIS MURDOCH TOLD ME, MORE THAN ONCE, THAT she saw poetry as writing at its purest, and that she had always really wanted to be a poet, her poetry remains virtually unknown. Despite her own public protestations to the contrary – 'I don't think I'm really a poet,' she told Tom Sutcliffe in 1980 – many of Murdoch's poetic writings are truly excellent.[1] Both in form and content her verses are compelling and adroit, offering useful snapshots, concentrated instances, of important ideas and themes expressed and explored in her prose writings. I have long argued for the inclusion of Murdoch's poetry in any full and proper assessment of her importance as a writer and a thinker, and it pleases me that Murdochian scholars are finally showing real interest in Murdoch as a poet.

Iris first became known to me in that capacity during the 1990s, when I somehow found myself co-editing *Poems by Iris Murdoch*, an authorised bespoke hardback limited edition, produced from start to finish with her hands-on participation, which remains to this day the only available published collection of Iris's poetic work.[2] My co-editor Yozo Muroya (1935–2020), latterly Emeritus Professor of English Literature at Okayama National University, was Japan's first and foremost Murdochian scholar. Mentor and father figure to me in Japan, and personal friend of Iris Murdoch and John Bayley, he authored two ground-breaking Japanese monographs on Murdoch, translated two of her plays, and founded, in 1999, the Iris Murdoch Society of Japan, of which I am now President.

Singlehandedly responsible for introducing Iris's work to an academic Japanese audience, Yozo awakened the Japanese publishing world to her novels, and tirelessly promoted her writings to his homeland's general readership. In the quarter century since our edition, the inception and gestation of which I will outline here, I have made it my quest to champion her poems in print and other public places. The discovery, after Iris's death, of thirteen handwritten notebooks (now housed in the Iris Murdoch Collections at Kingston University Archives)

full of previously unseen – and mostly excellent – original poetry, has only confirmed my impressions and strengthened my resolve.

The project began in May 1993, when Iris and John visited Okayama, where I had been teaching alongside Muroya at Okayama University for a year. I took part in chaperoning 'the Bayleys' around Okayama city that afternoon, visiting Korakuen, one of Japan's three most beautiful traditional gardens, and we held a semi-formal reception for them at the university. It was there that Iris seemed unusually fascinated to discover that I wrote poetry, and both she and John (and I still blush to relate this) insisted that I send them some samples of my work. (Reluctantly, I did, which directly resulted in the appearance of my first published poems in the UK, in *Agenda* in 1994.)

Thereafter, at their invitation, Yozo and I accompanied the Bayleys onward to a British Council speaking engagement in Kyoto, after which we enjoyed a splendid dinner. I cannot recall the exact conversation that ensued along the way, but at some point Yozo broached a 'Why don't you publish some of your poetry?' theme. Iris's response was initially of the 'Well, of course, I'd like to, have always thought about it, but…' variety. She was clearly not entirely against the idea. John was audibly more enthusiastic (in the childlike, winning way he had of being enthusiastic about anything to do with literature).

A seed thus planted, and the Bayleys once back in Oxford, Yozo would soon inform me that he had pointedly and repeatedly returned to this subject in his subsequent correspondence with Iris. Six months later, she had agreed to let us co-edit and publish some of her poetry under certain conditions. One of her conditions was that we would send her the final manuscript to personally check and approve before it went to print. Another coy caveat was that the book be only published in Japan, as a limited edition of 500 copies. We gladly agreed to these conditions. To my great surprise and my greater delight, she also proposed, through John, that I write something critical as a sort of foreword. We approached a sympathetic academic Japanese press, University Education Press of Okayama, and off we went. Iris herself had absolute control throughout, with hers being always the final say.

Our primary purpose in this venture, discussed at length in consensus with the author herself, was to demonstrate to anyone interested that Iris was a poet of distinction. We knew she had unpublished poems at home, as well as the several previously published juvenilia and commissioned verses that had surfaced in selected magazines and journals, or as parts of other projects, during her life. But she remained relatively reticent regarding the unpublished poems, hinting that most were too personal for public perusal at that juncture. She showed us a few of these, in private, in Oxford, and did post a couple of unpublished pieces to us early on in the process, only to change her mind and subsequently withdraw them. I formed the impression that, some time before I had arrived on the scene,

Yozo had already more than once pushed the subject of publishing her poetry with Iris. I suspected that, at some point in the proceedings, she had relented and acquiesced, suggesting that he seek an able co-editor, but perhaps confident that the idea would never come to fruition.

But Yozo was a determined soul: once he got an idea in his head, he went at it full throttle. And so I became involved, and his persistent idea did in fact become a reality: gradually, and then suddenly, as work proper began on the volume. Iris posted us poems in dribs and drabs between late 1993 and 1996. I do remember things going sluggishly for the first year or so. Everything was done by letter back then: a fortnight minimum, sometimes a month, between posting a letter and its arrival in the opposite continent, and time difference rendering phone calls unfeasible. In this way the project stopped and stuttered and started again, sporadically relegated to a distant back burner then hoisted to the fore once more. During the period in which the book began to take shape, Iris was writing *Jackson's Dilemma* and, largely unbeknown to us all then, was entering the earliest stages of Alzheimer's disease. It all went slowly, and was a frustrating endeavour at times.

To be completely honest, at certain moments during the half decade it took to produce our book, I do remember suspecting that Iris might deliberately be stalling us. Why was she solely sending us poems that had already appeared in school magazines and so on? Why so many versions of the same poem? Where were the unpublished verses she had promised in place of the ones she withdrew? I fretted: perhaps she was having second thoughts, was not as passionate about the project as Yozo always publicly portrayed her as being when reporting communications between himself and the Bayleys. I distinctly recall mentioning this to Neil McEwan, an academic colleague and friend in Japan who knew Iris quite well, and his opining that he reckoned I was likely correct. But Yozo remained so zealously enthusiastic, and the project seemed clearly such a labour of love to him, that I dismissed my doubts and together we pressed on. (I also recall that, at a very late stage in our editing, Iris suddenly sent us a couple of handwritten pieces that had never seen the light of day elsewhere, and they were even better than the ones we already had, but she quickly once more decided she did not want them included. I am now reading transcriptions of the poetry notebooks and, while I am seeing the majority of those poems for the first time, there are definitely a couple that she sent to us at that time.)

Eventually, the volume was finished. It is a beautiful book, resplendent with a specially commissioned 'Irises' watercolour cover painting done by Christopher Heywood, a colleague in Okayama and friend of the Bayleys – he painted various versions: I have one, Yozo kept one, and we presented Iris with one. Containing 28 poems in all, and reproducing a handwritten facsimile of one of the poems, chosen by Iris herself and created specially for our book, *Poems by Iris Murdoch*

was published by University Education Press of Japan in March 1997. Yozo and I travelled to Oxford in the summer of that year and, in their kitchen one warm sunlit afternoon at Charlbury Road, we personally presented Iris and John with some copies of our book. Iris was unwell by that juncture, but alert and clearly delighted to see her 'little poems' at last collected together in print. It was to be the last time I saw her, but I could not have wished for a pleasanter parting.

1 Tom Sutcliffe, 'Interview with Iris Murdoch', the *Guardian*, 15 September 1980.

2 Iris Murdoch, *Poems by Iris Murdoch*, ed by Yozo Muroya and Paul Hullah (Okayama: University Education Press, 1997).

Notes on Contributors

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ARKA BASU is a PhD student at the University of Auckland, completing a thesis on erotic spaces in the novels of Iris Murdoch. His research interests include the environments of intimate relations in post-war Europe, the philosophy of Plato, Wittgenstein, and Simone Weil, and the relationship between eros and art.

GARY BROWNING is a Professor of Political Thought at Oxford Brookes University. He is the author of many books, including *Hegel and the History of Political Philosophy* (Macmillan, 1999), *Rethinking R.G. Collingwood* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), *Why Iris Murdoch Matters* (Bloomsbury, 2018) and *A History of Modern Political Thought: The Question of Interpretation* (Oxford University Press 2016). He is currently working on a monograph, *Iris Murdoch and the Political*.

JAMIE CHEN is an English PhD candidate at the University of Iowa. Her research interests include twentieth and twenty-first century Anglophone novels, cosmopolitan readership, and the novel as aesthetic and material form. She is also pursuing a certificate with the Center of the Book for her work with Murdoch's manuscripts.

RAMÓN LUQUE CÓZAR is a Professor at the Faculty of Communication at the Rey Juan Carlos University in Madrid. With a doctorate from the University of Salamanca, Luque is the author of several monographs on film directors and writers. In 2019 he published the book *Iris Murdoch: An Essay on Intensity*.

RACHEL CUSK is an award-winning author. Her first novel, *Saving Agnes* (1993), won the Whitbread First Novel Award. *A Life's Work: On Becoming a Mother* (2001), is a personal exploration of motherhood. In *The Lucky Ones* (2003), she uses a series of five narratives, loosely linked by the experience of parenthood, to write of life's transformations; of what separates us from those we love and what binds us to those we no longer understand. In 2003 Rachel Cusk was nominated by *Granta* magazine as one of 20 'Best of Young British Novelists'. Her novel, *Arlington Park* (2006), was shortlisted for the 2007 Orange Prize for Fiction. Her latest books are the memoir of a 3-month family stay in Italy, *The Last Supper: A Summer in Italy* (2009); and *The Bradshaw Variations* (2009), a novel. In 2014 her novel *Outline* was published by Vintage. It was inspired by Cusk's experience of teaching a creative writing course in Athens supported by the British Council. Shortlisted for several major awards, it was the first in a trilogy, followed by *Transit* (2016) and *Kudos* (2018). A collection of essays, *Coventry*, appeared in 2019.

GILLIAN DOOLEY is an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at Flinders University in South Australia. She is the editor of *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction: Conversations with Iris Murdoch* (2003) and other Murdoch-related books, and the author of *Listening to Iris Murdoch: Music, Sounds, and Silences* (2022).

FRANK EGERTON studied English at Keble College, Oxford. He reviewed fiction for *The Times* and the *TLS* and has published two novels, *The Lock* (2003) and *Invisible* (2010). He has recently completed a memoir entitled *Trust: A Family Story*. He teaches creative writing at the University of Oxford.

PAUL HULLAH is an award-winning poet, tenured Associate Professor of British Poetry at Meiji Gakuin University, Tokyo, and the current President of the Iris Murdoch Society of Japan. With Yozo Muroya he edited *Poems by Iris Murdoch* (University Education Press Okayama, Japan, 1997) and *Occasional Essays* (University Education Press Okayama, Japan, 1998), and he is the author of *Rock UK: A Sociocultural History of British Rock Music* (Cengage, 2013), *We Found Her Hidden: The Remarkable Poetry of Christina Rossetti* (Partridge, 2016), and *Climbable: Poems by Paul Hullah* (Partridge, 2016). He is currently working on Murdoch's unpublished poetry.

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REBECCA MODEN recently completed her PhD at the University of Chichester's Iris Murdoch Research Centre. Her monograph, *Iris Murdoch and Harry Weinberger: Imaginations and Images*, is shortly to be published by Palgrave Macmillan. She is an Editor of the *Iris Murdoch Review*, to which she has also contributed essays.

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DANIEL READ completed his PhD at Kingston University with his thesis, 'The Problem of Evil and the Fiction and Philosophy of Iris Murdoch' (2019). He is an Hourly Paid Lecturer at Kingston University and is an Editor of the *Iris Murdoch Review*, to which he has also contributed essays and reports. His interests include psychopathy and the writings of William Blake. He is currently developing his thesis into a monograph.

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FRANCES WHITE is Visiting Research Fellow and Deputy Director of the Iris Murdoch Research Centre at the University of Chichester, Editor of the *Iris Murdoch Review*, Writer in Residence at Kingston University Writing School and the Series Editor of Iris Murdoch Today with Palgrave Macmillan. She has published widely on Iris Murdoch and other writers. Her prize-winning biography *Becoming Iris Murdoch* was published by Kingston University Press in 2014. She is currently working on the sequel *Unbecoming Iris Murdoch*.

Matching Fund for the Barbara Stevens Heusel Research Fund for Early-Career Scholars

Barbara Stevens Heusel, who founded the Iris Murdoch Society in New York City in December 1986.
Photographer: Robert Howard.

THE IRIS MURDOCH SOCIETY, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH Barbara Stevens Heusel and her husband Dennis Moore, are delighted to announce the continuation of the Barbara Stevens Heusel Research Fund for Early-Career Scholars which was awarded in 2020–21 to Arka Basu at the University of Auckland. Arka has been prevented from visiting the UK by the pandemic but intends to take up the bursary as soon as travel becomes possible again.

Each year, a £500 stipend will help fund a junior scholar's[*] visit to the Iris Murdoch Research Centre at the University of Chichester or the Archives at Kingston University, or participation in one of the IMRC's conferences or research events.

* Postgraduate taught students (MA and equivalent), postgraduate by research students (PhD/DPhil/MRes or equivalent), and those who have completed their PhD (or equivalent) within the last five years.

By donating £6,000, Professor Dennis Moore, lifetime member and former officer of the Iris Murdoch Society, has already double-matched the first contributions (one from the Murdoch Estate and three from private donors) and has generously offered to match the next £5,000 in further donations. Please consider making a contribution to this matching fund that will provide Barbara Stevens Heusel Research Grants to Early-Career Scholars.

The matching fund is a simple, ongoing way for the Murdoch community to honour the life and achievements of Professor Heusel while helping to nurture ongoing research into Murdoch's life and work. To donate, to apply, or for more details contact Miles Leeson at the Research Centre by emailing ims@chi.ac.uk

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For current subscription rates and to become a member, please contact the society at ims@chi.ac.uk or join online by searching for 'Iris Murdoch Research Centre University of Chichester'.

It is a collaborative project between the University of Chichester and Kingston University, London. Kingston University is home to the Iris Murdoch Archives, an unparalleled world-class source of information for researchers on the life and work of Murdoch and her contemporaries.