

Chapter 1. Iris Murdoch and Lived Experience : Introduction

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Why Iris Murdoch matters: Making sense of experience in modern times

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Why does Iris Murdoch matter? She matters in many ways. Her novels are absorbing and fun. They make us think and feel in all sorts of ways. Her philosophy is serious and engaged. She offers a realistic reading of the psyche, a perceptive understanding of social and political life and appreciates how religion and art speak to us in important ways. Morality matters to her in demanding significant things from us that are ignored by most modern philosophers. Her life also serves as a reminder of what a life guided by philosophy might look like. Most of all, though, she matters because she brings these things together, showing how they arise out of and reflect back upon experience in related ways. Her multiple interests and publications are inter-connected in tracking lived experience in modern times. In a letter to Raymond Queneau of 1946, before she established herself as a philosopher or novelist, she mused, 'Can I really exploit the advantages (instead of as hitherto suffering the disadvantages) of having a mind on the borders of philosophy, literature and politics.'

¹ Her question was significant and her subsequent career would answer it in the affirmative. The advantages of a mind that is on the borders of philosophy, literature and politics is that it enables styles and objects of thinking to be linked together.

Literature can show the ways in which individuals experience the world, form

relationships and recognise or misrecognise moral and political demands.

Philosophy can review how literature imagines individuals and their interactions, and can reflect upon the general character of personal development, morality and the political situations in which individuals are entwined. Murdoch strikes a subtle balance between the styles and objects of thinking to which she attends. She does not dismantle the borders, but takes them to be open and mutually accessible.

Murdoch's mind is alert to many sides of experience, the social and political as much as the personal and introspective. She is a dialectical theorist in identifying differences in style and substance and yet connecting these differences so that the value of her work resides in its overall integrity. Her life is of interest because it reflects and contributes to the ways she perceives the world. Her novels are not a disguised form of philosophy, but imagined worlds of intersecting individuals that are aligned with her philosophical analysis of the meaning of individual freedom and moral development. Her multi-dimensional perspective is exhibited in her reading of the historical context in which her theoretical and fictional writings are situated.

Murdoch has been celebrated as a novelist and philosopher but rarely as an historian and yet all of her work has an historical aspect. Time and its historical appreciation is vital, for Murdoch, because lived experience in all its guises is historical. The character of personal and public life, which is exhibited in the texture of her novels and in the arguments of her philosophical texts, reflects the issues and frameworks of particular historical contexts. Her philosophy is self-consciously historical in its defining but ambivalent response to the assumptions of modern philosophy. As a novelist she might maintain nostalgia for nineteenth century realism, but her focus is upon producing fiction for modern times that avoids its contemporary deficiencies. The generic frame for all of Murdoch's work is the

modern break with pre- Enlightenment traditions so as to hold subjectivity, freedom and instrumental reason to be foundational for theory and practice. Within this overall frame, she reviews distinctive assumptions in literature, philosophy, politics and religion while also invoking more fine-grained contexts in establishing background conditions for her novels and in reviewing specific forms of recent moral philosophy and metaphysics that bear upon her interests. Throughout her works Murdoch engages with the historicity of the present and reflects upon the past from which it has emerged. She respects the past, and attests to the influence of preceding philosophers and novelists but relates past thinkers to the realities of modern and contemporary experience. These realities, war, political repression and cultural innovation impact upon the present in all its aspects. The past is not outside the present but is internally connected to it. We are what we have become and this process of becoming is dialectical. The past lives on in the present perspective, which has emerged from reflection on the past.

From the beginning of her intellectual career to its close, Murdoch thought deeply about how the questions arising within the present are shaped by preceding ways of thinking. An enduring feature of her work, in all its guises, is her sense that her present was different from the past, and that reflection in the present requires clarity over the nature of that difference. In her application for the post of Tutor in Philosophy at St. Anne's College in April 1948, she offers her 'line' in philosophy, which is an account of how she sees the current philosophical situation and of how that context sets an agenda for subsequent inquiry. She observes, 'More recently I have had the time to see the existentialist and phenomenological movements in their historical perspective, and have been attempting to sift the valuable from the useless in their rich but confused philosophical development.' ² She goes on, 'Kant's

revolution has been mainly developed by two philosophical groups (Hegelian idealists and logical positivists) – each attempting in different ways to amend the rigidity of the system’³ She explains how her future role will be that of a critical and historical theorist, who is to integrate seemingly disparate forms of thinking in philosophy and who is also to bring this thinking to bear upon moral and political practice.⁴ Throughout her life Murdoch aims to integrate Continental and Anglo-Saxon ways of thinking and to bring her synoptic and historical thought to bear upon personal and social experience.

Towards the end of her life, and before the onslaught of Alzheimer’s disease, in an address to Humanities graduates of Kingston University, she reflects on the meaning of the specific cultural context of the late twentieth century. She remarks, ‘All these things (politics, reason, and civilisation) have been transformed in the twentieth century, notably in ways that pose dangers to our lives. Hitler and the evil of the Holocaust remains a potent warning of the threat of political fanaticism to security and ordinary virtue, while the erosion of belief in Christianity due to scepticism over its miraculous doctrines undermines a source of virtue and love. The ongoing development of technology, a tribute to mankind’s rationality, also endangers its continued cultivation, in that collateral environmental degradation and the invention of lethal weapons threaten to destroy a rational form of life. Even the creativity of an individual artist is threatened by the development of standardised technology, such as the word processor.’⁵ For Murdoch, there is an ambivalence about modern times, in that a development of freedom and reason is to be set against a loss of wider traditional and spiritual ties. The dangers of modernity are accentuated by accelerating technological invention that privileges instrumental progress over reflection on intrinsic value. The eclipse of superstition and supernatural beliefs

allows mankind's rationality to come to the fore, but the advance of reason threatens to override mankind's creativity and spiritual reflection.

What animates Murdoch is her sense of loss at the dissolution of preceding unifying myths, and the deprecation of religion, metaphysics, morality, political ideology and the literary imagination. The upshot is that individuals possess an immediate freedom from constraining conventions and attitudes at the price of losing touch with orienting beliefs to guide their conduct and sustain their identities. Kant is a pivotal figure of modernity in demanding a critique of the operations of reason to ensure that the empirical limits of what can be known and the rational claims of morality are to be observed.⁶ In her Platonic dialogue, *Above the Gods: A Dialogue about Religion* she projects her reading of contemporary culture onto that of 5th Century Athens. In the dialogue the sophist, Antagoras, declares, 'Instead of cosmic mythology we have science, instead of picturesque god fables, we have independent moral men making up their minds and choosing their values. *We* are the lords of meaning, there isn't any higher meaning set up somewhere else. There's nothing high, there's nothing deep, there's nothing hidden- but that is *obvious*, it's what everyone here in this room believes.' ⁷Antagoras' reading of his time represents a challenge to Socrates, but also to Murdoch, whose writings respond to the prevailing cultural mood in which God and background beliefs supporting morality, art and religion have been dismissed in the name of freedom.

Throughout her writings Murdoch identifies processes of 'demythologisation' that strip religion, morality and culture more generally of supernatural and unverifiable beliefs. ⁸ As a 'modern' herself Murdoch sees the logic of these processes, without abandoning a commitment to the claims of philosophy and literature to provide insight into the human condition. She still sees these subjects as guiding individuals

towards a sense of truth and goodness that supersedes a set of instrumental procedures to satisfy desires. To counter the hollowing effects of demythologisation, she employs a critical and historical perspective. In so doing, she draws upon Plato to reframe a philosophical conception of moral, religious and artistic life.⁹ Murdoch's Plato is a 'modern' Plato, whose thought is reconstructed so as to render it relevant to and in accord with a culture that demands reason to be kept within the bounds of experience. In reading Plato, she is attracted to his philosophy and takes from it what is pertinent to present circumstances. It is integral to her interpretive strategy of reading preceding philosophers that she observes in her journal for 1981- 1992, '...in philosophy, one goes where the honey is.'¹⁰ Hence her Plato reinforces her critique of contemporary philosophy and literature to reflect rather than to challenge problematic aspects of modernity. Contemporary philosophy gives up on metaphysics and so abandons its traditional and certainly Platonic commitment to identify patterns of unity within the discordance of experience. Likewise moral philosophy denies the relevance of moral vision in yielding to an alignment of morality with individual choice and shallow behaviourist accounts of human conduct. Paradoxically she also resorts to Plato in critiquing contemporary fiction for its uncritical submission to modern forms of neurosis and conventionalism, rather than portraying real characters freely interacting with one another.¹¹

Murdoch's sense of how time bears upon her work tends to receive marginal if valuable incidental critical commentary. For instance, at the outset of *A Philosophy to Live By: Engaging Iris Murdoch* Antonaccio remarks, ' Murdoch was a writer whose fiction and philosophy bear the deep imprint of the twentieth century and the end of the Cold War.'¹² What is neglected, however, is the centrality of the historicity of the present for her thinking in all of its guises. At the outset of *Metaphysics as a Guide*

to Morals she identifies what is distinctive about the present cultural context. She highlights how its demythologization of traditional beliefs threatens to undermine appreciation of the ubiquity of value and of the unity within the diversity of experience. She refers to, '...the extreme complexity of the whole idea of demythologisation and its challenge to conceptions of transcendence.'¹³ Old truths have crumbled and unifying myths are giving way to a deconstructive rational analysis, which disdains the integrity of experience. Murdoch's philosophy deals with the defining aspects of her times, notably the loss of faith in God, the end of 'grand' ideologies, the erosion of artistic realism and the substitution of subjective choice for non-negotiable principles in morality. This process of demythologisation is exacerbated by political catastrophes of the twentieth century, which disturb faith in an underlying order to things. After the Holocaust and the Gulag the very possibility of human goodness is questioned. Murdoch, in her letters and journals as well as in her published fiction and non-fiction, attests to the political catastrophes of the twentieth century that undermine utopian ideals.¹⁴ Murdoch maintains a holistic conception of the unity and goodness amidst the dissonant and disconcerting claims of subjectivity and cultural rationalisation. Deconstructive forces are to be acknowledged and negotiated and, at the same time, they are to be resisted.

All of Murdoch's work, her fiction alongside her non-fiction, focuses upon the defining aspects of the present and the contemporary questions that are posed to theory and practice. If, in some sense, philosophy and literature are timeless in relating to truth and reality, they are also historical in that their particular forms emerge from specific historic cultures. Questions arise out of experience, and experience is necessarily present and hence historical. The questions that are posed in the modern world are different from those that have gone before. Modern philosophy has to deal with a

world that judges the dogmas of the past to be unacceptable. The intricacies of metaphysical thinking must now recognise experiential limits that condition its work. The modern novel cannot rehearse the self-confident realism of the great nineteenth century writers, whose fiction reflects the contemporary surge of social forces and the consolidation of Western nation states.¹⁵ If metaphysics is to serve as a guide to morality it must deal with the current historical situation. In the wake of disintegrating demythologised traditions, Murdoch's philosophy represents a countervailing response, which continues metaphysics in a post-metaphysical age by drawing together forms of thought and action so as to make sense of them as a unity. Her metaphysics does not rely on top down first order principles but works with the grain of experience. It does not shirk the dissonance and fragmentation of late modernity but maintains a continuing commitment to orient personal and moral development by attending to unifying notions of truth and goodness that are evidenced within lived experience. Hence religion is to be valued for its orienting capacity to value experience as a whole rather than for its supernatural claims. In the light of the political traumas of the twentieth century, utopian schemes for political renewal are to be abandoned in favour of protecting the rights of individual citizens. Again, representational claims for art are to be modified rather than revived, so that its role in enabling an individual to perceive things accurately is to be cherished notwithstanding the iconoclastic temper of the contemporary world.

Murdoch's philosophy arises out of her reflection upon modern culture, and her novels, insofar as they aspire to be realistic and truthful, reflect her times just as her critical reflection aims to make sense of her times. Her novel, *The Time of the Angels* is a case in point.¹⁶ The phrase, 'the time of the angels' conjures up a world that has experienced the death of God and it crops up again in *The Philosopher's*

Pupil, but the sense of a world without God is reflected in all of the novels.¹⁷ The uncertain status of religion in a modern demythologised world is part of the atmosphere within which the action of her novels take place. What remains in the wake of a waning of belief in the supernatural elements of religion, such as the existence of a personal God, the resurrection of Christ and God's miraculous intervention into the world is a question that is taken up by the priests, iconoclasts and moralists who populate her novels. The rational temper of the modern age and its corrosive effect upon traditional beliefs constitutes a contextual component of the world that individual characters negotiate in her novels. Forsberg, in *Language Lost and Found- On Iris Murdoch and the Limits of Philosophical Discourse* conceives of Murdoch's novels as pursuing a kind of philosophy in registering a loss of traditional concepts in the ways that their characters struggle to make sense of their world. He remarks, 'What drives my work here is the thought that a loss of concepts is something that permeates our culture and is not something that can reduced to a loss of a certain set of words that we can do without.'¹⁸ Of course, Murdoch's novels are indirect rather than direct expressions of how she understands the world. They reflect rather than expound the issues of modern identity that are discussed directly in her philosophical writings. But her novels aim to be truthful in composing pictures of how individuals negotiate the world, of how they cope with its contingencies and of how they explore the freedom and respond to the challenges of modern times. The novels' characters question the orienting myths of preceding times and work within contemporary conventions and social practices that allow for choice and freedom in contrast to their previous rigidity and constraints. The historicity of the present is a feature of her novels just as it underlies her philosophical thinking.

In succeeding sections of this Introduction, I develop aspects of my overall argument, which will be pursued in later chapters. Murdoch's conception of the relations between philosophy and fiction will be outlined. Identifying the relations between the two is crucial in that recognising their connections contributes to an understanding of the integrity of her overall perspective. Yet it is also important to be clear that this does not entail one being reduced to the other. Murdoch does not merely translate her philosophy into fiction, though her novels and her philosophy are inter-related ways of seeing things. I will also expand upon her understanding of the cultural context of late modernity, which underlies both her fiction and non-fiction. Thereafter I will review how her first philosophical publication *Sartre- Romantic Revolutionary* and her first novel, *Under the Net* share common ground while remaining distinct. I conclude this Introduction by setting out the agenda for the rest of the book.

A Philosophical Novelist?

Commentators on Murdoch take a view on how her philosophy is related to her fiction. After all, she is a notable practitioner in both fields and the question of the relationship between the two bears upon how we interpret her as a philosopher and as a novelist. Opinions are divided. Some commentators see her as putting her philosophy into her novels, while others deny a connection. On the face of things, Murdoch seems pretty clear on the relationship. In interviews she characteristically denies that her novels are philosophical. For instance, in an interview with Stephen Glover that was published originally in *The New Review*, she responds to the suggestion that she imports her philosophical theories into her novels by declaring, 'I hope not. I think it's a very dangerous thing to do, and I certainly don't want to mix philosophy and fiction – they're totally different disciplines, different methods of

thought, different ways of writing, different aims.¹⁹ Again, in an interview with Bryan Magee for the television programme, *Men of Ideas*, she confesses to an absolute horror of putting 'philosophical ideas' as such into my novels.'²⁰ Certainly, it would be misleading to reduce the role of Murdoch's fiction to that of a vehicle for transmitting an underlying philosophy. Literary scholars, such as A. N. Wilson and Conradi, tend to take her fiction as representing her pre-eminent achievement and play down her philosophical powers and interests.²¹ They are right to attest to the quality of her fiction. Murdoch's imaginative creativity as a novelist supersedes a merely instrumental conception of her turn to literature. Murdoch's novels invoke imaginative worlds, decked with evocative descriptions and absorbing conversations between interlocutors, who demand our attention because of their credible individuality. Conversely scholars, such as Leeson, Nussbaum and Antonaccio take the novels to convey her philosophical ideas. There are variations on this theme. Heusel, for instance, identifies Murdoch's fiction as applying the doctrines of the later Wittgenstein. Certainly, Wittgenstein fascinated Murdoch, whose work she knew from her studies in Cambridge where she mixed with his former students. Arguably, Hugo Belfounder in *Under the Net* (1954) and Rozanov in *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983) incarnate aspects of Wittgenstein's charismatic persona. Perhaps, Wittgenstein's later philosophy, which allows for a diversity of unco-ordinated language games that preclude an overriding pattern to things, is also intimated by the multiple unschematic frames that structure her novels.²²

Murdoch's novels feature conversations of a philosophical nature. The meaning of God, the nature of morality and the future of the planet are subjects of debate and individual characters in the novels are writing books on philosophy. These imaginary texts within the novels resemble themes in Murdoch's philosophy. They are on Plato,

the transcendence of the good and how to maintain a sense of the good and moral perfection without relying on the existence of God. Individual characters and the diverse themes of the narratives also recall Wittgenstein. Yet is this enough to justify terming Murdoch a philosophical novelist? As Forsberg suggest in *Language Lost and Found- On Iris Murdoch and the Limits of Philosophical Discourse*, it is questionable to assume that Murdoch possess a self-contained set of doctrines that can be transferred easily to another form.²³ Her moral perfectionism, for instance is more of a reminder for us to consider closely how we think about goodness and evil in our individual experience rather than a generic formula for living. Murdoch in her philosophical writings recognises differences between art and philosophy and critiques novels that follow a tight theoretical or ideological agenda. Art, for Murdoch, is a means of perceiving and imagining reality. Visual and literary artists present the world realistically and our engagement with a work of art enhances our appreciation of reality. Murdoch's novels do not rehearse a set of doctrines without regard for the intricacies of their imagined worlds and the interplay between their characters. Murdoch may put philosophical ideas into the conversations of her fictional characters and even allow for their writing philosophical Murdochian tracts and uttering phrases that are associated with her ideas. Yet her philosophy is neither contained in fictional speeches nor in fictional texts. We need to specify how the novel for Murdoch is separate from and yet connected to her philosophical writings. Murdoch's distrust of novels that convey philosophical messages is set out clearly in her essay, 'Against Dryness.' In this essay she inveighs against crystalline novels, which dictate the interplay of character and plot to so as to express a position or point of view of the author.²⁴ She is also opposed to journalistic novels, which rely on detailed descriptions of the conventions in which narrative plot lines are

developed. Both journalistic and crystalline novels tend to reduce imaginative literature to something else, theory, ideology or sociology, whereas Murdoch imagines the novel to be autonomous. Indeed Murdoch establishes the autonomy of the novel as well as the internal relationship between philosophy and the art of the novel, by philosophical means. She philosophises about the differences between philosophy and literature. Standardly, she takes philosophy to be concerned with attending to conceptual affinities and differences between forms of experience so that, for instance, it discriminates between public and personal morality and recognises how art, religion and philosophy are distinct but related ways of understanding experience. Art is not reduced to philosophy and its independence is established by philosophy. ²⁵

While philosophy makes sense of the general contours of lived experience, the novel, for Murdoch, focuses uniquely upon its particularities. The messy, endlessly particular and contingent experiential world is captured in novels that articulate complex and interwoven plots where characters develop lives and intermittent patterns are constituted by their overlapping relations to one another. In *The Fire and The Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* Murdoch explains how the artist is attuned to ‘...the hardness of the real properties of the world... where the mystery of the random has to be accepted.’ ²⁶ Murdoch takes art to contribute to the realisation of truth and goodness by its capacity to show the particular reality of our experience and the novel is well fitted to frame narratives that show the contingency, plurality and freedom of individual characters. She proposes a theoretical frame for understanding novels, which invokes a re-worked Kantian idea of the sublime, whereby the straining of the form of a novel against the variety of particulars that are developed in a narrative shows the reality of our experience. In ‘The Sublime and the

Beautiful Revisited' Murdoch concludes, 'A novel must be a house fit for free characters to live in; and to combine form with a respect for reality with all its odd contingent ways is the highest art of prose.'²⁷ If Murdoch distinguishes the novel from philosophy, she does so by means of philosophy. She provides a philosophical account of its experiential role in attending closely to experience. More than this, the relationship between the novel and philosophy is dialectical. Philosophy allows us to see the value of the novel and art in general, while the novel in opening us to reality and a world outside of ourselves, can prepare us for philosophy. Literature is distinct from philosophy and philosophy registers its separateness, just as literature in making sense of experience serves as a vehicle to enable a philosophical perspective that is open to experience.

Philosophy, for Murdoch, respects the contingency and randomness of reality along with its intimations of unity and goodness. It is sensitive to the magnetism of goodness within experience, even if the pursuit of moral perfection is not to be encapsulated in any particular experiential enactment. In the light of this recognition, philosophy is to eschew general formulas for moral conduct that sideline the responsibilities of individuals to attend closely to other individuals and the particular circumstances in which they are situated. In her philosophical writings Murdoch suggests that what is required for moral development is a virtuous and loving attention to others and the reality of their circumstances.²⁸ And the quality of attention or inattention to others in particular circumstances can be shown imaginatively in novels. Murdoch's novels show many characters interacting with one another and in so doing they either attend to or neglect others needs and concerns.

In *The Fire and The Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists*, Murdoch suggests that an artist can be adept in depicting the prevalent tendency of individuals to act selfishly.

She observes, '...good literature is uniquely able publicly to clarify evil...' ²⁹ And she goes on to say, 'He (the artist) lends to the elusive particular a local habitation and a name.' ³⁰ Murdoch's own art that is expressed in her novels is neither philosophical in deriving from a philosophical blueprint nor in conveying her own express doctrines or messages. Rather Murdoch's novels disclose particular events and characters realistically. They reflect contemporary reality in the freedom that is explored by her characters who break with traditional religious and moral attitudes in pursuing an uncertain moral path that tends to be impeded by their distortive self-absorption. The novels are true to the nature of experience and in so doing they invite readers to consider the possibilities of moral progress or self-delusion in the modern world. In so doing they show something of the meaning of Murdoch's, philosophical perspective at a local level without being reduced to it. For instance, the personal development of Ducane in *The Nice and the Good* shows how moral progress is possible amidst a disturbed political context and within a moral atmosphere that defers to the pleasure of nice, bourgeois attitudes. ³¹ On the other hand, demonic figures, such as Julius King in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* and Carel Fisher in *The Time of the Angels* show how morality is not simply about enabling choices. Morality is altogether more serious. There is the possibility of evil. Some individuals pursue goals that are fundamentally at odds with the welfare and care of others. ³² We all know of occasions when we sense the presence of something evil.

In *Sartre- Romantic Rationalist* Murdoch relates how the novel can convey concrete aspects of life that tend to be overlooked by abstract formulations. Indeed, in part, her interest in Sartre derives from his use of literary expression. Sartre, she maintains, can turn to the novel as he is interested in reviewing the texture of consciousness and lived experience. Hence his fiction in portraying lived experience

and the permutations of consciousness can complement philosophy. She observes, 'The novelist proper is, in his way, a sort of phenomenologist. He has always implicitly understood what the philosopher has grasped less clearly, that human reason is not a single unitary gadget, the nature of which could be discovered once for all. The novelist has had his eye fixed on what we do and not on what we ought to do.'³³ The novelist, for Murdoch gets to grips with what Beauvoir referred to as the 'metaphysics of lived experience.'³⁴ A novelist imagines individuals in realistic contexts, which are concrete and specific rather than abstract and general. She maintains, 'He (the novelist) has that natural gift that blessed freedom from rationalism which the academic thinker achieves, if at all, by a precarious discipline.'³⁵ Murdoch's novels provide a phenomenological review of imagined experience, shedding light on the contours of personal and social life. In her philosophy she draws upon this imaginative capacity.

Murdoch's recognition of the interplay between philosophy and the novel is confirmed by her attraction to Plato. Notwithstanding Plato's critique of art, she sees Plato as an artist himself, approving of his use of the dialogue form. It is a form that, imagines philosophical questions as arising out of the conversational interplay between individuals.³⁶ Murdoch herself wrote Platonic dialogues and is alert to how philosophical questions arise out of and re-engage with experience. The questions to which Murdoch's philosophy are addressed arise out of the post-war culture of the Western world. Central to this culture is the demythologisation of religion, morality, philosophy and politics, whereby traditional values are losing sway and the previous security of principles is being disrupted by assertive subjectivism. Moral subjectivism takes over as beliefs in an objective goodness and a transcendent God disappear and the great ideologies of socialism, communism and fascism retreat before an

instrumental liberalism. This eviscerated form of liberalism, licenses subjective choice over a way of life that respects the liberty to develop individuality.³⁷

Murdoch's novels reveal a context in which traditional ways of life and principles are being eroded. They exhibit themes that are central to her philosophy because they show a world of particular individuals, situated at a point in time in which the culture of modernity renders moral, political and religious practice directionless. Just as her philosophy deals with demythologisation and the ideal of a pilgrimage to goodness from the subjectivism of the contemporary world, so her novels depict characters who contend in unique situations with the confusions of modern culture.

Murdoch, as Forsberg intimates, in her novels and in her philosophy, is intent on capturing what is lost or being lost in contemporary culture.³⁸ In this respect, her novels and her philosophy are complementary projects. The nature of this complementarity is exhibited nicely in the novels, *The Time of the Angels* and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*. In *The Time of the Angels* the demonic Carel Fisher is possessed with the idea of the death of God and the absence of moral limits, while his brother Marcus is working on a book to justify morality in the absence of a personal, transcendent God. Rupert Foster, in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* is composing a text on Plato and the Good, while his former colleague, Julius King plays havoc with people's lives in his unrestrained manipulation of people's self-regard. On the face of things the projected projects of Rupert Foster and Marcus Fisher resemble Murdoch's philosophy in their focus upon own engagement with developing a sense of religion and goodness to fit with a demythologised world. Yet neither Rupert nor Marcus are portrayed sympathetically. While the impetus of their writing may be honourable, we realise by the close of these novels is that they are pusillanimous and vain, and their abstracted philosophies do not bear significantly

upon the worlds around them. Chaos and immorality are unmoved by their words. The texts within the texts of Murdoch's novels do not encompass her philosophy, just as it is not disclosed in doctrines that are aired in her characters' conversations. Her novels, however, do imagine individual lives concretely so as to show the phenomenological possibilities of her philosophical analysis of moral perfectionism and in particular they show the fallibility and susceptibility to self-absorption and hence the moral difficulties of individuals operating in a messy world.

Sartre and Under the Net: Philosophy and the Novel at the Outset of Murdoch's Career

Murdoch's perspective on philosophy and the novel is evident at the outset of her career. She sees philosophy as more than an exercise in logic or semantics. It offers something to live one's life by and this guidance appears all the more urgent in the immediately post-war world, when everything had been turned upside down by the Second World War. Similarly her first novel reflects a critical turning point in post-war British society. Traditions and institutions are failing, socialism is an indeterminate word rather than a motivating doctrine and individuals strike out alone without institutional support and a guiding philosophy. Her first works of philosophy and literature signpost her concerns. Subsequent philosophical texts focus on the post-metaphysical and deracinated ethics of the late twentieth century and are motivated by the priority of re-establishing a metaphysical underpinning for morality. After *Under the Net* Murdoch's novels continue to explore the post-war world, where underlying myths of religion, philosophy and politics are decomposing and egoistic characters struggle to explore new possibilities of freedom.

From the beginning Murdoch's philosophy differs from that of her counterparts in Oxford and Cambridge. They were wedded to a post-metaphysical analytical framework, which renounced traditional metaphysics and reduced ethics to a set of formulas enabling the freedom of self-interested individuals. In contrast Murdoch's approach recognised how philosophy is to attend to the quality of experience and serve as a guide to how one might live a life. In a letter to Raymond Queneau of 1946, in which she recounts her excitement on reading Sartre, which is at odds with the cold rationalism of Oxford philosophy. She observes, 'But oh the way he throws his terms about... would make Oxford hair stand on end. My cold critical judgment has not yet caught up with my emotional assent. (Now and then I think let it go to hell anyway why not read philosophy just for the emotional kick... ³⁹ Murdoch's own philosophy can be read for its emotional kick. She saw philosophy and literature as possessing a kick. They have something important to say about experience. She read Sartre and Beauvoir alongside Anglo-American philosophy, and while she absorbed the analytical precision of the latter she also retained the existential kick of the former. If in the 1940s Murdoch was drawn to Sartre, she was also critical of him. Byatt, amongst others, is right to emphasise her critique of existentialism in that it was never sufficient for her to conceive of freedom in terms of 'indifference.'⁴⁰ *Under the Net*, her first novel, can be read as showing the limits of an existentialist attitude in that Jake Donoghue, is so self-absorbed in his own pursuit of an individualist form of freedom that he ignores or misconstrues what is happening around him.⁴¹ Yet Murdoch values Sartre as well as rejecting much of what he has to say. Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* is a phenomenological review of personal existence and the possibilities of freedom, which captured the mood of the times by looking for existential meaning while eschewing traditional forms of spiritual

comfort.⁴² In commenting upon *Being and Nothingness* to Queneau, Murdoch is ambivalent in testifying to its merits and yet being critical of its view of freedom. She observes, '... He is seductive and captivating...I don't want to concede that all awareness is self-awareness, and I find his concept of freedom vague and transcendental... I'm also very drawn to the Sartrean concept of anguish and to the portrait of man alone in the universe faced by choice, architect of his own values.'⁴³ Sartre's phenomenological analysis of existence spoke to the generation that had experienced the Second World War. It was a generation that was sought freedom and authenticity without reliance upon outmoded and discredited authorities. Murdoch's critical reading of Sartre reflects her sense that philosophy and literature more generally must engage with the present as an historical phenomenon in recognising what is distinctive and urgent about its character.

Murdoch's first book, *Sartre- Romantic Rationalist* introduced Sartre to an English-speaking audience and it remains a considered introduction to Sartre and existentialism. As with her consideration of other philosophers more generally, her criticism also serves as a way of setting out her own ideas. She follows Sartre's engagement with Husserl, Heidegger and Hegel, and admires the intensity of his phenomenological multi-layered review of existence. Yet she poses critical questions to his philosophy, which reflect her training in analytical philosophy and her down to earth appraisal of experience. She highlights a tension between Sartre's intensive pursuit of individual freedom and what she terms the ordinary virtues of everyday life, whereby obligations to family and friends are conditions of self-development rather than barriers to an individual's exercise of self-control. She observes, 'Sartre bypasses the complexity of the world of ordinary human relations which is also the

world of ordinary moral virtues.’⁴⁴ For Murdoch, ‘Sartre’s man is depicted in the moment-to-moment flux of his thoughts and moods...at this level freedom seems indeed like randomness, the freedom of indifference.’⁴⁵ In a later essay “On God and Good”, Sartre’s notion of freedom is likened to that of contemporary Anglo-American theorists of morality in his focus on will and choice as sovereign instruments in determining value, even though their philosophical styles contrast.⁴⁶ Moran, in his article, ‘Iris Murdoch and Existentialism’ takes issue with Murdoch on Sartre and existentialism, holding that the existentialist emphasis upon choice is warranted by the continuous responsibility an individual must assume for their lives. He remarks, ‘For it is because of what I referred to earlier as the “unbounded” aspect of human freedom, the fact that the person always orients himself one way or another toward both his capacities and obstacles, that the Existentialist sees an element of choice in all the continuities and discontinuities of a person’s gestures, postures and attitudes...’⁴⁷ Moran might well be right in highlighting the ubiquity of freedom in accounts of agency, which perhaps Murdoch underplays in her moral writings. Her reading of Sartre and existentialism is questionable but it is also plausible in pointing to the social context of freedom and her own alignment of freedom to a vision that goes beyond merely individual choice.

Murdoch’s early work on Sartre represents her enduring approach to philosophy. Philosophy, for Murdoch, is not an abstract exercise without reference to lived experience. What she values in Sartre is his focus upon making sense of an individual’s experience. Likewise, she accepts Sartre’s break from preceding forms of metaphysics and from an uncritical acceptance of conventions. She is at one with aspects of his reading of the present. The free development of individuals is central to the modern world. Yet she breaks with Sartre in insisting that an individual is not

to be abstracted from social and political practices that contribute to her identity and freedom. Moreover, Murdoch subscribes to a renewed form of metaphysics, which is to be distinguished from pre-Kantian forms of reasoning, but which continues the work of Plato and Hegel in connecting significant aspects of experience in guiding an individual to align with truth and goodness.⁴⁸ Where the Sartrean individual sees others as impediments to his freedom, Murdoch imagines an individual's cultivation of friendships, family ties and political obligations as being constitutive of their identity. Moreover, she perceives art and religion as attuning an individual to the possibility of grasping the truth of things and of other people.

Under the Net announces Murdoch's arrival as a novelist and her arrival was interpreted variously. Ryan, in his Introduction to the Vintage edition of the novel (2002), recalls and rebuts its original critical reception as a work of an angry young man.⁴⁹ If Murdoch was neither angry nor a man, she engaged with the spirit of her time like other emerging post-war novelists. But she saw the time differently. Spear in *Iris Murdoch* remarks, '... the further we travel from the 1950s, the clearer it is that while the novels of the 'Angry Young Men' of that time were the forerunners of the disillusioned "University novels" of the later decades of the twentieth century, she herself was in the process of creating a novelistic world unique to her own art; her created world attempts to grapple, not with the so-called realism of the 1950s and 1960s, but rather with the malaise that lies at the heart of life, the "real" realism in which we, all of us, have faced the changes brought upon us by the Second World War, by the holocaust, by the fear of the atom bomb, by the gradual erosion (however much it may be denied) of the old class system...'⁵⁰ Spears' focus upon the realist and historical dimension of *Under the Net* and of Murdoch's fiction as a whole is enlightening. *Under the Net* is not a philosophical tract in which Murdoch

dispenses her philosophical views. Rather it is a narrative of how a young man, Jake Donoghue, reflecting contemporary existential attitudes, negotiates the atmosphere of the post-war world, where long-standing traditions and beliefs have receded. *Under the Net* is, however, notable for containing express discussion of philosophy and for including two characters who are memorable philosophers. When Jake needs a bed at the start of the novel he goes to Dave Gellman. Dave is a philosopher who does extra mural work for a University in London. He is a sympathetic character, who never seems to lose contact with a student and who knows many artists, intellectuals and left-wing political people. Students like and admire him even if he devotes himself to critiquing the grounds of their metaphysical beliefs by his own brand of linguistic analysis. His hard-headed philosophical questioning aims to destroy unifying theories and he also aims to put any students off pursuing a philosophical career.⁵¹ The other philosopher is Hugo Belfounder, who is not a professional philosopher but Jake sees him as a rigorous theoretician who offers a distinctive philosophical point of view. Belfounder had a '...theory of everything but in a peculiar way. Everything had a theory but there was no master theory.'⁵² Hugo is profoundly anti-metaphysical. A radical undoctinaire philosopher who nonetheless has a distinct point of view. His critical hostility towards generalisation renders him suspicious of language itself. How can it capture the reality of particular things. It is a net that covers things.

The representation of philosophers and philosophical positions in *Under The Net* do not entail that Murdoch is espousing an express philosophical doctrine. She does not share the views of Gellman or Belfounder. Their views are not the heart of the novel. In fact, Murdoch is a metaphysician to whom their doctrines are opposed. What the novel does display is the rootless individualism of its central protagonist Jake

Donoghue, who wanders across London without a fixed purpose and enduring social ties. He believes in socialism but indeterminately. He is elusive and his elusivity represents the general elusivity of the present. The novel is also the first of a number of first-person narratives, where the narrator is revealed to be unreliable. The unreliability of Jake Donoghue's perception of things stands for the general unreliability of all of us in attending to what is happening. By the end of the novel Jake himself, and the reader, are aware albeit dimly that his assertive subjectivity masks his misreading of virtually all the key characters and relationships in the novel. The novel does not spell out a philosophy, but it serves as a reminder that in a radically individualist culture, securing a grip on one's relations with others is problematic. In his sensitivity to resist conventions and relationships that compromise his individuality Jake is insensitive to friends and lovers. He lacks awareness of whom he loves and who is in love with him.

Jake's Bohemianism might seem romantic and heroic, like existentialism, but he is revealed to be egoistic and floundering amid the deracinated relationships and practices of the post-war world. His individualism is uneasy, as he resists conventions and avoids stereotypical acquisitive behaviour to insist upon authentic existential choices, which obscure his real relations with others. Murdoch's first novel, like her first philosophical work, anticipates what follows in her career. As in *Under the Net*, all of her novels relate to her philosophy, vividly showing what it might amount to in an individual case while not rehearsing philosophical doctrines directly. The author relates to her readers indirectly. Characters are shown to be involved in fluid situations that allow for individual choices that tend to lack realistic assessment of self and others. Myths that have previously supported institutions and practices are now questionable and their recessiveness tends to leave individuals without the

resources. to handle their freedom. And yet the novels do not simply yield to what has been lost in the transition to modernity. There are suggestions of the possibilities of moral progress and a humour that lightens the incompatibility between individual ambition and the realities of the world.

The Dialectic of Murdoch's Life and Work

In the following chapters of this book, I will develop the themes that have been set out in the preceding pages. This book will attend to the critical and dialectical way in which Murdoch integrates forms of thought and action and their historical development. In doing so the value of her work in specific ways will be highlighted along with the overall value of her integrated conception of experience and how we are to understand it and live within it. In Chapter 2, *Murdoch and Metaphysics*, her metaphysics will be reviewed. For Murdoch, metaphysics provides an overall way of understanding experience, linking religion, art, personal development, morality and politics to one another and to an overall unity of experience that allows for difference and contingency. The historicity of metaphysics is significant for Murdoch in that she makes clear that she approaches metaphysics via a reading of its history.

Murdoch's approach to metaphysics is post-Kantian and she assumes that any viable form of metaphysics in the modern era must respond to the post-metaphysical context of modern times. She takes metaphysical understanding to depend upon experiential forms of support. Merely logical reasoning cannot generate experiential truths; rather experiential evidence allows for ways of reading experience as exhibiting truth, goodness and unity. Her historical perspective is evident in her practice of metaphysical thinking in that she develops her thinking by engaging in sustained criticism of preceding and contemporary philosophers. Metaphysics is a holistic reading of experience in which differing elements of experience are linked

together in terms of their common revelation of their underlying value and goodness. The inclusivity of this holistic perspective entails that the dissonant, the wayward and the contingent are to be recognised as part of the whole and their impact is evident in the imperfection of every experiential enactment of the good.

Notwithstanding the centrality of morality to Murdoch's conception of metaphysics, chapter 2 will not focus upon her ethics, which is set out most memorably in the essays contained in *The Sovereignty of Good*, for her moral philosophy will be considered in Chapter 4. Rather it examines *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* and her unpublished 'Manuscript on Heidegger.'⁵³ These two texts, which were composed towards the end of her life furnish a retrospective account of what she takes to be central in metaphysics. They are at one in respecting modern limits on the way in which metaphysics operates, in that Murdoch takes metaphysics to draw upon experience to support its arguments. She is also clear that metaphysics is not a mere academic exercise. It matters. It matters in that it provides an overall picture by which one can live one's life.

Chapter 3, *Murdoch and the Novel* reviews how she understands the novel. It asks and answers the questions of how her own novels fit with her philosophical ideas and how she perceives art in general. The novel, like art more generally, plays an integral role in Murdoch's conception of experience and the possibility of achieving moral progress. Murdoch's sense of the inter-relations between the novel, visual arts and philosophy will be explored. While many texts of Murdoch will be examined, the focus will be upon her series of essays on literature that are collected together in *Existentialists and Mystics* and her book, *the Fire and the Sun- Why Plato Banished the Artists*. The essays show how intensively Murdoch was engaged in reflecting upon the possibilities of literature and in particular, the novel. She offers a reading of

the novel, which is historical in character. She focuses upon the crisis of the novel in the contemporary world, offering a critique of the contemporary novel, eschewing the didactic tone of one of its most prominent idioms. As an alternative, she looks to work with the sublime whereby the interplay of particular human characters resist the author's inclination to impose a formal conception upon the intricacies of human interaction. She relishes the way in which the novel can intimate the richness and freedom of lived experience. Her own novels are guided self-consciously towards capturing the nature of lived experience, notably its randomness and contingency. The novels also frame pictures of individuals whose conduct and reflections bear upon themes of her philosophy. They reflect the processes of demythologisation that act upon twentieth century culture. Again, insofar as the novels are realist, they reflect aspects of her philosophy that are designed to comprehend experience. Characters are shown as seeking the good and straying from it in ways that show how the pilgrimage to goodness is a particular and arduous road. The novels disclose the singularities of roads to goodness and particular personifications of evil. Murdoch's understands the visual arts as representing truth and goodness and her novels engage with the visual arts in developing imaginary but realistic images of experience. Art as a whole represents the world truthfully allows for an appreciation of reality, which enables individuals to be clear on things. In her novels, individuals who visit art galleries and think about paintings are shown to be contributing to artistic endeavour and to appreciate something of reality.

Central to Murdoch's view of the world is morality and goodness and she takes the visual arts, literature and philosophy to contribute to the moral life. Hence in Chapter 4, *Murdoch and Morality* Murdoch's distinctive view of the moral life is analysed.

Contrary to standard contemporary views, which rehearsed forms of subjectivism,

Murdoch was committed to a perfectionist view of moral life, where individuals aim to achieve the good, which goes beyond a merely subjective perspective. It involves the critical determination to see things from other than one's own point of view. Her most famous philosophical essays that are collected in *The Sovereignty of Good* set out a challenging view of morality, which draws upon Plato's notion of the Good as the magnetic force that metaphorically expresses the standard for moral goodness. These essays are discussed alongside a review of the ways in which the pursuit of the good and its pitfalls enter into her novels, such as *The Good Apprentice* (1985) and *The Bell* (1958). Murdoch's moral philosophy remains as relevant today as when it was written. It combines a radical critique of standard assumptions with a plausible experiential argument for a perfectionism that answers to our sense that we need to look hard at ourselves and others in our moral conduct.

An under-examined aspect of Murdoch's work is her appraisal of the political world. In Chapter 5 *Murdoch and The Political* her views on politics are examined. Her early communism and later espousal of liberalism are acknowledged by commentators but what tends to be ignored are the ways in which she explores politics in her theoretical writings and how politics enters her novels. Politics occupies a definite place in her scheme of things. In her early political thinking of the 1950s she looks to a renewal of socialist ideology, while recognising that in the post-war Western world radical ideology has lost its previous appeal. Subsequently she develops a form of liberal thinking in which a limited form of politics is espoused that concentrates upon providing security and rights in the public realm so that individuals can pursue personal moral development. Her politics is influenced by historical developments. In her letters she reveals concerns over the tyrannies of the twentieth century, which have prevented individuals from exercising freedom. Her early commitment to

socialism faded. In her first novel, *Under the Net* socialism is an unexplained and unjustified commitment by characters, who cannot provide an account of its credibility. Subsequently she lost faith entirely in the socialist project and indeed in the capacity of politics to provide a utopian solution to the human condition. Her novels contain many references to Holocaust survivors, who testify to the calamities that can befall radical ideological projects. Questions of public morality are rehearsed in her novels, ranging from the status of refugees, the nature of rights, the balance to be struck between private and public morality, life and death issues, sexual freedoms and what a citizen owes to the state. *The Flight From the Enchanter* (1956), *The Nice and the Good* (1968) and *An Accidental Man* (1971) contain subtle discussions of a number of these issues. *The Book and the Brotherhood* (1987) concerns the writing of a book that purports to provide a general theory of politics. It is financed by a group, the brotherhood, whose own beliefs in socialism and grand theory have receded but the author David Crimmond produces a radical and challenging critique of the political system. Is the project of grand critical political theory still viable? This is a question that is asked in the book. The political questions and issues that inform the novels are not resolved conclusively, as they appear within complex events and are taken up by characters who are neither exemplary nor simple representatives of a viewpoint. Murdoch deals with these political questions because they are important in the modern world and impact upon people's lives and other aspects of experience. Her treatment of politics is subtle and valuable.

If Murdoch's philosophy and novels are ways of making sense of lived experience then it makes sense that Murdoch's own life reflects the issues with which she deals in her philosophy and in her imaginative writing. This is the case. In Chapter 6 *Iris Murdoch: Her Life and Times* her life is reviewed. For better or for worse Murdoch's

life is in the public domain and has been the source of several conflicting standpoints. One narrative sees her as a brilliant young woman, succeeding as a philosopher in a very male world of Oxford philosophy, making an ideal marriage with an Oxford eccentric and then succumbing at the last to Alzheimer's disease. At the last this formerly brilliant mind becomes a hopeless and abject, who is cared for by her loving partner. By and large, this is the story of the film of her life that relates to the moving memoirs of her husband, John Bayley.⁵⁴ This narrative was quickly debunked by A. N. Wilson who referred to her sexual promiscuity and frenzied sociality. The publication of some of her letters has added to the complications of the way her life is to be understood. In their Introduction to a selection of her letters, *Living on Paper – Letters From Iris Murdoch 1934-1995* the editors Horner and Rowe observe, '... they give us a portrait of a woman who lived unconventionally and according to her own moral code; of a complex individual whose reactions to others and events were often intense and frequently irreverent; of a woman whose ideas and values changed profoundly over the years.'⁵⁵ Perhaps unsurprisingly this balanced assessment of her life was not accepted by some reviewers who have concentrated on the sexual revelations in the letters. While Murdoch's life and letters can be understood in multiple ways, what they do show, and in ways that are relevant to the themes of this book, is how her references to events and attitudes to experience that feature in her novels and philosophy, are also evident in her letters. While in her philosophy the general character of morality is discussed and in her novels imaginary characters confront moral issues, in her letters we have evidence of how morality and reflection on morality is involved in an actual life, namely Murdoch's own. She owns to moral failings, empathises with others and has to deal with loss, of her parents, and a loved one. Again, the letters provide first-hand

experience of refugees surviving as victims of Nazi atrocity in the uncertain world of displacement centres. Her novels involve numerous migrants of many kinds, whose precarity and dislocation pose moral and political questions for themselves and others. The letters do reveal her intense personal and sexual relations with others, and this readiness to embrace loving relations may be questionable at times but also testifies to her capacity to enact the love of which she writes in her theoretical and fictional writing. The fluidity of her sexuality reflects her clear-headed analysis of homosexuality and her support for its legalisation in her article, 'The Moral Decision about Homosexuality'.⁵⁶ Murdoch's life attests to her reflection on experience, which includes consideration of political events of the day, and her concern to develop as a moral person. The life matters because it shows how making sense of experience matters. Indeed, her metaphysics, her literary art, her moral and political thought and her life because she integrates them all into her overriding concern to enhance our engagement with experience.

In the course of this book, many different kinds of writing by Murdoch will be consulted. Given our sense of the complementarity of her fiction and non-fiction, her novels and philosophical writings will be drawn upon. Given the inter-related nature of her interpretation of differing areas of experience, reference will be made to particular texts and arguments in differing chapters. Unpublished writings will be cited, along with published texts. These unpublished items include her 'Manuscript on Heidegger' and her letters and journals as well as papers relating to Murdoch that are kept at St. Anne's College. Given that Murdoch did not want her letters, journals and 'Manuscript on Heidegger' to be published, we use these sources after some reflection. Their use is justified in that they relate to themes that are explored in this book and generally harmonise with what is maintained in her published texts. Some

of the unpublished writings are of significant value. Her 'Manuscript on Heidegger' is a considered and thoughtful exploration of the possibilities of metaphysics in a post-metaphysical context as well as an informed and considered study of Heidegger. Indeed, it merits publication in that it sheds light on Heidegger and on Murdoch's conception of metaphysics, without wandering away from how she discusses metaphysics in her Gifford lectures which were later published as *Metaphysics as a Guide to Knowledge*. Her journals vary in character. Some of the early journals of the 1940s, contain intensive notes on philosophy, including a record of her thoughts on Cambridge philosophy, the existentialism of Sartre and Marcel and analysis of Hegel and Husserl. Later journals tend to be more epigrammatic and less scholarly but provide a record of her thinking on a variety of subjects. Her letters vary. Some are short on intellectual or personal reflection, but the letters to Queneau stand out for their discussion of her intellectual interests at the outset of her philosophical career. Where possible I have drawn upon the selection of letters in *Living on Paper – Letters From Iris Murdoch 1934-1995* as they are published and accessible, though all of the letter runs in the Iris Murdoch Archive are worth consulting. The use of her previously unpublished writings allows for an intensive analysis of the themes that underlie this study. Iris Murdoch matters because she provides an integrated historically attuned exploration of experience in fictional and non-fictional texts and tried to live by the principles that she theorised. Her ideas and life remain worthy objects of study.

¹ I. Murdoch, 'Letter to Raymond Queneau', 17 October, 1947 in A. Horner and A. Rowe (eds) *Living on Paper – Letters From Iris Murdoch 1934-1995* (London, Chatto and Windus, 2015), p. 99

² I. Murdoch, Application for the post of Tutor in Philosophy, St. Anne's College, St. Anne's College Library, p.1

³ Ibid., p.1

⁴ Ibid., p.2

⁵ I. Murdoch, 'Dame Iris Murdoch's Address – to Kingston University Humanities Graduates', the Barbican, London, 4 November, 1993' in Yozo Moroya and Paul Hullah (eds) *Occasional Essays By Iris Murdoch* (Okayama, Japan, University Education Press, 1998, pp. 49-53

⁶ See I. Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, (London, Chatto and Windus, 1992), pp. 431-60

⁷ I. Murdoch, 'Above the Gods: A Dialogue about Religion' in I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1997)

⁸ See I. Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, p.2

⁹ The impetus behind Murdoch's metaphysics and moral philosophy lies in her revival of Plato for the modern world. It is a particular modernised Plato and the character of her reading of Plato will be focused upon in later chapters. She draws upon Plato in most of her major philosophical texts. See in particular, I. Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* (1977) (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1978); I. Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970) (London, Routledge, 1985) and I. Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. In subsequent references to *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* and *The Sovereignty of Good* the reprinted versions of these texts in I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature* will be cited.

¹⁰ I. Murdoch, *Journal 14 for 1981-1992*, (Iris Murdoch Archive, University of Kingston), p.108. This phrase, and the attitude it represents is important for Murdoch and it occurs again in her 'Manuscript on Heidegger' ((Iris Murdoch Archive, University of Kingston), p. 19

¹¹ See I. Murdoch, 'Against Dryness' in I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, pp. 287-97 and I. Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* (1977)

¹² M. Antonaccio, *A Philosophy to Live By: Engaging Iris Murdoch* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 4

¹³ I. Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, p.7

¹⁴ Murdoch witnessed the devastation of wartime lives in Europe at first hand and her thoughts on this and subsequent political events can be seen in her letters, her fiction and non-fictional writings. See for instance the selection of Murdoch's letters to Raymond Queneau and Philippa Foot that has been published in A. Rowe and A. Horner, *Living on Paper- Iris Murdoch Letters 1934-1995* (London, Chatto and Windus, 2015). See also I. Murdoch, *Journals* (Murdoch Archive, University of Kingston. Many of Murdoch's novels relate the experience of refugees from twentieth century tyrannies. See, for instance, *The Time of the Angels* (1966) (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968), *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956), (London, Vintage, 2000) and *The Nice and the Good* (1968)(London, Penguin Books, 2000)

¹⁵ I. Murdoch, 'Against Dryness' in I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, p. 291

¹⁶ I. Murdoch, *The Time of the Angels*

¹⁷ I. Murdoch, *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983), (London, Vintage, 2000), p. 187

¹⁸ N. Forsberg, *Language Lost and Found- On Iris Murdoch and the Limits of Philosophical Discourse* (London, Bloomsbury, 2013) pp. 3-15

¹⁹ 'Iris Murdoch Talks to Stephen Glover' in G. Dooley (ed) *From A Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction- Conversations with Iris Murdoch* (Columbia, South Carolina, University of South Carolina Press, 2003), p. 36

²⁰ 'Literature and Philosophy: A Conversation with Bryan Magee' in I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, p. 19

²¹ See P. Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: The Saint and the Artist* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1986); A. N. Wilson, *Iris Murdoch: As I Knew Her* (London, Random House/Arrow, 2003). Wilson disparages her philosophy and Conradi tends to leave the philosophy to the commentaries of philosophers. See chapter 6 for further discussion of this.

²² B. Heusel, *Patterned Aimlessness- Iris Murdoch's Novels of the 1970s and 1980s* (Athens, Georgia, University of Georgia Press, 1995). See also M. Leeson, *Iris Murdoch: Philosophical Novelist* (London, Continuum, 2010); M. Antonaccio *Picturing the Human: The Moral Thought of Iris Murdoch* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000)

²³ N. Forsberg, *Language Lost and Found- On Iris Murdoch and the Limits of Philosophical Discourse*, pp. 15-57

²⁴ . I. Murdoch, 'Against Dryness' in I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, p. 291

²⁵ See I. Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, pp.1-25

²⁶ I. Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* in I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, p.456

²⁷ . I. Murdoch, 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited' in I. Murdoch *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, p. 286

²⁸ See I. Murdoch, 'On God and Good', in I. Murdoch *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, p. 348-9

²⁹ I. Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists* in I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, p. 457

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 461

³¹ I. Murdoch, *The Nice and the Good*

³² I. Murdoch, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1970) and I. Murdoch, *The Time of the Angels*

³³ I. Murdoch, *Sartre - Romantic Rationalist* (London, Fontana/Collins, 1976), p. 9

³⁴ S de Beauvoir, 'Literature and Metaphysics' in S. de Beauvoir *Philosophical Writings* trans. V. Zayteff and F. Morrison, ed M. A. Simons with M. Timmerman and M. Mader (Urbana and University of Illinois Press 2004), pp. 261-78

³⁵ I. Murdoch *Sartre - Romantic Rationalist*, p. 10

³⁶ I. Murdoch, *The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists*

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- ³⁷ See I. Murdoch, 'A House of Theory', in I. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1997)
- ³⁸ N. Forsberg, *Language Lost and Found- On Iris Murdoch and the Limits of Philosophical Discourse*, pp. 113-151
- ³⁹ I. Murdoch, 'Letter to Raymond Queneau', 2 June, 1946 in in A. Horner and A. Rowe (eds) *Living on Paper – Letters From Iris Murdoch 1934-1995* (London, Chatto and Windus, 2015), p. 72
- ⁴⁰ A. S. Byatt, *Degrees of Freedom- The Early Novels of Iris Murdoch* (London, Vintage, 1994), p. 31
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-40
- ⁴² J-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* trans. H. E. Barnes (New York, Washington Square Press, 1966)
- ⁴³ I. Murdoch, 'Letter to Raymond Queneau', 7 August, 1946 in in A. Horner and A. Rowe (eds) *Living on Paper – Letters From Iris Murdoch 1934-1995* (London, Chatto and Windus, 2015), p. 76
- ⁴⁴ I. Murdoch *Sartre - Romantic Rationalist*, p. 32
- ⁴⁵ I. Murdoch *Sartre - Romantic Rationalist*, p. 84
- ⁴⁶ I. Murdoch, 'On God and Good', in I. Murdoch *Existentialists and Mystics- Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, p. 341-2
- ⁴⁷ D. Moran, 'Iris Murdoch and Existentialism' in J. Brookes (ed) *Iris Murdoch Philosopher- A Collection of Essays*(Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 195
- ⁴⁸ I. Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*
- ⁴⁹ K. Ryan, Introduction to I. Murdoch, *Under the Net* (London, Vintage, 2002), p. xvi
- ⁵⁰ H. Spear, *Iris Murdoch* (Basingstoke, London Macmillan, 1995), p. 24
- ⁵¹ I. Murdoch, *Under the Net* (1954) (London, Vintage, 2002), pp. 28-9
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 65
- ⁵³ I. Murdoch, 'Manuscript on Heidegger', Iris Murdoch Archive, University of Kingston
- ⁵⁴ J. Bayley, *Iris- A Memoir of Iris Murdoch* (London, Duckworth, 1998), pp. 17-19 and R. Eyre, *Iris* (Miramax, 2000)
- ⁵⁵ A. Horner and A. Rowe, 'Introduction' in A. Horner and A. Rowe, *Living on Paper- Iris Murdoch Letters 1934-1995*, p. xviii
- ⁵⁶ I. Murdoch, 'The Moral Decision about Homosexuality' in Yozo Moroya and Paul Hullah (eds) *Occasional Essays By Iris Murdoch* (Okayama, Japan, University Education Press, 1998)