

Unpublished Sources: A Guide

Iris Murdoch

I. Murdoch, '*Heidegger Manuscript*', Murdoch Archive, University of Kingston

This manuscript is very significant. It is held within the archive collection at the University of Kingston. It is a well-written, thorough review of Heidegger's philosophy. It connects Heidegger to Wittgenstein and to analytic philosophy, hence it is valuable historically in showing how analytic and continental philosophy were thought to be linked. The manuscript was written sometime in the 1990s as Murdoch was working on *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. In many ways it represents a sharper, and clearer focus upon metaphysics than *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. Where it is difficult to maintain a clear and coherent path through *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, the Manuscript on Heidegger concentrates on Heidegger as a metaphysician in a post-metaphysical age and poses analytical questions to that metaphysical project.

The archive contains a letter from the celebrated Heidegger scholar Stanley Rosen, who was asked by John Bayley to consider its scholarly value. Murdoch herself had decided not to publish it and executors decided against publishing it. The advice of Rosen was mixed in that he recognises its quality and expertise in dealing with Heidegger, but notes that the essay tends to deal with many topics and contains Murdoch's own thoughts, rather than simply focusing upon Heidegger. In many ways this broad and engaging review of Heidegger allows Murdoch to provide a wide ranging and critical analysis of metaphysics that remains of value in discussions of metaphysics and in assessing Murdoch's work.

Murdoch recognises the value of Heidegger while at the same time subjecting Heidegger's philosophy to criticisms. She is impressed with the existential questions about the nature of Being that are set by Heidegger, though she does ask down-to-earth questions about their meaning. She takes Heidegger to be a valuable guide to metaphysics in an age that has rejected dogmatic metaphysics. She sees Heidegger as theorising from the concrete world of experience. She is impressed by Heidegger's starting point, *Dasein*, and the being for whom being is in question. She picks out Heidegger, Hegel and Plato as supreme practitioners of metaphysics.

Murdoch is critical of aspects of Heidegger's philosophy. She considers that he ignore or deprecates ordinary moral values, such as family commitments and the duties of friendships. There is an unhealthy heroic individualism about Heidegger that she critiques. Just as she had critiqued Sartre in her first published book, *Sartre-Romantic Rationalist*, she takes issue with a philosophy, which deprecates relations with others. She is also critical of Heidegger's lack of attention to progressive political developments in the West, such as the developing provision of rights for women. She takes Heidegger's late philosophy to be a step down from *Being and Time*. She provides a sympathetic reading of Nietzsche in the manuscript and is critical of Heidegger's late theism.

Unpublished Writings

I. Murdoch, 'Letters to Michael Oakeshott', Iris Murdoch Archive, University of Kingston

The letters to Oakeshott are revealing. They exhibit a decided tenderness and concern for Oakeshott's predicament. Oakeshott is being haunted for his love of another while

in a marriage. Murdoch contrives to be empathetic but at times her language and concern for Oakeshott appears strained, given her own feelings for him. She talks of Oakeshott's conservatism, which is against the prevailing liberal spirit.

I. Murdoch, 'Letters to Philippa Foot', Iris Murdoch Archive, University of Kingston

The letters to Foot are as interesting for what they do not include as much as for what they do include. On the one hand the letters are forthright and friendly, containing views on politics that are expressed clearly. For instance Murdoch is critical of state socialist regimes and describes with evident dismay the repression of China on her visit to that country. She is upset by the Chinese pretence that it contains no homosexuals. Murdoch is also moving in her heartfelt admission of her regrettable conduct in developing a relationship with Foot's partner. She is very delicate in her expression of concern for Philippa Foot and her relief when they resume their friendship. Murdoch also describes a brief sexual liaison with Foot.

What Iris Murdoch tends not to discuss in her letters to Foot are philosophical issues and her philosophical views. She tends to defer elaborately to Foot's philosophical ability and her status. However, it is unclear whether or not Murdoch is also aiming to preserve the independence of her own philosophical outlook, which, unlike Foot's, embraces Continental philosophy and a more radical critique of aspects of analytical philosophy

I. Murdoch, 'Letters to Raymond Queneau', Iris Murdoch Archive, University of Kingston

The letters to Queneau are very important for their discussion of Murdoch's philosophical views particularly at the end of the war and in the immediate post-war years. She shares ideas on Sartre and talks in detail about the progress of her own philosophical ideas. Evidently she respects Queneau's intellectual qualities and considers his views on continental philosophy important and helpful.

She also shares political views with Queneau and her own experiences. For instance she writes movingly of her experience in a camp for refugees in Graz, Austria when she was working for UNRRA at the end of the Second World War.

I. Murdoch, Application for the Post of Tutor in Philosophy, St. Anne's College, St. Anne's College library.

This successful application is of great interest for within it she develops an account of how she sees the development of philosophy, noting that the phenomenological and idealist developments of Hegel are of importance. Along the way she shows an interest in and good knowledge of Hegel.

Other Authors

Unpublished Writing

Jenny Hinton (Jennifer Dawson 1949-52) 'Iris Murdoch's Political Theory Class', (originally in *The Ship* magazine, St. Anne's College Library, University of Oxford)

An interesting account of what it was like to be taught by Murdoch. Hinton evidently appreciates Murdoch's liveliness, connection to her students and her knowledge.

Murdoch is described as a very lively teacher developing ideas on Marx, Oakeshott and Mill and responding to students' questions and posing engaging questions.

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