Abstract

Moral education has to be based on an adequate philosophy of morality. Such a philosophy of morality includes not only moral philosophy but a plausible philosophy of mind. Iris Murdoch alleges that moral discourse since Kant has been vitiated by a false picture of the human mind. Her critique is primarily concerned with a just understanding of the relationship of mental life to action and of the meaning of moral freedom.

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A Philosophy of Mind Adequate for Discourse on Morality: Iris Murdoch's Critique

Philosophers of science in their treatises on philosophy of science discuss the nature of scientific truth or knowledge, methods of scientific enquiry, and necessary attitudes such as objectivity and respect for truth, etc. A philosophy of science education would include treatment of how to develop relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes that would lead to the understanding and advancing of scientific knowledge. Any plan of science education that pretends to adequacy would have to be thus based on a comprehensive philosophy of science. Similarly, any plan of Moral Education would desirably be based on a defensible philosophy of morality.

The term 'philosophy of morality', however, should cover more than what is normally treated in moral philosophy, for Post-Kantian moral philosophy has generally confined itself to discussion of the meaning of morality or moral goodness and of the process of moral reasoning. Pertinent as these aspects of 'morality' may be, they do not make up the whole of a philosophy of morality, for the latter must cover, besides justification and reasoning, moral knowledge, moral attitudes including motivation, and moral activity, related in a way that would explain moral life as well as advance it. Even the three terms moral knowledge, moral attitudes and moral activity do not exhaust the connotation of the term moral life. Their relationship has to be treated within the context of a philosophy of mind or psychology.

When supplementing moral philosophy with other necessary components for the building up of a philosophy of morality, a philosopher of morality would also have to examine the truth of the model of mental life with which many or most contemporary moral philosophers in the rationalist, linguistic and existentialist traditions associate their theories of the nature of moral goodness and moral reasoning. An incorrect philosophy of mind would not be useful as a framework for discourse on moral life, the realm of both moral philosophy and a philosophy of morality.[1]

Even though it may be possible to envisage fruitful activity in the physical sciences being carried on even if methodological generalizations were absent, an unrealistic meta-scientific theory would certainly inhibit possible advances. Many social scientists would allege that the absence of a proper paradigm of enquiry in social and human behaviour inhibits advancement of knowledge in the area. To illustrate, just as an Aristotelian and Baconian epistemology inhibited advances in the field of phyiscal sciences, probably the practice today of modelling social scientific research on the methods of physical and natural

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sciences is holding up advances in the former. Similarly, a moral philosophy or philosophy of morality which assumes an implausible philosophy of mind can be an obstacle to explanation or advancement of moral life in individuals and societies. Needless to say, proposals for moral education based on an unreal or 'untrue philosophy' of mind are likely to be ineffective.

Iris Murdoch has charged that philosophy of mind expounded or assumed by such philosophers as Hampshire, Hare and Ryle are alien and implausible. She holds that the behaviorist, existentialist and utilitarian conceptions are combined in the image of the mind they present. She says:

> It is behaviorist in its connection of the meaning and being of action with the publicly observable, it is existentialist in its elimination of the substantial self and its emphasis on the solitary omnipotent will, and it is utilitarian in its assumption that morality is and can only be concerned with public acts. It is also ... a democratic view, in that it suggests that morality is not an esoteric achievement but a natural function of any normal man.[2]

What is the framework of mental life pointed by such moral philosophers against which they have discussed moral activity? For some the concepts of rationality and will, and the assumption of a direct impact of the former on the latter have all but excluded everything else in mental life. The capacity of the will to move independently of reason is idolized by some others as freedom or moral autonomy. Sentiments, emotions, passions, and their relations to rational process, on the one hand, and will on the other, have been ignored or noticed only for their negative role or weak nuisance import. Bernard Williams makes the same point in his essay, "Morality and Emotions":

> the only known ways of a man's keeping his emotions under control are either to deny them expression when the expression is not appropriate, ...train himself to have less of them, or to have only those of the more amiable kind. But these pictures of tactical and strategic advice seem to omit the most obvious influence of rational thought or advice on the emotions.[3]

It is as if in a discourse on physical activity only the skeletal system is considered, not the sinews, muscles and blood. Besides, this simplistic picture of mind is accompanied by an optimistic vision of the will surveying magisterially the chain of "ought" reasoning—one ought deriving from another—and then deciding freely, the degree of freedom (at least in the Existentialist stance) indicated by its autonomy from any necessary conclusions of "ought" reasoning. The picture is often of the self or the will standing neutral until the point of action, in the conflict of values involved in the process of reasoning. This optimism ignores the unpleasant but human possibility of moral values in strong conflict with self-love, lust, anger, etc., and the masquerading of them as values in themselves. The possibility of harnessing feelings (or love through attention to the object) on behalf of what is seen to be true or good, and thus slanting the will in the direction of what is true or good is unexplored in this philosophy of mind, expounded for example, according to Murdoch, in Stuart Hampshire's book: *Thought and Action* and in his essay *Disposition and Memory.*[4] Thought and action are distinctly separated, with thought seen as introduction to action. Thought follows its own path without the will's intervention, governed by its own universal rules. The will is pictured as isolated from reason, as from feeling, and yet identified with the essential centre of the self—"Identify myself with my will." Belief is ideally manufactured entirely by reason, and will's role in reasoning is not considered. To quote Iris Murdoch's description, "my responsibility is a function of my knowledge (which tries to be wholly impersonal) and my will (which is wholly personal). Morality is a matter of thinking clearly and then proceeding to outward dealings with other men."[5]

The inner life of attention to an object of thought (as distinct from reason) and of sentiment are not considered as part of the moral realm. Reason, that "public" activity, aims at being the ideal observer and deals only in neutral descriptions. Will has the monopoly of value terminology, and because it is pure choice and pure movement, not thought or vision,

needs only, what Murdoch calls, "empty action words", such as 'good' or 'right', i.e., limited normative vocabulary of virture words. Or as Bernard Williams puts it, in his "Morality and the Emotions":

> Since the preoccupation is one with fact and value...., it has imposed on the linguistic enterprise a concentration on the most general features of moral language, or ... more widely, of evaluative language. Thus the attention goes to such very general linguistic activities as 'commendation', 'evaluation' and 'prescription' and to such very general terms as 'good', 'right', and 'ought', and the more specific notions in terms of which people a lot of time think and speak about their own and others' conduct have, with the exception of one or two writers gone largely by default.[6]

Even if one agrees with Murdoch's point, is she being fair to Stuart Hampshire, for he had pointed out as early as 1949:

> Aristotle is almost entirely concerned to analyse the problems of the moral *agent,* while most contemporary moral philosophers seem to be primarily concerned to analyse the problems of the moral *judge* or critic. Aristotle describes and analyses the processes of thought, or types of argument, which lead up to the *choice* of one course of action, or way of life, in preference to another, while most contemporary philosophers describe the arguments (or lack of arguments) which lead up to the acceptance or rejection or a moral *judgement about actions:* Aristotle's Ethics incidentally mentions the kind of arguments we use as spectators in justifying sentences that express moral praise and blame of actions already performed, while many contemporary philosophers scarcely mention any other kind of argument.[7]

Can a philosophy of morality which is devoid of content, in that it leaves out of court norms and virtues, be conducive to the clarification or to the development of moral life? Can a philosophical description of the human phenomenon of morality, which does not make any moral judgements, meet the demands of a philosophy of morality which must explain and advance moral life? Murdoch comments:

> Moral philosophy cannot avoid taking sides, and would-be neutral philosophers merely take sides surreptitiously. Moral philosophy is the examination of all human activities...The examination should be realistic ... [And], since an ethical system cannot but commend an ideal, it should commend a worthy ideal. Ethics should not be merely an analysis of ordinary mediocre conduct; it should be a hypothesis about good conduct and how this can be achieved.[8]

Analysis of only the general quality of "goodness" or "rightness" falls short of the mark. Even beliefs and knowledge of moral virtues and standards will not become part of a moral personality, if the will is not integrated with those beliefs and knowledge, through the mediation of "attending". It is this attending which brings about moral attitudes and dispositions. The will itself can also play an active role in choosing objects for attention: among thoughts and beliefs and for exercise of reason leading to knowledge. The will should not be seen merely as a detached observer of neutral thoughts or processes of reasoning which acts autonomously or "freely", but also as an usher of attention. To refer to Murdoch:

> If we ignore the prior work of attention and notice only the emptiness of the movement of choice we are likely to identify freedom with the outward movement since there is nothing else to identify it with. But if we consider what the work of attention is like, how continuously it goes on, and how imperceptibly it builds up structures of value round about us, we shall not be surprised that at crucial moments of choice most of the business of choosing is already over.*... The moral life, on this view, is something that goes on continually, not something that is switched off in between the occurrence of explicit moral choices.[9]

Attending to, or positive "looking" at, what is true, is what leads to development of moral dispositions which strongly incline one to certain actions rather than others. Dispositions generated by attention are the immediate instrument which makes choices. If the *attention* is on the unreal or what is false, the dispositions will be bad and negative. In this sense 'ought' has to come from one's vision of 'is'. What Hampshire says on the "is-ought" problem is worth quoting:

> In general, one kind of sentence may be regularly established and defended by reference to another kind, without the first kind being deducible, or logically derivable from the second. So we may properly elucidate moral or practical judgements by saying that they are established and supported by arguments consisting of

**In this sense, Murdoch says, Sartre is right when he says, "Quand je délibère les jeux sont faits."*

> factual judgements of a particular range, while admitting that they are never strictly deducible, or logically derivable, from any set of factual judgements.[10]

To Murdoch, it is a "deep paradox of moral philosophy that almost all moral philosophers have been led in one way or another to picture goodness as knowledge".[11] And she also questions if naturalism *is* a fallacy:

> at the level of serious common sense and of an ordinary non-philosophical reflection about the nature of morals, it is perfectly obvious that goodness is connected with knowledge,.... with a refined and honest perception of what is really the case, a patient and just discernment and exploration of what confronts one, which is the result not simply of opening one's eyes but of a... familiar kind of moral discipline.[12]

Is this patient "gazing" or "attending" or "exploration", though Murdoch presents it in a non-religious framework, the same active direction of thought by the will, i.e., contemplation, meditation or prayer, characteristic of various religious and Confucian traditions? The purpose of such attention, in these traditions, is to make what is apprehended of truth or knowledge a part of one's being, or as is often expressed metaphorically: to digest the knowledge through affections and emotions. This interiorizing is the bringing about of dispositions. Having disposition in harmony with what is real is the state of being virtuous. And overt acts are just the visible tip of the iceberg, an independent criterion of moral sincerity. "And appropriate action," to quote Bernard Williams, "which is demanded by this conception of moral sincerity is itself something which, often, is not independent of the emotional elements in a man's moral outlook."[13]

One may ask if in this picture where the role of the will, in choosing to act or among possible actions, is so reduced, where does freedom come in? Will is certainly not thought of as an impersonal spectator of the reasoning process, which chooses without effort to act according to the conclusions of reasoning (the behaviorist and rationalist assumption) nor as a completely autonomous principle which acts detached or autonomously from the process or conclusions of thought (the existential position). The activity of the will, according to Murdoch's model of the mind, does not wait until the moment of decision to act. The notion is that freedom is not simply the movement of the lonely will; freedom itself is a moral concept and cannot be separated from knowledge. If one "attends" properly to what one knows, one's choice to act or among possible actions is limited. This is in a way, Murdoch says, the reverse of Hampshire's picture, where one's efforts are supposed to be directed to increasing our freedom by conceptualizing as many different possibilities of action as possible. To Hampshire, to be free is to be able to choose uninhibited by any considerations except those that appear relevant at the present. The ideally rational man of Hampshire,

> ...would always distinguish his present situation from unconscious memories of the past projected upon, and obliterating, the present, and would find his motives for action, in satisfying his instinctual needs, within the objectively observed features of the situation, as he sees it now.[14]

In the moral context, one may wonder if the ideally rational man cannot find "motives for action" higher than "satisfying his instinctual needs" within the immediately objectively observed situation. Even if this detached motion of the will is possible, this is hardly the freedom that can be identified with moral life. This seems to be a different ideal from what Hampshire describes as Spinoza's view that a man is not free, when he cannot help drawing a certain conclusion, and cannot help embarking on a certain course of action in view of the evidently compelling reasons in favour of it. Murdoch would agree with Spinoza that:

> The ideal situation (on the contrary) is rather to be represented as a kind of "necessity". ...the idea of a patient, loving regard, directed upon a person, a thing, a situation, presents the will not as unimpeded movement but as something very much more like obedience.[15]

As Simone Weil puts it, will is obedience not resolution. This obedience is to the true vision, the truth, the real, which occasions right conduct. What obstructs the vision is fantasy, the proliferation of binding self-centred aims and images. Freedom, then, is not

strictly exercise of the will, but rather the experience of accurate vision which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions action. The difficulty is to keep the attention fixed upon the real situation and to prevent it from returning surreptitiously to the self with consolations of self-pity, resentment, fantasy and despair.[16] Will has a role to play in the *task* to come to see the world as it is.

"A philosophy which leaves duty without a context and exalts the idea of freedom and power as a separate top level value ignores this task and obscures the relation between virtue and reality".[17] "Freedom, we find out, is not an inconsequential chucking of one's weight about, it is the disciplined overcoming of self ".[18] What freedom means in the context of morality and moral life, in the philosophy of mind which Murdoch presents us, may be summed up in her words:

> Freedom is, I think, a mixed concept. The true half of it is simply a name of an aspect of virtue concerned especially with the clarification of vision and the domination of selfish impulse. The false and more popular half is a name for the self assertive movements of deluded selfish will which because of our ignorance we take to be something autonomous.[19]

This description agrees well with Etienne Gilson's definition that "to be not determined by things but regulated by one's own knowledge of things is precisely what we call to be free,"[20] or with Spinoza's idea that if one fully understands, one has no choice.

As Murdoch is influenced by Plato, some may be tempted to brush aside her reference to the 'vision of the real' as some kind of Platonic mystification; but to her the 'good' is not wholly a mystery; she says:

> we do really know a certain amount about good and about the way in which it is connected with our condition. The ordinary person does not, unless corrupted by philosophy, believe that he creates values by his choices. He thinks that some things really are better than others, and that he is capable of getting it wrong. We are not usually in doubt about the direction in which good lies. Equally we recognize the real existence of evil: cynicism, cruelty, indifference to suffering.[21]

Probably for the purpose of moral life, what should be emphasized is that to be moral is not necessarily to be individually "autonomous." However, Murdoch puts the picture in perspective. She cites Plato,

> It (Good, Virtue) is that which every soul pursues and for the sake of which it does all that it does, with some intuition of its nature, and yet also baffled. (Republic 505)

The progress towards the ideal is a slow process. The vision of goodness is not an immediate apparition. Moral change and moral achievement are slow; we are not *free* in the sense of being able suddenly to alter ourselves since we cannot suddenly alter what we can see and what we desire and are compelled by. Moral change and moral achievement are tied up with our motives, and it is the mental life as a whole, belief, knowledge, reason and will, that determine our motives. Motives are a part of the state of mind of the agent of action, not a needle point manufactured by the will at the point of action. Murdoch would agree with Sartre that when we deliberate the die is already cast, but

> Oxford philosophy has developed no serious theory of motivation. The agent's freedom, indeed his moral quality, resides in his choices, and yet we are not told what prepares him for choices.[22]

Because explicit motives do not necessitate actions, Sartre asserts an irresponsible freedom; because motives do not yield readily to 'introspection', many British philosophers ignore them and talk about 'reasons' instead. These views are not only, in Murdoch's words, "unhelpful to the moral pilgrim but unrealistic." For even the rational man has reasons telling him that something "ought" to be done, he is not necessarily motivated to do it. The reasons alone do not provide most of us with the impetus to act in the way we think we ought to act. Though everyone needs to develop and practice the ability to reason morally, to make sound moral judgements and to reach moral decisions, in the last resort whether one acts morally will depend on the extent to which one is motivated to do so—to

put one's judgements and decisions to work. The Pauline difficulty—"The good that I would do I do not but the evil which I would not that I do" is real and contemporary.[23]

The reference to action in the previous paragraph should not mean that actions are the whole of morality. As has been said before, overt actions that are moral are only the visible tip of the iceberg. Under these actions are the moral dispositions or inclinations. Having such dispositions and attitudes is the state of being virtuous, even though an observer can only know that such dispositions exist in another through the observation of behaviour. Even here observable behaviour may be deceptive. Unless the external actions are an expression of a moral attitude, they are not moral.

At least to some degree the dispositions have an element of emotion, in harmony with reason. Even Kant speaks of or tolerates this element of emotion in relation to a sense of duty—the respect for the moral law. Murdoch's comment on Kant's reference to emotion is:

> This emotion is a kind of suffering pride which accompanies, though it does not motivate, the recognition of duty. It is an actual experience of freedom (akin to the existentialist Angst), the realization that although swayed by passions we are capable of rational conduct.[24]

Kant's concept of the Sublime is a close relation of his concept of Achtung, or respect for the moral law. We experience the Sublime when we confront the awful contingency of nature or of human fate and "return to ourselves with a proud shudder of rational power." Kant allows the emotions to return, a painful thrill, but only as a by-product of our status as rational beings. These emotions have no constructive role. Kant would locate moral life beyond the workings of the self-defensive, selfish, empirical psyche. Here his instinct was right. However, he ignores the reality of human nature when he implies that no mediation or catalyst is necessary between the impersonal rationality and the personal will.

The stuff of the process of reasoning has to be meshed into the reality of mental life, in such a way that energies would be released, that motivation would be built up to act. To use Murdoch's words,

> Our states of consciousness differ in quality, our fantasies and reveries are not trivial and unimportant, they are profoundly connected with our ability to choose and act. And if quality of consciousness matters, then anything which alters consciousness in the direction of unselfishness, objectivity and realism is to be connected with virtue.[25]

In building, sustaining, and improving one's moral life, it is doubtful if a proud, naked will directed towards right action will be sufficient. Murdoch (who does not subscribe to any religion) thinks

> ...that the ordinary man, with the simple religious conceptions which make sense for him, has usually held a more just view of the matter than the voluntaristic philosopher and a view incidentally which is in better accord with the findings of modern philosophy. Religion normally emphasizes states of mind as well actions, and regards states of mind as the genetic background of action, pureness of heart, meekness of spirit. Religion provides devices for the purification of the states of mind.[26]

Central to those devices for the purification of the states of mind is emotion of remorse or guilt. Bernard Williams states,

> the comparative neglect of this basic moral phenomenon ... [ignores] the possibly creative aspects of guilt.... He who thinks he has done wrong may not just torment himself, he may seek to put things together again.[27]

What Murdoch is calling our attention to is that in any picture of the mind, motivation as well as the need for devices to build up motivation for or against an action should be considered. (C. D. Broad calls "any belief about an action which attracts one towards doing it a 'motive component for the action', and any belief about it which repels one from doing it a 'motive' component against the action. See his essay, "Conscience and Conscientious Action" in Joel Feinberg (Ed.) *Moral Concepts,* p. 74). Though she does not subscribe to the theological context with which concepts such as remorse, repentance and purification

may be associated, Murdoch finds convincing the recognition of the quality of consciousness as the provider of energy or motivation for good action and such recognition to be supported by modern psychology, by Freud. To repeat her words, "our states of consciousness differ in quality, our fantasies and reveries are not trivial and unimportant, they are profoundly connected with our energies and our abilities to choose and to act." In Freudian psychology, the mechanism of moral choice is seen as highly individual and personal and not easily understood by its owner. The self of psychoanalysis is more substantial than a combination of impersonal rationality and an imperious will.

One does not have to be Freudian, or accept as truth this or that view of Freud, to admit that in the realm of psychological inquiry, it was an important discovery to show that morality is not easy. What is important in Freudian theory, according to Murdoch, is its pessimistic but realistic view of human nature where the psyche is seen as "an egocentric system of quasi-mechanical energy, largely determined by its own individual history, whose natural attachments are sexual, ambiguous, and hard for the subject to understand or control." In this picture, objectivity or unselfishness are not natural to man, and therefore virtue is not easy and morality not a natural function of normal man. Man may not be incurably and irremediably selfish; nevertheless his selfishness seems very deep. This truth, Murdoch contrasts with what she refers to as the "democratic views" where sincerity is the fundamental and perhaps the only virtue and is accessible to all. Freud takes a thoroughly pessimistic view of human nature and provides us with, in Murdoch's words, a doctrine of original sin.

With this pessimism about the nature of man, or acknowledgement of the sinfulness of man, Freud proposes devices for regeneration. Though, in the psychological context, the therapy is for the purpose of making people mentally healthy not at making people good or holy, the purpose is parallel to repentance and regeneration. Repentance in the religious context is, to use Simone Weil's words, the exposure of the soul to God, to bring about the death of the selfish part of the psyche. The death of selfishness opens the psyche, in religious terms, to the life of grace.

What is the appropriate language in philosophical discourse to express concepts parallel to Freudian psychology and religion? What are the techniques for the purification and re-orientation of an energy which by nature is egocentric? A philosophy of morality has to answer the questions: What is a good man like? How can we make ourselves morally better? *Can* we make ourselves better? The same questions can be asked in a religious context, and appropriate answers can be given. But what about philosophy? If the philosophy of mind in vogue has no recourse but to look to scientific philosophy, the questions become: What is a workable (adjusted?) man like? How can we make ourselves normal? Can we make ourselves normal? Professor Hampshire, with, what Murdoch calls, a determination not to part company with a scientific conception of the objective, appeals to psychoanalysis. Apart from the fact that psychoanalysis is an embryonic science, why should its concepts, Murdoch asks, be treated as fundamental? Why should the inexact ideas of science dominate the thinking in morality and philosophy? Science, in this context, psychology, can instruct morality on certain points, but it cannot contain either morality or moral philosophy. "Moral concepts do not move about *within* a hard world set up by science and logic. They set up, for different purposes, a different world."[28]

In terms of a philosophy of morality, an important question is: are there any techniques for the purification and re-orientation of an energy which is naturally selfish, in such a way that when moments of choice arrive we shall be sure of acting rightly? Murdoch holds that in traditional philosophy (especially in Plato) and in theology, goodness is a difficult countering of a powerful ego-centric mechanism, and within that perspective emphasizes devices for purification and reorientation of energy. In the theological tradition, attention to what is

true which generates love or inclination towards what is good may be, for example, prayer. The religious believer has the advantage of being able to focus his thought upon something which is a source of energy. This is particularly so if God is conceived of as a person. Concentrating the mind on an object of attention may of course be meditation or contemplation on the concept of goodness or God himself or on incidents in the life of models which depict virtues. Murdoch suggests that for religious worshippers God is a "single perfect transcendent non-representable and necessarily real object of attention," and she would that moral philosophy should try to retain a central concept of *goodness* which has all these characteristics. Just as God, attended to, can be a powerful source of energy for religious worshippers, an important psychological fact which moral philosophy should emphasize is that we can all receive moral help by focusing our attention upon things which are valuable: virtuous people, great art, and perhaps the idea of goodness itself. There ought to be what one may call 'secular prayer', which will enable the mind to focus on the true and the good. In Murdoch's words,

> Human beings are naturally 'attached' and when an attachment seems painful or bad it is most readily displaced by another attachment, which an attempt at attention can encourage. There is nothing odd or mystical about this, nor about the fact that our ability to act well 'when the time comes' depends partly, perhaps largely, upon the quality of our habitual objects of attention.[29]

She quotes,

> Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things. (Philippians IV.8)

Such attending can lead the mind away from the self, and counteract the powerful system of energy released by fantasy with its proliferation of blinding self-centred aims and images. What would be a true object or idea which an ordinary person (who is not religious) can attend to? What would be an effective technique for the contemporary man? About the technique, she says,

> The idea of contemplation is hard to understand and maintain in a world increasingly without sacraments and ritual and in which philosophy has (in many respects rightly) destroyed the old substantial conception of the self. A sacrament provides an external visible place for an internal invisible act of the spirit.... The apprehension of beauty, in art or in nature, often in fact seems to us like a temporally located spiritual experience which is a source of good energy. It is not easy, however, to extend the idea of such an influential experience to occasions of thinking about people or action, since clarity of thought and purity of attention become hard and more ambiguous when the object of attention is something moral.[30]

"The good itself is not visible." Faced with this problem Murdoch turns to the Platonic Idea of the Good, as a focus or centre of attention, of reflection. How can this Idea of the Good be represented? Murdoch recognizes the difficulty and suggests beauty as a feasible object of attention, beauty in nature or in art. Following a hint in Plato (Phaedrus 250) she considers that beauty, the visible aspect of the good, can provide us occasions for "unselfing", because it provides us pure delight in the independent existence of what is excellent, and in its origin and enjoyment this delight is a thing totally opposed to selfish obsession. Plato has pointed out that beauty is the only spiritual thing which we love by instinct. But Murdoch admits that experience of art is more easily degraded than experience of nature, and that a great deal of art is actually self-consoling fantasy; even great art cannot guarantee the quality of its consumer's consciousness.

Even though Plato held that beauty could initiate one to the understanding of goodness, he came to mistrust art and considered intellectual disciplines closer to the Good. The authority of morals is the authority of truth, of reality. Intellectual disciplines are moral disciplines, in that the attention is on something existing independently of one's self. And this is rewarded by a knowledge of reality. To use Murdoch's words, "...apart from special contexts, studying is normally an exercise of virtue as well as of talent, and shows us a

fundamental way in which virtue is related to the real world." An intellectual discipline, can, as in the case of art, "stretch the imagination, enlarge the vision and strengthen the judgment." For Plato, mathematical thought would lead the mind away from the material world enabling it to perceive a reality of a new kind, very unlike ordinary appearances; for Murdoch, disciplines such as history, philology or chemistry would reveal a new reality behind appearance. These studies may be thought of as introductory images of the spiritual life, though they are not the spiritual life itself. Through the truth-seeking mind, one is prepared to associate value concepts to the world, to see them with just and accurate discernment, not as adjuncts of an independent personal will. But Plato who is sometimes accused of overvaluing intellectual disciplines gives a high but only a second place. So, whether the "unselfing" necessary for the vision of the good, in the central area of morality where virtue operates, is the same as the "unselfing" in the great experience of art, or in the just discernment of knowledge, is not clear.

The Good is undefinable because of the world, and what Murdoch calls "the pointlessness of virture." Does this mean that 'love' or "attending" can be only of and to particular visions of virtuous actions and people? Still, she would, like Plato, posit "Good" as the magnetic centre towards which love naturally moves. Love, the general name for the quality of attachment, is capable of degradation; false love moves to false good. But, when the true good is loved, even partially, the soul is turned towards the Good.

Murdoch does not believe that there is any metaphysical unity in human life; to her everything is subject to mortality and chance. Yet she thinks that the form of the Good, morality, displays some sort of unity, though quite unlike the "closed theoretical unity of the ideologies." In this she follws Plato who does not present a unitary view of the world of forms. Plato's image implies intuitions of unity during one's climb to the summit. When one has reached the summit, when one has deepened his notions of virtues, one begins to see their relationship and hierarchy. This enlightenment is progressive, and the climax is the version of the Idea of the Good, which Plato defines as,

> ...the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and the lord of light in the visible world, and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he who would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed. (Republic, 517)

Murdoch herself posits objections that could be cited against her view, by religious believers and mystics on the one hand, and non-believers on the other. Religious believers and mystics would call her description of the transcendent Idea of Good, an empty shadow of a personal God, likely to be ineffective to motivate love for goodness because it makes little sense to speak of loving an idea or concept of the Good. Non-believers would allege that for Murdoch to present Plato's Idea of Good as an object of love is to bring in religious mysticism by the back door. Her response is,

> Morality has always been connected with religion and religion with mysticism. The disappearance of the middle term leaves morality in a situation which is certainly more difficult but essentially the same. The background to morals is properly some sort of mysticism, if by this is meant a non-dogmatic essentially unformulated faith in the reality of the good, occasionally connected with experience.[32]

Though the reality of the good she posits falls short as an object of religious attention and worship, her recognition of the importance of the Idea of the Good as the supreme object of attention is significant both psychologically and philosophically.

An allusion has already been made to Murdoch's reference to the pointlessness of virtue, as to pointlessness of art. For her morality does not fit into any larger scheme of things, for there is no such scheme. To her,

> ...human life is chancy and incomplete. It is the role of tragedy, and also of comedy, and of painting to show us suffering without a thrill and death without a consolation. Or if there is any consolation it is the austere consolation of a beauty which teaches that nothing in life is of any value except the attempt to be virtuous.[33]

Virtue is its own reward. In this, her view coincides with that of many philosophers whose philosophy of mind she criticizes. The autonomy of the Good is what she calls its "for-nothingness", its purposelessness, its lack of significance in the sense of any relationship to any metaphysical framework, which she denies exists.

For many, autonomy of the good means only autonomy in the epistemological sense, in that morality is not *derived* from metaphysical assumptions, or God's Will. Many Christians while accepting this epistemological independence of morality would hold that ontologically morality is dependent on God. This provision of a wider context would help support a particular way of seeing moral obligations which does not necessarily convert morality into prudence. The introduction of the concept of 'God' brings in such wider considerations, and it is too simplistic to express it by claims like 'God wills X' means the same as 'You ought to do X'. Keith Ward suggests that Frege's distinction between meaning and reference is relevant in this context.[34] 'X is right' refers to a situation identical with that, more comprehensively described as 'God willing X'. But there is an intelligible sense of 'means' in which to say this can be expressed by the phrase, 'when P says the X is right, he means that God wills 'X'.

The point made here is that 'pointlessness' is not a necessary condition of morality. In a way, the "pointlessness" isolated for comment here is not an important item in Murdoch's critique. As mentioned above, this view is something she shares with those whose philosophy of mind she criticizes. And it must not be forgotten that Murdoch and religious believers agree on the objectivity of the Good, and its importance as the object of attention; for her this object is the unpersonified Idea of Good, for religious believers, it is God.

Murdoch's criticism of thought being pictured as introductory to action, thought following its own rules and leading to its own conclusion without the intervention of the will, deserves to be scrutinized. Here the questions to be answered are: how does she see the will as an ingredient of thought itself? Does she see a formative role for the will, other than that of a will influenced by self-love interfering with true vision? What is the relation between will and the formation of justifiable beliefs?

Some even among those who agree with the model of the mind she presents may not be quite convinced that her model necessarily contradicts the picture or pictures of the mind depicted by those whom she criticizes. Maybe Murdoch helps towards completing the picture. If the central point in her argument is that for moral dispositions to be developed, there should be appropriate motivation, and for appropriate motivation there should be a proper and worthy object of attention, or at least proper and worthy objects of attention, the challenge to philosophers of morality is to consider what those proper and worthy objects are? And what objects are not worthy of attention? This ought to be a central matter for moral education. As Bernard Williams puts it,

> If such education does not revolve around such issues as what to fear, what to be angry about, what — if anything — to despise, where to draw the line between kindness and a stupid sentimentality—I do not know what it is.... There are indeed areas in which 'inculcation of principles' is an appropriate phrase for the business of moral education: truth-telling, for example, and the sphere of justice. But more broadly,.... we are concerned with something not so aptly called the inculcation of principles, but rather the education of emotions.[35]

Moral educators also have to consider if such cultivation of dispositions is not at least weak conditioning. If that is true, should weak conditioning be not only tolerated but considered as desirable in moral development? Moral educators will have to devise methods of *attending to* those worthy objects of attention, methods in terms of knowledge and capacity for moral reasoning to be attained, habits to be cultivated, and affections to be developed.

Résumé

L'enseignement de la morale doit reposer sur une philosophie acceptable de la moralité. Une telle philosophie de la moralité inclut non seulement une philosophie morale mais aussi une acceptable philosophie de l'esprit.

Iris Mordoch fait remarquer que, depuis Kant, la réflexion morale est faussée par une conception erronée de l'esprit humain. Sa critique porte surtout sur une exacte compréhension de la relation entre la vie spirituelle et l'action ainsi que de la signification de la liberté morale.

Footnotes

[1]Eric Weil, *Philosophie Morale* (Paris: Libraire Philosophique J. Vrin, 1969), pp.2 and 151 seq.

[2]Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good,* (London: Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p.9.

[3]Bernard Williams, *Problems of the Self: Philosophical Papers 1956-72,* (Cambridge University Pess, 1973), p. 224.

[4]Murdoch, op. cit., pp. 4 seq.

[5]Ibid., p.8.

[6]Bernard Williams, op. cit., p.208.

[7]Stuart Hampshire, "Fallacies in Moral Philosophy," in *Freedom of Mind and Other Essays,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

[8]Murdoch, op.cit., p.51.

[9]Ibid., p.37.

[10]Stuart Hampshire, op. cit., p.51.

[11]Murdoch, op. cit., p.38.

[12]Murdoch, op. cit., p.38.

[13]Bernard Williams, op, cit., p.221.

[14]Stuart Hampshire, "Disposition and Memory," in op. cit., p.176.

[15]Murdoch, op. cit., p.40.

[16]Ibid., p.91.

[17]Ibid., p.91.

[18]Ibid., p.95.

[19]Ibid., pp. 99-100.

[20]Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p.21.

[21]Murdoch, op, cit., pp. 97-98.

[22]Ibid., p.53.

[23]Peter McPhail, "The Motivation of Moral Behaviour," in Eric Lord and Charles Bailed (Eds.), *A Reader in Moral and Religious Education* (London: SCA Press, 1973), p.203.

[24]Murdoch, op. cit., p.81.

[25]Ibid., p.84.

[26]Ibid., p.83.

[27]Bernard Williams, op. cit., p.222.

[28]Murdoch, op. cit., p.28.

[29]Ibid., p.56.

[30]Ibid., p.59.

[31]Ibid., p.91.

[32]Ibid., p.74.

[33]Ibid., p.87.

[34]Keith Ward, *The Divine Image: The Foundations of Christian Morality, (London: SPCK, 1976), pp.111-2.*

[35]*Bernard Williams, op. cit., p.225.*