
Gary Browning, editor. *Murdoch on Truth and Love*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. Pp. xi, 226. US\$97.13.

In *Murdoch on Truth and Love*, a volume in Palgrave Macmillan's "Philosophy in Depth" series, Gary Browning points out that Iris Murdoch's "paradoxical equation of truth with love" reveals her understanding of "the roles of both reason and emotion in shaping moral conduct" (6). Murdoch herself explains that "life is a spiritual pilgrimage inspired by the disturbing magnetism of truth, involving ipso facto a purification of energy and desire in the light of a vision of what is good. The good and just life is thus a process of clarification, a movement toward selfless lucidity, guided by ideas of perfection which are objects of love" (Murdoch 23). Along with contributors, Browning shows how Murdoch's concepts of truth and love can be interpreted from a variety of perspectives including art, linguistics, politics, and morality. This book makes a major contribution to the latest approaches to Murdoch and broadens scholarly understanding of her philosophical dimension from thinking about the single and standardized idea of the Platonic Good to the ambivalent but dynamic balance of truth and love.

The book features an introduction by Browning followed by eight chapters, all new essays written by various contributors to the collection. Tracing back to Plato, Browning justifies the interplay of truth and love as the *mot juste* of Murdoch's multidimensional concerns. The strength of the study lies in its multiplicity of lenses. The collection's contributors are "diverse and have backgrounds in different traditions of scholarship" (6), which enables them to access the book's themes from more angles than readers might expect. This multiplicity also allows the collection to probe all genres of Murdoch's oeuvre, including her philosophical treatises, essays, unpublished manuscripts, notes, letters, and nineteen of her twenty-six novels. It is this breadth and depth of approaches that makes the volume a must-read for Murdoch scholars.

The eight chapters fall evenly into two categories: four essays on moral philosophy (chapters two, three, four, and eight) and four on interdisciplinary study (chapters one, five, six, and seven). The moral philosophy essays focus on reasserting the significance of somewhat ignored parts of Murdoch's moral philosophy and its themes ranging from consciousness (Sabina Lovibond) to justice (Frances White) to love (Carla Bagnoli and Sophie-Grace Chappell). Lovibond compares the quality of consciousness in Murdoch's moral philosophy to Marxist value—that is to say, the moral preference for individual condition versus public social situation. White points to Murdoch's concerns about justice, an aspect of public morality, to rebuke the criticism that Murdoch insularly indulges in building a perfect world based on private morality. White finds unpublished and first-hand material in the Iris Murdoch Archive and successfully connects the dots between Murdoch's reading and lecture notes (mainly on Plato, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, Simone Weil, and Philippa Foot) and the evolution of her own viewpoints on justice; White then elaborates on Murdoch's view of injustice with the support of textual analysis. In their essays, Bagnoli and Chappell directly access the theme of love in relation to proof (Kant) and knowledge (Ludwig Wittgenstein), respectively. Bagnoli offers readers a clear picture of the overlap and digression between Kant and Murdoch, especially their contrasting attitudes toward reason. Meanwhile, Chappell departs from the long-lasting argument about the definition of love among analytical philosophers and interprets the role of knowledge in accessing Murdoch's understanding of love by identifying Wittgenstein's influence on Murdoch's thoughts. Together, the essays comparing Murdoch with these two philosophers show that Murdoch offers a challenging and self-motivated way of observing life, related to but distinct from standard analytical philosophy and continental thought.

The merit of the interdisciplinary studies pieces is their great diversity. Anne Rowe begins her essay with a rebuke of some censorious reviewers who pay too much attention to Murdoch's private life after the unveiling of Murdoch's correspondence. She claims that Murdoch's letters only "lightly reflect on her moral philosophy" (24) and gives a comprehensive review of published and unpublished letters from the Iris Murdoch Archive and Oxford University. Niklas Forsberg studies Murdoch from the perspective of linguistic philosophy by examining the relationship between words and concepts, a key way to understand Murdoch's philosophy. Browning considers Murdoch's political thoughts in three parts—earlier thoughts ("A House of Theory"), late stage thoughts (*Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*), and a detour into Jean-François Lyotard's grand political narratives (supported by a case analysis of *The Book and the Brotherhood*). Rebecca Moden explores the morally catalyzing func-

tion of art in *The Green Knight* by interpreting the role of modes of art including mask, theatre, and passeggiata.

As is often the case with edited collections, the quality and sophistication of the essays vary considerably. The most impressive piece is the splendid chapter by Rowe, “‘The best moralists are the most satanic’: Iris Murdoch—On Art and Life.” An equally splendid article is Browning’s “Murdoch and the End of Ideology.” He begins with a clarification that Murdoch has always been interested in political issues, but her ambiguous and paradoxical attitude sometimes baffles readers. The greatest contribution Browning makes is gathering different voices on one topic in the volume, and some of the conclusions he draws are especially original and innovative. Browning’s work not only offers the latest research achievement on Murdoch but also reveals the future direction of the field.

Though this book is not without its flaws—for instance, its unorganized structure, some content overlap with Browning’s *Why Iris Murdoch Matters* (2018), an occasional digression from the book’s theme, a few typos, and the lack of a conclusion—this collection stands as a solid blueprint for future studies of Murdoch and other writers with a philosophical background. Fittingly, it debuted right before the hundred-year anniversary of Murdoch’s birth in July 2019 and fills the almost one-decade void in Murdoch scholarship since Maria Antonaccio’s publication of *A Philosophy to Live By: Engaging Iris Murdoch* in 2012. The collection’s examination of the intersection between art, language, politics, philosophy, correspondence, and morality makes the volume a groundbreaking contribution to several fields, including moral philosophy, linguistic philosophy, and political philosophy. In this way, *Murdoch on Truth and Love* holds a broad appeal to both students and advanced scholars.

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Works Cited

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Murdoch, Iris. *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. Penguin, 1993.