This is a pre-print. Please refer to the published version, forthcoming in *Philosophers' Imprint*.

Murdoch on Heidegger

Introduction

Iris Murdoch tells us that having encountered the work of Martin Heidegger, she could not 'leave him out of [her] own reflections (or way)' (H: 37).[1] She first read *Being and Time* in 1965 and seems subsequently to have studied almost everything else that became available in English.[2] As with Jean-Paul Sartre, whom she first encountered some twenty years earlier and who in 1953 became the subject of her first monograph, her engagement with Heidegger eventually led to a monograph as well, though never completed. The final draft of 'Heidegger' is from 1993.[3]

While the final tangible effect was similar in the two cases, the evaluative trajectory of Murdoch's engagement with Heidegger was in some ways the reverse of her trajectory with Sartre. When she encountered Sartre's existentialism at the end of World War II, it seemed to be just what modern philosophy was lacking.[4] By the time of her most popular collection of essays, published as *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970), however, she had rather come to see existentialism as precisely what was *wrong* with modern philosophy – as the culmination and worst version of a 'disease' that she saw as historically rooted in the thinking of Immanuel Kant.[5] Her initial estimation of Heidegger cast him in this Sartrean and almost wholly negative existentialist light. By the time of the late manuscript, however, things seem to have changed. Sartre is now mostly a poor imitation of Heidegger (e.g., H: 89, 93), and the latter's philosophy has become an object worthy of at least hedged praise. She says, for instance, that '[h]e may be seen, is in many quarters now seen, as the greatest and certainly the most influential philosopher of the century' (H: 37). And sometimes she is less restrained:

> One is bound to respect and admire the dogged solitary journeying of Heidegger's thought, and his passionate respectful love for philosophy. May it persist upon our planet, this unique slow form of thought […] (H: 119)

Of course, she also says that 'even geniuses […] may be wonderful but wrong' (H: 222–223), but in comparison to her earlier evaluations, even such hedged praise is high praise.

We can perhaps see this change most starkly by comparison with an especially noteworthy earlier characterisation of him. In 1969's 'On 'God' and 'Good'" (published in *TSG* and *EM*), Murdoch is concerned to argue that philosophy should rescue what she sees as one of the great merits of religious thinking: the idea of 'unconditioned value'. As a part of this effort, she makes a case for refocusing moral philosophy on the idea of 'the Good', both as

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[1] "Being in one's way" can of course be pejorative, but Murdoch says this directly after mentioning Heidegger's tendency to use "way" (*Weg*) to refer to a 'path of thinking'.

[2] See (H: 36). Gilbert Ryle had lent Murdoch his copy of *Sein und Zeit* in 1949 (Broackes 2011), but this was a German edition; the first English edition was published in 1962. I take her at her word when she says that she only read Heidegger in Enligsh (ibid.), though I have heard that there is diary evidence to suggest otherwise. 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth' (in Ga9) is the only work of Heidegger's that she mentions being unable to obtain in English (H: 123).

[3] There are also handwritten addenda to the typed draft, seemingly from January 1994. Murdoch was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 1995 and died in 1999. For other discussions of Murdoch and Heidegger, see Leeson (2011: chp. 3), McManus (2018), Mahoney (2022), and Whyman (forthcoming).

[4] In a letter to a friend, for instance: '[It's] just what English philosophy needs to have injected into its veins, to expel the loathsome humours of Ross & Pritchard [sic]' (quoted in Mac Cumhaill & Wiseman 2022: 151).

[5] I discuss this 'disease' in detail below.

taking the place of Western religion's 'God' and as prior to the ancillary notions of 'right action' and 'freedom'. As a first enemy of this task, she identifies 'scientifically minded empiricism', to which she thinks then-current linguistic moral philosophy had begun to succumb ('OGG': 70). As the other, she identifies 'existentialist thinking', which she describes as consisting either of mere 'optimistic romancing' or else of 'something positively Luciferian'. Heidegger, singled out and set at the head of this latter threat, is said to be '[p]ossibly […] Lucifer in person' (ibid.).

Murdoch never wholly abandons the substance of this early epithet – as we'll see, aspects of it remain even in her late manuscript. It is clear, however, that *some* significant change occurs in her thinking about Heidegger between 1969 and 1993. What is at the base of this change?

In the first place, she clearly came to see the existentialist elements in the early Heidegger as less Sartrean than she initially had. Centrally, she comes to think that Heidegger's picture of the 'will' in *Being and Time* is not quite the Sartrean 'lonely will', personally and limitlessly free. Instead, it is merely 'half-free', with 'half-truthful' apprehensions of its world, which, she says approvingly, 'sounds like how it is' (H: 87).

More generally, however, and more importantly, she also came to sympathise with what she came to see as Heidegger's most general philosophical project, not only in *Being and Time* but afterward as well. She continues the earlier-quoted hedged praise, for instance, as follows:

> In any case, anyone in the philosophical trade seeks in other philosophers for ideas which they can *profitably* understand, whether or not they also make them their own. Heidegger is, for anyone interested in his own question "What is metaphysics?" endlessly fascinating. (H: 37)

Murdoch, of course, was herself interested in this question. It is a central theme of her *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992), of which the Heidegger material was initially intended to be a part. And despite Heidegger's own claims to have moved *beyond* metaphysics in his later work (toward 'poetic thinking'), she rather sees him as continuously and passionately attempting to keep metaphysical thinking *alive*. This is the project with which she most clearly identifies. She remains aware of many faults in the philosophy and the philosopher – not only aspects of 'Luciferianism', but also occasional intellectual wantonness (H: 168, 214), interpretive brutality (H: 180, 190), deliberate unsympathy (H: 93), and all not implausibly (even if only implicitly in her thinking) connected to his inexcusable Nazism (H: 37–40). But she nevertheless maintains that his thinking is 'a very important step along that dark forest path' that is metaphysics (H: 83).[6]

To put the same point more descriptively, what Murdoch came to see in Heidegger was a continuous attempt to offer a more-or-less-systematic and all-encompassing picture of what she calls 'the unconditioned' and its essential relation to human being. That is the central task of what she calls 'metaphysics'. Metaphysicians ask what is 'ultimate in human life' (H: 200), as well as *how* it is so, 'the most difficult and scarcely answerable of all questions' (H: 210). This 'ultimate' (or 'unconditioned' or 'transcendent', as she sometimes calls it) is that in

[6] The word "very" is inserted by hand in the 1994 addenda to the manuscript.

human life which is not itself a being but is properly seen as 'conditioning' all beings and ways of being.[7] As such, it must be understood as omnipresent in the world and human experience. In Heidegger's thinking, the unconditioned, or transcendent, is *Being*.[8] Murdoch sees him (as he also saw himself[9]) as tirelessly thinking and rethinking the meaning of Being and its essential relation to human being. This is the direction in which she came to 'admire the dogged solitary journeying of [his] thought' (H: 119). In the late manuscript, rather than an *enemy* of the idea of the unconditioned, then, she now sees him as a fellow-thinker of the thought that philosophy should in some sense rescue that idea.

As can be seen from the above description of 'On 'God' and 'Good'", however, Murdoch and Heidegger disagree in at least one crucial respect. Though they agree that the unconditioned cannot be the traditional Western God, they disagree over whether the unconditioned could be mere Being.[10] For Murdoch, the unconditioned is specifically unconditioned *value* – it is *the Good*. She recognizes that Heidegger's 'Being' is meant to be 'beyond beings' (H: 91, 155) – thus not itself a being – and also that it is meant to condition all beings and ways of being. But for her, the 'thing' that must ultimately fulfil this role is the Good.[11] As she sees it, this is their most fundamental disagreement. It is the overarching and continuous theme of the Heidegger manuscript.

In each of her central criticisms, Murdoch is concerned that 'value' is not properly accounted for in Heidegger's thinking and that, as a result, he necessarily mischaracterizes the unconditioned and its relation to human being. My aim in what follows is to convey the development of this idea in her thinking. She admits the 'rashness' of entering into such a 'complicated scene' as discussing Heidegger (H: 36), but she could not, as we have seen, leave him out of her way. She continues to think that his thinking matters, and that it matters that we try to understand it; but she remains equally convinced that his concepts do not in the end do justice to their subject-matter.

In approaching this task, I begin in §1 by returning to the writings in which Murdoch sees Heidegger as an *enemy* of the unconditioned, focusing on her original charge that he may be Lucifer in person. In §2, I discuss in more detail her notion of 'unconditioned value' in relation to the late manuscript and begin to show the outlines of their newfound agreement. In §3, I explain her central, mature criticism of *Being and Time*. And in §4, I discuss how she takes a form of this very same failure to be continued but exaggerated in Heidegger's later

[7] This understanding of the unconditioned in terms of 'being' is atypical for Murdoch, but she seems willingly to adopt it in discussing Heidegger.
[8] See, e.g., *SZ* 62:38.
[9] See, e.g., Ga16 (704) and Ga9 (407), both quoted in Sheehan (2014: 87–88).
[10] See Mulhall (2007) for an argument to the effect that Murdoch's rejection of the traditional Western God does not imply a rejection of God altogether. And see Crowell (2022) for a discussion of Heidegger's 'methodological' atheism.
[11] Murdoch seems unconcerned to give any explicit account of how the notion of the Good relates to Being, or whether the former can do all that Heidegger intends the latter to do. She *seems*, however, to think of the Good as the highest *form* of Being, perhaps like Plato. See Golob (2014: §3.6) for a discussion of Heidegger's own 'modes of Being' as something like Plato's forms, but his rejection of those forms as 'values' (e.g., in Ga40) – also of Heidegger's later criticism of others for interpreting Plato in this very way (e.g., in Ga34).

work, providing a critique that she hopes will help us see what is profitable in Heidegger's thought, while leaving behind what is misguided.[12]

1. *'Lucifer in Person'*

In her early reference to Heidegger as possibly Lucifer in person, Murdoch *is* doing what she seems to be doing: she's suggesting that he may be evil incarnate. But she is doing so by doing something much more specific: she is evoking John Milton's 'attractive but misleading' character of that name from *Paradise Lost* ('TSG': 78). And she is evoking Milton's Lucifer because she sees him as having anticipated and embodied an ideal of humanity later adopted by the existentialists of whom Heidegger is seen as the head – an ideal which, at its most general, portrays the *self* as the ultimate source of value. As the leading existentialist, Heidegger risks being akin to evil incarnate because the self, for Murdoch, is much closer to being the source of all evil.[13]

In the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Murdoch sees Kant as having expressed the basis for this Luciferian ideal in compressed and memorable form, in the image of the individual who 'confronted even with Christ turns away to consider the judgment of his own conscience and to hear the voice of his own reason' ('TSG': 78; *GMM* 4:408-4:409). In earlier philosophers, it was *God* with whom one comes face-to-face in conscience, but for Kant, it is the rational self. His view is thus a view (even if ambiguously, according to Murdoch[14]) of the *self*, rather than of God or anything outside oneself, as the source of ethical truth and knowledge. Kant, however, wasn't original in this: 'Kant's man had already received a glorious incarnation nearly a century earlier in the work of Milton...' ('TSG': 78). She thus refers to this ideal as 'Luciferian'. And she says that in fashioning it, Kant unwittingly succeeded at doing what Milton's Lucifer could not: 'Kant abolished God and made man [that is, made himself] God in His stead' (ibid.).[15]

At the base of Luciferianism, then, is the idea of the self as the ultimate source of ethical value and knowledge, as in this sense attempting to take the place of God. She sees this ideal as having evolved by small steps from Kant, to Nietzsche, to existentialism. Once the good will is understood as looking only to itself, as itself in some sense containing the only standard for living well, that idea naturally becomes the idea of oneself *being* the only such standard – in some moods, it easily becomes the idea that there simply *is* no such standard. Murdoch calls such philosophy in general (whether more or less Kantian) a 'philosophy of adventures of the will', or a philosophy of 'freedom' in the sense of 'detachment'. According to such views, there is 'the ordinary world which is seen with ordinary vision' and there is 'the will that moves

[12] In reading other philosophers, Murdoch often takes an approach not unlike Heidegger's: 'In thinking about the work of great metaphysicians one has to seek a balance between 'faithfulness to the text' and a tendency to invent one's own metaphysician' (*MGM*: 510). One may feel in what follows that she has indulged in too much invention. But if it is invention, it is at least instructive invention.

[13] See 'TSG' (98) where she likens the self to the fire in Plato's allegory of the cave, distracting the cave's prisoners from seeing the light cast by the Sun. Also: 'In the moral life the enemy is the fat relentless ego' ('OGG': 51).

[14] See, e.g., 'TIP' (30).

[15] Murdoch implies that Kant himself would have been dismayed at this use of his ideal: 'Reason itself is for him an ideal limit: indeed his term 'Idea of Reason' expresses precisely that endless aspiration to perfection which is characteristic of moral activity' ('TIP': 29–30). Reason cannot, then, for Kant, be something which the self ever fully possesses; nonetheless, the ambiguity of the image of his ideal man, Murdoch thinks, lends itself to existentialism.

within it' ('TIP': 34). Choice is an 'adventure' of the will, on this picture, in the sense that it understands action as an endeavour into a world of non-moral facts, which are in an important sense independent of (and thus foreign to) the will. As Murdoch sees it, the more sensible versions of such views propose a picture of the will as taking stock of these facts in a detached way and then choosing how to act, not determined by them but merely 'in their light' – she calls this the more 'Kantian or Rationalist' end of the spectrum of such views. Here we have, paradigmatically, the Kantian agent, acting on the basis of the moral law, found wholly *within*, constituted by an internal faculty of reason, by which that law is merely *applied* to the facts of the world – thus, acting 'on the basis of' the moral law but merely 'in the light of' the facts. At the other, less sensible end of the spectrum, the will is pictured as acting not even in the light of such facts but, merely, 'amongst' them and as being the full and only measure of how to live. Here we have, paradigmatically, the Sartrean existentialist agent, not at all aided in their decisions by the facts and, so, not applying any law *to* those facts, but, rather, determined by nothing but their absolutely free self, answerable to nothing but itself.[16] Views at this end of the spectrum she calls not 'Rationalist', but 'Surrealist' (ibid.: 34–35).

In addition to giving us a false image of the will and its relation to value and the world, Murdoch thinks that the Luciferian ideal has at least two further, distorting effects. The first is that it makes living well seem *easier* than it in fact is. On the more Kantian end of the spectrum, one must recognise the requirements of rationality (which may indeed be difficult) but then merely apply those requirements to the objective non-moral facts, which are simply there to be seen, wholly separate from one's will. While on the Surrealist end, one has merely to act as one will, since the non-moral facts have no import. Her central objection to these pictures is that at neither end of the spectrum, and nowhere in between, is it recognized that *how* one sees the world is already an ethical matter – that in order to act well in the world, one first has to see (that is, conceive of) the world well. The fact that one cannot simply take for granted that one already sees the world well, for her has the implication both that value is 'of the world' and that the self is never completely detached from the world. The self's vision of the facts, and the facts themselves, are always value-laden.

As she sometimes expresses this same criticism, neither end of the Luciferian spectrum recognizes the 'continuous background of life' out of which one chooses (e.g., 'OGG': 53). Choice itself, she says, is just one small moment (or many small moments) in life; but to correctly picture these small moments, one must correctly picture the chooser's overall condition. This not only makes 'choice' an extremely difficult thing to picture theoretically; it also makes *choosing well* extremely difficult. The good person chooses not merely willy-nilly (as the Surrealist portrays them), and not merely on the basis of facts independent of them (as the Rationalist does), but, rather, in the light of their own overall condition and orientation, which may itself be mistaken, with no straightforward means of correction. Seeing well enough to

[16] Murdoch (*S*: chp. 6; 'TIP': 35) in fact seems to describe Sartre as *wavering* between the Surrealist and Rationalist ends of this spectrum. See Moran (2011) for a criticism of Murdoch's presentation of Sartrean existentialism, as more akin to her own views than she is willing to admit.

choose well, then, is extremely difficult, which means that living well is more difficult than any version of the Luciferian ideal can claim.[17]

The second of the two distorting effects can initially seem highly tangential: the Luciferian ideal, she implies, *valorises death*. Like the existentialists whom she discusses, she takes the notion of death to be essential to a full account of human being. But unlike the existentialists (at least as she interprets them), she holds that death is not to be confused with anything exhilarating or pleasant, is not to be valorised. This latter mistake, she thinks, has its source in Kant as well, specifically in Kant's concept of 'the Sublime'. As she understands this concept,

> [w]e experience the Sublime when we confront the awful contingency of nature or of human fate and return into ourselves with a proud shudder of rational power. ('TSG': 79-80)

This shudder is an emotional 'thrill' at our own dignified status, as not dependent on the mere facts of the world but, rather, as truly free. According to Murdoch, however,

> [w]hat appears in Kant as a footnote and a side-issue takes […] a central place in the development which his philosophy underwent in the romantic movement [and subsequently in existentialism].' ('TSG': 80)

It shows itself, centrally for her, in the existentialists' concept of death as 'suffering freedom', which has the effect of 'taming and beautifying' death into a mere 'pseudo-death' (ibid.). It relatedly appears in their conception of *Angst* (to which I return below).[18] In general, while she agrees with the existentialist concerning the 'awful contingency of nature and of human fate', she thinks that this contingency should not be evaded, covered up, or softened with the kinds of self-consoling fantasy that the existentialist proffers.

Murdoch believes that in Kant's initial development of the notion of the Sublime, as an experience of a region free from the contingent mess of the world and the human psyche, he 'followed a sound instinct' but 'looked in the wrong place' ('TSG': 81). Again, he looked inward, to the rational self, to what he took to be an intrinsically orderly domain. But Murdoch reads modern psychology as telling us (something which she thinks we deep down already knew) that the inner is no less a contingent mess than the outer, is not intrinsically better suited to offering freedom from contingency (ibid.). Rather, any account of human freedom, she thinks, must take such contingency *into account*. Thus, on her own view, freedom is not 'detachment' from the world, but is rather 'accurate vision' of it ('OGG': 65); it is a compassionate recognition of the truth (ibid.), concerning not a world of facts from which the will is wholly independent, but a world which is 'compulsively present' to it, and compulsively valued ('TIP': 38). Given our contingency and frailty, together with the world's compulsive

[17] There is another movement in Murdoch's thinking in which the ideal situation is one in which one has *no* choice, in which one's vision already determines how one will act, leaving choice inactive.

[18] Kant's notion of 'respect' (*Achtung*), she implies, combines an awareness of our dignified status (as rational) with a despair at our frailty (as sensuous) ('TIP': 38). "*Angst*", in turn, signifies the condition in which one has lost faith in that status and, according to Murdoch, is 'properly a condition of sober alarm' (ibid.). She believes that existentialism covers up this fact in instead treating *Angst* as an 'exhilarating' recognition of our own (true) freedom (ibid.). I further discuss *Angst* in §3. See Lotz (2005) for an account of how Heideggerian *Angst* descends from Kantian *Achtung*.

presence to us, such vision is immensely difficult; and that means that the Luciferian's valorisation of death again misconstrues the difficulty of virtue. Facing up to the facts of the human condition is part of a non-fantasising and non-self-consoling (honest, truthful) vision of human life. By instead taking such vision and virtue to be achieved easily, by re-fashioning life's difficulties into 'thrills', Luciferians cover up this fact.

The above gives us four main aspects of Luciferianism: the idea of the self as the ultimate source of ethical knowledge and value, the will's independence from the world, a focus on 'choice' at the expense of 'vision', and, finally, the valorisation of death, or a covering up of the human condition more generally. Thus, much as Milton's Lucifer rebels because he is asked to bow down to Christ and recognize his own lowliness, so Murdoch's Luciferians are seen as refusing to acknowledge our own limitedness and human frailty, or any transcendent authority or value beyond us. If Heidegger is Lucifer in person, he is particularly guilty of these mistakes – and, unlike mere 'optimistic romancers', with whom she is willing to identify at least some existentialists, if Heidegger is Lucifer in person, he makes these mistakes not out of optimistic romanticism but, rather, out of wilful ignorance – much as Milton's Lucifer knows but wilfully ignores God. By the time of the late manuscript, however, this picture has been significantly revised, as we'll see in what follows.

2. *Unconditioned Value*

Immediately following the title page of Murdoch's Heidegger manuscript is a mostly blank page with a few handwritten notes. The first of these is a reference to perhaps the only recorded mention of Heidegger by Ludwig Wittgenstein, from notes on a meeting of the Vienna Circle, taken by Friedrich Waismann. Wittgenstein says,

> To be sure, I can imagine what Heidegger means by being and anxiety [*Angst*]. Man feels the urge to run up against the limits of language. Think for example of the astonishment that anything at all exists. This astonishment cannot be expressed in the form of a question, and there is no answer whatsoever. Anything we might say is *a priori* bound to be mere nonsense. Nevertheless we do run up against the limits of language […] This running up against the limits of language is *ethics*. (Waismann 1979: 68)[19]

It seems that Murdoch may have intended this statement to be the book's epigraph. Waismann footnotes here a passage from *Being and Time* in which Heidegger claims that the thing 'in the face of which one has anxiety' is 'the world as such', a thought with plausible connections to Wittgenstein's own thoughts about ethics and 'world' in the *Tractatus* (ibid.: n. 25). As we will see, it also has important connections to Murdoch's late thought on Heidegger. As the quote suggests, she now recognizes the centrality of 'Being' to Heidegger's thought, as closely related to the existentialist elements in it, such as *Angst*; but she is interested (in a way similar to

[19] The note that I take to be referring to this passage is as follows:

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Murdoch also quotes the passage at H: 43–44.

Wittgenstein) to insist that such thought must conceive of itself *ethically* – and that Heidegger, to a greater or lesser extent, fails to do so. In the present section, I'll prepare for a discussion of this charge as Murdoch applies it to *Being and Time*, by further discussing the relation of the above quote to her notion of 'unconditioned value'. In the next section, I'll turn directly to the task of discussing her evaluation of *Being and Time*. And in the final section, I'll discuss her understanding and criticism of Heidegger's later thought along similar lines.

Murdoch mentions Wittgenstein in connection with being and ethics as early as her Sartre book, most explicitly following a discussion of Sartre's notion of 'consciousness' in *Being and Nothingness*:

> Sartre then goes on […] rather unexpectedly to say this: we are now able to determine more precisely what the *being* of the self is – it is value (*la valeur*). Value is something but it is not some thing. It has the double character of being unconditionally and yet of not being. It is not to be identified with any actual real quality or state of affairs; if it is[,] 'the contingency of being kills the value'. This much is familiar ground: compare G. E. Moore's insistence that value is 'non-natural'; Wittgenstein's: 'it must lie outside all happening and being so. For all happening and being so is accidental' (Tractatus 6.41). (*S*: 64–65)

She goes on to express doubt that Sartre properly recognizes his own point, but she clearly endorses the general conception of value. It is a conception of value as 'something but not some *thing*', not some *being*. Value is rather, as she later quotes Plato saying, 'above being' (H: 184) – in Wittgensteinian language, it is part of the 'sense of the world' and, so, 'must lie outside the world' (*T*: 6.41).

This, as we have seen above, expresses a conception of value as what Murdoch calls 'unconditioned' or 'transcendent'; such value is not a being but in some sense conditions all beings. It is what she believes philosophy must save. Plausibly, Wittgenstein was in some sense attempting to do so in the *Tractatus*: by not naming value or making it a mere fact, and yet making it part of the sense of the world, he was engaging in a kind of reverent mysticism, making value 'highest', and thus not *simply* saying that there is no such thing. But as is well known, his attempt failed to have its intended effect; the main philosophical movements in ethics and metaphysics in Great Britain after the *Tractatus* largely became shorn of the idea of unconditioned value. As we saw in discussing *The Sovereignty of Good*, that is the predicament to which Murdoch is often responding.

Despite this agreement, however, there are more ways in which Murdoch *disagrees* with the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*. And to begin to see some of her newfound attraction to Heidegger, it will be helpful to describe them.

The Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, first of all, draws a sharp distinction between 'will' and 'world' ('The world is independent of my will' (*T*: 6.373)). We have seen this view as one aspect of what we above described as 'Luciferianism'. Murdoch rejects such views, holding instead that the world is 'compulsively present' to the will – that will and world are inseparable. ('We have already partly willed our world when we come to look at it' ('DPR': 201).)

Secondly, though she agrees with Wittgenstein that value is transcendent (*T*: 6.421), she disagrees with what he takes to be an implication of that point: namely, that '[*in* the world] there is no value' (*T*: 6.41). For Murdoch, though value transcends the world – and, so, in a sense 'lies outside the world' – it also necessarily shows itself in imperfect form *in* the world. In this respect, she agrees with Plato against Wittgenstein:

> We look toward the divine through all sorts of beings, through holy things and good things, the "visible things of the world" spoken of by St Paul, the simple ordinary things, icons, holy books, *any* things, *any* persons. (H: 162)

Biting the bullet of Plato's *Parmenides*, she even seems willing to say that the Good shows itself in 'mud[,] hair and dirt' (H: 140), a point which in the *Parmenides* was meant to reduce Plato's forms to absurdity. She, rather, endorses it. She also thinks that this is the real (profound and correct) meaning of Anselm's heavily Platonist 'Ontological Proof': the transcendence and necessity of the Good means that it must be 'there from the start', not in a *definition* but as omnipresent in the world, including in any human experience, even if only in imperfect form. If it instead merely 'showed up' now and again, here and there, it would have to be a contingent, conditioned *being*. Thus, it must also be visible in the whole of the everyday world; the things of the world ('*any* things') must point us toward it, despite the fact that we can never fully conceptualise it and despite the fact that the world can never fully realise it.[20]

Since the Good transcends our grasp, we cannot fully express it in words. Murdoch and Wittgenstein superficially agree on this point – '[E]thics cannot be expressed' (*T*: 6.421). But more deeply, they disagree. For, for the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, the point that ethics cannot be expressed also implies that one *should not try* to express it. ('Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent' (*T*: 7).) Murdoch is rather more sympathetic to a view that Wittgenstein seems to express elsewhere. In the above-quoted conversation with the Vienna Circle, for instance, he exhorts the group with an apparently beloved paraphrase of Augustine: 'What, you swine, you want not to talk nonsense! Go ahead and talk nonsense, it does not matter!' (Waismann 1979: 69).[21] Murdoch agrees with the exhortation to talk nonsense, to attempt to express the Good, a chief part of that 'scarcely achievable' task that is metaphysics – 'scarcely achievable' precisely because the Good is 'infinitely distant' from us, because it is that in virtue of which anything makes sense at all, and, thus, cannot itself ever be made complete sense of.[22] What she opposes is the idea that talking such nonsense 'makes no difference'. Rather, *trying* to do so – appropriately and not 'idly', as Wittgenstein more specifically worries (Waismann 1979: 69) – is important precisely for the task with which she is so concerned: keeping the idea of unconditioned value *alive*. If we cease to speak of it, it is liable to be forgotten.

In the late manuscript, Murdoch finds in Heidegger a fellow thinker in each of the above respects. Not only is he now seen as having a place for a notion of the unconditioned – in trying to 'raise anew the question of the meaning of Being' (*SZ* 19:1) – but also in each of

[20] Chapter 13 of *MGM* discusses Anselm's proof at length. See Mason & Dougherty (2023) for a recent discussion of her appropriation of it.
[21] As Murdoch (H: 44) notes, the editor of the text suggests that the paraphrased passage may be *Confessions* I. iv.
[22] Expressing the Good's *manifestations*, on the other hand, for Murdoch, is nonsense in no sense, precisely because the Good is that in virtue of which things make sense.

the respects in which she disagrees with the early Wittgenstein. Heidegger, first of all, conceives of human being as 'Being-in-the-world' (*In-der-Welt-sein*) (e.g., *SZ* 65:40ff.), disallowing any basic separation between will and world. Secondly, he conceives of meaning and value as fundamentally *in* that world (e.g., *SZ* 190:150), a point on which I focus in the next section. Thirdly, he conceives of the unconditioned as manifest in *all* worldly beings and experience – he holds that nothing at all is, or is experienced as being, without Being (e.g., *SZ* 22:3ff.). And, finally, he conceives of human being as responsible for keeping the idea of the unconditioned, and its manifestations, alive – as he sometimes says and applies retrospectively to *Being and Time*, 'The human being is the shepherd of Being' (Ga9: 252).[23] The first and second of these points contradict the first two tenets of Luciferianism and plausibly lend themselves to a weakening of the other two tenets as well. The third and fourth points, in turn, appropriately fill in Heidegger's notion of the unconditioned, at least as Murdoch understands it.

As we will see, however, she thinks that Heidegger's attempt to make such an overall picture *work* in *Being and Time* – and thus his ability to hold each of these four positions *fully* – ultimately fails. And in each case, it fails because it fails to account properly for value. She thinks this not, however, because she thinks that *Being and Time* has and implies no ethics. Rather, she thinks that despite containing a tacit ethics, its notion of value fails to be *genuine* unconditioned value – indeed, fails even to be genuinely *unconditioned*. In the next section, I turn to the task of explaining this criticism in the context of discussing her overall evaluation of Heidegger's early work.

3. *The Ethics of* Being and Time

Though much of the Heidegger manuscript discusses work published after *Being and Time*, Murdoch's discussion of that early work is especially illuminating for two reasons. First, she seems to think that it comes *closest* to a proper conception of the unconditioned and its relation to human being.[24] And, second, even though she seems to think that Heidegger in subsequent work gradually moves further and further away from the truth on this matter, she believes that the main source of this movement is already contained in his early work – a point to which I'll return in the final section.

That she sees *Being and Time* as the closest of Heidegger's works to being correct, however, happens to make it somewhat difficult to discern precisely how she thinks it goes wrong. The main difficulty here is that she sometimes seems to endorse *as* in the book precisely what she subsequently criticizes as *lacking* in it. My approach in explaining her evaluation of *Being and Time* will thus be to untangle what I take to be the pivotal set of these seemingly conflicting endorsements and criticisms.

The most evocative way in which Murdoch expresses her central criticism of that book is by saying that the idea of value is not 'there from the start' in its analysis of human being

[23] Though also, man depends upon Being. If Sheehan (2014) is correct, this mutual dependency is what Heidegger most basically refers to as '*die Kehre*' ('the Turn'). As we'll see, Murdoch seems to endorse something like this mutual relationship, though as obtaining between human being and the Good. She has a more standard understanding of '*die Kehre*' (see §4 below).

[24] See, e.g., H: 102.

but is rather 'shuffled in' or attempted to be 'accounted for [only] later' (H: 47). More fully, she says that Heidegger

> omit[s] (and this is the great fault of [his synthesis]) the essential item which must be included at the start and cannot be shuffled in or "explained away" or somehow "accounted for later", the conception of goodness (virtue, duty) as fundamental to any metaphysical account of human existence. (ibid.)

Now, one criticism implicit here, which we gather from the surrounding text, is that Heidegger's ethical vocabulary is simply too impoverished. As she reads him, he does have room for *certain* evaluative concepts, but not for goodness *generally*, not for *human* goodness (virtue), and not for duty. As in *The Sovereignty of Good*, where she had worried that the vocabulary of modern ethics 'constitute[s] a sort of Newspeak which makes certain [genuine] values non-expressible…' ('TIP': 2), she here thinks that the same applies to Heidegger's tacitly ethical vocabulary in *Being and Time* (H: 114).

Another criticism, however, is also implied and is for her even more important: that even if value of some kind *is* 'there from the start' in *Being and Time* – and as I have already mentioned, she thinks that some kind of value *is* – *unconditioned* value is not. That she thinks this, however, results in an apparent tangle. This is because, first of all, she also believes that Heidegger not only understands Being as *unconditioned* but, further, that he tacitly understands it as unconditioned *value*, and, secondly, because if anything is 'there from the start' in the analysis of human being in *Being and Time*, it would seem that *Being* is. Heidegger introduces human being (*Dasein*) as the entity that understands Being (*SZ* 32:12); and the way in which Murdoch understands *value* as there from the start in *Being and Time* implies that *Being* is as well. In what sense, then, is this unconditioned value 'shuffled in' or attempted to be 'accounted for [only] later' in the analysis? This is the tangle that I'll be attempting to untangle.

To do so, I'll first describe the sense in which Murdoch thinks that Being *is* there from the start in *Being and Time*, due to the sense in which she thinks that value is. I'll then explain why she thinks that Heidegger tacitly understands Being as unconditioned *value*. And, finally, I'll outline why she nonetheless thinks that unconditioned value *cannot* be there from the start and, conversely, that Heidegger's 'Being' *cannot* be understood as genuine unconditioned value. We'll see that these seemingly conflicting endorsements and criticisms are in fact in good order and, if correct, undermine some of the central tenets of Heidegger's book.

Murdoch describes the basic sense in which Being and value *are* there from the start in *Being and Time* in describing two central contributions that she takes the early Heidegger to have made to philosophy. First, and like the Wittgenstein of the *Philosophical Investigations*, Murdoch sees Heidegger as having overcome modern philosophy's dualism of subject and object, mind and world. And second, and in this case seemingly unlike Wittgenstein, she also sees him as having overcome the companion distinction between fact and value. In both cases, she takes it that he accomplishes these things through the introduction of the notion of 'Dasein', as 'Being-in-the-world'. As Murdoch understands this notion, the term "Dasein" means something like 'human being', but it refers neither to individual human beings nor to any 'subject' (whether Cartesian, Kantian, Hegelian, or Derridian) (H: 5, 12). Rather, it denotes

something like our concrete way of being, or what we, as human beings, are up to.[25, 26] Human being is 'Being-in-the-world' because our concrete kind of activity is embodied activity, embedded in the world in a particular way. And, importantly for present purposes, that world always already involves *value*.

In summary of the relevant idea in Heidegger which she sees as overcoming the fact-value distinction, Murdoch says that, for Heidegger, '[o]ur "world", Being as we disclose it, has, primordially, meaning, including value-meanings' (H: 25). That is, the world always *means* something to us (the world is compulsively present to the will), and such 'primordial' meaning is also value-meaning. She quotes in this connection from *Being and Time*:

> In interpreting [that is, in seeing anything *as* something, Dasein's pervasive way of seeing] we do not, so to speak, throw a 'signification' over some naked thing which is present-at-hand (*vorhanden*), we do not stick a value on it; but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world […].' (*SZ* 190:150; H: 25)

For instance, whenever we see a tool as 'for hammering', we are not superimposing a value-meaning onto something valueless. Rather, we are encountering something as *already* meaningful, due to our pre-existing understanding of hammers – that is, at least roughly, due to the practical *intelligibility* of hammers, as being for the sake of putting nails in boards, building houses, and so on. Such intelligibility in general, at least roughly, is what Heidegger calls 'Being'. And whether such intelligibility (and hence value) is merely instrumental (as in the case of hammers) or non-instrumental (as in Dasein's own self-interpretation), the point is that because our understanding of our world always involves an understanding of the Being of the entities we engage with, our world always involves such value.[27]

The result of Heidegger's introduction of Dasein as Being-in-the-world, Murdoch says, is that '[v]alue of some kind must be thought of as belonging to the everyday' (H: 25). Thus,

> Heidegger's primal move, his concept of Dasein in-the-world, precludes, by-passes, not only the problem of how the subject reaches the object, but also the problem of how values become attached to facts. (ibid.)

Facts, on such a picture, are value-laden from the start. And that such *value* is there from the start – since such valuing, for Heidegger, implies an understanding of Being – implies that *Being* is there from the start as well, as essentially related to Dasein.

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[25] Murdoch commonly refers to Dasein as human 'consciousness', but since she sees Heidegger as having inaugurated a post-Cartesian philosophy (H: 84, 112), this is clearly not *Cartesian* consciousness.

[26] Importantly, Dasein is not the *Being* of human being; the Being of human being is what Heidegger calls 'Care' (*Sorge*) (*SZ* 235:191ff.). Dasein itself is *a* being, though of a unique sort.

[27] One of the main tasks of *Being and Time* is to offer an account of Being that can explain how the various narrower *modes* of Being (the readiness-to-hand of the hammer, the 'Care' of Dasein, the presence-at-hand of the electron) are all modes of *Being*. As the title "Being and Time" suggests, an attempt is made to show that the meaning of Being is *Time* (as opposed to Kant's 'space *and* time'), with different kinds of 'time' corresponding to different modes of Being. See Heidegger (Ga3) for some insights into how this project relates to Kant's.

If Murdoch also thinks that Being is tacitly understood by Heidegger as a kind of unconditioned *value*, however, the implication of the fact that Being is there from the start would seem to be that unconditioned value is *also* there from the start. Yet Murdoch's central criticism of *Being and Time* is that unconditioned value is *not* there from the start, that it is merely attempted, presumably unsuccessfully, to be 'shuffled in later'. To make sense of this, it will be helpful to look at why she thinks Heidegger tacitly understands Being as unconditioned value.

Murdoch sees the point that Being is unconditioned value as an indirect implication of another point which many readers of Heidegger have felt, despite his own explicit denials of it: namely, that "authenticity" (*Eigentlichkeit*; sometimes translated as "owned-ness") is a term of *praise* for Dasein – indeed, is the *highest* term of praise, in being Dasein's highest accomplishment. Authentic Dasein, that is, is *good* Dasein: 'This picture [of authentic Dasein] can be seen as representing for Heidegger something good in the old-fashioned sense' (H: 131–132). More specifically, as she understands it, authenticity is a way of being for Dasein which 'removes us from the hazy truthless area of ordinary selfish pursuits and chatter […] and grants us access to Being […] (H: 49). Since she believes that in Heidegger's picture these things are undoubtedly *good* (even though he explicitly denies that he is understanding them as such), she also believes that he tacitly understands authentic Dasein as good. Authenticity, though not itself old-fashioned human goodness (virtue), is seen as filling an analogous role, in being Dasein's 'ownmost potentiality-for-Being' (see, e.g., *SZ* 333:287).[28]

So Murdoch thinks that authentic Dasein is understood as *good* Dasein. This subsequently leads her to think that 'Being' is understood as a kind of unconditioned *value*. The connection between these two points is not immediately obvious, and she doesn't spend any time explaining how the former might imply the latter. Nevertheless, I believe that the following, fairly straightforward explanation can be attributed to her.

To start, though Dasein in general is said by Heidegger to have an understanding of Being, only authentic Dasein 'uncovers Being' or 'lets Being be': 'In *Sein und Zeit* Being is made to *be* by the authentic (honest, sincere, brave) behaviour of man' (H: 131).[29] This is plausibly what she means when she says that authentic Dasein is granted 'access' to Being. Access is not a simple 'staring at'; it's an uncovering or disclosing. Inauthentic Dasein, on the other hand, essentially *covers up* Being; it has no access to and takes no heed of Being. In this sense, only authentic Dasein is *responsible* for Being. In a definition, we might say that 'authentic Dasein is the entity that lets Being be'.[30] And this conversely gives us an essential characterisation of Being: 'Being is that which authentic Dasein lets be'.

If authentic Dasein is good Dasein, and if Being is that which authentic Dasein lets be, it would seem that 'Being' implies 'goodness'. Of course, there's one very straightforward but uninteresting sense in which that would be the case: if Being is that which good Dasein lets be, then 'Being' at least implies 'good *Dasein*'. Murdoch's point, however, is a more ambitious

[28] Golob (2014: 239; quoting *SZ* 186:145) says relatedly, 'Authentic Dasein […] fulfils the ancient injunction to "become what you are".'

[29] See Haugeland (2013) for a helpful discussion of Heidegger's notion of 'letting be'. Letting Being be is not 'creating Being (*ex nihilo*)' but, rather, something like 'enabling Being to manifest itself in beings'.

[30] This is implicit in a 'regional' way (specifically, about *scientific* Being), for instance, in Heidegger's mention of 'science [having] its source in authentic existence' (*SZ* 415:363).

one. It's that in picturing Dasein as good in virtue of its uncovering Being, Being is *itself* tacitly pictured as good. Perhaps this would not be the case if uncovering Being were good 'for' something else; but it's not. Uncovering Being, in Heidegger's view, is just what good Dasein, as good, does.[31] So the fact that uncovering Being is pictured as good, though it does not logically imply that Being is itself good, strongly suggests to us that it is. Murdoch thus concludes that Heidegger tacitly thinks of Being as good.

Importantly, however, if Being is to be conceived of as *unconditioned*, it cannot *have* value. Only *beings* have value (or lack it). Rather, Being must *be* (unconditioned) value. In tacitly thinking of Being as good, then, Murdoch understands Heidegger as tacitly committed to the claim that Being is *unconditioned* value.

But in that case, we return to our initial problem: if Being both *is* there 'from the start' in the analysis of 'everyday' human being and also is there in the end, in the analysis of 'authentic' human being, and specifically as unconditioned value, how can Murdoch's central criticism of *Being and Time* be that value is *not* there 'from the start' and is merely unsuccessfully 'shuffled in later'?

The answer concerns what lies in the middle, between the everyday (or 'inauthentic'[32]) and the authentic. In short, Murdoch believes that the starkness of Heidegger's distinction between inauthentic and authentic Dasein has the consequence that the value which *is* there from the start of *Being and Time* (in the discussion of everyday, inauthentic Dasein) is not the value which is there at the *end* (in the discussion of authentic Dasein). Thus, though Heidegger treats Being *in certain respects* as unconditioned value, and though he implies that Being is there from the start in the analysis of Dasein, neither Being nor whatever *is* there from the start in the analysis of Dasein can be genuine unconditioned value. In the remainder of this section, I'll further clarify this criticism, in part by sketching Murdoch's preferred alternative.

We saw earlier that Heidegger introduces Dasein as the being that understands Being. But since then, we have encountered a distinction in this region between authentic and inauthentic Dasein. On Murdoch's interpretation, authentic Dasein has, and inauthentic Dasein lacks, genuine 'access' to Being. The implication, as she seems to see it, is that in retrospect, we must see Heidegger's original conception of Dasein, as 'understanding Being', as problematically *duplicitous*. In having access to Being, authentic Dasein understands Being first-hand, while inauthentic Dasein understands Being only second-hand. Inauthentic Dasein, that is, *relies* on authentic Dasein for whatever understanding it has and, thus, has no insight of its own into Being. Indeed, such second-hand understanding, we might think, is not *understanding* at all. Murdoch seems to express this view in the above description of authenticity as taking Dasein out of the '*truthless* area of ordinary selfish pursuits and chatter' (H: 49; emphasis added); for, saying that Dasein is always 'in the truth' is just another way in which Heidegger expresses that Dasein always has an understanding of Being. As Murdoch seems to understand this, however, if only authentic Dasein has access to Being, inauthentic Dasein is

[31] Compare Murdoch's view about the purposelessness of the Good: 'The Good has nothing to do with purpose […] The only genuine way to be good is to be good 'for nothing'' ('OGG': 69). See Mason (forthcoming) for discussion of this view of Murdoch's.

[32] It is worth noting that it is controversial within Heidegger scholarship whether these *should* be taken as synonymous.

rather *not* in the truth; it is pictured as essentially truthless, despite Heidegger's own intentions otherwise.[33]

Being (as unconditioned value), in that case, is unsuccessfully 'shuffled in' because Being (as unconditioned value) is *not* there from the start, in the analysis of everyday Dasein; and only if it *were* there from the start could it be genuine unconditioned value. For whatever can even be *attempted* to be 'shuffled in' would have to be *a being* – or at least be understood as such. Murdoch thus thinks that though Being is often treated by Heidegger *as if* it were unconditioned value, it in fact fails to be such.

We can put her criticism as well in terms of her broader understanding of metaphysics. I said earlier that a central task of metaphysics, for her, is the attempt to offer a more-or-less-systematic and all-encompassing picture of 'the unconditioned' and its essential relation to human being. Her central criticism of *Being and Time*, in those terms, is that in attempting to offer such a picture, Heidegger has not pictured an essential relation between the unconditioned and human being *as such*. He has rather pictured an essential relation between the unconditioned and *authentic* human being:

> "[A]uthentic" (*eigentlich*) consciousness brings to be what is more really real and true, which deserves the name of Being. Here Being depends on Dasein […]. (H: 102).

More specifically, what Murdoch says here implies that Being depends on *authentic* Dasein. Once again, however, to picture Being as depending only on authentic Dasein is to fail to picture the human being *as such* as related to the unconditioned and, so, is to fail to picture the unconditioned *as unconditioned*.

As Murdoch sees it, the starkness of the distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic is further emphasized by Heidegger's conception of our encounter with 'the nothing' or 'void', chiefly in *Angst*. Angst, here, is not ordinary anxiety: 'Angst […] is a sort of spiritual anxiety, a sense of the higher, which painfully and also joyfully reminds Dasein of its nobler potentialities' (H: 28). In such Angst,

> [w]e are not anxious about "this or that". Beings recede, slip away, all beings slip away. Instead we face nothing, we realise the possibility that we ourselves might not exist, we wonder why anything exists instead of nothing […] [But o]ur sense of nothingness is also a state of wonder that things do exist, they appear, Being is manifested in beings. (H: 91)

In such moments of Angst, Dasein, 'held out into nothing', transcends beings but also 'steps back and makes an empty space into which Being may advance'; it lets Being be (H: 91; the first quote quoting Ga9: 91). Heidegger, along these lines, says the following: 'In the clear night of the nothing of anxiety the original openness of beings as such arises: that they are beings, and not nothing' (Ga9: 90; quoted at H: 91). That is, we recognize and 'make space' for Being

[33] Heidegger can seem to admit this when he says that Dasein 'understands *something* like Being [*etwas wie Sein zu verstehen*]' (*SZ* 39:16; emphasis added) – though possibly a better translation of this passage is "understands such a thing as being". (Thanks to Andrea Vitangeli for pointing this possible translation out to me.)

(i.e., recognize that beings *are* and make space for ways in which they *can* be) through experiencing them as seeming *not* to be, as seeming to lack meaning.[34]

The problem here is not that Angst is supposed to reveal to us what Murdoch (using Heideggerian language) calls 'the advance of Being' or the corresponding 'advent of beings' – a point with which she seems at least partially sympathetic (and to which I return below). It is not even, as it was in earlier work, that such a conception of Angst is problematic because characterised as self-consolingly *joyful* – she notes a number of points at which Heidegger denies that it *is* self-consoling, and she at least no longer seems to protest. Rather, the problem, again, is precisely that Heideggerian Angst creates too deep a divide between authentic and inauthentic Dasein. This depth results from the fact that Angst is understood by Heidegger as 'pure' – as itself illuminating a '"pure" void', evoking 'a "purified" truthful world presence' (ibid.), a moment of pure and original 'insight' (H: 83) – and thus the *beginning* of ethics.[35] Stephen Crowell (2022) has noted that Heidegger's account of the way in which Angst makes authenticity possible is well-conceived of as the 'originary ethics' of *Being and Time* (a term coined in Heidegger's later 'Letter on Humanism'); and that characterisation gives us one way of construing Murdoch's worry: if ethics *begins* in Angst rather than being a genuine part of the everyday, then what ethics gives us access to (Being, or the Good) is not genuinely unconditioned. It is rather shuffled in.[36]

In misconstruing the unconditioned in this way, Murdoch also thinks that Heidegger 'wilfully simplifies' 'the complex texture of our form of being' (H: 93). Most importantly, for her, human beings do not first gain access to the unconditioned in moments of Angst; rather, we are and must be *essentially* related to it. And she thinks, in particular, that we properly understand ourselves in this way when we recognize ourselves as essentially *loving* the Good:

> That we can and do love Good and are drawn towards it is something that we have to learn from our experience, as we move all the time in the continuum between good and bad. This is our everyday existence where spiritual energy, Eros, is all the time active at a variety of levels. (*MGM*: 507)

Love (Plato's '*Eros*') thus plays for Murdoch the role of relating us, essentially, to the unconditioned. Such love may begin and standardly show itself as unpurified desire, desire for what we later realise was an especially poor imitation of the Good, but through such experience we recognise ourselves as having been aiming at the Good all along.[37] Such a view not only preserves the Good's unconditioned nature (since such a view gives us an essential relation to the Good) but also, she thinks, does more justice to 'the complex texture of our form of being'. Indeed, she thinks that any adequate metaphysics must do both at the same time.

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[34] These quotes are from Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' (Ga9), which appeared in 1946; but Murdoch uses them here in discussing *Being and Time*.

[35] Murdoch (H: 202) interprets Heidegger as later momentarily admitting defeat in regard to the claim that Dasein could ever have a 'pure' understanding of Being or its own Being (Ga7: 75). As we'll see, the point that he typically does *not* is crucial to one of her central critiques of his later work.

[36] Crowell (2007: 322) expresses the way in which a Heideggerian would want to respond to this worry: our 'facticity is not put in question for the first time only in the distancing that takes place in *Angst*; it is always already in question.' The crucial question, for Murdoch, would be *how* it is already in question. I return to this below.

[37] Brewer (2009) contains an especially well-developed account of this sort.

Experiences of 'void', in that case, rather than being moments of pure 'insight' calling for 'courage', for Murdoch are better understood as hazy moments calling for 'loving attention' – a kind of love that is 'all the time active at a variety of levels' rather than first appearing only in such experiences. It is this energy with which she exhorts us to approach experiences of void: '[L]ive close to the painful reality [void] and try to relate it to what is good' (*MGM*: 503). The love by which we do so 'knows' that despite the experienced loss of meaning and value in Angst, there is Good. We must try to relate the void to what is good, and if we do so, 'something comes; as we sometimes say ["]from the unconscious["]. It comes to us out of the dark of non-being, as a reward for loving attention' (*MGM*: 505). This 'something that comes' is the Good manifested in ordinary beings. Such love is thus, as she says in the Heidegger manuscript, 'the energy which *connects* the black nothing with the radiant advent of beings' (H: 92). Love is capable of this because (quoting Simone Weil, quoting Paul Valéry), '[a]t its highest point, love is a determination to create the being which it has taken for its object' (*MGM*: 506). Love, that is, rather than authenticity, for Murdoch, lets beings be, or reveals them as they are – that is, in their goodness, at the same time revealing the unconditioned Good. Indeed, she holds that the unconditioned can only *be* unconditioned if through some such 'energy', containing the seeds of the whole of virtue, we relate to it essentially. Heidegger's authenticity, she thinks, is unable to do that.[38]

Murdoch thus interprets *Being and Time* as failing to account for value and, indeed, as failing even on its own terms. For even if Heidegger did not tacitly understand Being as value, he would have failed to picture Being as genuinely unconditioned, given its too-varied relation to Dasein – it comes and goes; it gets 'shuffled in', despite his own intentions. Thus, even though he also tacitly understands Being as unconditioned *value*, Being cannot be that either. It cannot be *unconditioned* value, of course, because it is not even unconditioned; and it cannot be unconditioned *value* – cannot be *the Good* – because it is only 'uncovered' by authentic, courageous Dasein, rather than by love, present (even if imperfectly) in every human being and containing the seeds of the whole of virtue.

Murdoch's critique is thus at once conceptual-philosophical (in that she sees Heidegger's philosophical picture as inconsistent), ethical (in that she sees him as tacitly, inappropriately diminishing a sub-section of humanity), and phenomenological (in that she believes that when we reflect honestly on human being, we see a constant connection to unconditioned value, not one that comes and goes). But it is perhaps most basically what we might call 'psychological-metaphysical'. Murdoch, that is, sees Heidegger's picture of human being as problematic in being inaccurate as to our psychological orientation and, *therefore*, to our essence. This indicates a fairly deep difference between them. Whereas Heidegger keeps the merely psychological and the essential (in his terms, 'ontological') firmly apart, Murdoch believes that they belong together.[39] For her, an *actual* psychological orientation (love) essentially characterizes us, whereas for Heidegger, the Being of Dasein (what he calls 'Care')

[38] One might hope that Heidegger's technical notion of 'Care' (*Sorge*) can do this work, but Murdoch thinks it cannot. She says, for instance, that 'Heidegger's *Sorge* may be thought of as a *humbler* […] force than Plato's Eros' (H: 22; emphasis added; see also H: 135), and she repeatedly says that despite having room for 'care', he has no room for love (e.g., H: 2, 32, 52, 62, 72).

[39] For the most complete elaboration of this general idea in Murdoch, see Russell (forthcoming).

indicates *possible* such orientations: inauthenticity and authenticity. In these terms, Murdoch believes that the gap between these orientations, made possible by the fact that Care is merely an ontological rather than an actual (for Heidegger, 'ontic' or 'factical') characterisation of us, both undermines Heidegger's stated aims and, in doing so, essentially mischaracterizes human being. Thus, the project of *Being and Time*, she believes, fails. As we'll see, these criticisms essentially remain in her evaluation of Heidegger's later work as well, though significantly transformed.

4. *The Later Heidegger: Truth and Insight*

I cannot do justice to Murdoch's treatment of the later Heidegger in the space that remains – she discusses numerous works in detail, quoting and commenting at length – so the brief treatment that I give it here is liable to seem crude. However, I think that even a brief treatment will help give us a clearer picture of her overall evaluation of Heidegger's thought and the trajectory of that evaluation, at the same time showing more clearly what she thinks remains to be gained from it.

In discussing Heidegger's post-*Being and Time* thought, Murdoch, like many others, sees an important shift – or a number of important shifts – sometimes referred to as *die Kehre* ('the Turn'). As she discusses it, *die Kehre* centrally consists of a gradual shift from a focus on Dasein as *freely* and *courageously* uncovering Being, to a focus on Being as *forcing* Dasein to uncover it, in different ways at different points in human history.[40] She summarizes this change, alongside some of 'the Turn's' other elements, as follows:

> There are obvious and evident differences both of philosophical attitude and of style and "tone" between the "early" and the "late" Heidegger. *Sein und Zeit* is "ontology", even still "phenomenology". It […] carries traditional moral, even religious concepts, such as authenticity, courage, guilt, dread, conscience. It pictures "Being" as dependent upon *Dasein*. The later work rejects the phenomenological method and the concept of ontology, and the ordinary moral pictures are absent. On the other hand, the relation of man to Being is reversed[;] man is now seen as dependent upon Being; and in this respect the later work might be called more "religious", even "mystical", and less "existential" […]. (H: 40–41)
>
> *Roughly*, *Sein und Zeit* is Lutheran, sober, stoical, preserving Christian traces; the later philosophy is unChristian (one might say Pagan), more patently heroic (the "heroism" in *Sein und Zeit* is more muted), deterministic (the *Dasein* of *Sein und Zeit* had some control of its destiny), pessimistic, yet also romantic, ecstatic, mystical, more extreme. (H: 42)

Murdoch sees a number of problems here. I'll spell out just three, with direct connections to the above discussion of *Being and Time*. The result of each, as she sees it, is that the later Heidegger moves even further away from a proper understanding of the unconditioned. As

[40] Sheehan (2014) labels this as one sense of "*die Kehre*" which, in his view, captures only one aspect of the project denoted by that term. (Relatedly, see n. 23 above.)

we'll see, however, she thinks that at base this growing misunderstanding can be traced back to an idea already present in *Being and Time*: the idea of truth as *aletheia* (uncovering, disclosure) and, specifically, of such uncovering as a kind of pure 'insight'. This latter point in a way simply repeats the critique of *Being and Time*, but it also constitutes a useful characterisation of her mature evaluation of what goes wrong in Heidegger's thought, both early and late.

The following are three general problems which Murdoch sees as arising in Heidegger's later work:

(1) Largely because of the shift away from thinking of Dasein as having (any) control of its destiny (that is, any control over the uncovering of Being, through authenticity and courage), what human goodness *was* there in the early work is 'magicked away' in the later (H: 84). Being's appearance now has no connection to man's 'work' (H: 140); and thus love, as omnipresent spiritual energy, orienting us toward and revealing the Good, remains missing as well (ibid.). In general, that is, the relation of human being to the unconditioned continues to be, but is now more seriously, misunderstood.

(2) Being again fails to be understood as unconditioned *value*, but also more seriously. In particular, the ways in which Being is uncovered (or forced to be uncovered) by Dasein are no longer always 'good' for Dasein. Being can now be evil: 'Being grants the grace of healing; it also grants to rage its compulsion to malice' (H: 156), which Murdoch takes to imply that Being is understood as capable of cruelty. Similarly, '[w]e cannot know whether Being intends to help us or destroy us' (H: 206). So even though the later Heidegger does once again tacitly treat Being as 'highest', he more seriously fails to understand it as unconditioned value, in understanding it as doing good *and* evil.

(3) Finally, he continues to treat Being tacitly as *a being*, rather than as truly unconditioned, though again more problematically in the later work. Being is spoken of, for instance, as hiding and revealing itself 'of its own will' (H: 140) – as 'determining' how Dasein uncovers it and how it appears (most famously as 'standing reserve' in 'The Question Concerning Technology' (Ga7)), and even as 'playing' with Dasein (H: 206). One might hope that this is only as much metaphor as a Platonic 'realm of Forms'; but Murdoch thinks that it rather amounts to the very kind of 'idolatry' that Heidegger intends to be avoiding (H: 156), making Being out to be a being.

It's worth noting that these aspects of Heidegger's later thought do seem to avoid the 'Luciferianism' with which Murdoch still sees him as dabbling in *Being and Time*. In particular, they seem to allow him completely to avoid the idea that value might have its source in the human will – since Dasein is now understood as wholly at the will of Being. They do so, however, only by erasing ethics altogether, at the same time picturing Being as in some respects *evil* and more blatantly picturing it as *a* being. Despite in large part avoiding Luciferianism,

then, Murdoch sees him as in fact moving further away from, not closer to, a proper conception of the unconditioned and its essential relation to human being.[41]

Most interesting in Murdoch's critique of the later Heidegger, however, is the tracing of the source of its failure to elements already present in *Being and Time*. In particular, she seems to think that its failure can be traced to Heidegger's idea of truth as *aletheia* ('uncovering'). She does not take this concept to explain *all* of the problematic elements present in his later thought, but she does seem to express that if he properly understood the nature of truth, those other problematic elements might be avoided as well:

> [T]he concept of truth as *aletheia* […] seems to me to be the central *fault* in the whole structure; the taint or weakness which leaves it open to corruption. (H: 180)

In concluding here, I want to argue that it is not truth as *aletheia in general* that Murdoch sees as the central fault, but, rather, truth as 'insight'. This will also suggest for us the central aspect of what she believes might *save* Heidegger's thinking.

We saw in the above discussion of *Being and Time* that in seeing Heidegger as duplicitous in regard to the claim that Dasein has an 'understanding of Being', Murdoch also sees him as duplicitous in regard to the claim that Dasein is 'in the truth'. Even though he *says* that Dasein in general understands Being and is thus 'in the truth', only authentic Dasein *in fact* does and is. Nevertheless, as authenticity removes us from a kind of 'truthlessness' (H: 49), authenticity is a kind of truth*ful*ness: 'Heidegger's metaphysic connects these [viz., truth and truthfulness] together' (H: 24).[42] And despite the fact that such truthfulness is enabled only by a kind of 'pure *insight*', it itself is nonetheless a kind of '*work*', connecting authentic Dasein to Being (H: 140). The failure of *Being and Time*, put in these terms, is primarily that it fails to present Dasein *in general* as truthful. She thus concludes that genuine truthfulness is not, in the end, represented in that early work (H: 104).[43]

In Heidegger's later work, according to Murdoch, Dasein is no longer the 'shepherd of Being', responsible for and working to uncover truth. Rather, truth simply 'happens' to it, due to the 'play' of Being (H: 211). Human truthfulness, that is, drops out; truth as uncovering is accomplished rather by Being. Nevertheless, what remains is something akin to 'revelation', wholly independent of Dasein's particular character (H: 223). All that remains is the hope of a pure and unquestionable *insight*, revealed to Dasein, giving it a pure understanding of Being.

Such insight is akin to the experience of pure 'void' in *Being and Time*, and Murdoch's reason for seeing it as a fault in the later work is precisely her reason there as well – namely, that as finite, imperfect creatures, we are not capable of such insight:

> [T]ruth as *Aletheia*, as an overcoming of oblivion, a granting of light, seems as a general concept empty. It is clear that we do *not* automatically see "as they really are" the things which, as we live, come to presence

[41] I note below (n. 44) a respect in which Luciferianism of a sort nevertheless *remains* in Murdoch's conception of the later work.

[42] See Mason (forthcoming) for an elaboration of Murdoch's agreement with this idea.

[43] One implication here is that being truthful, for Murdoch, is equivalent to *loving* the Good (again, even if only imperfectly).

> for us. The *struggle* with these presentations is the absence of truth, which connects essentially with truthfulness, and so with morality. (H: 223)

That is, Heidegger's struggle to present Being as available to us (or some of us, sometimes) through pure insight, misunderstands our nature, presents us with a false 'soul-picture', as she sometimes puts it ('TIP': 2).[44] As human beings, any seeming insight we may achieve, or be granted, will necessarily be tainted by our own essential imperfection. And thus, no amount of shifting of conceptual elements *around* the idea of a pure insight will be able to amend for it; doing so is liable simply to make things worse. That is why *aletheia* (as uncovering *insight*) is seen by Murdoch as the central fault in the whole structure. Instead of hoping for such insight, she thinks that we can only constantly *struggle* with the partial absence of truth in our way of seeing things. As she saw the Heidegger of *Being and Time* seeing darkly, we are always merely 'half-free', with 'half-truthful' apprehensions of reality. The struggle to see reality *better* requires not insight but 'work', in the form of ordinary truthful, loving attention, which all of us always engage in, to some degree or other.[45]

Conclusion

How, then, one might well ask, could Murdoch see in Heidegger 'a very important step on that dark forest path' that is metaphysics? What might she *profitably* have understood of his thinking, despite not making it her own – and despite seeing it as having fundamental problems?

The critical aspects of Murdoch's interpretation of Heidegger have certainly been in the foreground in the above. But it is worth concluding by again recognizing the fundamental agreement on which her criticisms stand: (1) that there is something (though not some *thing*) unconditioned or transcendent, (2) that that something must be understood as in some sense depending upon human beings, and, conversely, (3) that human beings can only (properly) be understood if they are understood as *essentially* relating to that something. In a late interview, Heidegger expresses this general orienting idea as follows:

> [T]he fundamental thought of my thinking is precisely that Being, or the manifestation [*Offenbarkeit*] of Being, needs human beings and that, vice versa, human beings are only human beings if they are standing in the manifestation of Being. […] One cannot ask about Being without asking about the essence of human beings. (Ga16: 704)[46]

If one were to express this point more generally – in terms of the 'unconditioned' or the 'transcendent' – Murdoch would agree. Perhaps she does not think of the Good itself as

[44] There is thus something *akin* to Luciferianism even here: a distortion of the human condition, though now seemingly unrelated to virtue or human goodness.

[45] This criticism of Heidegger's notion of *aletheia* as 'disclosive insight' could also be understood as a criticism of his conception of 'epiphanies', a term which some recent thinkers have explored in connection to Murdoch. That this connection has often been drawn can make Murdoch's criticism of Heidegger seem surprising, since epiphanies have commonly been understood as a kind of pure receptiveness or insight. But as Chappell (2022: 233) notes, Murdoch 'tended to see this receptiveness as an *activity*: the activity of attention', thus to see it in the very way which her late criticism of Heidegger suggests, as requiring a kind of work.

[46] In the quoted passage, Heidegger is responding precisely to the worry that his later thought neglects human being.

depending upon human beings – as even Heidegger hesitates to do here concerning Being – but the *manifestation* of the Good does depend upon human beings. Human beings, for her, are the 'shepherds' of the Good, just as for Heidegger (at least taking him here at his word) they are the shepherds of Being. They are responsible for keeping goodness alive in the world.

Murdoch and Heidegger's disagreement over whether the unconditioned is unconditioned *value*, of course, is a substantial one. Murdoch believes that

> the *kind of philosophy* attempted by Heidegger cannot succeed in its professed enterprise without this element. Without it the enterprise is damaged, maimed, ultimately "based on a mistake". (H: 104)

But again, this criticism at the same time points to fundamental agreement about the *kind of philosophy* worth doing, and to a basic idea of Heidegger's which Murdoch would profitably have understood, despite substantial disagreement:

> A fundamental philosophical (and theological) idea, not shared by all philosophers, is that there is something (or things), an essential ingredient, which must be put into the picture at the start, and cannot properly be introduced later. Many well-known philosophical problems arise from the attempt to put the essential thing in later […] The most obvious case, and perhaps model, of such an ingredient is God (or Good). If we picture the world and then say, oh yes, and there is God (or Good) too, then what we are adding, as one thing among others, is not what we are attempting to name. (H: 45)

Even if Heidegger fails *properly* to share this idea, he does (unlike many philosophers) share it. And one can see fairly easily how Murdoch may have profited from engaging with his attempt properly to think it. In seeing how difficult it is to think such a thing without reference to the Good, she may have been able to see more fully why that ingredient is essential – why Heidegger's 'Being' cannot fill the place left by the traditional Western God, and why the Good is needed instead. That is again a basis for significant disagreement, but it is also a basis for productive discussion, not possible with most other philosophers encountered along her way.[47]

[47] I had tried to read but not at all understood Murdoch before meeting Cathy Mason, whose conversation and work continues to be the main reason for the extent to which I do understand her. Andrew Buskell encouraged me to write something on Murdoch and Heidegger; and Kelly Becker, Matthew Heeney, Yannic Kappes, Maxime Lepoutre, Paulina Sliwa, Andrea Vitangeli, David Weberman, Tom Whyman, Rachael Wiseman, and two reviewers for this journal all gave me helpful comments on either the paper or its ideas. Thanks very much to all of you. Thank you also to the Kingston University Archives and Special Collections, and especially to Dayna Miller, who allowed me access to the Heidegger manuscript. This research was funded in whole or in part by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [10.55776/COE3].

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