

Article

Iris Murdoch's *The Bell*: Tragedy, Love, and Religion

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*Tragedy, like religion, must break the ego, destroying the
illusory whole of the unified self. – Iris Murdoch¹*

The novel begins as follows:

Dora Greenfield left her husband because she was afraid of him. She decided six months later to return to him for the same reason. The absent Paul, haunting her with letters and telephone bells and imagined footsteps on the stairs had begun to be the greater torment. Dora suffered from guilt, and with guilt came fear. She decided at last that the persecution of his presence was to be preferred to the persecution of his absence.²

Murdoch's novel *The Bell* is about Imber Court. It is a small Anglican religious community of lay people whose lives were transformed, not just by the arrival of a couple of dissimilar visitors, not just by the arrival of a new bell to be installed at Imber Abbey located beyond the lake, but more significantly by the discovery of a centuries-old bell the story of which is engulfed in a terrible legend.

At the very start of the novel, one has a foretaste of a certain Murdochian literary motif. Dora, an unsuccessful middle class art student and adulterous wife of Paul, an art historian of noble German descent, draws from the same source—fear—the very motive for two distinct acts: of leaving him, and returning to him. From the same feeling of fear proceed two distinct movements, of fleeing and returning. This model remains consistent throughout the novel. Dora and Paul are both engaged in art, but could never find common interest to sustain their marriage. Michael Meade, the leader of the lay community, realizes later on in the novel that his religious calling and sexual passions spring from the same source. The two bells of the novel are both named Gabriel, one old and one new. The religious community at Imber is one and yet two: The Imber Abbey of the strictly enclosed nuns and the lay community of Imber Court. The latter being for those people who, in the

¹ *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Vintage, 2003).

² Iris Murdoch, *The Bell* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1958).

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words of the Abbess, “can live neither in the world nor out of it,” those “unhappy souls” whose “desire for God makes them unsatisfactory citizens of an ordinary life, but whose strength or temperament fails them to surrender the world completely.”³ This allotropic pattern of a single spring feeding different, and sometimes opposing, streams provides the tension for the novel’s plot.⁴ This is the fertile ground where the realism of moral and even religious conflict germinates in the unfolding of what one may say a “tragic tale.”⁵

There is something “un-Murdochian” in a “tragic” reading of her novel *The Bell*. Firstly, she argues, “[a]ll tragedies are written in poetry.”⁶ This is not to suggest that prose is antinomic to the tragic genre. Rather, it is because for Murdoch, “only great poetry can raise language to the pitch of clarified moral intensity which enables it to display the horrors of human life in dramatic form.”⁷ Indeed, classical Greek and Shakespearean tragedies are molded in the highly judicious rules of versification and composed rhetoric for audience impact. Secondly, though Murdoch speaks greatly on the concept of tragedy as exemplified in general literature in her philosophical works, one may doubt whether she really considers her own novels, or at least some of her published works, as exemplifying the tragic genre. Though in the eyes of the public she is a philosopher-novelist where the two adjectives appear closely interlaced, it is remarkable to hear her say, “I don’t think philosophy influences my work as a novelist.”⁸ Nowadays, there is hardly any Murdoch reader who shares her view on this. Thirdly, and specifically dealing with the novel, there is something intricately contrived in a “tragic” reading of *The Bell*; more so because I argue that in this philosophical and psychological novel, we discover, in the early part of her academic career, a gradual disclosure of the eclipse, or the *substitution*, of God in her thought. No one doubts the importance Murdoch gives to the religious dimension, both in her literary and philosophical works, but the striking character in her Platonic retrieval of the moral and the religious logically, and tragically, involves a certain “twilight of the gods,” what one may call, the “tragedy of the divine,” that is, displacing God in order to retrieve the Good.⁹

³ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁴ Other illustrations may include: Toby ended up sleeping a few minutes after he said he wasn’t feeling sleepy. *Ibid.*, 156. Also the description of the fraternal twins, Nick and Catherine: “It was indeed strange that God could have made two creatures so patently from the same substance and yet in making them so alike made them so different.” Cf. *ibid.*, 111. Talking about spiritual powers, it “was indeed like electricity in that it was thoroughly dangerous. It could perform miracles of good: it could also bring about destruction.” *Ibid.*, 113.

⁵ That *The Bell* is a tragedy, in particular in relation to the death of Nick Fawley, is also shared by A. S. Byatt. See *Degrees of Freedom* (London: Vintage, 1965), 111-12.

⁶ Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 116.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Michael O. Bellamy, “An Interview with Iris Murdoch,” in *Contemporary Literature*, 18:2 (1977), 131.

⁹ It is interesting to note that Don Cupitt’s *Taking Leave of God* starts with the same allotropic pattern in speaking of the “eclipse of God” in contemporary culture. “I can’t live with it and I can’t live without it.” Such is the verdict of many people upon traditional religious belief.” Don Cupitt, *Taking Leave of God* (London: SCM Press, 1980), 1.

I wish not to go into details on the life of Murdoch, the historical events that unfolded in her purview, and how these contributed to the development of her thought. Suffice it to say, she lived in an age that she characteristically calls as the “untheological time.”¹⁰ Her Platonic retrieval of the Good is an urgent response to the steady fragmentation of the human identity in search of meaning and purpose. Technological and scientific advancement overcomes the modern subject. Humanity is overwhelmed and defeated by totalitarian forms of political ideology, ultimately becoming alienated from the religious sense of God. The novel echoes these three domains: (i) the debate to purchase the mechanical cultivator in order to improve productivity of the market garden; (ii) the tacit requirement of “fitting in” to which Dora and Nick find little inclination; and (iii) the final acquiescence of Michael’s faith, broken by a single blow, that “real faith in God was something utterly remote” from him.¹¹ Murdoch calls this “the current view” of her time.

The ultimate question, according to Murdoch, takes the form, “What does it mean to be good?” Or, in the words of the two homilies given at Imber Court: What is the “chief requirement of the good life?”¹² It is to this question that all her philosophical and literary oeuvres are weaved as hoped response in the retrieval of the moral life.

Moral Vision over Moral Understanding

In the first chapter of the novel, we find Dora, the estranged wife, inside a tightly packed train as she travels to Gloucester to rejoin her estranged husband who is temporarily staying in an Anglican Benedictine abbey doing research on an old medieval manuscript owned by the religious community. At one point in her travel, an elderly woman entered the carriage and started having a conversation with another old lady seated beside Dora, obviously her companion who was fortunate enough to find an empty seat. The novel reads:

Dora stopped listening because a dreadful thought had struck her. She ought to give up her seat. She rejected the thought, but it came back. There was no doubt about it. The elderly lady looked very frail indeed, and it was only proper that Dora, who was young and healthy, should give her seat to the lady who could then sit next to her friend. Dora felt the blood rushing to her face. She sat still and considered the matter.¹³

¹⁰ Quoted in Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. by Peter Conradi (New York: Penguin, 1999).

¹¹ Murdoch, *The Bell*, 312.

¹² Cf. *ibid.*, 132ff, 201ff.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 16.

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A series of ponderings followed that involved the consideration of the other man seated near them who might offer his own seat, the thought of her proper reward for having arrived early and hence deserving the seat, the consideration of the other passengers in the carriage, none of whom “looked in the least uneasy.” Their heads were buried in books, reflecting a “selfish glee” that Dora herself may have also shared.

The narration continues,

“The old lady would be perfectly all right in the corridor. The corridor was full of old ladies anyway, and no one else seemed bothered by this, least of all the old ladies themselves! Dora hated pointless sacrifices. She was tired after her recent emotions and deserved a rest. Besides, it would never do to arrive at her destination exhausted. She regarded her state of distress as completely neurotic. She decided not give up her seat.

She got up and said to the standing lady, ‘Do seat down here, please. I’m not going very far, and I’d much rather stand anyway.’”¹⁴

Such moral deliberations, of which the novel is interspersed in almost every page, mirror Murdoch’s deft style of running the psychological scalpel into the minutiae of moral consciousness. Dora was not being indecisive or erratic. Despite the care taken to think through the ethical requirements of civility, there is always something in the imperative of goodness that is not reducible to rational discussions.

Iris Murdoch is reacting against the prevailing philosophic tendencies in Britain during her time. Subjectivity is reduced to what Charles Taylor later calls the “punctual self,” the self as free and independent yet, cultureless, ahistorical and dreadfully solitary.¹⁵ The modern identity is stripped of its colour and texture. It is the consideration of the subject where we let “the notion of ‘experience’ drop out of sight altogether.”¹⁶ She argues that the chief feature of the modern dilemma is that “we have been left with far too shallow and flimsy idea of human personality.”¹⁷ In her view “the dilemma of modernity is precisely a dwindling, a narrowing of vision, a reduction in philosophic ambition and moral resources.”¹⁸ This is most evident in moral philosophy where the opulence of human experience is trimmed down to bare

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁵ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 159ff.

¹⁶ Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 43.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 287.

¹⁸ Michael Levenson, “Iris Murdoch: The Philosophic Fifties and *The Bell*” in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 47:3 (2001), 561.

essentials, to mere behaviour and public expression. The inwardness of experience is denuded.¹⁹

Morality is reduced to a function of making choices; of deliberations founded on certain principles that we take *simpliciter*, lacking in any metaphysical or even religious grounding. “We study the facts, and we make our choices.”²⁰ It is ethics reduced to epistemology, to a function of judgments and moral understanding. Dora’s experience of “the inner monologue”²¹ was something that 20th century British philosophy does not accommodate. Murdoch insists that seeing, awareness or moral vision is prior to moral understanding. It was what Toby, a young man who decided to spend a few days at Imber Court before his entrance to Oxford, had reflected on one time while on his way for a dip in the lake. “Would it really be so difficult [to keep one’s innocence] if one were fully *aware*? The trouble with so many young people nowadays was that they were not *aware*. They seemed to go through their youth in a daze, in a dream.”²² This is precisely what Murdoch is trying to wake us from, the petrification of an illusory stance in life where attention to particularity has been lost. This is the “unseeing” of which she speaks of; the inability to be aware, to put one’s attention, to take a deliberate stance towards the encounter with particular reality, with truth. Deliberate attention unfolds the motley dimensions of reality. Michael experienced this whilst drinking at a pub, on the way back after purchasing the much debated mechanical cultivator. After hearing of Toby’s admiration of him, “Michael could not help catching, from the transfigured image of himself in the boy’s imagination, an invigorating sense of possibility . . . He looked sideways at Toby . . . He had none of that look of cunning, that rather nervous smartness that is often seen in boys of his age. As Michael looked he felt hope for him, and with it the joy that comes from feeling, without consideration of oneself, hope for another.”²³ It is in seeing, in the real sense, that the subject is freed from egotism, transporting itself to the other’s irreducible presence, and even to the other’s nascent possibilities.²⁴ As if to suggest a philosophical metaphor, we encounter the following scene in the novel where Toby and Michael do the “headlights experiment” to see if the human eyes, the organs for seeing, glow brightly like the feline eyes facing a beam of light. Unfortunately, they “did not gleam or glow.”²⁵

¹⁹ Cf. Charles Taylor, “Iris Murdoch and Moral Philosophy,” in *Iris Murdoch and the Search for Human Goodness*, ed. by Maria Antonaccio and William Schweiker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 3-28.

²⁰ “Our morality is, on the whole, conceptually simple. We approach the world armed with certain general values which we hold *simpliciter* and without the assistance of metaphysics or dogmatic theology—respect for freedom, for truth, and so on.” Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 67.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

²² Murdoch, *The Bell*, 144. Emphasis added.

²³ *Ibid.*, 154.

²⁴ Cf. David J. Gordon, “Iris Murdoch’s Comedies of Unselfing,” in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 36:2 (1990).

²⁵ Murdoch, *The Bell*, 159.

The exigencies of the good are beyond consideration of whether it's more proper or not to offer one's seat to an elderly, as it was in the case of Dora. "There are things one doesn't choose," Dora comments later on in the novel. "I don't mean they're forced on one. But one doesn't choose them. These are often the best things."²⁶ Things had to be done simply because they *are*. It is this element of factuality of the ethical demand by which Murdoch brings ethics back to a certain metaphysical footing which "the current view" has made into an epistemological and prescriptive project. Two things are noticeable in her approach; there is the metaphysical grounding, and the appeal to variegated experience, specifically of ordinary human pedestrian experience; human existence inclusive of the "overt manifestations of personal attitudes, speculations, or visions of life."²⁷

Tragedy: Between Literature and Philosophy

An initial reading of the works of Iris Murdoch, especially in those sections dealing with her notion of literature may reveal that the tragic is but plainly a literary genre, and one that occupies a small place in the extensive horizon of the arts. She comments that "[t]ragedy belongs only to art, where it occupies a very small area."²⁸ Another, she remarks that "[s]trictly speaking, tragedy belongs to literature;"²⁹ it "belongs to art, and only to great art."³⁰ However, a more careful reading of her works reveals that the tragic occupies not simply a small domain of literary interest, one that only a few poetic geniuses can create without falling into the pitfall of sentimentality.³¹ For Murdoch, literature is not simply literary. It plays a vital link with philosophy for both of them are "truth-seeking and truth-revealing activities."³² Distinguished from the role of reason in philosophy, in literature, there is the innovative play of the imagination, in contrast to obsessive fantasy. One may well argue that the distinction between philosophy and literature is simply formal.³³ One is abstract, the other imaginative. One is direct, goes straight to the philosophic problem; the other is indirect, it adumbrates reality without haste to disclose truths that we never thought we knew. The arts is not simply

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

²⁷ Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 79.

²⁸ Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 92.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 94.

³¹ Murdoch avers, "The tragic art form is rare because it is difficult to keep attention focused on the truth without the author slipping into an easier sentimental, abstract, melodramatic (and so on) mode. In the truthful vision evil is justly judged and misery candidly surveyed." *Ibid.*, 104.

³² Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 11.

³³ Peter Johnson notes that the peculiarity of Murdoch, among other philosophers who talk of literature, and in particular of novels, is that she maintains the boundary that exists between the two, "unwilling to discard all separation between philosophy and literature." See Peter Johnson, *Moral Philosophers and the Novel: A Study of Winch, Nussbaum and Rorty* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 5.

mimetic, it is also anamnetic.³⁴ However, what connects philosophy with literature intimately, in terms of method, is that both of them are discursive. They both reveal the struggling intellect in its apprehension of reality. *Discursiveness is the retrieval of the peripatetic in written form.* In the many forms of literature, this discursiveness is most characteristic of the novel,³⁵ because it does not shackle itself with the strictures of conventional versification. She elaborates

The novel is the literary form best suited to . . . [forms of] free reflection, sad-comic and discursive truth-telling . . . What it loses in hard-edged formal impact [of poetry], it gains in its grasp of detail, its freedom of tempo, its ability to be irrelevant, to reflect without haste upon persons and situations and in general to pursue what is contingent and incomplete.³⁶

It is the very discursiveness of the novel form that establishes the continuity of philosophy and literature, methodologically speaking. Murdoch faced the problematic of modernity in the 20th century, the moral thinning of the irreducible subject, and this problematic she pursued along two parallel lines of approaches, philosophical and literary.³⁷

Treating of the comic and the tragic, one may initially conceive that in Murdoch the comic belongs to prose and the tragic to drama and poetry. Indeed, that the comic is unserious and the tragic serious. She finds these distinctions peripheral. For Murdoch, the comic is ubiquitous; it is in the air we breathe for all of us are artists.³⁸ Tragedy's domain is more restricted. It belongs only to art, occupying a small area. Tragedy, in short, is an artistic form, and only that. It is surprising to read her say: "Real life is not tragic."³⁹ Yes, that even the unspeakable horror of Auschwitz is not a tragedy.⁴⁰ But, it is precisely this very mark of unspeakableness, of being lost for words that make reality un-tragic, or better yet, non-tragic, that makes Auschwitz non-tragic. She explains that in saying thus, "the extreme horrors of real life cannot be expressed in art."⁴¹ To think of Auschwitz as tragic is the pretense of speaking the unspeakable.

³⁴ Cf. Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 12.

³⁵ "The novel form more frankly admits, indeed embraces, the instability of art and the invincible variety, contingency and scarcely communicable frightfulness of life. The novel is a discursive art." Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 96.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁷ It needs to be noted that her academic and literary careers developed and matured at the same time. She was not a philosopher turned novelist, nor a novelist who abandoned the academe. She was what may be genuinely called, a philosopher-novelist.

³⁸ Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 92.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

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Though art pictures reality for us (mimesis), though art instructs us (anamnesis), though art consoles us, it also lies to us.⁴² It deceives us; it is “a product of appearance not of reality.”⁴³ There are elements in life that exceed expressions, rendering us speechless; there are elements in life, truths to which we only adumbrate, and though we engage ourselves in the consolations of literature, Murdoch warns that it must not lull us to fantasy, forgetting that though literature mirrors reality, it is only an imagined one.

For Murdoch, the “true view of tragedy” is the combination of the Kantian sublime and the Hegelian reconfiguration of the tragic genre.⁴⁴ Kant argues that in the sublime, the subject experiences the failure of the faculty of imagination to circumscribe a thin picture of totality (non-historical, non-social, non-human and quasi-mathematical) which is not given and to which the faculty of reason merely adumbrates. The sublime, to cite an oft-repeated image of Murdoch, is a segment of a circle. The subject experiences the thin Kantian abstracted totality as a broken circle, grasped by the imagination, but the rest of the circle is not given despite the demand of reason.⁴⁵ Hegel humanized this abstracted thin totality of Kant, that is, it becomes concrete, inserted in history, and lodged in the social.⁴⁶ In short, the abstraction of Kant receives particularity in Hegel. Furthermore, Hegel reconfigured the tragic genre by insisting that the conflict in tragedy is not between good and evil, but between two incompatible goods.⁴⁷ Murdoch argues that without these two qualifications, the humanization of totality and the conflict between two incompatible goods, there is “no complete ethical substance” in tragedy.⁴⁸

Tragic Freedom and the Concept of Love

The Murdochian-twist in this scenario is the emphasis on freedom⁴⁹, on the development of degrees of freedom.⁵⁰ Kant provided the canvas, Hegel

⁴² “Sometimes, however, art which lies can also instruct.” Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 94. “All art tends to console, as the presence of God consoles Job.” *Ibid.*, 99.

⁴³ Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 264.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁴⁵ It needs to be noted that according to Murdoch, there is no place for tragedy in Kant. “Kant’s view of ethics contains no place for the idea of tragedy, so it is not surprising that he is unable to give an account of it in his aesthetics.” Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 215. Murdoch, however, gives the proviso that Kant’s theory of the sublime “ought” to be his idea of tragedy. Cf. *Ibid.*, 213.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Murdoch cites here Antigone and Creon.

⁴⁸ Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 213.

⁴⁹ Murdoch argues that one may treat of freedom in five phases: (1) *Tragic freedom*, where freedom is an “exercise of the imagination in an unreconciled conflict of dissimilar beings.” Literary form is tragic drama. (2) *Medieval freedom*, where “the individual is seen as a creature within a partly described hierarchy of theological reality.” Literary forms are religious tales, allegories and morality plays. (3) *Kantian freedom* (Enlightenment), where the “individual is seen as a non-historical rational being moving towards complete agreement with other rational beings.” Literary forms are rationalistic tales, allegories and novels of ideas. (4) *Hegelian freedom* (19th century) where “the individual is now thought of as part of a total historical society and takes his importance from his role in that society.” Literary form is the true novel. (5) *Romantic freedom*

gave the design, but Murdoch executed the painting in the particularity of its details and the texture of its colors. These elements emerge in the tragic genre in the exercise of freedom, the highest form of which is *attentive love*.

The concept of love has a unique place in *The Bell*. Dora, upon arriving at Imber Court noticed that an elaborate stone medallion hung above the doors on which are inscribed the words: *Amor via mea*, Love is my way.⁵¹ Likewise, upon the discovery of the centuries-old bell submerged in the lake, Dora and Toby found along the rim of the bell the following inscribed words, *Vox ego sum Amoris. Gabriel vocor*, I am the voice of love. I am called Gabriel.⁵² Dora herself was struck by the spectacle of the old bell, and “[a]ttending to it . . . she felt reverence for it, almost love.”⁵³ It is interesting to notice that Gabriel was likewise the name for the new bell, *Gabriel vocor*. However, it no longer bore the name of love.⁵⁴ If indeed moral experience is a compartment characterized by seeing, by ethical awareness, Love is that by which this seeing is signified. “Love is the perception of individuals. Love is the extremely difficult realisation that something other than oneself is real. Love . . . is the discovery of reality.”⁵⁵

Murdoch relates tragic freedom, “freedom as an exercise of the imagination in an unreconciled conflict of dissimilar beings,”⁵⁶ with the concept of love. The tragic safeguards the movement of love from ingesting external reality into subjectivity (neurosis), and likewise safeguards the subject such that in loving the other, the subject does not dissolve in the object loved (convention). It appears that Murdoch, in emphasizing freedom, is criticizing certain modes of thought where the tragic involves the shackling of the moral subject, those instances where the tragic almost means the loss of self-determination due to a spiral of events that the will cannot transcend.⁵⁷

(19th and 20th centuries) where the “individual is seen as solitary and as having importance in and by itself.” Literary form is the neurotic modern novel. See *Ibid.*, 217.

⁵⁰ A.S. Byatt argues that, in her classic study of the early fictions of Murdoch, the novels are revealed as studies of the degrees of freedom of the human subject, who, maintaining their freedom and individuality, had to relate to a rich and complicated world. Cf. Byatt, *Degrees of Freedom*, 6.

⁵¹ Murdoch, *The Bell*, 30.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 223.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 269. This was also the experience of Paul when he saw the old bell. Dora, finally abandoning her plans of “substituting” the new bell with the old one, decided to ring the bell in the middle of the night to make known to others the existence of this treasured discovery. People started to come to the barn and crowded around her, yet Paul, her husband “said nothing to her, he was too transported at seeing the bell.” *Ibid.*, 272.

⁵⁴ On the new bell was inscribed the words: *Defunctos ploro, vivos voco, fulmina frango*.

⁵⁵ Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 215. Cf. also Sharon Kaehele and Howard German, “The Discovery of Reality in Iris Murdoch’s *The Bell*,” in *PMLA*, 82:7 (1967).

⁵⁶ Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 217.

⁵⁷ Cf. Kaehele and German, “The Discovery of Reality in Iris Murdoch’s *The Bell*,” 562.

Tragedy as a Function of Attentive Love: Beyond Convention and Neurosis

Herein lies the moral critique of Murdoch, the loss of freedom in the fold of externality and internality, the two enemies of love: “social convention and neurosis.”⁵⁸ If indeed the old bell is named the voice of Love, one may, by extension, say that the novel is about Love itself, albeit a tragic one. How these two enemies of love are exemplified in the novel supply the conflict in the plot. The picture of convention is neatly illustrated in the homily of James Tayer Pace, a member of the Imber Court and second in responsibility to Michael Mead, speaking about “the chief requirement of the good life.” James’ talk echoes Murdoch’s preoccupation with morality as a growth towards unselfing, towards greater degrees of freedom, especially when he remarks that the chief requirement of the good life is “to live without any image of oneself.”⁵⁹ However, that is as far as it goes since his view of the good life is precisely what Murdoch herself is vigorously attacking: a prescriptive ethics, a morality of rules and codes of conduct. “Surely we know enough and more than enough rules to live by”;⁶⁰ “We should think of our actions and look to God and to His Law. We should consider not what delights us or what disgusts us, morally speaking, but what is enjoined and what is forbidden.”⁶¹ The just man (*iustus ex fide vivit*) “does not amend the rules by the standards of this world.”⁶² The rule-based ethics logically necessitates an ethic of conformity to practices and compliance to mores. In the words of Mrs. Mark, commenting on Dora’s abortive effort at decorating the couple’s room, “I thought I should tell you, though, for the next time. I feel sure you’d rather be treated like one of us, wouldn’t you, and keep the rules of the house? It’s not like a hotel and we do expect our guests to fit in—and I think that’s what they like best too.”⁶³ That is what the codes exactly demand, that one “fits in.” In another earlier instance, at Dora’s initiation to the spiritual practices of the lay group, the extern nun, Sister Ursula, took notice of Dora kneeling at the makeshift chapel unveiled. Again, Mrs. Mark enters the scene saying: “Sister Ursula says please would you mind covering your head? It’s customary here.”⁶⁴ For lack of anything better to use, Dora resigned to using “a small not very clean handkerchief.”⁶⁵ In the novel, Dora seems to be the prime victim of this “exigency of convention.” James, who admits that he has “very little time for

⁵⁸ Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 216.

⁵⁹ Murdoch, *The Bell*, 132.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 61. Mrs. Mark later in the novel adds: “We live by rules ourselves and if our guests just don’t there’ll be chaos, won’t there? It stands to reason. I know this sounds awfully dull and sober—and I’m sure your London friends would think we were a very stuffy lot. But trying to live up to ideals does often make one look ridiculous.” *Ibid.*, 244.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

[someone] who finds his life too complicated and special for the ordinary rules to fit” ends up calling her a “bitch.”⁶⁶

In convention, the individual subject disappears in the surface of the external environment; one joins on the bandwagon of social pressure; one becomes a fashion victim. In Murdoch’s philosophy, there is a heightened awareness of having to exist as an irreducible subject. At the beginning of the novel, one encounters Dora looking at her image on a mirror realizing that despite the overpowering presence of Paul in her life, a presence to which she drew life, and at the same time drains her of it, beyond the disturbing vacillation, she is still herself, a person “unknown to Paul.” She thought, “How very much, after all, she existed; she, Dora, and no one should destroy her.”⁶⁷ The main distinctive resolution of Dora, at the end of the novel, her moral crest, was the insight that “[a]s things were, she felt that she would never manage to live with Paul until she could treat with him, in some sense, as an equal She felt intensely the need and somehow now the capacity to live and work on her own and become, what she had never been, an independent grown-up person.”⁶⁸ However, this moment of resolve was a hard-earned reward. In staying at Imber Court, she “felt organised and shut in.”⁶⁹ Dora could not stand other people knowing of her life, of her faults and infidelities to Paul. She knew that if others knew of her intimately, they would disapprove of her, condemn her, judge her. It was this imposing tribunal scenario to which her immediate reaction was self-assertion by the performance of something truly Dora-like: to “take the train to London,”⁷⁰ to flee and escape from the unspoken yet palpable condemnation of the surrounding people. She had to find healing in the “anonymity of London.”⁷¹

Neurosis, on the other hand, is the disappearance of the external world, swallowed up by the solipsistic ego; the other subject becomes an extension of the self, the instrumentalization by the transcendental ego. Again, we encounter an episode of neurosis in the person of Dora. After the interlude of experiencing a new world different from her usual environment, after the respite from quarrels with her husband, and after furtively sizing up all the other members of the community, Dora once more felt being gauged and judged by them. In Murdoch’s psychological analysis, neurosis is the flipside of social convention. When the feeling is intense, of being organized and shut in, the external world collapses in solipsistic bouts. Waking up one day, Dora experienced, now more intensely, the illusory encroaching presence of the community, with its attendant judgment on her lack of moral uprightness: “they looked to her hostile and censorious.”⁷² Looking at the mirror in her room, and then leaning out of the window, seeing the sun, the lake, and the

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 305.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 193.

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Norman tower of the Abbey, she “had the odd feeling that all this was inside her head. There was no way of breaking into this scene, for it was all imaginary. Rather startled at this feeling, she began to dress and tried to think about something practical. But the dazed feeling of unreality continued. It was as if her consciousness had eaten up its surroundings. Everything was now subjective. Even, she remembered, Paul this morning had been subjective.”⁷³ Neurosis is consciousness eating up its surroundings, the disastrous implosion of the external into the internal. More specifically, Murdoch calls it the “mechanical repetitive imprisoning of the mind.”⁷⁴

It is interesting that though Dora experienced instances of both social convention and neurosis, Murdoch did not place upon her the sad ultimate judgment of the two enemies of love. Rather, this we find in the Fawley twins. It was Nick, the rogue who could not fit into the society and who found himself at Imber Court in the failed hope of starting a new life, who ended up committing suicide. His sister Catherine, who planned to join the enclosed community of nuns, but who, for the time being, decided to join the lay community as a place of transition, ended up losing her mind, tried to drown herself in the lake, and later found herself in a psychiatric ward in London, all because of the unrequited love for Michael.

At the conclusion of the novel, we find the crucial denouement in Dora and Michael who, after the spin of unexpected events, understood themselves better in relation to other people and the events that transpired. They were not the heroes in the novel, nor was the Imber Court the incarnation of the adversary. The novel was simply a narration of peculiar events that border between the real and odd. A tragic reading of *The Bell* veers us away from the classical conception that tragedy is about a certain hero, a demi-god, a more than ordinary human individual who collapses under his or her own *hamartia*. Although it may appear that Dora plays the heroine in the novel, the deliberate effort to spread out the evolution of characters in the novel hint at an effort to transcend the literary dual requirement of the hero and the foe. Indeed, one could not even pinpoint who or what exactly is the enemy in the novel. This is the realism that Murdoch tries to portray in her novels. There is a feeling of fantasy and eeriness, but as she would say, the ordinary passer-by is rather eccentric.

We can see now how the concept of love and the tragic are closely related. Tragedy is an art where imagination is more dominantly at work, and love is “an exercise of the imagination.”⁷⁵ The idea of tragic freedom and that of love have the same enemies, convention and neurosis. The conquest of both love and tragic freedom are the same, the reconciliation of the revealed irreducible particularity. Speaking of tragic freedom, Murdoch writes,

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 183. Dora thought: “When the world had seemed to be subjective it had seemed to be without interest or value.” *Ibid.*, 192.

⁷⁴ Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 139.

⁷⁵ Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writing on Philosophy and Literature*, 216.

The tragic freedom implied by love is this: that we all have an indefinitely extended capacity to imagine the being of others. Tragic, because there is no prefabricated harmony, and others are, to an extent we never cease discovering, different from ourselves. Nor is there any social totality within which we can come to comprehend differences as placed and reconciled. We have only a segment of the circle. Freedom is exercised in the confrontation by each other, in the context of an infinitely extensible work of imaginative understanding, of two irreducible dissimilar individuals. Love is the imaginative recognition of, that is respect for, this otherness.⁷⁶

If in love we apprehend difference, tragedy is the movement of irreconcilability between conflicting dissimilar particularities. There is no reconciliation because unlike Hegel, there is no external prefabricated harmony in the Murdochian world. It is this absence of external prefabricated harmony, of the *telos*, that made Murdoch say that a great tragedy “leaves us in eternal doubt.”⁷⁷ The subject collides with the irreducible otherness, yet becomes a victor in its own irreducibility: “the human spirit mourning and yet exulting in its strength.”⁷⁸ This is the particularity of the tragic genre, it is Janus-faced: triumph and defeat.

“Tragedy of the Divine”

Tragedy is not only closely linked to love, but also to religion. Or better yet, it is precisely because of this link with love that tragedy entails entry into the religious dimension.⁷⁹ It is not because tragedy requires the fact of contingency and death, that religion enters into the scene as that hegemonic whole where these two find a transcendent consoling meaning. Rather, tragedy and religion are linked because both entail dying, or forms of dying. “Tragedy, like religion, must break the ego, destroying the illusory whole of the unified self.”⁸⁰ When tragedy, because of its topic of contingency and death, distresses us, the drama of the ethical is raised to the religious level.⁸¹ It is able “to carry a religious message.”⁸²

The Murdochian world is a broken universe, and aesthetics (arts, tragic form), ethics (love) and the religious (belief, God) are forms that freedom

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁷⁹ Cf. Janet Martin Soskice, “Love and Attention,” in *Philosophy, Religion and the Spiritual Life*, ed. by Michael McGhee (Oxford: The Royal Institute of Philosophy, 1992), 59.

⁸⁰ Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 104.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 92.

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imposes upon the experienced totality, all of which entail a manner of consoling scheme to which the subject tiptoes along an existential tightrope that separates convention and neurosis. Tragedy carries ethics to religion. There is something in religion, a sense of universality, or better yet, of the absolute or ultimate, to which Murdoch appeals, and to which she brings her ethical theory. This is reflected in her appreciation of Schopenhauer's view of the tragic and its metaphysical nature, that tragedy is engraved into "the structure of the world."⁸³ Improving upon Hegel's reconfiguration of the tragic, Schopenhauer argues that it must also involve something of "necessary evil." Murdoch elaborates,

Schopenhauer says that tragic catastrophe is occasioned by 'original sin'⁸⁴, and he suggests what that is like when he speaks of ordinary, not necessarily very wicked, people coming to a point where they knowingly and inevitably damage each other and cause the innocent to suffer, a point where evil seems inevitable, necessary, even a kind of duty.⁸⁵

Following this line of thought, it may even be suggested that the tragic is a key concept in Murdoch's moral philosophy⁸⁶, for in the tragic, ethics elevated to the religious, the Good is revealed, undisclosed in its metaphysical significance. The tragic is a concept that is not simply limited within the literary arts. It plays a role extending across the spectrum of aesthetics, ethics and the religious. All three disciplines impose form in the Murdochian broken world, bringing, with the realization of the decrepitude of existence, a grain of non-illusory consolation. Tragedy is that function whereby none of the three approaches falls into sentimentality (aesthetics), fantasy (ethics) and magic (religion).⁸⁷

Our present problem, however, is to distinguish between genuine religion and comforting mythology.⁸⁸ If mythology comforts by concealing the factuality of death and absolute contingency of existence, true religion must function the other way. True religion, must play the tragic role of goading us to the fact that existence is a broken circle. Mythical religion slips easily to illusory comfort in the face of the horrors of life. In the novel, this is chiefly exemplified in the reading of *The Revelations* of Julian of Norwich immediately after Toby's idyllic view of reality was shattered by Michael's inadvertent kiss. While Catherine reads the words: "*I shall save my word in all things and I shall make*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁸⁴ Schopenhauer calls this original sin as "the crime of existence itself." Cf. *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Cf. Pamela M. Hall, "Limits of the Story: Tragedy in Recent Virtue Ethics," in *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 17:3 (2004).

⁸⁷ "Shakespeare's (true) tragic understanding that religion, especially and essentially, must not be consolation (magic). Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 120.

⁸⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, 139.

all things well;” Toby was not listening, pondering instead on “one of the earliest lessons of adult life: that one is never secure.”⁸⁹

We can retreat to nowhere in the face of the exigency of *seeing* “the truth which is held up before us.”⁹⁰ Religion must help us face this absolute, the absoluteness of suffering, of brokenness, which is the realization of the idea of death. Yet, in so doing, religion must not fall into the magic of mythology; “an atmosphere of magic is alien to tragedy as it is to true religion.”⁹¹

She finds in the idea of God, especially that of God the Father, the image of a consoling external person that distracts us from the ultimacy of contingency and death, “that living God in whom all pain is healed and all evil finally overcome.”⁹² There is no place for God in the tragic drama. Unless God relinquishes the role in the play, the drama is less tragic, if not ultimately a comedy. Quoting the Christian mystics Meister Eckhart and St. John of the Cross, Murdoch says that “[i]n the end we give up everything, including God.”⁹³ Otherwise, religion remains a heteronomous religion.⁹⁴ “Every man his own theologian.”⁹⁵ For Murdoch, true religion is a “religion without God.”⁹⁶

The Bell is not simply a philosophical or psychological novel but also a religious one. It is not because it talks about an Anglican community of enclosed nuns and lay religious that makes it into a religious novel. One needs to see through the symbolism of that singular object on whose existence the whole tale unfolds. This is the ancient bell that “flew like a bird out of the tower and fell into the lake”⁹⁷ after the community of enclosed nuns was put into curse by the local bishop when no nun presented herself as that fallen religious who took in a lover. After the fall of the bell, the guilty religious drowned herself into the lake.⁹⁸

In major religions, especially Christianity, the bell plays an exceedingly important role.⁹⁹ It was a symbol of God summoning His people to Himself.

⁸⁹ Murdoch, *The Bell*, 160-61 also cf. 209.

⁹⁰ Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 140.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁹² Murdoch, *The Bell*, 81.

⁹³ Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 91.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁹⁶ Cf. Franklin Gamwell, “On the Loss of Theism,” in *Iris Murdoch and the Search for Human Goodness*, ed. by Maria Antonaccio and William Schweiker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 171-89. Cf. also Peter Byrne, *The Moral Interpretation of Religion, Reason and Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 105-25. A more sympathetic reading of Murdoch’s “theology” is in Maria Antonaccio, “Iris Murdoch’s Secular Theology of Culture,” in *Literature & Theology*, 18:3 (2004).

⁹⁷ Murdoch, *The Bell*, 42.

⁹⁸ Cf. another reading of *The Bell* as an allegory of *felix culpa*, David W. Beams, “The Fortunate Fall: Three Actions in the Bell,” in *Twentieth Century Literature*, 34:4 (1988), in particular 421ff.

⁹⁹ In the First Testament, one reads of the injunction by YHWH that the vestments worn by the high priests need to include “bells of gold” so that “its sound shall be heard when he goes into the holy place before the Lord.” Cf. Exodus 28,33-35; 39, 25-26; Ecclesiastes 45, 9. In biblical times, it was used for the purpose of (1) making joyful noise to God, and (2) to ward

The bell speaks, calls, shouts. Michael took the booming sound of the bell as an ominous sign of an impending death.¹⁰⁰ Dora's emotionally charged encounter with the bell, the night before its intended "switching," intricately describes an almost religious experience of another being, which, unlike the portraits in the National Gallery that leave her be, enters into a relationship, a bond with her. She "felt reverence for it, almost love,"¹⁰¹ thinking that she was its master, the role was reversed, "it was mastering her and would have its will." Despite the failure of her and Toby's plan, she could not just let it be, remain indifferent to it; "she could not leave the bell ambiguously to be the subject of malicious and untrue stories."¹⁰² However, the bell could not be indifferent to her also; it needed her. As if having understood this vocation, Dora hurled herself with all her might against it, and continued to do so, realizing that her sole purpose now was "of keeping the bell ringing."¹⁰³

In the Christian tradition, the practice of baptizing Church tower bells, that is, giving names signifies the importance of the bell. The novel itself reflects this when the two bells are both notably named Gabriel (meaning, "the messenger of God"). Furthermore, at the arrival of the new bell to replace the old one that was lost in the lake, the enclosed nuns will receive the bell the same way as they receive a postulant into their community, that is, through the great door of the monastery, at seven in the morning, with the bell decorated as a bride. However, for one to understand the drama of religious symbolism used by Murdoch, one needs to call to mind a host of distinguishing features of the two bells.

Though both of them are named Gabriel, certain significations are also engraved in the bells. The old one describes itself in the simplicity of attentive love: *Vox ego sum Amoris*, I am the voice of Love.¹⁰⁴ The other *Defunctos ploro, vivos voco, fulmina frango*, I lament the deceased, I summon the living, I send out lightning¹⁰⁵ takes on the air of impartiality and final judgment. Furthermore, there were some scenes in the life of Christ engraved in the old bell that added more particularity, elaborateness and uniqueness to the old bell, something that the new bell no longer has: "Its surface was plain, except for a band of arabesques which circled it a little above the rim."¹⁰⁶ Two symbols that appear to suggest that the old Gabriel was announcing love exemplified in the life of Christ, the new Gabriel, the new messenger, was announcing the insipidity of mourning for the dead, imploring the living, but a judgment on both, all of which in the "plain surface" of a God-less faith.

off evil spirits. In Christianity, the use of the bell dates back to the fifth century when St. Paulinus of Nola introduced its use to summon the monks for religious services. Later on, it was approved for use to call the faithful to Mass in the Church.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Murdoch, *The Bell*, 225.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 270.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 223.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 242.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

In the two homilies, though James and Michael both spoke of the requirement of the good life, their view of it diverged; and though both utilized the imagery of the bell to tell a point, they were telling divergent points. For James the bell is an image of the marks of innocence to which we all need to cling, over that of the human desire to seek experience. He remarks,

A bell is made to speak out. What would be the value of a bell which was never rung? It rings out clearly, it bears witness, it cannot speak without seeming like a call, a summons. A great bell is not to be silenced. Consider too its simplicity. There is no hidden mechanism. All that it is is plain and open; and if it is moved it must ring.¹⁰⁷

The irony enters the scene when James relates the bell to Catherine Fawley, who, like the bell entering the great door of the Abbey as a postulant, is entering the enclosed nuns sometime soon. The simplicity to which James refers, that there is nothing hidden in it, is all laid bare as only apparent. Indeed, in the eyes of the community Catherine bore the same marks of innocence, simplicity and transparency that the bell bears. However, this changed when the new bell fell into the lake. Catherine herself took it as a sign of her unworthiness to be a nun, and the later disclosure of what she really was, and the things that lie hidden deep in her heart.

For Michael, also speaking of the requirement of the good life, one has to attain a certain degree of self-knowledge, “some conception of one’s capacities.”¹⁰⁸ As James speaks on the level of universals, on that which should be in all cases, Michael addresses himself in the plane of the particularities of human uniqueness and individuality: “Each one of us has his own way of apprehending God.”¹⁰⁹ No two persons are the same and as such, “God speaks to us in various tongues. To this, we must be attentive.”¹¹⁰ Michael’s approach was touched by his own experience of frailty (having had a homosexual relation with Nick early on in his career, and then the inadvertent kiss with Toby). Both in innocence and one’s way back to it, one must muster great strength, and “to use our strength we must know where it lies.”¹¹¹ The same image of the bell is illustrated:

The bell is subject to the force of gravity.¹¹² The swing that takes it down must also take it up. So we must learn to understand the mechanism of our spiritual energy, and

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 136-37.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² The very use of the word “gravity” and the context on which this word appears highlights Simone Weil’s influence on her thought, especially on the area of religion.

find out where, for us, are the hiding places of our strength.¹¹³

Michael and Dora embody this pivotal finale realizing that for them to live the good life, they must see, must *attentively be aware* of, who they are and what their places are in the changing scheme of things. It is interesting to note that between the two, in their grasp of the truth, there remains the ubiquitous undertone of the irreducibility of the subject. Dora decided not to return (yet) to Paul, and instead must first seek being “an independent grown-up person.”¹¹⁴ For Michael, the case was more intricate. He realized his own lack of unselfing. He was afraid to love and abandoned the hope that a single love could bring may have staved off the tragic death of Nick. With the tragedy came the conclusion that he had never believed at all: “The pattern which he had seen in his life had existed only in his own romantic imagination.”¹¹⁵ His final profession of faith: “there is a God, but I do not believe in Him.”¹¹⁶

This statement briefly sums up what the “tragedy of the divine” really is and the self-defeating tragedy in the tragic of Murdoch. Her moral vision falls short of being a religious vision. Murdoch’s effort to maintain the dual irreducibility of the subject and the other collapses in the topography of the Divine.

It is at this point that we encounter to the *internal tragedy* in the tragic of Murdoch. She structured a system of *seeing*, that is attentive love, whereby otherness and subjectivity are affirmed without the one collapsing into the other by the function of the tragic. However, when it comes to *religious seeing*, when she carries her ethics to the level of the religious, a flattening of religious categories ensues revealing that in Murdoch, one encounters a mere instrumentalization of religious types to modify and enhance her moral arguments. Ultimately, she doesn’t offer a moral interpretation of religion. It is a religious interpretation of morality or what Gordon Graham aptly calls, her “spiritualised morality.”¹¹⁷

Conclusion

The logic of internal tragedy in the novel, and in the philosophy of Murdoch, rests precisely on her effort to come up with a metaphysical view of reality, founded on Platonic moralism, that respects the irreducible particularity of entities, of the subject and the other, that populate the Murdochian universe. This she summarized in her view of attentive love, and how tragedy functions as a kind of “reality-check” lest love infolds into convention or neurosis. The tragic is then not simply a literary genre, but extends beyond her literary world

¹¹³ Murdoch, *The Bell*, 205.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 305.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 312.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Cf. Gordon Graham, “Spiritualized Morality and Traditional Religion,” in *Ratio*, 9 (1996), 78. See also, Byrne, *The Moral Interpretation of Religion*, 96.

towards that view of metaphysics founded on a moral vision. Her novels are pictures of how she conceived of the world, philosophically. Tragedy enters into her metaphysical scheme, disclosing the brokenness of existence. Tragedy brings ethics to the terrain of the ultimate, to that of the religious, yet on this divine topography, her metaphysics of attentive love infolds into a religious solipsism, the collapse of the religious Other into the subject's internality: "We must now also internalise our God."¹¹⁸ The divine tragedy is that we need to rouse ourselves from sleep and realize that our "God" is but a dream of which the "Good" is reality. To retrieve the Good, we must displace God. Murdoch argues that God cannot be a character in the novel, for unless He relinquishes his role, the tale is never tragic enough. However, what this "relinquishing" involves is not the removal of God in the drama of existence. Classical tragedy portrays heroes and heroines in the grip of iron fate which is the will of the gods. In Murdoch's genre, we find a reversal—that even the gods fall doom to the will of human beings. The relinquishing of role that Murdoch necessitates in the tragic is not the removal, but the replacement, of God. *The Bell* is a religious tragedy, a tragedy of the divine, precisely because the old bell, the very image of the religious Other, is replaced. The miracle of substituting the newly arrived one with the centuries old bell did not come to pass, even if the new one fell into the same lake. The fate of the old bell, that one called Love, whose "truth-telling voice [could] not be silenced,"¹¹⁹ ends up in one of the solitary halls of "the British Museum"¹²⁰ attentively waiting for the more curious passerby.

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¹¹⁸ Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, 137.

¹¹⁹ Murdoch, *The Bell*, 270.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 285.

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