

**Colouring the Ordinary and Going Beyond
Language:
Notes on Iris Murdoch on Ordinary Language Philosophy
and Critical Theory.**



Francesca Scapinello

Supervised by Franz Knappik

Department of Philosophy

University of Bergen

May, 2023

Abstract

Following the line of inquiry on Iris Murdoch and Ordinary Language Philosophy (OLP) opened by Niklas Forsberg (2013, 2018, 2022), I take issue with his claim that Murdoch is an ordinary language philosopher. I argue against this view by (i) engaging with Murdoch's treatment of the notion of the ordinary from an ontological and epistemic perspective and (ii) by specifying aspects of OLP that Forsberg doesn't consider by looking at the works of Avner Baz, Stanley Cavell and Herbert Marcuse.

Sammendrag

Med utgangspunkt i Niklas Forsbergs (2013, 2018, 2022) forskning om Iris Murdoch og dagligspråksfilosofien setter denne oppgaven spørsmålsteget ved Forsbergs påstand om at Murdoch er en dagligspråksfilosof. Jeg argumenterer mot denne oppfatningen (a) ved å undersøke Murdochs diskusjon rundt begrepet om det vanlige fra et ontologisk og epistemologisk ståsted, og (b) ved å presisere aspekter ved dagligspråksfilosofien som Forsberg ikke ta hensyn til, basert på skrifter av Avner Baz, Stanley Cavell and Herbert Marcuse.

Acknowledgments

I would not have been able to carry out this work without the illuminating conversations with my supervisor Franz Knappik, the friendship with Li, the quick cigarettes with Pas, the long talks with Carlota, the space built around NoGoods with Danja, Maike and the people who stop by, the climbing sessions with Sjur, and the phone calls to my family, Pietro, Irene and Eleonora: thank you all.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1 – Murdoch and OLP: Some Missing Exegetical Aspects

1.1 Resisting Linguistic Philosophy: Historical Background

1.2 Murdoch and OLP: Forsberg's Accounts

1.21 Forsberg's *Language Lost and Found*

1.22 Forsberg's "Taking the Linguistic Method Seriously"

1.221 Forsberg's Characterisation of OLP

1.222 Forsberg's Overlook of Murdoch's Ordinary

1.23 Forsberg's "Thinking, Language and Concepts"

Chapter 2 – On What Is Ordinary: Dichotomies and Epistemic Perspectivism

2.1 The Irreducible Duality of the Ordinary

2.11 An Overview on the Private/Public, Personal/Impersonal and Inner/Outer Distinctions

2.12 Axioms and Duties

2.2 Towards Epistemic Perspectivism

2.21 Diamond on the Fact/Value Distinction

2.22 From Mac Cumhaill's Metre to Murdoch's Ontology

2.23 Murdoch and Adorno on the Subject/Object Distinction

Chapter 3 – Murdoch and (a Version of) OLP: Not So Close

3.1 Baz on Meaning in OLP

3.2 On Cavell and the Broad Scope of OLP

3.3 Murdoch Facing (Baz's and Cavell's) OLP: A Comparison

3.4 Additional Considerations on Murdoch and Contemporary OLP

Chapter 4 – Metaphilosophical Affinities: Murdoch and Marcuse

4.1 Remarks on Marcuse Dissatisfaction with OLP

4.2 Critique and Metaphysics in Murdoch and Marcuse

Conclusions

Abbreviations

AD	‘Against Dryness’
CR	<i>The Claim of Reason</i>
IP	‘The Idea of Perfection’
MA	<i>Metaphysical Animals</i>
ME	‘Metaphysics and Ethics’
MGM	<i>Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals</i>
MWM	‘Must We Mean What We Say’
LP	‘Literature and Philosophy’
OGG	‘On “God” and “Good”’
OLP	Ordinary Language Philosophy
SGC	‘The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts’
TL	‘Thinking and Language’
VCM	‘Vision and Choice in Morality’

Introduction

It was during an interview with James Mellen in 1978 that, when asked what kind of a philosopher she was, Iris Murdoch stated that it was very difficult to formulate an answer to such a question. Before reaching this conclusion, Murdoch had said to be partly connected to Wittgenstein and partly to Plato, in virtue of some sort of empiricism absorbed from the former and a moral view inspired by the latter. Nothing more was asked about her philosophy after Murdoch's reply, and the conversation streamed into some considerations on Murdoch's activity as a novelist and artist¹. It is indeed difficult to encapsulate Murdoch's philosophical and, more broadly, intellectual interests, for they span from aesthetics to politics, from morality to metaphysics, from language to phenomenology, from existentialism and religion to structuralism and logical behaviourism. However, if her eclecticism renders hard a definition of what philosopher she is, something can be said about what kind of philosopher she is not. It is from the earliest "Vision and Choice in Morality" (1956) and the three papers collected in *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970) to the later *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992) and *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature* (1997) that Murdoch develops a line of criticism that runs throughout the entirety of her philosophical engagement: a strenuous opposition to the deflation of the richness and obscurity of morality to the aseptic views purported by the existentialists, logical positivists and linguistic behaviourists she was surrounded by. Sharing this resistance with her colleagues and friends Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot and Mary Midgley², Murdoch has always advocated the need to (i) rethink moral philosophy in light of the ubiquity of moral values and (ii) work with a picture of the moral subject that is able to account for the intimacy of emotions and of moral progress, for the experience of love and faith, for the need and inevitability of the involvement of personal stories and histories that shape moral concepts and attitudes.

Following Murdoch's declaration of interest in moral philosophy and her literary vocation, scholars have tended to see Murdoch as mainly concerned with a restoration of transcendent moral concepts, especially of the notion of the Good, via what she calls the 'Idea of Perfection', an asset that through an attentive and loving gaze (a semantic borrowed from Simone Weil)

¹ Murdoch wrote 26 novels, was appointed as a Dame of the British Empire in 1987 for her literary service and won the Gold Pen for Distinguished Service to Literature in the 1997 PEN Awards.

² The four of them together form what has been called 'The Wartime Quartet', see B.J.B. Lipscomb's *The Women Are Up to Something: How Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgely, and Iris Murdoch Revolutionized Ethics* (2021) and C. Mac Cumhaill's and R. Wiseman's *Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brought Philosophy Back to Life* (2022).

allows the recognition of the unicity of others' individualities (IP:27). In such a framework, vision plays a pivotal role in dismissing choice as the main moral medium: differently from for the moral accounts purported by existentialists and linguistic philosophers, which work with a restricted picture of the soul and thus see in choosing the only moment of morality, Murdoch advocates for the pervasiveness of morality, a feature that corresponds to vision. Indeed, the whole of the human experience is coloured, in Murdoch's terms, by the ways we see the world, which make morality an all-encompassing activity (VCM). Thus, most of the exegetical work that has been done so far has focused its attention on some of the main recognisable threads in Murdoch's texts, namely her attack to a trend in analytic moral philosophy that stems from a wrong and insufficiently spelled out picture of the human being (Antonaccio 1996 and 2000, Diamond 1996 and 2010, Hämäläinen 2013 and 2018, Rowe and Horner (eds.) 2010), her interests on the notions of attention and love (Browning (ed) 2018) and her positions in respect to art (Brozzo and Hamilton 2022, Gomes 2013), literature (Backus 1986, Dooley 2004, Forsberg 2013, Gordon 1990 and 1995, Hämäläinen 2015, Nussbaum 2012, Wolfe 1966), and platonism (Robjant 2012, Rowett 2022, Tracy 1996).

While the debate around these topics is still flourishing (see for instance the recently published anthology *The Murdochian Mind* (2022)), some authors have pointed out new relevant, yet overlooked, lines of inquiry on Murdoch's philosophical contributions. This is the case, for instance, of Mac Cumhaill's and Wiseman's individual and joint writings³, which, through their extensive use of unpublished material and the analytical scope of their works, bring a breath of fresh air into our gazing at Murdoch's philosophy, uncovering, for instance, her engagement with phenomenology, Husserl in particular, and with the works of Elizabeth Anscombe, Martin Buber, John MacKinnon, and Gabriel Marcel. Another area of investigation, mainly opened and furthered by Niklas Forsberg (2013, 2018, 2022), takes a closer look on Murdoch's view on language, an aspect has been quite neglected so far. Few reasons can be adduced for explaining this lack of engagement: the more obvious ones are (i) the fact that Murdoch's texts are not openly concerned with language as the main subject matter (one could name "Thinking and Language", a paper that Murdoch prepared for a talk she delivered in Oxford in 1951, as the only exception), and (ii) the numerous occurrences where Murdoch rejects, oftentimes quite uncharitably, linguistic philosophy and other views on

³ For their collective writings, in addition to *Metaphysical Animals*, see "The Importance of Murdoch's Early Encounters with Marcel and Anscombe". For their individual contributions, see Wiseman, "What if the private linguist were a poet? Iris Murdoch on privacy and ethics" (2020) and Mac Cumhaill, "Getting the Measure of the Good" (2020).

language, such as the structuralist one, without offering an account that she would consider correct. However, language is far from being something that did not puzzle and interest Murdoch: her fascination with the idea that one cannot speak about what is most important to us, something that derives from, on one hand, Wittgenstein's treatment of ethical propositions in his 1921 *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, and, on the other, from Marcel's indictment, contained in *Être and Avoir* (1949) of non-expressability of our emotions and feelings, which for him are mysteries; her denounce of the restricted vocabulary employed in moral philosophy by linguistic philosophers like R. Hare, of the reduction of moral concepts to linguistic descriptions and prescriptions (VCM) and of theories of language; the way she connects language to different strands of her philosophy, such as to the private/public and inner/outer distinction. All these points call for a deeper understanding of Murdoch's relation to language.

So far, the research on this topic has been framed by relating Murdoch to Ordinary Language Philosophy (OLP): the main (and, to my knowledge, only) proponent of this connection is Forsberg, who takes Murdoch to be an ordinary language philosopher. I will dedicate more space to the reasons why he thinks this way later in the text, but, overall, Forsberg comes to this conclusion by (i) appealing to some passages where Murdoch seems to rely on ordinary language to solve problems in moral philosophy, and (ii) by referring to Murdoch's call to historical situatedness for giving meaning to moral concept. It is at this juncture that my investigation begins, in the attempt to tell a different story about Murdoch and OLP.

To do so, I start with outlining the general context that led Murdoch to formulate her critique to a picture of morality that stemmed from linguistic philosophy and then proceed with a series of considerations on Forsberg's book "Language Lost and Found" (2013) and papers "Taking the Linguistic Method Seriously: On Iris Murdoch on Language and Linguistic Philosophy" (2018), "Thinking, Language and Concepts" (2022). Chapter 1 is dedicated to seeking out the argumentative premises to Forsberg's claim, which can be traced back to two main points: the first is a lack in an overall examination of what the ordinary is ontologically and epistemically for Murdoch, which goes hand in hand with a selection of remarks that show some agreement with OLP, leaving out other passages that oppose it; the second is the characterisation of OLP that Forsberg provides, which lacks in specification and thus misses some substantial differences (and similarities too) between OLP and Murdoch's philosophy. Briefly, Forsberg's outline of OLP includes: (i) a view of meaning as use, (ii) a consideration of language as a way for clarifying problems in philosophy, and (iii) an attention to contextual, historical and individual use of language. By referring this definition to broader considerations

on the variety of approaches that can constitute different accounts of OLP, I gesture at the idea that Forsberg's propensity to see Murdoch as an ordinary language philosopher is misplaced.

The main bulk of this inquiry is structured around the two problems that I traced in Forsberg's argument. In Chapter 2 I consider Murdoch's take on the ordinary as an ontological and epistemic dimension and the implications it has on her understanding of ordinary language. In highlighting how the ordinary connects to other relevant themes in Murdoch's philosophy, such as her call to realism, the notion of 'concrete universals', what she defines her 'non-dogmatic moral naturalism' and her use of the inner/outer, private/public, personal/impersonal, duties/axioms dichotomies, this chapter aims to show that the ordinary comprises both elements of epistemic certainty and reasons for distrust. In this way, Murdoch's ordinary does not figure as the ontological ground that OLP needs for securing the validity of ordinary language, thus rendering Forsberg's reliance on Murdoch's (superficial) avowal to ordinary language misplaced for taking her to be an ordinary language philosopher. In addition to this, I suggest reading in Murdoch a tendency towards epistemic perspectivism, which furthers her distance from OLP due to a shift from the agreement in shared practices to the unicity of the individual standpoint.

Chapter 3 and 4 tackle the other problematic aspect of Forsberg's argument, that is the delineation of OLP. In Chapter 3 I engage with two philosophers that ascribe to and that have helped shape OLP, Avner Baz and Stanley Cavell, and I will draw some points that Murdoch should share, were she an ordinary language philosopher aligned to the view that they purport. Such an account highlights other commitments than the ones envisioned by Forsberg, such as the appeal to explicative statements that underlie the normative status of ordinary language, and the role played by the notions of the 'claim to the community', 'forms of life' and agreements. The picture we get from this comparison is nuanced, since there are some important similarities, especially with Cavell, that could lead to placing Murdoch within the OLP tradition. Roughly, the similarities are (i) the rejection of a referential picture of meaning in favour of seeing meaning as use, (ii) the idea that, in engaging with language, one exposes their own personal individuality and can learn meaningful insights on themselves from reflecting on language, which is related to (iii) seeing self-reliance as a necessary tool for attaining a close relationship with morality, an aspect that has also to do with refuting the notion of agreement based on socio-linguistic conventions or contracts. However, there are far more striking differences which call for not associating Murdoch with OLP. These are (i) the fact that Murdoch does not see (ordinary) language as a site for solving philosophical problems, nor as the essential medium through which one attains and develops a deeper understanding of

moral concepts, which results in (ii) a philosophical argumentative style that does not take issue from (and does not return to) ordinary language; (iii) Murdoch's accent on epistemic perspectivism and on the individual dimension, rather than on communal agreement and on the community in general, together with (iv) her trust on metaphysics, an aspect that I will deepen in Chapter 4. I also sketch other reasons for keeping Murdoch apart from OLP by drawing a contrast between her and other contemporary accounts of OLP.

It is then in Chapter 4 that I develop an analogy between Murdoch and Herbert Marcuse, in order to strengthen both the distance between Murdoch and OLP and the proximity, to some extents, with critical theory. The choice of Marcuse stems from an interplay of references: even though Murdoch does not discuss his works in her writings, the critique Marcuse makes to OLP follows Gellner's *Words and Things* (1959), an author she refers to in VCM, and who has also been dismissed by Cavell in "Austin at Criticism"⁴ while arguing in favour of OLP. Now, the appeal of Marcuse's stance does not lie on his characterisation of OLP, but rather in his vision of what philosophy is, why we need it and how we should do it. It is in these sites that we can find an attunement between Murdoch and Marcuse, which spans from the acknowledgment of the epistemic precariousness of ordinary language to the need to include in philosophy more than just language; from assuming a doubting posture towards what there is to the need for metaphysical and ideal structures in order to read and change reality.

This research mainly aims at contributing to the broadening of scholarly interest in Murdoch and at fostering interest on authors that have been left out from the philosophical canon. Such an attempt regards not only her views on language and her stance in regard to OLP, but also a connection to a philosophical strand that she is not usually associated with, that is the one of critical theory. Furthering the scope of Murdoch's thought in these directions can help, I believe, in appreciating her intellectual originality, which cannot be tied to, and

⁴ "It is characteristic of work like Austin's - and this perhaps carries a certain justice - that criticism of it will often take the form of repudiating it as philosophy altogether. Let me conclude by attempting to make one such line of criticism less attractive than it has seemed to some philosophers to be. A serviceable instance is provided by a sensational book published a few years ago by Mrs. Ernest Gellner (*Words and Things*) in which this author congratulates himself for daring to unmask the sterility and mystique of contemporary English philosophy by exposing it to sociology. First of all, unmasking is a well-turned modern art, perhaps *the* modern intellectual art, and its practitioners must learn not to be misled themselves by masks, and to see their own. I mean both that unmasking is itself a phenomenon whose sociology needs drawing, and also that the philosophy Gellner "criticizes" is itself devoted to unmasking. (...) The relation of unmasking to evaluation is always delicate to trace. Gellner vulgarly imagines that his sociological reduction in itself proves the intellectual inconsequence and social irrelevance or political conservatism of English philosophy. (...) Such an analysis would at most show the conditions or outline the limitations - one could say it makes explicit the conventions - within which this work was produced or initiated. To touch the question of its value, the value of those conventions themselves, as they enter the texture of the work, would have to be established." (MWM:104-105)

encapsulated in, only one philosophical current. Having hers as a voice from the margins that exceed categorisations is vital to keep asking ourselves the need for philosophising and to remind us of the urgency of exploring our everchanging relationship with morality.

Chapter 1

Murdoch and OLP:

Some Missing Exegetical Aspects

In this section I will address the existing debate around Murdoch's engagement with OLP. After a general overview of Murdoch's resistance to linguistic philosophy, I will take a closer look at three contributions that have addressed the theme of language and OLP specifically. All of them were written by Forsberg over a decade, and I want to show how, despite some different nuances, they are all lacking in portraying OLP and Murdoch's views. Being his first publication a more general discussion on how to understand the relationship between philosophy and literature, I will mainly focus on his "Taking the Linguistic Method Seriously": On Iris Murdoch on Language and Linguistic Philosophy" (2018) and "Thinking, Language and Concepts" (2022). I take his 2018 piece, unique in its explicit aim to propose Murdoch as an ordinary language philosopher, to present some faults in regards both to (i) Murdoch's epistemic and ontological views on the ordinary and to (ii) the definition/description of OLP Forsberg offers. I will then strengthen this latter point by referring to his latest article and, based on it, I will set the main purported theses that I will oppose in the rest of this investigation.

1.1 Resisting Linguistic Philosophy: Historical Background

A good place to start for situating Murdoch in the philosophical atmosphere of her time is post-war Oxford, which became the intellectual shelter for the minds whose eyes had witnessed the horror of World War II and needed to restore an ideal order on thought and society. Just before the break of the conflict, logical positivism and linguistic analysis had already come to Oxford, first introduced by Susan Stebbing⁵, but then rendered hegemonic by Ayer's book *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936). This work, inspired by Wittgenstein's *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, entered Oxford's grounds as a novelty to the two main currents that had been

⁵ See Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman 2022 for a more articulate recounting.

coexisting since the beginning of the century: British idealism, mainly purported by F.H. Bradley, B. Bosanquet, J.H. Muirhead, R.G. Collingwood and G.R.G. Mure, and Realism, initiated by G.E. Moore and B. Russell in Cambridge and taken to Oxford by H.A. Pritchard and W.D. Ross. The terrains of confrontation between these two sides were various: Idealists, following Hegel, thought of reality as part of the Absolute, an ideal order that requires the progress of consciousness into a transcendent self-consciousness; Realists, on the other hand, rejected the possibility of such a structure and viewed reality as a dimension separate from the inquiring subject, who has the duty to gain an understanding of the world through rigorous methods, possibly informed by science. In particular, Pritchard and Ross set out, within this latter framework, an intuitionist account of ethics: the moral features contained in reality could be attained via intuitions, which figure as a distinctive trait of human beings.

Ayer's agenda was to go against both Realists and Idealists, tearing thus apart the ideas of obligation and duties of the former and the need for consciousness' sublimation of the latter. With him, the principles of logical analysis and empirical verificationism applied to propositions became the new tools for assessing the sense of all kinds of statements, including metaphysical and ethical ones. It was on these premises that "Ayer declared that since talk of right and wrong, good and bad, justice and virtue cannot be translated into the language of empirical sciences, this talk is nonsense" (MA:50). For him, ethics should be reduced to a matter of personal inclinations which cannot be treated as philosophically relevant. Ayer's attempt to disrupt the philosophical significance of metaphysical and ethical discourse was somehow followed by R. Hare's work on moral philosophy. After refuting the existence of a universal and objective moral standard and relating the nature of intuitions to a set of contingencies rather than to an objective disposition to grasp the structure of reality, Hare turned his attention to the role and the features of language in his new view on moral philosophy: moral statements are no more than orders, prescriptions, and they can only refer to actions. Both these contributors, together with (at least) Austin, Hampshire, Ryle and Wittgenstein⁶, can be placed within what Murdoch refers to as linguistic philosophy: a philosophical stance that rejects metaphysics (even though, as Murdoch points out in VCM, this only corresponds to another metaphysical take) and supplants it with linguistic analysis, which figures as the only valid, since rational and objective, method in philosophy. The

⁶ Alternatively, Hämäläinen indicates that Murdoch "seems to equate linguistic philosophy with Wittgenstein. (...) There is reason to believe that Murdoch here, when talking about linguistic philosophy, is making a broad gesture towards all those of her contemporary British philosophers who were concerned with language as a guide to philosophical clarity. She does make these kinds of overarching gestures in other places as well (...). But Wittgenstein is more important for understanding her philosophy". (2014:193)

mistrust of everything that is not liable to empirical verificationism forged, according to Murdoch, what in VCM she calls ‘the current view’ in morality, which “displays the moral agent as rational and responsible and also as free”, moving “unhindered against a background of facts and can alter the descriptive meaning of his moral words at will”. Such a view, Murdoch clearly states, depends upon the ‘linguistic’ method, “which provides a meaning for moral words which eschews earlier errors and construes these words as nearly as possible on the model of empirical terms, giving them definite factual criteria of application, and without reference to transcendent entities or states of consciousness” (VCM:35). It is then both linguistic philosophy’s views on language (as empirically oriented and as a method for clarity) and its extra-linguistic commitments (a specific way of seeing philosophy as a technical activity, a picture of the human soul) that constitutes Murdoch’s polemical target, which she opposes in moral philosophy.

1.2 Murdoch and Ordinary Language Philosophy: Forsberg’s accounts

This is the background that has favoured Forsberg’s attempt to bridge Murdoch and OLP. As I will show, Forsberg sees Murdoch’s criticism to linguistic philosophy based on its skinned and reductive conception of the human soul and its relation to the world via language to match OLP’s imperative to bring words back home.

1.21 Forsberg’s *Language Lost and Found*

In *Language Lost and Found. On Iris Murdoch and the Limits of Philosophical Discourse* (2013) Forsberg appeals to Murdoch’s interest and urgency in settling, or even just in taking seriously, the matter of reinhabiting language and the theoretical tools and strategies for doing so. Within this framework, Forsberg explores, more broadly, the connections between Murdochian philosophical and literary texts, the role of the artist and of the philosopher, and the relation between art and morals to the role of language plays in Murdoch’s work. One of the leading theses of this work is that “the central concepts of Murdoch’s ‘account’ or ‘theory’ are concepts that have lost their meaning,” taking thus Murdoch to be wanting to show us “that we are not in command of our language now, and that the fact that these parts of our language are lost on us means that we have disabled our possibilities of self-reflection and so self-understanding.” (2013: 5) Such a stance is supported by a comparison between Cavell’s

contribution on what it takes to be in touch with oneself through and in language - something that concerns much more than just a linguistic ability, and that embraces the whole existential dimension of the lived experience of a person, in terms of their attunement to a society, its history, its culture and its nature (what Wittgenstein would call a form of life). In this way, Forsberg wants to unveil the difficulty in discovering the 'idleness' that holds us captive when relating to language: it takes a lot to even understand that we have a problem with what words fail to mean for us - and what we discover speaks for something substantial about us, something more important than just considerations on the general workings of language. And this problem that we have with language has also to do with morality, in that Murdoch states "language itself is a moral medium, almost all uses of language convey value. This is one reason why we are almost always morally active" (LP:27). Concepts and words are, on his reading, closely related and embedded in everyone's form of life: words are the atemporal signs for historical concepts, and the use we make of both depends on the ways we go about our lives and relations (2013:120). Thus, to not have the right words for concepts, to perpetuate a discrepancy between what we say and what we mean, to forget that there is such a gap between words and concept and therefore failing in paying attention to the different nuances that must be addressed.

For Forsberg, language plays an important role for interpreting Murdoch's claim of a 'general loss of concepts': firstly, to analyse our language is a means to understand the relationship we have to our concepts. Such an enterprise, however, is never ending and always open to change, since there is always a renegotiation happening. Secondly, and related to the previous point, we can be wrong about our language, since we are embedded in it as much as we are in our culture. Thus, both a critique and an overall understanding of language can never be taken for granted and they always need to be aware of potential faults (2013:218-219). For these reasons, language, for Forsberg's Murdoch, constitutes a litmus test of the characteristic features, originality and fallibility of our shared and individual lives. Moreover, adding to this the aforementioned intersections with morality, it is to language that we have to return in order to find ourselves at home: Murdoch's "solution to the problem of a loss of concepts is thus a retracing of linguistic deflections, serving to take us 'back': we are blind to something that we at some level already know. We earn our concepts by recovering them in their changed form - we move from idling concepts back to working ones" (2013:220).

It is in the need of reappropriating language that Forsberg sees Murdoch's appeal to literature, a connection that gestures a relation to OLP. Indeed, literature, being the medium through which we deploy and expand our imagery of ourselves (2018:222), is able to portray more faithfully "the difficulty and complexity of the moral life and the opacity of persons"

(AD:293). Moreover, “Literature teaches us two lessons: that of *density*, where we learn to *rediscover* ‘a sense of the density of our lives’, and that of *distance*, where we learn where our concepts come from” (2013:223), and the stage for making these discoveries “is a return to the ordinary in, at least, this sense: words and concepts are again (...) not hovering above us in need of theoretical legitimization, but are grounded, anchored, in a particular form of life. Literature is ordinary language philosophy”⁷ (2013:223).

1.22 Forsberg’s “Taking the Linguistic Method Seriously”

If in *Language Lost and Found* Forsberg hints at a proximity between Murdoch and OLP, it is only with his later article “‘Taking the Linguistic Method Seriously’: On Iris Murdoch on Language and Linguistic Philosophy” (2018) that Forsberg suggests considering Murdoch as a linguistic philosopher. By this he means to inscribe Murdoch in a tradition of philosophy of language that “builds on the idea that many philosophical problems (about say, knowledge, truth, morality, mind and soul) must be approached *by means of* a study of language” and “that a great deal of our philosophical problems (have) to do with misunderstanding of our language”⁸ (2018:114). He finds reasons for such a claim mainly in two elements that run through Murdoch’s philosophy: the rejection of the fact/value distinction and the notion of attention to particulars. Forsberg takes it that when Murdoch states that “language is soaked in value” (MGM:256), she is expressing the need for an account of language that considers the whole experiential and emotional asset of human life. She is thus, in Forsberg’s view, rejecting the idea that language can be characterised as a study of meaning and reference and considered separately from the reality of humans as speakers, which is indeed one of the main assets purported by OLP.

Closer to linguistic philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Moore and Austin in finding meaning in use, Forsberg notes that Murdoch nevertheless distances herself from a still insufficient characterisation of the human side of language. Linguistic philosophy, with its claim to a neutral objectivity, developed in response to “various forms of psychologism, historicism, romanticism and idealism” (2018:115), was still casting a shadow on the intrinsically contextual and historical dimension of language, therefore conducting to a faulty

⁷ There is no further characterisation of OLP, nor a more detailed explanation of the connection between literature and OLP.

⁸ Forsberg characterises this view in opposition to what Soames (2010) argues contemporary philosophy of language is. Forsberg follows Hacking’s distinction between ‘pure theory of language’ and ‘applied theory of language’ and takes Murdoch’s approach to linguistic philosophy to be in line with analytic philosophers such as Moore, Wittgenstein and Austin. I address this matter at more length in the following section.

conception of the moral agent. The importance of such spheres is expressed by Murdoch in her often-quoted remark on the historicity of concepts and the need for staying in touch with the changes that concepts undergo, despite retaining the same words⁹. Language should be, for Forsberg's Murdoch, looked at as a medium that encompasses the entirety of the human experience and that should not limit its moral vocabulary to 'objective descriptions' and 'recommendations' (VCM). It is in this context that we register Murdoch's proposition to 'take the linguistic method seriously', meaning to really take into account the whole of human experience evolving in history (2018:127). In this sense, paying attention to details is the methodological strategy for not missing out on the real conditions of the world and of individuals inhabiting it.

For Forsberg this equates to seeing Murdoch endorsing ordinary language: "the entrance to the ideal must always be through the particular. And the sense of the particular can only be attained by means of paying close attention to 'words said to particular persons at particular times' (IP:31)." This, for Forsberg, is Murdoch's "historically sensitive ordinary language philosophy" (2018:129), which is, in his view, backed up by her attention to meaning as use: "[w]e do not learn the concept, the meaning, first, and only at a second instance learn to use it among ordinary human beings." (2018:129) Presented in this way, Murdoch's take on language as a historical revision of ordinary language philosophy is coherent with the main bulk of her philosophical endeavour: attention goes hand in hand with love and its conductivity to knowledge and to the unveiling of the truthful configuration of the world as soaked in a conjunction of value and facts oriented by the idea of perfection. By paying attention to ordinary language, we are informed of the moral articulation of facts and thus reach an understanding of humans as moral agents differently from the ideal rational animal that contemporary theories would like us to be.

1.221 Forsberg's characterisation of OLP

In the attempt to better spell out his take, Forsberg draws attention to the different meanings that 'Linguistic Philosophy' first had when Murdoch engaged with it and the one it has now. By referring to Soames' *Philosophy of Language* (2010), Forsberg maintains that Linguistic Philosophy should not be considered as what Soames calls 'Philosophy of Language', that is "*just* the development of a 'theoretical framework for studying language,'

⁹ "Words may mislead us here since words are often stable while concepts alter; we have a different image of courage at forty from that which we had at twenty. A deepening process, at any rate and altering and complicating process, takes place." (IP:28).

which is done by means of theorising about a number of ‘foundational concepts’” (2010:1). In other words, Philosophy of Language as we know it today unravels as an investigation that has language as its subject matter (2018:114). Instead, Forsberg notes, by ‘Linguistic Philosophy’, we should look at, and take as examples, the philosophical contributions of ‘the early analytic philosophers’ like Frege, Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein, Austin and Ryle. In fact, the common denominator of their investigations is the idea that language is not a philosophical issue *per se*, but rather is the medium through which, once analysed and clarified, we get to realise that the topical problems in philosophy are really just outcomes of a misuse of language. Forsberg argues that Murdoch associates with linguistic philosophy following this latter characterisation and imagines her to agree with Hacking's observation that “pure theory of meaning does not matter much to philosophy, although language does” (Hacking 1975:2). Keeping this as the main similarity between Murdoch's and the Linguistic Philosophy, Forsberg (rightly) notices a fundamentally different response to the influence of ‘psychologism, historicism, romanticism and idealism’ (without forgetting the heritage of the two Word Wars). Early linguistic philosophers wanted to secure a study of meaning and to have a philosophical style that was untouched by the complexity of the cultural, societal and intellectual context that surrounded them. The prominence of logic and meaning can thus be seen as a committed avoidance of (what linguistic philosophers thought of as) disturbance factors in the proceeding of correct reasoning. Murdoch's theoretical commitment stands in stark contrast with such a view: the attention she pays to concepts, rather than just words and language, and the weight that historicism and situatedness have in her works render, from her standpoint, linguistic philosophy a failed attempt. It is wrong not only in the assumption that one, when philosophising, should detach from the world, but also in the conception of its own proceeding: asserting neutrality does not lead to objectivity, but rather an illusory picture on how we can think and live. Language, for Murdoch, should always be connected to who speaks it¹⁰, as much as facts come already coloured and not separated from values. If this aspect shows how far Murdoch is from Frege and Russell, Forsberg continues, it also hints a similarity to the assumption made in Wittgenstein's and Austin's¹¹ works, thus by OLP: language needs

¹⁰ ‘[W]e cannot,’ she argues, ‘consider language as a set of grooves into which we slip. Here language cannot be considered as saying itself; it is not “p” that says p, but I who say “p” meaning p’ (Murdoch 1999b: 35).

¹¹ Austin, J.L. (1946). “Other Minds”. *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume 20*, 148– 187. “A Plea for Excuses”, (1956–1957). *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society 57*, 1–30. *Sense and Sensibilia*. (1962). Oxford: Oxford University Press

contexts. These latter provide the background to another feature common to Murdoch and the ‘fathers’ of what we know now as OLP, namely the understanding of the ‘one-making impulse’ in tracing back truth to only one term as a natural tendency stemming from specific historical and human needs. Thanks to the unveiling of this pattern as a trait of a philosophical image, both Murdoch and OL philosophers qualify the attention to plurality and multiplicity in philosophy as a different yet more valid and appropriate philosophical response to reality.

Linguistic pluralism/contextualism, ‘meaning-as-use’ in ordinary language and the awareness of images that keeps us captive are the main traits that Forsberg takes to be supporting his proposal to consider Murdoch as an ordinary language philosopher:

Murdoch’s linguistic philosophy can help us find a way to negotiate between the quest for philosophical solidity and the facts of human historicity and contingency. And the way she does this—and this is one of the reasons why I, somewhat provocatively, want to inscribe her in the ordinary language philosophy tradition—is by forcing us to pay attention to how language actually functions in our daily lives, to ‘return us home’ (2018:122).

For Forsberg, ordinary language plays an important role in this return, since it gives the possibility to renegotiate the relationship between us and the concepts we use, since it is there that the interplay between “the ideal and the real¹², ideality and generality, consistence and historical locality, fact and value, the personal and the communal” (2018:122) takes place. In fact, it is in ‘ordinary discourse’ that we appreciate the conjunction of fact and value (2018:123):

One might say that almost all language is evaluative language, language is soaked in value. If we were to describe this room we would naturally use many evaluative terms in the description. It is with great difficulty, for artificial purposes, scientific or legal, for instance, that we may expel value from ordinary language. (MGM:252–6)

In referring to VCM, Forsberg argues that Murdoch's disagreement with the supporters of the ‘common view’ in morality is rooted in a conception of language that is wrong on their side. Such a stance is for Forsberg depending on Murdoch’s contention on how moral concepts

¹² Forsberg takes the following passage to be the most representative for defining the relationship between the ideal and the real: “We could not infer reality from experience when the possibility of experience itself needed to be explained. The urge to prove that where we intuit unity there really is unity is a deep emotional motive to philosophy, to art, to thinking itself. Intellect is naturally one-making. To evaluate, understand, classify, place in order of merit, implies a wider unified system, the questioning mind abhors vacuums. We fear plurality, diffusion, senseless accident, chaos, we want to transform what we cannot dominate or understand into something reassuring and familiar, into ordinary being, into history, art, religion, science.” (Murdoch 2003a: 1–2).

are thought of as by analytic moral philosophers. For these latter, moral concepts are the result of a description and a prescription, an assumption that relies in turn ‘on the model of empirical terms’ which give moral concepts ‘definite criteria of application’ (VCM:78). Forsberg notes how such a view on language is far removed from the ways we normally relate to our ordinary language, which is the medium through which we operate when conveying moral concepts. Forsberg thus suggests that, being “something evolving, changing, formative and formed, evolving and degenerating, weak and strong, something to trust, something that forms what trust is” (2018:126), ordinary language is the view on language that Murdoch thinks of as the adequate framework for her account of morality, since it is within such a linguistic conception that we can account for the historical changes that occur in concepts. Overall, Forsberg’s argument for proposing Murdoch as an ordinary language philosopher is based on the following considerations¹³: (a) the importance she gives to the context and the linguistic agency of the speaker, (b) the connection between ordinary language and the historical change of concepts, (c) her critique of a view on moral concepts partly based on the rebuke of the correlated linguistic theory behind it.

The main problem that Forsberg’s idea poses, I think, stems from the lack of characterisation of OLP. In fact, he does not account for - but only refers to - it, somehow assuming (or implying) that OLP is a defined philosophical method. This, however, is not the case: there is no agreement on what OLP is and on how it should be practised. Interestingly, it is not just external observers and practitioners of OLP that disagree on a characterisation of it, but even ordinary language philosophers tend to define some of its aspects differently. Historically, OLP has been considered one of the two main outcomes of ‘the linguistic turn’ (Bergmann 1964), the other one being Ideal Language Philosophy (ILP). Bergmann reconstructs the origin of these two philosophical strands from the philosophical attitude shared by philosophers who “talk about the world by means of talking about a suitable language” (177). His account already offers a distinction between OLP and Ideal Language Philosophy (ILP): even though they both work from the premise that thinking about language is equivalent to think about the world, they have a different take on which kind of language is more suited for such an investigation. Briefly, ILP holds that to solve philosophical problems one should refer to a language different than the one we normally use, say current English. As Rorty summarises in the Introduction to his *The Linguistic Turn* (1967), one example of ILP is logical

¹³ These are my deductions from Forsberg’s text and not something he states since he is neither explicit nor systematic in accounting for them.

positivism, which takes an ideal language to be “one whose undefined descriptive terms refer only to objects of direct acquaintance, whose logic is extensional” (1967:12). OLP offers an opposite indication of the appropriate language to focus on, which is exactly that ordinary language that ILP wants to erase, arguing that philosophical problems could be solved with the correct use of it. ILP takes after various responses in the 1920-30 to texts such as Frege’s, Russel’s and Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, it was fostered by logical positivists and later applied to other philosophical areas, like to moral philosophy by Hare, whereas OLP’s origin is generally traced back to the later Wittgenstein’s, the *Philosophical Investigations* specifically, and Austin’s contributions. Now, this reconstruction is the accepted starting point for further differentiations. When it comes to the main ruptures between outlines of OLP described by its detractors, such as Gellner and Marcuse, and proponents, like Baz, Cavell and Hanfling, we can appreciate a different level of thoroughness in the implications that assuming OLP entails. Even though, for instance, Gellner (1959) connects the methodological and linguistic aspects of OLP to ontological views and to a picture of the mind, it is with philosophers that practice OLP like Cavell that we really understand what it means to assume OLP as a philosophical asset that can inform moral philosophy and epistemology. (I expand on this in Chapter 3) However, as mentioned before, there is not a consensus even among ordinary language philosophers. One important level of disagreement can be appreciated in the appeal to ordinary language: Hanfling (2000) maintains that it is in its empirical use that ordinary language sets the bar of correctness, whereas Baz (2012) and Cavell (1957) think of ordinary language as medium to project on contexts what *makes sense to say*¹⁴.

This brief excursus was meant to show that OLP can cover a multitude of criteria, approaches and styles which differ to one another in a way that needs to be specified. Thus, to say that Murdoch should be considered an ordinary language philosopher not only does not really say much, but it can also be wrong in some specific delineations of OLP. I take such a lack of specification on the methods and the features of OLP to engender a serious issue, namely that Forsberg does not ask some crucial question about Murdoch’s engagement with OLP - questions that could be informative about Murdoch’s philosophy. By this I mean that without a proper outline of OLP Forsberg does not relate OLP to Murdoch’s framework, that is, it does not deepen what does it mean for her account of morality to be equipped by the methodology put forward by OLP. The questions that I think are left out of the picture are: Do moral difficulties stem from misuses of language? Are moral change and moral progress

¹⁴ For more on this distinction, see Baz (2012).

attained through a clarification of language? Is ordinary language the most relevant sphere in which individual consciousness can flourish and become attuned to the idea of the good? Is language the primary target for a change in the image of the human condition? Even though this investigation does not address these questions, I believe that it can set an appropriate tone for answering them in the future.

1.222 Forsberg's overlook of Murdoch's 'ordinary'

The characterisation of OLP is not the only problematic aspect of Forsberg's argument. In fact, his engagement with the linguistic component of Murdoch's philosophy overlooks many passages where Murdoch voices quite radical doubts on ordinary language, thus rendering his conclusions quite arbitrary. Forsberg's argument is based on a selection of Murdoch's positive remarks on ordinary language and linguistic philosophy¹⁵, whereas not only her "bantering remarks about the naiveté involved in 'trusting' ordinary language" (2018:117) simply do not figure in his paper, but also there is only one evidence, taken from OGG, listed on a footnote of her criticism toward ordinary language philosophy. Such avoidance to get his hands dirty with a much more nuanced exchange between Murdoch and ordinary language, summed to the lack of engagement with the view that Forsberg says to discard, empties his (overall right) claims that "what Murdoch criticises is not so much

¹⁵ "[W]e cannot consider language as a set of grooves into which we slip. Here language cannot be considered as saying itself; it is not "p" that says p, but I who say "p" meaning p" (Murdoch, *Thinking and Language*,35), and "The thought is not the words (if any), but the words occurring in a certain way with, as it were, a certain force and colour" (*ivi.*,34) (p.116)

"We exist in many different ways at many different levels at the same time. There are qualities of consciousness and levels of cognition. We think and speak of ourselves in hypothetical dispositional terms. There are unconscious good habits, an aspect of civilisation. But we also know that we are not just a network of dispositions. This knowledge is part of our sense of our freedom. We need and want to *come home* to what is a categorical not hypothetical, to return to the present, where we also and essentially live." (MGM, 305) (p.122)

"In the majority of cases, a survey of the facts will itself involve moral discrimination. Innumerable forms of evaluation haunt our simplest decisions. The defence of value is not an attack on 'ordinary facts'. (...) In many familiar ways *various* values pervade and *colour* what we take to be the reality of our world; wherein we constantly evaluate our own values and those of others, and judge and determine forms of consciousness and modes of being. To say this is not in any way to deny either science, or empiricism, or common sense" (MGM:26) (p.123)

"The notion that moral differences are conceptual (in the sense of being differences of vision) and must be studied as such is unpopular in so far as it makes impossible the reduction of ethics to logic, since that suggests that morality must, to some extent at any rate, be studied historically. This does not of course imply abandoning the linguistic method, it rather implies taking it seriously" (VCM:84) (p.124)

"That words are not timeless, that word-utterances are historical occasions, has been noted by some philosophers for some purposes (...) Words said to particular individuals at particular times may occasion wisdom. Words, moreover, have both spatio-temporal and conceptual contexts. We learn through attending to contexts, vocabulary develop through close attention to objects, and we can only understand others if we can to some extent share their contexts. (Often we cannot.) (IP 324-5) (p.127)

"My view might be put by saying: moral terms must be treated as concrete universals. (...) this would, to the ordinary person, be a very much more familiar image than the existentialist one. We ordinarily conceive of and apprehend goodness in terms of virtues which belong to a continuous fabric of being" (IP:323) (p.130)

linguistic philosophising per se, but a false, illusory sense of duality” (2018:112), namely the fact/value distinction, that to get the linguistic method right means to “bring conceptual changes (and similarities) and conceptual re-negotiations into view” (2018:122) and that through a critique of linguistic behaviourism and positivism Murdoch is also attacking a way of doing philosophy that forgets differences in name of unity.

In pointing these things out, I am not challenging the content of Forsberg’s reconstruction of Murdoch’s disagreement with linguistic philosophy and of her call to an historical correction of ordinary language. Rather, I am worried about the polarisation of the debate around Murdoch’s position as either for or against ordinary language/linguistic philosophy which stems from the overlooking of the theoretical complexity she brings to the table. In not doing justice to the textual occurrences of a dialectic between appreciation and criticism, Forsberg fails in portraying Murdoch’s innovative views on ordinary language, which I think go beyond the introduction of historicity, and their connections to her whole philosophical work. What is missing in Forsberg’s account, for instance, is Murdoch’s epistemic trust in relying on a certain kind common sense for dealing with the human relation to the world seen as the conjunction of facts and values. A clear example of this is given in VCM, where she discusses the role of metaphors in ordinary language and how informative they are of people’s vicinity to her understanding of them as ‘texture of beings’ (VCM:39) that live in a moral world. Such an expansion of the variety and colours that canonical accounts of ordinary language do not have is lost in Forsberg’s account, together with the considerations that Murdoch offers on the private/public, inner/outer distinctions, how they relate to ordinary language and what is the relevance of these axes in moral philosophy. In tracing such connections, Murdoch unveils her reserve on the goodness of both ordinary language *and* linguistic philosophy: she is not, as Forsberg suggests, resorting to a good way of doing linguistic philosophy based on the adherence to ordinary language. Rather, she is tackling problematic aspects of both sides of the coin, and her critical stance on ordinary language and linguistic philosophy is diminished if not addressed in its overall dynamic. For her criticism of linguistic philosophy is also, but not exclusively, due to a particular way of understanding language and her reserve on ordinary language goes beyond its association with linguistic philosophy.

1.23 Forsberg’s “Thinking, Language and Concepts”

The latest published anthology on Murdoch’s philosophy, *The Murdochian Mind* (2022), includes another article of Forsberg, where, following the trajectory that he has been

developing over the years, he proposes another version of the thesis that connects Murdoch to OLP. This latest formulation appears to be somehow a partial withdrawal from his former stronger claim: Forsberg concludes that it does not really matter to fit Murdoch into a particular label (OLP), something that he had previously defended. Instead, he insists to see her more generally as “a philosopher who has language as a central area of attention” (2022:125), a claim that goes together with (i) appreciating that for Murdoch moral differences are conceptual differences and (ii) with taking the Good as the centre of attention of our moral visions. However, his paper still revolves around the connections he sees between Murdoch and OLP. As in his previous works, these parallelisms are a bit hazy, in that they fail to characterise OLP beyond its very general and commonplace theses, thus effacing its internal variety.

Again, the pivotal thesis of “ordinary language philosophy, rightly construed” (2022:118) is the attempt at unveiling the assumptions we make in our reasoning with the aim to making us gain self-awareness of the conceptual operations we undergo. The common thread that Forsberg thinks connects this feature to Murdoch’s views is to be found in his interpretation of what moral differences are. He takes Murdoch’s equation of moral and conceptual differences to imply that in order to understand moral differences we have to scrutinize their formation through conceptual differences, thus embarking on the same operation characterising OLP (2022:118). A second feature of OLP Forsberg stresses is the idea that language is more than a theory of meaning and that it is moulded by the uses speakers make of it and their understanding of it, which is always tied to a form of life. The similarity he sees with Murdoch is also tied to her conception of moral differences, which cannot be thought of as “the application of two different scales, or definitions, where there are two clear alternatives to choose from, and which can be compared” (2022:122), but rather should be understood through “something more immersed, lived” (2022:122). The third time when Forsberg bridges OLP and Murdoch, he does so by associating Murdoch’s avowal to contextualism to a quote from Cavell that I report here:

there the problem is also raised of determining the data from which philosophy proceeds and to which it appeals, and specifically the issue is one of placing the words and experiences with which philosophers have always begun in alignment with human beings in particular circumstances who can be imagined to be having those experiences and saying and meaning those words. This is all that ‘ordinary’ in the phrase ‘ordinary language philosophy’ means, or ought to mean. (MWM:270)

In addition to these remarks, where Forsberg explicitly refers to OLP, there is a gesturing towards other three, related, similarities. One is the resolute role of practices and language use to the threat posed by linguistic relativism, the second is a view on meaning as use and the third is the idea that words cannot be taken for granted. The fact that we assess and live through differences should not lead us to have a relativistic worry, since for Murdoch concepts are moulded historically and through our engagement with them. And despite the historical inadequacy of concepts and the differences we have in reporting to them, communication and mutual engagement are secured by the standing-still nature of words. (2022:120-121) What really is important then, is to always enquire about our words and our (dis-)attunement in relation to them, thus making language one of the central sites for moral engagement.

All in all, even if never so explicitly as in his previous papers, Forsberg still argues for a tight association between Murdoch and OLP that runs along these lines:

1. The need for a self-reflective attitude towards the word we use, to uncover our conceptual processes and the assumptions we made about them.
2. The appreciation of the variety of words we already possess, which correspond to wide range of ‘materials’ that we should include in philosophical inquiries.
3. The appeal to the view of meaning as use, based on the idea that we give meaning to words through our engagement with language and through the attendance to contexts.

This excursus on Forsberg’s contributions served the purpose to outline two main reasons for which I think his take on the relationship between Murdoch and OLP is misleading. The first, which I will deal with in Chapter 2, has to do with the fact that Forsberg bases Murdoch’s avowal of ordinary language on an incomplete characterisation, by just basically selecting passages where she endorses it, of what she takes the ontological dimension of the ordinary. The second reason has to do with the account of OLP he works with, which, as I argue in Chapter 3, I deem too poorly articulated for properly take a closer look at salient similarities and differences with Murdoch’s philosophy.

Chapter 2

On What Is Ordinary: Dichotomies and Epistemic Perspectivism

In the previous chapter, I have stated that part of the reasons why I disagree with Forsberg in seeing Murdoch as belonging to OLP has to do with how Murdoch relates to the ontological dimension of the ordinary. There is a fault, I think, in not addressing this topic when investigating OLP, and this is because, although not often spelled out, OLP as a meta-philosophical position relies on a premise about what it is that we talk about. In giving relevance to our usual use of language, OLP also assumes that the ordinary is a distinctive ontological dimension we refer to, and that ordinary language takes its force also, yet not exclusively, because it relates to it. In what follows, I try to show how the ordinary does not constitute an uncontroversial philosophical starting point for Murdoch, thus complicating Murdoch's avowal to ordinary language.

In order to orient the investigation on what is ordinary for Murdoch, it is necessary to ask what the correlation between Murdoch's ontology and epistemology is and where her criticism of philosophical views should be located ("Ethics and epistemology are always very closely related, and if we want to understand our ethics, we must look at our epistemology." (ME:81)). Such a framework is needed because of the, at a first glance, general ambivalence that characterises Murdoch's treatment of the ordinary, and its relation to the role of the metaphor of vision. Although Murdoch often refers to the ordinary, to facts and to a social reality, she does not phrase her work in ontological terms. The challenge of grasping her ontological set-up is furthered by the role vision plays, which is connected to the epistemic asset she purports. These considerations are relevant when looking into the ordinary given the two-sided characterisation Murdoch gives of it: on one side, the ordinary is regarded as an univocal evidence of how things really are and as something that legitimately grounds philosophical investigations. On the other, she seems to distinguish between two realms inscribed within the ordinary which correspond to a set of dichotomies formed by the private/public, inner/outer and personal/impersonal pairs. As I will show, the trait that distinguishes Murdoch's conception of the ordinary, is that the first terms of these dichotomies seem to take the ordinary as the ground for certainty abovementioned, whereas their opposites bring out an aspect of the ordinary as composed of a cluster of lifeless relations which would

hinder speakers' accountability in appealing to ordinary language (I will expand more on this in Chapter 3 when discussing Baz's and Cavell's account of OLP).

For shedding light on the ontological fabric of the ordinary alongside with the interplay between the former and epistemology, I will structure my inquiry as follows: in section 2.1, I will give an overview of the occasions where Murdoch appeals to the ordinary, and thus highlight its dual character. I will then connect these remarks to the inner/outer, private/public, personal/impersonal and duties/axioms distinctions, with the aim to further the different facets that are comprised in Murdoch's ordinary. In section 2.2, I will consider Murdoch's stance on the fact/value distinction and its relation to her 'non-dogmatic moral naturalism' (IP:43) and the notion of 'concrete universals' (IP:29). By referring to Diamond's "We Are Perpetually Moralists" (1996), Mac Cumhaill's "Getting the Measure of Murdoch's Good" (2020), and to a part of Chapter 12 of Murdoch's MGM, I will argue that the ordinary is shaped by a kind of epistemic perspectivism which coexists with moral objectivity oriented by the idea of perfection.

2.1 The Irreducible Duality of the Ordinary

As I mentioned earlier, the dimension of the ordinary plays a double role in Murdoch's philosophical works. On one hand, it appears to be the operational bedrock of certainty: she refers to it as if there is some truth in the way ordinary people think of morality and in the way we ordinarily go on with our language and life. It is, for instance, through an example - the one of M and D - 'more ordinary and everyday' (IP:16) that Murdoch introduces her 'rough ordinary way' (IP:21) to analyse it - a way that is more adherent to what is really the case in that it accounts for the inner moral development of M. Murdoch is also of the idea that "moral philosophy itself [is] a more systematic and reflective extension of what ordinary moral agents are continually doing" (VCM:42) and that "we must retain our everyday and continually renewed awareness that no theory can remove or explain away our moral and rational mastery of our individual being" (MGM:213), reminding ourselves to "check philosophical theories against what we know of human nature (and hold on to that phrase too) and feed philosophy with our ordinary (non-theorised, non-jargonised) views of it." (MGM: 216).

Moreover, the sphere of the ordinary is in contrast with those philosophical theories, especially the empiricist-linguistic and the existentialist ones, which set apart from

considerations on who agents are and on their personal engagement with reality. These accounts, she often argues, are not *realistic*, meaning that they eschew a meaningful core of truth enacted by, or expressed in, the ways people live. Indeed, Murdoch argues that there is nothing esoteric in recentring morality around the individual: “In fact this would, to the ordinary person, be a very much more familiar image than the existentialist one. We ordinarily conceive of and apprehend goodness in terms of the virtues which belong to a continuous fabric of being.” (IP:29) This is because Murdoch thinks that “the ordinary man, with the simple religious conceptions which make sense for him, has usually held a more just view of the matter than the voluntaristic philosopher, and a view incidentally which is in better accord with the findings of modern psychology.” (SGC:81). In fact, not only “a theory, whether normative or logical, is the more attractive the more it explains, the more its structure may be seen as underlying things which are familiar to us in ordinary life” (IP:31), but also “philosophers merely do explicitly and systematically and often with art what the ordinary person does by instinct” (SGC:91). These occurrences show how there is a relevant sense in which the ordinary is what can inform philosophy: what we normally do, what shapes everyday life and experience, how we relate to others form a given reality that not only must be taken into account, but also it also functions as a test for the validity of philosophical theories.

On the other hand, however, Murdoch doesn't fully take for granted that the dimension of the ordinary should be assumed a priori as unproblematic or should be left as it is. There are indeed passages where she acknowledges the limits that constraint the ordinary understanding of contexts and actions, specifically when she connects it to the domain of the public and to impersonal facts. Specifically, the “ordinary world [seen] with ordinary vision” (IP:34) is the one linguistic behaviourists and existentialists refer to in enforcing the value/fact distinction and an account of freedom that depends only on the will of individuals. This ‘pejorative’ account of the ordinary is furthered by Murdoch in noticing, while still referring to the works of British philosophers, that “the production of [their] reasons, it is argued (and this is indeed the point of emphasising their impersonal character) does not in any way connect or tie the agent to the world or to special personal contexts within the world. He freely chooses his reasons in terms of, and after surveying, the ordinary facts which lie open to everyone: and he acts.” (IP:34). Here emerges the dimension of ‘ordinary facts which lie open to everyone’, which calls for a dual understanding of the ordinary: there seem to be facts that, in their belonging to a public level, do not constitute a positive record for the idea that what is ordinary is grounded to a virtuous exercise of attention. This trait is also highlighted by some remarks on the role art has in offering a way for unselfing and for thus making us paying attention to

reality in a way that escapes the “self-centred rush of ordinary life” (OGG:64) and that “reveals to us aspects of our world which our ordinary dull dream-consciousness is unable to see. Art pierces the veil and gives sense to the notion of a reality which lies beyond appearance” (SGC:86).

2.11 An Overview on the Private/Public, Personal/Impersonal and Inner/Outer distinctions

It is especially in her accusations against linguistic and existentialist philosophies that Murdoch traces a connection between the ordinary world of facts and an alleged impersonal character¹⁶, which is distinctive, on Murdoch’s recounting, of the philosophical views she opposes:

The very powerful image with which we are here presented is the behaviorist, existentialist, and utilitarian in a sense which unites these three conceptions. It is behaviorist in its connection of the meaning and being of action with the publicly observable, it is existentialist in its elimination of the substantial self and its emphasis on the solitary omnipotent will, and it is utilitarian in its assumption that morality is and can only be concerned with public acts. (...) This position represents, to put it in another way, a happy and fruitful marriage of Kantian liberalism with Wittgensteinian logic solemnized by Freud. (IP:8/9)

What the [behaviorist and existentialist] philosopher is trying to characterize, indeed to justify, is still the idea of an impersonal world of facts, the hard objective world out of which the will leaps into a position of isolation. (IP:24)

This juxtaposition also concerns the conception of ‘the public’. The public is regarded to be the sphere where rules and meanings are settled and agreed upon, where individuality does not matter and does not have a chance to revise what is given. The certainty provided by this asset, she believes, is what linguistic philosophy is especially reliant upon: in securing meaning in shared contexts and practices that are pertaining to the ‘outer’, one avoids linguistic

¹⁶ These are the main occurrences of the adjective ‘impersonal’ in Murdoch’s characterisation of existentialism and linguistic behaviourism: ‘impersonal thought’ (IP:7), ‘impersonal tyranny (IP:15), ‘impersonal language world and impersonal atomic-world’ (IP:24), ‘impersonal worlds of facts’ (IP:24,25), ‘impersonal background’ (IP:26), ‘impersonal reasons’ (IP:27,34), ‘impersonal network’ (IP:28), ‘impersonal public language’ (IP:33), ‘impersonal choices’ (IP:35), ‘impersonal quasi-scientific knowledge of the ordinary world’ (IP:37) and ‘impersonal rational thinker’ (IP:39).

solipsism and scepticism; meaning as public use saves us from the embarrassment of not knowing what words really mean. In exposing her reserve towards this view on language, Murdoch refers to it as Wittgenstein's. Now, Christensen (2018) has shown that Murdoch's reading of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is heavily reliant upon Kripke's interpretation - hence, her view can be said to be exegetically erroneous, or misplaced. Nevertheless, her insistence on the ordinary as tightly related to the public, thus to an impersonal dimension, is quite telling. One can indeed find a parallel between the impersonal attitude to the common life and the implications that the value/fact distinction entails. Being detached from the overall moral dimension of human existence relegates individuals to an understanding of the ways we speak as established by an external network, over which one cannot have control. Her picture of the inner wants to imagine a different engagement with the (linguistic) community and wants to restore a committed and responsible entanglement between the inner and the outer.

The interplay between the private and the public dimension aspects of language, on one hand, and the epistemic dimension of the inner and the outer on the other is nicely spelled out by Wiseman's "What if the private linguist were a poet? Iris Murdoch on privacy and ethics" (2020). There, Wiseman connects Murdoch's specific treatment of privacy to Wittgenstein's attack to the cartesian picture of the inner, thus unveiling a common ground between the two philosophers. Through his famous argument against private language contained in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein rebukes the idea that meanings of words and concepts stem from the solipsistic act of ostensive definitions enacted by the subject, with a correlate detachment from the linguistic context that frames the need and the tools for giving a meaning to words. Wiseman notes that Murdoch not only agrees with Wittgenstein's move, but she takes the investigation on privacy further, thus exploring how "the privacy of the inner in the use that a person who has acquired a public concept goes on to make of it as she progresses through her life" (2020: 229). What is most significant for Murdoch is the entrance of the individual personal historicity into privacy, thus seeing this latter as a site for morality and not as a space entirely occupied by a genetic analysis of concepts¹⁷. Furthermore, it is on this basis that Murdoch sees a fruitful interlock between the private and the public, the inner and the outer: provided the importance of an external structure and agreement on rules and language, one has to tailor this asset to their own peculiar standpoint and use of concepts for

¹⁷ A genetic account of meaning "establishes the meaning of sensation words and mental concepts through acts of inner ostension" (2020:227), and it is typical of a cartesian metaphysics.

developing a deeply genuine and engaged sense of morality that embraces the whole of existence.

2.12 Axioms and Duties

The interplay between politics and morality resembles the relationship between what Murdoch distinguishes in IP as privacy and publicity. In MGM, Murdoch claims that “the argument led into politics by a consideration of difficult senses of ‘privacy’, ‘inwardness’ and ‘individual’” (389). The argument she refers to in the quoted passage can be summarised as follows: politics corresponds to what is public and it is regulated by axioms, whereas morality pertains to the sphere of privacy, it is informed by duties and it responds to the ‘quality of consciousness’ (383). I will spend some time now outlining Murdoch’s treatment of these two spheres and their related features in order to bring more concepts to the discussion of the relationship between the inner and the outer, the private and the public.

For Murdoch, axioms are:

1. “a kind of political thinking which is (...) better thought of as separate from personal morals and not assimilable into that sphere” (MGM:356)
2. “isolated unsystematic moral insights which arise out of and refer to a general conception of human nature such as civilised societies have gradually generated. Axioms are outside the main moral spectrum, a different and connected colour.” (365)
3. pointing “to piecemeal moral insights or principles which are active in political contexts” (366)
4. “more or less local, more or less general or particular” in protecting “values which are irreducible to each other” (368), and they do so without forming a hierarchy of axioms (there is no ‘king axiom’).

Axioms are those principles that constitute a generality that political communities have to abide by in order to maintain a status of ‘decency’. Examples of axioms are ‘be tolerant’ (MGM:366), ‘do not lie’ (MGM:386), ‘human beings are valuable, not because they are created by God or because they are rational beings or good citizens, but because they are human beings’ (MGM:365). These enunciations occupy a public role - they form a tentative moral compass that, nevertheless, can be disregarded. For this reason, they are to be differentiated from personal morality. Indeed, this latter is formed by the pervasive nature of duties: “the general idea of axioms can seem *like* the general idea of duty, but is importantly distinct. There are what we call ‘public duties’ and there are ordinary duties, related to personal conduct, such as

truth-telling and benevolence; and there are very difficult duties where what is public or taken for granted is scrutinised in an unusual personal situation” (MGM:356). For Murdoch, duties are the medium through which we explicate and live morality personally - duties are bounded by the “hurly-burly of reason-feeling, rule-desire” and thus are connected to “the most private part of personal morality, whereas axioms are instruments of the public scene” (MGM:381).

The nexus between axioms and duties, which parallels the one traced in IP between public and private, is described as a dynamic interwoven of influences, which never merge completely:

on the one hand, we are influenced in many situations by very general rules felt as external. On the other hand, a ‘sense of duty’ may exist at any level of generality in the form of a special kind of *certainty* about the absolute importance of morals, and so of *particular* moral acts. (...) The idea of a network of ordinary duties is an extremely important aspect of morals, it goes with a sense of being always on duty, a conscript not a gentleman volunteer. (383).

Murdoch refers this insight to her own discussion of politics and morality, clothed in the relationship between axioms and duties:

‘Axioms’ appears as part of an assertion that of course political activity is, among other things, or is often, moral activity, but one where values are dealt with in a different way. The idea of a separation is better here than a dialectic tension within totality: it both emphasises a very general (liberal) political value, and also helps to make sense of political scenes (365).

What is to be done with Murdochian dichotomies? On one hand, they signal different - and important in their differences – aspects of ordinary reality. On the other, they do not entail an impossibility of communication between the two: in the case of the public/private distinction, especially regarding language, Murdoch points to the fact that there are public rules that set the discourse, without which it would be impossible to operate. The point is not to take those public rules to constitute the whole of language, thus leaving the right space for a personal engagement with it. What is important to notice is that both poles of these dichotomies coexist at the same time and that they both form the tissue of the ordinary without a resolution of the tensions between them. Murdoch’s ordinary is a site that simultaneously comprises features that she argues for and against, and not a dimension that she accepts easily as a valid starting

point for carrying out a legitimate investigation. This translates also on a linguistic level: ordinary language can be home to our moral development and signal aspects of our conduct that we should value in our philosophical reflection, but it can also take us astray from a morally attentive posture into a public and impersonal use of language.

2.2 From Dichotomies Towards Epistemic Perspectivism

In this section, I try to bridge the considerations I made until now to a more well-rounded account of Murdoch's ontology and epistemology. That Murdoch is one of the first and strongest opponents to the fact/value distinction - the premise assumed by the analytical strand in moral philosophy, from Moore to Hare - is no news. However, the ontological implications her criticism entails have not been thoroughly examined yet¹⁸. I try to fill in this gap by pointing to the textual occurrences where Murdoch refers to 'facts. These are pervasive especially in "The Idea of Perfection". Here, facts are generally described as belonging to two types: on one hand they are scientific, impersonal, "ordinary and open to everybody" facts; on the other, they are the ones that change in respect to people's engagement with reality. In fact, if a person is able to look attentively as an unselfed and loving observer, they will be exposed to different facts than to the ones of a person that does not engage with the world with the same spirit ("a person has the facts that she merits"). This rough distinction poses at least one question: are these two kinds of facts ontologically different? If so, is it always the case that we cannot distinguish facts from values? Are there, in other words, some facts that are moral and some others which are not?

2.21 Diamond on the Fact/Value Distinction

One way for addressing these questions was provided by Diamond in "We Are Perpetually Moralists" (1996). In this piece, Diamond takes issue with Hare's deficient responses to Murdoch's attack on the picture of humans and reason assumed by analytical moral philosophers. Murdoch, Diamond highlights, contends that moral concepts constitute conceptual differences and that these latter cannot be bridged by descriptions stripped out of moral vocabulary. By this, Diamond means that the ways we organise and relate concepts are

¹⁸ In *The Murdochian Mind* are collected some papers that start emphasising the role of the ordinary, although not in the same way as I approach it here. See for instance Christensen's "Murdoch and Wittgenstein" and Laugier's "Care for the ordinary".

influenced and governed by moral terms: when we thus present conceptual differences, say in being vegan rather than omnivorous, we do so because we put in play different moral concepts. Thus, for Murdoch, the communication between two different *Gestalts* is morally incommensurable, since the way one relates to the world is already morally connoted¹⁹. Such a view is opposite to Hare's theory, which pivots the role of choice and rational communication as the landmark of morality. Diamond gives a linguistic explanation of Hare's model: Hare takes descriptive and evaluative terms to have correct applications on situations *in virtue of* certain features that not only justify the use of a word, but that are also universally explainable. There are meaning-rules that fix the appropriateness of descriptive terms and 'specialised' evaluative terms (courage is the given example), rooting it (the appropriateness) in the features constituting a situation. In this picture, according to Diamond's reconstruction of Hare's linguistic assumptions, one then chooses what kind of features are to be described through non-specialised evaluative terms - which, for Hare, are the ones constituting our moral vocabulary and the possibility for moral communication (1996:94). Diamond thus finds in this picture Murdoch's critique of linguistic philosophy in its mistrust of language (VCM:42-3): the way we go about telling our lives and visions goes far beyond this model. It includes metaphors, ways of saying, the use of phantasy, stories and a certain kind of confidence in parting from the 'in virtue of' model and thus creating new semantics, hence conceptual horizons. The role the fact/value distinction, implicit in the overview I gave of Diamond's paper so far, but explicit in both her and Murdoch's argument, is central: in rejecting it, one takes distance from a notion of moral concepts as merely describable regardless of the human contour that they stem from and return to. The embeddedness of morality in life and of life in morality makes value *ubiquitous* and integrally transformative of individuals' modes of being: "a moral concept seems (...) more like a total difference of *Gestalt*. We differ not only because we select different objects out of the same world but because we see different worlds." (VCM:40-1)

In addition to having provided a useful interpretation of what it is for Murdoch to 'take the linguistic method seriously' - a topic that I will address later on -, Diamond offers an interesting remark on what do we have to make of Murdoch's crusade against the fact/value distinction:

¹⁹ "difference of understanding (...) which may show openly or privately as differences of story or metaphor or as differences of moral vocabulary betokening different ranges and ramifications of moral concepts. Here communication of a new moral concept (...) may involve the communication of a completely new, possibly far-reaching and coherent, vision; and it is surely true that we cannot always *understand*, other people's moral concepts." (VCM:41)

To see value as everywhere present in awareness may indeed be to give up the analytical philosopher's conception of the distinction between fact and value, but we are left with a different understanding of a distinction between fact and value. If value is in a sense ubiquitous, if one wants to speak of it as tied to "quality of consciousness," one is distinguishing it from whatever can form *a* subject among others. To speak of such distinction is to make the kind of point Wittgenstein called grammatical. The distinction is not a matter of what forms of inference are correct, or of what kind of premises moral arguments need to have. On the contrary. If value is said to be ubiquitous, this is in fact tied to the way in which our experience of the world can bear morally on any situation, can shape our vision of what the situation is. (1996:108)

Translating Diamond's contribution to the framework of the present investigation, this reading denies an ontological distinction between facts and values not because they coincide, but rather because there are no moral facts²⁰.

Now I want to say something more about this passage, focusing on its ontological implications. In order to do so, I report two passages respectively from the SGC and VCM:

the value concepts are here patently tied on to the world, they are stretched as it were between the truth-seeking mind and the world, they are not moving about on their own as adjuncts of the personal will. The authority of morals is the authority of truth, that is of reality. (SGC:88)

(some sovereign concept decides the relevance of the facts and may, indeed, render them observable. (...) On the alternative view that I have suggested, fact and value merge in a quite innocuous way. There would, indeed, scarcely be an objection to saying that there were "moral facts" in the sense of moral interpretations of situations where the moral concept in question determines what the situation is, and if the concept is withdrawn we are not left with the same situation of the same facts. In short, if moral concepts are regarded as deep moral configurations of the world, then there will be no facts "behind them" for them to be erroneously defined in terms of. There is nothing sinister about this view; freedom here will consist, not in being able to lift the concept off the otherwise unaltered facts and lay it down elsewhere, but in being able to "deepen" or "reorganise" the concept or change it for another one. (VCM:54-55)

²⁰ Mulhall puts it in this way: "if moral thought and values are ubiquitously present to consciousness, then they are by that very token distinct from factual matters, which are precisely not ubiquitous in that sense." (2000:264)

What I take these lines to lead up to is the following claim: moral concepts orient epistemic perspectivism, meaning that the former mould how we conceive reality and orient the horizon of sense that we make of facts. Facts can be grouped, disposed and treated differently depending on moral insight (and the possible sights are not indiscriminately equal to each other, since there is one moral concept (the Good) that is sovereign to others and thus sifts through different moral stances) and the ways we look at them is never neutral. However, this does not entail an ontological change of facts: brute, scientific, impersonal and merely empirical facts are the substratum from which one manages to part when sharpening moral attention. Without a moral vision all facts could be impersonal and regarded as merely empirical: the data is there and ontologically homogeneous; what changes and colours them is the perspective assumed by a (moral) agent. The appreciation of the value-laden structure of the world is dependent on the epistemic attitude of observers: although scientific facts are still brute facts, the moral agent would be able to question the disciplines that develop discourses around those facts and see the interconnections between various narratives. Going beyond impersonal facts would then mean to relate to areas of analysis and theories with an attitude that is able to question the distance of ‘brute’ facts from the use we make of them. Then, ‘one gets the facts that one deserves’ means that one is able to make sense of the world depending on the ability to look at it in its interwoven fabric of multiple threads. In this respect, it is relevant to note how this suggestion dovetails with the following remark:

We are not always the individual in pursuit of the individual, we are not always responding to the magnetic pull of the idea of perfection. Often, for instance when we pay our bills or perform other small everyday acts, we are just ‘anybody’ doing what is proper or making simple choices for ordinary public reasons; and this is the situation which some philosophers have chosen exclusively to analyse. (IP:41)

Here it is clear that Murdoch does not have a problem with the factual level because of its impersonal features, but she rather takes issue with a vision of life and society that does not go beyond that and that does not acknowledge that in not attempting to look at things differently is not an innocent moral view.

2.22 From Mac Cumhail’s Metre to Murdoch’s Ontology

Having acknowledged a first dimension of the ontological ramifications of reality, it is now necessary to give a more accurate analysis of the role moral concepts play in Murdoch’s

philosophy and their relation to the ordinary. To do so, I will apply Mac Cumhaill's interpretation exposed in "Getting the Measure of Murdoch's Good" (2020)²¹ on the functions performed by idea of perfection to the ontological scaffolding that I propose to read through Murdoch's lines. At the end of this section, I will also relate what I will argue for to the 'non-dogmatic moral naturalism' Murdoch says to hold (IP:48).

Mac Cumhaill's analysis revolves around the passage contained in IP where Murdoch defines moral concepts as 'concrete universals':

None of what I am saying here is particularly new: similar things have been said by philosophers from Plato onward; and appear as commonplaces of the Christian ethic, whose centre is an individual. To come nearer home in the Platonic tradition, the present dispute is reminiscent of the old arguments about abstract and concrete universals. My view might be put by saying: moral terms must be treated as concrete universals. And if someone at this point were to say, well, why stop at moral concepts, why not claim that all universals are concrete, I would reply, why not indeed? Why not consider red as an ideal end-point, as a concept infinitely to be learned, as an individual object of love? (IP:29)

In a nutshell, Mac Cumhaill contends that a way for understanding what Murdoch means here is to trace an analogy with Wittgenstein's standard metre, in an interpretation that differs from Kripke's. In her argument, such analogy unravels as follows: the idea of perfection is a concept that constitutes the structure of a form of life and that relates to individual instances not as tokens belonging to a certain class in virtue of an attendance to an ideal, but rather as structurally interconnected and intelligible as such²² because of the practices and the conceptual network that such a standard generates. Mac Cumhaill traces a difference between Kripke's understanding of the role of the Standard Metre and hers, which follows Diamond's (2001) critique of the former. In their views, Kripke holds an intransitive interpretation of Wittgenstein's use of the Standard Metre, meaning that for him the metre is, since it is both an a priori given and a contingent one, "something that can be made sense of without appeal to a

²¹ I opted to discuss this piece instead of the plethora of contributions on the role of transcendence and on the idea of perfection for mainly two reasons: first, unlike canonical contributions which tend to focus almost exclusively on her platonic heritage, Mac Cumhaill considers Murdoch's work around the idea of perfection in the light of Wittgenstein's and MacKinnon's (her tutor in Oxford), thus drawing connection to the standard of linguistic philosophy and to the metaphysical heritage of British Idealism. The second lies on the explanatory power that her interpretation engenders of the term 'concrete universals', which is generally overlooked in the literature.

²² This appeal to interconnection goes hand in hand with Mac Cumhaill's interpretation of Murdoch's idea of perfection as inheriting the metaphysical scaffolding of British Idealism. I will give a more detailed account of this feature in the following section, as I deem it illuminating another aspect of my argument.

metric, that is by comparison with some other thing” (2020:241). What is different in Mac Cumhaill’s treatment of this notion is not to take it as something that particulars *resemble*, but rather as something they *relate* to. Thus, when Murdoch notes that “a deep understanding of any field of human activity (painting, for instance) involves an increasing revelation of degrees of excellence”; that “scales, distances, standards” are pervasive of our ways of judging moral conduct - hence are a constitutive part of our moral attitudes; and when she culminates in asserting that “the idea of perfection is also a natural producer of order” (IP:60), we can see how the idea of perfection can be taken to constitute an organising standard of different moral concepts. As Mac Cumhaill puts it, “as our grasp of moral concepts deepen, regulated by the idea of the individual concept perfected - i.e. the idea of courage - we can come to see, though dimly and with difficulty, those differing ways as *themselves* interrelated manifestations of the same virtue or quality, and those in turn as inter-related manifestations of the Good” (2020: 242)²³.

I will now attempt to paraphrase Mac Cumhaill’s stance in a way that brings the discussion back to the theoretical thread of the present investigation, namely a reading of Murdoch’s metaphysics as the coexistence of an epistemic perspectivism that is constitutive of morality and an ontological monism. What I take Mac Cumhaill’s stance to mean is that by seeing the idea of perfection as a standard, we have an universal, as in shared and objective, ruling principle that grounds a certain moral and epistemic uniformity. In this way, perspectivism doesn’t conflate into mere relativism: seeing the idea of perfection as the working criterion²⁴ for relating to reality results in a uniform and general cluster of ways to live morally. At the same time, such a claim to a universal methodological asset does not efface Murdoch’s commitment to historicism, which renders the universal tendency concrete and materially informed.

2.23 Murdoch and Adorno on the Subject/Object Distinction

Chapter 12 of MGM offers another nuance of the ontological grounding to her epistemic perspectivism. In fact, it contains a digression on Adorno, the thinker of the Frankfurt School with whom she feels more attuned to. In reading through her lines, what seems to draw an

²³ The passage Mac Cumhaill refers to for bridging the idea of perfection to the Good is the following: “Good as absolute, above courage and generosity and all the plural virtues is to be seen as unshadowed and separate, a pure source, the principle which creatively relates the virtues to each other in our moral lives. In the iconoclastic pilgrimage, (...) we experience the *distance* which separates us from perfection and are led to place our idea of it in a figurative sense outside the turmoil of existential being.” (MGM:507)

²⁴ And I reckon that Murdoch uses it in both descriptive and prescriptive terms.

intellectual line between the two is a certain resistance to “a ‘socialising’ of morality, a tendency for a public political morality to seem like the whole of morals” (MGM:360) - a condition that Marxism also helped shape. Murdoch’s main interest in Adorno revolves around his observations on the subject-object relation, stemming from a critique of the Kantian subject and of the Hegelian dialectic. What is most interesting for Murdoch is Adorno’s avowal to the ideas of ‘the contingent independence of the subject’ (MGM:369) and the ‘negative dialectic’ (MGM:370) - both instruments that are able to stay in touch with what is the case more *realistically* (MGM:370). For Murdoch’s Adorno (“an enlightened and civilised western thinker [who is] more evidently a neo-Hegelian than a neo-Marxist” (MGM:376)), subject and object are differentiated, although such a division is never left unchanged. It rather moulds itself dialectically, although never aiming at a unity between the two parts. In this way, both object and subject rest at their own place: the object retains its autonomy from the over-inflated philosophical subject, and this latter, in its rejection of the vision of totality under which the subject subsumes indiscriminately all objects, is endowed with the possibility of knowing the truth. Referring to Adorno’s treatment of art, Murdoch reveals another level of adherence with the ‘maverick neo-Hegelian’: what the autonomy of the object entails is the restoration of “the ordinary and traditional conception of *truth*. (...) This ‘ordinary’ truth is also the truth of art, as it emerges when the artist, confronted by the independent other, imagines, that is, *thinks*.” (MGM:377). It is, for both Adorno and Murdoch, the awareness of the independent life of objects that constitutes the force of art and that renders artists witty epistemic subjects, capable of spotting the conceptual manipulation that distort the nature of objects themselves. Moreover, the proof of Murdoch’s commitment to the idea that there is a truth of objects and of entities outside of oneself is confirmed by her appeal to the practice of attention, which directs the observer to appreciate the true reality of the observed.

Overall, Murdoch’s discussion of Adorno is particularly interesting for two reasons pertaining to different kinds of considerations on her work. One is that she finds in Adorno an ideal ally in her own transition from a committed avowal to communism to a critical stance with looser ideological commitments. Within this framework, her attitude towards social and philosophical critique is deepened: what I want to briefly suggest here is that her proximity to Adorno above the other Marxists that were starting the philosophical trend of critical theory (she mentions Marcuse, Horkheimer and Lukacs) speaks in favour of her position as never fully traceable back to pre-existent categories. Her vindication of a viewpoint that has undergone shifts and changes that have sunk into her ways of thinking in a way that made her unavailable to ideological staticity is something that should be emphasised. It is, maybe tangentially, also

for this reason that I want to resist Forsberg's pigeonholing of Murdoch as an ordinary language philosopher.

The second reason is her insistence on Adorno's ideas of an autonomous object and of the positive establishment of a non-teleologically oriented dialectic between object and subject, with the correspondent view on the 'ordinary truth'. What I want to get away with here, in that I deem this aspect important for exploring Murdoch's take on language, is that the ontological and the epistemic dimensions, albeit strictly related, do not collapse into each other. I will try to better explain this point by referring to the other main strand of Mac Cumhaill's argument in the already discussed paper, which she develops from Stern's "Hegel, British Idealism, and the curious case of the concrete universal" (2007). There, complementary to her interpretation of the idea of perfection as having the same role as the Standard Metre, a connection between the metaphysical asset developed by British Idealists and the one by Murdoch is traced. The gist of such juxtaposition revolves around (again) the notion of concrete universals and it plays out in this way: rather than following Hegel's idea in seeing the substance particulars as the materialisation of a universal substance, thus having substance particulars related to each other in virtue of the participation of a substantial feature, Murdoch could have instead have worked with the (still Hegelian) British Idealists metaphysics. As recounted by Mac Cumhaill, British Idealists held that concrete universals are such because, in being related to a universal, they are structurally interconnected to other concrete universals as the universal disposes. In other words, what concrete universals instantiates is not a universal substance, but an ideal set of networks: as Bradley puts it, knowledge of oneself (or something) should entail an omniscient understanding of all the relations that brings all the concrete universals together under a certain aspect, thus 'forming a world' (2020:238).

Before outlining my exegetical proposal on what the ordinary could be for Murdoch, I want to specify its cautious tone. I take this latter from Mac Cumhaill's warnings: although there is evidence of Murdoch's acquaintance with Bradley's work²⁵, in her published writings Murdoch does not explicitly associate with him nor with British Idealism more broadly. However, it is also true, as stated by Mac Cumhaill, that even if Murdoch does not argue for concrete universals, she nevertheless *wants* them and she is pretty liberal in (just) stating that all terms should be treated as concrete universals. The state of the art of scholarly work on the

²⁵ Mac Cumhaill refers (i) to Murdoch's journal entries in 1945, 1948, and 1951, (ii) to two letters to Queneau in 1952, where she expresses the (unfulfilled) wish to write a book on Bradley, and (iii) to a series of lectures (whose content is as yet unavailable) named "Some Problems on Bradley".

manyfold influences on Murdoch is still not thoroughly developed: this, I think, gives good grounds for exploring the liaison with British Idealism while keeping the feet on the ground.

What I want to suggest is that the potential proximity of Murdoch's epistemology to the metaphysics of British Idealism leads to the idea, which is additionally informed by her remarks on Adorno, that there is an ontological level which states of affair in their various structural interconnections and relational webs. In approaching such-defined reality, people delimit their world in referring (deliberately or not) to specific subsets of relations and objects (here I use objects to mean the opposite of what a subject is). Such an epistemic attitude, which is intrinsically related to morality, faces an objective reality and can discover its truth the more relations it grasps. Relations, in virtue of historical change, are not always the same and the truthful engagement with the ontological level is the one oriented by the method imposed by the idea of perfection and its connection to the concept of the Good. In this reading then the ordinary comprises the ontological level of what there is, namely the factual world with its web of relations. In this way, Murdoch's declaration of her 'non-dogmatic moral naturalism' gets into the picture: morality is about and takes into account existent terms - concrete universals intended as the British Idealists do. Her critique of the widespread anti-naturalism that characterised most of the discussions in moral philosophy (one of the best spelled out versions of her criticism can be found in VCM) speaks for a certain reliance on things as they are in their presenting themselves to us. Such a view - one that defends a prominent role of facts - is not in contrast with Murdoch's argument against the fact/value distinction. As Diamond's interpretation of it shows, Murdoch's appreciation of the ubiquity of morals resides on the epistemic, not on the ontological level: the way we relate to facts is already morally tainted, but, for instance, biological facts are not moral facts - rather, morality is concerned about what we do with these facts and how we connect them to different areas of knowledge and practice.

With what I argued so far, I want to point to the fact that what constitutes the ordinary is not unequivocally a way of seeing things right (as Forsberg's analysis implies) and that taking things personally does not equate to filling all the space of what is ordinary. This dimension encompasses both spectres of the dichotomies mostly used by Murdoch: what distinguishes inner from outer, private from public, personal from impersonal traits of the ordinary is the epistemic relation we entertain with the structural web connecting the objects of the world. It is not a matter of seeing the world right or wrong - i.e. it is not the case that the inner, the private, the personal are true and their opposite are false. Rather, the point is to see relations *truly* and *truthfully* (MGM:216) and not just merely as they come to us.

The motive for such an excursus on Murdoch's potential ontological commitment was to suggest a different attitude towards the ordinary from what Forsberg seems to point to when arguing for Murdoch as an ordinary language philosopher. Indeed, Murdoch is not very complacent to the ways things are and present themselves – or rather, she does not see in the fact that things are in a certain way a good enough explanation for accepting them as an epistemic grounding. In saying so, I am not suggesting that ordinary language philosophers are acritical in their assessment of the ordinary, since part of their methodological commitments is precisely to unveil and leave aside some structures of thought that hold us captive. Rather, I want to point out that Murdoch asks different questions and proceeds differently in regard to the ordinary. What she signals is a lack that we have not only while doing moral philosophy, but in our attitudes towards everyday life. The crisis that she is hinting at is cultural (see “A House of Theory”), the answer does not come from a clarification on language and the ‘material’ we start with in philosophy, as in life, is not taken for granted in its goodness. The ordinary is not indicative of something we do right as opposed to a philosophical distortion, but it is already a site of problems that cannot be left aside.

Chapter 3

Murdoch and (a Version of) OLP:

Not So Close

So far, I have tried to show that the dimension of the ordinary for Murdoch is a site of controversies. As such, it is hard to accept what Forsberg has argued for, namely that Murdoch's philosophy belongs to OLP. This impossibility stems from Murdoch's doubts about some features of our reality and her suspicions about the validity of the insights that we can gather from what we ordinarily think, say and behave. Moreover, her sympathy towards Adorno, weakens Forsberg's claim not because OLP presents a conservative nature²⁶, but rather because Murdoch does not rely on the same methods for attaining philosophical clarity and because she takes issue with different aspects of reality.

Continuing the investigation that has considered the onto-epistemic dimension of the ordinary, in the following chapters I will tackle the other fault that Forsberg's argument presents, that is his delineation of the features of OLP. As already discussed in Chapter 1, Forsberg works with a general, if not vague, definition of OLP. On his account, OLP is a method that (i) uses language as a clarificatory means to philosophical problems, (ii) pays attention to the historical and linguistic contexts of speakers, and (iii) holds a meaning-as-use view. It is true that these features are generally characteristic of OLP, but, I want argue, there is much more to be said about it. The version of the OLP story I am interested in telling and comparing with Murdoch is Baz's and Cavell's, who not only has had a prominent role in formulating and establishing OLP, but he has also branched out OLP as a method to philosophical domains different than philosophy of language, such as ethics and epistemology. In this chapter I attempt at articulating some of his insights on what it means to do OLP, together with further specifications on the view of meaning spelled out by Avner Baz, who has studied under Cavell's supervision, in *When Words Are Called For* (2012). Before getting to the core of the discussion, I want to make a stylistic, or methodological, point: despite it has been described multiple times, OLP is hard to characterise in a way that does justice to the way it is practised. It is significant to note how Cavell never gives a systematic characterisation of it, but rather explores its different aspects in various texts. This leads to think of OLP as more of a philosophical attitude (or sensibility even) than a set of premises, and, for this reason,

²⁶ On this, see Cavell 1967, and Crary 2000.

generally easier to teach in philosophy classes or enacted rather than described. In deciding to follow the paths walked by philosophers who practise OLP, then, there is a peculiar commitment to the texts produced and an inherent failure that structures such an attempt: translating a philosophical practice into words is a literal transfiguration and implies a conceptual loss.

3.1 Baz on Meaning in OLP

In the very first pages of *When Words Are Called For*, Baz describes OLP as a method for solving metaphysical problems created by a certain (philosophical) use of language, which believes grammatical correctness and a certain familiarity of words to be good enough criteria to make sense of what it is said in philosophy. OLP, in the attempt to cast light on these difficulties, focuses its attention on the ways we use words ordinarily, presupposing that such uses help in tampering down the detachment of philosophy from everyday life: a typical method of OLP is to appeal “to the ordinary and normal use of keywords in that stretch of discourse” in order to “weaken the hold of the conviction that the philosophical stretch of discourse does and indeed *must* make sense” (2012:4). In doing so, Baz observes, OLP is “essentially responsive: its reminders are assembled for a ‘particular purpose’ (Wittgenstein 1963, remark 127), in an attempt to alleviate this or that particular philosophical difficulty or unclarity. OLP’s reminders are assembled - when assembled well - not ‘opportunistically’, as Soames charges (2003:216), but deliberately” (2012:5).

There are three further specifications worth pointing out: one is the idea that OLP is not merely and only concerned with words, but it has to say much more about the world and our relation to it; the second is its take on meaning; the third is its characterisation of philosophical problems and purposes. Leaving the first and part of the third points to the following section, I will now concentrate on the theory of meaning that OLP purports, following Baz’s discussion. In order to better describe OLP’s take on language, Baz considers the features of meaning that OLP as a cluster approach rejects. These are:

- (a) “the idea that for every word there is something that may be referred to as ‘its meaning’, which is theoretically separable from and makes the word fit for, its ordinary and normal use(s).” (2012:13) Baz notices how this is the very first thing Wittgenstein dismantles in the *Philosophical Investigations* as the Augustinian picture.

- (b) “Sentences too are taken to have something that may be referred to as ‘their meaning’” where this latter “is thought of as what one would have to know in order to understand the sentence as it is in itself - that is, apart from any context of significant employment. The meaning of a sentence is supposed to be theoretically separable from *its* possible uses (...). Further, the meaning of a sentence is typically taken to somehow be combinatorially constructed from the meanings of the words that make up the sentence” (2012:14). Baz remarks how this point relates to the previous one and how they are both very crucial, since they can explain how we use and combine terms we do not know and they both account for the systematicity of language.
- (c) “it takes the meaning of a word (...) to be a matter of what it ‘refers’ to” and “it takes the meaning of a sentence to be, or to determine, what the sentence ‘says’ or ‘expresses’, where *that* has often been called ‘proposition’ or ‘thought’ and taken to be cashable in terms of the conditions under which the sentence (...) would be true” (2012:15).

The three criteria just sketched constitute a ‘representational’ or ‘descriptivist’ conception of meaning (meaning that representing and referring, although not the only things we do, are the most important ones). Such a view, for Baz, is deflated and erases practice from the picture: language serves only representation and thought, practice is left aside. In order to oppose this view on meaning,

- (a) OLP starts from considering as primary the normal use(s) of a philosophically troublesome word and to takes that/those use(s) to inform and potentially correct what we pick out from a philosophical engagement with it/them.
- (b) “OLP further proposes that the ordinary and normal use of a word is normative for its future employment, including its philosophical employment, not in the sense that it is governed by or embodies rules that determine how the word may and may not be used, but just in the sense that it makes the word fit (...) for some uses and not others” (2012: 20). As briefly mentioned before, this point takes to a further distinction between a grammatical (Baz and Cavell) and an empirical (Hanfling) take on how words constitute a normative standard;
- (c) OLP does not purport any theory of meaning: to understand which account of meaning philosophers work with, one has to observe the work that is done. This is so because OLP acts on different grounds than ‘traditional philosophy’: “The basic disagreement between OLP and the philosophical tradition it responds to, at any rate, is not about the meaning of ‘meaning’, or even about what meanings are; rather, it is about the nature

of philosophical difficulty, and the response for which it calls. (...) What does matter for OLP is that (...) the difficulty all too often takes the form of, or is ultimately rooted in, our being unclear about what we mean, or say, or think” (2012:37).

- (d) Linguistic practices and contexts are seen as fundamental to settle on the meaning of words. This latter should then be seen as a whole network of linguistic occasions enacted by speakers.

Before continuing the discussion of OLP through Cavell’s texts, I will say something more about the aim of OLP from Baz’s perspective. Indicating the leading question of OLP investigations as “What are the ordinary and normal *uses* of this word (or combination of words), and what are their conditions?” (2012:11), OLP “is meant to *raise* and *press* that question against the assumption that the stretch of discourse does - and indeed must - make (clear) sense, simply by virtue of being composed of familiar words that are put together syntactically correctly; and to do so in the face of a philosophical difficulty that owes its apparent force to that very assumption” (2012:11). Such an attitude differs structurally from ‘traditional’ attempts in philosophy, in that it tries to keep an eye on the needs we have for it and on the distortions that are induced by them. OLP observes, and it is set out to cure, a progressive detachment of philosophical terms from an everyday and ordinary experience of concepts and words, which then results in a proliferation of problems and questions that have little to do with what is close to us and matters. Thus, OLP signals the need for asking different questions in order to deconstruct a philosophical attitude that is not only unable to address the origin of philosophical interrogations, but that is also responsible for creating other problems that efface our needs. Wittgenstein, in this respect, is the milestone reference of the rejection of the metaphysical language that keeps asking and requiring a certain set of problems and answers. It is thus typical of OLP to resist such formulations and proceedings, therefore carrying out inquiries on philosophical problems on the basis of different premises.

3.2 On Cavell and the Broad Scope of OLP

As previously stated, Cavell’s contribution to OLP is hard to convey, as it takes different forms, it resides in different texts and it is more enacted than described. I will try to highlight his contributions on OLP following four of his pieces: “Must We Mean What We Say” (1957),

“Austin at Criticism” (1969), both collected in *Must We Mean What We Say* (1969), “Excursus on Wittgenstein’s Vision of Language”, contained in Part II of *The Claim of Reason* (1979), and “The Argument of the Ordinary”, part of *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (1988).

In “Must We Mean What We Say” (MWM) we find a first specification of OLP and the kind of claims that an ordinary language philosopher ascribes to. These are statements, that Cavell calls ‘explications’, such as “When we say ... we imply (suggest, say)” and “We don’t say ... unless we mean —”, and they refer to statements that describe what is typically said in a language, referred to as ‘instances’ by Cavell (“We do say ... but we don’t say —”)²⁷. The justification for the centrality of explanatory statements relies on a specific understanding and revisitation of the concept of normativity that Cavell carries out. This can be paraphrased as the negation of the view that descriptions are not normative and that prescriptive statements are. In fact, Cavell stresses the idea that to say that there is something already presupposes a norm - hence descriptions are not innocent words that have no force. Moreover, Cavell points out that the normativeness of OLP “does not lie in the ordinary language philosopher’s assertions *about* ordinary use; what is normative is exactly ordinary use itself” (1957:20), in that “establishing a norm is not telling us how we *ought* to perform an action, but telling us how the action *is* done, or how it is *to be* done. Contrariwise, telling us what we ought to do is not instituting a norm to cover the case, but rather presupposes the existence of such a norm”²⁸ (1957:21). These observations lead Cavell to argue that the ways we go about our language is not arbitrary only because it is ordinary. Specifically, in the last paragraph of his essay Cavell remarks that part of the suspicion around ordinary language has to do with its volatility: by being subdued to change, ordinary language figures as an unreliable source of certainty. For Cavell, however, this is a sign of attunement to the material and cultural reality we live in - hence it should be regarded as an informative sphere of discourse. Furthermore, linguistic perennial heraclitean mutations should not be considered a cause of instability, and that is because speakers are equipped with tools for getting around that potential problem: “the

²⁷ There is a third type of statement, ‘generalisations’, which is tested on the basis of the two other categories of statements.

²⁸ An example of such statements is what Cavell calls ‘Declarative Declaratives: “The Categorical Declarative does not tell you what you *ought* to do *if* you want to be moral (...); it tells you (part of) what you in fact do when you *are* moral” (23). In these statements we thus appreciate the equivalence between what “must” and what “is”, between normativity and descriptions. But most importantly, “The significance of categorical declaratives lies in their teaching or reminding us that the “pragmatic implications” of our utterances are (or, if we are feeling perverse, or tempted to speak carelessly, or chafing under an effort of honesty, let us say *must be meant*; that they are an essential part of what we mean what we say something, of what it is to mean something. And what we mean (intend) to say, like what we mean (intend) to do, is something we are responsible for.” (30)

primary fact of natural language is that it is something spoken, spoken together” (31) and, even though one can get something wrong, it is unrealistic to affirm that an entire community does not know what their words mean. After all, as Cavell remarks in “The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy” (1967), we rely on “nothing more, *but nothing less*” (1967:48, my emphasis) than our forms of life.

In *Austin at Criticism*, Cavell provides a different kind of considerations, which can be taken to argue for a certain way of doing OLP and its stance in relation to traditional philosophy. In this paper, Cavell mainly argues against the deflection of Austin’s philosophy as one that “attends to ordinary or everyday philosophy”. Such an ascription doesn’t in fact suggest the distinctions between Austin’s from “ordinary empirical investigations on language” (1969:96) and these differences are: (a) Austin suggests that by looking at the world one can look as well at language; (b) Austin’s method does not merely describe, but it reveals the reasons that motivate specific language uses; (c) the focus is directed inward rather than outward, that is, the interest lies in how one uses words, and in what this means for them, rather than in how others do it. The problem with the description of Austin’s method as looking at ordinary language is that this does not characterise it philosophically. Cavell finds the label Austin uses for his practice as ‘linguistic phenomenology’ more appropriate, which for Cavell “suggests that the clarity Austin seeks in philosophy is to be achieved through mapping the fields of consciousness lit by the occasion of a word, not through analysing or replacing a given word by others” (1969:93). Another relevant aspect that Cavell has in mind when arguing for the originality of Austin’s method is²⁹, however, is “Austin’s fundamental philosophical interest lay in drawing distinctions” in a way that serves two philosophical purposes:

1. To show differences and these latter are not the ones already addressed by traditional philosophy, but “more solid, having, so to speak, a greater natural weight” (1969:96).

2. To associate the act of distinguishing to the one of comparing (and in this tracing a similarity with art critique), where the aim is to convey “the hang” of something (1969:97). In doing so, “what we learn will not be new empirical facts about the world, and yet (it illuminates) facts about the world” (1969:97).

²⁹ In exploring his take, Cavell does not disagree with what Hampshire says about Austin’s alleged two main theses: 1 (weak): “we must first have the facts, all the facts, accurately stated before we erect a theory upon the basis of them”, 2 (strong): “For every distinction of word and idiom that we find in common speech, there is a reason to be found, if we look far enough, to explain why this distinction exists.” (94)

In addition to these features, Cavell remarks how Austin accuses modern philosophers to have distorted philosophy into an inauthentic enterprise, governed by a ‘Dionysian abandon’ to an ideal of deepness and disseminated with “bogus dichotomies, grotesque exaggeration, gratuitous ideas” (1969:102). Cavell observes how it is the conjunct effort of both Austin and Wittgenstein that has claimed the right to ask of philosophers belonging to the modern tradition “why they should say what they say where and when they say it, and to give the *full story* before claiming satisfaction” (1969:104).

In “Excursus on Wittgenstein’s Vision of Language” Cavell broadens the discourse opened in MWM on the kind of statements that an ordinary language philosopher is able to make, thus unveiling another aspect of OLP through a discussion of two questions, namely what is learning a word and what makes a projection of a word a correct one. Behind Cavell’s exploration there is his belief that Wittgenstein’s most significant teaching was meant to make us realise that “the justifications and explanations we give of our language and conduct, that our ways of trying to intellectualise our lives, do not really satisfy us” (CR:175). In his argument, Cavell wants us to see that asking how a child learns a word should make us understand that there is much more than just language involved in the process and that we tend to have, in philosophy at least, a narrow definition of what learning is. To question how a child learns a language, and also what of it, for both Cavell and (his) Wittgenstein, should not take us to draw universalisations about linguistic general features, as, for instance, the referential picture of language does. Rather, we should acknowledge that learning a language implies an array of connections which go far beyond meaning and words. Indeed, gaining linguistic proficiency means to learn the forms of life which make those sounds the words they are, do what they do” (CR:177). It is an activity that involves realising that “most of what is said is only more or less meant — as if words were stuffs of fabric and we saw no difference between shirts and sails and ribbons and rags” (CR:189), and that the emotional and relational sites of learning are inherent to what a child understands of the language and of the world. And it is within this contextually crafted and intimately engaging process of learning that Cavell articulates the linguistic and epistemic agency of the subject of OLP:

He is not claiming something as true of the world, for which he is prepared to offer a basis—such statements are not synthetic; he is claiming something as true of himself (of his “world”, I keep wanting to say) for which he is offering himself, the details of his feeling and conduct, as authority. In making such claims, which cannot be countered by

evidence or formal logic, he is not being dogmatic; any more than someone who says “I didn’t promise to...”, or “I intend to...”, “I wish...”, or “I have to...” is being dogmatic, though what he says cannot be countered, in the usual way, by evidence. The authority one has, or assumes, in expressing statements of initiation, in saying “We”, is related to the authority one has in expressing or declaring one’s promises or intentions. Such declarations cannot be countered by evidence because they are not supported by evidence. But that failure is not one which can be corrected with a more favorable position of observation or a fuller mastery in the recognition of objects; it requires a new look at oneself and a fuller realization of what one is doing or feeling. An expression of intention is not a specific claim about the world, but an utterance (outerance) of oneself; it is countered not by saying that a fact about the world is otherwise than you supposed, but by showing that your world is otherwise than you see. When you are wrong here, you are not in fact mistaken but in soul muddled. (CR:80)

In “The Argument of the Ordinary” (1988), among other things, Cavell unhinges Kripke’s interpretation of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, basing his claim on the idea that, despite being internally coherent, Kripke misses the stylistic gist and Wittgenstein’s argument of the ordinary proper of that work, and thus results in being wrong. Despite it being similar to Cavell’s CR in finding the *Investigations* not to be a rebuke of scepticism, but as a way of establishing a relation with it, Cavell and Kripke diverge in one fundamental aspect. Indeed, Kripke takes rules to be the key to understand Wittgenstein’s view on scepticism and meaning, whereas these, for Cavell, need to be understood in the light of criteria. It is through these latter that one can see Wittgenstein’s appeal to the ordinary, “a structure of which is the structure of our criteria and their grammatical relations” (1988:65). For Cavell, different interpretations of rules are not enough to form what Kripke sees as the sceptical paradox: “The Wittgensteinian issue is, as elsewhere, why we imagine otherwise” (1988:68). Moreover, Cavell argues that the “picture of how the “isolated” individual comes to be “instructed” (and accepted or rejected) by the “community”, in terms of “inclinations” expressed by someone (presumably regarding himself or herself as representing the community) who “judges” whether the “same” inclinations are expressed by the other seeking (as it were) the community’s recognition or acknowledgment” (1988:69) is not Wittgenstein’s. Through Cavellian lenses, Wittgenstein’s indication of the spade’s turn and his sketch of a learning child stress the (i) the importance of examples (the teacher would not set a precedent for the child because she is authoritatively entitled to say ‘it is right because I do it like this’) and (ii) the contingency of knowing (“knowing in the moment, like suddenly claiming to remember a tune,

does not *claim* to be right” (1988:74)). Cavell then introduces the notion of confidence, that he takes to come from ideas of patience and waiting (1988:75), for suggesting an alternative view to Kripke’s conventionalist sense of agreement. In fact, the problem Kripke seems to be wanting to address is a political one and his solution sees diversity as resolved in conformity: “The scene thus represents the permanent crisis of a society that conceives of itself as based on consent” (1988:76). Cavell then inverts Kripke’s logic: if Kripke finds in the fact that no one can constitute the reasons for meaning to be a sceptical ‘discovery’ and his solution tries to put a patch on it with a conventionalist notion of societal agreement³⁰, Cavell insists on the idea that one can present oneself as the ground for meaningfulness, provided the fulfilment of requirements of representativeness. By this, Cavell gestures at what he calls the ‘claim to the community’, that is the endowment of an individual to speak for someone else and for a collectivity: “We do not know in advance what the content of our mutual acceptance is, how far we may be in agreement. I do not know in advance how deep my agreement with myself is, how far responsibility for the language may run. But if I am to have my voice in it, I must be speaking for others and allow others to speak for me. The alternative to speaking for myself representatively (for *someone* else’s consent) is not: speaking for myself privately. The alternative is having nothing to say, being voiceless, not even mute.” (CR:28).

The picture of OLP that we get when following Baz and Cavell further articulates the one provided by Forsberg in the following ways:

- (a) Ordinary language is the basis for scrutinising and deconstructing the apparent sense that philosophical formulations (seem to) have.
- (b) An ordinary language philosopher commits to explicative statements to settle the normativity of ordinary language.
- (c) The normativity of such statements and the authority of a speaker rely on belonging to a linguistic community inscribed in forms of life. Within these, the agreement on language uses and meanings is not to be conceived, as Kripke suggests, in a constructivist sense.
- (d) Attending and claiming a language are activities that reveal aspects of ourselves and of our cultural, natural and linguistic communities³¹.

³⁰ (“Kripke speaks of our “achieving agreement in our criteria,” (1988:105) but that suggests to me a rejection of Wittgenstein’s idea of agreement, or let me say a contractualising or conventionalising of it. On Wittgenstein’s view, the agreement criteria depend upon lies in our natural reactions” (1988:94).

³¹ On the characterisation of the notion of forms of life in the natural and cultural sense, see Cavell 1996.

- (e) Both points (c) and (d) depend on the notion of the ‘claim to the community’.
- (f) An important part of OLP is its philosophical style, which revolves around the attendance to examples and the rejection of a spelled-out theory of meaning.

3.3 Murdoch Facing (Baz’s and Cavell’s) OLP: A Comparison

Let’s now turn to a comparison between Murdoch and the account of OLP just outlined.³² I take Cavell’s disagreement with Kripke’s reading of the *Investigations* to shed light on a first term of comparison between Murdoch and OLP, which is the connection between self-reliance and epistemic certainty, together with the refusal of a conventionalist picture of agreements (this latter is rejected by Murdoch in her criticism to Wittgenstein’s contractualist use of public rules and language (MGM, chapter 9), interpretation of which she takes from Kripke). Indeed, Murdoch’s underlying assumption is that one is entitled to trust, to some extent, one’s own sense of morality: the possibility for establishing a personal relation with moral words is embedded in the act of taking oneself accountable and able for doing so - an attitude that is similar to taking oneself seriously. This feature is relatable to both Murdoch’s and Cavell’s determination in preventing the real self from being effaced from philosophy: philosophical interrogations come out from intimate spaces and should be able to embrace and answer to the voices they start from. As stated by Cavell in the passage from “Excursus on Wittgenstein’s Vision on Language” that I reported in the previous section, there is also the idea that OLP, when it questions our relation to language, hints at unveiling some aspects of that person, not only as a speaker, but also as a moral agent³³. In Murdoch, this feature comes out from her critique of analytic philosophy, which stems from the (natural) fear of pluralism:

The urge to prove that where we intuit unity there really is unity is a deep emotional motive in philosophy, to art, to thinking itself. Intellect is naturally one-making. To evaluate, understand, classify, place in order of merit, implies a wider unified system, the questioning mind abhors vacuums. We fear plurality, diffusion, senseless accident, chaos,

³² From this moment on, when using the label ‘OLP’ I will refer to Baz’s and Cavell’s version, unless differently specified.

³³ . An expression of intention is not a specific claim about the world, but an utterance (outerance) of oneself; it is countered not by saying that a fact about the world is otherwise than you supposed, but by showing that your world is otherwise than you see. When you are wrong here, you are not in fact mistaken but in soul muddled.”

we want to transform what we cannot dominate or understand into something reassuring and familiar, into ordinary being, into history, art, religion, science. (MGM:1-2)

When it comes to agreement then, Cavell and Murdoch mistrust securing it to a matter of convention: they both have a broader understanding of what it is that streams into the ways we go about ourselves and each other. If Cavell stresses the Wittgensteinian dimension of forms of life and the idea of ‘general facts of nature’, Murdoch also takes it that there are a whole lot of gestures, tendencies and habits³⁴ that constitutes the premises for the functioning of a communication based on ordinary language. In this respect, it is also important to notice how Cavell’s notion of agreement is not tied exclusively to a linguistic dimension, and thus it is for this reason that a proximity between him and Murdoch can be found, since her considerations of human life and consciousness are broader than ‘mere’ language.

But would Murdoch agree with Cavell on the pivotal role of the claim to the community in endowing epistemic reliability to a speaker? Murdoch’s ambivalent attitude towards the ordinary, which also constitutes, as I will argue for in Chapter 4, her proximity to (a certain trend in) critical theory, should make one refrain from hastening to the conclusion that Murdoch would share such a notion. Indeed, Murdoch’s concerns stem from the possibility of things (and people) going completely wrong but portrayed as good: she does not abide by the two-way endowment between individuality and collectivity because it does not secure by itself a path to goodness and righteousness. Thus, despite Cavell does not take the ordinary to be a dimension without potential failures, meaning that he doesn’t argue for a simplistic understanding of it that effaces its intrinsic problematics, Murdoch is far more critical and urgent in pointing out that one cannot always trust our habits and normal ways of going on about things. She does not rely on the agreement aforementioned and she rather sees it as a source of potential inhibitions and detachment from a personal engagement with moral concepts. All in all, we can see that Murdoch’s problem is not solved by Cavell’s appeal to agreement and criteria, and that it is also partly because Murdoch’s wonder comes from a different philosophical place, from a quest towards goodness.

There are three other reasons for distancing Murdoch from the OLP Cavell exemplifies. The first has to do with Murdoch’s gesturing towards epistemic perspectivism, a dimension

³⁴ Even though she disapproves of the notion of ‘forms of life’, defining them as another logical cage, transfigured into something more human than the picture conveyed in the *Tractatus*, but still reporting the same limits. (see chapter 5 of MGM)

that Cavell doesn't really account for (even though one could think of it as potentially in line with OLP's attention to examples) and which is not formulated in the direction Murdoch takes. For her, the colours that words and worlds have distinguish the unicity and originality of each person's engagement with moral concepts, which resists the focus on a community:

if morality is essentially connected with change and progress, we cannot be as democratic about it as some philosophers would like to think. We do not simply, through being rational and knowing ordinary language, 'know' the meaning of all necessary moral words. We may have to learn the meaning; and since we are human historical individuals the movement of understanding is onward into increasing privacy, in the direction of the ideal limit, and not back towards a genesis in the rulings of an impersonal public language. (IP:28)

The second is that Murdoch has an understanding of the 'crisis' in moral philosophy that is eclectic and non-reducible to language; thus her attempt to correct it goes beyond the employment of a philosophical method which mainly envisions clarifications through and in language. This can be shown in respect to the aforementioned feature of self-reliance: for Cavell it is ordinary language that constitutes the dimension where one can understand oneself in their attitudes towards ordinary language, whereas Murdoch not only does not put any particular emphasis on it, but she also stresses the potential damage caused by public language:

The symbols which constitute our ordinary language may, and I shall argue should, be considered. This is not to deny that for some purposes we may adequately think of language as an internally self-determining set of public symbols or (the Tractatus picture) as a determinate mirror of the structure of the world. In the context however of a description of thinking we cannot consider language as a set of grooves into which we slip. Here language cannot be considered as saying itself; it is not 'p' that says p, but I who say 'p' meaning p. Language is a set of occurrences. (TL:72)

These remarks make space for a connection with Baz's consideration of the views on meaning purported by OLP. Overall, Murdoch joins the critique to a conception of meaning that works within a referential framework, which in "Thinking and Language" she relates to linguistic behaviourism, and agrees with seeking meaning in use or practices. However, in the same text, Murdoch specifies that "the notion of a concept as 'how a word is used' (...) is perhaps not the only one of philosophical interest" (TL:80). Indeed, Murdoch seems to lean towards an

approach to meaning that, despite being sympathetic to OLP's, takes issue with a different aspect of it. Rather than use in its public sphere, Murdoch wants to bring our attention to other engagements we have with language, especially with its metaphoric dimension - something that eschews 'the world-language dualism', together with the emphasis on public rules, and takes us to the inward-oriented metaphorical linguistic solutions.

The final reason is methodological and it can be drawn, as Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman show in their paper "The Importance of Murdoch's Early Encounters with Marcel and Anscombe" (2022b), by Murdoch's reaction to Anscombe's 1947 paper "The Reality of the Past", where Anscombe put into practice Wittgenstein's new linguistic method for solving philosophical problems. The subject matter Anscombe chose for attempting to do so was the existence of the past, its intelligibility, and the role played by memory in relating to it. Anscombe argues that if one follows Parmenides, as many phenomenologists and linguistic analysts à la Ayer do, in assuming that what it is it is because it can be thought, one could argue that the past doesn't exist. For Anscombe, such a conclusion stems from a wrong conception of thought and language: "The name 'NN' names NN by, as it were, pointing to him; a thought that employs the name 'NN' is a thought about NN because the name points to NN; the thought is meaningful and capable of being true because of this primitive connection between name and named (1950/1981:104)." (2022b:35) Within this framework, statements such as "There was a cat on the table" result problematic because they cannot be broken down into counterfactual analyses that clarify what the past is, since casting light on the nature of the past would require, according to the picture of language above mentioned, to have something to refer to. Linguistic philosophers employing such a framework would then haste to suggest that we cannot think about the past, or that we can change our views on the past without actually changing it (2022b:190-91). It is at this junction that Anscombe brings Wittgenstein into the picture and connects her topic to his work on language-learning and ordinary uses of language. In order to support the validity of claims around our past, Anscombe provides us with two examples³⁵ about how children learn to talk about their past and takes those to be appropriate arguments for her thesis. As Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman highlight, Murdoch was very much

³⁵ (A) Let us imagine that someone is taught (1) to say 'red' when a red light is switched on before him, 'yellow' for a yellow light, and so on; and (2) next to say 'red', 'yellow', etc., when lights of the appropriate colours *have* been switched on but are now off (Anscombe 1950/1981: 103–104).

(B) Suppose that someone learns to perform the following exercise, with little connection with anything else he says and does (as might be the case if a child were set to learn dates in the void): he learns to say after his teacher 'The battle of Hastings was in 1066; the battle of Waterloo was in 1815' and so on for a number of battles. Now the word 'when' is introduced in this way: the teacher says 'When was the battle of Hastings?' and the learner responds '1066', and so on for the rest of the battles (Anscombe 1950/1981: 115).

impressed with her friend's talk and tried to translate Anscombe's inputs into her work³⁶. Specifically relevant for the present investigation is what Murdoch remarks after having attended Anscombe's lecture:

Relate E's stuff to my own vague generalizings about the linguistic method & appeal to ord. [sic] language. E. is not 'appealing to ord. lang.' is describing facts about how we learn use of words (hence concepts).

What is this method? What are its implications for moral propns? (IMJ 04, 17 October 1947, 129.)

I take the distinction between 'appealing' to ordinary language and 'describing facts about how we learn use of words' to be quite relevant for situating Murdoch in relation to OLP. Indeed, what Murdoch seems to find revelatory and applicable to her own philosophical engagement is the latter operation: what makes us realise the validity or the sense of propositions is not to be found in abiding by a claim on the truth of ordinary language. Rather, we should look at how we grow by and through attending to linguistic practices - practices that result in the construction of our socio-cultural and linguistic reality and that make some sense also (but not necessarily exclusively) because they are there. To this respect, I want to point out that Murdoch is not drawn to one of the most substantial claim of OLP³⁷, that is precisely the *appeal* to ordinary language in solving philosophical problems and in grounding epistemic certainty. The fact that we speak a language is not equivalent to say that it is in virtue of these that we should draw conclusions about morality and the human condition. To this extent, the previous discussion on the ontology of the ordinary comes into play: being this latter dimension

³⁶ Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman maintain that Murdoch reception of Anscombe has to be related to Murdoch engagement with Marcel's *Être et Avoir*, where he is mainly concerned with the problem of distinguishing two temporal and onto-epistemic dimensions. One has a cinematographic character: in it, a person is 'being thought of or treated as an object' and considered to have 'a past that can be reconstructed', the world is seen as a spectacle and it requires an external perspective. The cinematographic conception of time is associated with the onto-epistemic character of problems and of *avoir*: problems are puzzles we have and that are exposable to, solved and inherited by a community by shared, objective and agreed tools. Opposed to this, there is a "concrete and engaged" (30) way of relating to time, which is played out by two main functions of reflection, a recollective and a recuperative one. It is through this medium that we relate to mysteries (as the opposite of problems), which are non-expressible due to their referral to personal emotions, perceptions, love and faith - belonging to the pole of *Être*. Despite being fond of Marcel's focus on temporality and of Buber's stress on interpersonal dialogue, Murdoch was aware of the faults of their account, mainly traceable back to their vagueness and lack of analytic rigour. It was then after Anscombe's presentation that Murdoch realised (1) that Wittgenstein's method could serve as a tool for deepening the discourse around what could not be spoken of and (2) that Marcel's focus on time and identity could be supported by Anscombe's view on "the subject's *continuous engagement with past and future*" (32).

³⁷ Even though this observation could be read as strengthening the similarity between Murdoch and Cavell in focusing on what our language and practices tell about us (see early section).

comprehensive of both rights and wrongs, an appeal to it through its linguistic aspect would not grant epistemic certainty about morality. Differently, by taking a closer look to human practices more generally, we can understand how the underlying workings of the construction of our reality works and thus can critically assess them.

One last aspect that can be considered in this regard is Murdoch's philosophical style: her arguments do not stem from considerations on language, she does not argue abiding by how we talk for opposing a philosophical picture and her conclusions are not primarily concerned with showing features of our ordinary proceedings. A key for unlocking Murdoch's philosophical operational background is given by her motivating drive in philosophy: "to make space for non-exposable, non-verifiable thought and experience within some logical framework and ontology" (2022b:29). Such a plan was the one she had while redacting her 1947 Sarah Smithson proposal at Oxford - something that she kept working on, as Mac Cumhaill and Wiseman note, (2022b:259-60) and addressed in TL. What Murdoch insisted on, on that occasion, was the phenomenological process we are involved in while thinking and saw in it a reason for refuting the analytical account of language that appeals to public and ordinary words. Her lines highlight how the linguistic currency we have to communicate is not only partial in its engagement with the broader set of activities we commit to in living, but also that we should envision practices for creating new (linguistic) ways for expressing our inner experience:

Considered as a content of thought, language may have a revelatory role (as when in *La Chartreuse de Parme* Mosca fears the mention of the word 'love' between Fabrice and the duchess) or it may have the opposite role. We have already had reason to think that a thought cannot necessarily be characterised by its verbal content. Language and thought are not co-extensive. (TL:47)

We know too what it is like for thought to be stifled by a conventional description; or for a verbal summary to replace a memory image. Experience of this kind may lead to neurotic or metaphysical views about language ('consciousness is the gaps in language') where it is thought of as a coarse net through which experiences slip. ('Thought seeks the unique, language gets in the way.') This experience may be connected with the nostalgia for the particular and the search for the concrete universal. Not all our new concepts come to us in the context of language; but the attempt to verbalise them may result not in frustration but in a renewal of language. This is par excellence the task of poetry. So there is give and take; words may determine a sense, or a fresh experience may renew words. (I am not

distinguishing here between words which I originate, and the words of another which I think through and make my own.) (TL:47)

We can see in these passages the fine line traced between appealing to language and gesturing towards our ways of acting: even though OLP, in the Cavellian tradition, does not exclude the second stance, Murdoch denies the first. For this reason, then, assimilating her into OLP might just make us miss part of what she is saying.

3.4 Additional Considerations on Murdoch and Contemporary OLP

Before heading to the last part of this investigation, I want to suggest, very briefly, that the association between Murdoch and OLP is not appropriate also with other accounts of OLP than the one purported by Baz and Cavell.

In “Contemporary Ordinary Language Philosophy” (2014), Hansen reports that contemporary ordinary language philosophy is constituted by two distinct, although potentially connected, projects: a constructive and a critical one, both deriving from “classic” contributions on OLP, identified as mainly Wittgenstein’s and Austin’s. The constructive project, following Austin’s program for deepening awareness of words in order to “sharpen our perception of ... the phenomena” (1956:8), consists of two parts, a ‘semantic stage’ and a subsequent ‘metaphysical stage’. The two parts are related as follows: the semantic first sets the meaning of an expression based on facts attached to the use of words, and the second settles the nature of those facts the meaning of words refers to. Instead, the critical project assumes that there is such a thing as philosophical nonsense when words other than the ones employed in ordinary language are used in philosophical discourse (Wittgenstein is the direct source). An example is Malcolm’s argument that the sentence “I’m here” should not be taken as a piece of “absolutely certain knowledge” from which philosophical conclusions on identity and existence can be drawn, but it should be considered within the context of linguistic discourse, for example as an answer to a question uttered in a specific circumstance.

Without going into more details of the accounts, their critics and the counterarguments that have been provided (in addition to the already cited works of Baz and Cavell, see DeRose 2005, 2007, and 2011; Travis 1989 and 2008), I want to point out an incompatibility between both projects of contemporary OLP and Murdoch. The nature of the incompatibility is twofold: methodological in respect to the constructive project, axiological regarding the critical project.

The former could be also phrased as a difference of style: despite the relevance attributed by her to the dimension of the ordinary (the next chapter will be devoted to expanding on this), which could lead to see Murdoch as potentially agreeing with at least the premise of the metaphysical stage, Murdoch never appeals to an argument based on theory of meaning in order to argue for features of, for example, the concepts of Goodness, Beauty or Art. The latter is due to a substantial difference of views on philosophy as an activity and its scope, and it boils down to the fact that Murdoch does not consider metaphysical and philosophical discourses nonsensical.

Chapter 4

Metaphilosophical Affinities:

Murdoch and Marcuse

What I have shown so far is that Murdoch presents features that are not fully compatible with OLP. These are (i) Murdoch's understanding of the ordinary as a dimension that does not secure an ontological grounding for ordinary language (Chapter 2) and (ii) Murdoch's distance from OLP's appeal to ordinary language, to the claim to the community, to an argumentative style that revolves around language.

This last chapter wants to further the distinction between Murdoch and OLP previously drawn. To do so, I will gesture at Marcuse's contribution on OLP contained in *One Dimensional Man* (1964) and relate some of his reasons for opposing Murdoch. To OLP. What I want to highlight is not their common points of criticism towards OLP, since, at least in Marcuse's case, are not only a bit superficial, but also refer to a picture of OLP different than the one offered by Baz and Cavell. Rather, I would like to point to some common features in their ways of doing philosophy which contrast with OLP. In making such a connection I do not want to deflate the existing differences between the two authors, even more so given Murdoch's expressed preference for Adorno *as opposed to* Marcuse and Lukács (MGM:372). This operation then mainly aims at broadening the pool of interlocutors that can deepen our understanding of Murdoch's philosophical contributions. To do so, I will first give an overview of Marcuse's attack on OLP and then detect the meta philosophical reasons behind it. A parallel with Murdoch will follow, where I will focus on the role of metaphysics and critique in philosophy.

4.1 Remarks on Marcuse Dissatisfaction With OLP

In the last section of Part II of *One Dimensional Man* titled 'The Triumph of Positive Thinking. One dimensional philosophy' Marcuse addresses linguistic philosophy as part of his broader criticism of contemporary society. The first words Marcuse has for linguistic philosophy are pointing to its therapeutic features: in his recounting, linguistic analysis aims at curing thoughts from metaphysical distortions, which often result from going beyond the scope

of the investigations that set their own stage. Marcuse notes how the kind of clarification attained by linguistic philosophy is an end in itself and it is strictly theoretical and academic. Thus, the fight against “conceptual transcendence beyond the established universe of discourse” (1964:175) cannot be equated to the equivalent move against ‘political transcendence’, and in this way it figures as a non-critical tool for debunking the lines of power that are run by a capitalistic setting. In fact, by its own definition, linguistic philosophy finds in the common usage of words the possibility for unveiling transcendent concepts, and in doing so, it characterises itself as distant from those ways of reflecting that engage with the pre-existent modes by opposing them. Such a statement comes from a consideration on ‘negative thinking’ (1964:175) or ‘the power of the negative’ (1964:176), which for Marcuse, drawing it from Hegel’s characterisation of Reason, constitutes “the development of concepts” (1964:176). Such a method, for Marcuse, is not exclusive of rationalism, but it was also made use of by empiricism, especially, in the circumscription of the area of experience considered relevant³⁸.

Linguistic analysis is thus, for Marcuse, positivist for the following reasons. Positivism grows out from Saint Simon’s thought and the three general cornerstones that dictate the philosophical agenda that was developed by his school: 1. Experience of facts validates thought, 2. Criteria for correctness of cognition is established by natural sciences, 3. The reliance on science and cognition also orientates the meaning of progress. It is in the realisation of society as structured around technology and progress that positivism realises its program of unification between theory and practice: positivism is able to do work and attempt to a certain degree of re-organisation only from within a framework: it is not capable to stay out of it and waives at different philosophical modes as ‘speculations, dreams or fantasies’ (1964:177). For positivism, reason is the opposite of transcendence, and the world is technologically understood as something that can become an instrument for man’s control over a *datum*.

The two theorists of linguistic analysis Marcuse refers to are Austin and Wittgenstein, who hold the view on philosophy as an activity that does not engage with the transformation of reality and whose style, for Marcuse, is quite telling of their philosophical (scarce) force: a style that “seems to move between the two poles of pontificating authority and easy-going chumminess” (1964:178), and which is mirroring a certain “familiarity with the chap on the street” (1964:178). The removal of a specialised philosophical vocabulary in virtue of a

³⁸ “In contrast, the empiricism of linguistic analysis moves within a framework which does not allow such contradiction - the self-imposed restriction to the prevalent behavioural universe makes for an intrinsically positive attitude” (1964:176).

familiar and common one, considered to be “the token of concreteness” (964:179), “militates against intelligent non-conformity” and “it ridicules the egghead” (1964:179). Marcuse accuses linguistic analysts not only of working with a ‘purged language’ that is incapable of using a vocabulary alternative to the one provided by society, but also to take it as ‘an accomplished fact’ that cannot be challenged:

Paying respect to the prevailing variety of meanings and usages, to the power and common sense of ordinary speech, while blocking (as extraneous material) analysis of what this speech says about the society that speaks it, linguistic philosophy suppresses once more what is continually suppressed in this universe of discourse and behaviour. The authority of philosophy gives its blessing to the forces which make this universe. Linguistic analysis abstracts from what ordinary language reveals in speaking as it does – the mutilation of man and nature. (1964:179)

This passage can be taken to voice two of the main allegations that Marcuse does: 1. Linguistic philosophy plays the game of political ideology and doesn’t give any tool for understanding the source of oppression and 2. Linguistic philosophy is, contrary to what it professes, carried out through attention to a narrow set of linguistic occurrences and not to the more well-rounded spectrum of ordinary language. After considering two examples from Austin, Marcuse comes up with two questions: “(1) can the explication of concepts (or words) ever orient itself to, and terminate, in the actual universe of ordinary discourse? (2) are exactness and clarity ends in themselves, or are they committed to other ends?” (1964:181)

Marcuse’s answer to the first question is affirmative: the explication of concepts can orient itself in the universe of ordinary discourse, for examples can elucidate the reality they are part of. However, the examples that are given (and there Marcuse quotes Sartre and Kraus) are an effective elucidatory medium because “they transcend the immediate concreteness of the situation and its expression” (1964:181). For this reason, clarification can never stay within the realm of the ordinary, but needs to go beyond it, even to a point where it can contradict it.

For Marcuse, Wittgenstein’s program of putting words like ‘language’, ‘experience’, ‘world’ on the same level as ‘table’, ‘lamp’ and ‘door’, and treating the former as “humble” words, creates a major problem of freedom in thinking. Linguistic philosophy eradicates “the *need* to think and speak in terms other than those of common usage. (...) What is involved is the spread of a new ideology which undertakes to describe what is happening (and meant) by eliminating the concepts capable of understanding what is happening (and meant)” (1964:183). In order to

combat linguistic philosophy's reductionism, Marcuse distinguishes two different realms, one of "everyday thinking and language" and the other of "philosophic thinking and language". Ordinary language, for him, is behaviouristic: sentences like "the pan is on the stove" causes reactions in behaviour. Contrarily, philosophical language preserves the rift between words like 'substance' and how we go on about life. However, through time, such words entail the spin of thought that can lead up to a change of practices, and can thus gear critical thinking. It is in this "second order" that critical thinking and critical awareness of reality can take form, especially because it addresses the general framework of the restricted experience that ordinary language refers to. For this reason, Marcuse precises that it is not that ordinary language cannot be of "vital concern to critical philosophic thought" (1964:186), but the point is that its valence goes beyond the humble function attributed to it by Wittgenstein, since ordinary language would hint at the very transcendent essentialist paradigm that Wittgenstein contests. In refusing to engage in an explicit attempt to analyse the material and ideological directions that shape ordinary language, linguistic philosophy fails its own aim to clarify philosophical problems and concepts.

Marcuse states that for succeeding in encompassing the whole of the linguistic sphere and its relation to human existence, three areas should be looked at:

1. the "individual project, i.e., the specific communication (a newspaper article, a speech) made at a specific occasion for a specific purpose".
2. the "established supra-individual system of ideas, values, and objectives of which the individual project partakes".
3. the "particular society which itself integrates different and even conflicting individual and supra-individual projects" (1964:201).

When these threads are considered, "the words reveal themselves as genuine terms not only in a grammatical and formal-logical but also material sense; namely, as the limits which define the meaning and its development - the terms which society imposes on discourse, and on behaviour. This historical dimension of meaning can no longer be elucidated by examples such as "my broom is in the corner" or "there is cheese on the table." To be sure, such statements can reveal many ambiguities, puzzles, oddities, but they are all in the same realm of language games and academic boredom." (1964:186) But, Marcuse notices, the lack of critical assessment implied by linguistic philosopher's refusal to 'go beyond' ordinary terms casts a contradiction in terms for the program. Indeed, "this radical acceptance of the empirical violates the empirical, for in it speaks the mutilated, "abstract" individual who experiences (and expresses) only that which is given to him (given in a literal sense), who has only the facts and

not the factors, whose behaviour is one-dimensional and manipulated. By virtue of the factual repression, the experienced world is the result of a restricted experience, and the positivist cleaning of the mind brings the mind in line with the restricted experience.” (1964:187)

Marcuse thus concludes that the main fault of linguistic philosophy resides in its self-conception as an internal analysis of language which does not require any extra-linguistic commitment, since “it decides on a distinction between legitimate and non-legitimate usage, between authentic and illusory meaning, sense and non-sense, it invokes a political, aesthetic, or moral judgement.” (1964:202) For Marcuse, linguistic philosophy’s refusal of metaphysical discourse that goes beyond what we see is wrong not only because the ‘external’ factors already shape the internal meaning, but also because, in lacking an apparatus that contextualises use and meanings within a broader understanding of society, linguistic philosophy fails its own aim to understand the meaning of words through an analysis of ordinary language. Thus, “in this analytic treatment of ordinary language, the latter is really sterilised and anaesthetised. Multi-dimensional language is made into one-dimensional language, in which different and conflicting meanings no longer interpenetrate but are kept apart; the explosive historical dimension of meaning is silenced.” (1964:202)

4.2 Critique and Metaphysics in Murdoch and Marcuse

Despite the lack of an explicit reference to Marcuse’s engagement with linguistic philosophy and OLP in Murdoch’s texts, there are several common threads held by the two philosophers that are worth exploring. These similarities can be traced back to three areas: (a) the dissatisfaction with the idea that language provides an exhaustive examination of reality, (b) the call for an historical understanding of language and the interlace between public and private language, (c) the need for a re-appreciation of metaphysics in philosophy and the bracketing of a certain view on empiricism. It is important to note that these threads constitute the backdrop for differentiating Murdoch from OLP not because they rely on Marcuse’s interpretation of it, which responds to a very stereotypical, if not wrong, conception of OLP. Instead, they signal a proximity between Murdoch and Marcuse in terms of their attitudes and styles in philosophy and of the role that philosophy plays in a broader socio-cultural landscape, thus making some room for appreciating Murdoch as an ally of critical theorists.

As briefly stated before, Marcuse expresses a deep dislike of analytic philosophy, for he sees it as just a theoretical attempt aiming at an academic audience and deliberately refusing to engage in social and critical analysis. For this reason, Marcuse accuses it to be a sterile exercise, which, moreover, does not even succeed in doing justice to the variety of ordinary language. In fact, part of the qualms Marcuse has towards linguistic philosophers has to do with the sentences they use for exercising their method (a recurrent one is for instance Wittgenstein's "my broom is in the corner"), which, according to him, not only do not qualify as philosophically relevant, but they also fail in eliciting the potential of ordinary language. To this respect, Murdoch's observation that linguistic philosophy does not take its own method seriously (VCM) develops a similar line of criticism - even though Murdoch, in that specific occasion, is targeting in parallel a conception of the human soul. What is left out from linguistic analysis is, according to both Murdoch and Marcuse, the attention to those very terms that we use ordinarily, which are philosophically loaded, and that we have to learn how to handle and to deepen. For both of them the problems for linguistic philosophy do not stem from ordinary language *per se*, but rather from a dialogue with it that really just effaces it and its philosophical relevance with it. Both Murdoch and Marcuse agree that one of the important features of ordinary language is its existence in the grey area of human exchange:

the talk of x and y is perfectly understandable, and the linguistic analyst appeals righteously to the normal understanding of ordinary people. But in reality, we understand each other only through whole areas of misunderstanding and contradiction. The real universe of ordinary language is that of the struggle for existence. It is indeed an ambiguous, vague, obscure universe, and is certainly in need of clarification. Moreover, such clarification may well fulfil a therapeutic function, and if philosophy would become therapeutic, it would really come into its own. (1967:203)

What they both seem to hint at then is the idea that if one decides to rely on the ordinary, one should then encompass a broader spectrum of linguistic uses and human dimensions. The ubiquity of value, the accent on metaphorical language and on epistemic perspectivism, the focus on those aspects of life that are difficult to have words for, such as emotions of love and faith are Murdoch's distinguished features for such an appeal. In this sense, despite Cavell's OLP embraces many aspects of our ordinary lives, Murdoch resists OLP because language does not constitute each and every dimension that it is worth philosophizing about.

Another aspect related to the appreciation of the vagueness of ordinary language and that is common to Marcuse and Murdoch is their reserve in taking ordinary language as uncontroversial as linguistic philosophers tend to do. In fact, although neither of them sceptically argues that ordinary language is not an adequate medium for communication (and for Murdoch for philosophical elaboration too), they both pressure the idea that there is much more to ordinary language, in its constitution and its use, than what linguistic philosophers tend to allow. More specifically, both Murdoch and Marcuse share the worry that, without a critical assessment of our words, and hence our concepts, we could make a use of language that is politically and morally wrong. In MGM, Murdoch urges the need for a deeper understanding than the one provided by Wittgenstein of his notion of 'language game' and asks: "How are we to *trust ourselves* to such a concept, what is it to 'accept the *everyday* language game' and to note false accounts?" (MGM:276). It is only few pages later that she extends her worry from language games to the concept of *Lebensform* and elicits Murdoch's call for the same critical assessment that Marcuse voices after pointing to the influence of historical, socio-cultural, political and economic factors on language:

Tyrants destroy language, destroy vocabulary. (...) Assent, general agreement, has a background which must be scrutinised. Is there a reason why a despotic state could not be a *Lebensform*? Any *Lebensform* may be subject to moral judgement. (...) However, out in the ordinary world, not in a frozen logical example, such distinctions are very difficult to make. Truth and falsehood are in a perpetual engagement with meaning. Meaning is slippery and free, language is a huge place (structuralists are right here). (...) Of course language depends very generally upon areas of 'agreement', but is also continuously lived by persons." (MGM:281)

In addition to this, Marcuse's words voice another side of the same coin, which I take Murdoch would agree with, although she is not vocal about it in her texts (I have already discussed this matter in Chapter 2)

This must necessarily be so, for language is nothing private and personal, or rather the private and personal is mediated by the available linguistic material, which is societal material. But this situation disqualifies ordinary language from fulfilling the validating function which it performs in analytic philosophy. "What people mean when they say ..." is related to what they don't say. Or, what they mean cannot be taken at face value – not

because they lie, but because the universe of thought and practice in which they live is a universe of manipulated contradictions. (1964:198)

This phrasing reveals another aspect that situates Murdoch's philosophical effort in relation to language. As already illustrated in Chapter 2, the private/public dynamic that characterises ordinary language is a theme very close to Murdoch, and it is in denouncing the dominance of public discourse as a criterion for truth that she argues for a renewed relation between the individual moral agent and the language that unfolds moral concepts. The connection to Marcuse's passage is then the following: in pointing out the connection between the private and the public sphere, and by this means highlighting the need to be critically on top of public words' use, Marcuse unveils a facet of linguistic engagement that can be true of Murdoch too. In fact, the possibility of developing an intimate, personal and aware use of language - which also corresponds to the possibility of deepening moral concepts from a situated perspective - also relies on the premise that the employment of words that have no other grounds than the public agreement should be reconsidered and changed. In other words, the very possibility of getting close to a deep and individual relationship with (at least, moral) language stems from the realisation of the insufficiencies and faults of public language. It is in this respect then that we can appreciate the distance between Cavell and Murdoch through Marcuse: even though for Cavell too one has to go deeper and intimately appropriate language, Murdoch and Marcuse pressure a point that Cavell does not regard as the main challenge, namely the potentially deviant character of our shared language. Cavell acknowledges, through his reading of Wittgenstein's private language argument, the fact that we are virtually always exposed to the tragedy of a scepticism that would question the validity of our shared language. However, he finds the possibility of epistemic grounding, or the halt to a sceptical spiral, in our shared form of life³⁹. What is different with Marcuse and Murdoch engagement with the ordinary and ordinary language is that they insist on the need to not abide by it as a resolute ground of certainty; rather, they see its constitution as already determined by structures that

³⁹ "We learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals nor the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of [...] of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation – all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls 'forms of life.' Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying." (Cavell 1969: 48)

must be problematised and changed. In other words, they look at what there is as something that should be critically assessed from the get go and judged instead of just acknowledged.

Closely related to the common criticism moved by Murdoch and Marcuse to the metaphilosophy and the use of ordinary language purported by linguistic philosophy, historicism as a condition determining the changing meaning of concepts overtime constitutes another similarity between the two philosophers. Despite Baz's and Cavell's formulation of OLP do not argue against it, it is also true that historicism does not figure as one of the main features of OLP, neither as part of their methodologies nor of their content. For both Murdoch and Marcuse, history and the cultural configuration of society plays a major role: the former famously reports how words stay the same when their related concepts alter (her well-known example recites that we have a meaning of courage at 20 that is different from the one we have at 40 (IP:28)) and the latter finds in a particular socio-political aspect the material causes for the current structures of thoughts. Such stances remark again an asset of disquiet with the typical OLP's avowal to ordinary language as it is, without engaging with it and framing it within a broader horizon that includes personal and social history.

The threads sketched stream into the third area of theoretical assonance between Murdoch and Marcuse, that can be signalled as the recuperation of metaphysics as a vital part of a critical engagement with reality with a parallel distancing from a particular engagement with empiricism. In VCM, Murdoch protests against the deflation of moral concepts to a conjunction of descriptive and prescriptive components, where the former is explicated through empirical claims that are excluded from a previous assessment. The uncritical assumption of the 'philosophical materials' on behalf of linguistic philosophers is one of the main qualms Murdoch has against the specific picture of morality that comes from it. The very failure of paying attention to what it is that we call reality, pretending that such an attitude is neutral, figures in Murdoch as equivalent to what Marcuse sees as the unrestricted empiricism that eventually figures only as positivism. On this specific point a specification needs to be made: in fact, OLP's relation to linguistic empiricism is debated by Cavell in MWM. Against Mates' criticism about the unsuitability of OLP's method for mapping ordinary uses of words, Cavell argues that ordinary language philosophers are not attending to a taxonomic task, but rather a normative one, in which describing usages also means indicating criteria of applicability and truth. However, regardless of the dispute around the normative or empirical vocation of OLP, both versions fail to meet Murdoch's and Marcuse's requirement of taking a metaphilosophical self-reflective stance with a critical aim as a premise for a philosophical investigation. What seem to constitute a similarity between Murdoch and Marcuse is their

timing in questioning our premises: they start already in alert about the conceptual ‘material’, taking it to be already determined by structures that they argue against. Their attitude is then different from OLP’s, where an initial avowal to the appropriateness of its premise is not only emphasised, but also constitutes the appeal to this method.

Finally, and following from the point just made, Murdoch and Marcuse regard metaphysics differently from ordinary language philosophers, seeing it as a necessary paradigm for assessing and engaging with reality. Both agree that philosophy should be concerned with metaphysics instead of abandoning it. For Murdoch, metaphysics is tightly connected to vision and images, thus to morality and to the ideas of the Good and perfection. Metaphysics is the orienting grid that traces the connection between truth, the Good, knowledge and beauty - it is what allows moral growth because it sharpens our understanding of moral concepts in the path towards goodness. Chapter 13 of MGM, titled ‘The Ontological Proof’, opens with a quotation from Tillich’s *Systematic Theology* that reports how “The destruction of the ontological argument is not dangerous. What is dangerous is the destruction of an *approach* which elaborates the possibility of the question of God” (MGM:391). I take that, for Murdoch, metaphysics covers the same function as the ontological arguments: it constitutes an attitude, a style and a posture that secure the viability of a path towards, as Tillich puts it, the “acknowledgement of the unconditional element in the structure of reason and reality”:

Metaphysics is inspired by a gifted thinker’s scrutiny of his own thought. Thought ‘aims’ at reality, but in varying degrees of success. An object of serious thought must be something real, serious thinking is moral truthful thinking, goodness is connected with reality, the supremely good is the supremely real. (MGM:398)

In this respect, Hämäläinen (2014) notices that “in Murdoch’s view one central aspect of metaphysics is the unavoidable activity of the conscious and self-conscious being in grappling with and giving expression to the conditions of his existence” (2014:205), thus conceiving metaphysics as an inherent part of ordinary life. This also connects back to the views Murdoch has on ideology, which is regarded as something regularly at work and that we cannot really escape. As argued by Browning in “Murdoch and the End of Ideology” (2018) Murdoch’s writings, especially “A House of Theory” (1958) and MGM, despite their declared distance from being considered political, do contain elements of criticism towards certain features of society, specifically of the lack of ideology as a system of reference and understanding that encompass the individual and gives them tools for orienting herself in the

world. While targeting different topics - the decline of socialism in post-war Britain due to a favouritism for individualism and capitalism in “A House of Theory” and the relation between politics and personal morality in MGM - the two texts present a similar move on Murdoch’s behalf, that is to connect “the decline in ideology to the disavowal of metaphysics and to the general subscription to more limited styles of analysis in philosophy” (2018:141). In relation to this, it is important to signal a difference between Murdoch and Marcuse in their characterization of metaphysics. If it is true that they agree on its role, they also belong to different metaphysical traditions: Marcuse inherits a Marxist-Hegelian dialectic, whereas Murdoch not only distances herself from it (see Chapter 12 of MGM), but she also refers to metaphysics broadly as a paradigm and as a system of references, without further specifications than the avowal to her view on morality and the rebuke of existentialism and linguistic behaviourism. If Marcuse sees in Marxist metaphysics a tool for debunking the ideological and material structure that normalizes oppression, for Murdoch metaphysics is more of a set of values and beliefs that constitute the grid orienting our worldviews (Hämäläinen:2013). Metaphysics is “not supposed to be a literal support of how things are, it must be judged as a big complicated heuristic image” (1992:196), thus as a creative attempt in discovering and deepening our intellectual and moral insights.

Conclusions

I want to end with the exergue Murdoch chose for *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, a passage from Paul Valéry's *Mauvaises pensées et autres* (1942): "Une difficulté est une lumière. / Une difficulté insurmontable est un soleil."⁴⁰ In it, I believe, is embedded (at least part of) Murdoch's attitude in philosophy: instead of seeking for solutions, ask questions that keep alive the need and desire for 'staying with the trouble'⁴¹ and existing within it. For it is only in this way that philosophy can inhabit us and make us expand our 'texture of being' (VCM:39). I also think that Murdoch's texts, in their complex fabric of colourful threads, offer themselves the experience of gravitating around a sun. One of the intentions that have motivated this research was to prove the difficulty of Murdoch's thought, whose breadth and peculiarity resist classifications and call for alliances instead.

One way to describe the present work, then, can begin with stating the aim to argue against a reductive assessment (Forsberg's) of Murdoch's understanding of the ordinary and of ordinary language, which led to resist seeing Murdoch as an ordinary language philosopher. I have first suggested that, differently from OLP, for Murdoch it is not in the dimension of the ordinary that we find the premise to get closer to morality, but in our epistemic situated perspectives instead. Secondly, I opposed the definition of OLP used by Forsberg, which effaced significant differences between Murdoch and OLP. I thus I deepened Baz's and Cavell's version of OLP and related it to some of Murdoch's philosophical contents and methods. This comparison unveiled substantial differences, which pertain to matters of style, of questions to be asked and of theoretical domains that are invoked for answering: Murdoch's arguments do not make use of ordinary language for solving philosophical problems, her puzzlements do not stop at, and often do not even start from, language, and she does not find it as *the main* site for solving problems, even though it still remains an important dimension to consider. It is then through a parallelism with Marcuse, an unusual philosopher to associate Murdoch with, that I emphasise other aspects that should distinguish Murdoch from OLP. These mainly concern the role of metaphysics in philosophy and a similar timing for tackling some assumptions that OLP works with. Indeed, Murdoch and Marcuse seem to start from questioning some aspects of the ordinary – something that does not lead them, but Murdoch in particular, to a rebuke of it, but rather constitutes a different way than OLP's, which instead

⁴⁰ "One difficulty is a light. / An insurmountable difficulty is a sun".

⁴¹ I am borrowing from Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chtulucene*. Durham and London: Duke University Press (2016).

begins with a trusting attitude and then proceeds with the critical activity of deconstruction of the images that keep us captive.

It goes without saying that this investigation is far from being an exhaustive examination of all the trajectories that could have been, and can be, developed on these topics. There is definitely more to be said about the implications on Murdoch's positions on morality based on the conception of the ordinary that I have gestured at in this text, and on her relationship with critical theory by bridging her metaphilosophy with her views on politics. However, I hope that this can constitute a first step in these directions.

Bibliography

- Antonaccio, M. 2000. *Picturing the human: The moral thought of Iris Murdoch*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- and W. Schweiker (eds.). (1996). *Iris Murdoch and the search for human goodness*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Ayer, A. J. (1972) *Language, Truth and Logic*. Middlesex, Penguin.
- Baz, A. (2000). *When Words Are Called For. A Defense of Ordinary Language Philosophy*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- (2018). “Stanley Cavell’s Argument of the Ordinary,” *Nordic Wittgenstein Review*, 7, (2):9-48.
- Bergmann, G. (1964). *Logic and Reality*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Broackes, J. (2011). *Murdoch, philosopher*. Oxford University Press.
- Browning, G. (ed.). 2018. *Murdoch on truth and love*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cavell, S. (1976). *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1979). *The claim of reason: Wittgenstein, skepticism, morality, and tragedy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- (1990). *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome. The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism. The Carus Lectures*. La Salle, Illinois: Open Court.
- (1996). “Declining Decline”. In: *The Cavell Reader*, ed. S. Mulhall Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, pp. 321-52.
- Christensen, A.M. (2018). “‘I Think I Disagree’: Murdoch on Wittgenstein and Inner Life”, In: N. Hämäläinen and G. Dooley, (eds.) *Reading Iris Murdoch’s Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. Cham, Palgrave Macmillan.
- (2022). “Murdoch and Wittgenstein,” In Panizza, Caprioglio S., and Hopwood, M., (eds.). (2002). *The Murdochian Mind*. New York: Routledge.
- Crary, A. (2000). “Wittgenstein’s philosophy in relation to political thought,” In *The New Wittgenstein*, Crary, A., and Read, R. (eds). London and New York: Routledge.
- Diamond, C. (1996). “‘We are Perpetually Moralists’: Iris Murdoch, Fact, and Value,” *Iris Murdoch and the Search for Human Goodness*, Antonaccio, M., and Schweiker, W., (eds.). Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- (2001). How long is the standard meter in Paris? In T. MacCarthy & S. Stidd (Eds.), *Wittgenstein in America* (pp. 104–137). Oxford, England: Clarendon.

- (2010). ‘Murdoch the Explorer,’ *Philosophical Topics*, 38(1): (2010).
- Forsberg, N. (2013). *Language lost and found: On Iris Murdoch and the limits of philosophical discourse*. Bloomsbury.
- (2018). “‘Taking the Linguistic Method Seriously’: On Iris Murdoch on Language and Linguistic Philosophy” In: N. Härmäläinen and G. Dooley, (eds.) *Reading Iris Murdoch’s Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. Cham, Palgrave Macmillan.
- (2022). “Thinking, Language and Concepts”. In Panizza, Caprioglio S., and Hopwood, M., (eds.).(2002). *The Murdochian Mind*. New York: Routledge.
- Gellner, E. (1959). *Words and Things. A Critical Account of Linguistic Philosophy and A Study in Ideology*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Gustafsson, Martin (2005). “Perfect Pitch and Austinian Examples: Cavell, McDowell, Wittgenstein, and the Philosophical Significance of Ordinary Language”. *Inquiry* 48(4): 356–389.
- Hanfling, O. (2000). *Philosophy and Ordinary Language*. The bent and genius of our tongue. London: Routledge.
- Hansen, N. (2013). “Review of Avner Baz, *When Words Are Called For: A Defense of Ordinary Language Philosophy*”. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 64(254): 179–181.
- (2014). “Contemporary Ordinary Language Philosophy”. *Philosophy compass*, 9 (8):556-569.
- Härmäläinen, N. (2013). “What is Metaphysics in Murdoch’s *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*?” *sats* 2013; 14(1): 1–20
- (2014). “What is a Wittgensteinian Neo-Platonist?–Iris Murdoch, Metaphysics and Metaphor,” *Philosophical Papers*, 43:2, 191-225.
- Hopwood, M. (2019) Fields of Force: Murdoch on Axioms, Duties, and Eros (MGM Chapter 17). In: N. Härmäläinen and G. Dooley, (eds.) *Reading Iris Murdoch’s Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. Cham, Palgrave Macmillan:243–260.
- Laugier, S. (2022). “Care for the Ordinary,” In Panizza, Caprioglio, S., and Hopwood, M. (eds.).(2002). *The Murdochian Mind*. New York: Routledge.
- Mac Cumhaill, C. (2020) “Getting the Measure of Murdoch’s Good.” *European Journal of Philosophy*. 28(1), 235–247.
- Mac Cumhaill, C. and Wiseman, R. (2022a). *Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brought Philosophy Back to Life*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- (2022b). “The Importance of Murdoch’s Early Encounters with Marcel and Anscombe”
- Marcel, G. (1949) *Being and Having*. Translated by Katharine Farrer. Westminster, Dacre.

- Marcuse, H. (1964). *One Dimensional Man. Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Moi, T. (2017). *Revolution of the Ordinary. Literary studies after Wittgenstein, Austin and Cavell*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mulhall, S. (2000). “Misplacing Freedom, displacing the imagination: Cavell and Murdoch on the fact/value distinction,” *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* (47): 255-277.
- Murdoch, I. (1956). ‘Vision and Choice in Morality’. Reprinted in Murdoch 1999, 76–97.
- (1970). *The sovereignty of good*. London: Kegan Paul.
- (1992). *Metaphysics as a guide to morals*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- (1999). In P. Conradi (ed.), *Existentialists and mystics: Writings on philosophy and literature*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Panizza, Caprioglio, S., and Hopwood, M. (eds.). (2002). *The Murdochian Mind*. New York: Routledge.
- Robjant, D. 2012. The earthy realism of Plato’s metaphysics, or: What shall we do with Iris Murdoch? *Philosophical Investigations* 35 (1): 43–67.
- Rorty, R. (ed), (19xx). *The Linguistic Turn. Recent Essays in Philosophical Method*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Stern, R. (2007). Hegel, British idealism and the curious case of the concrete universal. *British Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 15(1), 115–153.
- Wiseman, R. 2020. ‘What if the private linguist were a poet? Iris Murdoch on privacy and ethics,’ *European Journal of Philosophy*.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1921). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Ogden.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell.