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‘How is human freedom compatible with the authority of the Good?’ Murdoch on moral agency, freedom, and imagination

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Abstract: This paper deals with the issue of self-determination and agency in moral action. On the one hand, it seems that where possible, the moral agent should use their practical reason to identify what it is right for them to do, and act accordingly; on the other hand, this seems to leave little room for the agent to decide for themselves how to act, where this is often said to be a marker of freedom and how the will is exercised. In response to this difficulty, Ruth Chang has argued recently that at least some reasons themselves need to be seen as being created through an act of will. Looking at the work of Iris Murdoch, it is argued that this response is problematic. At the same time, it is also argued that Murdoch can provide a fruitful way of dealing with this problem through her account of the imagination. This gives a role to the will of the agent not in creating reasons, but in attuning us to those reasons, thereby locating the will within practical reasoning itself, and showing how the authority of the good can be made compatible with human freedom.

I want to start this paper with an aporia, which I hope to resolve with the help of ideas from Iris Murdoch. The aporia arises out of two incompatible but plausible looking views of the nature of rational agency, and its relation to moral action.

I will illustrate this issue by considering the example of the Good Samaritan, who helps the Jewish traveller he finds injured on the road to Jericho (Luke 10:30–35). In the parable, we are not told anything about the Samaritan’s interior state — what he was thinking, what his motivations are; and of course, it is a parable anyway, designed to answer the question of ‘who is my neighbour?’, rather than an account of an actual case. Nonetheless, I think it is fair to say that the Samaritan has taken up a central place in our

ethical imagination, as a kind of exemplar of what it is to be a moral agent. Why do we take him to be so admirable? One answer is: because he helped the injured traveller, whereas the Priest and the Levite did not. But I take it we also see him as a paradigm in how ***he came to help***: namely, without any sense of duty, but just because he sees the traveller needs his care, which he recognises out of concern or compassion or pity (σπλαγχνίζομαι) for the traveller, and also without having some desire to do otherwise or to act differently — where these two thoughts are related, as the sense of duty arguably only arises if one feels that what is right to do constrains that desire, and hence becomes binding as an obligation.[1]

Thus, in conceiving of the Samaritan as an exemplar, it seems that we picture him as simply having a reason to help the traveller and acting on it, while at the same time he does not think he has a reason to do anything else, except help the traveller. What other reasons might there have been for him? Perhaps he could have thought he has reasons not to stop to help, or to steal something from the traveller while he can, or to extort some money from the traveller in payment for his assistance, or whatever — and then we could picture the Samaritan as choosing between these different options, and so deciding how to act. But, if we did picture him this way, would he ***really be*** the Good Samaritan any more? We might think that precisely in order to be good in a way that makes him a paradigm, the only reason he would have is the reason he has to help the traveller — and all other reasons would be 'silenced', to use McDowell's term,[2] and so he would not be faced with any real alternative. To the Good Samaritan, the only reason he would have is the reason he has to care for the traveller, and so no deliberation about this, or decision whether to act this way or not, would arise for him — if it did, he wouldn't ***be*** the Good Samaritan. The issue here is not that the Good Samaritan could not do otherwise if he wanted to, or that it is impossible for him to do otherwise because he is causally determined — it is just that in acting as he does, he is not exerting his will by making any kind of selection or choice.

But now suppose the Good Samaritan found himself in a more complex situation, perhaps with several people for him to help. In this case, helping this Jewish traveller might then not be the only reason presented to him, and so other reasons would not be silenced, because the Samaritan now has competing reasons which must be weighed up.

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[1] See Stern 2012 for how this relates to Kant and others.
[2] See McDowell 1998, pp. 17–18, 55–6, 90–3.

Nonetheless, we might think he would then consider what he has most reason to do, and act accordingly depending on the result, so once practical reason has done its work, there is still no room left for any further decision and so exercise of the will in this sense.

Now, I take it that this view of the Samaritan makes him appear attractive as both a moral and a rational agent. He is guided in his actions by what he has most reason to do, and acts accordingly without hindrance from any non-rational forces, or any external constraint, so that his will follows his reason in a way that is unimpaired by akrasia, unreflective desires, irrational drives, or forces beyond his control from outside, and nor is his action explained merely mechanistically and thus deterministically, but by appeal to reasons. Given all this, we might also take him to be free.

However, there are also grounds to be dissatisfied with this claim. A recent expression of this dissatisfaction can be found in a paper by Ruth Chang on normative powers, as well as related works. In that paper, she criticizes what she characterizes as the 'orthodox view', which is the view outlined in our discussion above, according to which 'rational agency is a matter of recognizing and responding to reasons', so that our '"freedom" in being a rational agent' consists in our capacity 'to recognize and respond to reasons' in this way (Chang 2020, p. 297).[3] Chang then expresses herself dissatisfied with this account, and argues instead for a more 'agent-centered way of thinking about rational agency' (Chang 2020, p. 275):

> But I believe that this view of rational agency is profoundly misguided — or at least unattractive. It leaves no room for ***the agent*** in leading her life as a rational agent. Where are ***you*** in the conduct of your life as a rational agent? Your role with respect to reasons is to recognize them and then to respond to them by doing what you have most reason to do. There is, as it were, a rational script to follow, and your job as a rational agent is to execute that script as best you can. The orthodox view treats us as ***passive*** automata in relation to our reasons; indeed, with a large enough database of reasons and appropriate responses from which to learn, AI might well count as rational agents on the orthodox view… If rationality is a skill, then there is a

[3] In Chang 2021 note 1, Chang lists Wolf, Raz, Scanlon, Parfit and Dancy 'amongst many others' as subscribers to the 'orthodox view'.

> sense in which we are slaves to our reasons. Reasons are given to us by the world, and what we must do in the face of them is given to us by normative principles or values that we discover but do not create. (Chang 2020, pp. 297–8)

Given this problem with the orthodox view, Chang argues that we should move instead to an 'active' rather than 'passive' view of rational agency, which rather than seeing the agent as always just ***following*** reasons, treats the agent as ***creating*** such reasons, through an act of will: 'On the passive view, everything we do as an intentional exercise of rational agency is guided by reasons. On the active view, some intentional exercises of rational agency are things we do as a matter of will, and are not themselves guided by reasons', thereby giving us 'freedom to have an active role in determining the reasons we have' (Chang 2020, p. 298), without which we would not really be agents, just passive followers of what it is that we have reason to do already.[4] Now, clearly, Chang is raising an important issue here, which suggests a threat to our freedom that comes not from traditional debates about mechanistic determinism, but from our relation to reasons as practical agents: is the free agent one who acts in accordance with such reasons (as was suggested in our account of the Good Samaritan), or the one who creates such reasons through an act of will (as on Chang's account)?

This issue may seem to be aporetic, as there seem to be positive but also negative things to be said on both sides, in ways that show the two options to be mirrors of each other, each exemplifying complementary vices and virtues. So, it appears that on the one hand, Chang can appeal to the idea that freedom must involve more than just the will carrying out the instructions of the intellect as this is not sufficiently agential, making us no more than a 'slaves to our reasons' (Chang 2020, p. 298), with the result that 'if one option were always better than the others' practical reason would then just 'lead us around by the nose, always telling us what we are required to do if we are to be rational' (Chang 2015, p. 171). On the other hand, the picture she adopts of the will instead is a form of voluntarism, in which the will creates reasons through its own activity. However, she does not think that the will has the capacity to create reasons with normative force in all cases. If reasons 'given' to the agent are commensurable, that is, representable by a cardinal scale of

[4] For a similar formulation, see Chang 2021, p. 96.

normativity or value, and therefore comparable, then the will has no role to play in creating will-based reasons. But, Chang thinks, most of the reasons that are 'given' to us (that is, not created by us), are incommensurable but nevertheless comparable, and so the will has a central role to play in determining what reasons we have. Her voluntarism is thus not total but 'hybrid' because it allows that the will is constrained where the reasons available are not of this type.[5] However, then it still seems curious to claim that it is only in these special cases that we can really be free, but not when we are in a situation when the agent sees only one reason to act and it is not a product of the will, as in the Good Samaritan case above. How can the presence of such reasons take our freedom away from us as this view suggests? But then, of course, Chang can respond with her concerns: if the agent is just following reasons, how is there any room for agency at all, as isn't the will then just subordinated to the intellect? But if instead freedom requires the will to be independent of the intellect, how can her view avoid claiming that there is no genuine freedom in the example of the Good Samaritan? Chang can say, as she does of such cases, that what enables the Samaritan to be free is that he still has the *capacity* to create a reason, even if it is not exercised, which is not taken away by 'silencing' or having just one 'thing to do' (Chang 2016). But still, if the agent in this case is not *in fact* acting on any such will-based reason, why aren't they continuing to be led around by the nose, so shouldn't this still be treated by her as a matter of concern? And so the debate goes round again.

Chang herself writes as if this issue has been seldom discussed, holding that the 'orthodox' view 'is so entrenched in our thinking about practical reason that it has only been very rarely directly or explicitly challenged' (Chang 2020, p. 297).[6] I think this is an exaggeration, however, and that in fact her remarks echo a very long-standing debate concerning normative realism and various forms of voluntarism, and concerning the relation between reason and the will, at the heart of which are precisely concerns about freedom of

[5] See Chang 2013b. For Chang's detailed discussion of issues surrounding the comparability and incomparability of reasons, see Chang 2015.

[6] In Chang 2021, p. 96, she writes: 'It is no exaggeration to say that the orthodoxy about rational agency, sometimes understood in different terms, has enjoyed preeminence for at least the past twenty-four centuries.' This may seem to ignore various challengers, such as existentialism for example. Chang later rejects existentialism because its alternative to the orthodoxy is not the same as hers (p. 99) — but it isn't clear that this debars it from being a challenge to the orthodoxy nonetheless. In other papers Chang does provide some historical context to the issues she raises, for example by briefly mentioning Hobbes and Clark (see e.g. Chang 2013b, p. 175).

the sort she raises.[7] My aim in this paper is to pick just one historical interlocutor for Chang, namely Iris Murdoch, to provide this wider framework. I hope to show how Murdoch can make an important contribution here, as while she ultimately supports the view Chang rejects, she is not unsympathetic to some of Chang's concerns, and so may offer an attractive way of handling this issue that gets beyond the dichotomy that is presupposed by Chang in arguing for her view. In this way, I hope, Murdoch may show us how to escape the aporetic position into which we seem to have fallen.[8] In §I I will briefly consider the context in which Murdoch found herself faced with this issue, before then in §II presenting what I think is her response to it, and concluding in §III with an assessment of that response.

I. Murdoch: choice vs vision

The aporia we have been considering, I have suggested, has a long history, and can be found in a variety of contexts, from medieval and early modern debates between 'intellectualists' and 'voluntarists', for example concerning the liberty of indifference and whether it is really a 'liberty' at all,[9] to debates concerning freedom within German idealism.[10] For Murdoch, however, the context of this issue is more local to her time,[11] in her engagement with existentialism on the one hand, and contemporary analytic philosophy on the other, though she places both in a wider background, which relates particularly to Kant's influence on modern thought.[12]

Like many readers of Kant,[13] Murdoch sees it as fundamental to his conception of autonomy that value is removed from the world itself, as this would leave the subject

[7] In this sense, Chang's position might be added to other forms of 'arguments from autonomy' against normative realism: see Stern 2012, pp. 7–40 for further discussion.
[8] Murdoch is not often discussed in these contexts, but for a reading of her position that complements the one offered here, see Samuel forthcoming.
[9] To pick just one text from this debate, see Leibniz's intellectualist response to the indifferentism of William King in his 'Observations on the Book Concerning *The Origin of Evil* Published Recently in London' which is published as an appendix to the *Theodicy*. For some further general discussion of this debate as it figures in British early modern philosophy, see James A. Harris 2005, and for a discussion of the specific debate between King and Leibniz, see Pearce 2019.
[10] Again, for just one example, see Ware 2018.
[11] However, as Justin Broackes has noted, it is perfectly possible to locate Murdoch in the medieval and early modern debates mentioned above: see Broackes 2012, pp. 53–55. For a paper that puts together the early modern debate with the views of Sartre which are Murdoch's main focus, see N. G. E. Harris 1987.
[12] 'Kant is the father of all modern forms of the problem of freedom…' (Murdoch 1997, p. 262).
[13] As it happens, I disagree with those readers — but that is not relevant for the issues under discussion here. See Stern 2012, pp. 7–100.

constrained by what lies outside it.[14] As a result, Murdoch argues, practical reason is thus not given the role of discerning what has value in this sense, but either of helping us to identify the best means to satisfy our desires (instrumental reason), or of determining our various proposed actions in the light of a formal principle like universalizability which is said to be internal to reason as such (moral reason). In Kant himself, autonomy is associated with the latter not the former, as instrumental reason still leaves reason as a 'slave of the passions' and so heteronomous. After Kant, however, any confidence in such a priori rational principles was thrown into doubt by the many 'empty formalism' objections raised against Kant's picture, so while the rational agent may have to abide by some principles (such as consistency), what is left is the capacity of the will to constitute value for itself, in which the freedom of the agent is now said to reside.

Murdoch then pictures both analytic and existentialist philosophy as developing from this shared background, notwithstanding their differences:[15]

> Much modern philosophy (existentialist and analytical) follows Kant here: since value has clearly no place in the empirical (scientific) world it must be given another kind of importance by being attached directly to the operation of the human will. (Murdoch 1997, p. 195)

In the case of analytic philosophy, Murdoch claims that this leads to the fundamental commitment to a fact/value distinction (which brings Hume into the mix alongside Kant), and an associated non-cognitivism in ethics, where it is combined with distinctive conceptions of meaning and of mind, so that 'good' no longer says anything descriptive, but is a recommendation for willing (cf. Murdoch 1997, pp. 62, 72–3, 79–80). The freedom of the moral agent consists in their ability to always step back from the choice they have made, re-consider the situation in the light of further reflection on the facts and their preferences,

[14] 'Kant… says that the moral will is autonomous, and that morality cannot be founded on anything but itself' (Murdoch 1997, p. 68). Murdoch's relation to Kant is more complex than these critical remarks may suggest, as (alongside Plato) he was also one of her 'personal gods' (Murdoch 2003, p. 128; cf. also pp. 99, 107, 111), and thus to some extent she blames Kant's followers rather than Kant himself for the problematic positions she identifies. It is not possible to go into these complexities here.

[15] For an outline of their differences, see Murdoch 1997, pp. 267–70.

and choose again (cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 83),[16] where the role of reason is to inform them of the relevant facts in a way that will help them realise their intentions, and also to raise the question of universalizability, or apply some other self-evidently rational principle (cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 177). In ascertaining the facts and performing this test, it is said to be important that reason operates independently of the agent's will, as otherwise the will might corrupt the results of this reasoning by distorting it in one way or another; but once reason has laid out the facts about the various options, like merchandise in a shop, it is then up to the will to confer value on them by choosing which way to go (cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 305). Murdoch thus sees a trajectory 'beginning with Kant and leading on to the existentialism and the analytic philosophy of the present day' (Murdoch 1997, p. 365), which she summarizes as follows, and treats as fundamental to modern liberalism:

> The centre of this type of post-Kantian moral philosophy is the notion of the will as the creator of value. Values which were previously in some sense inscribed in the heavens and guaranteed by God collapse into the human will. There is no transcendent reality. The idea of the good remains indefinable and empty so that human choice may fill it. The sovereign moral concept is freedom, or possibly courage in a sense which identifies it with freedom, will, power. This concept inhabits a quite separate top level of human activity since it is the guarantor of the secondary values created by choice. Act,[17] choice, decision, responsibility, independence are emphasised in this philosophy of puritanical origin and apparent austerity. It must be said in its favour that this image of human nature has been the inspiration of political liberalism. However, as Hume once wisely observed, good political philosophy is not necessarily good moral philosophy. (Murdoch 1997, p. 366)

We have seen, then, how Murdoch in her work presents one side of the aporia we have been considering, which like Chang treats freedom as requiring us to create value and hence bring reasons into the world.

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[16] Cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 83: 'On the current view the moral agent is free to withdraw, survey the facts, and choose again'.

[17] The text of Murdoch 1997 is wrong here — it has 'art' instead of 'act'.

It is also clear that Murdoch rejects a picture of this sort, and offers various arguments against it. A first worry involves an expression of dissatisfaction with this view on internal grounds: namely, how this position can attach any value to freedom itself, or argue that we have some reason to take freedom as a goal for ourselves and others, if it is only through the exercise of freedom that value is created (cf. Murdoch 1997, pp. 122–3). Sartre himself famously ends *Being and Nothingness* with this issue, promising to answer it in 'future work' – but it is not clear he ever really does.[18] A second worry is that this view is phenomenologically inadequate with respect to the moral case. For example, in her review of Stuart Hampshire's book *Freedom of the Individual*, Murdoch allows that an agent can be in a situation when they can simply choose in a detached manner, but argues that while this 'sometimes happens' it hardly constitutes a 'complete "phenomenology of freedom"', and nor does it represent freedom in its 'most important' sense (Murdoch 1997, p. 201). To see what this picture wrongly excludes, we might appeal to cases such as the Good Samaritan mentioned earlier, while Murdoch herself often speaks of artists and of saints, who experience no element of choice in how they proceed (cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 331), but who are not thereby deemed unfree. Finally, a third worry is that it will be just as hard for the rational agent to find themselves in the act of groundlessly constituting value as Chang claims it is with respect to the agent who just follows reasons, as this self will appear to us as oddly disconnected from the world and thus as hardly a self at all. For, Murdoch argues, on this view the will now becomes 'lonely' and 'unworldly', cut off from any context in which it acts, making it difficult for us to identify ourselves with it in its 'emptiness' — 'The agent, thin as a needle, appears in the quick flash of the choosing will' (Murdoch 1997, p. 343). It is unclear how this pure self can see itself as making decisions and so as constituting a character, rather than merely acting arbitrarily. Of course, this might be easier if one already thinks of the self as a Kantian 'pure unity of apperception' or as the existentialist's pure ego: but for most of us, she suggests, this is not how we do or can see ourselves (cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 328).

Based on these arguments, Murdoch contends that freedom is better thought of as a matter of *vision* rather than a matter of *choice*, to adopt the terminology of the title of her

[18] This does not mean that Murdoch takes freedom to have an intrinsic value, and at one point is happy to link its value in a 'naturalistic way' to 'a proper quality of human life, which *begins* at the food and shelter level' (Murdoch 1997, p. 231).

contribution to the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* of 1956 (Murdoch 1997, pp. 76–98). As she puts the point three years later: 'Freedom is not choosing; that is merely the move that we make when all is already lost. Freedom is knowing and understanding and respecting things quite other than ourselves. Virtue is in this sense to be construed as knowledge, and connects us so with reality' (Murdoch 1997, p. 284).[19] On this account, freedom involves seeing the world rightly and acting accordingly, and so is more a matter of knowledge than of choice.[20] If we reject this picture, we may instead be led to adopt a sense of freedom that is merely 'fictitious', according to which 'I may as well toss a coin' (Murdoch 1997, p. 375), which is really a loss of freedom, as what the agent then does is thereby taken out of their hands and left to chance (cf. Bagnoli 2006).

I think it is also important for Murdoch's position here that when she conceives of freedom, she has in mind a certain kind of *unfreedom* to which it is contrasted, which makes sense of why for her vision is a better conception of freedom than mere choice. This unfreedom is the plight of the self which is caught up in its own various neuroses and fantasies, which lock it within itself and cut it off from others and the world, putting it in a kind of prison.[21] The capacity of vision enables the self to be liberated from this confinement, by drawing the self away from this inward focus and re-connecting it to a reality beyond the walls of this prison; this is therefore why vision can confer a freedom on us that choice cannot.

Now, because of differences between Chang's position and the views that Murdoch was criticizing, it could be said that not all of Murdoch's objections outlined above can be applied directly to Chang's position, which because of its 'hybrid' nature is intentionally less radical and thoroughgoing than the existentialism and Kantianism that Murdoch was

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[19] Cf. also Murdoch 1997, p. 317: 'Freedom is not the sudden jumping of the isolated will in and out of an impersonal logical complex, it is a function of the progressive attempt to see a particular object clearly'; 1997, p. 201: 'To be free is something like this: to exist sanely without fear and to perceive what is real'; 1992, p. 323: 'If "free choice" alone confers value, then all that is needed is a pointing finger; no place for cognitive struggle involving specialised informative moral concepts. ("I wouldn't call that bravery, it's just an egoistic gamble")'; 1992, p. 326: 'Freedom is not an isolated ability, like the ability to swim, which we can "exercise" in a pure form. The idea of "the freedom of the will" can only be understood in the context of the complexity and ubiquity of value, it is inseparable from modes of cognition'.

[20] Cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 356: 'I have spoken of the real which is the proper object of love, and of knowledge which is freedom'.

[21] 'Most of the time we fail to see the big wide real world at all because we are blinded by obsession, anxiety, envy, resentment, fear. We make a small personal world in which we remain enclosed. Great art is liberating, it enables us to see and take pleasure in what is not ourselves' (Murdoch 1997, p. 14).

criticising. Thus, because Chang thinks only ***some*** reasons are created by the will, she could allow that the reasons we have to act freely are themselves given rather than created (thus addressing the first objection); and she can see the context in which the self acts as less 'empty', as not all reasons are created (thus addressing the third objection).

But this lack of radicality arguably makes it harder for Chang to avoid the second objection: for she allows that not all cases of action will involve the creation of reasons, namely when reasons lack the kind of incommensurability which she thinks makes this creation possible. However, arguably in the Samaritan case, the will cannot have a role in creating reasons either, as then the Samaritan would be acting for the wrong reason, and so he wouldn't ***be*** the Good Samaritan. For, if he is to act for the right reason, the reason for the Good Samaritan to act can only be the needs of the traveller, and this is not will-based at all but 'given'. But then Chang faces the problem of either saying the Good Samaritan is still free even though he doesn't create reasons but follows them — but this seems to go against her conception of freedom; or he is not free — which Murdoch can object to along the lines she does against Hampshire, that this 'hardly constitutes a 'complete "phenomenology of freedom"' as it seems to exclude as unfree implausibly many cases that resemble the Good Samaritan's, when only a 'given' reason applies to us. Chang herself can respond that the Samaritan still has freedom as he retains the *capacity* to create reasons in a way that is not possible in commensurability cases where the options are fixed. However, it is not obvious that this response can work, given that she treats following reasons that are given as a kind of passivity that threatens freedom, where the Samaritan would still actually be passive in this sense insofar as he is not acting on a will-based reason. Murdoch's second objection outlined above would therefore still seem to hold.

However, I think it would be wrong to treat Murdoch as simply dismissive of the concerns raised by someone like Chang, and thus as insensitive to the other side of the aporia — for Murdoch herself recognizes as 'a very old problem in philosophy: how is human freedom compatible with the authority of the Good?', where as she acknowledges, the worry is that '[d]efinitions and revelations of the Good seem to preclude the spiritual value of freed adherence' (Murdoch 1997, p. 194). As a result, I will now suggest, she wants to accommodate those concerns to some extent, and thus resolve the aporia rather than just opt for one approach at the expense of the other. I will argue for this reading by looking in particular at Murdoch's account of imagination and of attention.

II. Murdoch: imagination as mental agency

As we have seen, for Chang one important reason to reject the 'orthodox view' and instead take freedom to be a matter of constituting reasons through our willing, is that the former view 'leaves no room for ***the agent*** in leading her life as a rational agent. Where are ***you*** in the conduct of your life as a rational agent?' If all the agent does is register a reason in a passive manner, and follow it in their actions, what makes them ***agents*** at all, engaged in their actions — doesn't practical reason then just 'lead us around by the nose' like robots who respond mechanically to their environments?

Now, at first sight, it might seem that Murdoch happily accepts this implication, and thus just occupies the opposite side of the aporia from Chang. For, in developing her account of vision rather than choice, Murdoch often speaks of replacing the latter with *obedience*, as the agent just sees what it is right to do, and acts accordingly, in the manner of the Good Samaritan from which we began. As Murdoch puts it in 'The Idea of Perfection', 'The idea of a patient, loving regard, directed upon a person, a thing, a situation, presents the will not as unimpeded movement but as something very much more like "obedience"' (Murdoch 1997, p. 331; cf. also p. 333). Murdoch also seems to accept that this type of freedom amounts to a kind of necessity, in a way that could appear to confirm Chang in her anxieties about views of this sort.[22]

Nonetheless, I think Murdoch's position is more nuanced than this may suggest.[23] For, while she talks of 'obedience' and 'necessity' in these contexts, this is not merely to subordinate the will to reason or agency to knowledge, as she also sees a place for will and agency in making us ***aware*** of the good and thus in considering what we have reason to do.

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[22] 'If I attend properly I will have no choices and this is the ultimate condition to be aimed at… The ideal situation…is to be represented as a kind of "necessity"' (Murdoch 1997, p. 331).

[23] Cf. 'Metaphysics and Ethics', where Murdoch contrasts a 'Liberal morality' which treats the autonomous individual as possessing a will that is 'entirely free to choose' with a 'Natural Law morality' for which 'freedom is not an open freedom of choice in a clear situation' as 'the individual is held in a framework which transcends him, where what is important and valuable is the framework, and the individual has importance, or even reality, in so far as he belongs to the framework' (Murdoch 1997, p. 70). I agree with Antonaccio when she argues that Murdoch is trying to find a way between these options (see 2000, pp. 111–2), and so would share Chang's concerns with the latter, even while she criticises the former.

This can be seen particularly in her account of ***imagination***, which I will now explore in more detail.[24]

In her review of Hampshire's book ***Freedom of the Individual***, which I have already mentioned, Murdoch accuses Hampshire of working with a strict dualism of will and of reason, and as a result being unable to properly accommodate the imagination, which he 'relegates…to the passive side of the mind', regarding it as a 'side issue' which is 'not even mentioned in his main argument', which treats '"imaginings" as just drifting ideas'. Murdoch argues that Hampshire is forced to 'bypass' the imagination in this way 'because this word may be used to name an activity which is awkward for his theory':

> I should like to use the word (in a sense more like its normal one) to describe something which we all do a great deal of the time. This activity, which may be characterised by a contrast with 'strict' or 'scientific' thinking, is (like so many totally familiar things) not easy to describe, but one might attempt a description as follows: a type of reflection on people, events, etc., which builds detail, adds colour, conjures up possibilities in ways which go beyond what could be said to be strictly factual. When this activity is thought to be bad it is sometimes called 'fantasy' or 'wishful thinking'. That we are all constantly engaged in this activity is something which Hampshire chooses to ignore, and he selects his vocabulary accordingly. (Murdoch 1997, p. 198)

Thus, while Hampshire sees imagining as passive, and as dangerous because it is likely to deceive reason,[25] Murdoch treats this as fantasising,[26] but instead treats imagining as

[24] In discussing the imagination, Murdoch draws on but also criticises predecessors such as Plato, Hume, Kant, Schopenhauer and Coleridge, but in ways that I cannot explore here. For some useful discussion of Murdoch's treatment of Kant and Plato, see Altorf 2008, Chapter 4. Some of the ways Murdoch uses and conceives of the imagination are finding echoes in contemporary debates, but the relevance of her position has been largely overlooked: see e.g. and Johnson 1993, King and Kung 2016, Badura and Kind 2021, in which there is no discussion of Murdoch. An exception is Chappell 2014, in which Murdoch is mentioned in relation to the account Chappell offers of the moral imagination.

[25] In a somewhat different way, Murdoch thinks this is true of Kant too: see Murdoch 1992, pp. 309–11.

[26] Murdoch draws a contrast between imagining and fantasising in several places, e.g. Murdoch 1992, p. 321. For further discussion, see Compaijen 2021. She also warns that imagination can lead us astray in other ways, for example by becoming 'too aesthetic' and hence tempting us to be 'stylish rather than right', and also something we can indulge in as a substitute for acting (see Murdoch 1992, pp. 334-5). However, I think A. S. Byatt goes too far when she comments that 'Miss Murdoch, it seems to me, like Simone Weil, in some fundamental way suspects the imagination' (Byatt 1994, p. 203), a view that is endorsed in Gordon 1995, p. 24

something which we can control in a way that is integral to practical reasoning.[27] The imagination thus forms an important place in our moral psychology where reason and will come together, which is why it cannot be fitted into Hampshire's more dualistic picture which contrasts the 'impersonal rational thinker' with the 'personal will' (Murdoch 1997, p. 332): 'He can readily admit imaginings which are unwilled, isolated, passive. But if we admit active imagination as an important faculty it is difficult not to see this as an exercise of will. Imagining is doing, it is a sort of personal exploring' (Murdoch 1997, p. 199).[28] Murdoch also importantly connects imagination with another key concept of hers (which she acknowledges came to her through Simone Weil),[29] namely ***attention***, where in this discussion she puts imagination and attention together,[30] and also treats the latter as active rather than merely passive, something that can be achieved through a variety of 'techniques'.[31]

Murdoch intentionally does not offer a very explicit or detailed account of how precisely she understands the imagination, how it guides us in action, and how we are active in employing it.[32] On the first point, it is clear from her discussions and examples that her conception of the imagination is very broad. In the moral case this might involve: imagining scenarios and possibilities such as whether a situation can be changed, how different actions will lead to different changes, and what the impact of those changes will be; seeing

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note 10. Unfortunately, the very interesting relation between Murdoch and Weil on this issue, which Byatt raises, cannot be considered here for reasons of space.

[27] Cf. Murdoch 1992, p. 324: 'we may like to insist that good reasoning and learning is imaginative', and p. 310: 'We would ordinarily say that rational judgment must involve, for instance, an ability to imagine various situations'.

[28] Cf. Murdoch 1992, p. 321, where Murdoch characterises imagination as 'freely and creatively exploring the world, moving toward the expression and elucidation (and in art celebration) of what is true and deep', and p. 323 where she calls imagination 'the mind's work' of 'searching, joining, light-seeking…which prepares and forms the consciousness for action'. Her discussion of imagination in Murdoch 1992 also comes in the context of a challenge to the dualism of 'intellect and will' (p. 324; cf. also p. 330).

[29] See, for example, the section 'Attention and the Will' in Weil 1947/2002, pp. 116–22.

[30] Cf. Murdoch 1997, pp. 199-200: 'We evaluate not only by intentions, decisions, choices (the events Hampshire describes), but also, and largely, by the constant quiet work of attention and imagination'. Cf. also p. 199: 'The formulation of beliefs about other people often proceeds and must proceed imaginatively and under a direct pressure of will. We have to ***attend*** to people, we may have to have *faith* in them, and here justice and realism may demand the inhibition of certain pictures, the promotion of others'.

[31] In his otherwise highly sceptical treatment of the idea of mental agency, even Galen Strawson allows that the imagination is perhaps the most plausible case, though he is less forgiving of attention: though relevant, there is not space to discuss his arguments here. See Strawson 2003.

[32] Cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 198, where she applies to the imagination a general point often stressed by phenomenologists: namely that the activity of imagining is 'not easy to describe' because it is 'totally familiar'. Cf. also Murdoch 1992, p. 322: 'The concept of the imagination is, on reflection, an essential one… It is on the other hand so ubiquitous that it is in danger of seeming empty'.

how things look from someone else's perspective; gaining some insight into their nature or character; and devising new concepts, which often have an important metaphorical and hence imaginative element — all of which may be required as part of the process of moral reasoning or reflection or thinking, which makes the latter more than just the rather mechanical process of comparing reasons to act for and against.[33] On the second point, the way the imagination can help us in engaging with others can incorporate all these aspects, from putting ourselves in their shoes, to changing the image we have of them (as in Murdoch's famous example of the mother-in-law M and the daughter-in-law D),[34] to also recognizing the limitations of our power of imagination, as a way of acknowledging the 'otherness' and particularity of others ('I can't really imagine what it must be like for her'). And on the third point, we can be active in our imagining, by deploying it in the consideration of the situation, and also by coming to question how well our imagination has worked, and taking steps to employ it better, for example by paying more attention, or adopting different metaphors, images and concepts, or setting aside the distortions of prejudice or fantasy, or acknowledging that our imaginative efforts have failed or at least require constant re-working — all of which require mental activity on the part of the subject.[35]

Now, the reason I have emphasised this active element of imagination in Murdoch's account, is to bring out that it puts her conception of the will in a somewhat different light. For, I would argue, her account does not straightforwardly fit the one that concerns Chang, which treats the will as entirely subservient to reason and which excludes agency on that basis. It is true that for Murdoch choice has a diminished place at the point of action — but this is because the will has ***already*** been engaged at the level of the imagination, and so has already played its role, as it were. This means we are not passive even when we have some

[33] Cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 198, where in her Hampshire review, Murdoch contrasts '"strict" or "scientific" thinking' with imagining. On the one hand, one might compare deciding whether to go to France on holiday, or take a job, or form a relationship, by running through the pros and cons; on the other hand, one might imagine oneself in France, working in that job, or being in that relationship, and decide on that basis instead: for example, by rejecting a job because 'I just can't imagine myself working for them!'.

[34] Cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 313: 'D is discovered [by M] to be not vulgar but refreshingly simple, not undignified but spontaneous, not noisy but gay, not tiresomely juvenile but delightfully youthful, and so on'.

[35] Cf. Murdoch 1992, p. 215: 'It is a matter of what we "see things as", what we let, or make, ourselves think about, how by innumerable movements, we train our instincts and develop our habits and test our methods of verification. Imagery, metaphor, has its deep roots and origins in this self-being, and an important part of human learning is an ability both to generate and to judge and understand the imagery which helps us to interpret the world'.

clear reason to act, as it is through this activity of imagination that what we have reason to do has hereby become apparent to us *as* a reason. We have thus already ***brought ourselves*** to see the situation a certain way — which is why in seeing it that way, we appear to have little room left for choice, and the decision makes itself.[36] I think this is what Murdoch is saying in this important passage from 'The Idea of Perfection', where she speaks both about 'imaginative effort' and 'attention':

> I can only choose within the world I can ***see***, in the moral sense of 'see' which implies that clear vision is a result of **moral imagination and moral effort**. There is of course 'distorted vision', and the word 'reality' here inevitably appears as a normative word… One is often compelled almost automatically by what one ***can*** see. **If we ignore the prior work of attention** and notice only the emptiness of the moment of choice we are **likely to identify freedom with the outward movement since there is nothing else to identify it with**. But if we consider what the work of attention is like, how continuously it goes on, and how imperceptibly it builds up structures of value round about us, we shall not be surprised that at crucial moments of choice **most of the business of choosing is already over**. This does not imply that we are not free, certainly not. But it implies that the exercise of our freedom is a small piecemeal business which goes on all the time and not a grandiose leaping about unimpeded at important moments. The moral life, on this view, is something that goes on continually, not something that is switched off in between the occurrence of explicit moral choices. What happens in between such choices is indeed what is crucial. (Murdoch 1997, p. 329, my bold emphases)

[36] Cf. Samuel forthcoming, MS p. 2: 'Murdoch underlines that agency is not a power dormant in us most of our lives, springing into act at moments of choice — it is the active aspect of our constant, inner, reflective engagement with the world. What emerges from her critique is a more sophisticated picture of agency, the ongoing, active work of which turns out to be implicated in ethical vision after all.' Cf. also Antonaccio 2000, who argues that Murdoch has an account of the relation between the will and vision which is 'reciprocal': 'the influence between vision and the will may be pictured as mutual rather than strictly linear' (p. 149).

Once we reject Hampshire's dualism of will and reason,[37] and see that imagination is both something we do and something that opens us up to the world,[38] then it is less tempting to confine the will and hence agency just to a moment of choice or reason-creation. Rather, because it is always already involved in the building up of our non-delusive picture of the world, the will and agency does not only come in at that point of choice; nor does it have to do so, as the will has already played its role through the activity of imagining and attending,[39] through which it may then be clear that we are only faced by one real option, once the values in question are made apparent to us in this way. But again, because the will is engaged in this process, it need not then be required to create reasons either, as Chang thinks is necessary if we are to be fully free.

It seems to me, therefore, that Murdoch's position suggests a route out of the aporia with which we began. This arose because on the one hand, in the case of a moral agent like the Good Samaritan, voluntarism about the reasons on which he acts seems misplaced; but on the other hand, such agents may seem to be reduced to passive automata in their moral actions, if all the will then does is lead the agent to act on the basis of these reasons.[40] What Murdoch reminds us, however, is that the will can play a crucial role via the imagination (and also via attention) in uncovering and attuning us to those reasons, in a way that enables the agent to see themselves as actively engaged with their actions in a different way.

III. Aporia resolved?

[37] Other philosophers who have also rejected this dualism would include Thomas Reid and G. W. F. Hegel: see Reid 1788, Essay II, Chapter III, where Reid insists that the understanding and the will are 'conjoined'; and Hegel 1830/2007, §468, where Hegel bases the transition from 'thought' to 'will' on the recognition of the role that the will plays in thinking. Questioning this dualism is also at the heart of contemporary debates concerning 'mental action': see e.g. O'Brien and Soteriou (eds) 2009.

[38] Cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 374: 'We use our imagination not to escape the world but to join it'.

[39] As Mark Hopwood has pointed out to me, Murdoch might not approve of my use of the terminology of 'will' here, as (particularly in her later writings), she connects willing with the kind of 'straining' that could be associated with acting on duty (see e.g. Murdoch 1992, pp. 300-7). But as she herself makes clear, this is just a matter of terminological tidiness in how one might 'restrict the term', and she is still happy to talk in the kind of agential ways that I am emphasising here: cf. p. 300: 'Experience, awareness, consciousness, these words emphasise the existence of the thinking, planning, remembering, acting moral being as a mobile creature living in the present'.

[40] As mentioned above, Murdoch might herself be said to set up this aporia in contrasting Liberal morality with Natural Law morality in 'Metaphysics and Ethics'.

Finally, assuming I am right that this is Murdoch's way of dealing with our aporia, how successful is it?

A first challenge from someone like Chang, who is concerned that our freedom is compromised insofar as our will is guided by reasons, is to ask why reasons may not equally take away our freedom at the level of the imagination, unless that too involves the will in the creation of reasons? Even if the will is involved in deliberating on reasons to act, on Murdoch's account must it not still be determined by reasons to imagine one way or another, and so remain a slave to the intellect?[41]

I think Murdoch could responds to this concern as follows. As the moral reasons to act in this situation are not yet known (which is why the process of imagining is being conducted), they cannot constrain the will in its imagining.[42] Thus, in using the imagination with the aim of uncovering these reasons, while there will then be reasons to imagine or attend in some ways and not others, nonetheless because of the epistemic uncertainties involved, the will still has a kind of license in how it proceeds in its operations. I therefore have various options here in how I direct my imagining which are not fixed in advance or binding from the outset on my imaginative endeavours, making this process 'a sort of personal exploring', as Murdoch puts it — but this is not random choosing either, carried out in a void, as it is also shaped by various parameters of inquiry even if it is not determined by them.[43] Thanks to its role in the imagination, the will thus finds freedom

[41] Michael Murray draws attention to a similar challenge as it arises in the context of the early modern debate: 'Some tried to thwart this objection [that the intellect is determined] by arguing that the will exercises control over the process of practical deliberation, rendering the activity of the intellect free, albeit in a derivative sense. However, critics argued that this view falls prey to an equally vicious infinite regress, since the intellectualists claimed that each act of will in turn required a judgment of the intellect to move it' (Murray 2005, p. 202).

[42] I do not mean that no moral reasons at all can constrain the will in its role in imagining, just any specific moral reasons that might be relevant here. It may be that there are general moral reasons not to try to imagine some things, which is reflected in the phenomenon of 'imaginative resistance'. And it may also be that our imaginative efforts at uncovering moral reasons will require the imagination to involve certain virtues, such as honesty and sincerity.

[43] Murdoch 1997, p. 199. Cf. Murdoch 1997, p. 257, where Murdoch is speaking about the role of imagination in art and literature: 'We bestow significance but we also constantly test it and we incorporate the tests, the tests of truth, in the work itself'. Cf. also Murdoch 1997, p. 506, where in the dialogue Socrates comments, 'We put the truth into a conceptual picture because we feel it can't be expressed in any other way; and then truth itself forces us to criticise the picture', to which Acastos asks 'You mean using images, and then trying to improve them, and — ' and Socrates replies 'In a way we are all artists, we all use metaphors and symbols and figures of speech…' There may also be some analogy with scientific inquiry here: until the truth is settled, the inquirer has various options that can be used to investigate into the truth (various hypotheses to be tested, experiments to be conducted, models to be tried), which while they cannot be chosen randomly, nonetheless leave various options open.

within practical reason, rather than on Chang's picture, in which it can find a space for freedom only when the 'given' reasons fall short or give out.

But this could give rise to a second challenge: what about the Good Samaritan on this account? If Murdoch is claiming that the moral agent is not generally faced by situations of choice because they have already been active in using their moral imaginations, doesn't this also involve some falsification of the case, as it may not be clear that this is going on here either: doesn't the Samaritan just see the traveller needs help and act accordingly, precisely without going through all the mental effort of imagining and attending that M requires in order to see D in the right way? But if this is the case, isn't he then unfree by Murdoch's lights, as well as Chang's?

In response, it is clear that the Good Samaritan's situation is less self-consciously effortful than M's, and as before, we would arguably treat him as less of a paradigm (or at least, a different sort of paradigm) if he were more like M. Nonetheless, I think it is open to Murdoch to argue that in seeing the traveller as he does, the Good Samaritan's capacities for imagination and attention will have been sufficiently engaged to still make this a case where his agency has been involved — perhaps not at the point of seeing the needs of the traveller, but in developing a view of the world in which that perception takes place, and perhaps not always full actively but often medio-passively,[44] in giving him the practical perspective in which he acts, a perspective which can thus claim to be *his*. The Good Samaritan may not be busy developing that perspective when he comes to act (as M is, perhaps), but he may nonetheless be said to be drawing on it as a crucial background to that action.

Chang is thus right that we would lack freedom if practical reason just 'led us around by the nose'. But she is wrong that the only way to avoid this is if we create reasons, just as the post-Kantians are wrong that the only way to avoid this is if the will can step back from the intellect in making a rationally ungrounded choice — it can also be avoided if we control imagination and attention and thus exercise our agency *within practical reason itself*. While the worry is that Chang's account leads to the counter-intuitive conclusion that the Good Samaritan cannot be genuinely free because he does not create reasons, on the account offered above the Good Samaritan is free because his immediate responsiveness to the

[44] Cf. Han-Pile 2020.

traveller's need is the culmination of a process of ethical self-transformation through the repeated use of his imagination and attention in the uncovering of reasons.

Thirdly, however, Chang may still feel that we are just back with what she rejects as 'the orthodox account', for although Murdoch's view may give the will some role in imagination and attention, this is still not enough to give Chang what she wants: for while she might allow that Murdoch is right that the will is involved when a moral agent imagines and attends, this still does not 'engage their very selves', which she thinks cannot occur in simply recognising reasons and responding accordingly (even if this recognition involves an active imagining and attending), but only 'in the activity of creating them' (Chang 2021, p. 101), and in the commitment of the self that is involved in this creation which then gives the agent their motivation to act.[45]

In response to this point, however, it could be said in reply that this underestimates what Murdoch takes to be involved in imagining and attending in the moral case, and in particular the kind of ***struggle*** and thus engagement that this can often require. For, on Murdoch's account, because '[t]he world is not given to us "on a plate"', our way of coming to view it is a kind of 'creative task', something we must work at (Murdoch 1992, p. 215). For example, this may involve us taking a stand for or against certain 'pictures' we have of other people and our relation to them, struggling to hold on to the right way of seeing and to resist the wrong ones — and in engaging in this 'work' of 'viewing the world' there is then more room for the idea that the self thereby ***commits*** itself to a position in the way Chang wants.

Here is one passage that suggests this response:

> The formulation of beliefs about other people often proceeds and must proceed imaginatively and under a direct pressure of the will. We have to ***attend*** to people, we may have to have ***faith*** in them, and here justice and realism may demand the inhibition of certain pictures, the promotion of others. (Murdoch 1997, p. 199)

We might illustrate this with the case of M and D: M has to actively suppress her various prejudices and preconceptions about D in order to see D rightly — where this involves the

[45] See also Chang 2013a on her view of commitment.

will in not just choosing, but in engaging with this process in which we thereby commit ourselves. Moreover, this relates to two other aspects of Murdoch's broader account: the first is how she talks of the self in terms of an energy that needs re-orientation, which can be accomplished not through 'pure will' and telling yourself to 'stop being in love, stop feeling resentment, be just', but through the will's role in attending and imagining through which we shape ourselves;[46] and the second is that on Murdoch's account, agents are plagued by various kinds of self-concern and egoism that again require struggle and effort to resist ('the inhibition of certain pictures, the promotion of others'), in a way which can be said to 'engage their very selves' in the way that Chang requires.

This side of Murdoch also explains an otherwise puzzling passage:

> I have been arguing that Hampshire's sharp distinctions of active and passive, reason and will, break down because a constructive activity of imagination and attention 'introduces' value into the world which we confront. We have already partly willed our world when we come to look at it; and we must admit moral responsibility for this 'fabricated' world, however difficult it may be to control the process of fabrication. (Murdoch 1997, p. 201)[47]

This has puzzled commentators,[48] as it might sound like Murdoch is going back on the kind of realism that she appears to support elsewhere. But I think she can be read as saying that precisely because the will is seriously involved in imagination and attention, we cannot view the world neutrally; rather, because how we see that world is the outcome of the will-directed work of our attention and imagination, the result is thereby disclosed to us as reason-giving, given the 'work' that has gone into this process, and thus the commitment involved – but this commitment lies not in creating those reasons (as Chang would have it), but in coming to see them.[49] The activity of imagination (and attention) thus does not

[46] Murdoch 1997, p. 345.
[47] Cf. also p. 200: 'We are obscure to ourselves because the world we see already contains our values and we may not be aware of the slow delicate processes of imagination and will which have put those values there.'
[48] Cf. Broackes 2012, pp. 79–80.
[49] Cf. Murdoch 1992, p. 215: 'The world is not given to us "on a plate", it is given to us as a creative task. It is impossible to banish morality from this picture. We *work*, using or failing to use our honesty, our courage, our truthful imagination, at the interpretation of what is present to us, as we of necessity shape it and "make something of it". We help it to be. We work at the meeting point where we deal with a world which is other than ourselves.'

merely enable the agent to encounter reasons that they would not have encountered otherwise, but also plays a role in the agent coming to treat this process *as* an encounter with reasons through the kind of sense-making activity involved, and thus in leading the agent to act accordingly.[50] However, where she and Chang still differ is that Murdoch allows that our activity here can be carried out wrongly and hence lead us astray in a way that Chang does not, hence Murdoch's remaining realism which is part of the orthodox view.

I think there are also two other points where Murdoch can agree with Chang, but without going over to the latter's position entirely. The first point is to accept that if reasons always decisively fixed how we should act, this would deprive us of the possibility of making the kind of freely chosen commitments that define our individual identity, and thus the ability to create who we are through those commitments, a commitment that may itself gives rise to reasons by altering our preferences and priorities — as when we commit to one career over another, or one partner over another, or even one football team over another. On the other hand, against Chang she can also hold that we may also discover our identity by coming to see the reasons that apply to us, so not everything here is a matter of choice. The second point of agreement is to accept that even in the moral situation, reasons can fail to determine action — for example, when faced with dilemmas, or imperfect obligations. Murdoch may seem to rule this out when she writes: 'If I attend properly I will have no choices and this is the ultimate condition to be aimed at… The ideal situation…is to be represented as a kind of "necessity"' (Murdoch 1997, p. 331). However, I think we should interpret Murdoch here as saying this is the ideal in situations where sufficient attention can settle the matter, like that of the Good Samaritan — but she doesn't have to be read as saying that all moral situations are like this, even for her 'saints'. Nonetheless, unlike Chang, Murdoch still won't see these indeterminate moral cases as the special ones that alone make genuine freedom possible.

This does not mean, however, that in following Murdoch we are now just back with what Chang rejects as the 'orthodox account', for in acting how they do in the light of this situation, the agent can feel they form part of the process whereby they have come to act,

[50] This might seem to create a 'wrong reasons' worry, but I think it does not: the reason to act (e.g. the other's distress) comes to be seen as a reason as a result of this will-involving process (e.g. through imaginatively putting myself in the other's shoes), but when the agent then acts, they do so for that reason (e.g. the distress of the other).

even in cases like that of the Good Samaritan — not by creating reasons, but by guiding and deploying their capacities of imagination and attention. The action is therefore not that of an automaton who simply responds to information provided from elsewhere, as this is information the subject has arrived at in a way that involves the will, in a world in which they have committed themselves, rather than being merely passive respondents in the manner of a robot.[51] It is also not a deterministic fatalism, according to which (as Murdoch puts it) '[f]orces within me which are dark to me have already made the decision' (Murdoch 1997, p. 238), as the 'force' of imagination on which the decision is based is something in which the will is incorporated.

In this way, I would therefore suggest, Murdoch shows us how to move beyond the dualism of will and reason that the aporia concerning freedom in moral action relies on. For, it is possible to resolve our aporia by appeal to her conception of imagination as something that involves the will on the one hand, but without needing to claim that the will is involved in the creation of reasons on the other. And by liberating us from fantasy, the imagination can also render us free in another way: by helping us escape from the neuroses and falsifying veil within which we so easily imprisoned ourselves.[52] [53]

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[51] Cf. Murdoch 1997, pp. 314–5: 'When we settle down to be "thoroughly rational" about a situation, we have already, reflectively or unreflectively, imagined it in a certain way. Our deepest imaginings which structure the world in which "moral judgments" occur are already evaluations'. Cf. Broackes, who contrasts Murdoch's position with one he finds in T. H. Huxley, who wrote: 'if some great Power would agree to make me always think what is true and do what is right, on condition of being turned into a sort of clock and wound up every morning before I got out of bed, I should instantly close with the offer'; as Broackes notes, Huxley's view leaves out the role of the agent in coming to understand what is true and good, in a way that Murdoch would reject (Broackes 2012, p. 55). This may still not satisfy Chang, however, who writes: 'But the freedom to discover which alternative one is rationally required to choose is not what defines us as agents who care about the things that we do' (Chang 2015, pp. 171–2).

[52] Cf. Murdoch 1992, p. 331: 'The good (better) man is *liberated* from selfish fantasy, can see himself as others see him, imagine the needs of other people, love unselfishly, lucidly envisage and desire what is truly valuable'. Cf. also p. 322, where she speaks of fantasy as something that 'can imprison the mind'.

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