



Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals (Penguin Philosophy)

By Iris Murdoch

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The decline of religion and ever increasing influence of science pose acute ethical issues for us all. Can we reject the literal truth of the Gospels yet still retain a Christian morality? Can we defend *any* 'moral values' against the constant encroachments of technology? Indeed, are we in danger of losing most of the qualities which make us truly human? Here, drawing on a novelist's insight into art, literature and abnormal psychology, Iris Murdoch conducts an ongoing debate with major writers, thinkers and theologians—from Augustine to Wittgenstein, Shakespeare to Sartre, Plato to Derrida—to provide fresh and compelling answers to these crucial questions.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

British novelist-philosopher Murdoch's treatise on contemporary morality spans such topics as Shakespearean tragedy, Martin Buber's philosophy and the nature of the imagination.

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From Library Journal

This book is about the interplay of metaphysical images in art, religion, and especially morals. Morality is fundamental to human nature and is to be understood, according to distinguished novelist and philosophy professor Murdoch, not merely in piecemeal analysis but in the broad synthesis of metaphysical categories that set the order and pattern of our moral experience and our concepts thereof. Moral discernment comes from concentrated attention and appears *ex nihilo*, as by a kind of grace that leads us from contingent detail toward a perfection that we (allegedly) know intuitively. The work draws significant influence from Plato and Kant and also discusses aspects of Schopenhauer, Wittgenstein, and Buber in detail. Far-ranging and rich with well-chosen examples, this insightful book challenges us to think more clearly about its subject.

- *Robert Hoffman, York Coll., CUNY*

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Review

"Iris Murdoch has written a book which concerns all of us as human beings ... There are pages here that one wants to embrace her for, pages that say things of fundamental human importance in a way that they have never quite been said before"

—Noel Malcolm in the **Sunday Telegraph**

"This is philosophy dragged from the cloister, dusted down and made freshly relevant to suffering and egoism, death and religious ecstasy ... and how we feel compassion for others"

—Terry Eagleton in the **Guardian**

"Gripping ... it enchants with a clause that sets you daydreaming, captivates with a stream of thought, empowers with reminiscences"

—Ian Hacking in the **London Review of Books**

"Anyone who has even the slightest interest in philosophical matters will find *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* an utterly absorbing book"

—**The Wall Street Journal**

"Remarkable ... Iris Murdoch has once again put us all in her debt."

—Alasdair MacIntyre in **The New York Times Book Review**

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