

Ethics and Normativity Seminar Series

“Iris Murdoch’s Perfectionism”



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Iris Murdoch takes a position that resembles figures in the broadly Moorean tradition (Nagel, Raz, Wolf) in privileging exemplary aesthetic and intellectual values, and in maintaining that they are beneficial for us to engage with because of their excellence (*simpliciter*). I argue that, even as the comparison is useful in putting Murdoch into conversation with views that are better understood, the resemblance is superficial. Murdoch takes the excellence-making feature of exemplary artworks and intellectual disciplines to be their form-like nature: their success at serving as models or accounts of reality. If we take the Platonic dimension of Murdoch’s project seriously, then it is not right to say that the objects have the property of being good in anything like Moore’s sense. In fact, I will offer a reading of Murdoch’s perfectionism that brings her closer to the view of the Mooreans’ opponents – a view on which the power of excellence and the power of benefit are one and the same. I bring out what is distinctive and promising about this proposal.

Friday, April 11th
Science Building - 120
3:00 – 5:00

Everyone is invited to continue discussion at *Axelrad* after the talk.