

**PERFECT MURDOCH:
WIM WENDERS'S LATEST CINEMATIC VISION
AS REITERATION OF MURDOCHIAN IDEAS AND
IDEALS**

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This new paper introduces and attempts to elucidate, explain, and extrapolate some nuanced and meaningful ways in which Wim Wenders's award-winning 2023 film *Perfect Days*, a gently engaging study of the unspectacular daily activities of an unassuming, taciturn Tokyo toilet cleaner, aligns with and, both literally and figuratively, reiterates and reinforces some cornerstone elements of Iris Murdoch's moral philosophy.

In particular, I argue, the film skilfully and poignantly dramatizes Murdoch's concepts of unselfing and the human (ist) quest to identify and emulate 'goodness' in our (in the movie's case, literally) faecal (I want to say 'shitty'; Iris might have preferred 'messy') messed-up modern life.

In doing so, Wenders's film can, in turn, function as a useful conduit to the comprehension of revealing similarities (be they conscious or unconscious) between the early British Romantic ideals and Japanese Zen psycho-philosophy that sit seamlessly in much of Murdoch's work. I select some specific instances of these intertextual intercultural correlations in order to clarify and amplify this aspect of the heightened significance the movie might have to a viewer interested in Murdoch's work.

In pursuit of this, by referring to a selection of Murdoch's published and unpublished poems, her novels, and philosophical writings, I necessarily dwell upon Murdoch's moral philosophical idea of unselfing, the moral process by which an individual, piercing the resistant ego, shifts attention away from self-centred concerns toward a clearer vision: a more objective and truthful apprehension of reality. This, Murdoch often linked with an appreciation of beauty, nature, or art (including music and song, as judiciously used in Wenders's understated narrative): a secular modern morality with love at its centre is thereby and consequently discovered rather than created. Goodness, in Murdoch's view,



is transcendently (and transcendently) tied to this attentiveness to others and the world outside of oneself, indubitably concomitant with nature filtered and framed into art, and Wenders knowingly makes this both his film and its protagonist Hirayama's *raison d'être*.

In short, in this paper, I endeavour to identify and consider ways Wenders's beautifully engaging cinematic vision elegantly ventriloquises important Murdochian themes at what must ultimately be considered both textual and meta-textual levels.

(This presentation was respectfully dedicated to the memory of Miharu Otsuki, a much loved IMSJ member and a highly regarded Murdochian scholar. A wonderful, good person, taken from us far too soon, she is greatly missed.)