31. More Essays (and More about My Essays)

Shakespeare was writing his best plays at the age I was writing these honours course essays. All these essays, all these practise-like essays that, along with the ones written before and after this period, I look upon now as preliminary to the one called *On Truthtelling*. To the one great essay that is both cumulative with respect to my best writing (despite what is preliminary or practise-like about it) and redeeming of my worst (which of course can be nothing other than my playwrighting). So much by way of deflating and then inflating my ego in an instant. This is something I can do at the present juncture with a certain amount of confidence in making this comparison between myself and Shakespeare (which I wouldn't make if I didn't think it touched all aspects of my writerly aspirations) whereas something like the opposite was the case when I was still struggling as a playwright. But once this dream was left behind and I had set my sights on a philosophico-literary enterprise both set in the university and drawing from outside it, I was able to think that, even with this essay writing so preliminary and practise-like, I was on the road to something great.

– Something too much of this.

Let me say it straight out and without mincing words. I have an overpowering urge to put these essays on parade. Not every one of them was an effrontery to scholarly-like attitudes but enough were that I had no difficulty keeping at a distance what I would have most abhorred doing. And this was the sort of thing that the good Professor Shimizu, a philosophy professor at the University of Winnipeg, had done as a student and told me about one day. The details aren't important because it was the sort of thing many students have done or at least I have good reason to think have done. Nevertheless one thing does stick out about it that seems relevant to what I feared most as a (however remote) possibility. Pandering one time to a difficult professor so in love with his own point of view that he gave top marks only to written assignments reflecting it back to him was, if I judge correctly, still on Professor Shimizu's conscience some thirty or thirty-five years later.

– I certainly don't think a professor should be in love with his own point of view or a student pandering to it. If ever there was somebody in my class who thought he could gain by it, he was quickly disappointed.

In retrospect, what I can say was that I was banking up a moral authority in writing essays that few people possess. And this was largely due to my allowing no outside authority of whatever kind to intimidate me. It is still the case that, whenever I look back over the many essays I wrote as university

assignments, I experience a sense of wonder at the tenacity with which I held to this principle. Here in fact was where I saw my highest good and where I now see this good having more in common with Satan-like rebelliousness than divine order. Certainly I'm not put off by this since, as is the case with Milton's God in *Paradise Lost*, authority can never discharge itself of an arbitrary element that belies and is in indeed caught up in its presumed grounding in reason and right. Certainly I'm not one who wants to think his rebelliousness ever extended to employing treacherous means and yet, as I know from personal experience, arguments put forward as legitimate critique by one party can easily be treated as unfair play by another.

– The nature of argument can't be summed up so easily as that. It can't be simply reduced to strategy that either side thinks the other has but not itself.

– He didn't say that exactly.

– What did he say exactly?

– He said arguments put forward as legitimate critique by one party can easily be treated as unfair play by another.

– Well, I believe in a fusion of horizons. People can be acutely attentive to what others are saying and if what they're saying is sound and well-reasoned, then it can be integrated into their own way of thinking.

– But how do we distinguish this fusion of horizons from appropriating from others what merely fits in with our position?

– Is this an argument you're giving me?

– How do we distinguish what comes from argument and what comes from other factors?

– Because there are some questions meant to sabotage any possibility of argument.

Pressing forward with my impossible subject, trying to make it possible only in a way that has never been done before, I do the singular violence of setting myself up as a sun from which all else gains visibility. This is at least the close-up view of the matter that is never far away from a reproach to

such high-handed presumption and to leaving out so much thought and observation that belong to others. But is it not possible with a more wide-ranging and magnanimous outlook to see this presumption as a sort of monadic-like operation, a view of the whole from one particular corner that may be captured in different ways and to different degrees by others?

– Isn't it incumbent upon us to respect the other party as we ourselves wish to be respected? Then if we consider ourselves serious and truthful thinkers, we should allow as much to others.

– But what a burden that places on all whose goal is truth about something and not truthtelling. (My hero, please grant me the strength to answer Professor Chalmers who is testing you and yet is you and – oh, it's so hard to be truthful!) For what they aim at never has this telling as part of its subject and so is never an examination of what might or might not be truthful about it.

The demands upon me are immeasurable. In truth, I can't cope with all this complicating and even over-complicating. Inevitably I'm driven towards simplifying. At least such is my situation as soon as I want to give some substance to my observations. And part of this simplifying process is already underway when I'm forced to examine major works, particularly philosophical ones, through my own lens. Through not only this essay but those past ones that examine this and that in various works and so never examine them completely and with greatest precision. Yet what other way, pray tell, would keep me on my subject and in the direction of treating it as thoroughly as possible? To leave myself out (but of course this is never done by anyone except in appearance) might very well be the better way to tell the truth about some other subject but certainly not truthtelling.

– I can see I'm but a pawn here and it would be better — where's that book?

All the factors I must keep an eye on and not let slip out of sight. It seems that the best thing I can to do is to continually gauge the tension between the essays I wrote in the past and the one I'm writing now. Between the act of imagining these essays stretching out and being consummated as one great project and remembering them as little ones (here of course I should exempt the master's and doctoral theses) caught up in immediate anxieties and concerns. At the most technical level they were assignments to be done at certain designated times. Invariably they involved intensive work over a relatively short period. Half the battle in writing them was trying to come up

with a suitable topic or theme. Whenever I hit upon a title for an essay that pleased me, I generally thought I had the whole of it roughly in sight. Little did I write in the way of preliminary notes but, then again, never did I write an essay without much reading and reflection. On the other hand, I tended to give a few canonical texts a number of thorough readings rather than carry out a survey of related literature.

– What book are you looking for, Professor Chalmers?

– It's called Human Development and Destiny.

– Perhaps you left it at home.

– No, it's here.

– It's obviously taking on a very big subject.

– Yes, yes.

– It sounds very interesting.

– How could it disappear like that?

– Who's the author?

– Irene Charinsky.

– Is she well-known?

– Yes.

– What's it about, Professor Chalmers?

– She argues – where the devil did it go?

– Please tell me about it.

– She argues in this book that, on the basis of our past patterns of behaviour and what confronts us today in the way of environmental problems, we must choose between civilization without militarism (involving of course some great changes and sacrifices) and a slide towards barbarism.

With all this in mind (but how can it all be kept in mind?), I will try to single out and bear down on some essays that I haven't already touched upon and that belong to these honours courses in both English literature and philosophy. Just as before, my way of looking at them must cut against the grain, must subordinate some common virtues of philosophizing to elevate others, must reveal less by being clear and consistent than by being unflinching in the face of all complicating and over-complicating factors. The latter even includes the simplifying and even over-simplifying that go with any limited operation and perspective.

– Wow!

– It's a very bold bringing together of disciplines that are normally kept apart. You must understand that this is generally frowned upon by specialists who view it as being less strict and scientific than their own work. Also there is the human element. The author doesn't hide herself. She speaks directly about her own development as a thinker.

– You mean she gives an account of herself while dealing with the subject?

– Yes, indeed, she does. Only it's not something, as you might expect, that gets in the way of it. It merely shows how her thinking is grounded in present realities.

– She's taking into account the subjective side of things then.

– But not in a way that prevents her from saying something truthful about these matters.

– For people who share these present realities?

– Of course.

– So the book would be truthful even if these present realities changed and in some sense made it untruthful. But tell me, Professor Chalmers, what is most topical and important about this book?

– It sounds the alarm for where we are at this juncture in our history and lays out the options before us as rational beings presumably in charge of our destiny.

– Is she optimistic or pessimistic?

– Well, pessimistic insofar as men have long ruled the planet and employed the care principle as a subterfuge for dominating and exploiting whatever presumed enemy lay about.

– Is she saying we should turn our swords into ploughshares?

– There has to be a different mentality worldwide that turns away from the tribalism of nations and is truly fixed upon our interests as a global community.

There is no question that taking Nietzsche to heart had emboldened me to attack all comfort-seeking metaphysics, aesthetics, epistemology, and ethics. All that was a purifying, an idealizing, an upholding of the good (that malleable metal!) and that at the same time was not particularly pure in its ways and means of hammering out the truth. But of course why there should be any attempt to render truthtelling more pure and honourable even as one sabotaged its connection to the good was itself without answer except as a counter-idealization that had long held sway in me and that I knew was alive in the world as much as the other sort.

– Professor Chalmers, I hear you play a mean game of chess.

– From whom did you hear this?

– From Baumgarten.

– Baumgarten isn't in the habit of making comments like that.

– Well, I proposed a game of chess to him and he suddenly grew cool. I assumed it was because you'd beaten him very badly because I read the board in an instant and saw you'd had him in an impossible situation.

– My, how observant you are!

– You gave him a real shellacking.

– Yes, it's true. He did suffer two amazingly quick defeats at my hand. But in fairness to him, he was not playing well.

So with all that I have said and perhaps on occasion repeated, I'm ready to take hold of some of my essays that lend themselves in varying ways to my ever-renewed demonstration of the inseparability of truth from the telling of

it. I will start with an essay that clearly cuts against the grain, that pitted the professor who read it against me (but not so much in the way of this professor's assuming the voice of authority as being the advocate of Aristotle's), and that had deficiencies resulting from my ignorance in areas related to but outside the area I was examining.

– Let's play some chess, Professor Chalmers.

– I'm not in the mood.

It is the essay called "Contradiction and Confusion in Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*." What in essence was I doing here if not, by trying to make the case that Aristotle's work on ethics was maladroitly reasoned, overshooting the mark and thereby inviting a strong defence of it? In retrospect I can say that the source of the problem insofar as it was *my* problem was that I took Aristotle to be less competent than he was. Due to my limited familiarity with his works, I failed to take into consideration the teleological principle that invests the *Ethics* as well as the rest of the Aristotelian corpus but, with respect to the first, seems to be rather unstated or obscured.

– I see you're in the mood for a great game of chess, Professor Chalmers, but I only hope, if I shellac you, you won't take it unkindly.

At the time of writing this essay, I wasn't sensitive to the fact that whatever problem there is in Aristotle's *Ethics* (or, for that matter, his other works) has at its origin this teleological principle. As a consequence I ignored this part of his metaphysics and focussed instead on that part that, in the *Ethics*, is his schematic treatment of the human soul. Aristotle's division of the soul into rational and irrational parts was the nub of the problem for me since I took him to be continually smuggling the rational back into the irrational part in order to account for the formation of a virtuous character by training and upbringing. As the good Professor Miller pointed out, I was operating with the assumption that Aristotle took the rational and irrational parts of the soul to be mutually exclusive.

> *Professor Miller:* "Aristotle doesn't say straight out that the responsiveness of the irrational part of the soul to the rational part is rational in itself. Rather he says that it can participate in the soul's rational nature. You are trying to introduce deeper divisions in the soul than Aristotle countenances."

My essay was thus a continual emphasis upon the divisions and exclusions that I took to be either implicit or explicit in Aristotle's treatment of the human soul and that Professor Miller, in his ample marginal commentary, continually de-emphasized. It is easy for me now to see why he did so and why a certain fluidity is permitted in Aristotle's terminology.

> *Comment 2:* "Aristotle says that philosophical ethics is pointless unless one has some social mode of training and experience under one's belt. He also distinguishes ethics from the theoretical."
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> *Comment 3:* "Aristotle is not like Kant. He maintains that there is an empirical side to knowledge in its origins."
>
> *Comment 4:* "Aristotle doesn't claim that the appetitive part of the soul is rational but only that it can respond to deliberative choice."
>
> *Comment 5:* "Aristotle, like Kant, distinguishes a non-theoretical, practical form of rationality whose starting point is our rationally clarified wish for the good life that is a product of a) our human nature and b) our upbringing and experience."
>
> *Comment 6:* "Virtue in the strict sense is the union of rightly ordered appetite and rightly wishing and well-functioning deliberative reason."
>
> *Comment 7:* "There are outside forces of socialization but there are also the individual's own choices and actions and it is these last two that make one responsible for one's character."
>
> *Comment 8:* "You raise some good questions about how appetite, action, reason and virtue are connected and whether Aristotle can present a consistent picture of this. You have to be careful, though, that you adequately justify your attributions to Aristotle."

Even though Professor Miller admitted that I had raised some good questions and even while I recognized the generosity and fair-mindedness of his comments, I couldn't help but notice that these comments didn't extend to identifying and addressing these questions. No doubt he took the view that a student should grasp well the philosopher he was studying and that this understanding should have priority over all else. Perhaps he even felt that he only had time to dwell upon a traditional understanding of the *Ethics* and this for two reasons. First, that the radical critique I was attempting complicated

matters and, as a consequence, demanded more than could be properly handled by him as a pedagogue (if not as a scholar). Second, that a student's critique of a classical work should proceed on the basis of a traditional understanding lest he establish one on the basis of a *mis*understanding.

But after having said all this, I still find that Professor Miller's commentary itself poses a problem. In perusing it now, what I notice is that, although he responded well to the many points I brought up about the rational-irrational distinction in the *Ethics*, he refrained from mentioning anything about the underlying metaphysics or at least that part of it that gave Aristotle the right to blur this distinction. Like most professors might have done, he admitted the possibility of inconsistency in Aristotle's work and even the possibility that I had provided some evidence of this. Yet while going thus far in recognizing the merits of my critique, it still remains the case that he didn't mention the teleological principle and that this omission could be interpreted as a certain willingness to absolve it of any *blame* for the possibility of inconsistency. That Aristotle can rather convincingly project the rational back into the irrational but only go so far in explaining how the first arises out of the second – what is this but the space of an immeasurable problem and the perennial hope of solving it?

– It's irritating that he doesn't go anywhere, that he doesn't have an objective, that he goes so far as to demand dissatisfaction and disappointment with any possible answer. My word, there's a point at which one would like to get off the merry-go-round, take a stand somewhere and say, "Yes, this suits me perfectly. I don't have any reason to move from here. I don't have to fret and doubt and put things into question anymore."

So far am I from abandoning the teleological principle that I have as my personal and philosophical goal taking the broadest and boldest risk with it. Am I to do otherwise when it is precisely along this line that I see my subject most fully exposed and laid out? Most severely tried and tested and, as it were, put on the rack and stretched? Could irritants and vexation and possibly even boredom (what other tortures might there be?) be a reason to abandon *my* teleology? Well then, abandon all highest hopes and aspirations. Abandon the idea that one should tell the truth fearlessly and without compromise. Abandon the idea that to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth should be carried out by you or anyone else.

– Professor Chalmers, I've got something in my eye.

It is hard to study philosophy for very long without recognizing the almost universal objective of finding some first and final resting place. Indeed, it goes hand in hand with the project of planting and constructing a great technical tree of knowledge between a beginning and an end that are taken to be secure in at least some sense. And yet it is precisely this beginning and end that are not only modifiable but subject to being doubted, shaken, suspected, challenged, and even disbelieved through and through.

– He talks about his own teleology in glowing terms while disavowing or desacralizing – if I can use that word – philosophy's.

In philosophy there might be *two* teleologies conflicting with each other as the higher way, that is, precisely as two ways conflicting. Two ways each of which struggle to be the higher or highest way that is neither one nor the other but both.

– He's always waffling in a way that, if taken seriously, would cut the heart out of the very thing he wants to tell the truth about.

There may be a heart that beats in philosophy or, for that matter, truthtelling forever without a thought being necessary to it. In any event, when it came to writing an essay on Leibniz with the cheeky and even derisive title, "For God's Sake, What's a Monad?," it was not without the feeling that I was already in the presence of some such conflict. And this perhaps for the reason that Leibniz's metaphysics didn't register with me as something to be taken quite literally. That is, as something that was bereft of art or not possessed with a subversive element that allowed for a sort of dual register. Something like a secret avowal of the incomprehensibility of the whole at the heart of an account purporting to make it comprehensible.

"**For God's Sake, What's a Monad?**"

"This essay tries to follow two principles, the first of which it is the present business to unfold and the second of which is an assumption regarding the appropriate means by which to grasp hold of a complex subject. To grasp hold of it, that is, in the face of having to do so with no more than a student's level of scholarship and within the commensurately modest bounds of this writing assignment. The assumption about appropriate means then is that, in order to have the surest grasp of the subject (however much rough handling this entails), a student with limited means and time does best to immerse himself in the subject, reading and thinking carefully not simply with an eye for one particular part of it but for the whole and each part's

relation to it. In so doing, there is an inevitable blurring of at least some of the finer points, memory possibly altering them in the attempt to keep strictly before the eye the main outline and grosser features. As bad as this might sound, I do not think that the gain in insight and overall comprehension should go light in the scales. In any event, it is with this in mind that I decided to forego making specific references to the various writings of Leibniz and keep myself within the confines of memory and a general understanding. I place my trust in the diligence with which I read and thought about his philosophy and, as a corollary to this, the consideration that such a reading and reflection is the most important work.

"The first principle mentioned above and long delayed in being spelled out is really the form, style, and content of this paper. Specifically, it is the view that Leibniz's metaphysics is art as well as argument. In saying this, I pay heed to that part of the postmodern discourse that, as I understand it, sees all philosophy as in some sense artful. More specifically, it is the art that suppresses rhetorical elements but ultimately does not eliminate them. All such works, in other words, tell a story or paint a picture, paying a kind of covert but nonetheless painstaking attention to such things as style, probability, diversity, unity, balance, tonality, and so on. In works of highest accomplishment, one finds a content which is not only intellectually appealing but imaginatively so. This being said, Leibniz's metaphysics presents a particularly masterful example (despite the scattered nature of his work and the lack of a *magnum opus*) of a metaphysical epic whose argument is about heaven and hell and everything in between.

"We begin by noting that God is at one end of the spectrum or continuum and the humblest of bare monads at the other. Leibniz tells us that, though the monads be finite entities, they are infinite in number. At the same time they individually participate in this infinitude by not only mirroring God (at least such is the case with human souls or rational minds), but also by mirroring the created order as this infinite number of monads. The idea of such intensely complex entities stretching themselves away from God and of necessity becoming less perfect and simpler (but how is 'simple' to be understood here?) is, to say the least, stunning. Here we note, as we shall have occasion to note elsewhere, what might be called a grand paradox in Leibniz's account of the whole. It is non-reason suddenly becoming acceptable in a work of reason simply by virtue of the latter's breathtaking scope. And here it might also be noted that Leibniz resorts to a rhetorical ploy to cover up this paradox. Denying as he does that the imagination plays any part in grasping and appreciating monadic reality, he conveniently avoids examining even the *possibility* of its role. Which to identity it now and

in an admittedly convenient way, is its ability to follow reason to the vanishing point while engendering the conviction that it isn't *really* a vanishing point, that reason has every reason to turn away from this point to spend most of its time with the more visible features and details that prevent the monadology from being an immaculate conception.

"The Leibnizian god is analogous to the Christian god and the monadic continuum to Christian eschatology. The metaphysical saga and the theologico-biblical one have much in common. In both cases, God is an omnipotent, omniscient, and beneficent being who exists outside but participates to some degree in his own created order. In both cases, the latter is to some extent dependent on his divinity yet independent as mechanically self-operating universe and vitalistic community. Moreover, the created order in both cases involves a ranking or classification. The metaphysical equivalent of the angelic is that part of the monadic continuum stretching between man and God. The metaphysical equivalent of man himself is the monad as rational soul. The metaphysical equivalent of animals and plants is the monad as non-rational soul. And, finally, the metaphysical equivalent of insensate matter is the monad as bare entity.

"Grand schemes of this nature stun the intellect and appeal to the imagination. This might be evidenced in Leibniz's hierarchical ordering that is similar to Aristotle's Great Chain of Being. With respect to the former, however, there is a continuum with infinitesimally varying degrees of change which conflicts with the classificatory scheme. To sum it up quickly, the rational part of the Leibnizian continuum should, according to its characterization, merge imperceptibly with the non-rational part. Since both Leibniz's metaphysics and Christian theology identify all rational souls with human beings, it stands to reason that the former implies that there are creatures extremely close to being human beings without actually being them. However, this point of tension or inconsistency (which of course has doctrinal implications) is covered over by what we may observe as human beings *acting* like animals and vice versa. It is the plausibility factor then that ultimately speaks on the side of Leibniz's conception: the fact that human beings can, given pride on the one hand and shame on the other, think that there is an immense gulf between them and animals and yet, for all that, an intimate bond. (This parallels the traditional view of the relationship between man and God.)

"One important way in which the metaphysical narrative differs from the theologico-biblical one is its depiction of what we might call the pre-Creation scene. Leibniz addresses himself to the big question: Why is there

something rather than nothing? Tackling the matter of God's existence, he argues that, in order for him to exist, there must first be the *possibility* of his existence. Since anything is possible that does not include a manifest contradiction, and since the possibility of something is its essence, and since the essence of God is or includes his existence, it follows, according to Leibniz, that God must exist. (We note in passing that, however terrible this argument strikes the modern mind, it and variants of it convinced the best minds of Christendom for centuries.) Neither is it, according to Leibniz, contradictory to state that God is supremely powerful, wise, and beneficent. Such a god does not create possibilities so much as comprehend their infinite range. Moreover, he comprehends whole series of possibilities, that is, possibilities that can connect with others. The series which God allows to spring into being is the best of all these series of *compossibles*. Clearly, Leibniz provides something here which is as aesthetically and morally pleasing as it is intellectually. As in the greatest works of art, complexity combines with a certain unity, a certain meaning or purpose, and the clearest possible expression.

"The Bible tells us that God created heaven and earth and all things in them. Leibniz tells us that heaven and earth and all things in them are really spatio-temporal projections of an infinitely complex arrangement of single substances called monads. These monads themselves exist outside time and space, are indivisible units, and individually contain infinitesimally different readings of not, strictly speaking, the complete monadic order, but the phenomenal one which represents it.

"As already stated, magnificent schemes confound and leave the much-vaunted intellect a slavish dolt. Leibniz's metaphysics is such a scheme and no doubt one of the greatest ever conceived. Its basis is the long philosophical and theological tradition of employing the verb 'exist' in ways that are questionable without raising too many questions. In the case of Descartes, for example, *exist* applies to entities which occupy time but not space (i.e., minds) and those which occupy both (i.e., bodies). Leibniz takes a further step by asserting the existence of minds over bodies. At this point there are but two positions: to deny the reality of bodies altogether or to accord them a secondary status. It is my contention that Leibniz comes down both ways: the conception of monads as independent entities corresponds with the first position and the conception of them as a vast network of ideal relations corresponds with the second.

"I do not think it is difficult to see that, conceptually speaking, the human mind is, for Leibniz, the paradigm of all monads from the very least up to

and including God. Thus all monads have internal activity which manifests itself separately from the internal activity of all other monads. This activity may be described as expressions which are entirely contingent on and determined by previous ones. In the case of the human mind, these are thoughts and desires which, at their origins, would seem to be generated from a site where certain monads break rank with others in order to take on a rational destiny. Not only are there infinitesimally varying degrees of clarity among monads, but also with respect to each expression of a monad as a snapshot mirroring of the universe. The specific nature of each monad corresponds with its rank in relation to God. This in turn involves the overall clarity of its expressions. God is pure activity, pure understanding, and immaculate perception. Rational souls have more limited activity and understanding but are likewise self-conscious. Animal souls possess an even more limited consciousness and memory. Plant souls are even more limited again. The entelechies or substantial forms of inanimate bodies are monads with an entirely unconscious level of activity. However, they are understood by Leibniz to be distinguishable from the monads of unformed matter.

"So far the dimension of the ideal relations between monads has not been taken up. To my mind, this part of Leibniz's metaphysics compromises the whole scheme and yet this compromising is such an elusive affair that, like a thin mist, it wafts almost unnoticeably behind the pyrotechnics of what Leibniz calls *pre-established harmony*. In brief, he arranges it so that God is the great orchestrator of all monadic being and, as such, is one who calibrates each and every monad, has its internal activity varying in accordance with the internal activity of every other monad. And just as Leibniz, the good artist-metaphysician withdraws himself from his work, so God, the supremely good artist-Creator, withdraws himself from his. That is, the monads function independently as a vast array of automata, as an endless army of obedient but fundamentally independent entities. And their activity, need it be said, is of a precision and complexity which goes well beyond any parade square performance. Each monad registers in some fashion or other the shifting activities of all other monads. But the question still remains: how do these infinitesimally ordered proceedings, these infinitesimally varying movements, these delicate, dance-like steps all known and as it were divinely choreographed – how do they translate into the perception, understanding, or experience of one monad which itself is an entity of varying importance?

"Let us allow the mist to waft in more noticeably for a moment, the pyrotechnical display to be frozen temporarily and let us, in order to be more critical metaphysicians than aestheticians, examine the relationship between

Leibnizian phenomena and Leibnizian monads. First of all, we are told that all monads exist outside of time and space. However, it cannot be that they *completely* exist outside of time and space for, if they did, their internal activity would also be atemporal and non-spatial. And if this were the case, nothing would separate monads from God himself. Therefore the unavoidable conclusion is that the monads exist *both inside and outside* time and space.

"Let us grant that their unchanging monadic nature belongs to the one and their changing internal activity belongs to the other. There follows then this difficulty. Unless the latter is understood in terms of monads directly influencing one another (something that Leibniz disallows), time and space are entirely locked up in each and every one. The result is that it would be more appropriate to claim that there are an infinite number of universes as opposed to a monadic unity that constitutes one universe of infinite extent.

"However, Leibniz's presentation of the relations between monads essentially involves two languages and two conceptual levels. The first is the concept of ideal relations and it has as its language that there is no reality other than God and monads. The second is the concept of these ideal relations as phenomenally represented and its language is that the universe is real and thereby made up of physical entities and cause and effect relationships. Out of this arises Leibniz's willingness to recognize the material universe and view it in scientific and mathematical terms.

"However, it is the stated purpose of this paper to examine the overall appeal and attractiveness of Leibniz's metaphysics. I can only submit that, perhaps to a perverse degree, trying to crack the hard kernel of incomprehensibility has its own peculiar charm. It is the common experience with great works that at the heart of them there exists a mysterious, fascinating, and deeply moving question. There is elusiveness and ambiguity in them which generates the feeling of approaching but never quite grasping the answer. But if true art succeeds wonderfully by raising and not answering such a question, true philosophy succeeds by attempting to do so. On the other hand, it always raises new questions resulting from its never quite escaping the limitations of its time.

"Leibniz addresses himself to the perennial question which lies behind all art and science: Why is there something rather than nothing? And why are things the way they are rather than some other way? His answers to these questions involve two great principles which, according to Leibniz, exist apart from God and are the very essence of a reasoning mind's grasp of the

contents and operation of the divine one. They are the principles of non-contradiction and sufficient reason. It is by virtue of the latter that, as stated above, God chooses the series of compatible possibilities which becomes the best of all possible worlds. It is indeed a world with a kind of extra-phenomenal perfection which invests even the poorest and most wretched aspects of it with no small degree of worth. At the same time this dimension of God's creation has validity only insofar as the whole is weighed as a whole and only insofar as human endeavour grows more perfect and overcomes wretchedness. Basic Christian values remain intact and shine as the guiding light leading towards a complete fellowship with God. At the same time every part, point, or particle of being belongs to a much larger fellowship whose active end is the merger of the human with the divine. All chaotic or seemingly mindless activity in the phenomenal realm translates back into the highest activity. The pageantry of earthly existence, however magnificent in its own right, is but a whirligig compared to the computer-like precision of myriads upon myriads of divine sparks which are God and yet independent performers in step with the immaculate choreographer. In sum, God makes the created order a great, pulsating, bejewelled crown with every human soul a gemstone in it.

"With respect to good and evil, I think it may be said that Leibniz paints with broad strokes. Following the traditional line of absolving God from evil, he argues that it is to be equated with the necessary imperfection of all possibilities other than God himself. He further argues that any other world or universe than the one that exists would have more evil in it. With respect to the existing one, he goes so far as to say that the evil in it ultimately works to a good end. But then, with what seems to be little more than faith and tradition as argument, he holds to the view that God rewards good and punishes evil.

"Moral ambiguity, points of tension, and positions which tend to subvert one another are important features of great works. One need only compare what Milton set out to do in *Paradise Lost* (i.e., teach God's ways to men) with what he actually achieved (i.e., make evil look interesting). Philosophy as opposed to art traditionally strives for and indeed claims the opposite. Leibniz's metaphysics is no different in this regard and, insofar as it may be said that it fails to eradicate these elements, it fails as philosophy. However, to look at the matter from the point of view of his being a great and masterful designer, the limitations of human intellect translate into different contending perspectives that, given the strength of his metaphysics relative to others and given that this strength weighs more in the scales than its weaknesses, intensifies interest.

"The best example of such intensified interest is Leibniz's account of the human will as being both determined by past mental processes and having a free expression in the present. Here it is possible to mark off two positions, however overlapping, besides the one Leibniz himself occupies. The resolution of this antinomy (i.e., the conflict between the determined and the non-determined) is what he himself claims. His argument is that, because the will confronts situations that allow it to actualize itself in more than one way, the fact that past mental processes incline it in one direction does not preclude the possibility of its taking another. And even if the assured nature of this inclination is rather overpowering evidence of determinism, Leibniz still argues that, until one possibility is actualized and excludes the others, there is a moment of freedom. A second position that might be taken up, one which might be called the Kantian (but how much of this is already in Leibniz?), maintains that free will, arising in a purely rational way, is a total break from inclinations. Finally, it might be argued, as Nietzsche does, that not only past mental processes but the whole history of a species is caught up in all that might be called one or the other.

"The admission that evil can work to effect an overall gain (no doubt a radical thought in the moral sphere) and the declaration that God's will operates with supreme justice and love provide yet another example of moral tension. The depth of the problem is such that it has now forced a look below the foundations of present-day values and valuations.

"The position which has been argued in this paper is that philosophical works, particularly those of large design and intricate detail, show as much artfulness as argument. It is only perhaps by looking over the distance of time that one can see how every such work is an under-estimation of itself as an imaginative affair and over-estimation of itself as an intellectual one. Stepping back from Leibniz's metaphysics, one can discern the outline of a vast, nebulous globe rising from the religious imagination while being at the dawn of new scientific discoveries. Taking a closer look then, one discerns a multitude of little germ-like entities teaming throughout it and giving a miraculous but all too hidden display of superabundant life. Then, startling as it may seem, this vast nebulous globe infuses itself with land, sea, and sky and everything that they contain. Now out of this weltering mass of simplest life emerge god-like creatures capable of contemplating this world which is at once beyond, behind, and within the sensible one. But still there is no slaking the thirst to see wholly, deeply, and clearly – up to the highest point and down to the deepest depth. Metaphysics is epic and encyclopaedic: it is the grand work of the human head and heart when these two receive the call (or think they receive the call) to be visitants and beholders in the

shrine of greatest mystery."

The good Professor Shimizu marked my essay on Leibniz and a number of his comments were virtually illegible. It was almost as if he were writing to himself or rather in such a way as to allow me to dimly catch sight of what was private and self-addressed but having a bearing on my work and so of interest to me. Certainly enough came through to indicate that he was struggling to understand this or that point in my essay and that these points themselves may have been too dim and obscure. It is quite possible that they sometimes reflected inadequately not only Leibniz's work but how it relates to the work of other major philosophers. Descartes and Spinosa were a couple that Professor Shimizu mentioned. Philosophers that, in ways that could be compared and contrasted not only with respect to themselves but with respect to Leibniz, are connected both to Christianity and to a largely unacknowledged aestheticism.

– Philosophy's mixed up with art but continually in the business of denying it. What do you think of that, Professor Chalmers?

– Perhaps one of its arts is this denying.

– Oh, Professor Chalmers, you surprise me! You can't be as hostile to this art – to what the two of us are caught up in right now – as you've been letting on.

– Well, I'm caught up in it in a way that's partly against my will and partly not. In any event, I'm not going to be around much longer. I'll soon be quitting the academic scene. And then I'll put an end to wrangling over these questions that most people don't care about.

Truthtelling as specialization. As profession. As hypertrophied activity. As the continual risk of sounding pompous and hollow compared to a certain dignified reserve. Perhaps it is this very fracture and contradictory play of sensibilities that makes the opposing pulls of art and science operate as a sort of alleviation and expedient. To get away from a surcharge of reasoning is what I suspect is implicated in both poles of attraction. Thus it would be that communicating the truth emotionally and imaginatively and communicating it narrowly and specifically are simply two different ways of protesting speculative thought's rampant and often ridiculous growth.

– You see? He's always looking for some new twist to his subject. Even my pokey old thoughts are used to start off a new line. Admittedly it would be

very hard for him to get all he wants into a systematic treatment because the very ordering or organizing principle of it would forbid such an extreme degree of heterogeneity.

I like to think that I can position myself behind both Plato and Aristotle. Behind that whole range of philosophizing in which dominant voices take a great deal on themselves with the notable exception *of* themselves. What is it to assume a dominant voice and to assume that this voice in its bid to tell the truth need not take itself into account? Surely one thing is certain: its bid is not to know the nature of truthtelling but to keep faith with the ideal of objective or transcendent truth. This faith itself cannot be an issue without breaking faith with this ideal. It cannot even announce itself as faith and in this it has to break faith with another principle of truthtelling, namely, the one of self-examination.

– It's hard to think of Plato downplaying self-examination when it's Socrates himself who personifies it.

But only in a limited sense. For philosophy as tradition is a massive machine of self-examination. And even if it is most often not a *radical* examination of itself, it nonetheless includes the radical.

– That means him, of course.

Perhaps I'm now getting a better idea of where I come down in the tradition and why others are where they are.

– You see what I mean?

When I wrote my essay on Socrates, it no doubt was with the idea that there was some great lack of self-examination on the part of Plato's hero that, as an active principle of truthtelling, hadn't been properly credited to him. As much as this flew in the face of his being the famous upholder of the *know thyself* dictum, and as much as his ironic good nature and welcoming of all questions argued a person thoroughly in touch with himself, the consequence of not crediting to him this principle seemed to me to be having no choice but to view him as a master deceiver.

– It's not as bad as you think, Professor Chalmers. He's only saying there's a choice between viewing him as deceiving or being deceived and that ultimately the second is the better way to see him.

– Deceiving or being deceived? Deceived by whom?

– By himself. By his belief in his ignorance and having only questions and answers as a guide towards knowledge. By thinking the whole process is innocent and doesn't have a coercive aspect. Tell me, if you met someone who was as much in control of a discussion as Socrates, do you think you would say oh, he's a master dialectician and leave it at that?

This essay on Socrates entitled "The Didact behind the Dialectician" itself gave the illusion of crushing opposition because it was one of the few I wrote that wasn't criticized or questioned. Professor Sterns was a genial but highly reserved man who was perhaps too polite to deface my essay with vulgar pedantries. It would be flattering to think so and to think that he was more sensitive than others to my originality. On the other hand, it is also possible that he was simply too timid and perhaps not even energetic enough to make pointed and searching comments.

– Do you make as many pointed and searching comments on your students' papers as you do here, Professor Chalmers? If you do, I think they're very lucky because it shows you're really engaged with their thoughts and although there are some students – I know, I've talked to them – who don't like that sort of thing, I think you're doing exactly what's best for them.

Like Nietzsche, my attitude towards Socrates was ambivalent. Already there was this parti pris on the side of dialectics that licenced questioning everyone about everything but didn't quite take in the dialectician himself. At the same time it would be difficult to separate what was admirable in Socrates from all that was strategist. From all that was part of his pretending to be ignorant and merely a medium or midwife for other people's thoughts. And why shouldn't this be the case if in fact his goal wasn't simply truth but exalting philosophy? At least my essay took up this theme by focussing on how he operates in the *Gorgias*.

– Do you want me to tell you about how he saw him operating in the Gorgias*? By creating a counter world that calls into question the larger world that could be called Athens or Greece or just plain society. And by creating a fiction like the soul to ground this counter world and make it seem preferable with its emphasis on general order and well-being.*

Striking at Socrates' integrity didn't strike me as being much more than throwing a light on philosophy's. To see ruse and deceit as being elements in virtually all human activity and then to study philosophy as if they didn't

exist there – this to me was but one more ruse and deceit. Socrates was close to admitting (while definitely *not* admitting) his wiliness when he insisted on his ignorance and being merely the vehicle of other people's ideas (although it must be admitted that this self-characterization is not in the *Gorgias*). I daresay that a dialogue could be drawn up in which, having his ears pinned back by an even wilier opponent, he would be forced to admit his own use of sophistry. It could also be that, with a grace befitting one who had always leaned more towards principle than profit and who was prepared to die in order to keep faith with himself, he would reaffirm his ignorance in a much more authentic way.

– It's true that Socrates does cast out a lot of lines with a practised arm. If this be ignorance, it makes ignorance already in league with a subtle and crafty art.

– Now you sound like that wilier opponent.

– No, no, no. I don't have that phenomenal memory that records every previous move as if on a mental chessboard. I'm not an effective debater. I'm not even an effective speaker. On the other hand, the one has never struck me as being any more a sure sign of being on the right track than the other.

"**The Didact behind the Dialectician: A Study of Socrates in the *Gorgias***"

"Alcibiades mentions in the *Symposium* that the character of Socrates is unique not only amongst the personages of his day but also those of history. No doubt this is true insofar as he pursued with great single-mindedness an intellectual and spiritual quest which, at the ethical level, he exemplified with equal rigour. Nonetheless I believe that we can look upon Socrates as a type which, however rare, impinges upon society from time to time and can be described as the following. He is the type of man who creates a counter world with himself as the centre such that this counter world effectively judges, condemns, and creates changes in the larger world. Needless to say, such a character must rank very high in conviction and fortitude, and be of such an independent spirit that, if need be, he will stand against all. He is the type of person who, despite appearances and claims to the contrary, possesses a massive superiority complex. Although Socrates may often claim ignorance and that he is involved in a pursuit of the truth for its own sake, there are many instances in which his purpose sounds less than pure and objective. In the latter part of his exchange with Callicles, he urges his

opponent to adopt the philosophical way of life, citing many reasons as to why it is the best. Then he mentions his habit of beating his opponents.

> These conclusions, at which we arrived earlier in our previous discussions are, I'd say, bound by arguments of iron and adamant, even if it's rather rude to say so. . . . And if you or someone more forceful than you won't undo them, then anyone who says anything other than what I'm now saying cannot be speaking well. And yet for my part, my account is ever the same: I don't know how these things are, but no one I've ever met, as in this case, can say anything else without being ridiculous.

"The ironic pose of not knowing the truth about this or that or of setting out upon a completely open and undetermined course is at best a clever trap for the pretentious and at worst a form of self-deception. The very things he is so bent on condemning such as oratory and sophistry are unavoidable aspects of his own discourse. For example, when Socrates launches into a discussion of the soul in the *Gorgias,* he precludes a truly fair and symmetrical debate with his opponents, Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles because these characters simply don't have it as part of their discursive repertoire. Moreover, what allows its uncontested introduction and thematic domination is the fact that Socrates has already demolished these three characters and so in a sense has left himself free to set up whatever he wishes. The Socrates of the *Gorgias*, I believe, is someone who has many well thought out positions and strategies which he willingly, even eagerly, tests against others. Nonetheless these others more often than not prove immensely unequal to him.

"The first thing to say about the world which Socrates creates for himself and into which others are drawn is that it devalues the commonly esteemed objects of the larger world. That is, it turns its back on privilege, power, position, and material possessions and, on the other hand, embraces an almost ascetic life which emphasizes restraint, control, and moderation. These attributes find their ultimate ground in the soul which, according to Socrates, is that part of the person which, separate from the body, animates the latter and is equivalent to the popular concept of mind. This then is a fundamental aspect of Socratic ontology which, in aligning the Socratic world with the whole of reality, results in the kind of argumentative power necessary to challenge the larger world as Athenian society.

"I should say perhaps that this ontological aspect makes Socrates' case against the larger world more conclusive than it otherwise would be. He does

manage to bring harsh judgements against this world simply by isolating such concepts as the good and the just and then showing how the world falls short of them. At the same time he implicitly commits himself to an even more all-embracing conception, that is, the one of a world that, even though it falls short of being good and just, still has these values as its form, measure, potentiality, and *telos*.

"The above, I think explains the growing prominence of soul talk in the dialogue such that at the end it centres entirely on the soul's experience after death. Earlier arguments in support of such things as the beneficial effects of punishment and the benefits derived from the just and temperate life are now illustrated in terms of not just the temporal and social, but the eternal and universal. The connection of the temporal and social with the eternal and universal comes in the form of these Socratic souls who, having lived the just and temperate life, go off to some paradisaical place whereas the opposite type, the ones who have lived immoderately or unjustly, go off to the place of punishment.

"It is interesting to note that, however severe and exacting Socrates is with respect to finding out the truth, he allows a substantial role for the mythical element which, strictly speaking, bears no relation to the dialectical process. He allows for it because he is engaged in a spiritual quest as much as an intellectual one. The former is distinct from the latter insofar as it involves the whole person and has as its ultimate goal the desire to find a sort of combined intellectual, imaginative, and emotional home. That part of his quest that is intellectual or dialectical can only go so far in this direction and hence the need to complete it with a story that he himself fears might be dismissed.

"I say all this in order to emphasize that Socrates' ethical concerns are part of something very much akin to the religious. This is the larger picture of the man and the smaller one is the one wherein he intellectualizes. A number of times in the *Gorgias* Socrates' comments regarding the unjust man, the deceptive speaker, and the self-serving politician betray nothing less than moral indignation. Since for the most part he comes off like an inoffensive and good-natured type, it is easy to miss the more hidden aspects of his character. The comic, good-natured mask he wears prevents him from sounding pompous and high-toned, precisely the things he attacks or at least shows up in others. Nevertheless were it not for this deeper part of his character (no doubt having at its source much ill will towards those who, leading the unexamined life, make bold to mock him for spending his time philosophizing), it is unlikely he would be motivated to improve the quality of

his thinking, to sharpen it as a weapon and employ it as the means by which to strengthen unformulated positions, to acquire as much certainty as possible, and to influence others to follow the same path.

"There is no mystery but some irony in the fact that the real source of Socrates' ethical vision is the larger world which ends up being measured by these same values. Justice, truth, order, goodness, etc. are part of a developing civilization's consciousness long before a philosopher comes along to systematize it. If evidence of this is needed from the *Gorgias*, one need only look at the representatives of this larger world (i.e., the three opponents of Socrates), all of whom betray an adherence to these values even while taking up positions that conflict with them. For example, Gorgias starts off by maintaining that, although the teacher of oratory invests his students with great power in the way of persuading and influencing people, this selfsame teacher should not be held responsible for those who abuse it. When Socrates gets him to admit that oratory is in some sense tied up with justice, Gorgias, the respectable citizen, is forced to back off from his claim that he has no responsibility for how his students conduct themselves. Similarly, Polus starts off by claiming that the orator, much less the teacher of oratory, should be indifferent to the issue of justice. When Socrates gets him to admit that acting unjustly is shameful, Polus finds that he must agree when Socrates says that punishing the unjust tyrant is appropriate and even beneficial. Callicles in turn starts off by claiming that the unjust orator or tyrant does not do anything shameful according to a higher conception of justice. When Socrates gets him to admit that there is a distinction between the concept of goodness and the concept of pleasure, Callicles shows that he understands the first in terms of the well-being of the many. As a consequence, he affirms social or democratic values that, taking in as they do such concepts as justice, conflict with his view that the strong are entitled to all they can get.

"The distinction between Socrates and his opponents – the distinction between the Socratic world and the larger world of which his opponents are the representatives – is not so much a matter of the degree to which truth is successfully arrived at as the degree to which truthfulness is sought. To state it another way, it is far from evident that everything Socrates says is right or that everything his opponents say is wrong. What is clear, however, is that Socrates wants to examine rigorously what his opponents would leave largely ignored. That part of the dialectical process which is isolating concepts, seeking definitions, and enforcing logical consistency best illustrates the one approach. The other is best illustrated by grandiose claims, smooth talk, violent assertions, and the upholding of what appears to

be largely derivative notions. In a similar fashion it could be said that Socrates' hostility to oratory is based not on what the latter is as a technical skill but on the way in which it has come to be understood and practised. This disparity between what might be called the more conscientious view of it (Socrates) and the less conscientious view of it (Gorgias) is part of a larger picture which may be expressed as follows. The opponents of Socrates uphold two conflicting ethics, one of which is an ethic of power and the other an ethic of justice. This accounts not only for their conceptual confusion and inconsistency, but also for the fact that, as the dialogue proceeds and one opponent after another confronts Socrates, the ethic of power becomes more and more the focal point of the discussion.

"Let us examine the above in detail. Gorgias is Socrates' first opponent and there is no question that he is the most restrained, respectable, and conscientious. In other words, he best represents that part of the larger world which is law and order, justice, mature judgement, and responsibility. At the same time, however, he quickly shows that, while praising oratory as 'the greatest of human concerns' and 'the source of freedom for mankind itself,' his real valuation of it concerns its extraordinary power. (He gives the example of being able to have greater influence over a doctor's patient than the doctor himself.) Furthermore, he begins by holding that the teacher of oratory is not responsible for those students who end up abusing this power. Two things need to be said at this point. First, Gorgias is inconsistent in wanting to take credit for the achievements of his students (at least, in the ethical sphere) while disavowing any responsibility for their wrongdoing. Secondly, he indirectly affirms the ethic of power by showing himself to be one who believes that the teacher of oratory or the orator himself can benefit greatly by what he does even while and even by virtue of not troubling himself about possible abuse.

"Socrates next opponent is Polus and, being younger and more reckless than the others, he represents that part of the larger world which rebels against society to some extent. He begins by expressing admiration for the unjust tyrant, the type of man who is the very embodiment of the ethic of power. That he himself is not such a type is shown by the fact that he permits himself to enter into a discussion which, although it allows for a few incivilities, is itself an expression of values at odds with what he claims to admire. Furthermore, he begins to fall victim to Socrates' arguments and, perhaps feeling the injustice of this, he quickly agrees that doing what is unjust is more shameful than suffering injustice. It would seem then that his shifting ground is, apart from the power of Socrates' arguments, attributable to his, on the one hand, wishing he had great power for himself and, on the

other, subscribing to what empowers those who, like himself, *lack* such power.

"The next to confront Socrates is Callicles and he is clearly the least respectable, most devious, and most abusive of the three opponents. Although he sits in the Assembly and presumably believes in government by the majority, he nonetheless holds the most radical view. Not only does he state that it is part of the natural order for the strong to lord it over the weak and to take a greater share, but that this is the higher form of justice. His reasoning thus shows itself to be very bad right from the outset. In order to be consistent, he would have to maintain that law, order, morality, and so on are themselves unjust. As it stands, his assertion that the strong are the better and more naturally fitted to rule runs into difficulty when Socrates points out that it is most often the many who are strong. Thereupon Callicles claims that the bravest and most intelligent men are the ones who should brook no restraint and be a law unto themselves. However, he continually allows Socrates to draw him into a discussion of the human condition in general and with reference to such things as pleasure, pain, sickness, and loss. Like Polus then, Callicles is attached to values at one level of his thinking that he spurns at another. He too participates in a dialogue that, were he the embodiment of what he upholds, would likely end up with his resorting to violence to make his arguments prevail.

"If Socrates is the most radical truth seeker among men, he is also one who *creates* truth. He does so by conjuring up a comprehensive, detailed, and seemingly coherent world picture. First of all is his claim to ignorance or at least only a modest understanding of matters under discussion. In the *Gorgias* one has abundant evidence of his having well thought out views. When Polus and Callicles flag in their ability either to ask or answer questions, Socrates discourses at length on oratory, the nature of politics, the nature of deception, the nature of truthful investigation, the purpose of punishment, the purpose of self-restraint, the harmfulness of pleasure, the shamefulness of injustice, the value of modesty, the constitution of a good society, the caring of the soul, the value of the philosophical life, and the soul after death. The question and answer method or *elenchus* then is not so much a neutral investigation as it is the means by which Socrates seduces his opponents into a step-by-step argument that confirms his views. It may be seen as his way of testing the world picture which he has created and which most certainly is in place long before he steps into the arena of the marketplace.

"One might well ask at this juncture: how does Socrates so successfully

control the discussion such that, on the one hand, it has the appearance of an impartial investigation and, on the other, it stays within the compass of a particular point of view? The first thing that needs to be mentioned is that Socrates' insistence on the question-and-answer format is not neutral. Since no one else fashions questions with such skill and dexterity, he controls the situation from beginning to end. For example, the dialogue presumably begins as an investigation of the nature of oratory. We learn virtually nothing about this subject but rather are exposed to some extravagant claims that his opponents make about it. However, this works to Socrates' advantage because it bears on what he is most interested in, namely, the *ethical* side of this subject. The conversation thus turns on the worth of oratory and how it compares with those practises or skills (e.g., arithmetic) which quite clearly impart knowledge or bestow some other benefit. Herein Socrates seems to blur the distinction between teaching a skill and teaching a subject such that oratory, considered from the viewpoint of its imparting knowledge, is found to be wanting. Having committed himself to an extremely high valuation of oratory, Gorgias is forced by Socrates to agree that it involves justice. That teaching the art of public speaking should carry this extra burden is of course questionable. Nevertheless, being that it is far removed from an ethically neutral or purely technical account of oratory, it falls in nicely with Socrates' wish to expose the sham which is oratory as it is actually viewed and practised.

"At the same time the identification of oratory with justice and, later, politics allows Socrates to set his sights on these larger issues. Polus tries to prevent a connection between oratory and justice but is blocked when Socrates shifts from merely a devaluation of it to a full-scale assault on it. He accuses it of being a kind of counterfeit practise, one which goes under the name of justice but, by appealing exclusively to the baser instincts, harms the soul and the new state as much as certain things harm the body. The body-soul dualism is slipped in at this point without being challenged by Gorgias, Polus, or Callicles. Caring of the soul is said to be the realm of politics and justice. The introduction of this theme and related ones is, as noted before, important in terms of developing ethical principles within a metaphysical framework.

"A good portion of the debate between Socrates and Polus and then Socrates and Callicles centres on the conceptual confusion resulting from both the ethic of power and the ethic of justice being perceived as the good. Polus and Callicles straddle both positions whereas Socrates methodically sets out to destroy one of these positions. Thus the man of great power whom Polus admires becomes the same man Socrates both pities and loathes. The

manner in which he carries out this condemnation is one which has him singling out what is most typical or conventional in human affairs and then universalizing it. For example, when he commits Polus to the view that the unjust act is shameful, the assumption is that this is a truth not grounded simply in what is most common in society but in something which transcends it. The same holds when he identifies punishment with what is beneficial. As a result, he comes to the rather strange conclusion that the unjust tyrant who escapes punishment is the most miserable of men.

"After Callicles proves to be much more of a strawman than the formidable opponent he first appeared to be, Socrates continues to apply what would give utmost order and well-being to most men to *all*. For example, to men of extreme wealth, ambition, power, appetite, etc. such that, not surprisingly, he finds them wanting on all counts. The result is that the philosophical life as exemplified by him is judged most worthy. With this conclusion coming after a long debate about other matters, it perhaps doesn't seem so presumptuous and self-promoting as it otherwise would.

"In the *Gorgias* there are many points at which the underlying passion of Socrates' commitment to philosophizing slips through. These are times when his mask of almost unshakeable equanimity slips a bit. It is on those occasions when he reveals his hostility to orators and sophists, his disdain for majority opinion, his contempt for those who pump themselves up and then are quickly deflated, his low opinion of pleasure-seeking (such that he even includes the tragic poets), his barely repressed malice towards those who malign the philosophical life. Socrates' revenge on the non-philosophical world is to ground his opponents into the dust. At the same time he brings forth a highly intellectualized picture of the world with ethical valuations derived from a society of advanced concerns. To regard the dialogue itself as the womb of Socrates' thought is, in my opinion, a naivete. Much better to understand it as the publication of this thought in the most palatable, free-ranging, and persuasive way."

– Sharp and searching comments, Professor Chalmers?

– Deconstructing Socrates is not a way to win friends and influence people.

– Oh, you're absolutely right. He submitted this essay a couple of times to conferences and nothing came of it.

– There are no references to other scholars. There are hardly any citations. And what's more, much of his interpretation sounds as if he were treating it

as a play.

– That's very sharp and searching. A play with characters. Plato's art. Who would deny that he created three-dimensional characters?

– But normally what is paid attention to is the dialogue as argument. And truth to tell, that's more in the spirit of Socrates than prying into personal matters.

– And so he achieved a great victory by not letting his arguments (and for that matter his art) extend that far. For if he did (and I'm talking about Plato here), people wouldn't have come to him for centuries afterwards thinking there was nothing behind them worth looking into.

When I look back at some of these old essays, I'm struck by the excessive rhetoric that sometimes lent them an impudent, disrespectful, and aggressive tone. The Nietzschean influence was no doubt part of the reason for this but there was also this other thing, repeated over and over, of wanting to get to the heart of the matter. Such an overreaching and overriding objective seemed to leave me with no alternative but to make a sort of forced entry.

> "This essay begs permission to dispense with formal niceties. It is not that I regard scholarly procedures as unimportant. It is simply that, rather than proceeding in a routine way, I chose to devote much time to thinking about a matter of central importance. In so doing, I find myself forced at this stage to move along rather quickly and not trouble myself so much with the courtesies and acknowledgements to which I otherwise would attend. I express the hope that my earnest attempt to penetrate to the heart of the current debate will more than make up for this admittedly regrettable shortcoming."

This essay, one of two I wrote for the course called *Postmodern Philosophy*, certainly wasn't the only one where I granted myself some liberties. With its opening paragraph proclaiming the need to dispense with formal niceties in order to get to the heart of the matter, it merely was more upfront about it than most. At the same time it carried with it a presumption that didn't declare itself fully as if to avoid any unnecessary risk of giving offence. This not-so-straightforward presumption was that, first, politeness and decorum can get in the way of telling the truth and that, secondly, the matter I was dealing with was of such a nature that telling the truth about it required the

dismissal of the usual scholarly proprieties.

– I daresay that politeness is the grease for more human understanding than the opposite.

In truth, it was weakness that produced this show of strength: the weakness that everyone has to greater or lesser degree. One that need not transform itself into arrogance but at the same time few flaunt or wear on their finger like a death ring. This weakness was my being unable to research, study, reflect upon, and write about my subject (which was truth, reason, rationality, and selfhood as these intermingled and played themselves out in the essays of three contemporary philosophers) as thoroughly as would have been possible in presumably ideal conditions. So much as I failed in having these conditions and so much as I wanted to get to the heart of the matter, so much did my prejudice dominate my discourse without me trying to hide it. What I was looking for was more in the nature of an insight into this area than how it was investigated by others. To such a degree my critical analysis was one-sided because it lacked a counterbalancing move and insight. Of course it is the one I have been trying to keep going in this essay and could only have had at the time of writing the essay called "Equivocal Anti-Foundationalism in Three Essays" if I had tried to get an idea of not only how but *why* others investigated these complicated matters as they do.

– Do you know who wrote these essays?

– Of course I know. Everything he's done I know as well as I know myself. But does it really matter who wrote them? It's enough to say they're all well-known contemporary philosophers, they all have different points of view, and at the same time they're all trying to save some little space for reason, truth, philosophy, and goodness even while giving up a whole lot of ground to fickle, unconscious, and possibly even irrational forces like Aristotle thinks of them or really didn't think of them only he could've thought of them in that way only, well, Aristotle's passé so they don't really want to talk about things like irrational forces and teleology and make it sound like there's a connection between him and them.

– They want to save something. Is that to be frowned upon?

– Maybe not, Professor Chalmers. But sometimes you can't help but laugh at it because it's always like rearranging the decor and thinking you have a new house.

Driving my philosophical car as hard as I did had the advantage of provoking responses and reactions from my professors that, largely defensive but also, as it needs to be said, tolerant and free of any hostility (I realize now how lucky I was), gave me an idea of how weak I was around the edges. First of all, the comments I received quite often referred to philosophers or philosophical works I hadn't read but were considered by my professors to have a bearing on, if not the work or works I was examining, then at least my way of examining them. Such a move invariably discomforted me for two reasons. The first was that I wanted to believe that I had almost perfect control of the text, that is, a full understanding of it simply on the basis of a scrupulous reading and study. Thus it was that, when a professor brought into my purview some other text that he thought pertinent to this reading, he was in effect shaking this belief of perfect control and understanding. The second reason for being discomforted was that a corresponding belief was also shaken. The one of assuming that my critical voice in these essays, despite its Nietzschean overtones, was quite distinct from everyone else's. With respect to the essay I wrote that was an attack on three contemporary philosophers and their pretensions to leaving behind the traditional foundations of philosophy, the shaking of my confidence and certitude as far as this matter of control and understanding went was exacerbated when the good Professor Keenan seemed to identify me with a philosopher I neither mentioned in my essay nor particularly liked.

– *What philosopher is he talking about?*

I'm not going to drag in any names or rekindle any skirmishes of the past if the result would be not much more than arguing on the basis of a prejudice rather than trying to demonstrate it. Here is naturally where I see my great step forward and what allows me to distinguish what I do now from what I did in the past. In the past I took everything from the point of view or principle of self-examination without thinking that this point of view or principle was also a prejudice. As much as this principle, point of view, and prejudice can't be dispensed with by me and others (and, indeed, *all* others in the most complete or comprehensive sense), it has no honour or worth apart from being shunned, second-rated, and feigned in both theory and practise. This is as much as to say that the shunning, second-rating, and feigning of it are the very *condition of possibility* of theory and practise.

"**Equivocal Anti-Foundationalism in Three Essays**"

"The three essays which I have looked at very closely are 'Overcoming Epistemology' by Charles Taylor, 'Why Reason Can't Be Naturalized' by Hilary

Putnam, and 'Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter' by Jürgen Habermas. The critical position which I have taken up regarding reason (or is it reasoning about reason?) helped to determine the selection of these articles and inform my attack on them that is no doubt equivocal in its own right. This state of affairs cannot be helped nor, in my view, should it be by pretending that this area of philosophical investigation is something other than a peering into vast distances. Indeed, the whole exercise is akin to peering into distances only as they appear in a mirror. This being said, I shall attempt to demonstrate that the three thinkers in question wish to view reason in a way which would entail having to stand outside it.

"Is there not something in this attempt which is itself unreasonable? Perhaps this question signals an appropriate time to indicate the way in which these three thinkers and I are not square together. I do not venture to say what lies in their hearts but in their heads, that is, in their writings, there seems to be a faith in reason which has no concern for the above question. Which sees something enduring, straightforward, matter-of-fact, and inviolable about it. To be sure, these three thinkers diligently attest to another side of the question and admit its intractability. But here, precisely here, in this convenient separating of the non-problematic from the problematic, is where I suffer by their reasoning and do not follow them. All three of these thinkers, though admittedly in varying ways, no longer uphold (or so it seems) that part of the philosophical tradition which affirms something fundamental. Putnam denies that propositions or observations are valid apart from a socio-linguistic context. Habermas surveys a whole range of anti-foundational critique and, despite all the gunfire and pounding artillery of this latter-day controversy, still holds aloft the glorious flag of critical reason. Taylor boldly immerses the self and its whole cognitive being in the warm waters of intersubjectivity without losing sight of a self that can know itself better. So the point, in brief, is that none of them are endorsing Cartesian self-transparency or the Kantian transcendental ego. Yet, truth to tell, secure land sinks below the waves with these last two and what chances to float up seems very much like what the drowning man clings to when all else fails.

"Already I must impress the reader as being too much of the doom-and-gloom school, too much of a naysayer in this, to use Taylor's expression, deep important area. Surely, as it might be maintained, this noblest faculty of man is being mocked and sullied here, derided simply because it does not give up the chase, the belief in itself, the belief in its transcendence. In other words, it is the *immortality* of reason which is being brought into disrepute in the way that others at one time brought into disrepute the immortal soul.

Yet in answer to this anxiety I must pose the question: Is simply the infinite duration of a thing the mark of its respectability, its excellence, its worthiness for human beings, its right to highest honours?
"Rather there might be some wisdom and a lessening of suffering in this coming-to-awareness of the fate of even the most flexible, rebounding, adaptable, enduring, and, last but not least, cunning of institutions. Kant and Hegel, I believe, first brought this complexity of the reasoning self home to us. Nowadays thinkers attach to the backs of our heads an immense background without going so far as to attach what they rightfully should, namely, the whole cosmos as impenetrable mystery. But even limiting this background to society and the immediate world, reason must have its roots in all happenings which go beyond it and which are, no matter how much they are taken up by it, still not in it or of it. A multitude of factors impinge on, hold together, infiltrate, and ultimately change thinking, feeling, willing, and acting. Now this is equivalent to admitting that it is out of our hands what befalls reason. So I ask myself then that, if it should be showing signs today of its mortality, should we conceal this from ourselves? And the answer I give myself is that it is much better to put on knowledge as a kind of armour and to be thus provided with the courage, freedom, and dignity which, as *self*-knowledge, is the mark of a higher reason. The worst affair is what we experience as utter shock, surprise, and with horrifying helplessness. One need only imagine how it would be if people were not prepared for their end but only learned about it at the last moment.

"Just as there is a time in everyone's life for illusions of a sort, so there is a time for something analogous in the course of human development. And just as the thought of a childhood full of cynicism and scepticism is repugnant, so is the thought of an earlier mankind bereft of those beliefs which intrigue, exalt, distract, and so on. The illusions of childhood are eventually replaced by the interests of adulthood; the beliefs of yesteryear give way to the more prolific and pervasive business of today. And yet it is not that anything so deep alters but only the obvious and obtrusive which disappear as the victim of contemporaneous changes and criticism. The institution of reason or, more specifically, the institutional practise which concerns itself with this institution is, it seems to me, caught up in the above process. The public position is one of transition and confusion, of a simultaneous Yes and No to reason, of a willingness to discard this and a refusal to discard that about it. At least so I read the situation as I come to it by Taylor, Putnam, and Habermas. I will not take up the issue of whether they are fully representative of a situation. I will simply assume it and be pleased to be corrected. I tend to think, however, they could muster legions of the philosophically minded to their ranks whereas the less and therefore more

equivocal position regarding reason would attract few who were genuinely committed.

"But what I am most concerned about with here is a fairly prominent mindset which I take to be halfway honest and which I think should be resisted at least by some. After all, if reason compromises itself to play the guardian of both itself and morality (as is the case particularly with Habermas and Taylor), then it tarnishes the name of reason as much as it distinguishes it.

"It is now incumbent on me to deal in some way with these thinkers and to register myself both as a critical antagonist and a fellow equivocator. What spans these two roles is my fundamental insight that there is an eradicable paradox or dilemma at the heart of reason and, a fortiori, reasoning about it. Reason, in order to be reason, must believe and act as if everything potentially lies open to it. Even when it knocks desperately at some door and fails to have it opened, it keeps faith in itself by passing on and saying: 'That was a false door. There is nothing behind it.' And so it arrives at another with the same expectations. Does not Charles Taylor, for example, announce himself at such a door when he commends the critical exploration of what he characterizes as the deeper, more authentic understanding of the self? When he suggests doing away with the disengaged, punctual, atomistic self of the Cartesian tradition? When he declares that this monstrous outcome of modern epistemology and the mechanistic age is not only passé but false, false and, what is more, morally culpable! It is at this point that I would ask: how are we to understand this self that presumably can reach back and behind itself to its primordial origins? How are these origins, this murky and mixed up part of it, to be translated into some present condition of the self which is for its moral betterment? And why should the latter remain a self in any recognizable form?

"Does Charles Taylor understand himself? For, as it seems to me, he does not recognize that the words which he employs to describe the deeper self – words such as *community*, *social identity*, and *commitment* – already form a prejudice about it. As it seems to me, he does not hesitate and grow a bit uncertain when, to speak figuratively, he picks up an armful of the diaphanous train which the queenly self must drag around with her and calls this freedom. Or when he deals so matter-of-factly and objectively with what is always and forever slipping out of sight. With what he calls the situatedness of the self and largely identifies with the civic humanist tradition. Wouldn't he, in knowing himself a bit better by taking into consideration all the murkiness of his own or anyone else's psyche, admit

that there are countless denizens of the intersubjective ocean that are hostile to any time-bound conception of the self and the need to overcome it?

"The philosophers of today, unlike the earlier ones with their greater metaphysical self-assuredness, now go about their reasoning, as it seems to me, a bit like circus acrobats. They must deftly keep up in the air the proposition that no propositions are certain while entertaining propositions that must be upheld as such. Publicly it goes out as a hypothesis but privately or personally it is *the* hypothesis. That is, it is what they or anyone takes to be absolutely certain about his philosophy until proven otherwise (and how difficult and rare a thing that is!). If this were not so, it would be impossible to take up a position and maintain it from moment to moment. But at the same time to know that one's belief in the absolutely certain is not itself certain is to know that there is something not entirely reasonable about it. Then again, this knowledge or insight about the uncertainty of certainty weighs far less in the scales at any particular moment than what is held to be certain *at that moment*. So in this sense the belief in the certainty that is not quite certain is, in the recognition of itself, itself never certain. One therefore effectively discounts what reason tells us about reason (that is, that it is always falling short of itself) as long as believing in it is the higher and, indeed, only way.

"Hilary Putnam, I think, does not find the situation so complicated. He neatly divides reason into an immanent aspect which culture and language determine and a transcendent one which, to make sense of the distinction, I shall say is self-determining. First of all, he states that truth claims have a linguistic character or frame of reference which is in accordance with the particular discourses and practises from which they emerge. He therefore allows that there may be many such discourses with correspondingly conditioned claims. Yet he strongly opposes the position that such a situation as above generates many different truths. Reason he in effect says can criticize the whole background from which it itself emerges. Transcendent reason then is, so to speak, the producer of a super-critical attitude and even a super-truth while immanent reason generates merely criticisable claims and so is a kind of supplier to the first. Since he more or less identifies philosophy with this producer role, one would think that it should evidence this transcendent or self-determining aspect. But then that should lead us to ask: Is not philosophy itself a particular discourse? Does it not generate truth claims which are linguistically and culturally conditioned?

"The modern age with its faith in science and reason have enough of a

historical memory to know the fate of many long-held and cherished beliefs. Whether these were tied to tradition or custom or institution or empire, they took their leave no doubt in a troubled way. That is, with the earliest signs of something amiss or unpleasant in the offing being largely ignored by so much that was vested interest, so much that was enslaved spirits and bodies, so much that was disposed to show contrary portents of a favourable and upbeat nature. Jürgen Habermas strikes me as such a modern-day seer. Just like those wise councillors and dream interpreters of old who gave the king only good news, he brings forward much that is meant to charm philosophy and make her take heart. To be sure, there are a number of good sound cautionary signs he gives which, taken together, reveal dangers and the means to overcome them. He paints before philosophy's eyes a strange kind of war that is going on inside her and involves fighting over more and more for less and less. Despite these worrisome symptoms, Habermas makes a shrewd diagnosis when he notes that all these factions, despite their differences, share the one true faith of there being 'claims which transcend all restrictions of time and place.' Even hermeneutics and pragmatism, which he looks upon as rival philosophies to his more community-oriented and truth-by-consensus one, do not, as he maintains, contradict or challenge this. A favourable prognosis is thus established and it only rests with philosophy to assume a more modest and becoming air.

"Is it possible that, for the sake of saving philosophy as a discipline, Jürgen Habermas would have it turn itself into a primping charlatan? A seemingly modest yet truly sycophantic overreacher? A small-time operator going around looking for ever-larger pieces of the action? For what he maintains about philosophy's role-to-come is that, first of all, it should entail a humbling of itself before the sure-footed sciences. It should deal with them with utmost respect, not infringing upon their territory (unless at their bequest) and even deferring to them when it comes to their areas of expertise. Comporting itself in this way and keeping a definitely lower profile than it did in the past is, on the basis of Habermas's account, complementary to carrying out such not-so-modest tasks as, first, supplying the social sciences with their germinal ideas, secondly, mediating all the various elements of the *Lebenswelt* (i.e., the intersubjective world) such that the whole of humanity moves towards a rational and cultural unity, and, finally, being the guardian of reason itself. In truth, it seems that Habermas would have it doing nothing less than promoting peace on earth and good will towards men. Oh, to be sure, it would all be done modestly enough, beginning with the use of such modest-sounding terms as *stand-in* and *mediator*. Philosophy, duly reformed and humbling itself before the giant, well-planted frames of the sciences, certainly would not be so foolish as to

tell them, as it did in the past, where *they* should be standing. Rather it would make itself serviceable to them, offering council and perhaps, if two giants wanted to talk but lacked the manners or vocabulary for it, philosophy would step in and mediate."

– I've read a couple of these papers and, in fairness to their authors, I don't think your hero has understood everything about them. For example, Putnam certainly doesn't deny that philosophy is culturally and linguistically determined. Rather it's on this basis he argues philosophy must hold on to the notion of transcendent truth. Otherwise it simply ceases to be.

– So putting that notion into disrepute is inconsistent?

– This is what he argues against the solipsists and relativists. For with them there's always a claim that wants to be taken seriously.

– But it still remains to be shown that philosophy is anything but inconsistency. For if all philosophers bought into the idea of transcendent truth (and of course I mean in the explicit and dogmatic sense and not just in the implicit and sceptical sense), it would stop searching for itself and so, in a sense, stop searching.

The interminable struggle to deny that the struggle *is* the thing but rather to let on in all ways that it is merely the result of other people's wayward thinking. Can anything be more scandalous than the repeated overlooking of this phenomenon that, from another perspective, prevents truthtelling from *being a scandal*? Can it be that truth is already at odds with something that might be called the good and, inasmuch as this is the case, is pre-determined to be divided into the less-good-than-truthful and the less-truthful-than-good? Is this enormous complication fit for human consumption or is it the absolutely indigestible, the debunking or de-idealizing of both goodness and truth?

– For the life of me, I can't concentrate when he goes on like this.

Something tells me that this complication is complicated even further by our subscribing both ways, by our being not entirely one with recognizing or not recognizing it. Beyond the rational-irrational divide there is still something that can be called thought and it is here we're counselled and committed in ways that every heart is aware of though attached to a head that obdurately claims that all enlightenment comes from it.

– Tell me. Where did you learn to play chess?

– Is the game upsetting you?

– It's not that. It's the lack of a respite from the twists and turns on that chessboard no one can play on but himself.

Perhaps the philosophical heart is what I have always set my sights on. Perhaps this heart is the most hidden thing while its outward parts, its hydra-headed immensity with each head an immensity in itself, enters our consciousness transformed, serviceable, shrunken, and moderately tamed, a gnat compared to its intellectual life outside it.

– There he goes again. Comparing philosophy to a monster in Greek mythology. Scotch one head and another rears up. It's like the devils in Milton's poem who shrink from giants to gnats in an instant to show how mean and worthless they are.

Indeed, whatever is not seen, not understood, not contemplated is left by the wayside. I see it as much in others as myself. It is no doubt a survival tactic that is always in play but hardly gets attention because it is fundamentally disheartening. It speaks of a certain fraudulence in all our attempts that is inseparable from wanting to know as well and widely as possible.

– I give up.

Pushing towards self-examination has been placing a great deal of strain on my thought experiment.

– You shouldn't give up, Professor Chalmers. You still have a lot of men on the board.

The normal thing is to run away when it gets to be too much.

– You're not going to leave me, are you?

With still a good piece of the road to go down and so much effort required to understand why I kept on it and why that should even matter, I realize I'm going to have to tax not only my insightfulness but my inventiveness.

– We just have to find a way to chase away all those grey clouds suddenly

hanging over your head. Let's see. You like theatre, don't you? Alright, sit down. Take off your coat. Give me a word. Any word. I'll choose it for you then. How about "Nietzsche"?

– I don't know what word could interest me less.

– But you were interested in the play Baumgarten told you about.

– How could you possibly know about that?

– Everyone knows about that. Okay, Professor, here we go. "It's not possible! When I looked at you just a moment ago, I thought you had changed. I thought you had become someone else."

Certainly self-examination was on my mind when I wrote the essay that started: "After much perturbation regarding how I should go about this assignment, I finally asked myself the question: How might Friedrich Nietzsche have advised me on this matter?"

– "Oh-h! There it is again! I can't believe my eyes! You look just like him! With the coal-black eyes and the big bushy moustache and the equally bushy eyebrows. Pinch me! Tell me it isn't true! I'm in the presence of one of the most amazing people who ever lived."

I answered my own question by saying he would have advised me to seek out some small part of his work and draw out as much as I could from it.

– "Why are you staying so quiet, Mr. Nietzsche? Why are you just communicating with your eyes? And now you're shushing me. Do you feel alright? What's wrong with your head? Why are you pointing at your head?"

So I chose Aphorism 335 in *The Gay Science* because we had already discussed it in class.

– "This is worse than anything. If you can't talk, if you're just like the empty shell you were the last eleven years of your life, then I feel like saying with Ophelia:'To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!'"

The essay called "An Exegesis of Aphorism 335" is written in a style that no longer appeals to me. Like many of my old essays, it strikes me now as a strange mix of seriousness and flippancy.

– I could end up like him.

On the other hand, it was doing all that it could at the time to keep alive that one principle that I really couldn't dispense with.

– If there's one thing I can assure you of, you'll never be like him. You'll always be wonderful, wonderful Professor Chalmers!

And despite the fact that I more or less fell short with it by not quite getting to the heart of the matter, I must have been close to getting there. To the place where reason disappears and only reappears as the justification for a faith that surpasses it as much as life does. And this perhaps accounts for the all too Nietzschean style that I adopted as well as the muted critique I made of him.

– Every time you get a bit down from now on, I'm going to cheer you up. I'll make you laugh. I'll make you smile. I'll even tell you stories. If you want, I'll do some more improv. Oh, you're such a good actor! You should've followed it up.

This style that now I find too imitative and this critique too muted. This style and critique that no longer satisfy me because I have always been pushing the principle of self-examination as far as I can. This same style and critique that were nonetheless the strongest indications of my general direction at the time.

– What is your name, dear girl?

– Alice.

Yes, I suppose I was trying to out-Nietzsche Nietzsche and out-self-examine his own self-examination. But Nietzsche's self-examination was something he did essentially in advance and as preparation for the critique of a whole tradition.

– I really must go.

From this perspective, no one can outdo him because he carried out this task under conditions that were particular to his time and place. Imitating him as I did thus had something naive and all too convenient about it. It is as if I thought that his spirit were alive in me purely as a result of my efforts and apart from the conditions that were particular to *my* time and place. As

if I thought that adopting his style didn't betray that I still had unexamined parts of myself.

– You mustn't run out on me, Professor Chalmers. I'm counting on you. Oh, it's so hard to explain. I can't criticize him, you see. I can only worship him. I can only be his princess but I can't be the other thing, the negative thing, or at least, well, it's complicated because I am *this thing in a sort of conflicting or opposite way and that's the trouble. Love makes me blind, Professor Chalmers. That's part of what I'm trying to get at. That's part of it and the other part is that my love is so great that I want to try the impossible. I want to stop being so blind. But I can't do it on my own. Professor Chalmers, I need your help.*

So what was I trying to dig into? My greatly favouring, indeed, my falling down before Nietzsche's analysis of morality wasn't something I tried to hide. Aping him as I did, I must have given Professor Keenan the impression that I fancied myself one of his more radical and provocative spiritual heirs. Indeed, if it were radical self-examination that bound Nietzsche and me together, I was without doubt ready to follow him all the way. I was even ready to go one step further and recognize a certain one-sidedness in his attack on morality that, in the name of self-examination, I thought should be taken into account.

– Oh, please let him come back! For if he doesn't, I'll stop being the princess who's as much an ideal as anything else. I'll stop being substantial and turn into fluff.

This attack on morality, specifically, Kantian morality, that fully convinced me insofar as it was an attack on the doctrine that reasoning, deciding, and acting upon the basis of rules exhausted the subject of morality and gave a full account of the moral self. Nietzsche's call for an intellectual conscience, a conscience behind the moral one, a conscience that would reflect upon and judge the latter (and so be a kind of *second* moral conscience) appealed to me because the moral conscience in and of itself seemed too much attached to a certain conceptual or constative convenience as well as to a certain practical or performative one. As I saw it then (but also as I see it now), the first as systematisation and simplification was a virtual ruling out of court of another, perhaps the *only* other side of morality, namely, struggling with uncertainty. In this way the first forfeited bringing to bear the most penetrating gaze upon the subject. So far as this was Nietzsche's thought and so far as it was meant for others to grasp and a few to take to heart, I was there for him. So far as it was a call to order that recognized itself as

being also a call to a certain *disorder*, I was also there. But so far as it was all this without recognizing that the call to order must also be, despite all proper enmity, the call *for* order, the call for systematicity and simplicity in morality as everywhere else (as well as the corresponding call to honour and idealize it), I was made uneasy and suspicious.

– Did I miss anything?

– Oh, Professor Chalmers, I'm so glad you came back!

It was his lashing out at people who hadn't looked deeply into themselves that struck me as being the sign of some unexamined part of himself. It seemed to me that he wasn't acknowledging the difference of these others or, more properly, their *right* to be different in a both moral and non-moral sense. For what choice did these others have in the matter of what they were if, according to his own analysis, their origins and constituting parts were largely hidden? And if the same applied to his own character, then how could he view his placing himself at some higher or more exalted level as being no less a prejudice than a principle? How could he have prevented himself from reversing perspectives and, not only making the case against the vast majority, making their case against him?

– Well, that might be asking too much of Nietzsche.

But what I didn't see at the time – and this despite reaching the point where I thought I knew Nietzsche better than he knew himself – was how much I was still taken up by his perspective. That is, by a principle that didn't recognize itself as being also a prejudice. That didn't recognize itself as being in the most radical way a prejudice. That didn't recognize itself in the most radical way because it stopped short with the recognition that prejudice is a universal feature. That didn't recognize itself because it didn't go on to *thematise* and *personalize* itself, that is, the very prejudice that allows for such a universalization.

– Whooh! I don't know what to say! Are you hungry?

Without this thematisation and personalization of prejudice, without what in effect I have been doing up to now, the chances are good – both Nietzsche and my past self are evidence of this – of forgetting that one even has a prejudice. And more than this, of forgetting that one is opposed not only to prejudice but to principle. Case in point: my response to Professor Keenan's defence of Kant and his questioning of Nietzsche. Instead of noticing how

consistent his comments were with a principle that could have been universalized, that could have been a categorical imperative, that could have taken the form, *Treat all your students fairly even while upholding your own point of view* (for his comments were not in the least dismissive or disrespectful), I took umbrage at the fact that he wasn't fully on board with me.

– Where did you get all this stuff?

– At various places.

– And you just happened to have it in your packsack?

Address to Professor Keenan: A Short Response in Light of Some Dissatisfaction and Disagreement with Comments Made upon My Essay

> Your comments do not pick up on or reflect in any forthright way the exegetical thrust of my essay. If I may say so, they betray an unwillingness either to recognize or to seize this issue with both hands. If you disagree with my analysis, it would have been interesting to have such comments or objections as outline a counter-position. As it is, I'm forced to the conclusion that you do not really believe Nietzsche when he describes his philosophy as dynamite.

– He was upset by Professor Keenan's skirting the basic thrust of his essay but now he realizes he was unjust to him.

– I'm overwhelmed.

– He's trying to go very deep, Professor Chalmers. I think you know that.

– Oh, I know it but I'm just getting a bit tired of it.

When I first started this project, not just telling the truth but telling it to myself seemed like the right way to go. The guiding thought was that it would check all kinds of repression, omission, minimization, and exaggeration. The fact that it would also check coming to any sort of hard-and-fast conclusion didn't strike me as a sin that I, devoted as I was to the most singular of subjects (but how many others have also said that?), needed to bear upon my conscience. This is what essentially fell out from the

naive thought that I was doing no more than telling the truth to myself. It was naive not because I wasn't conscious of secretly having in mind a general readership but because I felt myself protected from any sort of wrongdoing. Such was the case at least until I had to bring in other voices in order to register depths that my own couldn't reach. Then it became apparent that, insofar as wrongdoing includes offending, disturbing, and perhaps even deranging others, it is *already* culpable. And this for the reason that, even though I don't intend to do any specific harm, I still go on grinding out *my* truth that will grind down some, that will alienate and unsettle others, and that is always open to being taken up in ways that can't be foreseen and, like Nietzsche's thought (but not only Nietzsche's thought), be put to cruelest and most unusual uses. Of course all of this is not separate from an egoism that, despite this show of moral compunction, wants it to be so. Ultimately this egoism is the faith that its truth will merge and become one with the good.

– Now, tell me. How did you end up bringing all this stuff here?

It is strange how my voice now seems like a lead weight bound to my highest aspirations. As if the little bird that Nietzsche speaks of had flown over my head and cried out to me as it did to him: *What does it matter? What does it matter?* Faith doesn't come without some doubts that perhaps are the necessarily fleeting but also necessarily recurring reminder of the limitations of our faith. Fleeting for most of us at least because spending more than a few moments in this most hostile of regions is death. The alive and the quick are forever those who, in a host of diverse ways, are ready to strap on the strong pinions of faith.

– It's such a boring subject. You wouldn't be interested.

So is my present condition. It belongs to my so far steadfast faith (my health, as Nietzsche would call it) and, with luck, so will some of the future. Surely enough of the future, I daresay, to put the lie to the thought that my voice is a dead weight. If this faith and reassertion of faith must themselves be put into doubt, then such a challenge and shakeup must come from others. No doubt a wide range of others that I'm no more in a position to judge than to bless or to curse.

– Alright, I won't ask any more questions about this unreal scene except where are we headed?

– Are you in good spirits, Professor Chalmers?

– I'm in excellent spirits.

– Do you like everything I brought?

– I like it.

– The plan so far as I know it is to end up where we started.

It's a question now of what to say or what not to say about the other essays I wrote for those ten honours courses I took between 1991 and 1993.

– I may be feeling better but I don't like the idea of listening to all he's ever written.

So much in them is close to my present thought that I don't see how I can bring them into this essay and make them talk afresh.

– You see, Professor Chalmers, it's not so bad as you think. He doesn't want to drag in stuff for any old reason. He doesn't want anything that would just be pure ego without exploring it. On the other hand, this exploring is without limit or, well, of course that's overstating it because at some point he'll have to end it and he'll have to say something like, "Look, that's it. I can't go any further. I've more or less said everything I have to."

It is pretty clear that, if I'm to continue on course with my subject, I must also continue with a sense of the moral precariousness and divisiveness of truthtelling. And of course not only with respect to others but with respect to myself.

– That means he can't just talk about his past as if it were like a highway to the present. He must also talk about it and walk it like that scene in Zarathustra *with the tightrope. It's always possible to fall off because there's so many distractions and activities and people wishing you would fall off and, well, if not break your neck, then at least show you've come back down to earth and lost a few feathers for having tried something they're either contemptuous of or don't understand.*

I have swum halfway across the river and there is no turning back. The way I have proceeded so far must be the way I carry through to the end. If my thoughts were to turn dull and stale, then I would know I had run my subject into the ground. But how could this be as long as my account falls short of bringing my past self up to my present one? This present self that

itself is a mobile thing but that I decided in advance to freeze and contain (or is it expel?) as a necessary terminus. In a sense then my past self never does catch up to my present one. But to show this to be the case, to choose precisely the right moment where the circle closes without catching it, would serve well as my final statement.

– Oh, bravo!

*