

*COLLECTED
PHILOSOPHICAL
DIALOGUES*



John O'Loughlin

COLLECTED PHILOSOPHICAL DIALOGUES

by

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Of Centretruths Digital Media

CDM Philosophy

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PREFACE

The forty-three dialogues included here, in my collected philosophical dialogues, span the period 1977–84, when I also wrote essays and had not as yet abandoned such genres in favour, first, of my 'supernotational writings' (as a kind of cross between essays and aphorisms) and, then, of the aphoristic and even maximistic purism (whether independently or in combined formats) which took my philosophy to greater heights of truthful insight and, in a manner of speaking, metaphysical truth (though I have since modified this and other such terms in favour of what I like to call a ratio-specific and dichotomous comprehensiveness).

Be that as it may, the humbler creative forms of my philosophical beginnings are not, seen in retrospect, without some value in themselves, and I can be confident that if I hadn't started out on such terms I would never have evolved my work in the manners described, including, not least, my almost aphoristic approach to blogging on the internet, by which time I was not only weary not to say wary of dialogues but, more particularly, of essays and of anything else unduly discursive!

Therefore if I have republished my philosophical dialogues in this enlarged format it is not because I

regard them as representing the pinnacle of philosophical and/or theological truth, but simply for the record, as a marker, in one convenient volume, along the route of my literary progress towards its philosophical apotheosis several decades later, an apotheosis which few people would wish to approach, still less tally with, who had not already acquainted themselves with – shall we say – less demanding and, hence, more accessible texts long beforehand.

Nonetheless, I should not wish to underestimate or undermine such philosophical complexities of logic and methodology as do exist in these dialogues, since they were the product of an engagement with philosophy on various genre fronts, so to speak, and therefore match if not surpass, for sheer speculative audacity, the best of my essays and early aphorisms, which are also available, together with a philosophical approach to short prose ('short stories' would hardly do justice to a majority of them), in collectivized formats the better to underline a chronological consistency of style and theory that is generally characteristic of my early works.

John O'Loughlin, London 2007 (Revised 2022)

A Dualistic Integrity

PHILOSOPHER (*Addressing himself to his young interviewer*): So you have familiarized yourself with my latest philosophical contentions, and now you wish to ask me some questions concerning them?

STUDENT: That is correct!

PHILOSOPHER: Well then, what can I do for you?

STUDENT (*Consulting his notes*): You have contended that a man cannot be good without also being intermittently evil – in short, that goodness cannot exist without the aid of its opposite. How, then, do you differentiate between good and evil in relation to people?

PHILOSOPHER: Very simply! Whatever proceeds from positive feelings is good and, conversely, whatever proceeds from negative feelings is evil. Thus when you transmit the former you are doing good to someone, you are making a person feel happier, as well as making yourself feel happier, whereas when you transmit the latter you are making both yourself and someone else feel less happy or possibly even sad, and are therefore doing evil.

STUDENT: So every action committed in anger is evil?

PHILOSOPHER: Yes, because anger invariably engenders negative feelings and thereby makes people feel wretched.

STUDENT: Hence we can always know whether we are doing good or evil simply by taking account of the

nature of the feelings that we are transmitting at the time?

PHILOSOPHER: Precisely! For example, if you were a thief engaged in cracking open a safe somewhere, you would know yourself to be doing evil simply by taking account of the way you felt. You would probably feel very tense, very 'on edge', very nervous in case anything went wrong. And if, by ill-luck, anything *did* go wrong, like you were caught, say, in the act of opening the safe, you would probably either lose your nerve altogether and give yourself up or panic and, assuming it was within your powers, attempt to escape. But the negative feelings would give you away all the time.

STUDENT: Yet none of us can avoid doing both good and evil, even though the evil needn't entail cracking safes?

PHILOSOPHER: No, we are made for both and, as such, we are compelled to accept both. Try to imagine a life without any negativity, a life without any worries, pains, angers, frustrations, doubts, aggressions, tensions, regrets, hatreds, prejudices, disparities, etc. I rather doubt that you would be able to live such a life under normal circumstances.

STUDENT: Yet Christ taught men to 'resist not evil', which, broadly speaking, means to 'turn the other cheek', to ignore the evils of others, to live and let live, to resign oneself to the ways of the world and not offer any opposition to one's enemies or potential enemies, so that one can remain calm and continue to experience 'eternal peace', or the 'Kingdom of God' within the self. That was what he taught and also what he demonstrated

during the final days of his earthly life, when he showed an apparent indifference to his fate and allowed himself to be pushed around from hand to hand without making any attempt to defend or justify himself.

PHILOSOPHER: Yes, that is perfectly true. But comparatively few men are permitted to lead a Christ-like existence, especially when, not being itinerant philosophers or religious preachers, they are obliged to earn a living in such a highly competitive and potentially hostile world as this one! Unfortunately, there is often a marked lacuna between a philosopher's teachings and their actual applicability to daily life. It is all very well for Christ to preach particular doctrines, for he slots into the world as a preacher, he earns a living by preaching, whereas the vast majority of those to whom he preaches aren't really in a position to follow suit, to abandon their respective tasks and lead a similar life. So they are inevitably compelled to ignore or, more accurately, fail to live-up to certain of his teachings. The only true way to lead a Christ-like existence would be to become a wandering, self-employed, self-responsible, self-styled preacher. But what do you think would happen if everybody 'down-tooled', as it were, and followed Christ's example?

STUDENT: There would be far too many preachers in the world, leading, ultimately, to chaos.

PHILOSOPHER: Yes, chaos is indeed an apt description! If everybody led a Christ-like existence, there wouldn't be anyone left to preach to and the human kind would quickly die out. Without butchers, bakers, farmers, fishermen, builders, shop assistants, clerks,

doctors, etc., everybody would be dead within a few weeks or, at most, months. So without intending any disrespect towards the messianic vocation, one can see how absolutely imperative it is that a majority of people always *refrain* from following in Christ's footsteps too literally. And if they must refrain from doing so on the grounds that a few billion preachers would ultimately lead to chaos, they must also refrain from taking some of Christ's teachings too seriously – a thing which, as history adequately attests, has never proved too difficult for them anyway, Ghandi-like exceptions notwithstanding. Therefore, in returning to this problem of good and evil, it is not wise, in my opinion, to resist too much evil. For unless one is someone who has purposely gone out of his way, like Christ, to preach that kind of thing, or is part of a vast crowd of people who can bank on the strength of the finite number of club-wielders eventually running out, one could easily become a living corpse pushed hither and thither by all who have more strength, audacity, willpower, or authority than oneself. Yet for a time, as you well remarked, Christ virtually made a living out of being pushed backwards and forwards from hand to hand. But it seems quite obvious to me that a majority of us certainly couldn't make a living out of it, so one must learn to stand-up for oneself and be natural too, you know! People often resign themselves to a kind of death-in-life after they have been seriously disappointed in some way.

STUDENT: How do you mean?

PHILOSOPHER: Well, when one lives fully, vigorously,

naturally, impulsively, and adventurously, there are always a correlative number of dues to be paid. Usually, the more one lives, as opposed to just exists, the wider becomes one's spectrum of emotional involvement on both the negative *and* the positive sides of life, and it is this latter fact in particular which generally proves an immense stumbling-block to such people as I am alluding. When one settles down, as the saying goes, one is usually curtailing one's spectrum of activity to a level or degree that won't unduly disturb one, won't cause one to suffer too much but, on the contrary, permit one a sort of Buddhist imperturbability. In short, the more one lives, i.e. the more vigorous and adventurous one is, the more suffering will have to be accepted as the inevitable price one pays for one's pleasures. Now if, because of various personal problems, you don't wish to suffer beyond a certain point, you must endeavour not to live beyond a certain point, though the point in question will depend upon the nature of your personal circumstances. I mean if, for example, you are used to a hectic life and then suddenly switch to a slower one, it will probably bore you to tears because of the contrast. You will probably suffer more from the slower one, to begin with, than ever you did from the hectic one previously!

STUDENT: Yes, I seem to recall a similar experience myself, and I was terribly bored. But, tell me, is there really no way of avoiding boredom? People are always complaining about it, no matter where you go.

PHILOSOPHER: It is virtually impossible to entirely escape from the intermittent prevalence of boredom, and

altogether futile to attempt such an escape, in any case. Boredom has a very legitimate place in life as the opposite of excitement. Now perpetual excitement, assuming it were possible, would be an insufferable hardship for even the most excitable of people. It would either wear them out or wear thin eventually. But, fortunately, there is always boredom to fall back on, to act as a reprieve from excitement and, conversely, from which to *create* excitement afresh after one has grown tired of it. So if you value excitement, I am afraid that you must learn to accept boredom. For the one is as important as the other, and they are inextricably linked together throughout the course of your life. There is no defeating boredom by a determined attempt to escape into excitement when the latter isn't justified, hasn't been paid for, as it were, by a sufficient preliminary degree of boredom, whether that boredom takes the form of manual work or intellectual work or, indeed, no work at all. People who attempt to cheat themselves out of boredom very often become bored with what they foolishly imagine will excite them, thereby defeating their objectives. They may be excited for a time with whatever they happen to be doing, but such excitement soon pales to insignificance, and even though they carry on with their respective pursuits they will really be bored to tears.

STUDENT: You sound very wise.

PHILOSOPHER: Don't believe it! Perhaps I seem a little wiser than others because I have more time in which to think. I spend the greater part of my day thinking, teaching, and writing, whereas a majority of

people have to do an office job, a factory job, a shop job, or a service job. But they aren't necessarily less wise than me! If a man doesn't want to write and speak these kind of thoughts, what would be the point of his doing so? He would be a fool, wouldn't he? Oh no, everybody has his own tasks to attend to and, as such, everybody is as wise as he needs to be! If I have any wisdom at all, it should prevent me from imagining a philosopher's task to be the highest, the one and only task to which a man should aspire if he wishes to regard himself as an intellectual success. But, naturally, there *are* philosophers who pride themselves on such an arrogant attitude; men who fatuously consider most other people to be either superfluous types or failures, which, if my wisdom counts for anything at all, they are very unwise to do! Indeed, one may be excused for assuming that an element of envy enters into their attitude, that it may be a form of unconscious compensation for the fact that they find their philosophical tasks so difficult, and therefore aren't altogether convinced of their own personal or professional superiority. But God forbid the establishment of a world exclusively geared to the production and aggrandizement of philosophers! Truly, there is much to be said for an attitude of mind which knows how to be ruthlessly selective in its choice of reading matter! For not everything that goes between the covers of a book passes for wisdom or truth. There are many so-called serious writers, thinkers, poets, prophets, etc., who imagine that they are writing wisdom or truth when, in reality, nothing could be further from the case! And one is sometimes fooled by these

pernicious influences, is one not?

STUDENT: Yes, I'm afraid so! Thus you are cautious as to the extent and authenticity of your own wisdom as well?

PHILOSOPHER: Up to a point. For what I would particularly like to impress upon you is a knowledge of the fact that no-one can be wholly wise, and hence a 'wise man', least of all those who generally purport to being such. One becomes wiser on various issues primarily on account of one's folly, so, fundamentally, it is the folly that guarantees one's wisdom. In other words, without being intermittently unwise one could never hope to be wise at all. Consequently one can never be really wise except in the sense of also knowing oneself to be a fool. Yes, that is a true wisdom – knowing oneself to be both wise *and* foolish without ever standing a chance of becoming exclusively either. Therefore I shall permit you to refer to me as a 'wise man', though only on the condition that you also privately take me for a fool. Is that acceptable to you?

STUDENT: You embarrass me slightly.

PHILOSOPHER: My dear friend, there is absolutely nothing to be embarrassed about! Learn to see me as a person rather than as a repository of ultimate wisdom or truth. I do not wish to be regarded as an infallible philosopher, still less a guru. Don't put me on a pedestal, even if it brings you a certain amount of pleasure. It is better that we converse as man to man rather than as god to man, isn't it?

STUDENT: Yes, you are doubtless right there!

Although it *is* pleasurable to have someone to admire. It

seems to be a natural tendency in man.

PHILOSOPHER: Then disregard my foolishness and continue to admire me, if that is what you want. I shall do my best to bear with it and not disappoint you. I shall allow you a degree of pleasure at my expense, just as you allow me a degree of pleasure by being both my interlocutor and student. For all tutors require students if they are to remain relatively sane. So I respect you as my student.

STUDENT: And I respect you as my tutor.

PHILOSOPHER: Well then, is there anything else you wish to ask me?

STUDENT (*Consulting his notes again*): Yes, as a matter of fact, I am deeply intrigued by your theory of insanity, which I would like to explore in greater detail. Why is it that, according to you, we can never go entirely insane? Surely life provides ample proof to the contrary, as any lunatic asylum would demonstrate.

PHILOSOPHER: I must have been partly insane to have contended such a thing in the first place! But, curiously, that is really the fact of the matter. You see, we are all partly insane from the time of our birth to the time of our death. If we weren't insane *as well as* sane, life would prove more insufferable than it generally does. As beings of polarity, we contain elements of sanity *and* insanity within us throughout our lives. Thus if one is already partly insane, it is quite impossible to actually go insane. All one can do is cultivate the normal polarity to a point of incompatibility with majority standards. Take the case, for example, of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. An average person would surely be tempted to consider

Joyce insane on account of the obscure style and eccentric nature of much of its content. It is extremely difficult for even the most literate of people to understand, and proves virtually unintelligible to anyone not well-acquainted with a variety of European languages. Yet Joyce is generally regarded as sane and, in my opinion, rightly so. Notwithstanding the extraordinary fact that the novel took him some eighteen years to complete, due in part to his failing eyesight and numerous eye operations, he kept to the task and consequently remained intelligible to people within the context of writer.

STUDENT: But if you contend that we are both sane *and* insane, why do you now contradict yourself by considering Joyce sane?

PHILOSOPHER: Ah, but I was speaking on the world's terms rather than on my own, in order to remain intelligible within the framework of a wider context! The world treats sanity and insanity as entirely separate phenomena which, under the prevailing circumstances, it is perfectly entitled to do, since one must be able to communicate generally as well as particularly, in terms intelligible to the nonphilosophical generality as well as in terms engineered by the philosophical individual. The 'sanity' to which I was alluding has its analogue in the 'wisdom' of the foregoing conversation. It is a sanity of one's being more or less compatible with majority standards, rather than a sanity which wholly excludes the possibility of a concomitant degree of insanity being involved in one's life. Thus Joyce's 'sanity' can be established on the basis of the fact that he remained a

writer and eventually had *Finnegans Wake* published. Had he destroyed the typescript instead of having it published, there would of course be a real case for considering him insane, though, once again, only on the world's terms.

STUDENT: This is all rather confusing! However, I think I'm just beginning to understand you, even though I am by no means convinced that you are right. I mean, isn't the eccentricity of *Finnegans Wake*, coupled to the fact that, even with serious eye trouble, it took Joyce so long to complete, sufficient indication of insanity – at least in the world's eyes? Surely no-one would have spent so much time on the creation of a work which, if memory serves me well, is not even 600 pages long.

PHILOSOPHER: Not unless he was both highly individualistic and virtually blind. But, even so, is it really any stranger or 'madder' to dedicate oneself to writing a certain book for eighteen years than to work in a peanut factory for as many years, to teach simple arithmetic to junior-school children for several years, to give a few thousand performances of a particular play in a variety of theatres, to give as many performances of a given piece of music in a variety of concert halls, or to drive a bus around on the same route for several years on-end? When one begins to consider the vast number of human activities, their apparent eccentricities, and the number of times or years people carry on doing them, there would seem to be sufficient grounds for considering everyone partly insane, not just the comparatively small number of eccentric writers, musicians, or artists one happens to know about.

Indeed, why should we not regard a mathematician, an acrobat, a clown, a comedian, a priest, a politician, a racing-car driver, a footballer, a soldier, a pilot, or an actor to be just as crazy or eccentric as Joyce – assuming we were disposed to regarding Joyce in such a light anyway? For instance, can you imagine Joyce preaching about Biblical miracles all his life?

STUDENT: No, I don't think the mumbo-jumbo or occult side of religion would have greatly appealed to him, if books like *Ulysses* are anything to judge by!

PHILOSOPHER: Indeed not! And he would have been as justified in assuming the preaching of miracles to be a waste of his time as, say, a priest would be in assuming the writing of a novel that took eighteen years to be a waste of *his* time, considering that, to some extent, everyone seems foolish to everyone else. But one must stick by one's habits if doing so makes life more tolerable, if not enjoyable. Most people are incapable, in any case, of being highly individualistic, of being a writer or an artist, because too much of their own company, too much solitude, and too great a demand on their personal initiative would sooner or later lead them to worry about their sanity, about the possibility of their slowly going insane without anyone being there to help them. For a time even I worried about this, when I first started out on a writing career. But it gradually dawned on me that, provided one kept at it and didn't become too lazy or careless, writing fairly intelligible information all day wasn't really any weirder than doing particular clerical duties all day, or teaching infant-school children to read, or working on a newspaper team, or playing

professional cricket every day. What really matters is how one feels about doing it! Yet it is truly amazing how a majority of people will cope with just about any task so long as they have colleagues, co-workers, mates, or whatever who do similar things and thus keep them company. Then it appears that they feel protected against themselves, against the responsibilities of creative individualism.

STUDENT: So it no longer worries you, as a writer and teacher, that you are now going your own way?

PHILOSOPHER: Occasionally it still worries me, though not as much as before. When I feel self-doubts as to the validity of my work or the nature of my calling, I generally console myself in the knowledge that it takes more courage to 'do your own thing' than to 'run with the herd', and that I must be mentally brave to be doing what I do, rather than something which can only be done in the company of others and, as often as not, under their command. Then I consider the nature of the many things which various other people either have to do or choose to do. Yet they don't normally consider themselves going mad on account of the nature of their respective occupations. Far from it! It is the occupations which *prevent* them from imagining that they are on the verge of insanity, even though what they do may well be less sane, or rational, than what I am doing ... judged from an individualistic point-of-view. However, the important thing is to remain preoccupied.

STUDENT: So Joyce was evidently preoccupied with the creation of *Finnegans Wake* for some considerable period of time?

PHILOSOPHER: As a matter of fact, he became increasingly fastidious in his approach to writing. For as *Ulysses* will confirm, fastidiousness had long been a major concern of his. So it doesn't particularly surprise me that he brought this concern to a veritable head in *Finnegans Wake*. Someone who had arduously read-up on Joyce once informed me that on average he was writing a line a day, but a line replete with subtle puns, symbolic innovations, hybrid words, and complex intellectual connotations – in short, a very pregnant line! So his creative fastidiousness had brought him to that peak of perfectionism or professionalism or eccentricity or extremity or foolishness or brilliance, or whatever else the voice of your personal judgement would like to call it, to the utter astonishment of the many less-individualistic natures. Had he lasted beyond his fifty-ninth year, and thus started work on another book, we may be forgiven for doubting whether he would have lived long enough to complete it, so deeply engrained would his fastidiousness have become by then! One can imagine an 83-year-old Joyce half-way through a potentially 300-page tome, a tome of such arcane complexity as to appear utterly unintelligible.

STUDENT: Have you ever felt yourself slipping into a tendency towards such fastidiousness in your own work?

PHILOSOPHER: Nothing comparable to Joyce, I can assure you! Though I have found reason to criticize myself on occasion. The only remedy for such a tendency would, I suppose, be to give oneself over to something comparatively slapdash, that is to say slapdash according to one's own exaggerated standards

rather than by general or, so to say, journalistic standards. Such fastidiousness is probably one of the main reasons why certain authors are always so dissatisfied with their writings. Instead of cultivating a fairly readable and spontaneous style of prose, they become bogged down in a swamp of self-criticism which, in any case, is probably irrelevant to their requirements.

STUDENT: You mean a writer may coerce himself into becoming so self-critical, with regard to his work, that the habit gradually overrides his natural pride in and enjoyment of it until, in becoming a sort of obsession, it causes him to lose faith in himself. Instead of being there to serve his work, the critical sense becomes so overdeveloped as to become a hindrance to it, and a kind of madness is the illogical result.

PHILOSOPHER: Yes, that may well be the case. For nothing will satisfy him so long as the critical sense remains intrusively paramount. But if one doesn't at least enjoy one's work to some extent, how can one possibly expect other people to enjoy it at all? A writer in that situation ought either to give-up writing altogether or learn to cultivate a less self-critical approach to it until, eventually, he can strike a balance between the two fatal extremes – that of the overfastidious and the slapdash. If he loses a little pride over the reformed nature of his style, he may gain some additional pride on the strength of his subject-matter, which should be meaningful to him. No-one requires an overrefined style of writing these days, though it has to be said that very few people would care to wade through

something so perversely slapdash as to be totally devoid of either artistic professionalism or meaningful content. The greatest and most accessible works are usually found somewhere in between the two objective/subjective extremes. However, if memory serves me well, I believe we were discussing the paradoxical relationship between sanity and insanity, weren't we?

STUDENT: Yes, and I was somewhat puzzled by it actually. If I have understood you correctly, it would appear that one can go insane in the world's eyes but not, apparently, in yours, seeing that one is already partly insane in consequence of the intrinsic dualism of life. Yet despite this, you are prepared to accept both attitudes, depending on the context, as equally applicable.

PHILOSOPHER: You have understood perfectly *mon ami* and, as such, I must congratulate you! For what one has to do, in this regard, is to forget the world's classification of insanity and concentrate upon the dual concepts of sanity and insanity within the individual, which is more or less tantamount to concentrating upon the theory of the regulative relationship between the conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche as defined by Carl Jung in various of his writings, as well as perceiving in the distinction between, for example, traditional theology and modern science a cleavage in the psyche between irrational and rational predilections, the latter somewhat more evolved than the former. Naturally enough, this will also lead one to forget the world's classification of sanity ... centred, as it usually is,

on the relationship of the individual to society and the degree of his integration within it. For a being composed of both tendencies can hardly be described in terms of one or the other, can he?

STUDENT: Not unless you remain consistent with your teachings and call a man 'sane' in view of the fact that sanity is the positive, and hence principal, attribute of his dual integrity. In other words, there is more sanity than insanity to life simply because the latter attribute, being comparatively negative, is eternally destined to play the secondary role, like the Father vis-à-vis the Son, or, for that matter, illusion vis-à-vis truth, evil vis-à-vis good, and sadness vis-à-vis happiness?

PHILOSOPHER: Excellent! So now you are getting closer to the truth of why, for instance, it is impossible for a man to be wholly sane, rational, good, happy, etc., on account of the necessary interplay of their contrary polarities, and therefore why the world is what it is – i.e. apparently without sanity, reason, goodness, happiness, etc., when you happen to be in an insane, unreasonable, bad, or sad mood and, often enough, when someone else is, too! Quite apart from the fact that without insanity there would be no sanity, one must give insanity its due as a means to making life tolerable, since without it one would virtually be unable to *do* anything.

STUDENT: You mean insanity makes it possible for us to take so many things for granted, to go about our daily lives without all the time wondering what in God's name they're all about?

PHILOSOPHER: Yes, to a certain extent. I mean, just look at yourself, at some of the things you do, at many

of the activities that you take for granted without particularly questioning them or waking-up to the realization of their inherent absurdity. I needn't run off a whole list of them, but there are certainly enough things in this category to keep us talking for some time to come! For example, take those musicians who play an avant-garde style of jazz on their saxophone. Now some of the sounds they make with that instrument are so disagreeable and disjunctive as to cause one to doubt their sanity or integrity as musicians. In fact, if a state-registered lunatic was actually released from an asylum one day specifically to play sax or piano or guitar in one of the more avant-garde jazz bands, do you imagine that he would sound any weirder or madder than most of his officially sane colleagues? No, a wholly sane creature would be unable to live as a normal man. One needs a certain degree of insanity in order to live at all. But in order to live wisely, shrewdly, and 'sanely', one must keep the essential duality of the psyche in line with society's demands at large, not condition oneself to becoming a public nuisance by allowing one's irrational tendencies to become too concentrated around a single theme or context at the expense of one's overall psychic economy. Needless to say, there *are* many such public nuisances who, despite their strange behaviour and even stranger opinions, are regarded as relatively sane in the world's eyes or, at any rate, in particular sections of it. But that is quite another story, and one which we can safely postpone for another time. I trust, now, that you will have something else to ask me? Or perhaps I should ask you? For instance, are you by any chance interested

in getting rid of your fears?

STUDENT: Yes, I am actually! But I don't honestly see how that can be done.

PHILOSOPHER: Neither do I. For a man who deliberately strives to get rid of his fears is as stupid as one who strives to rid himself of his hopes. You will never succeed in doing so, even if you occasionally kid yourself, during a spell of apparent good fortune, that you did. However, you have doubtless succeeded in outgrowing certain fears and replacing them with others?

STUDENT: Yes, I have to admit to *that* fact. Though these other fears seem every bit as bad as the earlier ones.

PHILOSOPHER: That is only to be expected. For in order to become fears at all, they have to attain to a certain intensity of emotional effect. So, in the long run, one fear is going to be pretty much like another. But fears have their use, all the same, since they help keep us in line.

STUDENT: What, exactly, do you mean by *that*?

PHILOSOPHER: Simply that they generally prevent us from doing something extremely rash, like, for example, throwing oneself under a car, jumping out of a tenth-floor window, swearing at strangers in the street, breaking shop windows, throwing all of one's money away, or murdering one's neighbours. If you weren't secretly afraid of what could happen to you, were you audacious enough to follow one or more of these regrettable courses, it is highly doubtful that you would be here today. You would almost certainly be dead or, at the very least, in gaol. Fortunately, however, you fear

various things and situations as much as anyone else, and thereby safeguard yourself against the possibility of experiencing them. One might contend that, except in exceptional cases or circumstances, fear keeps us fairly orderly and ensures that we do our best to keep others fairly orderly as well. As a singer in a rock band, for instance, you would endeavour to sing as well as possible, in order to win the audience over and keep it on your side. Fear of ridicule, in the event of a poor performance, would be an important consideration in that context. So you would behave in an orderly fashion, in accordance with the high standards of the better rock bands, and sing well.

STUDENT: Supposing I am afraid of not fully satisfying a particular young woman's sexual desires.

PHILOSOPHER: Fear of not satisfying her will motivate you to make sure you do satisfy her, as well as satisfy yourself. Without this fear regarding a particular female, you might become overcomplacent or sexually lazy, and lose her to somebody else.

STUDENT: Then I won't strive to eradicate my fears – at any rate, not those kinds of fears which we have been discussing!

PHILOSOPHER: You will never succeed in doing so anyway, especially with regard to that kind of fear which arises from an unforeseen situation and has absolutely nothing to do with any rational preconceptions one might have. Like boredom, fear is one of those things which, in all its manifold