

*42. Address to a Class of Philosophy Students  
at Concordia University (1994)*

“There is a current trend in Academia which I was made more than aware of a few days ago. I am speaking of a trend which is very much shared by the larger world of respectable society. I think I have knocked about enough in this world, respectable as well as non-respectable, to know that, to paraphrase Hamlet, there is more between heaven and earth than in any philosophy. I say this in order to come quickly to the point which is that if such behaviour as typified and exalted by this trend means the stifling of spontaneity to the point of robbing life of much of its richness and zest; if, furthermore, it means no longer bringing to the light of day the ooze-covered wealth of one’s deepest self; if, finally, it means going about as a well-rehearsed actor or, even worse, as an inoffensive puppy dog, then I stand before you as one who declares that he must take a different tack.

“As a teacher’s assistant I come before you knowing full well that I may at some point transgress the letter of the law. I may very well conduct myself in a way unbecoming the ceremony of the court and, in so doing, perhaps embitter some courtier who has the ear of the king. How much this might happen against my will or how much I might bring it on myself are questions I will leave open for now. I will only say that they reflect upon my status here as a self-styled anomaly or interloper. Even if it chances that I don’t survive in Academia despite the support of a few gracious people, I shall nonetheless be content and find my home elsewhere. For the world is large whereas the university has always struck me as being a bit like an overcrowded garden where the weeds of narrow-mindedness not only have a chance to spring up but be shown off like so many prize flowers. And all of this of course while displacing and choking the life out of rare but potentially highest growths. Those very spirits who, in order to survive, must sink their roots deep down below the quickly-exhausted humus of shallow talk and superficial judgements. Fortunately this garden, when one gets right down to it, is so immense and scattered, so much the product of highest things that the weeds and the weed-growers have but their day and no more. At least there rests my faith and so ending this highly improbable address, I thank you.”

*– He wants to impress all and sundry by showing how far he was willing to stick his neck out.*