

#### *45. But Here Are Three Satisfied Ones (1994)*

“Yes, here are three satisfied ones. And perhaps there are a number of others. But if one were suddenly presented with a barrel of apples and found the top ones to be all good and wholesome, would that be sufficient to think that the whole barrel was good?”

“I should say rather that a smart buyer would want to look a bit deeper into the matter. And if he had the least reason to be suspicious, he would check out a good many apples before spending his money.

“So it is in Academia. One shouldn’t be so quick to think that, because there are a number of open avowals of satisfaction for a particular professor, there are therefore no hidden undercurrents of dissatisfaction. There are a number of students who, if a professor is kindly and helpful while leading them to the well of his wisdom, will think no further than this show of kindness and helpfulness. Even if the water of his well is a bit brackish and does not sit well upon the palate; and, moreover, even if the professor makes it quite clear that they should only drink from *his* well, they will imbibe what he offers for fear of quite possibly bringing out another side of his character.

“On the other hand, there are students who, having already tasted more wholesome waters, cannot but go grudgingly to this well. Generally speaking, they keep their sour faces and bitter words out of reach of the eye and ear of the professor. Or else they will learn the art of mockery by which, even while feeling themselves forced to participate in such a demeaning ritual, they may still be able to maintain some dignity and freedom of expression. If they are lucky, they will survive without too much damage. But if they are not, they will think that highest principles, however much they are honoured, are as far away from their immediate concerns as the reveries of childhood.”

*– Alice, I think you’re expecting too much of me. I’ve been teaching philosophy for thirty years and, although I may not have lived up to everyone’s expectations, I’ve never abused my authority and never expected anyone to drink from the well of my wisdom – to use his words – if they found the waters to be brackish.*

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