About the cover:
3 color woodcut done by Monica Sibilia

...your slightest look easily will unclose me
though i have closed myself as fingers,
you open always petal by petal myself as spring opens
(touching skillfully, mysteriously) her first rose...

...(i do not know what it is about you that closes
and opens; only something in me understands
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)
nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands

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I knew I was going to be a marine biologist. I knew about dolphins (they're cool) and I knew about Jacques Cousteau (my parents had a National Geographic book about him, which I studied with an intellectual intensity I've seldom duplicated since). In the interest of practical, hands-on learning, I set up a laboratory in the basement, and perhaps it was here that I went wrong; I chose to focus the bulk of my research on spontaneous generation, which I attempted to coax out of vials of colored water.

Then, reality struck—eighth grade Earth Science. I was done in. Sure, there were a few things I hadn't counted on—exact measurements, control groups, and some mysterious and frightening thing called scientific method which meant your hypothesis was supposed to have a point—but my knowledge would pull me through. I mustered the gravity appropriate to one tinkering with the laws of nature; I hypothesized, experimented, and concluded with vigor. But in the rather dull light of that junior high laboratory, my aspiration to scientific greatness seemed a chimera, an idle fancy, a useless abstraction.

I don't know what I'm going to be anymore. I know about GRE's and I know about resumes. I know what I didn't know going into eighth grade Earth Science: I'm not ready. Perhaps you know the feeling. It's like those nightmares when you're walking about with no clothes on, and no one seems to notice, but you know—you've got no clothes on! Except in this case someone may notice. There is a future gathering its forces; it may expose you. You're the Emperor; no matter how much it costs you to get those clothes, your attempt at a stately promenade may be shown for what it is—a desperate buck run. I suppose the question this fear suggests is as tired as it is ancient: what has all the knowledge you've gained done for you? Will it stand up to life? Will it even weigh in the balance at all?

This question is complicated, for me, because it is the getting of knowledge that excites me. A word well defined, an argument cleanly done, a complex phenomenon demystified—all in all, there is nothing as satisfying as the organic click of understanding. But take the product of that work, isolate it, look at it: it is stale and impotent. It is knowledge, yes, bloated sacks filled with it, in great static piles. It is the world, dissected and labeled, soaked in formaldehyde, wrapped in plastic, and resting in the pit of the skull. It, in itself, is nothing. What is it, then, that draws me to knowledge? Why have I worked so hard to get it?
Herein lies the rub: much as I would like to posit knowledge as the enemy, name theory, abstraction, and objectivity the tools of evil, and curse them all, it’s not that simple. Treasure is hoarded because it’s valuable; it’s not the treasure that’s the problem, but the hoarding, and the hoarder must know this to reform. I have stored up knowledge for the same reason I have stored up many treasures on earth. Somehow, I think it will be enough. I think it will stand up to life, will even the balance—I think it will make me whole. Whether you are like me and seek knowledge to gain some sort of strength, or seek it for something else—praise for academic success, a good job after graduation, whatever—the possibility is there. It doesn’t matter whether you’re getting it for its own sake or so that you can get something else. You may be a hoarder; it may be greed that whispers to you the desire to have your fill, to get your life-fuel, to complete your knowing and understanding so that you will be complete.

If you’ve known this quiet panic, this fear of being exposed, then you've probably realized the impossibility of your situation. Any institution of higher learning, consciously or no, is extremely conducive to treasure hoarding. Perhaps you’ve thought, as I often have, that it is therefore the institution that is at fault, and that it would probably be best to leave it all behind and strike out on a simpler and purer path. Waitressing, perhaps, or a cabin in the woods. But we could beat on this monster of academia eternally and to no avail. I don’t think it’s too harsh to say that it is next to impossible to go about getting a degree without some extent of treasure hoarding, that is, some interest in getting something that will make you strong, or successful, or respected, or simply courageous enough to start “really living.” But neither is it any easier to avoid treasure hoarding in the “real world.” So. If you’ve known this quiet panic, you know where we are now. We are naked, the Emporers, still ourselves after all this work. And worse. We are the fraudulent weavers, for we are the ones that convinced ourselves that the clothes would cover us and bring us admiration. We are the ones who thought the treasure would be enough.

And perhaps this is the point to these years ‘prostrate to the higher mind’. Perhaps if formal education accomplishes anything of value, it accomplishes this cycle: it brings you, again and again, to you, stripped of your treasure, not stronger or better for what you’ve accumulated, just you. It brings you, in fact, to you knees, if you pay attention to it, where you know yourself as you were created: dependent on your Creator, his strength made perfect in your weakness. Indeed, we throw ourselves into the machinery of education; for whatever purpose, we clutch knowledge, and we are continually humbled. Each year we run a circle around the sun. Yet I clutch a suspicion, or even a hope, and this is it: I think that each time I come around to seeing myself as the Emperor, I know myself better because of the time and knowledge that have waxed and waned. I know my God better. And still the weaver whispers.
Global Market

There is a burning of the already
Dry Bolivian dirt.
In the high passes farmers are chewing coca
To subdue the dizzy heights of the naked
Tin mines.

All decisions are made in Japanese tongue
For the fate of soil under Queensland’s feet.

I have my knuckles tightly drawn
On the northern end of a north-south stick,
A hand on the upper hemisphere, heads above competition.
And I am burning in the cruel billow,
Wicked West wind, sideways smoking,
Reaching for the bottom rung
Sunk deeply in cool mud.

David Ihmels
During 1992 I will have personally witnessed elections in two nations; in the spring the British general election, and in the fall the American presidential. What follows is an attempt to sort out the meaning of the extraordinary and unexpected conservative victory in Britain and to anticipate the continued positioning of American politics somewhere between the moderate center to the extreme right, no matter who wins in November.

Readers who may know of my journalistic comments over the last twenty years, will not be surprised to learn of my dismay in noting the seemingly unstoppable tidal wave of conservative victories in Britain, America, Germany and even in Scandanavia. Like Canute, I cannot stop the rising tide, but I don't have to like it that my politics of the democratic left, in the tradition of Niebuhr seems to be out of fashion as much among Christians as among the general public. It seems best to admit my point of view at the outset so that readers may be on their guard as to whether or not my comments are politically partisan or as I mean them generically Christian and transcending partisanship. The two political positions on offer tend, respectively, to community and individuality. While, as a Christian with social concerns, we must respect and value the worth of individual persons, it is toward the ideal of community that conscientious Christians must tend. God intended us to be a human family, and our Lord intended us to be members of one another. Our political views, therefore, should be predicated on how best to build up our common life rather than on how to enhance personal well being at the expense of community.

My observation of the British election began with a British recounting of the concerns stated above. The council of churches in Manchester published a document just prior to the election campaign in which they were careful to avoid partisanship. Nevertheless the Manchester document was forthright in asking Christians to follow this simple maxim: when making political choices, consider first how the policies of parties and candidates would have impact on community, not on how it would affect the individual, at least in the first instance. This plea to consider the needs of others before oneself would seem to be so unexceptional to Christians as to be unable to generate political controversy. But controversy was soon to follow. Some supporters of the (by now very moderate and hardly socialist) Labour party claimed that the ideas of the Manchester document were similar to their own, i.e., that community should be the guiding norm.
In reply, some supporters of the (by now more moderate and distanced from Thatcherism) Conservative party cried foul, repeating their oft-stated view that church leaders, in nearly endorsing Labour ideology, were out of touch with the real views of ordinary people.

I thought, wrongly as it turned out, that the conservatives had hurt themselves badly by giving away "caring and sharing" issues to Labour, while keeping lower taxation and "freedom of choice" as their issues. As the election came and went, I admit to being surprised at how relatively unmoved was the British electorate to plaintive Labour Party pleas to care and share. I admit to not having fully reckoned on how deeply the ideology of Thatcherism had penetrated the British spirit. The decade of Thatcher, and of Reagan in America, was indeed the decade of greed, or at least the decade in which it became legitimate to say in public what had long been said in private, that politics was a means to maximize personal gain.

Both Labour and the small third party, the Liberal Democrats, had had consistently higher support than the Conservatives in the pre-election polls. Since both the opposition parties were advocating raising taxes slightly to give governmental attention to concerns such as health, education and the government, it seemed as if the electors might well return a Labour government, perhaps aided by the Liberals, and that such a government would be center-left. However, the polls were wrong. While Labour and Liberal percentages of the vote did increase in comparison to the last general election, it was not as much as pre-election polls had indicated and not nearly enough to form a government. Early academic opinion is mixed on why the polls were wrong, and there are many factors involved in so marked a miscalculation. One suggestion that I find particularly fascinating is that there is a kind of "politically correct" way to answer when pollsters call at door or on phone: that a person must of course express concern about the poor, the homeless, the health service, the cities, the environment, etc.; that a person would be willing to pay for such concerns; that a person would never ask of government, at least in the first instance, "What's in it for me?"

After the election it came out that a large number of voters were precisely asking, "What's in it for me?" and they actually had less interest in "caring and sharing" issues than the pre-election polls would have indicated. In trying to interpret this, a leading article in The Times suggested that the clear message of the voters to
the Labour-Liberal concerns for the poor was in fact "sod the poor." North American readers may be excused for not knowing this expression, both because it is largely unknown on this side of the water and because it is a particularly offensive remark. "Sod" is short for the act of sodomy. In American colloquial English the closest we can come is to suggest the term "fuck 'em." (This grievously vulgar phrase demonstrates the vulgarity of the attitude; these are their words, not mine.) Well might we echo the view expressed in The Times that if such is the stuff of conservative victories if some goodly percentage of voters tell their government that their attitude toward the poor is "fuck 'em" then there ought not be much legitimate cause for rejoicing at 10 Downing Street or at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Shifting now to the 1992 American presidential election, I am very much helped by "The Suburban Century Begins," William Schneider's insightful article in the July issue of The Atlantic Monthly. He observes the monumental demographic shifts that have occurred in American history: in roughly the first century of the nation's history rural issues dominated the political scene; in roughly the second century, urban issues predominated because it reflected growing city power; in our time roughly the beginning of America's third century a majority of citizens live in what can statistically be called suburbs (up from a quarter in 1950 and a third in 1960). Thus, the political parties and candidate who can best appeal to suburban voters will win. Acknowledging that suburbs can vary enormously, Schneider correctly (in my view) observes that it is not so simple as saying that suburbs are conservative and cities liberal, though that is broadly true. It is more helpful to observe the character of suburban life, which, as Schneider writes, "means the privatization of American life and culture." To move to the suburbs is to express a preference for the private over the public. Quoting other scholars he offers the following scathing characterization of suburban life:

The classic suburb is less a community than an agglomeration of houses, shops and offices connected to one another by cars, not by the fabric of human life. The structure of the suburb tends to confine people to their houses and cars; it discourages strolling, walking, mingling with neighbors. The suburb is the last word in privatization, perhaps even its lethal consumation, and it spells the end of authentic civic life.

There are many reasons that people choose suburban life for which they need not apologize (a home of their own, security for their children),
while some reasons are not so salutory (racism and classism). But whether or not some or all of the above reasons for moving to the suburbs are true of a particular person's choice, a certain kind of behavior seems to follow logically from suburban living, i.e., the privatization of concerns or at least the refocusing of civic concerns to the merely local. Suburbanites want a secure and controlled environment where in their private time they might pursue the life-style interests either in private spaces or in controlled public spaces, not the uncontrolled public spaces of the city.

Most suburbanites are property owners, and that makes them very sensitive to taxation. A "good community" to a suburban dweller means one in which they have been able to purchase the government, police, schools, etc. that they want, much the same way they purchase their other consumer goods at their local shopping mall. Because their interests are privatized and local and because the government and society they have purchased is costly, they have little interest in state or national government taking any more than minimal taxation from them. They don't like politicians who advocate taking "their" tax money to solve other people's problems, especially since they believe that government isn't really effective in helping needy people and, perhaps more importantly, that the needy people should help themselves.

There is one major shortcoming, however, in Schneider's otherwise insightful treatment of suburban politics. He tends to ellide middle class status and the ideology of suburbia. They may overlap but they are not coincidental. I think it is better to make a distinction between "middle class" and "bourgeois." Presumably, most readers of this magazine are middle class, in that we are neither rich nor poor; thus the category middle class distinguishes very little. But "bourgeois" especially because of the historical connotations associated with the term connotes a certain self-satisfaction in being middle class, of having arrived to a place and status where one is determined to stay. Thus politics for the bourgeois becomes aggressive in that people want government to work for them in maintaining and amplifying their "arriviste" privileges.

For purposes of this essay, what we are calling bourgeois politics comes close to the attitudes described at the close of the section on the British election. Bourgeois politics is liberal in the classic sense of the term (what passes for conservatism in modern America, i.e., limited government) when it suits its own class interests, but it is also liberal in the modern sense (activist, interventionist government) when it suits class interests. So, for example the bourgeois believes that government shouldn't raise taxes to help the needy because that shouldn't be the function of government. But they also believe that government should give bourgeois homeowners a favorable tax concession (e.g., mortgage relief) that...
is unavailable to propertyless city dwellers. Once again we have the politics of "sod the poor." And, unlike the British case, when one adds as in America racial antipathy, then we see the real intent and edge of bourgeois politics.

George Bush is a more faithful servant of the suburban bourgeoisie than is Bill Clinton or the unknown maverick, Ross Perot. But Clinton is savvy enough a politician to know where the votes are, and if he tries to appeal to the same voters as Bush it will surprise no one.

Whichever candidate wins is unimportant here, because my point is this: to win he must have a set of policies to please suburbanites, and it is they who he must serve. I believe that a Democrat has a slight advantage in potentially being able to bridge the gap between city and suburb, though a Republican in the mold of Mark Hatfield might also be successful.

As Christians I hope we might appeal to the new majority in suburbia to overcome the logic of suburban life and to recommit their considerable skills and financial power to the needs of the entire community. But even if we cannot appeal to them on altruistic grounds, we can appeal to them on grounds they know best—self interest. The sad truth is this: if the Los Angeles riots proved nothing else it was that the problems of American society are deep and real, and that they need to be addressed before we all perish in fear and shame. However, I am sustained in this hope by a local example of a few years ago.

Many CRC people were angry at what they regarded as the unfair treatment they received in respect to paying taxes for schools they didn't use while paying tuition to schools that the public would not help to fund. For a while, some CRC members advocated that their potent political numbers be used to defeat school millage elections. Happily, under the influence of wise leadership, CRC people now typically vote for the millages, against their own self-interest, because it is the right thing to do. If Christians could encourage others to follow that helpful and hopeful example on a larger scale, then our nation would indeed be gentler and kinder, because community not individuality would be our guiding norm.

Ronald A. Wells is professor of history and director of the Calvin Center for Christian Scholarship. During the spring semester of 1992 he was director of Calvin's "Semester in Britain" program, and he lived at Oak Hill College, London.
Summer Sickness

Clean white sheets
cover the couch

at low morning

she curls head-under
the stiff blue blanket
which the day bleeds through, but
muted, and cool

Here
Peter and the Wolf play
smoothly spinning
until the arm lifts from its groove

the sun climbs high

she sucks orange slowly
through a straw
nibbles saltines and sleeps as
thick afternoon

slips behind houses
and shadows seep to the street

in the eight o’clock dark

the sheets stick and sweat
with a daylike fever, rising;
er her body burns with the sun
sunk to earth’s other side, and
she tosses restlessly through the night

waiting for the next blue dawn

April Diephouse
"Kierkegaard Dealing

An Interview with Paul Schrad

By Jerem
"Kierkegaard Dealing Drugs"... or a Calvinist making movies—they seem equally improbable. The latter is now a reality, however, and the former is what Paul Schrader said of his new film, Light Sleeper, at the premiere party at New York's east side club, Tatou. Schrader comes from a Dutch Christian Reformed background, which places him in a rather unique position as a Hollywood filmmaker. However, most Calvin College students probably do not know that the man who coined the phrase “Born in the U.S.A.” (Bruce Springsteen “borrowed” it from him) and was one of the main innovators of early-eighties suavity, from which the fashion styles of Miami Vice originated, was in their very shoes a little more than twenty years ago. Indeed, Paul Schrader, now one of the biggest names in Hollywood, was a one-time seminary hopeful and Chimes editor.

In Schrader on Schrader and Other Writings, Schrader summarizes his perception of the method to the moviemaker’s madness: “...misfits from small towns across America go out to Hollywood, make TV and movies...pump it back into our parents’ home and try to make them feel guilty.” For Paul Schrader, who was born in Grand Rapids in 1946, this is a fairly accurate early-career assessment. For those who find it hard to understand why a boy with such an upright religious upbringing could now be making what some call “blasphemous” films, one must realize that Schraders’ disenchantment with his origins occurred over a long period of time and probably began at home. (A rather well-known episode involved his mother, who pricked his finger with a needle to show him what hell is like.) After his days at Calvin as a student radical, journalist, and budding intellectual, Schrader attended UCLA film school and soon proved himself a formidable film critic. He turned down a major career opportunity in that field and co-wrote his first script, The Yakuza, with his brother, to make ends meet. Around the same time Schrader joined a close group of young renegade filmmakers, including Martin Scorsese, Robert De Niro, and Steven Spielberg, who together challenged the Hollywood establishment. Ironically, two decades later these “misfits” are the establishment.

The first real wave of notoriety that came to Schrader, in terms of his
writing ability, came in the form of *Taxi Driver*, directed by Scorsese in 1975. Other scripts of repute are *Raging Bull* (1980) and *The Mosquito Coast* (1986), both adaptations of novels; the former was heralded by many critics as the best film of the eighties decade. *The Last Temptation Of Christ* (1988), an adaptation of Niko Kazantzakis' novel, brought fame to Paul Schrader in far more dubious ways. Due to the "questionable" portrayal of the Christ character, press conferences were held in denunciation of the film. An offer was even made to purchase and destroy all copies, while fundamentalists and many evangelical Christians staged a number of blockades and protests at theatres nationwide. This phenomenon was an unprecedented mass-censorship of the entertainment industry, and eclipsed an earlier Schrader controversy when John Hinckley Jr. claimed to have been inspired by *Taxi Driver* in his assassination attempt of President Reagan.

As a visual artist, Schrader holds architect Charles Eames responsible for molding his aesthetic. Eames taught him that images without words can express ideas in their own right—a tenet simple to any visual artist yet revelatory to Schrader at the beginning stages of his career. In 1979, *American Gigolo* marked Schraders' first serious venture into cinematic art. Six years later, his *tour de force* arrived in the likes of *Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters*. Called by some the most extraordinary Hollywood movie ever made, it was filmed on location in Japan with no official budget in the midst of death threats by the Japanese mafia; the film remains virtually unheard-of today. More recently, Schrader has written and directed *Light of Day*, in addition to directing *Patty Hearst* and *The Comfort of Strangers*.

At mid-career, Schraders' view toward his profession no longer seems to be that of an enfant terrible, as he described himself earlier. In many ways, however, he is still a misfit. Paul Schrader may very well be the most serious filmmaker at work today; his exploration of the transcendental through the main ingredients of his films—religion, art, and violence—certainly makes him one of the most unusual. The characters of Travis Bickle, Julian Kay, and John LeTour are all individuals at the margins of society who seem ready at any moment to transcend their immediate awareness of their existence. It is this notion of the transcendental (which he analyzes in his book *Transcendental Style in Film*) that best typifies and defines the core of Schraders' cinematic mold. For the moviegoer, this innovative concept of how movies can affect our lives can be rather alien. We will see how *Light Sleeper* fares among the melange of oftentimes mindless films released within the past several months and years.

Twenty-four hours before *Light Sleeper*’s premiere this past August, Paul Schrader took some time to share a few words with his alma mater and *Dialogue*. 
How did your “Road to Damascus” experience with Charles Eames, during which your aesthetic view of the “visual” was completely overhauled, change how you write?

It hasn’t changed how I write one wit. I only write as a writer. I don’t pretend to write as a director, I write for myself the same way I write for another director; I think it is risky to try to confuse those tasks. You should write as a writer and direct as a director. A writer’s task is narrative, theme, character, and dialogue—not to decorate the room or pick up the camera’s angles. A writer can often get confused about what his task is if he is trying to do the director’s task instead of concentrating only on the writer’s task. And then when it comes to directing a piece I have to set the writer’s half-brain aside and look at it visually.

Do you consider yourself a chronic writer, or does everything stay in your head until a little voice says, “Here, write this one?”

The latter. At any given time I’m mulling through a number of ideas, and at some point one becomes formed to the degree that it wants to be written. Sometimes I write them and sometimes they just fade away.

How did your major in English help you in your career as a critic and later as a screenwriter and director?

Yes, well I think the more important thing was working on the Chimes—learning to write on a deadline, learning how to thaw out seven column inches in three hours. I also did some work for The Grand Rapids Press. Journalism is, I think, one of the best training grounds for the arts because you really learn how to communicate efficiently and quickly, and then when you get into the arts you have that skill behind you, and then you can work in a slightly different direction.

You have said in the past that everything you have done has been formed by biblical characters. How is John LeTour, the protagonist from your latest film Light Sleeper, influenced by a biblical archetype?

There is a lot of that wandering and soul—searching that you find in certain biblical characters, that kind of spiritual anxiety, particularly in the way that I wrote the Christ character in Last Temptation of Christ—that “What does God want of me?” kind of angst.

Along those same lines, I find Tolstoy’s Ivan Ilyich likened very much to many of your characters. Whereas Travis Bickle will probably return to his old ways at the end of Taxi Driver, Julian Kay (American Gigilo) and John LeTour experience a redemptive process of sorts that is subtle and open to interpretation. Some viewers perceive this as a concession towards America’s enormous diet of re-
deeming hope. What are you thoughts on this latter idea?

It’s a mystery of grace redemption, the unearned quality of it all, and in some ways the inexplicable qualities. There is a quote from I Corinthians 15:51 from which I got the name for Light Sleeper, which is printed at the beginning of the script, now published in book form; “Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed...” -- that notion. Jung, in the carving over the doorway to his home on the lake in Zurich, had a quote, “Called or uncalled, God will be there,” which is a very similar sentiment -- a sense that the divine, the spiritual, the unearthly, will come knocking, will pursue you. Sometimes you’ll sleep, sometimes you’ll be listening, and sometimes you won’t, but it will still be there.

And some will sleep and some will not.

Yes, but both can find change.

At the end of Light of Day, do Joe and Patti Rasnick (who might represent America’s youth culture in relation to its addiction to rock and roll) find a means to an end in their music, or will they in the future experience something greater than their music -- redeeming hope, perhaps?

I don’t see that in that mold so much as I see a kind of Kommerspiel, which is a sort of home drama -- trying to battle through one’s identity in the family context, in this case the religious context. I think it’s more about families than it is about God.

In terms of ethics in Hollywood, does a filmmaker in a pluralistic society hold any responsibility to how much sex and violence he portrays in any given film?

I think he does. He doesn’t have a responsibility to be polite. He doesn’t have a responsibility to uphold societal values. In fact, if he has any responsibility, often it’s in the other direction -- to challenge and to question. But the responsibility he does have in this area is to have some kind of coherent morality that people can look at. It can be a dark morality. It can be an evil morality. But if it’s responsible, people can look at it and learn from it.

I heard a Calvin professor once comment that if second century Christians could watch movies like The Greatest Story Ever Told or Jesus of Nazareth they would have been proclaimed heretical,
whereas *The Last Temptation Of Christ* may have been praised in some ways due to its portrayal of the human side of Christ. Perhaps many 20th century Christians protesting the film weren’t “defending the faith” but ignorantly defending a gnostic view of “God As Man,” which goes back to one of the Church’s earliest debates.

Yes, I would think so. The church, particularly the way it is constituted today, is much more comfortable...no, I don’t want to misstate myself. The church, you have to understand, is, I think, first and foremost a social institution and secondarily a spiritual one. The spiritual institution is quite private and the church is usually run on some kind of social rules. That’s why it can have so many members—the moment it is private it starts getting smaller and smaller and starts fragmenting, and I think that’s what the Reformation was all about. Handing the Bible to the parishioners automatically meant the church was going to start fragmenting, because individuals will always have individual responses to the Scriptures and will not necessarily agree with the ecclesiastical czars who are running the social institution. The church tends to respond to the crisis as a social institution rather than a spiritual institution. It wants to protect its hegemony in certain areas and therefore it will twist the scripture to defend its social doctrine; it will find those texts in the Bible which attack homosexuality, that lessen the equality of women, and will hold these texts up as being definitive of the Bible. The texts in the Bible that, let’s say, promote communism, that promote overthrow of government, that promote equality and individual rights will tend to be elbowed out the back door by the social rulers of the church because they are not in the best interest. But if you turn instead to the poets and the mystics, who are as much spiritual leaders as the popes and preachers, they will cede on these texts. Therefore, as an individual one always has to be suspicious of church theodicy because they have a second agenda, or perhaps even a first agenda, of defending the certain social order which they exist in.

**So the church confuses many people by saying that the social institution and the spiritual institution are one and the same.**

It’s very confusing because the church will often cloak its political and social agenda up in spiritual terms. It will cloak the idea of, let’s say, a secondary position for women in spiritual terms. Of course, this has made life rather miserable for women in the church. I remember when I was growing up in Grand Rapids, one of the jobs of the church was the economic growth of our community. We shopped at Christian Reformed merchants and Christian Reformed merchants shopped with us, but we kept our money in the community. Now that’s not biblical but that is part of the social function of the church. It’s very easy to get these two things confused..

**What would you say to the idea that the point of movies is to show us things we shouldn’t be allowed to see, the “big, bad world out there.” Is this part of the motivation behind film?**
No, I think what movies mostly are about is confirming people's prejudices and sentimental illusions in order to make a dollar.

**You've said in the past that movies can change people's lives....**

Yes, but you don't make money changing people's lives. Where you really make money is affirming people's prejudices—that's when they really pay you.

**When you show them what they want to see.**

Absolutely.

**I don't see that in your films at all.**

That is why I am not as rich as some of these filmmakers.

**Over the last twenty years Calvin College's aesthetic views have changed dramatically. If cinema were taken seriously enough, what do you think the potential is for someone from the Calvin community to make a significant mark in Hollywood?**

Well, first of all, we can't have any illusions about what movies are. Movies for the most part are a very coarse form of commerce--the lowest denominator form of commerce--and therefore there isn't much room in motion pictures for any kind of intelligent much less spiritual, communication. So there isn't much room in movies for intellectual feasibility of any sort. And movies are very, very expensive. And the people that go to movies usually don't have much interest in spiritual values or intellectual values. So it's not a very "right" field.

**Wouldn't you consider your films intellectual?**

Yes... and many people would consider the career I have hewn out of a hostile environment something short of miraculous.

**At Calvin College we talk an awful lot about integrating our faith into all areas of life. What is your view towards this basic Calvinist idea at this point in your life and career?**

[long pause] Yes, well, of course that is correct. But, you know, the devil is in the details [laughs] and how that is interpreted is going to be authority. "It's very easy to say" is kind of a general principle. But then
someone starts telling you, “Well, you can’t do x, y, and z because you would be violating church rules,” then you’d have to say wait a second—whose rules? Where are those rules coming from? Are they coming from Scripture? Are they coming from theology? Or are they coming from custom?

Perhaps that is a difficult question to answer because when you were at Calvin the arts were largely ignored.

The Church’s ban on motion pictures was actually very convenient for me because it allowed me to be a rebel and an artist at the same time. I got into motion pictures the same way I got into political protest— it was a way to be a rebel and hold the high ground at the same time. It was the best of both worlds [laughs].

Would you care to comment on your new screenplay?

No ... I’ve written a couple of things. Actually right now I’m doing a script for somebody else on John Gotti and the family Gravono. I’ve written a script about a born--again Christian that I may or may not make, which is sort of interesting. I don’t know what shape it will take.

What prompted your interest in this character?

Well, you know, Light Sleeper is about a drug delivery boy. I was saying to someone that in present day society it’s hard to imagine a character less sympathetic than a drug dealer—unless, of course it’s a born-again Christian because nobody wants to be a born-again Christian. At that I said wait a second, now there’s a guy who is a very, very unlikely character— what if I made him a hero, what would happen? Because it’s been thirty years since Christians have either been buffoons or hypocrites in movies. So it was almost a perverse challenge to take such a character and try to make him a protagonist in a positive way.

There seems to be this ongoing love/hate relationship between you and Calvin College. Why donate your film library to it?

Well, it was time to get rid of it. I just hadn’t used it in a long time and therefore I was looking for a place to give it to. Calvin actually needed it, as opposed to giving it to UCLA or whatever, for whom they already have those books, and they would simply sell them and it would simply be a donation. I thought I could give it to somebody whose library had a vacuum in that area and who could put those books on the shelf. I don’t know if I’ve ever really gone on record as having a gripe against Calvin, at least not after I left it. I think I’ve gotten a very solid education and a very clear sense of individual responsibility in the world and and I would not trade that education for any other.
Sonnet

I saw my mother’s mother pale in white:
Her face washed clean of lilac, pinks and reds,
Her eyes all sunken, gulping up the light,
Her veins as dry as ruined river beds.
She lay a timid hillock losing earth;
Her skin, once full, was drained down to the bone.
Death washed from her the grittiness of birth
And smoothed her down like water over stone.
I saw my mother’s mother as a bride,
Before the deviled dark distilled her mind.
She lost the marrow and the pith inside,
The husband, God, and grist that forged a rind.
I have her fleshless image in a frame—
In memory, dark, and death she looks the same.

April Diephouse
Modern Philosophy an
A Fragmentary Preamble

Mr. Reddwick was sipping his tea. A bearded man walked up to him and said, “All men with beards are liars.”

“Do they lie all the time?” asked Mr. Reddwick.

“Yes,” said the man. Then his face became red, and he walked away. When Mr. Reddwick had finished his tea, the bearded man came back.

“All men with beards all the time,” he said. Mr. Reddwick smiled.

“My friend, you are in a muddle,” said Mr. Reddwick. “Perhaps you should shave.” The bearded man grumbled and walked away. Mr. Reddwick closed his eyes, and when he opened them again, the bearded man was there.

“I am presently lying,” said the man.

“What are you lying about?” asked Mr. Reddwick.

“Why, I am lying about the self-same statement that I just made,” said the man.

“I think you are lying now,” said Mr. Reddwick, and the bearded man disappeared. After an hour, the sun began to set, and Mr. Reddwick noticed the bearded man approaching.

“About this statement I am presently lying,” said the man.

“Do you believe that the statement is true?” asked Mr. Reddwick.

“I am not certain,” said the bearded man, with a crafty leer.

“Then you can’t lie about it, for you don’t know the truth to lie from.”

“Well, then, I believe that the statement is true,” said the man.

“I believe that the statement is false,” said Mr. Reddwick.

“Aha!” shouted the bearded man. “Then I am not lying, and the statement must be true!”

“Oh, no,” said Mr. Reddwick, “You are not lying, but you are wrong in thinking that the statement is true, so your assertion that you are lying is, as I said, false.”

“But if it is false . . .” shouted the bearded man, but Mr. Reddwick quietly interrupted,

“Then you are speaking wrongly to say that you are lying, insofar as you think you are lying and thus intend to lie about something false. In fact, you are telling the truth, but it is false in your faulty conception.”

“You are long-winded,” said the bearded man, “and brevity is the soul of wit.” Mr. Reddwick looked at him for a long time.

“Phooey,” he said.
“If it is the case that an abstract thinker is devoid of a sensitiveness for the comical, the circumstance is in itself a proof that while his thought may be the product of a distinguished talent, it is not the thought of one who has in any eminent sense existed as a human being.” Kierkegaard, 269

It is a distressing symptom of the modern \textit{zeitgeist} that most teachers of philosophy have developed a preoccupation with \textit{careful} philosophy, as if ever there was such a thing. They have associated good philosophy with \textit{carefulness}, and as such they threaten to smother the life out of thinking.

Some people have said of Heidegger that he sacrificed clarity for profundity. There are some people, however, who sacrifice clarity -fooof!- straight off to the literary gods. They write in confusion, and there is an element in this that is even more real and revealing than the profound.

In discussing philosophy as a general thing, it is next to useless to simply ask, “What is it?” We need a device, an \textit{ad-hoc} philosophy to use as an interpretive tool. In this particular instance, such a tool will be provided. Philosophy will be addressed as a response to certain elements of reality, a motivational set. In treating specifically ‘modern’ philosophy we therefore must identify a new or recently uncovered element of motivation that, appearing focused in the birth of modern philosophy, affects the nature of philosophy by manifesting itself to most of the modern thinkers. The positing of this new motivation is not completely \textit{ad-hoc}, however, for in fact the described motivation might actually exist.

Philosophy is the disclosure of self-deception.

A complicated suggestion

During the summer a few years past, I worked in a nut factory. Between the cycles of the peanut roaster I read a book about neuropsychology. Fifteen pages, then dump, shovel, and pour the next 330 pounds into the roaster. The workers there thought I was pretty funny. Eventually Ed the manager told me I ought to watch the peanuts rather than read. “This is work time, not story hour,” he said. Ed always had a way with words. And so I transferred my attention from reading to speculative philosophy, staring blankly into the depths of 330 pounds of roasted peanuts as they churned away in the big barrel roaster. Dave the foreman thought I was acting odd. He asked me what I did up there on the roasting platform. “Think, I guess,” I told him. Dave laughed and shook his head. From then on he occasionally called me “Philosopher.” Ed heard him call me “Philosopher” once, and he laughed and said, “Yeah, I think therefore I am.” Like I said, Ed always had a way with words.
Regardless of what philosophers would intend, the overwhelming majority of people in the West regard philosophy as, “I think therefore I am,” and nothing more. That silly little statement has become more culturally pervasive than anyone, including the philosophers, can explain. Even the august discipline of philosophy itself returns time and again to Descartes as a point of reference, although most philosophers insist that he didn’t get anything right. Curious. I think therefore I am. Among all the catch-phrases which ever were fashioned about philosophy, this one sticks in the heads of most everyone, even as it sticks in the craw of most philosophers. We can say this about the idea: there must be something to it.

Descartes’ philosophy is one of doubt. Insofar as he can be seen to begin modern philosophy, this doubt becomes a hallmark of all later philosophies. The contemporary philosopher employs doubt; she is aware always of its presence, seeing it at least as a landmark within the rugged badlands of rigorous speculation. Now, if philosophy, as Aristotle claims, finds its beginnings in sheer wonder about the world, skepticism is a funny application to it. So too is the application of so rigorous and strict a logic as was employed by Descartes. However, a fair acquaintance with Wonder makes skepticism at least an understandable option. Wonder as a manifest metaphysical reality, when approached by pure and strict reason, is barren, as it is when approached with absolute skepticism. Increasingly in modern philosophy, the approach or method of confronting Wonder became a focus. Most philosophers categorically refute Descartes’ rationalism, as well as they reject absolute skepticism as a viable venue, but his approach was important for it forced the philosophers to such an opposing stance, and it forced them always to be aware of the how of their approach. Yet doubt we do, and likewise do we muck around in the sluggish soup of sterilized propositions, nit-picking at the ooze with analytical tweezers. Curiouser and curiouser. Modern philosophers seem not to have learned any lessons from their critique of Descartes’ faults.

As it happens, Descartes’ approach was not a strict rationalism, nor an absolute skepticism. Such things could hardly be considered a response to Wonder at all. Rather, it was rationalism with passion. Descartes’ passion was, primarily, a firm faith in God. This faith kept his head out of his analytic, and kept his doubt from being absolute. Such a combination of passion and mathematical reason is Descartes’ genius, but even this did not prepare him for the raw Wonder that his extreme skepticism uncovered.

At this point, the gentle reader might wonder why Wonder keeps being capitalized. It’s an old philosopher’s trick that I learned from Heidegger. You see, it suggests that only I know what I am talking about, and further that whatever it is, it is Very Important. I will try to explain, for you see, it is Very Important. Wonder is not a simple thing. Its meaning is not exhausted by our common usage of the word, as in “I wonder,” or “wonderful.” Oh, it is much twistier than that. Let us call it a synthesis, made up of chasms, phantasm, allegory, alligators, mesmerism, mania, mellifluosness, luminous flux and much more.

Luckily, we have a more definite expression of Wonder than just a disjointed mess of words. Lewis Carroll has embodied the whole thing, fittingly, in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland. Here the world that is created, or rather discovered, is childlike in its beauty and delightful — digni-
fied fuzzy white rabbits and idyllic floral gardens. However, Carroll’s Wonderland is not idyllic in the boring sense of the word. Wonderland bewilders and distorts, wrapping reality around quizzicality and confusing here with here-nor-there. It pitches us into a lucid fluidity and rips off the noxious goggles of adulthood that keep out kaleidoscopes and swirling rainbows. It makes us Wonder. It is quite curious. In essence, this Carrolean amalgamation is what makes us philosophize. “Curious,” in fact, is a fair bridge of the subject-object division, and we had best do away with that division right away. Curious is a hallmark of Wonderland. Descartes, you see, followed Alice down the rabbit hole. He followed her into the Queen’s rose garden. He sat down there and tried to geometrically doubt the whole thing. This is what he came up with — “I think therefore I am.” The thing at last which he could not doubt was Consciousness. Granted, in Wonderland, one might find even consciousness to be suspect. Descartes did. He even attempted to doubt that-which he thought that-was. His rationality, however, he never thought to doubt, and this at least allowed him to carry on some sort of discourse.

Who are you?” said the Caterpillar.
This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied rather shyly, “I - I hardly know, sir, just at present — at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.”
“What do you mean by that?” said the Caterpillar sternly. “Explain yourself!”
“I can’t explain myself, I’m afraid, sir,” said Alice, “because I’m not myself, you see.”
“I don’t see,” said the Caterpillar.
“I’m afraid I can’t put it more clearly,” Alice replied very politely, “for I can’t understand it myself to begin with; and being so many sizes in a day is very confusing.”

Descartes had a similar conversation with God. By skeptical elimination, he considered Consciousness alone, and thus uncovered the modern variety of philosophical Wonder.

Kierkegaard (or Climacus) comments upon Descartes’ first philosophical movement of “I think therefore I am.” He says this,

The Cartesian cogito *ergo sum* has often been repeated. If the “I” which is the sub-
ject of *cogito* means an individual human being, the proposition proves nothing: “I am thinking ergo I am; but if I am thinking what wonder that I am:” the assertion has already been made, and the first proposition says even more than the second.

Kierkegaard, 281.

It is true that the first proposition does say more than the second, but Kierkegaard has missed the distinction between the propositions by ignoring the situation in which they were made. The first proposition, *cogito*, is indicative of consciousness with reference to and within consciousness. This is usually referred to, uselessly, as self-consciousness, but this is a confusion of the pre-supposed self with the wonder of consciousness. Consciousness of consciousness has little or nothing to do necessarily with the self. Descartes’ presupposition of the self influences his consciousness, so that he expresses it as *I think*, but the emphasis is stripped from the *I*. In the “I think” proposition, the *I* fades into the grounds of consciousness, and in fact fades even further to nothing. Descartes still recognizes himself as the thinker, but not *essentially* as the thinker. Rather, his identity is necessarily subsumed by the consciousness of his thought. However, having the pre-assumption of the self, he never completely loses his identity, and instead retreats from that peculiar and particular consciousness to a detached position wherein he can consider his thoughts removedly, and come to the *ergo sum*. This secondary detaching, disengaging movement to the assertion *I am* is highly suspect. It shows itself more clearly if we re-interpret the phrase as “Wonder (delirium confusion) therefore I am.” Nonetheless, with or without the paradigm *I am* attached, consciousness (Wonder), as Descartes ran into it, is the starting point of modern philosophy.

The reflection “I think,” unqualified except by Wonder, is a weird one. It is the mental equivalent of walking between parallel mirrors and consequently seeing the fringes of your head multiplied *ad infinitum* into the looking-glass distances of reality. The discreet identity (i.e. the known figure of one’s own face), when stretched out to the infinite zero-point-value horizon, pulls the whole defined image into non-reality and a self-referent paradoxical null identity. To consider only the first immediate reflection of *I think* is to ignore the weird fringes of reflectivity, which is to say that an objective *I think* ignores the existential, experiential whole of the consciousness. This infinite distance implied by the reflections is a phenomenon which lies almost beyond our awareness (especially since it’s hard to look at and it keeps hiding behind the bulk of the rest of our head). This startling trick of the looking glass is a visual rendering of the immediate, philosophical Consciousness. It is subconscious vertigo. It is an ethereal queasiness of conceptions, mental viscera revolting against natural toxins of an intellectual variety. The experience is like that of a computer who has been programmed to count all its mathematical computations; once started, it cannot stop. This mental looking-glass phenomenon is supremely and Wonderfully philosophical, and equally scary. I will call it philosophical consciousness. For Heideggerian brevity, I will also sometimes call it Consciousness with a capital “C.”

Philosophical consciousness is the ground of psychological consciousness. Psychological consciousness is the “I am,” and it includes our existential wholeness of experience. Psychological consciousness is also what Kant describes as Transcendental. His transcendental philosophy starts
with concepts, however, and thus does not transcend to the philosophical Consciousness. The “I am” awareness, along with the rest of our thoughts, stands out against the ground, and the ground recedes into shadows. This is, in part, because our lives consist of the contents of consciousness to the extent that even our identity is a part of our awareness, but not Awareness, Consciousness itself. Within everyday life (Heidegger might call it inauthentic life) we have no reason to consider the quasi-infinite, unconceptual grounds of our existence. Another reason, however, that we do not consider Consciousness still remains. This reason is that self-knowledge scares the living hell out of us. Knowledge of the self is awareness of its frail, contrived nature. Calvin had a hard time with total depravity, Sartre had his own troubles with the abyss. While these two fellows seem to be dealing with entirely different subjects, the fundamental condition seems to be a personal entity that morally, existentially and obviously just won’t square with the vastness of everything out there. In its relation to hints of the infinite, philosophical Consciousness gives us angst and half a dozen other things that send us sneaking quietly back to our vices, closing the doors behind us.

Descartes came dangerously close to a full face of that philosophical Consciousness which, by its stark conception-destructuralization and infinitizing awareness, was frightening. Such a thing was best avoided, even by old men with long beards, who might otherwise have had something to think about. For, deep down, it scares them as well. Descartes’ Discourse on Method is a sort of history of the disclosing of philosophical Consciousness, as only a loopy geometer could do it. As we have seen, he managed to doubt just about everything philosophically recognizable. This left uncovered a reality with which he was unfamiliar: philosophical Consciousness. As an element of thought-experience, it seems an easy thing to ignore. The contents of consciousness stand out too much, unless of course they are completely doubted away. It is interesting to note that he did not rest, as he easily could have, in the assertion “I am.” This seems like a reasonable foundational truth. Psychological consciousness is a fairly definite point, and it must have taken considerable effort to doubt it. So Descartes admits, but nonetheless he doubted even his existence. One expects nothing to be left. What is odd is that, upon voiding the rest of reality as best he could, he came to the assertion “I think.” What he meant by this, his interpretation, became a commerce between himself and God (who was not doubted), wherein himself and God became indistinct, as did the nature of everything in general. Reality is always a slippery fish, but especially when it changes shape, swims into God, back into a fish, and then into the thinker. Nonetheless, the reality fish does just such things as it swims through the philosophical Consciousness. Was it a mistake of metaphor that Descartes employed his concept of God in this consciousness?

The point here is that philo-
sophical Consciousness is quizzical, angst-ridden and awful to deal with. The fish threatens to swal-
low you whole. What helped Descartes through it was his faith in God and his odd, mathematical
rationality. His faith, I believe, kept him alive and sane (arguably), while his rationality dictated the
unique, generally rejected conclusions to which he came.

The one thing that seems to have made Descartes’ experience impure is that he kept an as-
sumption of the ego. Even though he questioned peripheral ideas, the ego itself never came under
focus to be disenfranchised or doubted. This was a self-deception. In pointing this out, we must
now deal with the idea of the transcendental self as such. It is a faulty theory. By positing an ego
which transcends, we can hypostasize the self at its most deep level, thus obscuring the central char-
acter of Consciousness. The transcendental self “answers” incompetently the problem of Wonder.
It is true to say that philosophical Consciousness is transcendental, but specifically insofar as it tran-
scends even the ego. This does not mean that in Consciousness the ego reaches out to envelop tran-
scendent reality, but rather that in transcending the boundaries of conception, Consciousness disinte-
grates the ego.

There is in the Consciousness state a radical confusion and unreality about the “self” which
may or may not exist in the moment it is reflectively considered. Deception and a quizzical
Carrollolean non-reality exist in Consciousness, as well as the abyss and the Kantian sublime; but all
states are in flux, including the ego, each tending upon the instant of focus to disappear like the
Cheshire Cat. One wonders if his fading smile is menacing or benign, but just then the slippery fish
of reality swims through, moving things on to another fascinating, scary confusion. If this sounds
like an LSD trip, it is only the result of concretizing a conceptual process. By this it is meant that a
psychedelic experience comprises things transforming and changing within our conception until
their existence is questioned, whereas Consciousness involves our conceptions transforming and
changing themselves until the existence and being of things in general moves through and out of
those conceptions and is thus ultimately questioned. Psychedelia is Consciousness inside-out. Who
knows if the moon’s a balloon? (Quotations, 17a)

As philosophy is (maybe) a pursuit of truth, then philosophical Consciousness holds a vex-
ing if not paramount position with it. Truth as a pure thing is arrived at mostly via negativa, by pair-
ing down the whole edifice of surface appearance that obscures, distances and confounds the truth.
Once we move away all the familiar, assumed structures, or pick them apart to find the truth inside,
we will then arrive at the dancing maelstrom of Consciousness. We start swimming, and unless we
hastily reconstruct our static factuality, we must search on for a truth devoid of comfortable, accus-
tomed factual referents. Any philosopher wishing to embrace or define the truth will at some point
be enveloped by an underlying Conscious awareness of confusion. Perhaps this needs elucidation.
What follows is a simulation, if you will, of a moment of philosophical Consciousness, which is to
say, confusion.

Facts are not truth. A description of facts could be true to the facts, but the facts themselves are not
truth. Description and clarification then are good in themselves, as are conception and speculation,
all of them having relevance to things, facts or hypostatics, none of which are truth. Truth is some-
thing different. Hmmmm. Truth involves meaning. For a life to have meaning, this is also not
truth. In both cases, the term is relative to something. Meaning is having relation to things, as a
word like “bucket” relates, has reference to the thing—bucket—which has meaning as to its use, the
use having meaning in relation to purpose of some sort, be it existential or symbolic. The Absolute
meaning, then, is the long chain of reference which eventually leads to truth. Clarity ought to exist
in meaning, but Truth is not necessarily bound by the limits of anything. So mystery suggests abso-
lute meaning as long as the chain of reference which eventually leads to truth. Clarity ought to exist in meaning, but Truth is not necessarily bound by the limits of anything. So mystery suggests Absolute meaning as long as the chain of relations started off in a fair amount of clearheadedness, assuming one would ask such a question in a clear state of mind. Here, to have meaning involves a referent to existential or metaphysical reality. That fish! There's that darn fish again! For existential or metaphysical reality to be true indicates that they not express themselves as facts, or if they do, that these facts are superfluous. So to have true meaning in conceptions or in life involves a reference to non-factual reality. Nonetheless, our common interpretation of existential or metaphysical truth involves description of hypostatics, factual things. In philosophical Consciousness, wherein Truth may be found of a distinctive nature, the first thing to disintegrate is the system of factual hypostatics, including the hypostatic self. The distinctive nature of disclosed truth in Consciousness ought to be that facts do not could the Truth, but Consciousness is primarily just confusion. Granted, none of this explains truth. Shoot, I don't know.

It would be silly to say that people, especially philosophers, don't have this sort of experience, and yet philosophy is in the habit of ignoring it. Perhaps such a willful ignorance is understandable. The existence of Wonder and Consciousness, once realized, tends to have a radically disruptive effect on any system of philosophy. Consequently, Consciousness ends up to be a fairly exclusive claim. It exists underneath and before any system of subjective reality. And certainly, Consciousness precludes a naturally implicit objective reality, unless that reality be a metapsychological process through which human nature encounters Wonderlike non-objectivity. Further, to say that philosophical Consciousness fundamentally defines the nature of philosophers actually doing philosophy, while a limited and restricted claim, still lays hold of the entire realm of anything anyone would want to philosophize about. Effectively, that includes everything.

Nonetheless, just that sort of assertion is necessary for Consciousness to have any relevance. In actuality, the whole philosophical Consciousness idea evolved in my head primarily as a tool for understanding the modern philosophers. The idea's justification comes most saliently from its ability to pull down abstruse philosophies and tie them to an understandable (somewhat) psychological motive. Once philosophy turned inward—a modern trend—the roots of psychological reality were touched, and thus I think every modern philosopher has had to deal with Consciousness in one way or another.

Usually, philosophy has been a hasty progress away from philosophical Consciousness. In light of this, Consciousness highlights vividly the ad-hoc assumptions that undergird a given system, which might otherwise seem to be just so many ungraspable higher truths. The murky, effer- vescent depths of infinity through which a philosophical mind will swim change along with every thinker who will enter the vat. Perhaps it is only a faith in God which makes me sure at least that those vast and chaotic waters are in essence the same pool. In totem, philosophical Consciousness externalizes the locus of subjectivity, while dissolving the external world; it subsumes the transcendental ego and takes every a priori and reduces it to a mere reactive shudder; it relativizes the soul. Most importantly, however, I must insist: it's real and it's going to get you.
This section of Dialogue will be dedicated to accounts in raw form—ideas of high or low intellect, mountainous philosophical breakthroughs, tender morsels of knowledge to savor, or questions to chew on. To enjoy the fruits of this endeavor, lean forward and read on.

The following quotes were extracted from essays written for Professor Timmerman’s English 333, Spring, 1992. They are insights into what good writing consists of, in all its various complexities.

However, undesirable obscurity should not be confused with ambiguity, a tool which the artist can use to enhance a work. While obscurity masks intent, ambiguity presents multiple intents. These multiple intents do not represent indecisiveness or a lack of communication; indeed, they make a work rich with meaning. Virtually no work will have a single interpretation; in fact, a work that cannot inspire more than one interpretation often (though not necessarily) indicates poor workmanship—the artist has not explored or stretched the capability of his materials. Of course, this is not to say that simplicity is an aesthetic defect. On the contrary, its purity of communication can stimulate a complex tapestry of images and thought in the reader or viewer, because the work contains no physical complication to block or distract.

April Diephouse

Artists have a responsibility to talk to other people, not only themselves. They need to incorporate keys which help readers understand their work. Readers need to realize they walk beside the author as they travel through the work.

Christine Weeber

Most of the great literature of our time has challenged the reader, making him re-evaluate his own beliefs. Whether these stories confirm or completely turn around anything which we believe, they cause us to think. They cause us to examine our world critically and draw new conclusions about it. Saul Bellow once said, “The poet-artists should give new eyes to human beings, inducing them to view the world differently.” It is the artist’s responsibility to make human beings think.

Scott Cederlund
In my writing, I aim to make contact. I want to communicate with people and inspire them to communicate with each other. I want to touch others by letting them share in my thoughts, questions, and philosophies. I want to encourage kids whose world has shattered, inspire sour adults, and instill wonder in people who thought maturation required losing it. I want to make ordinary life interesting by showing the miracles in it. I hope Joe says to his wife, "Honey, I have to read you this poem!" The goal of my writing is to build relationship, not portray my own world solely for personal satisfaction. People have differences so they can teach each other; I want contribute by showing what I’ve seen.

Christine Weeber

John Gardner, in his book *The Art of Fiction*, gives an excellent analysis of what makes a good work of fiction. If there was an absolute criterion for good fiction, it would be Gardner’s criterion of fiction as a dream. He states, “whatever the genre may be, fiction does its work by creating a dream in the reader’s mind” (p. 31). He goes on to say, “In great fiction, the dream engages us heart and soul; we respond to imaginary things—sights, sounds, smells—as though they were real” (p. 31). There cannot be found a better statement of what makes fiction work. Writers go about this in different ways, but they all create a dream in the reader’s mind.

Phil Oosterhouse

Poetic talent is delicate play with the meanings, sounds, and rhythms of words.

Good poetry takes effort as well as talent. Poets must communicate with talent using forms appropriately to show their purpose. The ways this is accomplished may vary, but there are structures we can follow. Advice from poets who have made a mark is the best way to understand what good poetry is. Yet, as with any art form, new methods of expression are always being discovered. As our world changes and our language changes, how we communicate will change as well. These criteria must be examined with this in mind. Thoughts on ‘good’ and ‘bad’ poetry shouldn’t stifle but enhance creativity.

Christine Weeber
The Monarch

The delicate wings of the butterfly
Waving in the light breeze:
  That butterfly beauty,
  That butterfly freedom,
  That Monarch butterfly.

The delicate wings of the butterfly
Waving across that mother's face:
  That butterfly sting,
  That mother's death,
  That Lupus butterfly.

The delicate wings of the butterfly
Waving freedom- waving death:
  That beauty's sting,
  That freedom's death,
  That monarch.

Denise Bloem
On the Beach

With wandering eye and trembling frown, he speaks
Above the slapping waves and snapping fire,
And drains his wine to end each phrase: too soon
His silence ends his tale— not yet entire.
I watched his drunken smile dismiss his frown
While I dismissed his silencing of tales;
And bitter drink slips past on my quiet lips
To flush and burn my crimson face, once pale.
And we ignore our children’s begging dance
And sit in silence now completely whole.
Our children hush their aching why and sleep
Their sleeping dreams unchained by dreaming soul.
We sleep—entwined— in whispering, silken sands:
Two strangers holding stranger children’s hands.

Denise Bloem

We Talk Too Much

A child would have looked out tonight
Into the swarm of mist
And not spoken of wit and imagination
Saying,
“The fog is so thick, one could slice through it
With a knife”,
But he may have laid his head on a pink pillow
In a pillowy sea where the fog rolls up
On the decks of pirate ships, red bandanas flashing
Like sirens on men with patches and wooden legs
Banging and growling
Clump...step
“Thar she blows” “Ahoy!” “Shiver me timbers!”
Raising curving swords which are coiled snakes
Hissing in the night thickness,
Slicing up the sky with such ease.

David Ihmels
Roses are red.
Violets are blue.
Daisies are white.
Tulips come in a whole variety of colors.

Dave VanderLaan
**flotsam and jetsam**

Survey: Do you make a good date?

1. Your blind date comes to your door wearing a leopard print leotard and go-go boots. You:
   
   A. suggest staying in and watching home videos from your family’s ’88 vacation to Warsaw, Indiana.
   B. pretend you like them, and in fact give an excited, “Threads…oh.”
   C. tell people your date is a distant cousin from out of town. Distantly out of town.
   D. suggest a foray at the shopping mall.

2. While enjoying your meal at your favorite restaurant you notice your date has a portion of their entree dangling from their lower lip. You:

   A. get used to it.
   B. ignore it, knowing it will fall back onto their plate and eventually be eaten.
   C. in a nonchalant manner, lean over and flick it off.
   D. make quick work of it yourself licking their chin clean.

3. During your car ride home you realize your date has flatuluted. (Proof: your hair begins to curl.) You:

   A. open the windows, despite the weather, and encourage your date to join you in riding Superman style (arms extended, torso hanging out of car.)
   B. take the blame yourself, saying, “excuse me” and then, “I’m sorry” and again, “Oh. I’m so sorry”.
   C. look them straight in the eyes and say, “Stinky.”
   D. make them walk home.

4. After a loud bang and a puff of smoke you realize it’s all been a cruel scheme. Your date is really a squirrel. You:

   A. enjoy your new friend’s company.
   B. dispatch them with a knife and commence with a pot pie.
   C. pet heavily.
   D. offer them some nuts.

**Scoring**

For every question answered A, give yourself one point. For every question answered B, give yourself two points. For every question answered C, give yourself three points. For every question answered D, give yourself four points.

1-4 points: You seem like a fun date. You’ll certainly have many successful dates in the future.

5-8 points: You’ve got one foot in the door, keep at it. There’s more than one squirrel in the tree.

9-12 points: Don’t get discouraged. There’s someone out there for you somewhere.

13-16 points: Were your parents siblings?
On Prayer

Your words the fire  
burning the blackness  
devouring the Night

Speak the silence  
break open the door  
into Eternity

As an alabaster box

Patty Matuszak
Contributors

Jin Barclay, the other Chinese guy (he's Korean).

Steve Bardolph has big feet.

Denise Bloem is hard to get ahold of.

Pat Byrne is a psychology major who is sympathetic to the arts; however, he would rather not comment on the content of his photographs.

April Diephouse is majoring in both art and English, and is practicing walking on water in her spare time.

Dave Ihmels is one tough cookie.

Sara Kendall is a B.F.A. major who keeps three art inspiring mice.

Sara Penninga is a junior transfer student who has nice hair.

Monica Sibilia loves sunshine and snow mixed (with pumpkins).

Sara Taylor, although she's not Dutch, enjoys being called Sara Vantaylorsma.

Dave Vanderlaan writes just under one poem a year.

Ronald Wells is a prof.