

“Informing Ingo About Portals”
Nicholas Katsafanas

“No, that’s fine,” Ingo said, “just continue, Carl—go ahead. It wasn’t that important anyway.” “Because that’s essentially what I told her at the time, Ingo,” a bright orange orb the size of a school bus named Carl

indeed did continue, “I told her, ‘Listen, um,’ I said, ‘Umm, Marie? It’s Marie, right? Can you listen to me for just a second? Just tell me right now, in this moment we occupy, beyond a reasonable doubt,

just prove it to me, once and for all somehow, that I actually exist to you, but not simply within the exclusive purview of your own conscious experience, prove to me that I exist

as a so-called independent conscious being, with a so-called conscious experience, in the materialist atomist sense of all of this, just, you know, establish some sort of syllogism that proves to you

(and me!) that I’m here, standing here right now, authentically speaking this mellifluous shit to you, which comes from inside of myself, which we continue to assume exists,

this inside of myself, prove to me that I’m not just an utter figment of your imagination. Or what you perceive to be your own imagination! That I’m not an indiscernible phantasm

that emerged from an infinite wave that reflects an infinite projection of your own single self! You can’t do it, Marie. Try as hard as you may, without the philosophical crutch of the perception of others

you can’t prove beyond a reasonable doubt, scientifically, that I actually exist, that the physical

world you perceive isn't an extension of either your own consciousness,
or a consciousness that you interpret to be your own.' That's what I said to her, Ingo. I said, 'You can't! Try and try as hard as you can, you will always fail to prove this to yourself
beyond a reasonable doubt, assuming you maintain a modicum of honesty with yourself.' And, you know, in the end of course she couldn't really do it for me, she provided no syllogism of note,
because of course she couldn't prove this! Because what proof other than her own utterly fallible sensory organs did she have at her disposal, per my own instruction?
Because sensory organs only become scientific via corroboration by a plethora of, what? Other sensory organs?
It's a universe of convenience, a groupthink galaxy, Ingo," Carl continued, "Because a single set of sensory organs is of course an insanely small sample size, which proves absolutely nothing,
so naturally if you deprive a set of sensory organs from the litany of other sensory organs that, it believes, corroborates its own sense-perceptions, then that set of sensory organs
becomes itself a notion of nonsense! Oh, you got abducted by aliens, Ingo? Did anyone else see it? The sun rises every day solely because we all see it, Ingo, sans all of us seeing it
and agreeing upon what we see, then the sun would cease to exist, without all of these allegedly independent eyeballs seeing the same sun, then this object we call 'The Sun'
just becomes a fireball of false notions, no? But—of course, the pure wool here is: how the fuck is it that

you think you know those other sets of senses actually exist independently, like we say the sun does, as actualities, that they're not just a sort of projection of your own set of sensory organs? No, their existence must be axiomatic. Assumptions, Ingo!

You, as I speak to you here right now, are nothing more than an assumption I'm continually making! And sans that axiom of 'other sensory organs' everything falls into chaos!

Or does it? That's a question I'll come back to, Ingo, because I think it's actually quite key here. 'Prove it to be the case, via syllogism, or some other scientific means,' I said to her,

'Prove my own very existence to me here, right now, in this Applebee's, but you're forbidden from taking a survey of other independent so-called sensory organs, because, of course, they too could be similar projections of your own single self! They prove nothing more than you telling me, for example, that it was the moon that corroborated to you that I, in fact, exist.' She's a fucking physicist, Ingo. You believe that? So yeah, basically in so many words she told me I was kind of an asshole, and I guess the date pretty much concluded shortly after that."

"Well," Ingo replied, "that seems." "But you know, Ingo," a bright orange orb the size of a school bus named Carl interrupted, "Ugh. I can't help but recall here, sitting in the backseat of my mom's station wagon, or, I don't know, some equivalent semi-popular car of the era, some equivalent bourgeois nuclear family automobile,

I recall sitting in it as a young teen, or some equivalent age category of the era, some era where we still

counted numbers and called ourselves certain ages, containing ourselves in categories!

I recall sitting in the backseat of a station wagon and just brutally attempting over and over and over to prove to myself, in the back of my mom's station wagon, via one syllogism or another, that my very own conscious experience was somehow actually verifiable to my own self, that my own frequent peregrinations into my so-called essence were actually somehow real, verifiable, even leaving aside the veracity of my own so-called essence for a second. Just confirm the peregrinations, the journeys themselves actually occurred!

But, to be clear, this wasn't based on some philosophical reading I'd done, Ingo, no, it was just a natural extension of my direct experience, which I think is quite important to note here,

because it seems like we always think that becoming precocious about this or that thing in our youth is a result of reading a certain page in a certain book, about perusing text after text after text

until a thought, poof, pops into your brain. But texts are always secondary sourcing at best," Carl continued, "Necessary but secondary! No. It's the experience that's been missing

from the Western notion of intellect, our Western notion of intellect is always presupposing that the sole experience of the intellect is reading books as opposed to experiencing itself.

I suppose maybe there was something latent within my conscious experience, assuming that consciousness is actually existent to some extent, something latent within this consciousness, my 'individual' consciousness, that sought to verify itself but utterly failed to do so,

to verify that it actually owned some material existence,
that it wasn't some figment of its own imagination, and furthermore that, even if it did exist, that this existence, if we can even call it that, was in any way 'me' as we'd normally construct that word.
Because of course all other consciousnesses, the consciousnesses that actually have the ability to scientifically verify your own conscious existence, if we assume these other consciousnesses even exist, that even if those other consciousnesses exist, like we noted above, they could also certainly be just derivative of some other outside consciousness that exists, a super-consciousness that's play-acting as 'your consciousness.' No, there's no way, beyond blind faith (which is, the more I think about it, perhaps underrated!),
of accepting that fact of yourself as a conscious being amongst similar beings also retaining independent consciousness. That possible fact that we exist as we believe ourselves to exist,
to prove that, not only do perceived outside so-called consciousnesses exist, but that even your own consciousness exists, and, if it exists, that it's your consciousness, no,
that wasn't in the realm of my possible knowledge at the time, or even right now for that matter. And to me, to be blunt about it Ingo, after those intense investigations into my own self,
I couldn't reasonably take any scholastic foray into science seriously, if that fact couldn't first be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. First! Let's prove we exist scientifically, shall we? To me,

and I'm not being a dickhole about this, but it was actually unscientific to take these scholastic forays seriously if they couldn't first prove to me my own material conscious existence.

Dissecting a frog just seemed to be a bit presumptuous to me, I guess, if I couldn't verify I was even there in any material sense! From thereon the so-called scholastic sciences

always disgusted me for that reason, Ingo, mostly because they were so pompous about the whole thing! They never hesitated to treat you like you were the one on the spectrum

('Are you schizophrenic, maybe?'), to assign you some scientific name to explain why your questioning of science was innately absurd, simply because you asked a simple question.

But this is naturally what happens I suppose when you ask the wrong question, the question that underpins the sacred axiom." "Right," Ingo agreed, "but." "In any case," a bright orange orb

the size of a school bus named Carl interrupted, "we sit here, you and me, Ingo, just casually conversing, and maybe we unassumingly attempt to convince ourselves that portals to attain

instantaneous knowledge of this sort don't actually exist, or that, if there is a portal, if there's a portal, then said portal should remand itself to a form out of a well-known science fiction movie,

some little quirky blip or technical bloop that's technologically driven, that all of these so-called portals will suddenly open themselves up to us visually, and that we'll enter them unassumingly

and then instantly find ourselves in some other time or some other space, or outside of both time and

space, with other foreign entities, extra this or that,
ultra that or this,
like some sort of canonical alien abduction tale. But
we've already assumed too much, haven't we Ingo?!
I certainly think we have! I mean, why does a portal
need to 'open up'
when my own conscious experience is itself very
possibly a figment of an imagination, a figment being
generated from something that's simultaneously
myself
but also not at all 'me' in any real sense? An opening up
assumes a previous axiom, Ingo. What the fuck do
you need a circular shaped portal to transport you to
another planet for?
To me? To me, that's simply begging the question, if I'm
even using that phrase correctly, begging the
question? Perhaps fuck phrases Ingo. Texts are
always secondary sources anyway.
Anything's possible. Perhaps phrases aren't the proper
tool to investigate portals? But no, no, on the other
hand, we're told by some that everything that exists
are only the words of God.
You can walk gently down the avenue and actually enter
into another universe, while, at the same time, that
universe itself may have almost few to no actual
points of emphasis
that materially diverge from the universe you and I
believe ourselves to occupy at this moment, where
we're jubilantly having this quaint conversation. You
may, for example,
notice a fat adolescent eating a can of Doritos in the
middle of the street, wearing silver chains and
goth-inspired oversized dark clothing, and it will
strike you as architecturally alien,

even if its form isn't technically alien at all. We think things have to change immensely in order for us to travel elsewhere, whether that's across the galaxy, across the country,

or perhaps traversing so-called dimensions that physicists are just now beginning to suggest may exist. But in these alleged peregrinations we always leave to the side this notion:

that two completely different things maybe in fact be the exact same thing and vice versa. Yes, that's what we're essentially leaving on the cutting room floor here, Ingo.

Yes, that's precisely what we're missing! We think, 'Oh, maybe we entered a portal because some seven foot grey alien shoved a probe up our butt, in his little fancy anti-gravity spaceship,

that of course resembles some advanced aircraft of our own!' Our derivations are always resembling ourselves. We put same and similar in two different categories,

while leaving same and same in a single taxonomy. No, that fancy spaceship may be more of a figment of our imagination than this very conversation is—no, perhaps we're still confusing 'big' and 'small' as actual things instead of gradations that have no true essence in themselves except as projections in very specific milieus.

But isn't every milieu essentially a projection except for that which we can't comprehend ourselves? And that's what's actually sacred, Ingo?" "Well," Ingo replied, "in my opinion."

"Like, for example," a bright orange orb the size of a school bus named Carl interrupted, "you can have a dream, right? We all have dreams from time to time. You go to sleep,

and then you have a dream. And that dream, let's just say that maybe it can predict your own future events, even though perhaps the actual figures from your dream may differ slightly from the actual figures you encounter in so-called real life. Yet those two things, the figures from your dream and the figures from your waking life, although perhaps disparate, can actually be the exact same fucking thing. Same and similar are in a single category; while same and same are now in two disparate taxonomies. This is difficult for many to accept, and, in fact, most will scoff and roll their eyes right into the backs of their heads! But should they? Anyway, I had quite a vivid dream some time ago, Ingo, it was one where I encountered two figures who themselves were in fact the same figure. One was dark and one was light, but I intrinsically knew both figures to be the exact same entity, it was a direct download, and, well, upon waking and well afterward, this dream stuck with me like gorilla glue in a sort of vivid and unerring way, until one day, only after the real-life encounters actually occurred to me, I reflected on said encounters, and I realized they were actually the same encounters from the dream. These real-life encounters were only re-enactions of the same dream encounters, disparate but the same, that the dream apparently somehow foretold me of these encounters, and, to bring us back to my initial point here, or one of my initial points here, both encounters occurred within what I would now deem to be actual

'portals'. My two dream-interactions were with disparate entities who were in fact the same entity, while my two real life re-enactions of those interactions were with two subsequently disparate entities, also with disparate actions that were ultimately still the same actions.

But, no, of course these didn't occur in portals in the science fiction sense, Ingo, which ruins everything—the science fiction sense has ruined our thought in this regard.

Now, ugh! Now everything is basically science fiction, to the extent that now realism is essentially science fiction, with the UAP phenomena becoming more and more realist by the day.

We've gradually manifested a science fiction world for ourselves, and we're all worse off for it! But, no, just to be clear, these portals were just buildings, Ingo, actual architectural structures as portals. Architectural structures, but somehow much more than simply buildings. They were architectural structures that somehow called out to me, man-made structures that contained some non-man-made essence within them, both of which I felt myself habitually moving toward in a totally non-voluntary sense.

You know me to be an entity of caprice," Carl continued, "but even for me, this experience was a bit much, with these two architectural structures. It was a caprice that I wasn't entirely in control of, if that makes sense, almost like an out-of-body experience, Ingo, yes, I'd just find myself ambling along on an innocent walk, a nondescript sojourn of sorts, ones that I often take around the city, and I'd suddenly find myself on the path to one of these two

establishments, architectural structures that occupied territories on two streets called South and Globe. Like a map! However, I only put this together way, way after the fact. I'd just—end up there. And these structures, of course, they're where I encountered these two entities from my dream, Ingo, these two figures who, not only being the same figure themselves, they collapsed upon themselves in the dream, then collapsed upon their counterparts in my waking life, and while individually sharing characteristics with the figures from the dream, they wisely cloaked themselves just enough so that I didn't immediately recognize either of them for who they actually were. Which of course actually makes a tremendous amount of sense. Because if I'd immediately recognized them, then my dream wouldn't, no, it couldn't have reoccurred. And I guess that's really my point here about portals, Ingo? In a more explicit sense? My point, if I have any point at all, is that if a portal immediately makes itself known to us as a portal, then it's done a poor job of being a portal. Yes. It's only poor portals that make themselves known to us as big ass spaceships with mantis beings that are ten feet tall with laser beams in their pockets. No. The true portals are totally nondescript, they're in fact the exact thing we define as our normal physical world itself. Two figures, although disparate, are the same figure in the dream. They collapse upon themselves into a single category in the dream, and then collapse again onto their

real-life counterpart in my waking life. And then the two real-life figures subsequently collapse yet again into one figure. Two addition figures in real life, although disparate,

are in fact the same figures from the dream. And then, well. It's like the story of the two sufis who went to Mecca, Ingo, only for the wiser of the two to weep for no reason.

'Why so sad?' 'Because this was a grave miscalculation!' People spend countless decades searching for an Essence, only to discover that God Himself is just a voice in their head

that they've mistaken as themselves their entire life. Ugh, Ingo, what a waste of the highest order!—only poor portals make appearances in Hollywood movies, Ingo!"

"This much we." Ingo attempted to retort. "But anyway," a bright orange orb the size of a school bus named Carl interrupted, "Yeah, I guess, well.

I suppose I should probably relay just a little something of detail about these so-called portals, or one of them at least? Now, Ingo, I think we'd both agree that it's obvious that,

at times, we need to turn our backs on our families, that we need to ruthlessly recognize once and for all that this pervasive idea of genetic lineage is, for lack of a better word,

a complete misunderstanding of who we actually are, that what has been created cannot subsequently create what's created, and that, furthermore, gross intoxication is,

at least compared to our modern capital technocratic lunacy, some moderate improvement? Intoxication, if nothing else, allows a momentary reprieve from this idea of genetic lineage.

But we shouldn't distort the case. Because it's not like all so-called spiritual men and women of previous generations were constantly fucked up on hallucinogens and shit, but, sure, certainly some spiritual people historically partook in, for lack of a better word, Dionysian tendencies. And not as some hedonistic 'steam-letting' sense, but as a genuine spiritual practice. After recognizing on a certain autumn afternoon that I needed to spend my night in solitude, I was sitting at a bistro on Broadway, sipping a pure Mezcal on the rocks, taking note that a man across the street looked curiously like the actor Burt Young (born: Gerald Tommaso DeLouise), and that it seemed like he was picking up a coin of some sort from the pavement across the street? Odd, I thought. In any case, I finished the Mezcal, settled my tab, and started down the street, completely unaware that a close family member, who I'd pretty much blown off earlier that day, needing to spend the night in solitude, would very soon, that night, be sitting in a hospital bed in the same sub-section of the city I was now approaching, where I would remain for the evening, while this person would literally stay fighting for their life in the night. But I was completely in the dark about this, Ingo, I was innocently continuing my sojourn into the Dionysian, eventually getting to the point where I'd feel comfortable informing people I didn't even know that I enjoyed certain Lebanese bars for their olive plates, saying, with no sense of irony,

'Wow, that's a cool name!' 'Hey. I like that name.' To complete strangers, Ingo, but isn't this ritualism at its finest? I'd find myself bantering with all sorts of people, most of whom were grossly intoxicated themselves, but possibly not in a state of Dionysian bliss? From complete strangers to the random people you nominally establish a sort of faux-friendship, an acquaintanceship completely devoid of meaning, Ingo, I was unabashedly bantering with all of them, because this is ultimately what's Dionysian in our era. It's not in the secluded woods that we find ourselves completely alone, Ingo," Carl continued, "in utter solitude with trees and shit, no. The mountains and the trees know more about us than we do, they infiltrate our thoughts before they occur, they contain spirits too shrewd to let us think to our heart's content. On the contrary, it's the architectural structures of the city that are younger, that still allow us to experience solitude, drunk in the midst of others who know nothing about us, in densely populated areas, with perhaps curious architectures, around people who have no regard for us, who don't know, will never know us, and could never know us, even if they knew us. I was right in the middle of chain smoking cigarettes outside on a patio at a shitty table when a woman of European extract with dreadlocks handed me an additional cigarette and stared at me intently. I took no meaning from this at the time, the fact that this person stood there with a cigarette in hand as still as a billboard on an interstate highway.

It had no meaning. Two weeks later, pleased with the ritualism of the previous night, I'd repeat this very same process, Ingo, expecting a similar result, but of course repeating the same thing twice and expecting the same result is the actual, true test of insanity. Whereas two weeks prior, despite my family member fighting for their life five hundred feet from the bar I was chain-smoking cigarettes at in a Dionysian rage, two weeks later I'd find myself, not in the midst of a ritualism that expanded upon itself in its solitude, but instead within a violent unraveling of myself. An implosion of appropriate proportions. An older fifty-something man replaced the Caucasian with dreadlocks as a meaningless statue to imbue projected meaning upon, and the next morning, in, admittedly, a really rough state, the Entity from the dream revealed itself to me. Reappeared, having already appeared. Having been right under my nose this entire time, they told me, in so many words, in the aftermath of a Dionysian implosion, what the original Entity told me, Ingo. An announcement of sorts. The map was ready to be revised. But, to be clear, this assertion was only a feeling. Walking home that night I came upon a young African-American girl on the corner of 44th and John J, requesting spare change, and, I don't know, I handed her maybe eight bucks, back when I was actually still carrying cash in my pocket—before I decided that it was too cumbersome to carry spare change with a rubber band. Yet in the process, the girl took note of a twenty dollar bill in my small fistful

of cash, and she noted that she would—if I was interested -
be willing to engage in sexual intercourse for twenty dollars cash? She actually wasn't that bad looking, Ingo—for a homeless drug addict at least. I actually think her exact words
were something to the effect of: 'We could fuck for the twenty,' which is perhaps the most depressing statement you'll ever hear. I politely demurred, equally depressed and embarrassed,
and kept on walking, yet as I ambled onward, suddenly something told me to turn around walk back to this person. To interrogate her! To get to the bottom of this societal decay
that brings young women to have sex with strangers for literal spare change! Fuck it, maybe I actually should have street sex for twenty dollars!
Clearly, there was something occurring here, but back at the corner she was nowhere to be found. It was almost as if she disappeared into thin air."
"Curious," Ingo began, "That actually reminds me of."
"What occurs in our childhoods, Ingo," a bright orange orb the size of a school bus named Carl interrupted,
"in many ways, is ultimately unknowable to us. Memory at times, we should note this, bursts open at the seams and allows previous events to evaporate into thin air,
yet on some level these events, although technically evaporated, still manage to form nooses around our necks, which we remain unaware of, until homeless black girls at street corners
prompt us for cheap sex, until dream entities bait us into real portals that never diverge from other elements

of our waking lives! It's only then that, suddenly, these escaped memories flood back to you like a series of paroled convicts that, obviously, you now have to admit, have dictated your entire life from afar up to this point! You wake up one day and you realize that what you've forgot for decades now has never not been hugging you like a shark jaw, Ingo. And you don't even remember recalling it in the moment, your partner has to actually recount it all back to you in detail, all these things you said to her upon arriving home, these floods of forgotten memories. And you're as amazed as she is!

It's so-called trauma of this type that causes adolescents to stare at walls for hours on end, journeying far into our own imaginations until we're granted momentary hall passes into other planes, until memory itself becomes a plaything of nonsense, itself a derivative of daydreams instead of vice versa, and it's perhaps, Ingo, it's perhaps this very trauma that pointed me in this direction of questioning the first principle of conscious experience, perhaps it was this mnemonic noose around my neck that squeezed me in this direction as a young teen in the back of that station wagon! Actually, let me apologize right now to the scholastics! 'You see, apparently there was a mnemonic noose around my neck at the time?'

But, again," Carl continued, "and I can't stress this enough, these planes aren't necessarily circular portals with grey aliens on the other end. They don't need to be, Ingo!

It's just, I think we might be creating an image of the portal that's not truly worthy of it? As a child, in this questioning of the veracity of my own consciousness, I recalled this dissolution of myself, this quite necessary dissolution of myself, this dissolution that can only be known by those who experience said dissolution itself, and I subsequently left the consciousness of 'everyone else' firmly in the realm of doubt, whereas, by contrast, the scholastic pedants of normalcy recall their own normal amalgamation with the consciousness, of themselves or others, and then deem it to be obviously true, and, for their part, leave my brand of dissolution in the realm of doubt. The origins of this dual doubt is perhaps a topic for another time. In any case, months later, I'd find myself in a bit of a hurry, walking out of a local mosque on First Street when I felt the hand of an old man, hardly able to walk himself, gently grab my wrist. As I turned toward him he looked up and asked me where I was from, a question I, of course, have never answered truthfully in any situation. The man suggested that, rather than continue practicing my form of prayer, that I instead adopt his form of prayer, that I cast aside the type of prayer I was practicing, which was of course rooted in little beyond my own whims and caprice, and instead adopt his particular form of prayer. Perhaps sensing that he'd committed a social faux pas of sorts by asking me this so brazenly in public, the man almost immediately apologized for broaching the subject, but I told him,

actually, there was no need for an apology. 'Frankly,' I said, 'if I'm being honest, my innate form of prayer has probably always bordered on the heretical,' yet, with that said, Ingo, these are the difficulties we continue to encounter, from the mosques to the martians, there are ruthless attempts to regulate and codify what will simply express itself in the manner it chooses."