

Mechanism & Dialogue

Nicholas Syrianus 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

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Canto I
Informing Ingo About Portals

“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 remind 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-enactments 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 of 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.”

Canto II

One Contains All Of The Numbers

“No. I think that’s it,” Ingo said, “That’s what’s actually wrong with me. I’m glad we finally got the bottom of it.” “No,” a female floor fan in Moscow named Tifa replied,

“um, that’s not it. Keep trying.” “Could it be. Um.” “No, that’s not it. That’s not it either.” “Why is this so difficult?” “It seems as though the things you’ve forgotten have dictated your emotional trajectory to date—

in like an acute way?” “Is it possible I exist simultaneously, like in another time completely?” “You’re still meandering around in the realm of lineage. Please stop.”

“Is genetic history passe?” “This is a portal. You need to think differently. You’re not being honest. You believe you’ve forgotten things but that’s not entirely true is it?”

“But I’ve finally expressed my feelings, like at a really high decibel too.” “No, that’s not it. Those aren’t your feelings. You thought those were your feelings? I’m afraid you’re thinking

in terms of relations still.” “Relations?” “You’re analyzing things in terms of relations, Ingo, as if there’s true difference. How else could you relate?”

Didn't you already get past this? This isn't a dive bar. It's a portal. There's no relation to really consider here. That's not it. Keep trying."

"But if I say it. No, that won't work." "You're still thinking in terms of relations. Of extensions. Of things relating to one another. Please stop."

"No, this isn't a dive bar at all. You're right. Although it seems like I may be blackout drunk?" "This is just a mirror. Does that help?" "But not in the sense I'm thinking. Right?"

"You're getting closer." "How can there be something that equals more than one?" "One contains all the numbers. That's correct." "And zero?" "That's what's actually illusory. Coders are assholes."

"I see. So it's true that I don't love anyone." "In a manner of speaking. You're close to getting it now. Certain assertions imply extension. What does love mean if it's extended?"

"Of course! At times we attempt to extend and retract a thing we call love not realizing at all what it is we're actually doing. We think we're at a shitty dive bar.

And it perhaps even occurs to us that we're blackout drunk. But there's something else to memory. We misunderstand memory essentially. This is really just a quaint plane of consistency isn't it?"

"And no one would know the difference. They're extending what they don't possess and foolishly think that by doing so they create relation."

“It’s actually kind of funny in a sense.” “In order to be the most forgiving you have to be able to laugh a little.” “It’s implicit.”

“Yet others refuse to do so. Laugh that is. They hang over us with a perpetual frown under their smile. Assigning their own actions to themselves.

Concerned about nothing but what they view as themselves.” “But they can only do so for an assigned time. They’re obsessed with lineage. They cling to lineage like a shadow.”

“Not all dive bars are portals to a plane of consistency. But the plane of consistency is—well, you get it now right?” “How could I not? One contains all of the numbers.”

Canto III

Chris Conklin in Line at Rite Aid

“This nostalgia,” Ingo began, “ugh, it’s fundamentally an act of terrorism isn’t it? I mean in the sense that it’s working, in some sense, against the potential production

of newer childhood memories from more recent childhoods, themselves of course fundamentally as false as our’s, but don’t they.” “Have as much of a right to exist as our own?”

a female floor fan in Moscow named Tifa cut off, “Our own memories which we find.” “Serendipity in doubting as an act of faith?” Ingo finished,

“What is nostalgia fundamentally? It’s fucking like ASMR or some shit. It’s just another church and, fundamentally, as Kierkegaard himself said, the Church cannot be distinguished from the State.

Every prophet allegedly sent down to us, let’s just face it, results in an unintelligible truth and the subsequent post-mortem construction of a State that posits intelligibility

as the crux of its tyranny.” “We shun unintelligibility,” Tifa said, “all the while remaining willfully ignorant to the fact intelligibility has no other function but to annihilate.”

“There’s nothing lower than intelligibility really, at least as it relates to first causes, to Being itself,” Ingo

retorted, “when you actually take a second to think about it, you know?”

“Greed is the fulcrum of intelligibility.” “Why is it then that we seem to believe that it, intelligibility, is an encasing worthy of divinity?”

“Bring four witnesses to each infidelity,” Tifa said, “otherwise it’s you that spreads corruption in the land. Is that a commentary on intelligibility, to some extent?”

“Shouldn’t the divine emerge sans encasing?” Ingo noted. “How could it not emerge exactly like that?”

“Nostalgia: it’s basically terrorism to me.”

“It’s only walking in solitude yet in densely populated areas that I actually feel anywhere close to at ease, like I can actually think a little bit?” “But the people we grew up with,”

Ingo said, “these actual co-conspirators of our nostalgia, we can’t make ourselves known to them, can we?”

“To them we remain eternally unintelligible,” Tifa concluded.

“We’re like a local news story to them, but I for one wouldn’t necessarily take a ton of offense if they just closed the browser for good?”

I saw Chris Conklin
in line at Rite Aid; he looked

twenty years older,
and I thought eventually
the two of us will be dead.

“Leaving aside the alcohol and its potential benefits,”
Ingo continued to Tifa, “weighed against the
indubitable drawbacks, there are essentially only two
choices in front of us:

the one being to untether yourself completely from
everything, and view the world and all human
interaction as essentially things that require
annihilation, primarily because

there’s a next something that we should instead be
turning our gaze toward. Or to basically sum it up
quite simply the other option is: Everything reverts
to Him.

That, in fact, rather than untethering from everything,
you should instead immerse yourself so fully in these
infinite extensions that the net result is that you’re
inevitably

annihilated in turn, and the only thing that remains is
His face.” “Go on, Ingo,” Tifa said. ““Every moment
my heart tugs me to the tavern—how can I remain
here with these pious hermits?””

Ingo quoted, then said, “There’s an importance, philosophically speaking, of not making eye contact with anyone, of avoiding all eye contact if possible, especially in densely populated public places. The wisest of people have always understood this, Tifa. Conversely, the egregious alcoholic in some not immaterial sense is actually placed higher in spiritual knowledge than even the practiced monk, because the practiced monk—practicing the former approach of untethering from everything—has attempted to find his solace in nothingness, but true nothingness is quite elusive. True nothingness will, sure, eventually lead you to everything all at once, but via true nothingness you’ll encounter everything all at once from the opposite end. Whereas, the egregious alcoholic—yes, he’s taken of course essentially the opposite approach of the practiced monk, and of course he’s landed in the same place essentially, yet viewing everything all at once from the opposite side! He’ll eventually approach everything all at once but from the opposite end than the practiced monk. The practiced monk arrives at everything all at once from one end, while the egregious alcoholic arrives at everything all at once from the opposite end. You make yourself more objectionable when you drink

by yourself, which is preferable when it comes to matters like these, Tifa.”

“I suppose there’s really nothing a priori inappropriate about pouring yourself a stiff cocktail after a hard day’s work,” Tifa replied. “Hmm, I’m just curious here, I thought,” Ingo continued,

“sitting in a comfy red chair having a sip of some fairly high class Mezcal—by myself of course!—‘yeah, I wonder how long it specifically takes for alcohol to truly leave your system?’

I thought, having successfully avoided alcohol entirely for a full week, for seven whole days. And on the seventh day I began to feel somewhat like a completely different person,

as if all of my previous urges, during—I don’t know, the last two decades or so?—had shifted in some not statistically insignificant way. But it’s difficult if not impossible

to truly map out these tiny shifts in the caprice you experience with regard to yourself, to map them to one thing at the exclusion of others, although, in a sense,

at the time, I felt like a child again. At the time, Tifa, I was also intensely reflecting on the three plums I’d bought on sale earlier that day, and how one of them, the only one I’d consumed to date,

had, I don’t know, a bit of a bitter taste to it? Almost like it wasn’t good at all? In turn, in addition to thinking

about how long alcohol stays in your system, while drinking by myself,

I also found myself considering if purchasing produce that was marked 'on sale' was itself always necessarily an ill-advised idea in concept, that the only reason fruit would be on sale is if it was out of season, or if it was a member of a bad batch of produce, that basically some sequence of events must have occurred to this fruit that made it unappealing enough to the grocery store for the store to place it on sale. I finished my drink and figured I might as well leave my apartment and, I don't know, fucking buy a book or something? But on my way to buy a book I ended getting a massive urge to pee, Tifa, so I ducked into the only dive bar that I knew for a fact wouldn't frown upon me using their bathroom as a non-customer, because I knew for a fact all sorts of bums were using their bathroom on the regular, so why couldn't I?

I made literal nanosecond-duration eye contact with the girl behind the bar as I walked to the men's room and recalled that it'd been literal months since I'd been to this bar,

yet I distinctly recalled, the last time I was at this bar, being pushed mercilessly over the edge of sobriety by taking the bartender up on a second Mezcal, yet as I continued to reflect

I concluded that that was actually the case every time I'd ever been to the fucking place. After I peed, I asked the girl behind the bar to get me a Mezcal and water, quite aware that the entire reason I went to this bar—to pee without purchasing—was now rendered completely pointless, and she asked for a clarification of my order via uttering the words: 'Like with water? On top of it?' Yeah and close my tab. I suppose it would be fair to say that I didn't give a particular fuck about this girl behind the bar, Tifa, although, to be fair, it's quite possible that at a previous point in my life I would have felt some urge to give some modicum of a fuck about her, to note some nanosecond-level eye contact as somehow imbued with meaning in some way. In my younger years I very well may have taken note of this bartender, now arduously tasked with constructing my Mezcal and water, and imagined a pretext of some sort to subsequently give a fuck about her as a person, but now, at that particular moment, sitting at the bar waiting for my Mezcal and water, it would be disingenuous to suggest that I gave a fuck about her in any way. Yet of course I obviously didn't know her at all! At a minimal glance, it looked like she she'd hit a bit of a rough patch over the last few months—only because I distinctly recalled

her from a few months prior, precisely because she was
a physically attractive bartender at this bar, where generally speaking you'll rarely if ever encounter anyone physically attractive. I closed the tab upon the execution of the order
of the Mezcal and water. Like with water on top of it?
Yes, that's correct. With the water. And ice too if you have it." "Ingo," Tifa interjected, "you remember what I used to do for a living, right?"
"The fact of the matter was," Ingo continued, "that I'd crossed the bridge that afternoon in a completely capricious way! To be honest, Tifa, I was being just slightly dishonest
when I said I decided to buy a book. Initially my thought was to just take a walk in my neighborhood. I was initially planning to take a quick walk, but I was intent on making sure
that the walk remained exclusive to my particular neighborhood, which was on the one side of the bridge, and I was specifically attempting to avoid crossing the bridge
and meandering into the downtown on the other side of the bridge, primarily because I'd been avoiding our downtown of late, of late our downtown perhaps even distressed me
to some extent. This downtown contains metaphysical danger for me, I thought. I didn't really have an urge

to have anything to do with downtown at the time.
Yet when I gave
some modicum of thought to trying to find an alternate
translation of a book I've been reading—immediately
as this thought occurred to me, Tifa, I took an
aleatory sharp right turn,
now walking toward the bridge instead of further into
my neighborhood!—now walking into downtown
instead of walking further into my particular
neighborhood, walking directly into downtown.
Later on, urine officially dispensed, drinking a Mezcal
and water while sitting at this bar—downtown!—I
began staring into what could only be identified as
pure blank space,
right as the girl behind the bar moseyed to my end of the
bar and engaged in a deep sip of her mixed drink. I
continued to stare into pure blank space as this
bartender,
now finished with her deep sip, now clearly satiated by
the depth of this sip, turned her back to me and sat
her ass on the ice box and also started to stare into
what I could only assume
to be a form of pure blank space. She pulled up on her
blue jeans repeatedly. At a glance a tattoo on her
lower hip, partially obscured by the very blue jeans
she pulled up on,
seemed to depict a man flipping off the world. A drunk
man approached the bar and redeemed a Keno ticket

that won him one single dollar, but he only submitted the ticket
after prefacing the submission by apologizing for even turning in the admittedly meager ticket. Yet he subsequently turned in the ticket and ambled back to the other end of the bar
with a single dollar bill in hand. The girl turned around again and returned her ass to the ice box, her blue jeans displayed more or less right in front of my face. She pulled up on the jeans again.
You know what my problem is, I thought to myself, Tifa, staring into this pure blank space and remaining only benignly aware of the blue jean adorned buttocks motionless in space
more or less right in front of my face: My problem is that I actually lack a necessary derisive fervor when it comes to things—that I’ve somehow mistakenly come to believe
I’m too derisive of things, when in fact it’s actually the case that I’m lacking in the requisite derision appropriate for things. For years I’ve considered myself too derisive
when in reality I haven’t been nearly derisive enough!
You cannot allow yourself to make eye contact, Tifa—this is the first philosophical principle. Yet, at the same time,
all philosophical thought of any worth has emerged from densely populated areas. You must accept everything all at once, in one instant as

an aesthetic beauty, where now and next collapse upon each other instantaneously, but in a way where it's approached from a very specific side.”

Canto IV

Yet Another State of Perpetual Rescinding

“No,” Ingo said, “I just, it’s weird, because, sure, he’s my primary care physician, but, at the same time, I feel like that’s actually a drawback—like I don’t want to disclose, you know, personal shit to him, because he’s never going away? It’s not like I could be like, ‘Oh hey, it burns when I pee’—obviously not that it burns when I pee, but you know what I mean, like, ‘Oh hey, it burns when I pee,’ and then I’ll never see you again. Because I’ll fucking see the guy in six months at my annual check-in! Basically, with this guy, it’s like if I tell him that it burns when I pee—not that it does but like hypothetically if it burnt when I peed—if I tell him that, then I feel like I’m forever the it burns when I pee guy, like I’d have to go fucking find a completely new primary care physician who had no inclination that it had ever burnt when I peed.” “Which these days is basically impossible!” a sentient tic tac shaped UFO named Dave said.

“These days it’s literally easier to find a seasoned whore who’s never caught the clap than it is to find a decent primary care physician, you know, Dave?” Ingo replied.

“Because if it’s not one thing it’s another!—like half the time they’re not even accepting new patients, or

they're like my old dentist: telling you that your teeth will all fall out in five years unless you immediately buy some adult brand set of braces that, no doubt, is giving the dentist kickbacks for every purchase, and, of course, all of this is right after the dental technician tells you how great your teeth are! No, fuck you. I won't be prey to your dental scams, miss! No—that's why, honestly?—I would never want to leave this guy, my current primary care physician, but at the same time, because I'd never leave him, I also find myself quite reticent to disclose anything that's wrong with me, to give him him that health history ammo, you know?

No, I need to be the completely healthy guy, not the random malady person. No, I need to keep this doctor completely in the dark about anything that's potentially wrong with me that's short of absolutely life threatening. And, frankly, even then . . .

.” “I mean,” Dave replied, “you can't even go to the doctor's anymore, if we're being honest. That's really where we're at in this country at this point, I think?”

“Going to the doctor's?” Ingo said, “Besides your annual physical, which you basically legally need to do, because otherwise you'll get boxed out—God forbid anything is actually, at some point, really wrong with you in the future, if you don't have the medical history they'll try and fuck you up the ass.

Your primary will disown you, Dave, that's what will happen.

You'll get dropped and become ineligible for the life-saving treatment you might actually need! But, beyond that, no, you're absolutely right!

Going to the doctor's is basically out of the question at this point for us. There's no greater folly than going to doctor's office for aches and pains, because, for one,

you're totally putting your business out there, the people in the office, they'll all know everything about what's going on with you, and who knows who they'll tell in private,

with so-called confidentiality. Spouses? Cousins?! That word could spread throughout various communities with a rapidity you'd never imagine.

No, you might as well just get a megaphone and start yelling out, "My pee burns!"—not that mine does, Dave, but hypothetically, just to continue with the same hypothetical,

like you accidentally had sex with some, I don't know, some Bulgarian heiress who's here on a visa for three months, just looking to hoe it out in America.

All of the sudden you're making Bulgarian love, and now you have Bulgarian pussy juice in your system, and maybe that disagrees with your urinary tract in one way or another?

But there are any number of hypotheticals you could employ as examples, Dave, you know what I mean? And then, if you actually need treatment, let's assume you actually need treatment, well, then you need a referral, of course!" "Which is even worse," Dave added, "if you need a referral!" "Which then gets you right back in the game of trying to find a new doctor, Dave," Ingo said, "through your current doctor who's now tasked with finding you a new specialized doctor, which is, of course, basically impossible, because whoever you need to see, there's no way they're taking new patients either, or, sure, maybe they can open something up for you, but it'll be in three months, which, of course—if what you're going through is actually serious—then, shit, you might be fucking dead by then!" "Honestly, Ingo," Dave said, "you're probably better off dying!" "Anyway," Ingo went on, "I just, you know, needed to get that off my chest—but, anyway, it was the other Friday night I guess, that I was sitting at the bar when, of course, Joe texts me. The fucking guy texts me as I'm just sitting there by myself, minding my own business, he fucking texts me to tell me that, apparently, on a Friday night, he's going skating. Now, being that it's 20 degrees out, I assume he's going ice skating, Dave, downtown,

right in more or less my damn neighborhood, within a mile of where I was sitting at the time, and I say to myself, ‘Yeah, sure, I’ll meet him there, since he’s rarely in town these days.’

Now I say (to myself) I’m going to meet him, but, to be clear here, he hasn’t explicitly asked me if I could hang out, he just informed me he was going skating, right in my neighborhood, and, in fact, it’s still possible, now that I think of it, that he had no real intention of wanting to hang out with me at all.”

“Yet,” Dave interjected, “then?” “Why text me at all, Dave?” Ingo finished, “What?—to tell me you’re around the corner, which you rarely are, but that you don’t want me to come by?”

A great question. Yet, with that said, to be fair, if I’m being honest, I wasn’t really trying to hang out with him either! Not out of any malice or ill-will, Dave, no,

simply because it was fucking 20 degrees out, and I walked to this bar, and I was explicitly not trying to make a night out of it, I was attempting to rescind completely,

which walking downtown, I mean, that could very easily lead to making a night of it and reintegrating myself into polite society, so to speak. So I call him up—I give Joe a call.

I give the fucking guy a quick call. He’s not immediately answering. The call actually goes to voicemail, and

it's very possible at this point that it's the case that
neither one of us
are actually seeking to hang out with each other, despite
the fact we're great friends and in a fairly close
geographical area together on a Friday night,
despite the fact we're texting back and forth on a Friday
night within spitting distance of each other.
'Fucking prick,' I think at the bar as I continue to
listen
to the automated voicemail's preamble. 'Then again,' I
think, 'do I really want to walk a mile in the freezing
cold, to watch Joe and his little friends ice skate?
Because I'm not ice skating. There's absolutely no way
I'm getting on any ice on this Friday night. For one
thing, I don't even know how to ice skate, and, for
another thing,
I'm currently in the midst of drinking my seventh beer!
Am I accidentally attempting to hang out with
people who I genuinely like yet don't currently want
to socialize with?
I guess that was the question I was asking myself at the
time." "Honestly, Ingo—this is the question we all
need to ask ourselves, really," Dave replied.
"I don't leave a message," Ingo said, "I finish the beer
and walk home, and the guy fucking sends me a
photo an hour later of him and his friends roller
skating at a roller blading rink all the way in Hell's
Kitchen."

“Roller blading, Ingo?,” Dave replied, incredulous, “Is that normal—conflating roller skating with roller blading?” “But that’s rescinding essentially, Dave,” Ingo continued,

“these types of imbroglios are so typical of rescinding—because rescinding in the extreme will only place you face to face with the fact that you’ve always been rescinding,

that you’ve never stopped rescinding, that even when you weren’t rescinding, that you only momentarily forgot the fact you’ve been in a perpetual state of rescinding at all times,

that no matter what it is you’re doing you’re essentially rescinding. You can’t not rescind, Dave. In short, it’s the pious mind, it’s the pious mind inveterately drawn to piety that’s—no,

not at any extreme of being, or extreme of goodness, but in fact it’s the pious mind that exists in the middle. Whereas some rescind via their day-to-day inanity with no actual awareness

of the fact they’re rescinding, others, by contrast, rescind in full awareness simply by engaging in nothing fundamentally monastic at all!—

simply because they’re equipped with the authentic knowledge that they’re perpetually rescinding no matter what, they’re smiling as they rescind, comfortable with the fact that,

no matter what they do, they’ll be rescinding, that they’re faced with two fundamental choices and

both are rescinding! But then there's the pious among us, engaging in their self-proclaimed piety in a way that makes them feel as though—yes, they're rescinding in the service of the reward of the next life.

They're oppositional in their rescinding, they think. Yet what I think the pious among us forgets here is the old saying: He does whatever He will. How could they—the pious - alter what's already been laid out for them, by engaging in the extremities of conscious decision making, in thinking they can somehow determine for themselves what's better for them in the next life? First of all, Dave, nowhere at all is it clear that the life to come, or the next life, or whatever nomenclature we choose to give it necessarily entails a future event. If anything there are bread crumbs all around us that suggest a fundamental Oneness, an all-encompassing collapse where next doesn't necessarily entail subsequent. It's been a thousand years to me, but to you it may only feel like a brief moment. Piety is, at bottom, I think, actually drawn from an intense skepticism, a deep-seeded unsureness, perhaps even a wavering trust in a unified Oneness! Rescinding from material things,

will it get you closer to a fundamental unity, Dave?

“Well,” Dave replied, “I don’t know, Ingo. For my part, I’ve always believed so at least.”

“But maybe we should take a moment and contemplate what rescinding from material things entail exactly?” Ingo said, “If we agree He does whatever He will,

then the material things you may or may not encounter must originate from Oneness, no? And, if this is the case, then to turn entirely away from them,

is that not essentially an act of skepticism? To approach said material things with moderation, of course, that’s advisable in the extreme, but to rescind completely,

as the monastic among us tend to do: is that not skepticism in the extreme? Yes, I think it is! Oh, absolutely I think it is, Dave! How can we stay here, with these pious hermits any longer?! Maybe, now that I think about it, I should have, in retrospect, been more willing to meet up with Joe,

assuming he was ice skating and not roller blading—that perhaps this idea that solitude was somehow more pious, that not making a night of it would be better for me,

maybe that was folly after all! I should have never walked home at all. No, I should have instead walked directly to the ice skating rink from the bar in the twenty degree cold, and,

even when I found no one I knew there, I still should have just tossed on a set of blades and made some new friends, some new ice skating friends—and made a night out of it!”

Canto V

Redd Foxx Told You To Wash Your Ass

“I wouldn’t necessarily call it an epidemic,” Ingo said,
“but I think it’s, frankly, a little concerning to me, if
I’m being honest. Namely—this item that’s quite
concerning to me,
well, it’s this trend I’ve been noticing during my visits to
my local gym, just routinely getting my workout in
on the gym’s equipment—it’s these attractive enough
females
who just refuse to wipe down their equipment after use.
Attractive girls, Dave—girls I know for a fact you’d
look at and, in all likelihood, want to have sex
with—who just leave
their sweat all over their fucking machines! Sure, I think
they’re attractive enough, these girls, but do the
rules somehow not apply to them anymore?
Example:
There was an attractive African-American girl on the
stairmaster walking next to me just the other
morning, just for example, and she hops off the
damn machine,
right next to me she hops off, and the next thing you
know she’s on the leg press! She’s not actually doing
anything on it—no, she’s scrolling through her
phone on the leg press,
not pressing the weight with her legs—no, she’s just
scrolling through her phone on the leg press, and

the stairmaster she was just walking on remains unchanged right next to me,
completely unwiped! Is that appropriate, Dave?—to just leave the machine without even a cursory wipe down? Sure, she was cute, but do I want my palms to hypothetically just fucking sink into her personal perspiration on the bars of a stairmaster that wasn't even remotely wiped down? Should attractive strangers just toss buckets of their own perspiration on top of me when I'm minding my own business, simply attempting to get my daily workout in as quickly as possible? No, frankly—frankly Dave—
I think it's a bit of a bush league move!—regardless of whether or not you're physically attractive, regardless of whether or not I'd want to have sex with you. Me personally?—
I always make a point to thoroughly wipe down my equipment after use, even if a person is so desperate to mount a machine after I finish on it that they approach it before I perform my wipe down, I'll still halt them and just say, 'Yeah, just one second? I'm just gonna wipe it down real quick?' and then I'll wipe the machine down thoroughly right in front of the person, then turn back to the person and say something like, 'There you go!' I just don't feel comfortable—even as an attractive man, Dave—

I don't feel comfortable having other strangers inadvertently wear my personal sweat all around the gymnasium. I've never felt like my perspiration is a gift that people should

massage all over their body. Oh, you don't sweat, you say? So you don't need to wipe down your equipment, you say? Hmm, well, I find that just a little hard to believe!

And, just to wrap this whole thing up here, this wasn't the first good-looking female I've seen do this on the stairmaster! No—this is a trend I've noticed. Never mind the other machines,

Dave—the stairmaster alone is enough for me to make a legal case out of this. It's just fucking wholly lacking in tact to me, man! It's devoid of tact! I'm sorry. That's all.

I'm just, yeah, I'm slightly offended by it. Wipe down your fucking shit! I'm sorry, but your pussy lips aren't comprised of rose pedals and potpourri, honey—no, it's just a little sickening, that's all.”

“You can only hope these girls wash their asses better than that!” a sentient tic tac shaped UFO named Dave replied, “Ugh! It's like? What? Do you wash your hands after you go kaki?”

“The Book of Truth notes a general disgust with man and a predilection toward a singular purpose as characteristics of those in a close relationship with what's Most High,” Ingo continued,

“and perhaps that’s part of where I’m coming from here, Dave? Maybe—I’m actually thinking now—maybe my disgust with this pretty girl perspiration is actually, net-net, good?—

that if I was just like, ‘Oh yeah! Let me lick their sweaty seats!’—that that would be indicative of a spiritual defect on my part? Yet, even with that said, I’ve actually recently considered

going up to one of these girls—in fact, maybe the next girl I see not wiping her shit down—and just being like: ‘Hey. Yeah, you. What’s the deal over here?’

What’s possibly so important in your life that you’re in such a rush that you can’t wipe down your equipment? Especially considering I’ve seen you scrolling through your phone

mindlessly on the leg press for the last ten minutes, doing jack shit on the fucking leg press? I’ve actually gone through three-fourths of my own workout, you know?—

I’ve done about eight sets of machine work, and I still see you scrolling through apps and messages on that leg press, not even pressing any weight.

Yet, no, wiping down your sweaty machine? No, that would be a little too much to ask, right?’ That’s what I’d say to them, right to their face, Dave.”

“Ingo,” Dave replied, “if you did that, honestly, you’d be doing the public, collectively, a damn favor!”
“What,” Ingo said, rhetorically, “you don’t wipe

your ass after you do a doo-doo? The fuck outta here!”

Canto VI
The Inevitable Nazis of Veganism

“It was a Tuesday night,” Ingo said, “in the dead of winter at maybe around ten pm and the bar, which featured a somewhat unique entrance where patrons descended down a spiral staircase, arriving at a series of tables that looked up toward a full wall window displaying the city street of the entrance—the bar was basically empty. Joe was with me, and he ordered a chicken parmesan from the ethnically ambiguous gay waiter before I even had a chance to tell him I wasn’t hungry. I wasn’t expecting to eat an entire meal at this bar. I thought we were just trying another one on. So I ordered an olive plate as a quote-unquote ‘meal’, but the olive plate itself, when it arrived, rather than highlighting the taste of the olives, instead featured a type of highly processed ‘spicy’ sauce that basically made it unpalatable to eat at a rate faster than a single olive every three to five minutes. I’d already had two gin martinis at the previous bar, and I personally decided to top myself off with a third gin martini, a third gin martini that would complement my underwhelming olive plate as well as bolster my two previous martinis, which were both served in

unorthodox rounded champagne-like glasses instead of traditional martini glasses.

Joe ordered a gin martini as well, despite the fact he was drinking beer at the previous bar, and as the gay waiter brought the two martinis two us, as he walked away,

Joe questioned whether it was kind of gay that we were now both drinking martinis, sitting together in this quasi-underground bar. 'It's a Tuesday. I don't think it's gay,' I replied.

Neither of us seemed to be homosexuals in my eyes at the time. Joe ate his chicken parmesan. I nibbled on the olive plate in spite of the sauce. 'Eight bucks for this olive plate?' I said,

trailing off. 'Is it good?' Joe replied, genuinely curious, in the process of chewing a chunk of chicken. 'Should we hit the strip club?' I said. In the corner booth to my left,

completely behind Joe, I took note of a guy about our age who, granted after about a decade or so, had clearly put on a bit of weight since the last time I saw him, which,

as I thought about it, as I placed him within the context of my memory, was probably at the strip club?—did my recent digressive reply to Joe emanate from this person,

or was it pure coincidence that I noticed him more or less simultaneously with the comment? Was there a

cause and effect here? Or was it just a complete fucking coincidence?

I contemplated bringing the thought up to Joe, of telling Joe that I recognized a guy in the corner of the bar—not exactly Earth shattering news—but I decided against it.

I gave it some thought, bringing up the topic, but ultimately decided against it, figuring it not only a bit trite, but also just fundamentally pointless.

A middle-aged homeless woman paced back and forth in the full wall window, shivering up and down the street in the freezing cold—I recalled that even walking from the car to the entrance,

a maybe two hundred foot distance, was pretty shitty.

The homeless woman paced up and down the street, her route at times seeming to begin and end with the window

that displayed her brittle frame to the handful of people in the bar that night. The frigid weather only half concerned her, which seemed appropriate for a number of reasons—

Joe mentioned an event from his past where a homeless person he knew killed their entire family. ‘That’s the only reason why I say fuck the homeless,’ he said, ‘otherwise I don’t mind them.’ ‘I think we should even potentially help them!’ I said. He didn’t disagree but reiterated his previous point.

We should perhaps be inveterately skeptical of the homeless, due to the fact they may, at the drop of a

hat basically, choose to murder their entire families in cold blood.

‘One thing I do like about olives,’ I said, ‘is that they’re vegetarian at least? I actually was a strict vegetarian for a period of time, and,

even after I stopped being officially vegetarian I still adhered to a mostly vegetarian diet. I was no longer strictly vegetarian but I was mostly vegetarian,

and I was encouraged by this when I began reading a book detailing some of the practices of the Bektashi Sufis by a certain Baron von Sebottendorff—

the author himself stated that the spiritually inclined person should stick with fruits, vegetables, cheeses, and breads, and avoid for the most part meats.’

‘Oh wow, so you were like practicing that shit without even really knowing it,’ Joe said, still finishing his chicken parmesan. ‘Yeah,’ I said,

‘the only thing about it is that von Sebottendorff was probably a Nazi?’ ‘Oh.’ ‘How much weight should we put in his analysis of the Bektashi Sufi way of life,

despite the fact it seemed as though he spent considerable time with these Sufis in Constantinople—despite the fact he was probably a Nazi intelligence asset,

if not perhaps even more involved with the National Socialists?’ ‘Nazism and Sufism seem so.’ ‘Well, not necessarily,’ I interjected,

‘you would think that based on the new age adjacent interpretations of things like Sufism, but true

Sufism, Joe, is generally not liberal in the sense we think of liberalism today, being basically a zealous, uncompromising pursuit of linear progress—no, Sufism, despite perhaps being averse to progress as a concept, is, more importantly, generally not involved in contemporary politics.’ ‘But was this Sebottendorff guy, was he like campaigning for concentration camps?’ Joe queried. ‘Fair,’ I said. ‘No, he was, so that’s fair. But should we associate vegetarianism with Nazism as well then?’ ‘I’m not saying we should even associate Sufism with Nazism!’ ‘Okay,’ I continued, ‘We have Nazism, vegetarianism, and Sufism—according to von Sebottendorff vegetarianism and Sufism are often, if not always, practiced in tandem— or at least the majority vegetarian diet I practice, as opposed to the more stringent forms often endorsed today—yet von Sebottendorff always associated his Sufi practices, at least to some extent, with his latent Nazism. Literal Nazism. Not like Nazi vegetarianism where you don’t even touch cheese, Joe—no, we’re talking about National Socialist Adolf Hitler Nazism—this is the Nazism that von Sebottendorff placed adjacent to the Bektashi Sufi practices he, in all likelihood, was initiated into.’ ‘A Sufi—Nazi?’ he said. ‘A Nazi who became a devout Sufi, who believed one of the keys to maintaining a spiritual balance was found in the diet,

and that that diet should be majority vegetarian. It's a small sample size, but I suppose it's possible that I'm following a Nazi-adjacent diet, Joe?

That I should be partaking a large chicken parmesan like you are, that, in fact, by continuing to instead consume potent gin martinis and measly olive plates I'm spiritually preparing myself for, yes, the esotericism of Sufism, but also unfettered Nazism?" "So," a sentient tic tac shaped UFO named Dave finally replied, "did you?"

"Continue eating the olives?" Ingo said, "Or—you mean like order a chicken parmesan?" "No, I mean—did you hit the strip club?" "Yeah, we obviously went!" Ingo interjected.

"But the stuff with von Sebottendorff. Do you find that intriguing at all? I feel like Joe was only half-interested at best in it, that he was, sure, humoring me to some extent,

but not to the extent that I really needed, you know?"

"Oh, of course," Dave said, "Joe humoring you to some extent is like your best case scenario with some shit like

von Sebottendorff! I'm actually shocked he even humored you to some extent—he must have been at least half in the bag if he did."

"I think I did bring it up toward the latter portion of his gin martini, now that you mention it." "In any case, yeah," Dave continued, "I think it's a valid question,

of how to properly contextualize a Nazi endorsing vegetarianism, and not just vegetarianism, but the exact iteration of vegetarianism that you yourself practice,

and, apparently, so does the median Sufi? How should one contextualize that? Is there perhaps a slight stain on not eating meat, for the most part, and maybe even Sufism,

since this Nazi was so into it, since he endorsed it to the degree that he went to the lengths of writing an entire book about it? Are vegetarians now Nazis? If so, then what are vegans?

I've always, in a way, kind of felt like vegans were basically Nazis anyway?" "Well," Ingo added, "that's an interesting point, right?"

Because I think it's fairly safe to say that vegans do exhibit certain Nazi-like characteristics? There's a certain National Socialist narcissism to idealistic veganism at least,

the type of veganism that purports that your actions can somehow save the animals from suffering, that purely by one's own actions that multinational industries can shift.

But there's also a Nazism even deeper in veganism—namely, his idea that we know what's best for the animal kingdom, that we comprehend suffering. These animals are suffering,

so we need to stop eating them—yet, while I certainly would agree that animals seem to suffer, and that

certainly practices like factory farming amplify these states,

I also think there's an interventionist spirit at play here.

Humans have hunted animals for, what—millions of years? How long have we even been on this fucking planet, Dave?

And now, as our species has amplified itself these practices have amplified themselves in correspondence, yet certain sects—and, yes, I will call them sects—

believe that we can stop this by ourselves boycotting meat products.” “And that's not even getting into the biological need that humans have for B12, which you, realistically,

can only get from animal products—sans supplements of course!” Dave added. “Which is, of course, yet another Nazi-adjacency to veganism,” Ingo replied,

“that we shouldn't even milk cows? But cows require milking, Dave? So we should boycott milking cows because we don't like how cows are milked? The milking of cows,

the creation of cheese and dairy products seems to be a rather vanilla, benign, actually quite mutually beneficial process, yet the vegans will tell us that it must be stopped!

This is certainly Nazism, to some extent.” “I'm actually starting to wonder,” Dave interrupted, “like, was von Sebottendorff,

was he maybe behind the curve in Nazism by endorsing this majority vegetarian diet? Was he actually to some extent deficient as a Nazi by not endorsing and practicing

the pure National Socialism of veganism, as opposed to advising on a rather moderate diet of mostly vegetarian meals?

It seems like, if he was truly married to this idea of Nazism, that he would have gone full vegan, that this endorsement of Sufism and vegetarianism actually

is tempering his Nazi tendencies, that perhaps we should be concluding the opposite—namely, that majority vegetarian diets actually deter Nazism,

while veganism is obviously associated with being a ruthless Nazi.” “von Sebottendorff’s vegetarianism is actually indicative of his liberalism?” Ingo replied,

“it’s actually having the opposite effect? I think I like that idea, Dave, that instead of von Sebottendorff’s Nazism shifting the polarity of vegetarianism toward Nazism

it’s actually the fact that his vegetarianism is shifting the polarity of his Nazism toward liberalism—and, in turn away from Nazi veganism?”

“In every sphere today,” Dave continued, “we associate vegetarianism with veganism as the two truly similar diets,

when in actuality it may be the case that the vegans and the carnivores are the true siblings of, not only diets,

but Nazi diets. Yes, while a moderate vegetarianism, sure, it mitigates animal suffering on an individual basis, but it also—more importantly—fails to succumb to the Nazi megalomania of believing that itself alone can change the world as we comprehend it. Assuming we comprehend it correctly at all!” “Which, in my mind,” Ingo replied, “is something that’s also quite up for debate!”