

CHRIS CONKLIN IN LINE
AT RITE AID
NICHOLAS KATSAFANAS

“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.”

