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A spring afternoon in Tübingen (12/19/2015)

“1788 — On October 21 Hölderlin enters the *Tübinger Stift*, or Protestant seminary, at the university and meets G.W.F. Hegel. ... Like all the rest of the gifted students, these two hate the narrow-minded sectarianism and conservatism of their school. Only one of their teachers dares to peek into Kant. Within two years the students will own all three *Critiques* but will have to hide them under the boulders that line the banks of the Neckar River.”

David Farrell Krell: Introduction to *The Death of Empedocles*.

Exterior pure form of sensible intuition — Day

A spring afternoon in Tübingen, 1791. Along the banks of the Neckar we discover three teenaged boys in student garb playing hooky.

They are Johann Christian Friedrich Hölderlin, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (a Wunderkind, he is somewhat younger than the others).

At a large boulder by the side of the river they pause, look about them to make sure they are unobserved, and pull a rucksack from beneath the rock. It contains their stash, their rolling papers and paraphernalia, and a severely distressed copy of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, bookmarked with a leaf and decorated with burns where smoldering joints have been used as placeholders.

They waste no time in rolling a doobie and lighting up.

“Dude,” says Hegel, toking with evident satisfaction, “this is some world-historical shit.”

Schelling inhales and nods vigorously. “This weed is empirically real but transcendently ideal.”

“The transcendental ideas have immanent use,” says Hölderlin. “Rivers make arable the land. For where herbs are growing” — he sucks on the reefer — “there men will go also.”

The other two giggle uncontrollably.

“Dude, anticipations of perception are so bogus,” says Schelling. “The use of the idea may be extravagant or indigenous.”

“Every thing stands further under the principle of thoroughgoing determinism,” says Hegel. “I think this is out.”

“In a cognition that thoroughly agrees with the laws of the understanding there is no error,” says Hölderlin. He strikes a match. “Now come, fire!”

“Was that modality problematic, assertoric, or apodictic?” Schelling asks Hegel.

LATER in the real form of inner intuition:

Schelling stares at the joint in his hand with a puzzled expression. “Why is there something, and not, like, nothing?”

Hegel fumbles in his pockets. “I thought I brought chips.”

Hölderlin lies with his ear against the ground, listening for voices in the Earth. “We are nothing, what we search for is everything.”

Interior Dean's office — Day

The Dean, a formidable martinet, sits behind his desk beneath portraits of Christian Wolff and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. He hears the reports of his snitches, who inform him the trio have called in sick with nervous fever and ditched, doubtless to read forbidden texts and advocate Revolution. The Dean declares such heresy to be intolerable. "I'll show those little weasels the architectonic of pure reason," he says. Reminded that the three have been on probation since they were caught reading Spinoza last semester, he puts them on double secret probation. "Amphiboly of concepts of reflection, my ass," he says. "Philosophy is an absolute monarchy, and I am its despotic minister. A foot will come down — and that foot is me!"

As an afterthought he instructs his stooges to check the taverns. "They'll be getting the munchies."

Interior Tavern — Day

At the "Transcendental Unity of Apperception", a favorite student watering hole, the trio are seated in the back, attempting to bring the critical estimation of the beautiful under principles of reason as they watch Kathi, the waitress, glide gracefully among the tables.

"Too fair to worship, too divine to love," sighs Hegel.

"Does she look better a priori or a posteriori?" wonders Schelling.

"Within us a god commands," says Hölderlin, with a dreamy expression on his face. His hand wanders down the front of his

breeches. — “Dude!” Hegel protests. “Hands off the Ding-an-sich!”

A sudden hush falls over the room. The Dean has entered. Flanked by his trusties, he confronts the errant scholars. — “So! the disciples of Prometheus! as usual reeking of cannabis sativa.”

“Busted,” mutters Hegel. — “So much for the progress of the consciousness of freedom,” mutters Schelling. — Hölderlin, apprehended with a mouth full of the matter of sensible intuition, imitates a zit.

The Dean laughs unpleasantly, and snaps his fingers. “My office, ten minutes, bring kneepads.” — To Hölderlin: “We’re going to make you a healthier, more German poet, skidmark. Start practicing on that bratwurst.” — Hölderlin looks curiously at the sausage and tries screwing it into his ear.

Suddenly a giant FOOT descends from the heavens and stomps the Dean flat! Totally Euripides.

“Food fight!” shouts Schelling, emptying a vat of potato salad over the heads of the Dean’s minions. In the ensuing chaos the three bolt into the street.

A PARADE is in progress. Leaping onto a float to escape pursuit, Schelling seizes a microphone and leads a dancing chorus of barmaids dressed in dirndls in a memorable rendition of “Twist and Shout”.

Hegel watches in admiration, but it is clear he is rhythmically challenged. “The valor that struggles is better than the weakness that endures,” he insists. But he still can’t dance. — All is not lost: Kevin Bacon will matriculate in the next semester, see *Tübinger II: Fussbefreien*. — In the meantime he seizes the baton

from a drum major, performs a propaedeutic interrogation of its transcendental dialectic, and leads the marching band down an alley into a dead end. “To be aware of limitations is already to be beyond them,” he assures the spastically twitching marionettes. “Those who are too fastidious toward the Finite never reach actuality, but linger in abstraction, and their light dies away.” — “What the fuck is that supposed to mean?” asks someone caught in the crush. He will not be the last to ask such a question.

SUPER title advising us that Schelling and Hegel go on to become the Original Gangstas of German Idealism, but, illustrating yet again the primacy of noumena over phenomena, their credit ratings never recover from what the Dean has written in their Permanent Records.

Pursued by the Dean’s minions, Hölderlin escapes by climbing to the roof of an adjacent building. From this vantage he MOONS them, shouting gibes from the racier passages of the *Transcendental Aesthetic*. — He espies Kathi in the crowd below. “Freedom and Nature unite in true infinity!” he exclaims. Appealing to the apodictic certainty of geometric principles, he seizes a hanging rope and SWINGS from the roof to grab her.

In the universe of Becoming the convertible has not yet emerged from non-Being into Being. He throws her over the back of a horse and they gallop off into the sunset.

“We delight in flinging ourselves into the night of the unknown,” he declares, “into the cold strangeness of any other world, and if we could we would leave the realm of the sun and rush headlong beyond the comet’s track.”

“Whatever,” she says. “Did you bring any of that Schwarzwald shit?”

SUPER title announcing that when the First World War commences every German soldier will march to the Western Front carrying an edition of the poetical works of Hölderlin in his rucksack. A slender volume, alas, it will stop no bullets.