

EXTRA!

JEAN-PAUL SAUVAGE
THE PHILOSOPHER
DETECTIVE **IN**
CRITIQUE OF
PURE MURDER

Michael O'Donoghue

It all began on a wet Paris afternoon in 1948. I was huddled over my Olympia, putting the final touches on a small monograph concerning certain neglected aspects of the Leibniz-Wolffian school's influence on *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaft und die transzendent Phänomenologie* when she walked in - blonde, beautiful and stacked. She wasn't the dame in the mind of God, but she'd do until one came along.

"What's your problem, sweetheart?" I asked, lighting up a Gitane.

"Are you Jean-Paul Sauvage, the 'Philosopher Detective'?"
 "That's what it says on the door."

She hesitated momentarily, and when she continued, her ice-blue eyes were clouded.

"My father said if I ever needed help, I should contact you Mr. Sauvage. And...and now he's missing. I want you to find him."

"Who's missing, doll?"
 "Doctor Witticus von-Etzdorf."



I felt like I'd been hit with all 46 volumes of the Collected Works of Saint-Simon. I'd studied under old Prof. von Etzdorf back in my student days at Württemberg. A brilliant philosopher, he had lived as a recluse since the death of his wife over 20 years before. Besides his daughter, I was the only other person to ever get close to him.

"You must be Athene."

She nodded. Only the Professor would hang a nutty moniker like that on a classy broad like this.

"What makes you think your old man's missing?"

"I went up to Heidelberg to visit him yesterday and he wasn't in his rooms. The bed hadn't been slept in. And his copy of *Critique of Pure Reason* was on his desk. He never goes anywhere without it. I'm worried, Mr. Sauvage."

She was wearing a nice perfume. The scent was mimosa. It brought back memories of a sabbatical on Mykonos with a sexy little spinoza scholar named Yvette.

"I wouldn't worry, glamour puss. He's probably just visiting a friend but, if it will make you feel any better, I'll drive up to Heidelberg and nose around."

"There's something else you should know. Daddy had been invited by the Logical Positivists to speak on Hegel at the University of Vienna the day after tomorrow."

"I know, I was planning to attend. Do you have the keys to his place?"

She reached into her coat and took out the keys and a well-thumbed edition of *The Story of Philosophy*.

"What are you doing with that?" I asked.

"Just boning up for Daddy's lecture. Phone me when you find out anything."

Hours after she'd gone, I could still smell the mimosa.

I drove to Heidelberg that evening. The Professor lived on a quiet side street off the Korn Maridt. When I'd climbed the stairs, I was surprised to find the door to his apartment ajar. Then I made my first mistake. I kicked open the door and strolled in. A guy was standing by the desk. I couldn't tell much about him because he was shining a flashlight in my eyes. I knew one thing for certain, though. He wasn't looking for an honest man.

Before I could move, somebody slugged me from behind and everything went as dark as Plato's Cave. When I regained consciousness, that is to say "consciousness" defined, in the manner of Locke or Reid, as "the reflective Apprehension of the mind of its own process." I discovered that the thugs had hightailed it.

The place looked like a torpedo had tied a pineapple to it. Drawers were overturned. Papers lay strewn about the floor. And, judging by the way the sofa was sliced up, I had a feeling that whoever sapped me didn't find what they were looking for. I stumbled to my feet and, as I turned to leave, I spotted a ticket stub near the door. It was for the Bolshoi Ballet. I had an idea. After 10 minutes, I finally found the phone under a pile of old issues of the *Revue de Metaphysique et de Morale* and called Athene. Her voice was silky with sleep.

"Sorry to disturb your shut-eye, toots, but did your old man ever go in for ballet?"

"Not that I know of. What's the angle?"

"Probably nothing. I'm just playing a screwy hunch. Go back to your beauty sleep, baby. I'll call you if anything breaks."

I locked the place up and checked into a cheap hotel. In the morning, I had a lump the size of a philosophers' stone on the back of my noodle. I dressed quickly, downed a fast cup of joe, and walked out to my car. Somebody called my name before I reached it. He was a short, plain man wearing a tan trench coat. The only thing that might distinguish him from a thousand other mugs was the snub-nosed Smith and Wesson he poked in my throat.

"O.K. shamus. Listen and listen good. I'm gonna -"

"Excuse me for interrupting, but I believe you just said, 'Listen "good".' Precisely how do you associate ethics, specifically morally praiseworthy character, action or motive with a simple sensory experience? Or perhaps you were speaking axiomatically, in which case I am forced to inquire as to whether this goodness is intrinsic or extrinsic. If extrinsic, or 'instrumental,' then it must derive its being from -"

"Cut the gab, bright eyes. One false move outta you and I'll blow your head off."

"But how are we to determine the 'falsity' of any move when moves *per se* cannot be characterized as either true or false? On a correspondence theory of truth, truth or falsity is properly ascribed to a proposition if, and only if, the fact to which the proposition refers is actually the case. And on what grounds are we to judge the purported 'falsity' of any move which I might undertake? An action may be effective or ineffective, salutary or infelicitous, meritorious or blameworthy, wise or foolish. In none of these cases, however long and arduously may you try to do so, is it possible to secure a unique identifying reference - an *a priori* condition of the ascription of the truth or falsity - to an appropriate empirical proposition."

"How's that again?"

"Let me illustrate my point," I replied, knocking the revolver aside and kneeling him in the groin. He crumpled to the pavement. I kicked him a few times in the kisser until he stopped moaning.

There wasn't much in his pockets - a few rubles, a switch-blade that wasn't quite as big as the Sword of Damocles, a driver's license made out to Gregor Alexeyevich Reznichenko, and a heidelberg Public Library card. I stuffed everything in my pockets, including the heater. The library card looked interesting. Gregor wasn't my idea of a bookworm. I decided to check it out.



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