



God's Play

– an effort to visualize some fragment of the theological discussion
in dramatic form.

by Christian Lanciai (2008)

The characters:

God
Adam
Eve
Abel
Cain
Noah
Sem
Ham
Japhet
Noah's wife
Abraham
Lot
His daughter
His wife
A messenger
Sodomites
Solomon
Jeremiah

Belsazzar
Daniel
Herod Antipas
Herodias
Salome
servants
John the Baptist
Herod's minister
Jesus
Mary, mother of Jesus
Mary Magdalene
Mahomet
Ali, his son-in-law
Pope Innocent III
Francis
Dante Alighieri
Virgil
Emperor Charles V
Martin Luther
Giordano Bruno
Three inquisitors
Urban Hjärne
Three witch judges
A doorman
A woman
Karl Marx
His wife
His daughter
His son-in-law
Leon Trotsky
Vladimir Ulyanov Lenin
Josef Stalin
Two Jewish concentration camp prisoners
The Rolling Stones
A theologian
A musician

Copyright © C. Lanciai 2008

Act I scene 1. The garden of Eden.

God Should I really dare to commit myself to such a precarious experiment? To create my own image. To at last have some company and someone to talk with. All nature is beautiful, I created a world of purity and beauty which couldn't be finer in its exorbitant natural multiplicity and where all life manages by itself in absolute freedom, but how could you ever be satisfied? You always have to have that little extra thing, a creation needs something to crown it, and life gets dull at length if you lack drama and challenges... So be it. Welcome, Adam, and be my own representative on earth, and I give you all nature to manage as you like, for if you just have the slightest portion of myself in you, you will understand to manage it well and cultivate your garden.

Adam You offer me a world to take care of, my creator, and certainly it is consummate in every way in its unlimited freedom and beauty and glory, but isn't there something missing?

God What would that be?

Adam Someone to talk with. Someone to share it with. Some company.

God You have me. That's why I created you.

Adam Yes, but you are above me.

God You have the whole world under you. All living beings are subject to you.

Adam I mean an equal.

God I made you my equal. Am I not good enough for your equal?

Adam You will still always remain my creator and always have the last word. Pardon me, Lord, but I will never be able to regard you as an equal, since I always will have to feel inferior to my creator.

God What do you want then? Another being like yourself? A twin brother? A clone? What are you really asking of me?

Adam No, pardon me, Lord, but what I need is some company with which I am able to talk and discuss and share experiences, a challenge, something other than just myself.

God What is wrong about you then?

Adam I am too perfect. You have equipped me with superior physical forces, which make me hard and strong but angry in my loneliness. Give me another better self than myself, another being like me but someone I could love better than myself.

God Thus some kind of a softer, nobler and more beautiful variation. Hem! Of course. You are a natural being. Nature endows all living beings with an urge for love and sexual desire. That I didn't come to think of it! What you need is a woman!

Adam A woman? What's that?

God A female man, man's other self, who gives man the possibility to according to nature multiply by life's fundamental lust which is love!

Adam Do you mean you could give me someone to love?

God A trifle! Just watch! (*stretches out a hand, and enter Eve*) May I present Eve, the first real woman, who will compensate for all your lacks and give you everything you want, and whose life's meaning is to mother your children.

Eve Do you accept me, Adam?

Adam Some question! Why wouldn't I? You are far more beautiful than myself, with your exquisite curves, the generosity of your fantastic rich and wavy hair, which is like a swarming herd of goats down your back, and the sweet softness of your face, not to mention the charm of your entire irresistible being!

God It's love, Adam. Take it easy.

Adam Lord, you have surpassed all my wildest expectations! You have surpassed yourself! What have I done to deserve this extraordinary happiness?

God You asked for it.

Adam (on his knees) Thank you, Lord!

God Just take well care of her, so that you don't lose it by for example doing something stupid.

Adam Whatever could I do that would be stupid?

God You could for example get it into your mind to eat of the dangerous fruits of the tree of knowledge.

Eve The tree of knowledge? How exciting! Where is it?

God Don't tell her, Adam.

Adam The whole world is ours, Eve. Only the fruits from the tree of knowledge we are not allowed to touch.

Eve Why not?

God For your own good.

Eve What's the meaning, Lord, of all the freedom you give us, if it is hampered by any restriction?

God (to himself) Here we go! The woman is getting ideas. That I overlooked that possibility!

Adam Eve, forget those thoughts. Don't challenge destiny and our lord, who gave us all this for us to manage and not to abuse.

Eve I can't see how knowledge could be abused.

God This outgrows my competence. The woman is asking questions, and I can't satisfy her curiosity with less than humanity being forced into a most questionable direction... This will Adam have to deal with himself. I am not responsible for his woman. He was the one who asked for her. (*leaves*)

Adam Eve, now you made the Lord turn away from me.

Eve Don't blame me. My question was relevant and fair.

Adam But was it then worth taking the risk to challenge him for nothing? He is after all our creator!

Eve I just asked him a simple question which obviously flunked him. It was not intentional, but it was no fault of mine or of the question. He just felt upset for nothing. And is there anything special then about the tree of knowledge? Its apples look no different from any others. (*takes an apple and bites it*) It also tastes like any

other. Try it yourself. (*gives Adam another apple from the tree, who tries it*) Well, do you notice anything special about this fruit that would make it worth forbidding?

Adam (surprised) No.

Eve There you are. Eat your apple. It's not worth saving. There are others.

(*Suddenly, shocked, yells*) I-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i!

Adam What is it?

Eve Did you see it?

Adam What?

Eve The snake in the tree!

Adam Did it bite you?

Eve No, but there was a snake in the tree!

Adam So what? Snakes are hardly worse than other animals.

Eva I-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i-i! (*yells again, terrified*)

Adam What is it now then?

Eve Can't you see??

Adam What is it that I can't see?

Eva (scared to death) That we are naked!

Adam You are right. We are naked. That we didn't come to think of it before.

Eva We have to cover ourselves!

God (returns) What have you done?

Adam It was Eve!

God What did she do?

Adam She gave me the forbidden fruit! And she ate it first herself!

God And therefore you have become aware that you are naked. Fie on you! You have only yourselves to blame.

Adam What will happen to us now? Have we done something really bad?

God You have done the very worst of all! You have discovered the truth!

Eve We didn't know any better. You made us so curious.

God I gave you all power and freedom of all the world! There was only one thing I forbade you to do, and of course you immediately go messing it all up by violating that only prohibition!

Adam But it was just an apple!

God But you knew it was wrong and did it only because of that! You will never be able to live naked at liberty again!

Adam (shattered) What have we done!

God You did a foolish thing! You started the history of mankind by committing a mistake! Now everything has to go wrong!

Eve Forgive us, Lord. We didn't know what we were doing. We were young and inexperienced.

God It can't be helped. What's done is done. But you can never be masters of nature again. From now on you must obey its laws like all other living creatures. In great pains you will deliver your children, Eve, which only will cause you worries and troubles. And you must always sweat on your work, Adam, to be able to support

your miserable family. Get you gone! I don't want to see you any more! You have made perfect fools of yourselves from the very start! Get lost! I now must protect the paradise of nature from your abuse. My human experiment has failed from the beginning, and the worst thing is that now nothing can stop you! Begone, you hopeless idiots! (*drives them out*) I never should have given them domination over nature. Now I am miserably compelled to let nature ruthlessly be their arbitrary master, as long as there still will be some abortive humanity left on earth without anything better to do than to misuse that sanctity of nature which I in my ignorant naïvety entrusted them with the responsibility for. (*leaves in great frustration*)

Scene 2.

Abel (sacrificing) Should I not try to placate you, Lord, with my innocence and trust and respect for your creation and all life? If my love is overflowing with my sincerest feelings of gratitude, would I not offer them to you for a sacrifice, as our creator and origin of all?

God (enters) What are you up to, boy?

Abel Offering a sacrifice of gratitude to our creator.

God How do you know there is such a being?

Abel Like I have some origin, all life must have an origin, and since all life is divine, the origin of everything must be the very power of creativity, the most divine matter of all.

God And how do you know that power is personal belonging to some personality?

Abel I just take that for granted. All that is true is personal, and all life is true.

God You are an example of the ultimate piety. But what do you expect in return from the divine power?

Abel Restoration. Exoneration. Man's redemption. My parents were expelled from paradise for a trifle. I would like to atone for that. They meant no harm but were punished with sufferings and ordeals without end.

God They broke the only law that existed.

Abel And why then is there a law if not to be broken? Could there be a law without being broken?

Cain (turns up) What are you doing, Abel?

Abel Exonerating mankind.

Cain You just make a nuisance of yourself as usual. What is that supposed to mean? (*indicates Abel's altar*)

Abel An altar.

Cain What is an altar?

Abel A sacred place for association with the divine.

Cain What nonsense. There is no divine matter. There is only a hard life, sex and death. Everything else is just superfluous and silly fantasies. And what are you doing there with your altar?

Abel A sacrifice to God.

Cain Sacrificing fresh meat? Such a waste is not sensible. You are mad. (*attacks the altar and tears it down*)

Abel No, Cain! You must not destroy my work of redemption!

Cain I am doing it for your own good! You must stay on earth!

Abel Don't you realize, that what you are destroying is something good? That you in your stupidity is ruining the future of mankind?

Cain It's getting worse and worse.

Abel No, it's you who don't realize what you are doing!

Cain I keep you from abandoning yourself to sheer folly!

Abel No, you are destroying the link between man and God!

Cain That link was destroyed by God himself if it ever existed.

Abel You are blaspheming!

Cain And you are getting on my nerves.

Abel You must not destroy your brother's work!

Cain Who can stop me? Your softness makes you unfit for this world.

Abel No, Cain, you are corrupting it with your ignorance!

Cain That's enough! (*strikes him down*) I never could stand you! There! That will keep him quiet. Good riddance to him, the bloody milksop! (*meets God on his way out*)

God Cain, where is your brother?

Cain How should I know?

God How have you taken care of your brother?

Cain Should I take care of my brother?

God That is why you have a brother.

Cain I don't know where he is.

God No, because he is everywhere, for his blood has been shed on the earth, and the earth is quaking from his undeserved suffering. What have you done!

Cain He vexed me.

God He didn't at all. He just wanted to redeem humanity to a better world.

Cain And that made him unbearable.

God So you beat him to death.

Cain So what?

God Cursed be humanity for your sake, Cain, because you, who were evil and brutal and ruthless beat him to death who was better, softer and weaker than you. While you, who hasn't done anything good for life, now are surviving, you disposed of the one who only wished to do good. Do you think that is fair? Is it justice?

Cain What is justice?

God The contrary to the law which makes might the right and overruns nature by force.

Cain What is your point, you crazy old man?
God The point is that for the sake of you and the likes of you all humanity must perish.
Cain That will be the day.
God You make it unavoidable.
Cain Even if you were God himself, old demented fool, I couldn't care less.
(leaves)
God And that's the kind of man I created. No, this won't do. Humanity just can't grow worse all the time without anyone putting a stop to it. Someone has to take responsibility for the situation when man just aggravates his own irresponsibility. Do I then have to destroy what I created myself? Is that possible? Hem! *(starts thinking and leaves)*

Scene 3.

God Listen, Noah, I have to ask you about something.
Noah What's on, Lord?
God I must ask you to build a houseboat large enough to house at least a couple of every land animal on earth.
Noah But why on earth do you ask me about such an absurd matter? Could any boat on earth be constructed large enough to house all those animals without sinking and becoming unmanageable?
God Just trust me. I know what I am doing.
Noah But you lay all the work on me! At least give me some reasonable explanation.
God The earth will perish by a flood, which humanity has brought on itself by its folly and wantonness, and I wish to save what can be saved, and the least I can save is then the only man on earth whom I could call my friend with his whole family and at least a couple of specimen of all noble land animals.
Noah How do you know this flood will come?
God Don't worry. It will come.
Noah What then has humankind done to deserve it?
God And you really ask that? Don't you see how they are behaving? They live only for their promiscuity and godlessness, their bad taste and vanity, their greed and egoism, their aggressions and their own self-destruction. All earth was a paradise until they came and littered it by their mass multiplication as something worse than any invasion of locusts, devastating it by their short-sighted destruction of the environment! Naturally nature must react! No natural life can at length accept any form of mismanagement and general abuse!
Noah You will need a hell of a large barge to make room for all those animals. At least two floors have to be stables, and we will have to squeeze into a corner of a third one.

God That's what I mean. It could work.

Noah I am a cautious man, Lord, and take no risks. The risk here is that what you suggest actually might happen. If I then build an ark for an insurance against all eventualities I haven't lost anything, and if the whole world is drowned I will be safe and dry anyway. But I can't guarantee to save all animals, since there certainly will be more that no one is yet aware of.

God Naturally I will overlook margins for the human factor and its unfortunate but natural limitations. But you had better hurry on with the job. It could start raining any moment, and then there will perhaps be no more interruption until everything is washed away.

Noah People will consider me mad and mock me and laugh me to scorn, but I don't care, for it is safer to take prophets of misfortune seriously than not.

God If all historically important persons would think like you, many historical mistakes would be avoided. Get started now! You have no time to lose!

Noah Yes, Lord. – Sem, Ham and Japhet, you have to help me with the greatest engineering project the world has ever seen.

Sem What's up, father?

Noah We shall build a boat able to house a couple of every known land animal of our world.

Ham Father, you have been drinking too much.

Noah Unfortunately I have never been more sober in all my life.

Japhet Birds as well? Then we will have a mess of a universal shithouse.

Noah Yes, and then you must all help me keeping it clean all the time.

Sem What will be our reward?

Noah Life.

Ham Or else you don't mean you will kill us?

Noah Not I, but possibly the circumstances. This is a matter of life and death, boys. Regard it as perhaps our only possible life insurance.

Japhet Something is going to happen. Father means business. Go ahead with the boat construction, brothers, and I will take on collecting the animals. We will all have much to do, so we might as well share the work at once.

Noah That's the spirit, boys! At least we will not be out of work!
(*They get started.*)

Scen 4. In the ark under the rain.

Noahs wife I don't understand how you think, old man. How could you know what would happen?

Noah I had a visit from a secret friend who was too well informed.

Wife And who is he then, this mysterious Mr. White with the long beard who looks older than death but still isn't even bald with his long white snow-white hair, so that an ordinary hag like me has to envy his rich and lovely hair?

Noah Don't bother. He is something of my life's chief counsellor. If I told you more you wouldn't believe me.

Wife You call him lord. Have you served him in your younger days?

Noah We are all his servants without being aware of it.

Wife Is he some kind of a messenger from an alien power?

Noah He is the alien power himself. That's why I call him lord.

Wife He must then be as close to divinity as you could reach, but all gods are just idols, superstition and vain blind faith. What I can't understand is how you could know it was going to rain like this perpetually and infernally?

Noah There is an end even to eternity, dear wife. Just you wait! (*The entire stage shakes, like foundering.*) At last! There we are! We have foundered! Touchdown!

Wife It felt more like running on grounds.

Noah Do you know what it means? The water has started to recede! Now it's just a question of time before we are liberated from this boat prison with all its poor locked up bellowing, trumpeting, bleating, mooing, chattering, roaring and howling animals.

Wife Not to mention all their infernal defecations and urinal floods. I can't understand how they all managed to survive.

Noah Japhet always had a good hand with animals and knew how to organise a temporary deer park for so many. The problem was the birds, which we always had to let out flying with the risk they wouldn't find their way back. Migratory birds are better at orientation than men. We don't really know where we are in this world.

Japhet (*enters*) Father, another mule has been born.

Noah Didn't I tell you to keep the horses apart from the donkeys!

Japhet Yes, but they keep breaking their stalls all the time, and we must grant them any small change possible. Neither the mare nor the jenny ass did ever complain.

Noah And a stallion is always a stallion. What's done is done, and the harts keep copulating with the deer. I trust you, Japhet, no matter how liberal you are.

Japhet Liberalism is expansion, father. (*leaves*)

Noah Soon, my dear wife, we shall see the days when the birds we let out don't return any more. We have run ashore. That's the best thing that could have happened to us. If we now are stuck here the situation is stable. And then we could soon get out and find the ground. And the first thing I will do, when we can get started working and cultivating again, is to plant my saved vines, so that at least we won't have to do without wine.

Wife First we must get down to earth.

Noah Exactly.

Wife What I can't understand is why your secret friend that old gentleman chose to save you and your family out of all people.

Noah Perhaps because he knew that I was the right man to start cultivating wine for the future of humanity.

Wife In that case he was more than just wise.

Noah What would that be?
Wife Human.
Noah You said it. That was maybe why he selected me, because he saw that I had a similar inclination.

Scene 5.

Sem Don't tell me father is drunk again.
Japhet Yes. Ever since his first wine harvest after the flood he has been obsessed with the potentials of wine.
Sem He has derailed.
Japhet Yes. And what can we do about it?
Sem How far is he gone? How bad is it?
Japhet He lies naked babbling if he hasn't drunk himself stoned and unconscious.
Sem We look at it seriously. But does Ham?
Japhet He just laughs at our father's shame and humiliation, as if it was funny.
Sem That doesn't make it any better, does it?
Japhet No, not at all.
Noah (*in the next room*) On your billows I will float up to heaven one day...
Sem He was awake!
Japhet Then there is hope at least.
Sem Come, let's go inside and try to put him into order.
(*They go in to join Noah.*)
Noah (*naked on his bed with a cup of wine in his hand*) Welcome, my sons! Now we can start living! Thanks to the blessings of wine there doesn't have to be any more sorrows for humanity! Now they can start living and multiply for all eternity!
Japhet Father, all humanity is gone. We are probably the only ones left.
Noah Don't you think I know? But everything is just a joke! It will only happen once and never again! Now life begins! (*drinks*)
Sem Stop drinking, father!
Noah Why shouldn't I indulge in health and soundness? The Lord gave us the wine and the rainbow for us never to have to worry again. As long as the wine and the rainbow exist there will never again be any world devastating flood.
Japhet Stop it, father! It isn't funny any more!
Ham (*enters*) Let him alone in his drunkenness! Let him drink himself unmanageable, incompetent and gaga and cultivate his own senility! That's what he wants. He has survived the flood with all his animals. Let him celebrate that feat as long as he likes and as long as he lives.
Noah Wine is the best thing that ever was found on earth. It's the only stable blessedness, the constantly restored paradise, the eternal company and solace, the eternal miracle and liberation, the only medicine against everything and the only

cure against sin and melancholy, guilt and repentance, worries and remorse, anguish and fear, powerlessness and death.

Sem Father, you have had enough.

Noah You can never have enough.

Sem Take his wine away from him, Japhet. We must put him to bed.

Ham Yes, nurse him and bed him down, let him drivel and puke in his sheets, let him wallow in his senility, the old disgusting pathetic oldster.

Sem You are talking about your father.

Ham That's why I say what I am saying.

Sem He saved your and everyone's life.

Ham Yes, he regrets that vanity so bitterly that he intends to drink himself to death. You can do that even on water, old devil! It will even be faster!

Noah Aberrant son, go to hell.

Ham I regret, father, that you had to save even my life although you let your lord destroy all the rest of humanity.

Noah The rainbow will always shine upon us, my boy, and always save the world again no matter how much we try to destroy it. The rainbow is the sign of every flood and world disaster to have an end turning for the better. But you can't see the rainbow, Ham, for you are colour blind.

Ham You are just drooling, old shitbag. Your lord will constantly exterminate humanity again and serve us with new disasters no matter how he constantly will fail in that enterprise. And do you know why he will constantly fail? Because he is as limited by his humanity as all mad and stupid and senseless people on earth, who always will continue to work for their own extinction! Just look at yourself! You are continuously drinking yourself to death! And yet you were the best of all men! You and your lord are equal humbugs good for nothing but failures as road signs for the eternal self-destruction of man! (*leaves in a rage*)

Japhet Don't mind him, father. The flood has gone to his brain.

Noah As if it hadn't for all of us. We have witnessed and survived the holocaust of man, And we will never get over it as men. But I believe in the rainbow. It finally marked the end of the flood, and we have reached land safely and been able to start cultivating our gardens again. Isn't that worth celebrating? Drink, my sons! Forget that wet blanket Ham, who don't know how to drink and have fun. No man is more boring and mortal than the one who is constantly sober.

Japhet There's something to it.

Sem Shall we dare to drink with him then?

Noah Drink, my sons! It's the only universal medicine of life, and by it humanity will be able to keep happy and alive forever! I give you the elixir of life!

Sem Father, you are drunk.

Noah As if I didn't know it and enjoy it.

Sem Go to bed, father. You can't go on like this.

Noah Sure I can, as long as I live.

Sem He is hopeless.

Japhet Come, let's leave him alone. At least we finally got him under the quilt.
Sem Sleep well, father, and try to at last sleep it off.
Noah You mean well, but Ham doesn't, who will never understand to enjoy himself, for he has no sense of humour. Laugh at least, at your old drunken father who still succeeded in saving all humanity and nature for the future, and even showed you how to make wine.
Sem Sleep well, father.
Noah I will sleep well and wake up to be able to start again from the beginning. That's what life and death is all about – start all over again. Now all humanity could have a restart and with wine as an insurance for doing it better next time.
Japhet Sleep well, father.
Noah Never be too sober, my sons. It will never pay off.
(*Sem and Japhet leave.*)

Let me float on your golden waves all the way up to heaven one day, oh you blessed contrary to the flood, you miraculous life elixir, who make us men more human than gods... (*falls asleep snoring*)

Act II scene 1.

At the grove of terebinths by Hebron.

Abraham But dear lord, you couldn't just destroy the two greatest and most prosperous cities in the world only because they are morally corrupt?
God I am sorry, my dear friend, but they have no right of existence. They are completely corrupt, degenerated, denaturalised and dehumanised.
Abraham But will you then also destroy the good minority for the sake of the many wicked?
God Who are the good ones? Can you tell me? Can you give any examples? How do you know they exist?
Abraham My nephew Lot lives there in Sodom with his family, and they are righteous people.
God Well, I could agree to that. Are there any more?
Abraham There must be. Maybe they are just a hundred, but you can't let a hundred perish for the sake of the wicked majority.
God Well, if there really are a hundred people who don't live only for their sedition, I will spare the whole city for their sake.
Abraham Perhaps they are only fifty. Will you then sacrifice those fifty for the sake of the damned? In that case you demand human sacrifices among the innocent. That's not human.
God Well then, if there are fifty with the smallest grain of goodness and idealism and who strive for what is right, I will spare Sodom for their sake.

Abraham Maybe there are only thirty who think of other matters than the satisfaction of their lusts, egoism and greed. Will you then sacrifice those thirty for the sake of all those depraved and lost?

God Well, for your and your nephew's sake and those thirty righteous I will spare the city if they exist.

Abraham Perhaps they are only twenty. Will you then sacrifice them for not being quite thirty?

God If I find twenty who don't live like inhuman swine, I will spare the city.

Abraham Perhaps they are only ten.

God Well, Abraham, your prayer of grace for ten innocents, if they exist, will have the advantage to what is right.

Abraham Pardon me, Lord, but I am relying on your being human. Or else we wouldn't be able to meet and associate like we do. If then there is only one righteous man in Sodom apart from my nephew's family, is it then your right to let one single innocent perish just because you doomed the city?

God You are right, Abraham. If there is one single good person, the whole city will be spared for his sake.

Abraham Thank you, Lord. Then I rely on you.

God You can always do that.

Abraham Thanks for letting right give way to mercy and for allowing my prayer to save the city. People are still only people with their human weaknesses, and you have to show them understanding and compassion, don't you?

God Not with debauchery, rape and criminality, capitalistic ruthlessness and blind force of violence.

Abraham But aren't we all more or less like that?

God No, at least you and your nephew are exceptions, but do you know any other people who try to favour others just out of empathy and compassion?

Abraham Not directly.

God That's what I mean, Abraham. Idealism is always lonely, and all idealists know that indeed. That's why they are so few, for only the exceptions prefer loneliness to the company of superficiality, vulgarity, wantonness and baseness. The multitude always goes to hell, and therefore only those individuals who turn against the crowd will ultimately manage.

Abraham My Lord is hard.

God No, only realistic.

Scene 2. Sodom.

Daughter The king wants me for his concubine, father. I could make a promising career as one of his concubines.

Lot Forget it.

Daughter He has the power to force your allowance, and you have nothing to put against him. If he wants me he could have you killed.

Lot That would be preferred to sacrificing you to the general prostitution.

(*A knock on the gate.*)

Here they are again.

Daughter No, father, this is someone else. I don't recognize the knock.

Lot (opens) Who are you?

Messenger A messenger. You have to leave the city. It is going to perish.

Lot Who told you so?

Messenger It has been decided.

Daughter Who is it, father?

Lot A messenger. He probably comes from my uncle Abraham. – Is there no hope for Sodom?

Messenger I am sorry. They are all potential sodomites.

Lot I see.

Messenger If you want to save your family you must all leave the town immediately and not even look back when you escape.

Lot Is it that bad?

Messenger It's even worse. It's about both Sodom and Gomorrah.

Lot So we have no choice.

Messenger No.

Wife Don't listen to him, Lot. He wants to fool you into a trap.

Lot And what if he is right? Do you want to take that risk?

Wife We are well off here with our daughters, and the oldest can make a career with the king. Have you any right to forbid her if she wants to?

Scoundrels (outside) Open up, Lot! What was that lovely man you let in? Let us in also, so that we may know him!

Lot Here they are again, the sex maniacs, the raping scoundrels, the whoremongers, the damned violators, who just want to ravish my daughters. They won't even allow us a guest in peace!

Messenger You said it, Lot. You have no choice. The only matter you may expect in this urbanisation of decay is humiliation and perdition.

Lot You are right. We have to leave. Wife, pack all our things at once. We must leave this copulation abyss.

Wife And what if I refuse?

Lot Then I am not responsible for the consequences.

Wife You would leave without me?

Lot Yes, and bring our daughters with me to save them. If you don't want to save yourself, it's your funeral.

Wife Say what you like about the corruption of this great city with its superficiality and ignorance, but I was happy here. What could you offer me that could be better?

Lot Anything is better than losing yourself, and that's what both Sodom and Gomorrah has done in their totally senseless downhill slide in their bolting carousel of blind and self-destructive psychopathic sensuality.

Wife I don't know.

Lot Follow us or perish.

Wife I guess I'll come along then but not without hesitation and remorse.

Lot Good. Let's break it up immediately.

Messenger Remember: don't look back, and don't regret your departure. You must only look forward.

Wife You demand the impossible, messenger. No matter what world disasters are carried through, we will always retain our memories well documented in our hearts.

Messenger Woman, you are reactionary.

Wife No, only human and natural.

Lot Come on, wife. We have to follow our destiny.

Wife Yes, Lot, and I have to follow.

Lot Do it then, but come along with us at least.

Messenger The risk is she will hesitate on the way, reluctant as she is.

Lot That will be her problem in that case. Show us the way out of here, messenger, to a better world than the hell of vices.

Scene 3.

Abraham Was there not a single good person then in all Sodom and Gomorrah?

God I am sorry, Abraham, but man is like that. Only the exceptions count. The multitude is always for perdition.

Abraham You have treated two rich and flourishing cities as if all their people were no better than a cloud of locusts.

God Because they were not. That's why they perished. Consider it the result of their own destruction of the environment. It wasn't the first time. It has always happened now and again, and it will always happen again. You should be pleased that your nephew got out alive.

Abraham But his wife perished on the way.

God She was too hesitant. She stayed on too long. She had been warned. It was her own fault.

Abraham Lord, who could ever understand you? You try to appear as the most powerful of all, but at the same time you are the most inhuman of all.

God I am sorry, Abraham, but I have to accept and live up to my responsibility.

Abraham This responsibility, as you call it, is the most abhorrent power in the world.

God Is powerlessness and irresponsibility better? Do you prefer chaos and no order? Do you think life can exist without cosmos?

Abraham I don't understand you.

God Be glad you don't.

Abraham Thanks for allowing me to be your friend anyway.

God Without friends such as you, Abraham, the world and humanity would perish. All you need to do is to detach yourself from the crowd, and you will no longer be just a locust.

Abraham In all its wisdom your philosophy is hostile to life, since it must lead to no wish to make children.

God That's the very kind of fathers the world needs. Don't worry about begetting a son, Abraham. That much responsibility and means you can afford to take for the world and the future. An only son could make you more worthy as a father than all the world's bastards.

Abraham What do you mean by that?

God That there will always be a need of exceptions to all the bastards.

Act III scene 1. In front of the splendid temple of King Solomon.

God You have called on me, Solomon. Here I am. What do you want?

Solomon I want you to give me my freedom.

God What do you mean?

Solomon I have fulfilled all my obligations as king to you, my people and my state.

God What more do you need?

Solomon I don't want to be bound to you, Lord. I want to be free.

God Explain yourself.

Solomon What is all my glory, wealth and power but vanity? I have obtained all that is considered good in this world and found it all to be but worthless and conceited nonsense. I am called the wisest man in the world, but what have I achieved by all my wisdom? Nothing except possibly the realization of the vanity of everything.

God To the point. What do you want?

Solomon I want to forget myself and all the foolish splendour of my vanity. I want to be free from being run and dependent on a priesthood and the compulsory laws of Moses. The world is full of gods. Why then are we not allowed more than one? I want to embrace all the gods of my wives and not just my own.

God In brief, you want to break loose and indulge in unlimited debauchery both sensually and spiritually.

Solomon I want to be tolerant and extend my tolerance universally to all religions.

God There is no harm in that, but for a king it is irresponsible and must have consequences. If you abandon the Lord of your fathers, on which your state has been founded, that state will not be able to carry on.

Solomon Have I then no right to live for myself? Because I was born to this office, which already my father stained with debauchery and civil war, while I at least have maintained peace, should I then be bound for life in servitude to a self-righteous over-established priesthood, that I by your temple and its contents made the most powerful on earth?

God I can only repeat my warning. If you abandon the discipline of our religion, you abandon the state of Israel and its future. Without law and order there is no state. It's your responsibility.

Solomon I have already abandoned you. I am sorry, Lord, but I actually love the Queen of Sheba more than you and your power and your fatted priesthood.

God You prefer sex to disciplined responsibility.

Solomon Disciplined responsibility bores me. I have had enough of my established sanctity and its false glory.

God At least you are honest, but your honesty will cost you dearly. After you there will be a flood, and it will only strike your own country and only for your sake.

Solomon I am sorry, Lord, but as a human being I have the right to my own life.

God It's your funeral. Israel will curse you forever.

Solomon I don't care.

God You will be branded in the annals of eternity as a fallen soul and as an equally fallen angel as Lucifer.

Solomon Don't you understand then, Lord, that all your threats will only fortify me in my decision? The more you turn against me, the more I have to detach myself from you.

God The beduin Abraham in his humbleness and Joseph thrown in the well and sold as a slave in all their precarious exposure were wiser than you in all your glory and established highest position of power and affluence.

Solomon Don't try to preach to me. I will not buy it. I preach better myself.

God All you can preach is vanity.

Solomon I know, but it still better than *your* vanity.

God Consider what you are saying.

Solomon That's why I say it.

God You are then a hopeless case.

Solomon I know, and on purpose. Get out now. I have broken my fathers' contract with you, so you are released from the contract.

God A contract with me can't be broken, since I will always remain faithful and constant. You will only dissolve yourself.

Solomon No, what I dissolve is the ideological slavery of the free man from an imagined serfdom to a higher power than himself. I only want man to be free.

God Your liberalism is going too far and dissolving the state.

Solomon That's intentional!

God You are out of your mind.

Solomon Or wiser than you? That's the question.

God (resigning, sighing) I deplore you, Solomon. (*leaves*)

Solomon That's the end of him. Good riddance. It couldn't be avoided. A social pattern can't be locked up in permanent strictness. No establishment can last in the long run. Everything constructed has to be torn down. I built the most glorious temple in the world to the highest power in the world. Then the job is done, and I have to turn my attention to something else. That's how simple it is. All stagnation is mortal, and anything is better than getting stuck in what can't be expanded any further. So the necessity of natural expansion demands that I now open the doors of the one and only god to also other alternative gods. If the state doesn't like it nor approve of it, the state can go to hell.

Scene 2. Jeremiah on the ruins of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah Are you happy now, Lord? Fallen is Jerusalem, and your own temple is brought to ruins and violated any number of times, so that it never can rise again. Was this the purpose of your religion and your chosen people, that they should be carried off as slaves after having been harassed by surrounding jealous neighbouring states for four hundred years? You drove Adam and Eve out of paradise, you drowned all the world in a devastating flood, you let Sodom and Gomorrah perish in fire and sulphur, and you gathered a people of your own in a state of their own, which now you allowed to perish, while your people are reduced to exiled slaves. What was then the meaning of our relationship, Lord, between you and your so jealously loved people, if it couldn't end in any other way than by this abomination of desolation?

And who is responsible besides yourself? Yes, I know, you sent me out to preach against the local kings here and denounce them by telling them what damned fools and failures they were, you didn't give me one positive word of edification to your own people but only made me curse them and lash them with evil prophecies, but were you or I then to blame for the destruction of Jerusalem? Alas, I don't know, so all I can do is to lament, which I suppose is the only sensible thing for me to do now for the rest of my days until I die, while you just hold your silence keeping absent and don't do nothing but just stress the destruction and death of your chosen people by the mortal silence of total indifference.

Scene 3. Belsazzar's feast.

Belsazzar Daniel, you damned Hebrew, snake fry of a cursed people of slaves, you who are prophetic and could interpret anything to anything, come over here and try to make yourself useful! Do you see what is written on that wall? Some idiot is

pulling our legs by scribbling graffiti on the wall just to ruin our party! What the hell is this all about? What the devil does he mean?

Daniel It's simple. It's Aramaic.

Belsazzar For you it is simple. For me it is Chinese or even worse, all Greek. What the hell does it say?

Daniel It says *mene tekel ufarsin*.

Belsazzar Yes, of course that's what it says, any devil can see that who can read! But no devil can understand what it means! Tell me now what that devil says, and don't make it into some bad publicity for some shitty laundry institution!

Daniel It's no publicity gag, nu publicity scam and no publicity at all.

Belsazzar What the hell is it then?

Daniel It's a direct message to the highest king of Babylon.

Belsazzar Is the messenger such a coward then that he can't say it straight but has to scribble it on a wall in a foreign tongue?

Daniel He would probably risk getting executed at once if he didn't.

Belsazzar What is then his so dreadfully indecent message?

Daniel In brief, your time is out, your days are numbered, and your power is down the drain, and fallen is the mighty Babylon.

Belsazzar It takes a miserable Jewish dog like you to deliver such an indecency.

Daniel I didn't write it.

Belsazzar Are you sure? Who was it then?

Daniel It is the Lord.

Belsazzar And who the hell is lord here if not me?

Daniel The eternal lord, who rules all our destinies.

Belsazzar Don't give me such bloody old wives' tales! You shall have no other lords or kings in Babylon but me! That's the first letter of the law. All others are impostors and rebels.

Daniel I am sorry, my lord, but even you are under the laws of eternity.

Belsazzar And what does that damned law of eternity say then?

Daniel That all and everything is mortal except eternity.

Belsazzar But that's obvious, isn't it?

Daniel That's what the writing says.

Belsazzar Are you pulling my legs?

Daniel Not for all the world.

Belsazzar But you claim that your all powerful lord himself avails himself of magical tricks to here on the wall in front of all my guests in the middle of a wild raving party try to teach me that everything isn't eternal except eternity, which is eternal.

Daniel No, it's a prophecy of your own destruction and that of your realm.

Belsazzar Blyme! So your God is just a hopelessly miserable prophet of misfortune!

Daniel He is not the first one. There has been many such in our country during the centuries.

Belsazzar Yes, you are a people of a poor besotted fools, who only are good for perishing and losing all your power and influence by sticking to some superpower of some supergod, whom you want to set above the world whether it wants him or not, and then you have the consequences: your country is devastated, your capital is levelled with the ground, your temple, the most famous in the world, is ravished and torn down to only remain a smoking ruin of random stones, while you just complain and claim it's not your fault and not even that god's fault whom you set above yourselves and the whole world. No wonder everything goes wrong for you! You are just incompetent fools, the whole lot of you, and at best just interminably plaintive prophets of misfortune!

Daniel But we are always right.

Belsazzar And that's the worst part of it. Well then, when shall I hit it?

Daniel Sooner than you think.

Belsazzar It's getting better and better. And what happens then?

Daniel Your kingdom will be devoured by another kingdom, which will give us liberty and allow us to return home to Jerusalem to restore our temple.

Belsazzar So that you will be conceited and haughty again, so that we must tear your temple down again and extirpate your realm again and drag you off as slaves again for life and for all times. Is that rational? Why do you make so much trouble for the sake of your angry god?

Daniel It is our destiny.

Belsazzar You are at least a realist in some ways. Well, let the Persian king come then and take us and wipe us out. We did after all exterminate and wipe out others, so it's only fair. Thus the world rolls on to extinction after extinction. It's a squirrel wheel of a vicious circle of constant disasters and political mistakes, which are there for politicians to never learn anything from. Thus your infernal god of silence will always be right in his murderous silence while all worldly powers only exist to brawl themselves to death. Alas, when will there ever be any order in this world? Never, for man is interminably expansive in his total disorder. Perhaps what we would need is a new universal deluge. The old one didn't succeed in exterminating us totally, and the sea is in a better order than humanity. Thus speaks an old dying king whose days are numbered together with those of his miserably powerful realm. Tell that to your god, Daniel, if he hearkens prayers. If he doesn't it doesn't matter, but do it anyway.

Daniel Don't drink yourself under the table, my lord.

Belsazzar Why not? Could a king do anything more sensible? Did even your wise wizard Solomon suggest anything more sensible?

Daniel No.

Belsazzar There you are. Let the world perish, so nature might perhaps recover after the deadly mismanagement of man. Go now, Daniel. I let you free as my slave. Or else someone else will give you free. Run home to your Jerusalem, and try to bring something better than bad prophecies.

Daniel I will try. (*leaves*)

Belsazzar A handsome young man who ended up in the lion's den of power. Well, he will survive, and the lion's den will remain, while only power constantly will perish for all eternity. (*drinks*) Cheers, all my guests, to the eternal downfall of the world!

Many guests Cheers, our lord and king!

(*They toast and drink to each other, and the feast goes on.*)

Scene 4. The court of king Herod.

Servant Lord, he is back again.

Herodes Who is back again, you blackguard? Everyone is here again! Who isn't constantly here again?

Servant It's that preacher.

Herod You mean that dirty stinking chatterbox who just is spewing out curses like every other mad prophet?

Servant No, it's John the Baptist.

Herod (terrorstruck) John the Baptist!

Herodias (to Herod) Don't let him in.

Herod I have to. He is too embarrassing to be kept away. He will only get worse if we try to restrain him.

Herodias You should have cut his head off long ago.

Herod Here in Israel they have sawed prophets to death, burnt them at the stake, pulled out their eyes with glowing pincers, massacred and thrown holy prophets down in black holes of bottomless wells. We don't do things like that any more, Herodias. We are not that barbaric. We have learned that they are just possessed maniacs suffering from the illness that they can't stop talking bullshit. They suffer from sacred madness, and that is not directly criminal.

Herodias He is dangerous. He talks too much. He insults and smears your family. He preaches anarchy. He is against the entire world order.

Herod And you are obsessed with him. One could think that you have fallen for him and are as fanatically revengeful as Potifar's lovesick wife.

Herodias He calls your children bastards and me a harlot.

Herod That's what they are. That's what you are.

Herodias But we are royal and hold the power!

Herodes You can't convict him, Herodias, just because he tells the truth.

Herodias But you can and must do it.

Herod Not as long as he still provides entertainment. (*to the servant*) Let in that loudmouth and let's enjoy his latest flush of drivel.

(*The servant enters John the Baptist.*)

Servant John the Baptist.

Herod Well, you blatherskite, what new old wives' tales do you have to entertain us with?

John That you are a villainous king of a pimp who fucks your own illegitimate daughters while your queen keeps whoring every crook in the country behind your back.

Herod That's nothing new, John. You always said that before.

John But you never seem to have got it. All pedagogy relies on repetition, and at best the idiot learns his lesson at least when it is too late.

Herod Do you suggest that my wife is plotting against me?

John She is not the only one. Everyone is.

Herod That's no news either. Every king must accept that.

John But your days are numbered, and you will rot from the inside, just like your stinking worm-eaten villain of a grandfather.

Herod Thanks for that. So far I have not discovered any hatching metastases.

John Don't worry. They will be there.

Herod And what more trash do you have to offer?

John The downfall of the entire world order. I tell you, that the Roman world order you are serving is more rotten than yourself and will be completely ravished to death by barbarians who will turn Rome into a forum for mutton-heads and idiots incompetent of everything except shitting blood on their own ruins and get bloody by crocodile tears while the ravishers of the world will stamp their failed world order of only corruption and perversions into cinders and dust and the faeces of snakes.

Herod Don't you have anything better, you prophetic failure? You are not even oozing sulphur but just stinking. Go home and wash and cut your yardlong horse-hair of flea nests and shave off your shaggy beard and cast off your pissed off underwear of camel hair into the fire, and I will give you a new suit. I will pay for your laundry.

John You sanctimonious king of baboons for chimpanzees and hyenas, someone will come after me who will wash away all your tribe in sulphur and establish a reign as long and eternal as yours will be short and mortal.

Herod Do you have an impostor round the corner?

John You are the impostor. David's line was never extinct, and they are the only legitimate kings of Israel.

Herod Didn't my grandfather slaughter all babies in Bethlehem just to put an end once and for all to the myth of Messiah?

John The outrageous infanticides were his life's greatest mistake and folly. You can't stop the progress of innocence by killing it, since it will always rise again from the dead.

Herod And who then is this innocence who threatens my throne? You yourself, you dirty rascal, who has smeared yourself with dirt all your life and can't enter a house without releasing stink bombs?

John I will be followed by the one who will replace all perverted dictators and corrupt tyrants with enlightenment, wisdom, purity, innocence and knowledge.

Herod You bore me. You are more amusing when you are cursing.

John You can never be cursed enough.

Herod That's what I mean. What about my wife then? Does she deserve anything less?

John Her fornication could make even the devil vomit.

Herod What about that, Herodias? Can you take the compliment?

Herodias Cut off his head!

Herod You see, John, that your diplomacy has hardly succeeded in achieving any popularity here.

John I only tell the truth, and it will prevail. You and Tiberius and all your pestilent tribe of disgusting reptiles can but rot to death and perish.

Herod You are repeating yourself.

John And you are a demented fool who cannot rule but only allow yourself to be ruled by female vampires of cursed procuresses and whores.

Herod He means you, Herodias. He is in his most gracious mood today.

Herodias And you are an idiot who doesn't throw him in jail.

Herod You are not popular among the ladies, John, although you didn't prostitute them. – What will you do, Herodias, if I don't throw him in jail but allow him to carry on?

Herodias Then I will report you to the emperor.

Herod Tiberius? Do you think he would care about such things? He has enough of his own perversions on Capri.

Herodias Sejanus governs in his place and would take any measures against anything.

Herod We don't want the agents of that policeman in our free country. I am unfortunately obliged to fence you in, John, until further, just to reduce my wife's threat to hang the police around my neck.

John That will not make me quiet. Even if you saw my head off it will continue roaring against you and all tyrants forever.

Herod We believe you. We will not saw your head off. It would be better to let you roar yourself hoarse to mute walls.

John The word will remain the more powerful for the efforts to reduce it to silence.

Herod I am not trying to silence you. I am only trying not to make my wife shout you down with worse threats than yours.

John Her destiny will be worse than yours. You will be eaten alive by worms, but she will be eaten alive by gadflies.

Herod You hear, Herodias. He loves you.

Herodias I wish I could love him equally voluptuously in return.

Herod I am sorry, John, but I have to make your relationship with my wife impossible. Or else she could become so obsessed by you that she would chop off your head just to at last be able to kiss your lips in peace.

John Let her do so for her own eternal damnation.

Herod You hear, Herodias. It is serious. For your own safety and to save your life, John, I therefore must throw you in jail. Take him away! (*Guards take care of John.*)

John Procuress! Lousy bitch! Infected strumpet! (*He is brought out.*)

Herod Are you satisfied now?

Herodias Not until he is silenced forever.

Herod Unfortunately prophets of that kind have the singular trait of making their words resound and go on resounding and working after death.

Herodias I don't think his voice will survive when his head has been separated from his body. He is after all mortal like everybody else.

Herod I can't see what you have against the poor clown. He is after all funny and quite entertaining sometimes. How will I now be cheered up when you forced me to turn him out?

Herodias Let my daughter dance for you, and you will enter better thoughts.

Herod Salome?

Herodias Who else?

Herod Strip tease?

Herodias What else?

Herod She is welcome to make a try.

Herodias (*enters the floor*) Music! Salome! Appear in all the splendour of your glow and please your king! (*joins Herod again when Salome embarks on her challenging dance, in which one veil after another is discharged.*)

Herod (*admiring*) What a titbit! What a juicy fruitcake! What curves!

Herodias Do you dig her?

Herod Do I dig her!

Herodias She is yours. Do whatever you wish with her.

Herod Are you her procuress?

Herodias No, I am your wife.

Herod You seduce me to sin.

Herodias That's the intention.

Herod Come here, my child. (*calls on her when only one veil remains*) Whatever you wish is yours.

Salome What should I wish then?

(*Herodias whispers in her ear. Salome wants to object, but Herodias is firm.*)

My mother ordains. She is the one who ordered me to dance for you, my lord and king. I desire the head of John the Baptist on a silver plate.

Herod (*appalled*) You can't be serious.

Herodias She is serious. You told her to wish whatever she wanted. She has expressed her wish, and you must keep your promise, Herod. Or else you are no king. And Salome is serious. Aren't you, Salome?

Salome (*dares only to nod*)

Herod Alas, what are wives good for except putting themselves in an awkward situation! You don't know what you are asking, you satanic women. Well, give her then the head of John the Baptist on a silver plate, hangmen, and we'll see if it may satisfy their perverse inclinations.

Salome Mother, I didn't mean to...

Herodias You certainly did mean it. Well, servants! The king has issued an order! Execute!

(Some servants turn to some guards, who get down to work.)

Herod Now we are done for. He will never forgive me this.

Herodias On the contrary. All your sins are forgiven as soon as he is dead.

Herod How you must hate him!

Herodias No, as you so correctly pointed out earlier, I only love him.

(enter the guards with the head of John the Baptist on a silver plate.)

Herod Your love is not quite convincing.

Herodias Isn't it? Just watch this! *(takes the bloody head of John the Baptist in its hairs, bringing his dead lips to her own and kisses them passionately and voluptuously.)*

Herod Do you call that love?

Herodias What else would it be? May the lips of my love give you eternal life, John Baptist, to make your challenging voice against the authorities and their power never fall silent. May your prophetic mission never be interrupted except for being carried on and excelled by others. At last I may kiss you. As long as you lived it was practically impossible, for you never desired such a noble queen as I. *(kisses them again greedily)*

Herod Herodias, you are going too far.

Herodias You can never go too far in love.

Salome Mother, you are disgusting! I shall never marry! I will be a Christian instead! *(rushes out)*

Herodes Look now what you have done. Your own daughter has deserted.

Herodias That's her problem. At last I have John the Baptist in my power, and I shall keep him. *(walks out with the head)*

Herodes Now we will only have more trouble with the essenes and their followers, and so the last mess will be worse than the first. That women never are able to control themselves! *(sinks in gloomy ponderings)*

– Intermission –

(the same scene continues, but later)

Herod Now tell me all about this new grotesque candidate for the Messiah.

Minister He is I regret to say not just a prophet like everyone else.

Herod What do you mean?

Minister He is the cousin of John the Baptist and appears to be directly related with the house of David by both his father and mother.

Herod What do you mean by that?

Minister John the Baptist appears to have indicated him as the expected one.

Herod Are you suggesting that he could be something else than just an impostor?

Minister He is calm and cool, what he preaches is sensible, he is more erudite than most, and people listen to him.

Herod I know. He was greeted with palms and cloaks laid out for him when he demonstrably entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey's foal just to mark himself as the Messiah, and people hailed him as the son of David. Is he the son of David?

Minister There seems to be no doubt about it.

Herod Is he the Messiah?

Minister There has been many Messianic candidates, and none has been wholly convincing.

Herod Is this one convincing enough?

Minister That's the question. Pilate has problems with him. That's why he sent him to us.

Herod Why?

Minister He doesn't want to judge him himself.

Herod What is his charge?

Minister Blasphemy. Caiphas tore his own clothes.

Herod Why does a high priest tear his own clothes?

Minister There was probably some misunderstanding.

Herod So this Messiah claims to be something. That's probably the problem, and Caiphas was disturbed and upset by the man's hubris. Very well, we shall try him. Show him in.

(The doors are opened, and Jesus is ushered, all bloody and crowned with thorns.)

Herod (frightened) What have they done to him?

Minister They have roughed him up. Pilate is hoping for you to release him. He has suffered enough.

Herod (to Jesus) Have you suffered enough, Jesus?

Jesus You can never suffer enough for humanity.

Herod Do you then want to suffer even more?

Jesus I didn't say that.

Herod Who are you?

Jesus The son of man.

Herod Who is the son of man?

Jesus Read the prophet Daniel.

Minister It was because he quoted Daniel that the high priest tore his clothes and gave him over to the soldiers to take him under treatment.

Herodes So he is just an ordinary Jewish scholar.

Minister That's the question.

Herod (to Jesus) Are you the Messiah?

Jesus The Messiah is the eternal hope of mankind which always will remain and return never to fade. There have been many Messiahs before me, and many more will follow.

Herod So the Messiah is just a role for rebels to assume?

Jesus No, the Messiah is the eternal urge of humanity for freedom.

Herod Freedom from what and for what?

Jesus From the prison of materialism for the eternal right of the spirit to constant expansion.

Herod You are too abstract for us. You are a dreamer. The problem is that you are political. They say you are the son of David. Are you?

Jesus I can't help my ancestry but like all good sons, I try to live up to it.

Herod And since people acclaim you as such you are a threat to the present social order. That's your problem. How will you sort yourself out of that?

Jesus It's not my problem but that of the present social order.

Herod At least you are not aggressive and challenging like your poor smelling cousin with the long hair, whom my wife perversely was obsessed with and forced me to dispose of, but you are almost equally long-haired if somewhat better dressed, but you are more dangerous, for you are more careful and tactical. You would never have reached this far to be greeted with hallelujah and hosiannah as the king of Israel if you had not carefully consolidated your position. I am sorry, Jesus, but I can't let you go. Like you said, you are the problem of the present social order which is Roman and called Pontius Pilate. I have to send you back to him. Only he can free you from your misfortunate involvement with the world order. (*Jesus is quiet.*) Have you nothing to say?

Jesus What do you expect me to say? What are you hoping for?

Herod As I see it, the only thing that can save you is a disclaimer of your position. Accept yourself as a bastard, that your mother was a whore, I learned that she did after all give birth to you without being married to your father, and you will manage well as an ordinary bastard like so many others. Instead of threatening the world order by your role play you will be a simple joke. What about that? I am just trying to save your life.

Jesus No good son could ever admit his mother to be a whore, even if she were.

Herod So you refuse to cooperate. That's your honour. Back with you to Pilate then, but wait! You will have a farewell gift. (*doffs his purple mantle and puts in the shoulders of Jesus*) My gift of farewell to you, my acknowledgement of your excellent and sustained role play, and my transfer of all my royalty to you. Be a better king than I, Jesus, until you die, until you are liberated from this world game of fools. (*to the minister*) Bring him back to Pontius Pilate with my sincere greetings.

(The minister walks out with Jesus.)

Yet another fool and perhaps the worst of all, for he seems to have taken his mission seriously. Well, Pilate will probably release him, or he will become an even worse threat to the world order as dead than alive.

Scene 5.

Magdalene What was really the matter with Jesus, mother Mary? Who was he really?

Mary You should know more about that than I, since you were his friend.

Magdalene I never came close to him, but you were his mother. No one could have known him better than you.

Mary A mother never knows her son. She only knows him as a child, and he will remain a child to her all her life. She can never see anything else than her child in him, and the more he grows up and matures, the more he will become a stranger to her. Do you mean to say that he never knew you as a woman?

Magdalene He only knew me as a fallen woman, as a strumpet and sinner. He could drive evil spirits out of me, but he could never love me.

Mary That fits. He made up an invisible wall around himself to guard and protect his secret mission, which no one understood except himself, if he even did it himself. Did you understand it?

Magdalene His mission was to take responsibility for the fallen humanity, and he did that by taking all the sufferings of mankind on himself.

Mary The cruelty of humanity is no suffering or anything to commiserate, and that cruelty crucified him. It was unjust, and he had no reason to take responsibility for that part of humanity.

Magdalene Still he did in his goodness.

Mary He should have loved us instead, who stuck to him and loved him, instead of looking for trouble with the authorities and challenging the world order.

Magdalene He had to walk the end of the line as the Messiah and thus fulfil the scriptures.

Mary Do you think he was?

Magdalene Don't you?

Mary I doubt that he even believed that himself.

Magdalene He doubted and struggled with the matter as long as he lived, but whatever he believed, he took on the job.

Mary You mean that he accepted the role and played a game.

Magdalene Yes, but out of self-sacrifice. Someone had to do it, and he fitted the picture perfectly.

Mary So it was still just a game all the way, a vain role play, hypocrisy and affected artifice, only intended to confuse and spread myths and originate legends and heresies. Paul and Peter are already quarrelling about what he really said and meant.

Magdalene Paul knows nothing and wants to use the example of Jesus to make his own cult and perhaps religion to teach, and Peter is too honest and simple a Jew to offer any resistance and protest against the distortion.

Mary It has only begun. Just wait. When the Roman empire has finished rotting, the whole world will fight about different versions of the legitimacy of Jesus.

Magdalene I am afraid you are right, but we will not be alive then any longer.

Mary What do you think they will think about us then?

Magdalene They will not know anything why they will just explode in speculations and arrive at anything but the truth.

Mary Let them fight and go under. Only we who knew him know anything about him, and not even we got to know him, yes, not even you.

Magdalene But wasn't the little that we got to know of him enough?

Mary What are you thinking of then?

Magdalene His love.

Mary (considering) Yes, you are right. It lasts long enough and longer than all eternity.

Magdalene So let us take care of it and at least carry it on to future generations. Let them speculate about us as they wish. Only his love was important, and it was not of this world.

Mary You are right, my daughter. Let us stick to it.

(They walk out together, Magdalene supporting Mary, whom she helped up on her feet.)

Act IV scene 1. The deathbed of the prophet Muhammed.

Muhammed Ali, I haven't much time left, and I am afraid you will partly be responsible for the continuation of this enterprise.

Ali What do you want me to do?

Muhammed I want you to answer my questions. Have I done anything wrong? Give me an honest answer.

Ali (considering) No, father-in-law, you never did anything wrong.

Muhammed We made the Jews our enemies although we took over their God. Was that wrong?

Ali They did wrong in making resistance against us.

Muhammed We fought a hopeless superiority all our life, and all odds were against us. Did we do wrong in taking the law into our own hands?

Ali We had no choice, father-in-law.

Muhammed What did we do wrong then as everything feels wrong?

Ali We did nothing wrong.

Muhammed That's maybe what was wrong. We were too perfect and ended up infallible. So nothing is wrong in the sacred book we managed to achieve?

Ali Not a single letter, father-in-law.

Muhammed Still the entire world will war against us, and we will have to fight the entire world. That's wrong. That was never the intention. Could it be God then who was wrong?

Ali You must not think like that, father-in-law. He if anyone is infallible, and since you always acted in his name, you are as well. It will be our legacy to make sure your name is kept as inviolable as God, so that you will never lose your sacred authority. No one must ever try to picture you or resemble you. You were the last and definite prophet, who never can be excelled in infallibility.

Muhammed What did we miss then, since we will never be able to do without the holy war?

Ali If that is our legacy we will have to fight it as long as God lives.

Muhammed That's what is wrong. It's not fitting.

Ali You have nothing to regret, father-in-law.

Muhammed Yes, I have everything to regret, for everything went wrong. I never wanted to make enemies. I never wanted war. But the resistance of stupidity forced us to it, and therefore we'll never get rid of the war.

Ali So may we then never be rid of it.

Muhammed I am afraid I give you the worst possible inheritance.

Ali We are grateful for it. Or else we would still be wild desert beduins in constant conflict with each other. The holy war has united us.

Muhammed And you will always go on bleeding to death in it. I am afraid everything went wrong, Ali.

Ali You can't undo your own life's work, father-in-law. You couldn't even try. You can separate from it and from life, but we could never separate from what you have achieved.

Muhammed And what else did I achieve but war?

Ali Even if it was only war it was at least sacred.

Muhammed Sacred unto damnation for humanity and history. If only I had remained just a camel driver and never had any wild ideas!

Ali Wild ideas are born to never have an end, and we will never do without them, for they govern us more than we do ourselves. You were innocent, Muhammed, of your wild ideas, and it is our duty to follow those wild ideas forever, for only they keep us alive.

Muhammed I never understood God. That's why I never got rid of him.

Ali A fine obsession to serve as an example for all of us.

Muhammed For blessing and damnation, as already Moses realized.

Ali He was the first prophet.

Muhammed And I am afraid, Ali, that I didn't succeed in being the last one, possibly the worst one.

Ali It's enough for us and our guidance that you were a prophet.

Muhammed It's enough for me that I made a fool of myself as such. It is enough now. May all poor victims of my fanaticism now and forever forgive me for my sacred madness.

Ali Nothing is more sacred than divine madness.

Muhammed Or more dangerous. Let me at last have peace and die.

Ali Your will be done, prophet and father-in-law. Sleep in peace forever.

Muhammed No, Ali, not even in death I will ever be able to find any peace or rest, only the contrary. (*dies*)

Ali May your last words and secret remain concealed in my heart forever, and may only your actual life's work remain the more definitely and burn forever as a testimony of God, for nothing could ever impede that power, as little as human sense ever can do anything about human madness.

Scene 2. In the Vatican.

Innocent III You poor devil, how could you expect anyone to take you seriously? You don't even have shoes on your feet, you walk in a tattered cloak with holes and a rope for a belt and are stinking.

Francis Does God then mean nothing to the church any more?

Innocent You holy idiot, we don't talk about him any more. He has no say and he hasn't had any for thousands of years. Moses launched him as a moral power for Israel, but already Solomon deserted all the divine ideals, and after the fall of Israel no sensible being has ever taken him seriously any more. All that matters is the survival of the established institutions by real politics! And that's something you don't know anything about. That should make you happy. You will do without much misery and trouble. Be poor and crazy in peace, but don't come here insisting on establishing anything.

Francis But you have to sanction my holy order. The world needs it.

Innocent Can you present one single reason why the church should sanction your order? Why do you suppose the world needs miserable parasites of mendicant friars?

Francis The world needs representatives of the spiritual life, especially now, when all the church is concerned about is power and politics. The world needs idealists for a counterpoise to everything that corrupts it. Since the world is mostly about egoism and greed, it needs alternative idealists who willingly concern themselves about health care and to mind all the suppressed victims of misfortune.

Innocent Don't tell me you are sentimental as well. That's the very last thing the world needs.

Francis It's not about sentimentality, holy father. It's about humility. As established poor brothers in the service of the church we could be more efficient as diplomats than as clumsy berserk soldiers and vain short-sighted ecclesiastical swankpots of bishops.

Innocent There you said something. Do you think you could find a way to reach the sultan?

Francis Why not?

Innocent Good. I will sanction your order on the condition that you establish diplomatic ties with the sultan. You have to succeed. Or else you will not have your order.

Francis We will succeed.

Innocent (lower) They say you are good preachers as well. It wouldn't do any harm if you occasionally also could preach against the emperor.

Francis Christ's continuous mission is to demonstrate the vanity and perdition of all worldly power and to present a better alternative, that is life as a spiritual reality, which by its divine laws stands above all power, all violence and all politics. That is more valid than ever today.

Innocents I think you could be of use to us, Francis. The church needs people like you.

Francis Thank you, holy father! (*falls on his knees and kisses the pope's hand and ring.*)

Innocent It's all right. You can leave now. You will have your order.

Francis Thank you! (*rises overwhelmed and leaves in bliss*)

Innocent (alone) Such holy simple fools could easily be used by the church for the dissemination of profitable propaganda, since they preach with their hearts and people listen to them. If they also could be used as diplomats for pushes against islam it's almost too good to be true.

Scene 3.

Dante You have led me off all my wayward ways and brought me out on worse straying ways than I ever could guess existed, and all the time you tempted me on by my beloved Beatrice. When will I then at last meet her?

Virgil Your love has brought you whole and dry through all the hell, and your impatience will carry you further on through all purgatory and all the way up to heaven, where you at last will be able to meet your Beatrice, if you only show a bit of patience, Dante.

Dante But what is then the meaning of all hell? Why did you show me all these mythical horrors of no end to their constantly increasing terror? What was the meaning of bringing me down to the extreme bottom of the cruelty and hopelessness of human misery?

Virgil All reality is just illusions, and the reality we believe to exist behind the illusions is the greatest illusion of all. You haven't seen any hell, Dante. You have only seen your own fantasies. You have only looked thoroughly into yourself to there find the possibility to settle with all your prejudices and aggressions. There is no evil, no hell, no eternal punishment and condemnation except in our own sick minds. You have been able to confront all the collected superstitions of the world to thereby be able to dispose of them and make the world step out of them and into the future. The dogma of the church were invented to keep the world in check by fear and terror, but they have now played out their part, and you have seen for yourself all these false prophets and lost popes and how Muhammed himself cried out his woe from his own eternal hell and how those popes who branded the Jews and exiled them from the community of mankind were just as rotten and corrupt as the maddest emperors of Rome. Nothing is new in this fraudulent world of universal filth and outrageous abuse, where the villains always martyr the saints they feel threatened by, and you have seen the summing up of the world's collected fraud in the shape of the absurdity of this tremendous hell.

Dante So you only wished to unmask humanity and me by this exposure.

Virgil Yes, and if I have succeeded you will be able to find your Beatrice, for beyond all smokescreens, all confusion and all mundane ignorance and blindness, love will always remain, which alone can save us all.

Dante Show it to me.

Virgil First you must be enough purged, You still have all purgatory to go through, and not until towards the end of your pilgrimage to heaven you will at last see the light and your redemption when you yourself at last leave your mortal life of lies behind.

Dante So you actually only lead me to death?

Virgil No, to life and your eternal life, which will be your reward with Beatrice, who just will give you the trouble of getting yourself through all the lies and illusions of vanity first.

Dante Let's then move on immediately, so that we will get this long walk over and done with.

Virgil That's the spirit! Forward, Dante! (*They move on upwards.*)

Scene 4. Worms, 1521.

Charles V Take it easy now, Martin. We wish you no harm. We only wish to doubt and question your authority.

Martin Luther And how can you do that? The emperor has no right to oppose God.

Charles That's what we must question. Therefore I wished to see you like this more privately, so that we could reach some compromise and agreement.

Martin You can't compromise with God.

Charles How could you say that? Is then anything impossible for God?

Martin No.

Charles Try to get us right, Martin. We don't question your belief or your sanctity. Your urge for reform is reasonable. That is confirmed by other theologians like Erasmus of Rotterdam and Thomas More. It's the means that you apply which we don't find very relevant. Consider what you are doing before you cast the church and the world into religious civil wars.

Martin That is not the issue.

Charles Well, what is the issue then?

Martin The church claims mundane power, which it has no right. The church makes profits on marketing its sanctity and makes use of its monopoly of sanctity, which it has no right to.

Charles And therefore you wish to turn the entire church upside down and assumes arbitrarily the right to do so by abusing God's name yourself as your right of power.

Martin I only pointed out the power abuse of the church.

Charles And what do you think will be the consequences? As a real politician I can see the consequences. In your name the princes will revolt against the church and confiscate it, plunder it and make of themselves the heads of their national churches. The consequence will be everyone's war against everyone with Christianity for weapons. Is that what you wish?

Martin I only wanted to reform the church.

Charles Which already was on its way to reform herself from the inside. That process of careful reform you have disturbed by demanding a reformation by force. I can promise you it can lead to nothing good.

Martin I can't take anything back.

Charles No, you can't, for you are standing where you are, and what you have done cannot be undone, and your responsibility for the future and its approaching wars is tremendous. You will not be able to get away from your own damnation, Martin Luther, which you released on the world yourself.

Martin What do you want me to do?

Charles Cancel everything. Plead to the pope. Make him unban you.

Martin Impossible.

Charles There you are. You are impossible. For God nothing is impossible, but you made him impossible in the brave new world that you conjured out of Pandora's box.

Martin I couldn't do otherwise.

Charles Nonsense, Martin Luther! You could have controlled yourself, like the much more sensible and sensitive and responsible Erasmus.

Martin I have nothing more to say to you, your imperial highness. You just scold me.

Charles And with good reasons, and better reasons than those for which you run over the church! Get lost, Martin Luther!

Martin Get lost yourself!

Charles We are getting nowhere.

Martin That's what I mean.

Charles Begone, and never appear in my sight any more!

Martin Thank you! The same to you! (*thunders out and bangs the door behind him.*)

Charles He is completely mad and irresponsible! How could such a fanatic ever become a theologian? He is dragging down the credibility of the entire church in the mire!

Scene 5. Giordano Bruno in a hearing with the inquisition of Venice 1593.

1. You have bothered us long enough, master Giordano Bruno. We only have a few more questions to ask of you.

Bruno You are the ones who have made the bother all the time.

2. Know your place, master Bruno! You gave your pledges as a holy Dominican monk! You have betrayed the church!

Bruno Is it then criminal to follow your conscience?

2 Yes, if it harms the church!

Bruno I never wished to harm the church, and you know it. That's why I abandoned it and left it in peace. You yourselves dragged me back into it.

3 We never would have done so if you had not spread your heretic views!

Bruno Is it then a crime to speak your mind freely?

1. Yes, if that includes spreading heresies. That's what we wish to investigate, what kind of heresies you are spreading. That's why you are here.

Bruno I always loved the church and never wished to harm her, while you instead constantly seem to have desired to harm me, since you want nothing more fain than to drag me to the stake.

1. Not if there is no reason. That's why we urgently ask you to retract your denial of the divine nature of Christ.

Bruno Jesus said himself that he was only a man, while at the same time he confessed to the divine nature of all men. I only kept to his own words.

1. What we mean is his divine nature as God's Son.

Bruno That's a dogma invented by the church long after his death. Only the church can retract that herself.

2 And you insist on not having heretical views?

Bruno I believe in God. That's the only creed any religion needs, and on that point Christianity, Jewry and Islam are alike. No other articles of faith are needed. Everything else will just divide and alienate the believers from the subject. Therefore the pope Innocent III incarcerated the Jews in ghettos totally in vain, and therefore the church made war against Islam totally in vain, since we all have the same God.

3 But you have claimed, master Bruno, that God is not personal. Thereby you have denied him.

Bruno Gentlemen, no living being has ever seen God. Abraham and Moses may have associated with him, but that God went down with Israel, while all the Antiquity lived religiously on the awareness of God in all living things in nature. That was quite enough for them. No personal God was needed as a reason to make wars and sacrifice armies in reckless crusades for a stillborn cause.

2 And he is supposed to be a believer!

1 So you actually don't believe in God the Father, Giordano Bruno?

Bruno I devoted my life to God but not to a God who sanctions judicial murder, cruelty and persecution by established inquisitors, a system of excommunication, heretic fires and intolerance against other religions. My God is a good God who created and supports life and who doesn't harm and destroy it.

1 So you confess to the theological outlook on life?

Bruno Without any doubt.

1 Still you go even beyond Copernicus in his heresies by claiming the sun does not only circulate around the earth, but that it is not even a sun but just a star among other stars.

Bruno And why is that so heretic?

2 Because the sun does circulate around the earth!

Bruno How do you know?

2 The earth is the centre of the universe! It is self-evident!

Bruno It is always dangerous to take anything for granted, since you always risk being wrong. Gentlemen, allow me to be doubtful about my knowledge, but don't make me doubt my faith and your church, as your inquisitional methods risk carrying me in that direction.

3 Be wary of your words, Giordano Bruno! We have the power to send you to Rome!

Bruno You have no power at all. There is no power. All worldly power is an arbitrary conceit affected by hubris and therefore doomed to perdition.

2. He dares to hold a prospect of the downfall of the church!

Bruno No, I am just warning you by presenting you with the fact that your inquisition can only lead to perdition.

2 He is blaspheming!

3 Away with him!

1 (*clubs*) Once more, master Bruno, you have proved impossible in your heretic obstinacy. No one can come to terms with you. This session is concluded. (*clubs*) Take him out. (*Bruno is brought out.*)

2 What shall we do with him? We can't keep him here year after year.

3 Send him to Rome and let them settle with him.

1 I am afraid we have no other choice. If Rome takes care of him, we will at least not have to burn him.

Act V scene 1. A Swedish witch trial.

1 Do we dare to expose him to this?

2 He asked for it himself.

3 But the shock! Her condition! The indelicacy!

2 If he can make it, he can make it. Or else he will have to accept the witch trial to go on.

1 But let's then at least speak with him first, so that we may prepare him!

2 That's not asking too much. (*to a doorman*) Show Urban Hjärne in.

(*He is brought in.*)

Well, master Urban, we are ready to counter your arguments with reality! Are you ready to face reality?

Urban The reality, gentlemen, is that all these poor so called witches brought to court, harassed and tortured, abused and burnt at the stake by you have not committed any worse crime than just being women.

2 Do you suggest that all women are alike?

Urban Women have a different mind from men, more dispersed, sensitive and easy to manipulate. If they in the slightest degree are liable and weak in their minds, which they easily become through unfortunate influence, they could adopt any sickly fantasies and confuse them with reality.

3. We just received a real witch, on whom we give you the opportunity to test your hypotheses. We consider her a hopeless case who at best could be cured by exorcism. Or else we see no other possibility than to burn her at the stake.

Urban Let me then see this misfortunate woman.

2 (to the doorman) Bring her in.

(A woman is brought in dressed in rags, shackled, with a ravaged face and long grey dishevelled hairs.)

Urban (shocked) What have you done to her?

2. She has had better treatment than most. She is shackled for her own good. Or else she would probably have destroyed herself or at least all her looks.

Urban I must insist on her shackles being removed.

2 You don't know what risks you are taking.

Urban You are afraid of an abused innocent woman. That's the only devil here. You are afraid of what you don't understand. I understand her. Remove the shackles.

(2 gives a sign, and the shackles are removed)

Woman (while she is liberated) Handsome priest, have you come to set me free?

Urban There is nothing to set you free from except human prejudice against you.

Woman What about all my devils then, who never leave me alone?

Urban There are no devils. There are no evil spirits. There is no hell. There is only God. You also are a part of God, and God is a part of you. Everything else is vain delusion.

Woman Take me away from here then, and make me your own bride instead of the devil's.

3. You see, master Urban, how Satan speaks through her.

Urban (hard) I don't see that at all. (to the woman) Woman, come to your senses and control yourself. I am only here to help you resume a normal life.

Woman Could any ravished woman ever be normalized? No, she must remain possessed for the rest of her life until she is liberated by death, for once you are the slave of love you will always be the slave of love, and if those who abuse her are not men she has no alternative but to join the company of evil spirits.

2. Can you deliver her from her evil spirits, master Urban?

Urban My child, there are no evil spirits. Regard reality as it is and ignore everything that disturbs your impressions of it.

Woman Do you suggest that there are no unblest dead? They are everywhere! I see them everywhere! Those who were wronged by life can never leave life in peace! I am one of them, for I was also abused by life!

Urban We know that, my child, and that's why we are here to help you.

Woman No one can help me, for not even death could separate me from eternity, of which I can see all the curses with open eyes!

3. Could you exorcise her evil spirits, master Urban? That's what is needed. Or else we will have to smoke and burn them out.

Urban Is it her fault then that she has been maltreated by life? Should a ravished child be burdened with the responsibility of the violation? Don't you see the obvious in that every victim to any cruelty thereby only has her innocence doubled? No one is more innocent of her own martyrdom than a martyr.

3 But don't you see then that the woman is mad!

Urban That's a different issue. In ancient times madness was considered something sacred. The most horrible madness, epilepsy, was regarded with respect and fear as 'the holy malady', which both Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar suffered from, which gave them almost divine status. Also this woman is sacred, if her madness really is the result of her sufferings.

Woman Handsome priest, fuck me to death, so that I can die blessed and get rid of my unblessedness!

Urban No, my child. You shall learn to work and manage by yourself. That's the only blessedness life has to offer.

Woman What about love then?

Urban It can never be used without being abused. Its abuse is cured by your leaving it behind. It's very simple. It's the same medicine for the alcoholic: quit drinking, and he will be rid of his alcoholism.

Woman No woman can do without love.

Urban What is love then? Explain it to me!

Woman To be able to love the one you are in love with.

Urban I agree. The question is how. Let's see if you will be able to agree with me as well. Love is not just sex, which is just a release of natural urges. No, love is something higher. It is to love for life and stick to your ideal and never let it down. Love is faith and affection. Forget all about sex and engage in love instead, and you will get well and be cured.

Woman Do you think it will work?

Urban I know it will work.

Woman You are the first man who didn't want to ravish me.

Urban In that case I am afraid that I am also the first man who really loved you. Stick to that love and don't forget it, so you might be able to avoid being abused in the future.

Woman You make me feel so calm.

Urban That's all right. Carry on like that.

Woman (to the assembly) Gentlemen, you don't have to be afraid of me any more, for the handsome priest has saved me.

Urban No, but at best I made you see reason.

Woman I will improve.

Urban I will personally make sure you get work and may keep it. Do you agree?

Woman I will gladly accept any work for your sake, handsome priest.

Urban (to the assembly) Well, are you convinced? You can see for yourselves how this woman has become human just because I treated her humanly. What about you doing the same with all other poor women denounced as witches?

1 We wish you could take on more of our victims.

Urban I will be glad to as long as I have time and energy enough.

Woman You are a real priest.

Urban No, but I try to be a real human being. Take care of her, gentlemen, let her be a free woman without shackles, give her work to do, and everything will work out well.

3 We will try, master Urban.

Urban (bellows) And no more absurd witch processes in this free country, if you please!

1. We'll see what we can do, master Urban.

2. Under your guidance we could surely discontinue that operation.

Urban (to the woman) Go, my child, and be a free human being, and apply your freedom to constructive work, and no one will ever be able to disturb your circles any more.

Woman Thank you, handsome priest. I will try to do my best.

(Urban helps the woman out with the doorman assisting, and the assembly also follows them out under much discussion.)

Scene 2. A simple bourgeois 19th century home.

(A knock on the door. The wife goes to open.)

Karl (from the inside, invisible) Tell them that I am not at home.

Wife But if it is someone important?

Karl It's 90% certain to be a creditor or debt collector. Just drive him away.

Wife (opens) Mr Marx is not at home. Oh!

Karl (from the inside, as before) Who is it? *(comes out)*

Wife (lets in the guest, is overwhelmed with joy) Look who has arrived!

Karl (sees who it is) You could have skipped letting him in. It's just our son-in-law.

Son-in-law We are coming both.

Karl Even worse.

Wife Karl, try to be human for once. We are just a family.

Karl And it's a failure. Don't remind me of it.

Wife But it's your own daughter!

Karl Yes, and I never should have allowed her to marry that nigger.

Daughter Father, no one has ever taken a stronger stand against his own Jewry than you, and still you are the worst of racists!

Karl And by all rights! Most people are failures! And you married one of them, and coloured at that!

Daughter Just because he is from the south he is no less a human being.

Son-in-law Apparently we came to the wrong place.

Wife No, please, stay. Karl is just not in his best mood today.

Daughter Father never is. He is always in his worst mood, and all he can share with his fellow beings is hatred, even with his own family, as if he systematically wanted to drive us all to suicide!

Karl The sooner you all commit it, the better! The more people who commit suicide, the better! That's the best thing man can do! He is good for nothing else! He is a stupid, unnatural, failure of a creature only made for self-destruction. That's why it is important for us who know better to take over all power of the world to help man more efficiently just go to hell!

Son-in-law He is mad.

Daughter He always was.

Karl No, I am wise! It's all mankind who is mad!

Son-in-law Is that why you preach dictatorship of the proletariat, so that the working masses should demolish all society?

Karl Of course! Society deserves nothing less! And we shall overcome! By the numerous irresistibility of the working masses they will constitute the supreme and greatest dictatorship, which nothing can resist or pull down! And then it's just for them to cleanse society of all that is not needed, to make life simpler and more just.

Son-in-law Like culture, religion, traditions and history.

Karl God is dead. No religion is needed. The sooner humanity realizes that, the sooner a more efficient world order can be implemented.

Son-in-law Without capitalism, without freedom, without spiritual values, without soul?

Karl Without social injustice and class differences!

Son-in-law So all should be reduced to the lowest class?

Karl It's a social and historical inevitability that we all must follow that course.

Son-in-law I believe more in peace and humility, cooperation and spiritual education.

Karl That's why you are a failure as a son-in-law. Go and make yourself useful by hanging yourself.

Wife Karl!

Karl I mean it!

Daughter (to her husband) Come, let's get out of here.

Karl Yes, go to hell.

Son-in-law And all that you are good for, Mr Karl Marx, is to drive people and humanity to suicide!

Karl That's why I was born.

Daughter (to her husband) Come, before it gets worse. *(leaves with her husband)*

Wife (wringing her hands) Karl! Karl!

Karl Go and hang yourself, you too, so that I don't have to hear your whining any more! *(leaves and bangs the door behind)*

Wife (breaks down crying)

Karl (opens the door, fires off one last time) And never let them in here any more! (bangs the door again. His wife just keeps on crying.)

Scene 3. The Kremlin.

Trotsky But comrade Lenin, you have to accept the free licence of the bolsheviks to unrestricted violence. You gave the order of the annihilation of the tsar's family yourself. We can't afford being squeamish.

Lenin Can't we afford then to be human as well? We brought the revolution to victory by ruthless force, and your contributions were commendable, Leon, when you took the initiative to open fire against the masses without distinction, just like Napoleon did in his time, which made him victorious. But we are on the safe side now. The civil war is over, we have won, so what do we have then to be afraid of any more?

Stalin Everything. The enemy is always in our midst. The counter revolutionaries will never cease to conspire and undermine the revolution. We have to be on our guard against subversive initiatives and movements within our own ranks and never hesitate to strike hard at them when we discover them.

Lenin And one of them is you, comrade Stalin, who demonstrates dictatorial tendencies to terror.

Stalin I only suggest that we should be on our guard. Or else we can never spread the revolution around the world which is our mission and foremost duty.

Lenin And I suggest, comrade Stalin, that your ambitions show unsound paranoid tendencies, which I should warn the whole party against. The victory is ours, and the most stupid thing we could do then would be to work against it ourselves and ruin it by indulging in persecution mania.

Trotsky You are the one who are invoking ghosts in broad daylight and paint the devil on the wall without reason, comrade Lenin, and no one else.

Lenin On the contrary. I only try to make you understand that we have nothing to fear. After the disposal and extermination of the imperial family out of history all the whites have given up and are executed one by one – all the dragon's heads have fallen. We have smashed the church, and it's only old demented ladies who still dare to show themselves as such inane idiots that they stick to it. We have succeeded in implementing a totally atheistic state where God definitely has been scrapped as the chimaera of superstition and blind faith it always has been. The enforced collectivization has been successful all around, and we have no private farmers any more. We have established the dictatorship of the proletariat with brilliance in which the working class has triumphed as the only class permitted, and all who don't fit in, society could easily do without. So what are you afraid of, comrade Stalin?

Stalin I if anyone am not afraid of anything, but we have only started, and we must not rest on any laurels or imagine that we could take it easy. We abolished

religion, but we haven't yet torn down all churches and deleted all traces of religion and the old corrupt history. We have established an atheistic ideology, but all citizens have not yet embraced it. We must enforce a more efficient indoctrination in all schools, to make it impossible to think in any other way than along the infallibility of the paradise of communism. And then we have the rest of the world. We must not be satisfied with the victory of the revolution here at home. We have to export it all over the world, and we are not safe until all states have accepted and embraced the total socialization by force.

Lenin How would you export it then? Impose the revolution on the world by wars?

Stalin Why not? The world war unfortunately only led to the victory of the revolution here at home. Another world war might give us also Germany and all Europe.

Lenin So you believe the revolution could only prevail by war?

Stalin Wars have always been needed for balancing mankind. The ten million casualties of the world war were just a small bloodletting. We need a hundred million victims just in Europe to be certain of the fall of Europe. All the world would probably be sanitized by some billion being cleansed out. We are too many people in the world. That's what brought us the curse of colonialism and capitalism. Let the world make wars and perish, so that the social justice and the abolishment of classes of communism could spread the only sound paradise on earth all around.

Trotsky Comrade Stalin is radical.

Lenin Yes, but isn't he going somewhat to extremes? Wasn't it wars and the establishment of absolutism by means of terror that made the French revolution derail?

Stalin Who needs history? We need it as little as we needed religion and God.

Lenin You are going too far, comrade Stalin.

Stalin You can never go too far.

Trotsky Comrade Stalin is right in that we can never feel safe against the counter revolution. Therefore I must insist on better systematizing of the prison camps. We now have so many political prisoners in our crowded prisons that we lack the possibility to execute them all. Therefore concentration camps must be set up all over Russia.

Stalin Comrade Trotsky is right. With barbed wire and unrestricted capacity.

Lenin Do you then wish to close in all the Soviet Union behind escape proof barbed wire fences with no possibility of insight?

Stalin Only if necessary, which it very well might be in the event for example of another world war, since we must by all means protect our citizens against the corrupt world around as long as it is capitalistic.

Trotsky Comrade Stalin is right.

Lenin I don't know which of you is worse and who I should warn against the other. I never wanted a civil war, and still it dragged on for years, since the whites

never gave up. You don't get anywhere by violence. I think communism could only attain universal victory ever by peace.

Stalin But if we are attacked we have to strike back and hard!

Lenin Of course, but who would attack us? Whom do we have to fear except your inner enemies, comrade Stalin, who you believe are undermining us all from the inside?

Stalin The inner enemy is always the worst enemy.

Lenin I have had enough. He is only to be found within yourself, comrade.

Stalin On the contrary. There are no enemies but outer enemies.

Lenin I am leaving. I am tired and need to rest. (*breaks it up*)

Trotsky How long do you think he will last?

Stalin He will never be the same again as before his apoplexy.

Trotsky And when he is gone we will have to share the power and make the best of it.

Stalin I am sure we will agree well with each other, comrade Trotsky.

(They smoke and drink.)

Scene 4. Two Jewish concentration camp prisoners after the war.

1 What do you think really is the meaning?

2 Don't imagine there is any meaning of anything.

1 But all this absurd extreme macabre circus with so much effort and organization behind – it just can't have been completely meaningless.

2 Yes, it was all completely meaningless.

1 Theodor Herzl's gigantic efforts? The Balfour declaration and the rebellion of Lawrence with the Arabs against the Turks? The entire twelve year nightmare of superhuman exertions to ruin all Europe, all history and all our people, which still was doomed to fail from the beginning? All the astronomical extensive and painstaking concentration camp industry?

2 Still they came a long way on the way of exterminating the Jews, which only makes it the more meaningless, just because the doomed enterprise only reached half way and was left unfulfilled with everything untidy and left open for the world to glare on, like a slaughterhouse where everything went wrong.

1 But still we survived. There must have been some meaning with that after all?

2 Still we are stuck in the same concentration camp and are not let out. The only difference is that we get food and clothes and don't have to work ourselves to death and have Patton for a senior capo instead of Hitler. We are not allowed to go to Israel since the English forbid us to. So we are still in the same concentration camp. What is the meaning of that?

1 Don't you think God still must have had some meaning of it all? What else do we have our God for? Don't you think the meaning still was another exodus, so that we at last would have our Israel back?

2 But we haven't got it!

1 UN will give us independence at any moment.

2 If there will be independence there will be war, and there will be no end to that war until Israel is lost again. No, brother. I have made up my mind. I will go to America and forget about Israel and go for assimilation. I have had enough of this circus of constant persecution misery which only means we will be stuck in the same vicious circle forever.

1 We will be as much displaced persons in America as we are here.

2 Anything is better than this constant tour of homelessness and persecution. I'll take the risk. I'll buzz off.

1 I will wait for Israel to get its independence.

2 That's your funeral. God has forgotten us.

1 That doesn't mean we should forget God, does it?

2 If only we could!

1 Who is the most wishful thinking refugee from reality of the two of us?

2 We all are chronically so just because we are Jews. That's all we are good for. You just go to America and dream of your UFOs. I will go the other way and join the film industry. Only there you still have more space for better dreams than reality.

1 If we have managed this far we will probably manage a few hells more.

2 There are always new hells for us idiots who never give up our quest for paradise, which no one ever found and which never even existed.

1 Next year or next eternity in Jerusalem?

2 No, brother, next time we'll just have to start all over again from the beginning, until everything falls apart again. That's the eternal vicious circle of man, which he never tires of constantly starting all over treading again. That's the only reason why we are still alive, as if there was any meaning in it. But the more we think it should have any meaning, the more utterly meaningless it remains.

1 I am of a different opinion.

2 Where there are two Jews there are three views all contradicting each other. That's what I mean, Samuel. No matter what we do, we'll reach nowhere anyway.

Scene 5. The Rolling Stones in their castle in France.

Charlie This won't do, boys. You just mess it up.

Bill Don't you think we know?

Mick Let's take it again, and it will be all right.

Charlie It doesn't get any better, Mick. You have lost it. You don't sing in tune any more. You just make it mawkish and repeat yourself.

Mick Says you, Charlie, who drops the beat all the time.

Bill Don't fuss now, boys. Let's try it one more time.

Charlie It will come to nothing, as long as Keith is gone.

Mick He is busy.

Charlie With what? Being tired? Being undone? Being unconscious? He is the symptom of all of us! We are finished!

Mick We have still done well, Charlie. We are rich. We made fortunes on our shows. We have been able to buy this chateau in France.

Charlie Where we just go to the dogs drugging ourselves to death.

Bill Speak for yourself.

Charlie I speak for Keith. He has turned 250 years old by smoking and injecting heroin every day as long as we have been here.

Mick Leave him alone, Charlie.

Charlie You mean that we should let him drug himself dead in peace, like we let Brian drown in peace turned on and shredded by drugs into a vegetable...

Mick Shut up, Charlie!

Charlie Yes, that's the best thing we could do. Let's quit and leave the world alone. What else have we been offering but drugs and intoxication? What have we given the easily seduced masses of youths but perdition and slavery in constantly increasing drug dependence and music constantly more out of tune, which only has grown into increasing noise all the time?

Mick We have made careers. We are multimillionaires.

Charlie Yes, and wasn't that's why you dropped off your economical studies at the university, Mick, to make bigger money on bad vulgar pop music?

Bill We stuck together better than the Beatles.

Charlie The Beatles were musical. George Harrison studied Bach, and Paul McCartney knows how to make good tunes. None of us could do any such thing. We just rattle and clatter on yelling and repeating ourselves, making ourselves intolerable and drugging ourselves to death.

Mick That's how the world of pop music works, Charlie. Everyone uses drugs. Everyone thrives on intoxication. Those who can handle it survive. The weaker fall off and go under, like the Bee Gees. That's their funeral. We are still on stage and keep it up.

Charlie As what? Pathetic wrecks of drug abuse? Look at Keith! He can hardly hold on to his guitar any more, trembling and shaking like a feverish old man on the brink of death, although he looks even older.

Mick That's our deal, Charlie. People want it like that. They dig it. Any drugs will do, and we give the party. We thrive on it. It's just for us to go on seducing the masses. It's better than the sanctimonious church business and other religious opium for the people. We are better than God.

Charlie Watch yourself in the mirror, Mick. You are just Keith's minor brother in burnt out and pathetic overage, which only becomes more grotesque as you insist on carrying on like teenagers.

Mick That's enough, Charlie.

Charlie That's what I mean. Let's quit.

Mick Never! The devil is still alive, and we are with him! As long as he has sympathy for us, we must have sympathy for him!

Charlie He just drives us on to make us appear even more grotesquely macabre than we are already.

(enter Keith as a wreck in hard abstinence)

Keith A syringe, anybody?

Bill You wasted them all, Keith. We are out of supply.

Keith Surely we can afford some more?

Mick You can't take any more, Keith. We don't want to lose you, like we lost Brian.

Bill You can have anything you want, Keith. What do you want? We can get any smashing tart. Anything except more heroin.

Keith *(desperate)* Go to hell, bloody devils, when heroin is all I need!

Charlie He is finished.

Mick No, we are never finished. The masses need us. The crowds of youths need our popular opium of noise so that more generations can be seduced and devoted to the indulgence in eternal damnation of drug and rock music deluvions of no end. You must not let us down, Keith. You must get back on stage. We must run all our old hits once again. The audiences of the 60s are still there keeping up with us.

Charlie In the pathetic ride of burning out downhill.

Mick What does it matter as long as they like it?

Keith Give me a shot, and I will play.

Charlie You can't even hold on to a guitar any more!

Keith I am better than Jimi Hendrix!

Charlie He is dead! Janis Joplin is dead! Sid Vicious is dead! Bob Marley is dead! Elvis Presley is dead! They all went down the drug drain! And you are the most pathetic wreck of all, for you are still alive!

Keith Give me a shot.

Mick Come with me, Keith. I think I have something left. You'll get what you want, if you only cooperate.

Keith Then I will play like a god.

Mick That's the spirit. *(takes care of him and walks out with him)*

Charlie And he claims for sure that we are better than God, and is dead serious about it.

Bill Of course we are! We have after all succeeded in burying God alive in the blind seduction of noise.

Charlie You seem to have understood what it is all about, Bill.

Bill I am not worse than you, Charlie. Go to your drums now, and we'll try out this new idea. *(takes up his electric guitar. Charlie goes to his drums. Aside you see Mick helping Keith sensuously taking a shot.)*

Scene 6. At the mountains of Himalaya.

John Well, my friend, what did you learn of the history you have studied all your life?

C. Only that it is better left alone.

John So you as a man refuse to take any responsibility for the history of mankind?

C. Not at all. On the contrary. I believe that each one will take his best responsibility by minding his own business, his own life first of all and to behave by self control.

John That's the stoicism of Marcus Aurelius speaking again through you: taking responsibility for cosmos by by practising absolute self control. Well, what about God then? Does that mean he is superfluous and excluded?

C. You know more about God than I who have studied his case all your life.

John What is he to you?

C. He is perhaps the very essence of the historical problem. Most historical mistakes and transgressions have been committed in his name. All the most bloody exaggerations, crimes and violations have been let loose by his idea, as if that idea of absolute power just had to always result in power abuse and damaging absolutism.

John You are right. As a means of power, that idea is of pure evil. But does that necessitate the exclusion of his existence?

C. How would you then define him?

John That's the very crux, Christian. God cannot be defined, for he transcends everything. He is not even personal. Everything we associate with in the form of life is part of God, who is best defined as 'what is adored'. It's life itself, its inmost secret and fundamental energy. To use it to establish religions and power is the supreme misunderstanding and abuse. If he can be comprehended at all it could only be abstractly, and the closest means for doing so would then be music, your field of action, so you should know about that better than me.

C. Music is totally corrupt today. The established music has been ravished by atonal music, which isn't music but anti-music, while all true musicality and musical efforts are drowned and throttled today by the gush of mass media and the roaring rape by noise on the audience of masses by rock and pop. Real music stands no chance today. It is being drowned by noise and ugliness.

John Still it's there, and you represent it.

C. What is your view?

John The real music is to me an ideal, which in its highest developed forms, like by Bach and Handel, the Vienna classics, the opera masters and the romantic symphonists, mirrors the divine order and harmony of cosmos. Another mirror thereof is astrology in its purest and most clinical form, which is a language by itself and an insight into a dimension which is as close to divinity as music. Some also regard mathematics as a means of associating with God, but neither in mathematics

nor in astrology you find the divine beauty which music can provide, and thereby music reaches closer to the very secret and divinity of life.

C. So you deny and reject God as a power and personality but not as a living entity.

John Something like that, but above all as a living being of continuous creation, who most of all is revealed in all creativity, like when Dante wrote his Comedy of the most accomplished poetry in existence and when Michelangelo painted his Sistine chapel.

C. But everything created is not always good and beautiful.

John Exactly, and that's where beauty comes in as another decisive element. I am in spite of all still the same Christian theologian as I was born to be, and I see in spite of everything Christ as the one who came closest to the divine ideal and even in a palpable human form.

C. Which Christ? The crucified one? The miracle worker? The saviour? The resurrected?

John The Christ who always will continue to be idealized and who never will cease to engage all human minds, the soft and beautiful Christ with the long hair and exemplary relationships with children and fallen women. The crucifixion and resurrection are just irrelevant details. It's the human being that counts.

C. As he appears in the gospel of St. Thomas?

John For example. Krishna is a similar ideal but not at all as human, since he preached violence against the relations of Pandava. Christ is a pacifist in contrast to Krishna and quite consistent as such who rather dies for the violence of others than partakes in any sort of violence himself.

C. But wasn't he God?

John Of course not, not more so than everyone else, and he said so himself.

C. So let's leave God then in peace with all legends and myths of blind faith and power to at best at least be able to devote ourselves to him by art and music, philosophy and science.

John That's the only way to associate with him. All other non-constructive ways are mistakes.

C. And what about nature?

John That if anything is an expression of divinity by its sacred greatness, beauty and freedom.

C. So let us leave God and nature in peace and beg of humanity to do the same.

John That's the best thing we can do.

(They watch the mountains in the twilight together.)

The end.

*(Finland and Gothenburg, summer 2008,
10.6 – 28.7,
translated in November 2022)*