

THE
BOOK OF
NOT
THEATRE

by

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Plays by Anton Bonnici:

Yet So As By Fire: A Passion Play in Two Acts

Quasar Love: A Reenactment in Three Acts

Pornotopia: The Incomplete Texts

When The Phone Rang (co-written with Youssef
Alaoui and adapted from his original short story)

Corpus Dei

Other:

Writing for the Stage with Anton Bonnici

Part One – The Fundamentals

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This version of The Book of Not Theatre was completed in March 2026. The Book of Not Theatre is a work in progress. The reason it is being released now in this form is due to the urgency of the times we live in. There may or may not be updated versions released in the future.

The Book of Not Theatre is for my friends, past, present and future. It is a book that does not belong to this world but emerges from the dream of another one. If you read it in this world, you will surely resist it and see it as nothing more than a work of absolute folly. But once you read it as if already in the other world it stems from, you will be able to see its potential and the potential for more of us to live in a new world. It is there, in that new world, I wish to meet all of my friends.

See you soon.

With love

Anton

This book has neither a contents page nor page numbers so you may get lost in it over and over again.

PART ONE

The Purpose of Theatre

(And the Seven Misbeliefs that
Rule the World as We Know It.)

WHY THEATRE?

I have started writing this book a number of times over the past four years and every time I stop somewhere midway thinking *no, this is not it, this is not what I should be saying*. My original intention was to write about making theatre, including a part about writing plays, a part about staging them and a part about teaching all aspects of theatre. But the more I engaged with what I do and why I do it the more I doubted what that was and why I was doing it. I thought I knew what theatre was, but do I? You write a play, it is produced, directed and staged for an audience to appreciate. Hopefully the audience enjoys it and is moved by it. Is that all?

The more I looked into
theatre the more I
doubted the purpose of
theatre.

Why write plays?
Why stage theatre?

Is it enough to bring
people together and tell
them a story?

**Is it enough to
give others an
intelligent and
moving
spectacle?**

**Is this what the
world needs
today?**

Too many big
questions already.
Let's focus on one for
now or maybe
two...two that are
really just one.

Why theatre?

Why write and stage
a play?

There are a lot of obvious ways to answer this question (I like plays! It's what I did at school. I love being on stage etc.) and maybe that's why many don't bother with such thoughts. These questions also tend to become speculative rants with no end, another reason for avoiding them. And yet, these very reasons for avoiding the question are, for me, the very reasons why I want to ask. Are these obvious, unhelpful answers truly so obvious and unhelpful? Moreso, if you are here reading this it must be because you're into theatre making, and you might even be a playwright. Then, more than anything else, I do believe that this is indeed the most important question you need to be asking.

**Why
theatre?**

**Why write
and stage a
play?**

BAD REASONS FOR WRITING A PLAY:

1. You don't have enough budget to make a movie
2. Your agent didn't get you into TV like they promised
3. You believe it's easier than writing anything else
4. You want to impress someone you're attracted to who likes plays (this isn't entirely a bad reason, it's actually almost a good one)
5. You want to tell stories

**How is
wanting to
tell stories a
bad reason
for writing a
play?**

There are many reasons for mediocre play writing out there such as poor structure, clichés, opportunistic intentions, weak characters etc...but one root of bad play writing that I encounter a lot, and people avoid facing (maybe because the reality of it is too harsh to face?) is the very essential question 'Why are you writing a play?' Why are you not writing a novel? Why not a short story? Why not a movie? Why not a graphic novel? Why not a TV series? Why not a videogame? Why do you believe that whatever it is you are trying to write should be a play, a script to be performed on a stage? One might say, I don't care, I just like to tell stories!

**Is story
telling
enough of a
purpose?**

Some might say this question, *why theatre*, is not important since at the core of every medium there's exactly the same thing – a story. Focus on writing a good story and everything else is just bobs and whistles for the sake of telling the story. Theatre is just another way of telling a story, so is film and so is a novel. Story is story, no matter what. The rest of the craft is how you're telling it, how you're delivering it. But if this is true, isn't it much easier to simply write a story and have people read it? Why go through all the trouble that is theatre? Is this for some conservative sake of sticking to an old tradition? But is the old tradition really still the same old tradition?

**Is this theatre
or is this
more T.V.?**

Another influence that has roped itself in with the story problem is the TV problem. It is indeed true that TV has kept getting better and better in terms of writing and when you see great TV you are bound to start absorbing what makes 'good writing' from 'good TV'. We are once again watching a lot of TV, way more than reading novels and watching movies, making TV our most regular dosage of all storytelling media. But 'good TV writing' is not neutral ground at all, this is much more than simply 'good writing'. There is an agenda behind its structure and we replicate this all the time. What if we are indeed writing without thinking much about why we are writing the way we are writing?

**Is this
Aristotle on
steroids?**

**Is this the
ultimate fix?**

The medium has a lot to say in how we're perceiving this form of writing to be 'good'. TV takes all the classic Aristotelian tropes of storytelling and chains them up in an addictive form of bite sized 3-4min moments, building overarching storylines through a concatenation of subplots over multiple characters in multiple locations, and feeding the 'need for more' effect by making every climax the starting point of the next chain of events. TV show after TV show we've become experts at consuming this structure and before we know it, we turn this structure into the very ruler by which we measure 'good writing'. 'Good TV' becomes the measure of 'Good writing' and subsequently even theatre writing.

**Another
pseudo-
solution for
the daily
grind?**

So, us theatre makers and playwrights, not only are we trapped in the 'good story' problem, with all the 'universal' trappings that it brings about but it's more and more the case that we're actually talking about 'good TV story' and it shows in a lot of new work for the theatre. *I truly find ironically hilarious those theatre snobs that say they do not watch TV but their own theatre work is literally of the same quality of mid-level TV...* Good TV gives us an easy distraction from the everyday grind, something that adds a thrill to the end of our working day or a smile, a little giggle with loved ones or friends. Something easily palatable so that we may find a quick rest before going to sleep and restarting again tomorrow. And so much new theatre barely gives us even this.

**What if
theatre was
already good
TV before
there was
any TV?**

Some would argue that's enough, that's all theatre needs to be, a good distraction. Maybe good enough to make us think a bit about the world we're living in, but still a distraction. In truth, theatre was a means to entertain and contain the masses by the elites who sponsored it for so many centuries. Why should it be any different now? Maybe, now that we do have TV, we even have it constantly on our phones everywhere we go, we might not even need theatre anymore. Why bother financing such a cumbersome thing as a live act for relatively small immediate audiences when you may reach millions of viewers with so much more ease? Why does, against all odds, theatre persist, even if it might be sick and forever dying?

**Is it though?
What about
those mind
blowing
experiences?**

Now you might be saying, “Wait, no, it wasn’t all TV, I had amazing experiences in theatre that are nowhere near more good TV!” And you’d be right. We all have had amazing theatre experiences where we saw something on stage and it blew us away and we can very easily point and cry THAT, THAT is a GREAT PLAY! But can you compare any of the amazing experiences watching a play? At times these shows are so diverse! Watching a great Ibsen play has got nothing to do with watching Brecht, Beckett or Sarah Kane, not to mention Molière or Shakespeare or Sophocles. Go to a fringe festival and you’ll see brilliant stuff day after day and only a few might even be definable. They all could be brilliant and some are very short on ‘story’.

**Is it the
spectacle?
All those
oohs and
aahs you
hear from
the audience?**

Some would say there's nothing like the spectacle of live theatre. The skills, the artistry, all that which makes us go 'Wow!'. The brilliance of an ensemble cast, the impactful vision of a director, seeing those sets come to life... amazing right? But so much brilliant theatre also has so little of this. You could have two performers in a black space and an audience still leaves saying 'Wow!'. What is truly happening here? Is spectacle necessarily twenty people doing somersaults to live music from a full orchestra or is there something much more essential, much more foundational? Isn't some form of excitement and joy the purpose of spectacle? And is spectacle the only way of causing excitement and joy?

Notice how
we went
from ‘Why
theatre?’ to
‘What is
Good
theatre?’

The purpose of theatre and the quality of theatre are intertwined and cannot be separated. I would even go far enough to say that one of the biggest failures of theatre is exactly at that point of separation; when the purpose of theatre is separated from its quality and we start judging a work of theatre whilst neglecting to consider its purpose. Right there, at that point of separation is where theatre fails, and we start slipping into the realm of mediocrity. To understand what good theatre is, one needs to understand its purpose. So, if the purpose of theatre is not simply to tell stories or to provide spectacle, then neither are good enough as a measure of good theatre.

**What about
social
commentary?
Or
intellectual
stimulation?**

Is the purpose of theatre to make us think? I love a play that truly digs deep into a socio-political issue and makes us see problems from different points of view. When I see a character on stage representing a person I believed to know and then after the performance I realize that I did not know them at all, my prejudices now gone, that is truly an achievement. But once again, is that special to theatre? Cannot that be achieved with a documentary? Isn't a well-researched essay better at offering intellectual stimulation for those with the patience to sit through reading it? Theatre may help in understanding socio-political issues but there's no reason to call it its purpose.

**Something
more
essential,
more
fundamental,
something
*obvious.***

To truly understand the purpose of theatre and thus start to fully explore its potential one must look at its most essential aspect that separates it from all other forms of art that may also offer everything theatre seems to offer, storytelling, spectacle, social commentary etc. There is something else that theatre does before and beyond all this which only theatre does, and which is not only foundational for theatre but is also essential for the very existence of society. And this pertains to the fact that theatre is a *live performance*. At its core the one thing theatre does other mediums don't is gather people for a live encounter. One might say that wherever this happens, wherever people gather in front of others, there lies theatre.

**Before story,
spectacle or
commentary,
there are
people
meeting each
other.**

Nothing brings people together like theatre does. And if you are writing a play, remember, first and foremost, that you are bringing people together. Whatever it is that you are going to write, a group of people has to come together around it, they are going to spend a lot of hours working together on it and with a lot of skill and artistry, they will bring it to life for others to see in an unmediated way, just them, real people, in front of other real people. No screens in between, no time in between, no paper in between, relatively speaking. Engaging with this reality of the stage is what brings us closer to why we write for the stage. This is the key to understanding why theatre and what is good theatre.

**There are
two
experiences
in theatre
and we write
for both.**

There are two experiences that you are writing for when writing a play. The experience of those coming together to perform it and the experience of those coming to see it.

In both experiences *human connection* is key.

We do theatre to meet each other, to see each other, to hear each other, and to experience something together. This is supposed to give us a human connection unlike anything else. Or maybe so we wish...

A 21st Century Paradox?

It has never been easier to express yourself in public and have thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, read and listen to what you are saying. Social media has truly revolutionized how we communicate and what we communicate. A tweet could go viral in minutes and suddenly millions are talking about the same subject, and anyone on the planet can find your specific opinion, your words, about what is being said. Not to mention how easy it is to create artistic content and make it available for all to find or buy, be it books, music or video. These are unprecedented realities, and we are riding giant waves without much restraint. But there's a downside to all of this and we are all suffering from it.

**A connected
dis-
connection...
worldwide.**

We feel connected to millions around the globe but we have never been more visibly divided and fragmented. There was a time when we championed discussion and we whole heartedly believed that presenting our ideas and opinions, supporting them with proper research and evidence and confronting our arguments with those of others, would guide us towards higher truths as a society and civilization. And yet, even though there was never an easier time to rationally discuss and confront ideas and opinions with valid evidence and sound logic, debate and rhetoric are failing us every day like never before.

**Mis-
information
and fear are
breeding
anger, hate
and violence.**

The more people square off in debate the more they hate each other and pull away deeper into their own beliefs. The more time passes more people are returning to scary ideas that are racist, misogynist, discriminatory and fascist than ever before.

**Human expression is at its peak
but real human connection is
dissolving in anger
and disagreement
at every level
of our societies.**

**Is theatre our
salvation?**

**Is theatre the
solution to
our
alienation?**

One may think, where debate and discussion fail theatre and live performance may prevail because it gives us something more than words, more than arguments and rationality, theatre gives us an experience involving both heart and mind. An experience of fully human connection away from our screens, away from the million distractions that invade our senses every day, a face-to-face engagement in a very real moment in time where we may inhabit the worlds of others, their pains and joys, beyond mere rational understanding. But is this truly what happens in theatre? *Is there really a human connection or merely its illusion?*

**What if
theatre is
part of the
problem?**

No matter how beautiful, insightful and poignant it is, a play script will still be processed to give two experiences. The experience of those coming together to stage the script and the experience of the audience. Of the two it is definitely the performers that are engaging the most with this script. If there is anything to be fully taken by inhabiting these characters and living in the world of the play it is the performers that shall have the advantage. The audience has an altogether different experience, most of the times a very passive one. They sit and watch and will go back home mostly unchanged, making, once again, this experience nothing more than a time filler.

**Or worse,
not only
unchanged
but even less
capable of
change than
before...**

What if, not only is the passive audience watching the performance, no matter how strong the storytelling, the spectacle and the social commentary is, leaving the theatre without much new motivation added to their lives but also depleted from any motivation they already had? What if an audience enters a theatre full of anger at the state of the world, this anger brewing inside of them with the potential of becoming actual physical action sometime soon, but once they see the performance the anger dissipates, and is replaced by a proud feeling of achievement in empathy with what just happened on stage?

But in reality, in
real life, off stage
they have all
achieved nothing.

Everyone goes back
to the world they
hated two hours
ago, maybe just a
little bit less
angry...

“[...] the poetics of Aristotle is the poetics of oppression: the world is known, perfect or about to be perfected, and all its values are imposed on the spectators, who passively delegate power to the characters to act and think in their place. In so doing the spectators purge themselves of their tragic flaw – that is, of something capable of changing society. A catharsis of the revolutionary impetus is produced! Dramatic action substitutes for real action.”

Theatre of the Oppressed, pg.155

Augusto Boal

**What if
theatre is the
ORIGINAL
problem??**

The Brazilian theatre maker Augusto Boal has already engaged at length with this problem and convincingly so. In *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal wrestles with this nature of theatre, re-addressing the ground Brecht had already started covering, to show how theatre as we know it, the Aristotelian form of theatre with an active performer and a passive audience is at the heart of oppression. Not necessarily in content but in process. Both Boal and Brecht focus on the cathartic experience and its effect on the audience, I'd like to simplify this even further and look at the missed opportunities due to the line that keeps separating the two experiences in the theatre.

**Why two
experiences?**

**What
separates the
crowd from
the stage?**

The assumption is that you need to have those showing something and those seeing something, two experiences, the expert craftsman performing the tale for those that lack the craft. Those that lack the craft are meant to enjoy the show without involving themselves too much since they do not have the right to do so, the craftsman has won that right with their training and experience (or money). Training and experience (and money) give the craftsman privilege, they may stand before others and say what they want to say, the others lack that privilege, so they are there to shut up and listen and in revenge they get to judge. The two experiences are grounded in hierarchy and competition.

**So theatre
brings us
together, face
to face, but
only to
separate us
again.**

This remains the fundamental problem and its source is at the heart of this misconception of the purpose of theatre, a purpose arising from its most base contingency. Theatre gathers people together to have an embodied creative experience. As soon as this experience stops being one experience, without hierarchies, without competition, and instead is split into two, with the expert on one side and the non-experts on the other, the most beautiful, transformative and connective opportunity of theatre is lost. The opportunity for all those gathered to have an experience without discriminatory structures allowing the whole group to reach a moment of collective creative transcendence is discarded.

I call this
transcendental
communal
experience
which is being
discarded by
theatre,
*Dancing Around
the Fire.*

Theatre stops us from dancing together around the fire, physically and metaphorically. We do not dance around the fire together, dissolving the walls between us and discovering inspiration in community and creative collective action. We sit in our seats, one by one, separated in silence, a hundred strangers in one room that enter as strangers and leave as strangers after having chuckled or shed a tear in the same space at the same time looking at one spectacular story giving us a little food for thought. This is what Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal were fighting. This is what drove Antonin Artaud to madness.

“At a time when life itself is in decline, there has never been so much talk about civilization and culture. And there is a strange correlation between this universal collapse of life at the root of our present-day demoralization and our concern for a culture that has never tallied with life but is made to tyrannize life.”

*From the Preface to Theatre and its Double,
Theatre and Culture
Antonin Artaud*

Though Artaud was writing at the start of the other century, probably this quote above around the early 1930's, it might as well have been written today. If life was ever in decline, it very much is now. And if culture was ever harnessed to hold together a deadly status quo, this is truly where it's at today. Our natural environment is being destroyed at an unprecedented rate, pure death. Our mental health is being eroded day to day, insanity in every other household. War and disaster are present and looming. And we have perfected a culture that ensures we all retain the consumerist individualistic values which sustain and enable this horror. Theatre is also guilty.

“There is an absurd division between theatre and life. We might say theatre began to deteriorate the day it began to command its own autonomy, to carve a kind of field out for itself apart from reality, a domain that betrays its unbearable artificiality. Yet theatre is reality’s magic, an outlet for an overfull life that does not enter into routine existence, breaking the framework of visible, customary reality.”

The Theatre and its Double, Appendix VII

Antonin Artaud

Though their visions for the theatre couldn't be more polarized and their character couldn't be more opposing, both Artaud and Brecht were fighting the same thing; a theatre that subdues life, that robs life of an opportunity for further transformation. A theatre borne of a culture that restrains and suffocates the very spirit of our reality, a reality that needs to sustain itself through creative movement and exploration, a reality that will simply implode if not allowed to reinvent itself from one moment to the next. Artaud saw an opportunity for reinvention through the shocking immersion of the audience in an apocalyptic vision, Brecht hoped for reinvention through a distanced contemplation. Both desired change.

**Western
theatre was
never meant
to bring
about
change.**

The conventions of the theatre have been put in place to curb the primal opportunity that theatre affords us in the first place. A gathering of a group of people with creative and narrative motivations is in the perfect condition to imagine a different future, imagine a different society, and in their gathering influence each other for these alternative possibilities to become real. Within a space that gives all those present the opportunity to experiment and play, to explore together these alternatives, the line between the life these people are living and the creative moment they are experiencing will be inexistent. This is a moment of real life playing out its own transformation into the future. Not a distraction from life.

**Conventions
and
structures
ensure that
the line is
always
present.**

In a hierarchical competitive culture where someone always wants to rule and control the rest such an event is an aberration. How do you ensure that when the people gather with such impulses they do not get too involved in their imaginative engagement? Place a line that cannot be crossed and control who's on one side and who's on the other. The line does not divide equally the space but creates a majority on one side with very little privileges of expression and a minority on the other with a freedom to tell the majority whatever is needed. Make sure the minority represent all the values you need to keep the majority in line and make sure the majority believe that this minority has a right to be there. And bingo, no one is dancing around the fire anymore.

**All you need
now is a
carrot so
everyone
sticks to the
rules of your
game.**

You need a carrot or else that majority is sooner or later going to explode and just kick your privileged minority out. You need to make it like it is not impossible to cross the line just very difficult, but possible. Make it competitive. Turn it all into a giant game. You win the competition, you fit the requirements, you get to cross the line. And suddenly your whole majority of listeners is not only quiet and focused on what's on stage but willing to fight each other as soon as they get out just to be the next ones on it! But are we talking about theatre anymore? Is this the stage? Doesn't this feel like something much more fundamental that governs every aspect of our society? Is the theatre like everything else or is everything else theatre?

Open your eyes
and see what's
underneath,
beyond the
rhetoric, beyond
the words, see
the real theatre,
*the theatre in
everything...*

You see it at home, the head of the family in front of the rest, at school the teacher in front of the class, the head of school in front of the rest, the manager at the workplace in front of the employees, the owner of the company in front of everybody else, the heads of state in front of everybody else, you see it everywhere, always someone in authority with the privilege to tell the rest how things are going to be and the rest need to listen and play the game and fight each other if they ever want to have the privilege of being across the line, in front of everybody else. But this isn't theatre you might be saying right now, this is leadership! This is the very basis of our civilization! What has theatre go to do with it?

**But doesn't
this form of
leadership
have an
uncanny
resemblance
to theatre?**

Is it simply a strange coincidence that leaders are charismatic like actors? Is it not curious how leadership teams are constantly trying to find ways to manipulate the experience of those they're supposed to be leading just like directors do with a performance for their audience? Isn't it also pernicious how hard it is to imagine any alternative structure to this? Why is that? Why is it that we are able to imagine the most fantastic of worlds and wonderful stories, but we can't imagine another way of life that does not involve hierarchy and competition in leadership? *Our lack of imagination, our inability to see any possible alternatives to this system is exactly why there is theatre and every other source of entertainment that evolved after it.*

**Theatre is the
reinforcement
of the system,
the blindfold
of our culture,
the curtain in
front of the
machine.**

We go to the theatre to take a break from life and yet engage with life in the fiction being presented to us. But what if there's another layer? What if while giving us a break from life the theatre is simply reinforcing our most fundamental programming to live life the way those in power want us to live it? *No matter what is actually being said on stage.* We focus so much on the content and form of theatre but what about its infrastructure and its actual production process? What if by sitting there and paying attention and accepting that someone is keeping us enthralled for sixty minutes or more, we are practicing the hierarchical and competitive structures that the performance itself might be criticising?

**With all the
hard truths we
see on stage
why don't we
have riots
after theatre
performances?**

Have you ever wondered why for so many decades now thousands of theatre makers have been engaging on stage in front of millions of audiences about problems such as climate change, racism, sexism, fascism, consumerism, capitalism, war, colonialism and literally all the problems under the sun we all want to end and resolve but nothing ever changes? Why is it all so ineffective? We know what the problems are, we've spoken and engaged and shared our stories from the stage to the screen, in song and text and animation but the problems persist. Here's where the typical voices chime in and say art is not meant to fix the world, art is not there to change anything. And they're correct. Because it is literally there to do the opposite, hold it all in place.

**The status
quo is not an
accident and
celebrities
are its
guardians.**

No matter how wild or seemingly radical celebrities may be and no matter how generous and socially engaged, in some cases genuinely good people, *celebrities will forever sustain the dream of success in a system designed to enslave its own worshippers.* As soon as you see a celebrity, or I'd go even further, as soon as you see someone on a poster, framed out, singled out as some form of exemplary model or other and especially if this frame includes wealth and fame in its packaging, whatever this person is saying your brain is understanding something else; *this person is special, but you are not, better compete harder to become special like them.*

**What
happens to
humanity if
it is
competing
24/7?**

No, human beings are not apt at competing 24/7. We are social creatures and we are apt at cooperating and collaborating for most of the time and competing only when truly necessary not as a constant baseline of our existence. What if we are made to feel like we have to compete every single minute of our daily lives? What would that do to us? Can our minds and bodies take it? Is it a mere coincidence that mental health problems keep getting worse? If we have been born to feel accepted and purposeful in a community of loving people what would happen if we're suddenly thrown into an unloving world that is only telling us that we are useless unless we win?

**Needing to
be special is a
made-up
problem but
it's not a
coincidence.**

You step out and see posters of people more beautiful and supposedly more successful than you everywhere you go. You go to school and you're told that if you don't get better grades you're a failure. You go to work in a place where you know that someone above you is making millions off the work you do whilst you can barely pay your rent. You look at social media and you see faces and bodies contorting every which way to be seen and validated. You go home to rest and you put on a show where special people can entertain you. Everywhere you look is someone showing you that you are not special enough and you have to compete to become so, every day, every moment, make or break.

**This is what I
call the
COMPETITION
ALGORITHM
and it has
entered every
facet of our
lives.**

STOP

TAKE A BREAK

TAKE A LOOK AROUND YOU

BREATHE

LISTEN

FEEL

TAKE A WALK

LOOK AND BREATHE AND FEEL
SOME MORE

COME BACK ONLY WHEN YOU
FEEL READY...

NO PRESSURE

**THE SEVEN
MISBELIEFS
THAT RULE
THE WORLD
AS WE KNOW
IT.**

The competition algorithm is built on a set of mistaken beliefs that give value to a specific set of behaviours with the goal to keep us all constantly competing in a dog-eat-dog race to the end. And by the end I do mean the end. An apocalyptic end. An end that has already happened to many, is already happening to more and will happen to everyone eventually, if we persist in living like this. Worlds are ending all the time, but we are not grieving enough, or not at all. We are not stopping to see what is happening. We just think that since we are still here the world hasn't ended yet, so we keep going, we keep competing, hoping to get on stage.

**Nothing is
more
dangerous
than the
unquestioned
truth.**

It all goes on because we are made to believe that it must and that it cannot be otherwise. And that's the power of beliefs. Beliefs about human nature and about the nature of nature itself that both sustain this whole system and are sustained by it. These are very simple, rudimentary premises that are so integral to the 'everydayness' of our lives that we neither 'see' nor 'question' them, and yet these are wrong. And thus, these beliefs are actually **misbeliefs**. In this section I shall question the truth of these seven misbeliefs with reference to great works of theatre, proving that we are already aware of the falseness in our society yet we are still entirely within its grasp.

Misbelief #1:

The world is
made of
winners and
losers, and
winners should
be privileged
leaders.

Have you ever wondered why we never question privileged leadership and the importance we give it in our current social organization? We are constantly complaining about how shit our leaders are. Both on global and national levels and even within local work organizations, most of us are traumatized by horrible bosses. There have been of course examples of good ones but they're the minority and most good leaders happen to be people that never wanted to be leaders. So why don't we ever question the necessity of privileged leadership itself? Could it be that there is something wrong in our conception of leadership that inherently attracts shitty people to the role?

**A collection
of
narcissists...
whom we
should all be
grateful for!**

The idolization of leaders is again not a coincidence. We are primed from literally birth to believe that leaders are an important aspect of our life and that some of us should be leaders. Yet the toxicity of such people is rarely put into question. Think about the very idea of running for president or any kind of 'nation leading' position. A nation is a bewilderingly huge thing. Millions of people living with constant challenges from all sorts of pressures on miles upon miles of land. Yet someone would think that as an individual they should have the power to steer this giant mess into shape. How can you believe that without being an egomaniac or a downright narcissist?

**From brutal
past to stupid
present.**

Times might have changed a bit from an age of constant warring tribes and conquering legions but looking at what is happening in the world today, with the ongoing conflicts and environmental neglect, maybe things did not change that much at all. We are living at a time when cooperation across the planet is essential for our survival, when big decisions need to be made in unison for the sake of our future, and yet all we have is competing world leaders who are still trying to beat each other economically or militarily for the sake of coming on top and being 'winners'. And what does 'winner' mean in this case? The rich and the powerful; the privileged.

**One of the
most toxic
concepts in
our culture is
the
'WINNER'.**

The winner is automatically that individual who is separated from the crowd and told “You are better than the crowd. We give you more value than everyone else.” And hence they are given the stage. And just like that their voice becomes more important than yours. The winner has the stage and is now able to address the masses. The masses are the ones without access to the stage, hence the losers. Yet the winner is given more than voice, they also take power. The winner now decides things that will control your life because you have decided that they have more value than you by proclaiming them a winner. At worst the winner is also allowed to use violence.

**All privileged
leaders kill their
fathers and fuck
their mothers...
metaphorically
speaking of course.**

Sophocles was definitely onto something, and not just about men's repressed sexual feelings for their mothers. In *Oedipus Rex* I see a treatise on privileged leadership itself, its delusional nature. The foundational hubris in leadership and its intrinsic curse. Oedipus is proud enough to believe he may escape fate. Then his pride is hurt on the road thus he resorts to violence. Finally, he deems himself worthy of winning a queen by confronting a creature no one humble enough would ever dare confront. Aren't these always the makings of a privileged leader? A winning leader? Only one that has at least a smidgen of arrogance may take a seat of power.

**The ultimate
winner brings
nothing but
corruption to the
land...**

Oedipus is the ultimate winner. Rising out of nowhere, he saves a kingdom, wins a queen, is celebrated as wise and powerful. And is followed by plague and death. No one questions his arrogance because everyone wants a winner to save them. The cost always comes later. Oedipus is unaware of what he is actually committing, he is unaware that he has killed his biological father, and he has fathered his own sisters. Why was he blind? Because his eyes were always on the prize. Those that strive to win must lose sight of what's essential for the sake of winning and betray everything they hold dear. That is the nature of winning, as one rises from the masses, one betrays them.

**Every day, groups
of people could
work together and
achieve their goals
without powerful
leaders if our
world allowed it.**

Of course, this process isn't obligatory at all. People can discuss and come to agreements without competition and without the need for a winner if they are not indoctrinated from day one on this necessity of privileged leadership and winning. Even in matters of skill, the more skilful individual for a task would simply emerge, even when humble, according to the needs of the community without anyone else needing to be shamed or relegated to a secondary status. People may take turns in leadership, sharing skills and communicating their needs accordingly without any winner taking the stage and being proclaimed ultimate king. But not in this world. Not with these misbeliefs in place.

**In a world built on
competition, it is
essential to always
find THE ONE.**

**This misbelief is
what betrays us all
and makes the rest
of us anonymous.**

It's our misbelief in winners that keeps us enabling the very value of having a winner as leader no matter what. A cyclical process arising from our sense of collective hopelessness. Why do we need a winner? Because we are all losers and we need a winner to save us. We need a messiah. We are made to believe this since we are born. We're told we need great people to save us. In every story, religious or otherwise, even history is re-narrated as one messiah story after another, though it actually is never so. The others, all the ones that do their small bit, everyone who is part of the giant chain of events that lead to grand historical moments, are completely erased from the picture. Only the one remains.

**But who is the
one? The one is
always the same
one – the one with
the most money,
hence the one
with the most
power to influence
everyone else.**

Have you ever seen a penniless beggar in an award-winning show on a stage? Have you ever seen a penniless beggar explaining his political manifesto with a campaign? Of course you haven't. But is it possible that there is somewhere in the world a penniless beggar with great talent that could be beautiful to admire on a stage? Mathematical probability alone would suggest that there is. Same with a penniless beggar that has enough wisdom to suggest a policy that would be indeed better for the common good way more than what most politicians today are peddling. But these will never be on stage. They will never be the one. Because they do not have the essential element, money.

**We live in an
age where
success is
only material
and even
skill or talent
have a price.**

How can we not turn to Chekov's *Three Sisters* and witness in dismay the spiritual hole at the heart of their privileged family? Or Brecht's *Mother Courage* as she loses child after child in the very wars she profits from? Or *Serious Money* by Caryl Churchill, a play about the ridiculous traps of the British Stock market? Or Ravenhill's lost youths of *Shopping and Fucking* as they go from one extreme act to another in search for an elusive meaning beyond material subsistence and survival? There's no shortage of brilliant plays about the horror of money and the treacherous role wealth plays in all the inequalities of our lives. And yet we keep respecting those who have it.

Privileged leaders rising from an elite class are automatically the least spiritually aligned and psychologically stable people. We are literally giving the reigns to the worst human beings on earth because of the material conditions that make them 'winners'. And we are telling these horrible people that they may rule us and take decisions for us.

This will not end unless we can imagine a different breed of leadership:

A leadership without privilege.

Leaders that are not winners.

We need leaders that do not come from material wealth and that will not receive material wealth once in leadership but are rich in spirit and mind.

Leaders that want to lead
WITHOUT BEING ON
STAGE.

Misbelief #2:

**All the non-
winners are losers
and should be
followers, unless
they can one up
each other or are
marked as threats.**

The second misbelief is both the direct consequence and the very origin of the first. If there are winners there must be losers and vice versa. Hence change is impossible. There will always be the rich and the poor. There will always be the oppressing and the oppressed. There will always be the talented and the worthless. This dichotomy is constantly drilled into us as if it is a universal physical law instead of a socially constructed reality built on selected values and misbeliefs. And yet it is at the very heart of our current civilization. It is the very reason why every day many of us endure injustice and accept indignity. We are losers hence this is our fate. But we still have options.

**Follow a winner
or compete
with other
losers until you
become a
winner
yourself.**

This is where the spirit of community is completely dissolved in the rat race. The winners of today keep making it clear to all of us that only a life on stage is a life worth living. And the closest we may get to being on stage is to follow ardently someone who is. It's okay to go back to our soulless job every day because in the evening we get to bask in the light of our heroes and the slight moment of elation gives us a sense of pride as if we accomplished something ourselves. Even if we do not know who our neighbours are anymore. Even if we have no idea what kind of world our children are going to grow up in. At least we know our heroes. And we also know their enemies.

**Nothing like
an army of
self-hating
followers to
beat your
opponents
with...**

Only one thing stops us from competing to get on stage and that's ganging up to beat the enemy of our winner. Leaders know this very, very well. All of modern-day politics is literally waged on this most despicable of tactics that taps into the sad hole inside every single one of us that's been drilled at birth by this individualist society – the need to belong to something bigger. We cannot satisfy this need by managing our communities and environments anymore nor can we satisfy it by having big extended families. Instead, we connect and move together as one in another way – by hating the same person or people. Suddenly our feelings come alive again.

**Today, hate
makes us feel
like we
belong, fuels
our purpose
more than
anything else.**

A group of people that understands the importance of community and solidarity would also be able to see the importance of such ideals for others. True community breeds empathy. People that live in love, who nurture those around them to reach new heights without competition, would wish exactly the same for all those they encounter. They would not hate someone just because they are told to do so. They would not see a threat in the other but another opportunity for growth and understanding. But this is not who we are and so this is not what we are doing. And whilst we waste time hating opponents the winners take everything we cherish and all that we could have.

**A bunch of
despicable men
trying to one
up each other
with only the
gift of the
gab...**

A play that brilliantly captures what it means to be a loser in the rat race is David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Set in the world of real estate, this two act ensemble masterpiece pits a group of agents against each other and their management as they compete to sell real estate to people who clearly can't afford it in a bid not to lose their livelihoods. The despair is palpable in every single scene as you see the pressure squeezing everyone down the line in a ruthless profit making, dog eat dog world that spares no one. These men would do everything possible to be winners, risking every shred of principle or dignity in the process, and that's the world we live in.

**But not only
men...**

**Women also
make it to
the top, at
great
expense...**

Though a very different play from David Mamet's, Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* could very easily be read as the feminist answer to *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Not only completely different in style and structure, but more so an upside-down reversal of the point of view; where Mamet's characters see the world bottom up, struggling to make it to the top, Churchill's characters view it top down, as they start to recognize the parts of their humanity they needed to discard in their climb to the top office. *One is the perfect embodiment of Reagen's America, the other of Thatcher's England, the father and mother of today's neoliberal capitalist world.*

**But what
keeps us
believing in
winners and
losers? Why
do we accept
this?**

One would dare to think that if you had millions of people struggling every day to stay alive, struggling hard to keep their families safe with a roof over their heads and bread on the table, and as they struggle they all know, indubitably know, that a very small percentage of the population is keeping everything for themselves and is controlling everyone else' livelihood, one would simply dare to think that these millions of people will just stop accepting these terms, no?

It's not difficult to see the injustice in this whole scenario, so it's not a matter of ignorance.

So why doesn't humanity rebel against a system that keeps insisting on a winner/loser paradigm?

Because there are two other misbeliefs sustaining the first and second.

*Misbeliefs about the nature of
love and knowledge.*

Misbelief #3:

Love is the only
thing better
than money,
when you don't
have money.

In such a cruel world love becomes the ultimate secret weapon. The stabilizer. The panacea which is supposed to melt away all differences and release our humanity to a life of poetic beauty that is worth living. As long as we do it at home, after hours, with those we sit on the couch with to watch the TV. The private treasure we should do everything possible not to lose hence better not rock the boat too much at work or else we might disappoint the dependents that we love and love us back if anything goes terribly wrong. And this implies that there are only two kinds of love acceptable, romantic love preferably between two people which should lead to a family, hence allowing for the family love.

**We've been
unashamedly
brainwashed
from birth about
ROMANTIC
LOVE.**

**And most of it is
the toxic kind.**

From the stories of princes that may kiss sleeping brides because they have true love to princesses that would kiss a frog in hope of romantic reward, stories that define and promote romantic love are fed to us from as soon as humanly possible. And for the vast majority, with some deviations only very recently, the formulas were always the same. Romantic love is between two people, preferably of different genders and preferably open for having children. Though there's another core message at the heart of the formula which for the most part has never been tempered with and that is that *romantic love is what makes us whole*.

**Get the
romantic
partner, look
happy, roll
credits.**

**This is what we
always
wanted...**

The idea that our life is complete only when we have a romantic relationship is hard wired into our culture in drastic ways beyond what our biological necessities require. Not only is this conceptualization of romantic love extremely exclusionary since most images do not include any variety at all in how this may be put into practice, but it is also anti-community. The focus is on the couple, the two people in love versus the world. From the couple it expands to the couple plus their children, the nuclear family, and once again, versus the world. This inner group of people who love each other becomes the protective shield for the individual to go out there and compete some more.

**Why don't we see
more examples of
love that is meant
to be shared and
break barriers
instead of building
walls and isolating
the lovers?**

Because if more people lived on what bell hooks called a 'Love Ethic', if more people thought of their neighbours and their colleagues at work and literally the rest of the world as people we need to care for and help and support for the sake of everyone's physical, mental and spiritual growth, we would simply stop competing. In a system that is set up for constant competition such an ethic is completely impossible. Those that love outside of their private boundaries are deemed weak and stupid. In a world where everyone has to compete to survive, kindness is a weakness. **And so love has to stay private and has to be controlled to remain itself a means of control.**

**The Blanche
Dubois and the
Stanley Kowalskis
of this world are
still all clinging to
love because they
believe they have
nothing else left to
lose.**

Tennessee William's *A Streetcar Named Desire* remains one of the most crushing plays about the lengths, brutal and delusional, one would go to hang onto love when there's nothing else. Blanche is penniless and homeless, in disgrace and self-medicating on whisky, her only salvation is love. If only a white knight would swoop in and despite her past (or in ignorance) would marry her and offer the protection and care only a loving man could. Stanley adores his wife and is proud of his little household. His brutish manners are an essential part of his working-class distinction and he won't allow anyone to diminish him in his wife's eyes. If only these two needed love a little less.

When love
justifies
everything, one
is ready to
inflict or endure
anything. And
this is not a
good thing...

In the name of a refined poetic love Blanche seduces in her favour both her sister Stella away from her husband Stanley, and Stanley's best friend Mitch, trying desperately to be a bright light for others, the same light she fears would expose her own sins. In return, Stanley terrorizes Blanche to ensure she fails in her seduction, holding hard onto his possessive, raw love for Stella, and his brotherly love for Mitch. Blanche's love leaves her with nothing but demented fantasies. Stanley's love makes him a violent abuser. Yet they're both losers in the world. They're both people without much to lose but the people they love. And they both believe this love is enough. But is it?

**For how long can
we keep
romanticizing
possessive,
delusional and
manipulative
relationships for
the sake of love?**

The drama of toxic romantic love has a big part to play in the winner/loser dynamic in a competitive society. In a society where an exclusive possessive monogamy is assumed between lovers, the cruelty of competition enters our love life just like our careers. And if we keep competing to satisfy our need for love we might even accept losing the competition for money. Toxic romantic love is the opiate of the losers. We might not be on stage, but when we kiss someone and make them ours, lock them down, and expect no one else to ever kiss them again, we feel like we are. We feel like we are on a stage of our own and the rest of the unjust world may just keep on spinning.

In a world built on competition it will forever be scandalous to love a colleague at work because how can you compete with and exploit people you love? And the love between friends or even love for animals, will never be taken seriously because that love will not lead to generating a family unit that spawns more

competing,

tax paying,

consumers.

Loving people we shouldn't love is an act of rebellion we should indulge in. The creation of stronger communities is dependent on circles of people that love each other beyond the normative definitions of romance and family that keep all the 'losers' in check.

Love breeds kindness and gentleness and we cannot have a world built on love until we stop believing that kindness and gentleness are weak.

Misbelief #4:

**The strong
are sure and
convincing.**

**Doubt is
weak.**

One of the strongest traits of the 'winner' is their self-confidence, their lack of doubt and persuasive determination. There is no room for vulnerability and chance. No room for cautious consideration. The winner is the man or woman of action. They know, they decide, and they act. If the consequences are harmful for anyone that is simply unavoidable, collateral damage, a continuation of the fact of life that there always must be winners and losers. Hence the one that acts like they know, even when they might not, is still always rewarded more than the one that shows hesitancy and doubt.

**Decisive action is
applauded even if
restrained
consideration
might avoid
unnecessary
suffering of the
innocent.**

This is a classic Shakespeare trope. Romeo, Hamlet and Macbeth are all men caught in the middle of being a man of thought and feeling versus a man of action. In all three cases there is a constant pressure for them to be a man of action, either via their rivalries, their social status or in the case of Macbeth his own wife, they're all being pushed to act. Yet all three resist before giving way and as soon as they do give way there is always tragedy afoot. But their resistance is never met with understanding, in Hamlet's case he even chastises himself for such resistance, and thoughtful consideration is still marked as cowardice in all three cases.

Though we have found the perfect short circuit for such consideration, religious faith or scientific knowledge, both of which may be used as the springboard for decisive action.

Over the course of human history value systems have been put into place to eliminate the necessity of this daily individual consideration and direct people's behaviours in the socially acceptable mode of the moment. Religious beliefs and scientific knowledge have remained the basis of justification for most of today's value systems and wherever there is a dilemma the most vociferous voices will always rely on either one or the other to support their claims. Take for example the abortion debate. It is impossible to follow a debate on whether to allow a pregnant person to have an abortion or not without encountering recourse to religious beliefs or scientific knowledge.

**The value of life
itself must be
either defined
exclusively
religiously or
scientifically, and
the justification
must be
convincing.**

Either the embryo is endowed with a human soul since the moment of conception hence it will forever be a mortal sin to destroy it at any point in time since a sperm fertilizes an egg.

Or there is a specific point in its development from embryo to foetus ready to be born that a human being becomes a human being which should be protected by rights as much as its adult mother.

Both positions attempt to eliminate doubt via agreement on a definition, and both positions, ultimately, need to be 'believed'.

**What if there are
specific instances
where we believe
in scientific facts
in just the same
way as we believe
in religious
doctrine?**

In one instance the religious community is agreeing on a definition of a human being endowed with a soul, on the other the scientific community is agreeing on a set of observable traits that define a human being. In both cases the people involved must agree on a verbally expressed definition and believe in it following that agreement. But once all doubt is eliminated, in both cases, the people concerned may start considering their position as immutable factual knowledge and hence fall into the trap of dogma. Both religion and science can be dogmatic. And both faith and fact could be false knowledge.

Is it Faith or is
it False
Knowledge?

The difference
is *doubt*.

If a religious leader is persuasive about the existence of God because he is sure to see God everywhere and in everything, without a shadow of a doubt, that person is not showing Faith. He is actually exhibiting false knowledge and his **certainty** is what makes the difference. One must watch out when false knowledge disguises itself as faith. For *Faith* is built on *Doubt* and they are not opposing forces but aspects of the same process. I may truly have Faith in the existence of God only if I doubt this very possibility. Once I doubt, once I realize that it's much more probable that there is no God at all, only then may I start to have Faith in God. Faith exists against all odds.

**Most people
arguing from a
position of
certainty, both
using religion or
science, are most
of the time
applying false
knowledge.**

The person of Faith would not commit harm to another without hesitancy and restraint. For the real person of faith will always harbour the doubt that they might be wrong. A person of faith will not label a homosexual a sinner simply because a book or a holy person tells them to. Because as soon as the book or the holy person are followed without doubt and their words become an authority without hesitancy as if built on fact and not interpretation, right there, we no longer have real faith but instead we have false knowledge. Yet, in a world that rewards only certainty it's better to show false knowledge than have a faith built on doubt. And the same problem plagues science.

Science shows us
the gaps in our
knowledge yet we
behave as if there
are none, even
though what was
scientific truth a
century ago is today
clearly known to be
false.

It's incredible how many people feel confident to talk about scientific 'facts' based on what they remember from a couple of classes they took twenty years ago. So many believe that what religions say is based on ignorance and science is the truth. Yet many don't realize that the science they think they know is based on interpretations that might have already been discarded decades before they even encountered them in school! Science is not a list of immutable facts and definitions. Science is primarily a method of investigation, and the meaning of the results of this method is not always self-evident, it needs interpretation, which is a subjective, historical process.

Old men in the
desert replaced
by old men in
the lecture halls
and laboratories;
and we're still
studying what
we've been told
by old men.

If we're going to read and teach the discoveries made by science two hundred years ago in reverent and idolizing ways than we might as well just keep teaching the Bible. Because the whole point of science is that it's discoveries and interpretations change and yet we keep teaching school curricula as if it doesn't. Why? Because we want to convince students that having knowledge and being determined about it is more important than having doubt and admitting ignorance. Or worse, speculating the possibility of an alternative. And yet even the simplest of scientific facts might not be fact at all. Take for example the infamous X and Y chromosomes and their effects...

**You might
believe it is
scientific fact,
but it might be
10% fact and
90% socially
constructed false
knowledge.**

Evidence shows that a human being that carries XX chromosomes at birth has the potential of developing traits in adulthood of a female. And carrying XY has the potential of developing traits in adulthood of a male. That's as far as we may go, *that the chromosomes give the person the potential of developing traits.* There is a big gap between this more factual definition and the socially prescriptive notion of XX = girl = woman. A person with XX chromosomes needs to go through a variety of steps with a variety of influences both biological and environmental to actually arrive at the destination of female woman. There are many *ifs* and *buts* in those steps that we never account for...

**A society that
abhors doubt
would rather
prescribe
definitions on
false
knowledge.**

So, when a baby is born, as soon as they land into the world, the first thing we do is look at whatever shape their obviously underdeveloped baby genital is and immediately declare BOY and has to grow up to be a MAN or GIRL and has to grow up to be a WOMAN. The assumptions are huge and unfairly prescriptive because it is obvious that this baby is unable to give birth to anything and this other baby is unable to inseminate anyone. And yet we need to declare that as a state of fact, with the persuasive confidence of a knowledge that we do not actually possess. Because who knows how each of these babies is going to grow? In truth, nobody may tell, neither for their bodies nor for their minds.

**We suffer
systemic violence
and cruelty as
soon as we are
born in a society
built by winners
who believe they
know what is and
what should be.**

A society that is unable to handle the unknown, a society that is unable to handle doubt, a society that wants immediate, safe and immutable answers for everything, is a society constantly ready to be duped and manipulated. This is an integral part of the competition algorithm because our need for answers stems from our desire of a winner, a messiah, that will give us answers and solve our problems. And there will always be someone ready to step up and tell us what we need to hear whether using science or religion instead of saying the truth – *I don't know. We have to wait. There are doubts. We need to tread cautiously unless someone else is harmed unnecessarily.*

**When
religion is
turned into
the science of
persecution
and
oppression.**

All these themes are brilliantly, and timelessly, dealt with in Miller's *The Crucible*. What is truly scary about that play is not only that it's a perfect example of how blatant lies could be used to persecute people in a highly dogmatic and superstitious society, but how afraid, terrified, the people in power are to exhibit any doubt. It is this fear of doubt that drives the entire process, which is a very rational, quasi-scientific procedure. The institutions demand evidence, the evidence is interrogated, a book of knowledge is used to analyse the evidence with, and a sentence is arrived at. Yet, the people who doubt this very process are immediately put under suspicion, and there's the real rub.

**We live in a
society that
has waged
war on
Doubt, Faith,
Love and
Kindness.**

Whether through dogmatic religion or dogmatic science the winners are always doing the same thing; pretending that they may give everyone certainty where there is none. Though we have thousands of stories that show us how unpredictable life can be and how we need to remain open to possibility including the possibility that the people around us may not be all selfish and greedy; and that maybe, if we treat everyone with love and kindness, maybe the world will be a better place. And maybe doubt is the way, not certainty. Maybe we do need to doubt all the giant systems and institutions that we take so much for granted; and maybe, just maybe, we do not need their certainty at all.

Maybe we can
know enough things
to live with the
uncertainty of
everything else that
we do not know,
without stepping on
all those around us
out of fear and
hubris.

If we allowed doubt to be a part of our value system than both the abortion debate and the gender debate would be non-issues. Why? Because as a society we could simply agree that we do not know and hence we do not have to define.

In the case of abortion we do not know whether it is truly morally acceptable or not to terminate a life that hasn't been born yet. We simply do not know. So, allow the pregnant person to decide. It is their responsibility, their conscience, let them think and feel and consider and come to their own conclusions without prescription.

Same for gender. A baby is born and we do not know whether they will grow into a woman or a man, whether they will be queer or want a family or any of the variable life behaviours and choices that come into play with identity. So, live with the doubt, do not label and allow the person to grow and discover what they are becoming, let them engage with the unknowns of life that may never be truly certain.

**In both cases we can simply support
their decisions with love and
kindness as they find their own way
of dealing with their doubts by
having faith.**

But that wouldn't work in a competitive world, or a competitive world wouldn't be possible if people showed such doubts and lived with faith supported by love and kindness.

So, it's easier to convince everyone that:

**It is just you and your family against
the world.**

**That we know exactly what a boy is
and a girl is, and everything else is
fancy politics.**

**That we know who our friends are
because they are certain of the same
things we are certain of and everyone
else is an enemy.**

That capitalism is the only viable economic system and it certainly works.

That everything we're unsure of can be simply plugged in with God, who can't be argued with.

And we're certain that there must be always doubtful losers and they should follow and that there will be convincing winners that show unwavering conviction who must be rewarded.

Misbelief #5:

**The prize for
the winners
is literally
the entire
planet.**

But the worst part of a society built on a winner/loser dichotomy must be how millions of losers simply allow the few thousands of winners to take everything they want and squander it. *“They worked hard for their money so they should be allowed to buy whatever they want with it!”* Including the amazon rainforest or private data about our daily needs and desires. Every day so many of us worry about the degradation of our planet and the future of humanity but we still cannot see how this is the only possible consequence of a competitive culture that rewards winners. **Winner takes all.** Literally. Forever. There’s no way to stop it unless you stop having winners.

The planet
cannot be a
trophy, a
reward, since
we simply
cannot afford to
give it away.

Our planet, planet Earth, and the ecosystems on it, and the resources that consist of its very materiality, all, in some way or other, sustain life. All of life. Including human life. One of the gravest mistakes humanity has done is to ever believe that this planet belongs to someone. That the ground we walk on may belong to one person or another for the sake of their prosperity. That it may be given. This very core belief is at the heart of how our current civilization was built and now there is disaster everywhere. Not only do we need to stop thinking in terms of winners and losers but we also need to stop believing the planet may be won or owned. We can't own it; we live on it and we're a part of it.

But you, you who have listened to
the Story of the Chalk Circle,

Take note what men of old
concluded:

That what there is shall go to those
who are good for it,

Children to the motherly, that
they prosper,

Carts to good drivers, that they be
driven well,

The valley to the waterers, that it
yield fruit.

From *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

by Bertolt Brecht

The haunting beauty of the final lines of Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* lies in their potential universality. What if the only measure for whether someone should hold on to something or other is their ability to care for it? Not whether they are able to buy it or not, or whether they won it or not, or whether they've inherited it or not, or even whether they've given birth to it or not, but simply their ability to care for it. What if all other measures by which one may take possession of something are completely suspended and we simply recognize our ability to care? What kind of world would that be? A caring world, yet an illegal one.

**It is
impossible to
care for
something
you mean to
profit from...**

...since profit inherently implies exploitation, and exploitation will always result in the extinction of that which is exploited. Yet profit is protected by law, hence exploitation is protected by law. The catastrophic impact we have had on the planet since the industrial revolution is simply immeasurable. We might love our lives in the big cities, with the giant theatres and malls and exotic foods ready for our consumption at every corner. But we never, ever, stop to reflect on how all of this was achieved by people that did not consider any of the possible consequences on the rest of the planet and all of its inhabitants, human and other, by men of action.

**We need to
move beyond
the law to
envisage a
world of
care.**

If we do not move beyond what is legal and truly start to think in terms outside the typical property rights that have led to the creation of our current world, we will never be able to build a world that is not sustained by exploitation. Yet this is so hard to achieve simply because we're born in a system that ensures we never think outside the law. In fact, we are literally told that we will be punished if we behave outside the law and hence we shouldn't even think outside the law. There is a whole system in place that ensures we grow to behave only in specific patterns, mostly competitive and exploitative, whilst believing that we are free and aware, instead of programmed and ignorant.

**School is
where most
of this
programming
happens.**

The educational system is fully orchestrated to sustain and promote these misbeliefs and to convince everyone that they have to work hard so that one day they may get a piece of the planet. Not only are we geared for this competition, but we are also systematically punished and made to feel like absolute losers if we attempt not to compete. We must obey at all costs, fit in the box and exit the system a competitive, functional member of society ready to take the world but also ready to follow and obey. A deluded individual with hopes and dreams ready to be crushed and just enough education to know how to pay taxes and not end up in prison. Though that's not a problem either.

**Most schools
exist to
prepare
losers but
some are
there just for
the winners.**

Elite private schools, Ivy league universities, all the top educational institutions of the world are reserved for the rich and mighty to literally produce its world leaders. We can see very clearly where the winners are coming from and it is a production line of inconsiderate narcissists who believe that their superiority gives them the right to own everybody else's life. People that not only buy the planet and its resources but also buy other people. Entire populations are bought by the rich to work in their industries, not to mention all the women and children bought and sold to satisfy the depraved appetites of the elite. Winner does take all. But why is there no rebellion??

But what about all
the kind-hearted,
well-meaning
teachers that do their
best every single day
to educate young
people into thinking,
feeling and
compassionate
adults?

There are millions of teachers that truly love education and do miracles every day to keep going. People that believe the true goal of education is empowerment. But not only does all of this take huge amounts of personal energy from those teachers to actually put in practice, it also, in most cases, fails, bar for the one or two students we manage to leave a lasting effect on. Because school is embedded in the world, and school alone cannot resist the rest of the world. Even if there is some good in the institution that is school, that good is very quickly neutralized by everything around school. And yet the general structure of education always remains the same. Competitive and meritocratic.

Schools are there to indoctrinate in childhood the ultimate lie at the heart of our civilization, the same lie the justice system uses to control us in adulthood.

The lie of a morally responsible, individuated, free will.

The lie at the heart of all false meritocracies.

Misbelief #6:

All this is
acceptable
because we
believe we are
inherently free
agents, aware of
our decisions.

The human aspect that is taken for granted the most in this system is our consciousness itself; our ability to be aware of things and our presupposed freedom to decide and act. This assumption, the assumption that we are conscious hence aware, hence free to decide and act, is what supports all of the above. It is this assumption that removes all responsibility from any system of thought or behaviour and puts that responsibility on the individual. Competition is fair and just because you are aware of the circumstances, and you are free to decide and act. If anything went wrong with your life it was entirely your fault because you took the wrong decisions. But we did not, so fuck you.

**There is
nothing more
overrated
than free
will.**

Okay, so you make your own choices, that's how the saying goes. Well, have you ever tried to consider all the things that we do not choose that shape us and our lives in extremely significant ways before we dump it all on our so-called freedom of choice? When we judge someone for their habits or dysfunctional behaviour and think of them as weak willed, what are we truly judging? Are we taking into consideration all the things that person could have never had a single shred of say in? For the sake of the argument, let me list the things you could not have ever possibly chosen just to see what we're actually left with at the end of it all...

**You did not
choose your
genetic
makeup.**

To start with, you did not choose the genetic makeup you've been literally born with, and this includes:

The original general tone of your personality and temperament.

What subjects you'll eventually be good at in school.

The shape of your body and your skin colour.

Any potential predisposition to mental health problems and any neuro-divergency.

Your potential sexual orientation.

The limits of your physical strength and predisposition to health issues.

**You did not
choose your
parents and
their
families.**

The next extreme force you had no choice in that shaped you entirely is of course your parents and their families. This would include:

The presence of any toxic individuals or predators at home.

The core value system you were raised with, religious or other.

The tragedies or traumatic events that befell your family.

The cuisine you were fed in the earliest years of your life.

The kind of attention, emotional and otherwise you received.

The economic social class you were born into.

**You did not
choose your
schools and
teachers.**

Widening the circle, the next big influencer we must account for in the first quarter of your life is of course education, which once again you had no say in. You did not choose:

The schools you attended.

The teachers you met in those schools, good or bad.

The other students you met in those schools, friends or foe.

The syllabi you were taught.

The methods of investigation and thinking you were taught.

The stories about other cultures and your own culture you were told.

**You did not
choose the
country and
environment
you grew up
in.**

Finally, you also had no control over the socio-cultural and physical sphere you grew up in which means you had no say in:

The mother tongue you spoke.

The geopolitical tensions or conflicts around you.

The levels of safety around you.

The economic policies.

The chemicals in the air and water you breathed and ingested.

The entertainment available.

The books and knowledge available.

The entire history of your country and all its consequences.

**So, after 18 years of
being shaped by
powerful forces you
have absolutely no
control over, during
the most vulnerable
periods of your life,
you are finally told
to exercise your so-
called FREE WILL!**

For years on end we are shaped internally and externally; by our own biology, our families, our schools and our countries putting in us a set of belief systems and principles, shaping our dreams and desires, our defence mechanisms and idiosyncrasies, putting into place all the programming that is going to influence our behaviours and decisions for the rest of our lives. Where is free will? And if it is there, how free is it really? It's never free of our own biology. It's never free of our past. It's never free of the limited options available in front of us. If we need to stick to the idea of free will, then the question has to be free from what?

**Is it really
free will or
are we still
talking of
ghosts in the
machine?**

Without having to push for a definitive yay or nay about whether we have free will at all or not (though scientific research is mostly pointing towards the nay) it is already very safe to say that there is no such thing as a free will cell, or free will gene or free will muscle anywhere inside of us. Though it is here that even the most secular of atheists revert to some form of spiritual essence, I find those people that do not believe in souls going to hell or heaven yet still clinging to the importance of some free floating free will as quite paradoxical. And yet it is still the core belief that we justify everything else with, including our entire legal and justice system. For how could we judge without freedom?

**We need to
believe in free
will so we may
judge
individuals
instead of
society.**

Hence, back to our original point, we need to believe in free will so that we may justify a system based on competition and all sorts of false meritocracies. If we had to truly acknowledge how small and limited our will is in face of everything that shapes us, we would have to face the fact that it is ultimately **only luck** that separates the so-called winners from the rest of the losers. It is only because the winners had the fortune of being born with the right set of genes to the right parents in the right places with the right schools that they had what we might misinterpret as being the strong will necessary to make them indeed winners and indeed worthy of being on stage.

A system built on the premise that every individual is a free agent whose results are a direct consequence of their efforts and free will, is intrinsically and unavoidably a system that enables, promotes, hides and benefits PRIVILEGE.

A hierarchically competitive system based on winners and losers is automatically a system based on enabling the privileged to wield power and authority over all others. A belief that has been believed for so long that it is assumed to be as obvious as human life itself. And thus you end up with poverty stricken working class men that are living as non-slaves only in name who would still agree to a system in which billionaires may exist and who would even go vote for a billionaire to run their country. And they would never, ever, question why they think the way they do and what is shaping these decisions for them because they believe themselves to be rational free thinkers.

**But how
many are
actually
aware of
what makes
them who
they are?**

How many are conscious not only of their hunger and thirst and sexual desires but also of what has given them their dreams and ambitions? We live in a time when so many point fingers at others claiming that they are ruining age-old traditions or institutions by bringing an ideology or other into the conversation when their own world views are nothing but pure ideology in practice. There are still too many people who believe themselves to be 'free' of ideology simply because they think they are conscious and aware and rational thinkers and yet it is the ones who believe themselves to be free who might be the most under ideological control, **their chains still invisible.**

**There is NO such
thing as a
FREE THINKER.**

**Either you see the codes
that sustain your
rationality or you don't.
But no thought or decision
making is ever 100% free
of influence or bias.**

There is no such thing as a no strings attached understanding of the world and human civilization without a framework of beliefs and ideas that sustain that thought. Even something as simple as liking a car and agreeing to the existence of cars is ideological. You only like cars and agree to the existence of cars because you believe that individual independence and the movement of the individual is more important than the planet. **That is a belief not a fact.** Cars are an aberration to anyone who believes that the planet and all life on it is more important than their individual movement. So, you either know the beliefs that make you who you are or you don't. Being free from beliefs is not an option.

We are so
obsessed with
being in control
and knowing what
we're doing, that
we're terrified of
anything that
points to the
contrary.

One of my favourite plays talks about all this in the most hilarious way possible but it's all there, the loss of control, the existential question of how free or not we are, the power of the will or absolute lack of it. This is Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*. As a small French town starts to turn, citizen by citizen, into rampaging rhinos, the protagonist, Béranger, and a group of friends and colleagues, attempt to understand what is really happening and why. Why would someone turn into a rhinoceros? What motivations could there possibly be behind such a decision? And is it a decision? Or is it more like a disease that you catch? The results are both funny and unnerving.

Once we all turn
into rhinos we
will still say that
that's what we
wanted all along!
We decided to
become rhinos!
It's all still good!

Having been told that lack of choice is the worst indignity of all for practically the entirety of our lives makes us truly the worst hypocrites in the most dangerous of times. We would rather keep insisting that we are free, intelligent people making good rational choices rather than actually admit the truth; more and more we are under constant pressure to conform and behave in terrible ways that if truly ever given the choice we would not. Just think of the omnipresent technologies that invade our lives as we keep pushing the buttons of stupidity and exploitation whilst believing we're doing so out of choice. We all believe we can choose not to buy a smart phone, but can we?

Here's where the big lie comes into full play:

We are so convinced that everything we do is our fault or our success because of our individual choices that have been fully in our autonomous control, that even when we are being monitored and controlled every single day with advanced technologies that ensure we remain addicted to behaviours that are meant to keep us subjugated we still believe that we are the ones choosing and we can stop it whenever we want to!

And so, we keep allowing it to happen and we keep playing a game that will eventually kill us or make our lives entirely meaningless. We see it happen day by day, yes, not unlike the frog in the pot of boiling water, and we keep saying it's fine because it's by choice.

*Hence the world keeps
burning whilst we watch.*

But there is still one final misbelief that cements all the other six into place once and for all...

Misbelief#7

The belief
that all of the
above is
simply
'natural'.

When people get into arguments about human behaviour they tend to use nature as an argument. In fact, a lot of people tend to use either genetic discoveries as a means of cementing a behaviour as natural or the existence of the same behaviour in animals, again to prove that this behaviour is natural. Yet, there's a big problem with why people want to prove something is natural and that reflects on their wrong understanding of what nature is. **Most people still believe that if something is natural then it is unavoidable, unchangeable, universal, has been so since ever and probably will be so forever, and there might also be something good about it. *All of these are false ideas about nature.***

**Nature is
complex,
mutable,
varied, time
bound and not
necessarily
'good'.**

Everything that is natural had a beginning and will have an end, this accounts for human nature and our behaviours too. Behaviours that are considered intrinsically 'human' started somewhere and just like they started they might someday end. Just because a behaviour has been popular for the past 300 years and today we think of it as 'human nature' doesn't mean this behaviour can never lose popularity or stop altogether and also doesn't mean it's been with us from the dawn of our species. This also implies that nature changes over time so it's not immutable, and with change you get variety and degrees of everything. Natural doesn't mean universal in a strict sense of the word.

**Volcanoes,
hurricanes,
dangerous
bacteria and
viruses,
they're all
natural...**

But that doesn't make any of these things necessarily 'good'. Religion has done a lot of work over the centuries to convince people that if something is natural than it comes from God and therefore this must be 'Good'. Of course this was a total misconception. Most of nature, outside of us and maybe certain high functioning animals, is amoral. Things just happen as part of a chain of events that have no specific final goal other than dealing with the energy changes underway. So trying to prove that homosexuality or abortion or transitioning are unnatural and immoral by saying that they are not found in nature outside of humans is already a non-argument.

**Is there truly
such a thing as
UNNATURAL
behaviour?**

Peter Shaffer's *Equus* deals beautifully with this problem. A teenager commits a heinous crime, blinds six horses by stabbing them with a metal spike. How could such abnormal behaviour be explained? He loved horses. His family consisted of an educated mom and dad, very average middle class people, nothing extreme or abnormal. He's described as a gentle though unambitious teenager. What could get him to act so violently? The story is presented to us from the point of view of his psychiatrist, Martin Dysart, as he attempts to understand what went wrong with this boy. But the case makes Martin probe not only this boy's psyche but psychiatry itself. What if normality is the problem?

**What if Alan
Strang is a
beautiful
human being
as he is and
normality is
wrong?**

As they pass through their teenage years how much do our children deform themselves to fit in? How many urges and impulses do they hide out of shame because they know society will consider them as strange and abnormal?

And what about all the 'normal' things society itself perpetuates every day?

Body alterations of all sorts, most of them unhealthy, are considered normal. Horribly unhealthy working hours in jobs whose function is suspicious or even unethical are considered normal by everyday standards. Yet, as soon as someone feels too strongly about something that's not in vogue; they're the abnormal ones.

**The normal
and the
natural go
hand in
hand, both a
means of
oppression.**

Nature, as used in social discourse, is nothing but the normal after a hundred or so years. Someone starts a behaviour, the behaviour is promoted so more people practice it, the people in power profit from this behaviour so they oppose any attempts at stopping this behaviour or changing it, then, after a hundred years of people practising this behaviour, enough children are born that do not remember a world before this behaviour existed. After long enough the behaviour isn't only normal but becomes natural. That's the way it is, that's the way it shall remain, and if you don't practice it there is something wrong with you. If you don't practice the natural you are unnatural.

**But why
make us
believe in
nature to
begin with?**

Simply because if we believe something is natural than we will not fight it and will enable it. Even if the belief might cause direct harm to others, create injustice and social inequality or discrimination. Slavery, for example, always rests on some form of dehumanization of the nature of the slave. Since this person is of an inferior nature, or worse, unnatural, then it is okay to enslave them. This abuse of 'nature' is clearly at work in the competition algorithm. The above six misbeliefs are conceptions about human nature that people still believe firmly without question because they think these are immutable aspects of humanity yet this may not be actually true.

**‘Nature’ is another
stop gap argument
that ends the
discussion,
another false
answer to complex
questions that
require complex
answers.**

As soon as someone answers a question with 'nature', the conversation ends. Hence, 'nature' becomes another way of preserving ignorance instead of an opportunity to appreciate the complexity of everything, including human behaviour. Like all of nature, human nature is something that has changed and will keep on changing and to use 'human nature' as means of ending a conversation, by implying that some behaviours simply have to be accepted, is actually a consequence of ignorance. Classic example: *there will always be rich people and poor people, we cannot change that because it is human nature.* False. Because even if it were human nature, we can still change it.

**Recap: Seven
misbeliefs, that
together make
the
COMPETITION
ALGORITHM, a
cyclical system
which will drive
us to oblivion.**

Seven lies that we have believed for so long that we now assume to be human nature itself:

The lie that we need privileged leaders who must be winners.

The lie that everyone else is a loser and must be a follower or a threat.

The lie that love and kindness are a private panacea that give meaning to the lives of losers.

The lie that only facts and knowledge are strength, whereas faith and doubt, are weaknesses.

The lie that the winners deserve to own the planet with everything and everyone on it.

The lie that we are all inherently free to think and decide thus all of this is justified and legitimate.

And the final lie, that cements it all, that all of this is natural and thus since ever and forever and maybe even 'good'.

Yet these are all false generalizations about human nature and the only reason why we keep believing in these misbeliefs is because we

KEEP PERFORMING THEM

INTO BEING

even though there is already plenty of evidence that we could believe otherwise and have another understanding of human nature.

**Other beliefs and
values that
balanced out
these lies got
pushed aside
when neoliberal
capitalism took
over everywhere.**

But this is not all of human nature. Every day we have examples of people coming together to help each other without judgement and without competition to survive and defeat obstacles in their communities yet you do not see this in our world leaders and money makers that run all the major world industries. Why? Because neoliberal capitalism is the individualistic ideology that has been chosen by our world leaders in conjunction with big industry money makers over the 80s and the 90s to ensure that capital keeps growing. And capital does keep growing, we have many more billionaires than we did thirty years ago, at the expense of all life on earth.

**We allow them to
do this by
enabling the seven
misbeliefs of the
competition
algorithm, giving
us the insane
world we have
today.**

We allow big money industries to keep destroying our planet and our environment, we allow states to keep waging wars, we allow poverty and injustice to keep spreading in every city; even if we are wholeheartedly against all these things, by simply living our life according to the basic infrastructures that maintain the competition algorithm going we enable and sustain everything we hate.

And us, the artists, the storytellers, the theatre makers and entertainers, have an essential role in the enablement of these seven misbeliefs and the competition algorithm. We enable all of this and even promote it in the most basic processes of the creation, promotion and distribution of our work.

**It is time to
reassess the
purpose of
theatre...but
first take a
break.**

STOP AGAIN

TAKE ANOTHER BREAK

TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AROUND
YOU

BREATHE SOME MORE

LISTEN TO SOME MUSIC

FEEL EVERYTHING

PLEASE GO OUTSIDE AND TAKE A
WALK

LOOK AND BREATHE AND FEEL
MUCH MORE

AND COME BACK ONLY WHEN
YOU FEEL READY TO START
AGAIN.

NO PRESSURE.

**THE
(UN-
INTENTIONAL)
HORROR
OF
THEATRE**

Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal have already argued clearly and shown us how theatre robs us of our agency. Hence Boal's mission to democratize theatre and give audiences back their own voice and empowerment in engaging with the stage as a means of rehearsing for action in daily life. Continuing on this anti-Aristotelian path of thought I'm here attempting to unravel another level at which theatre undermines our ability to imagine a different form of social organization beyond our current one built on hierarchy and competition. The theatre's power over us lies in its most basic of conventions, so obvious to be considered invisible and non-threatening.

**Every means
to separate
and select
people is a
micro-
violent act.**

What I am defining and emphasizing here is a consistent and repetitive system of micro-violent acts that perpetuate a list of beliefs that are in fact false and yet continue to fuel many of our behaviours and social norms. I'll walk you through a typical commercial theatre production and it's run, to highlight these moments and their mostly unconscious effects on the people they touch. Starting from the very education of the performers and artists that will end up coming together to stage a play, competition is drilled into their minds and values from the get-go. Who's the better performer? Who's the better writer? Who will be chosen? Who will be given a leg up into the industry?

**The
nightmarish
life of
performers...**

I feel strongly for all of my performer friends and I do not always understand where they find the strength to keep struggling to make a life as performers. I surely hope it's not only the dream of someday making it big that's keeping them in it because the chances of becoming a so-called star are so infinitesimally small for thousands of performers compared to the few that ever get into the limelight that such a dream is beyond masochistic. Yet it is also believable because it is this very dream that is sold to all performers all the time as they keep forking out the little money they make to attend one workshop after another in the hope to nail that one audition which will change their life forever.

**Living with
constant
competition
and
repetitive
rejection.**

Rejection hurts, and whether we are accustomed to it or not it will always hurt (maybe those accustomed are the ones hurt the most...). To have a profession that should give you enough money for sustenance which includes constantly being told that you're not good enough and that you should try again, with never any guarantees of when you will land a paying role, is mentally and spiritually debilitating. And yet I keep seeing so many that keep taking the abuse, that keep accepting being treated rudely or even abusively until they themselves have to become rude and abusive in order to beat a system that has been beating them for far too long.

Pretty faces
on glossy
posters does
not
necessarily
mean healthy
people.

Do we ever think about any of this when we see those shiny posters in the streets? When we see the beautiful pictures of performers in character looking cool or sultry or menacing and we think “wow, they’re amazing” do we think of all the abuse this person has received for them to get to that poster? Why do we accept so blatantly that performers may have addiction and mental health issues, sometimes even thinking of it as cool and in character? How many of our favourite performers are alcoholics or addicted to strong drugs or known for exhibiting abusive behaviours? And these are the ones who make it! What about the hundreds of thousands that don’t? How’s their mental health?

**When living
with tyrants
and
megalomaniacs
becomes the
norm.**

But let's say you get hired! A performer lands a role in something big. A cool production with a couple of stars thrown in and a big-name director. That's when the nightmare might just be starting. How can you ever navigate through a whole parade of larger-than-life egos constantly telling you what to do and how to do it? The director, the writer, the producer, all of them with their own vision and goals for this work, all of them competing for attention and the last word on what you should be doing on stage. Is it possible to actually do this job without shutting your emotions and opinions out, to simply become the best puppet in town? And what if they're downright abusive?

**How much
abuse can you
take to stay in
the game and
someday be
told ‘you’re
good’?**

When abuse becomes a norm, health becomes dispensable. And for most people working in the theatre industry, or any entertainment industry for that matter, health is always dispensable. Overworking, aggressive working environments, the use of demeaning language, self-doubt and anxiety inducing conditions, the unacceptable becomes normalized. And it goes on and on even after the show is on stage and hopefully successful. Everything is tolerated for the sake of success, to come out a winner, to be seen and recognized as distinct from the crowd. That is what we want, to be seen as special by the hundreds that will sit in front of us every night.

And finally,
you are
JUDGED by
know-it-all
critics and
needy
audiences.

But how do you achieve this success? It's by meeting the standards set by the arbiters of taste, the critics, and by giving the audiences the good time they've paid for. No one is sitting there in front of you to listen to you and hear what you have to say. No one is thinking about how hard it might have been for you to actually get up there on that stage. No one is thinking about what this director or writer might have had to do to get this done. No one is saying, 'let's try to appreciate whatever these people here are going to show us.' Oh no. They're all there to see if you, all of you, measure up to their expectations, expectations that have been built in a culture of hierarchy and competition.

**An audience is
never innocent.
Especially if it
has paid to
watch.**

Having been indoctrinated from birth into the constant task of judging what is better and what is best, the audience is always ready to tear the work apart no matter who's doing it and for what reasons. And yet there is also the opposite reality where huge audiences sit enthralled in front of works that maybe should be torn apart! The severance of aesthetic standards from ethical standards has happened in the audience as much as in the artist. The audience doesn't care if this movie, which cost millions to make, is designed to promote once again the military industrial complex as long as it delivers the one hundred and twenty minutes of distraction the audience paid for.

**This is the
systemic horror
found in all the
entertainment
and performance
industries, not
just theatre,
whether we like
it or not.**

Because all of these industries have been built by people who championed elitist, at times sadistic, practices in search of the masterpiece. In search of the work that shall grant them immortality. A devotion to the arts where everything may be sacrificed; time, family, health, the world itself, for the egomaniacal perfection of the artistic moment itself. This is where aesthetic standards have been completely severed from any form of ethical standards save for outright murdering people for the sake of art. This, coupled with the business minded money makers who only care about the fame and fortune that can be manufactured by exploiting such artists, gives us a true nightmare.

**Surely, not
everyone!**

**How can we
blame every
single person
working in
theatre? Or in all
the arts??**

No, this is not about individual blame. This isn't even about intentions. This is about the core values of the structures we operate in. Even before capitalism, attitudes and behaviours have been deeply set into the inner workings and essential frameworks of all the arts to ensure that specific patterns keep being enabled. So yes, even if your play is very clearly anti-capitalist and calls for the safeguarding of the environment, just by making an audience sit in front of you in silence and having selected the best actors to perform in your show and having put a price on a ticket and made people pay for it, it's already too late. You are still playing by the same old rules of the competition algorithm.

**But this is not
why we go to
the theatre!**

**Theatre is
where we
encounter
humanity!**

So, I ask again what I asked in the first part of this book: where is the real human connection we should be getting from this live encounter? What if all we are truly getting is a routine means of separating people from their humanity and judging them for painfully acquired skills? As an audience we are already separated by the ticket price and then we get to once again practice the central instructions of the competition algorithm in this entertaining form without ever truly questioning the inhumanity of the processes involved. But the performance might have a moving message about diversity or ridicule the absurdity of our politicians thus all is right!

**A product of
liberal values
that became
toxic and
impotent
(maybe even
boring.)**

Truth is, most of our theatre is drenched in liberal politics that are clearly unable to offer any of us a proper way forward out of the horrible mess our civilization finds itself in. When you have an audience that cherishes a show that explores the struggles of homosexuals in the eighties but is unable to react to the treatment those performers received to actually end up in that show, you start to realize where the problem is. We are so obsessed on the correct 'message' and on the correct 'representation' in the fictions that we put on stage and yet we completely disregard the disgusting capitalist reality in which that fiction is constructed and presented.

**Ever noticed
how it's
getting even
harder to
work in
theatre?**

But if theatre is such a good means of maintaining a status quo than why is it always being financially undermined? Because theatre is literally a very old remnant of a system that has evolved far ahead of its original shape. The Aristotelian rules of drama have adapted themselves from form to form, from the stage to the screen, from the big screen to the small screen and now from the small screen to the portable screen. It is all theatre. The theatre in everything is constantly holding us in place, keeping our attention distracted, making sure we never dance around the fire to emerge changed and ready to change our society. The old theatre, the tradition we love, is now expendable.

**But what if we
don't need it?**

**What if we are
capable of
practicing
something else?**

**What if we
leave old
theatre behind,
take what we
truly love away
from it and give
it new shape?**

What if we may
practice something
that reinforces more
truthful and
healthier beliefs
towards an
algorithm of
COOPERATION
instead of
COMPETITION?

**What if we
could all dance
around the fire
again and bring
about a new
world?**

Augusto Boal said
*Theatre of the
Oppressed* was the
rehearsal for the
revolution. But now
we truly do need a
revolution. We just
need to agree on
what our beliefs are
going to be.

BUT before I conclude this first part of the Not Theatre book, let me reassure you, lest I'm misunderstood. (Though it won't be the first time and surely won't be the last!) Not Theatre is not against theatre. I'm not expecting anyone to stop doing theatre, though if that's what you are inclined to do I won't stop you. But no, I'd rather people make theatre than go work in banking or health insurance. So why all this? Why try to convince you of the possibly horrible purpose theatre has in this world? Do I intend to make you forget of the beautiful moments theatre may give us? Of all the times we did come together to connect, feel and understand ourselves more through theatre?

Theatre is still a
beautiful, joyful,
human experience
but it's one of the
best things we can
have in THIS
WORLD. *What if
we don't want **this**
world anymore?*

I'm going to return for a second to one of the oldest, most cliché-ish mantras in show business:

**GIVE THE AUDIENCE WHAT
THEY WANT.**

What if the audience is aching for something beyond spectacle? Beyond distraction? Beyond a joyous moment away from their daily burdens? What if the audience wants to live in another world? What if the audience is so disgusted by how corrupt and unethical this entire civilization is that it is ready to give up being a passive observer expecting entertainment and stimulation but wants to truly get involved? To start connecting in ways that build a new way of life?

**As artists we
cannot work for
success and
recognition in an
unethical world
whilst also
hoping to
dismantle it.**

There comes a point where
one needs to understand
the relation of aesthetics to
ethics.

Any aesthetic standard
created and agreed upon
within an unethical system
is automatically tainted by
that system and upholds
that system in its very
appreciation.

**Our aesthetic
standards need to
start accounting
for the unethical,
exploitative,
divisive and
irresponsible
systems they are
perpetuated in.**

**We need to start
living with a set of
ethical beliefs that
respect more our
human complexity
and avoid
simplistic
understandings of
human nature.**

The seven misbeliefs I detailed in this first part are the opposite:

They reduce human complexity to banal binary options.

They make everyone compete for individualistic, materialistic and dogmatic goals.

They enable violence, exploitation, shame and division.

They reduce our ability to become ever more aware, ever more free and ever more loving in community.

And they enable the destruction of our planet.

**Worst of all, they
make us believe
that all of this is
set in stone and
may never be
changed.**

It is time for another set of beliefs and a process to put these beliefs into practice for an ethical artistic purpose and I hope that this part starts the conversation in that direction. I'm writing this book, first and foremost for my friends, and for those that hopefully shall become my friends. This is an opportunity to truly engage with each other's beliefs and purposes at another level, a deeper, more meaningful level. And start chipping away at the bubble of cognitive dissonance that holds us all in place, full of anger at the horror of the times we live in yet still playing the same games to get on the same stage for our meaningless fifteen minutes in the spotlight that change nothing.

This is not a condemnation. This is a reflection on the contradictory nature of our lives. We did not choose to be born in this system and we are still unable to live outside of it. But revolutions need to start somewhere, and that somewhere is first and foremost within ourselves and our communities, in the way we think and feel, and in the way we work and love. I shall be making some suggestions for what these beliefs could be in the next part but first...

STOP

TAKE A BREAK

TAKE A LOOK AROUND YOU

BREATHE

LISTEN

FEEL

TAKE A WALK

LOOK AND BREATHE AND FEEL
SOME MORE

GO HAVE A CHAT WITH
SOMEONE YOU LOVE.

COME BACK ONLY WHEN YOU
FEEL READY.

NO PRESSURE

PART TWO

**The
Ethics &
Aesthetics
of Not Theatre**

**ETHICS &
AESTHETICS**

**The
impossible
world starts
becoming
possible first
in writing...**

What drove me to write this book? Why do I feel the need to say all of this? There's a loneliness in writing a text such as this one. I'm fully aware of how few people would ever take such considerations seriously and how easy it is to think of these observations as 'crazy' or 'unrealistic'. So why do it? Why dedicate so much time to it? There's surely a therapeutic aspect where one needs to simply unburden themselves of all the thoughts they feel are occupying their waking mind. It is a relief to put everything on paper and somehow open it up to be shared. But there is also the original impulse of where such thoughts come from to begin with. And that is so much harder to pin down.

**On some
occasions,
one can't
help but feel
everything.**

On some level it is truly an inevitable gesture, one that spills out of empathy towards all those I see around me, both friends, close by, and afar through the media. Every day I see people struggling and dreaming to make it in the arts and culture entertainment industries. Performers, writers, directors, artists of all kinds. Beautiful, creative people that have stories to tell and poetry to share with the world. I also see the thousands of examples that do make it out into the world, the published books, the distributed films, the plays on stage, each at their own level of success, sometimes appreciated and sometimes not. Not to mention the millions dropping their tiny bit on the socials.

**Trying hard
to make it
big whilst
the whole
world burns.**

Simultaneously I see all this within the framework of what is happening to the world, and how so many of these people are reacting to that. The world is burning, the world is at war, the world is hostile and intolerant, the world is losing its grip on reality and slipping into further fragmentation and violence. None of us want this and most of us want to do something about it. Want to say something about it. Would like to contribute with our stories and our visions; drop our little drop into the ocean hoping that enough drops would someday bring about what we all so desperately need, a change. Another possible outcome. Something kind and understanding and generous.

**No matter
how great
the shows
are, the
conversations
after remain
bleak.**

Everyone is trying really hard indeed to shed some light into the darkness. And yet I still see frustration and disillusion at every corner. No matter how hard we share our visions and spread our messages, the world keeps getting worse. The big changes we seek do not seem to be anywhere near possible. So, I felt the impulse to ask, I have to ask, *what if we are a big part of the problem?* What if whatever we do is simply adding fuel to the fire? What if no matter the message, no matter the visions, we are simply perpetuating the same old processes that we hope to change? What if the mistakes that we do are so integral, so fundamental, that we are unable to see them?

**So many are still
afraid of extreme
positions; maybe
because they still
can't fathom that
we're living in
extreme times?**

In person, when I discuss such matters with friends, I tend to be very averse, super frustrated really, with any position that seems conservative and traditionalist. Some people think of this as an extreme stance and they might be correct, since I'm naturally resistant to anything that might constitute a result of traditional values, including things most people consider wholesome such as family, career ambition, business and profit making in general, the nation state, the justice system, education and philanthropy. Things many consider to still being the bedrock of a supposedly good modern life. Yet I'm honestly resistant and suspicious of all that and anything it represents.

**What if we still
haven't learned
from the past
enough because
we still
romanticize it?**

This suspicion comes from a deep disagreement with the core argument of any conservative or traditionalist stance, i.e. that at some point in the past, and usually this isn't a very distant past, usually it is within the memories of those holding the argument, things were better. The world was more respectful, had better values, was somehow a good world, and it is only recent ideas, recent trends or behaviours that have made everything wrong. Usually, these recent trends tend to end up including rights given to women and minorities and any 'softening' in the ways we treat children. But the fix is easy, we revert to the good old ways, and the world will get better again.

**Why is it so
easy to
believe that
in the
kingdom of
the blind the
old can see?**

This argument isn't only made by older people (though yes, it is very predominant in that category, which also makes me quite averse to the 'wisdom' of the old...) but many young people today keep going back to such views too. I'm in complete disagreement with such positions since beyond the nostalgic fantasy of a rosy era in the past there's actually no logic in anything conservative. On a very basic level of cause and effect, action and consequence, if we are in the shit today it's only because of what happened yesterday. The past is where the mistakes that have led to today have been made. My question though is, which past? How much further back do our mistakes go?

**How long
ago is a
long time
ago?**

What if we are suffering from the consequences of mistakes that we have made, as a species, not twenty or thirty years ago, but maybe hundreds of years ago, or even thousands?

Why should we assume that when we were much, much younger we had the right ideas, and we got the fundamentals of our civilisation correct?

Shouldn't the assumption be the reverse?

**Isn't the
younger, less
experienced, less
mature human
the one most
likely to make
horrible
mistakes?**

What if we, human beings, have locked ourselves into a dysfunctional mode of thinking and behaving, at a very early stage of our social development, with the wrong ideas on how to relate to each other, with the wrong ideas of how to relate to our planet, with the wrong ideas of how to manage our relationships, with the wrong understandings of how we fundamentally function, and we stuck to those ideas for centuries, and now here we are, destroying our planet beyond repair and creating artificial intelligence to take control of our purposeless lives whilst celebrating the billionaire of the week?

**In an age of
extremities
only extreme
explanations
will suffice.**

Step back, I'm making a mistake saying us as a species. What I should truly be saying is all those of us that believe in individualism, competition, the nuclear family, private property, imperialism, and the need of rulers to rule over the giant masses of people that need to keep getting bigger and fatter and seen as swathes of numbers for machines to manipulate and manage. Again, I'm in my own historical bubble seeing only as far as my western education allows me to see. Who knows, maybe there have been people someday, a long, long time ago, that did things differently, collaboratively, amicably and had much more beautiful cultures than we do.

Maybe they
lived in peace,
had a good
time, and died
in peace too.
But that's not
us.

We are not living in peace and certainly not dying in peace. We're living in corruption and destruction and struggling through every waking hour as we submit to forces and behaviours we have no say in living without, and we die knowing that most of our time was wasted to make others richer as we get ever closer to take everything and everyone down with us.

And yet, for better or for worse, we still hope for change. But what do we truly need to change to bring about change?

The argument I have made in the first volume of this book is that we need to recognize how unintentionally we keep perpetuating a set of misbeliefs that make our civilization the exploitative horror that it is. A set of very basic ideas that people believe to be universally true and that when put together lock our behaviour at all levels of human interaction, from what we teach our children, to how we treat our loved ones and what we do for a living, into a competitive dog eat dog world. And yet these ideas are only true as much we want them to be. These ideas are only true because we keep insisting for them to be true.

**And, even worse,
we keep insisting
that these are not
only true but also
right and what
should be, even
though the
results are
disastrous.**

We have all the necessary freedom to revise these ideas and start believing in notions that lead to a much more ethical life based on collaboration instead of competition, in harmony with the world around us instead of exploitation and destruction. Though there is still a huge mental and cultural hurdle we need to face and that is the problem of our aesthetic standards. Our aesthetic standards have been formed in mostly male dominated times within male dominated industries, by so called masters that have always insisted on the supremacy of the aesthetic standard above all else, maybe even above human life and human suffering. This is a problem we keep avoiding.

No pain no gain
the saying goes,
but whose pain is
it? And why do
we keep
glorifying
suffering for the
sake of abstract
ideals?

The idea has always been, for centuries, that it is justified to suffer and to make others suffer as long as you create a masterpiece. This notion is so deeply ingrained in our culture that we do not even consider, at any point, whether anyone was exploited or abused or coerced or treated unjustly in any way when we consume, if not appreciate, any work of art. The 'good' in a good work of art is only an aesthetic 'good', it is not, in any way, a moral 'good'. Our aesthetics are completely dissociated from our ethics.

**What was
destroyed for
you to be
entertained?**

Places?

Lives?

Worlds?

And this is not because we simply turn a blind eye, the reality is even more horrible. We do not bother with the ethics behind the creation of the work of art because we assume, in a very cynical way, that yes, someone has been treated horribly for this to exist, someone has been unjustly exploited or worse physically harmed to make this work of art and that is normal. Just as much as we don't care at all that the components of our mobile phones are manufactured using materials excavated by slaves in Africa or assembled by children in Asia or delivered to us by workers that have to pee in bottles through catheters to make a non-living wage.

**We do not
care because
we've been
taught not to,
and we're
punished
when we do.**

So no, we do not care how performers have been treated in drama school, or on set. We don't care about who has been humiliated and broken and who exploited whom and whose life got ruined. And we don't care what the contracts of crew members and technicians look like, and whether anyone is able to feed their family after a good day's work or not and whether this person could take a break in a decade of work. We might not even care about what was the very private pain of the very people whose story is maybe being told, the people that might be exploited right in front of our eyes for the sake of our entertainment. We only care about the so-called aesthetic standards.

How can
something *of* this
world ever bring
about another?

What if we look
for something to
grasp which is
already of another
world instead?

If we are truly to start making art that brings about change our aesthetic standards need to change first. We cannot build a more ethical world if we are still creating works of art that adhere to aesthetic standards born in the very unethical world we are trying to change. Our ethical standards need to start informing our aesthetic standards. And we cannot find the aesthetic standards we should aim for unless we truly understand what our ethical standards are to begin with.

**Our action
must be
ethical before
it becomes an
aesthetic.**

How can we start living in a world with better ethical standards? My suggestion is to believe in a set of notions that would oppose the misbeliefs that give us the competition algorithm. Oppose the competition algorithm at its very core, in its most core ideas, and live with a set of ideas that would put into practice a collaborative algorithm. A system of human interaction that would ensure everyone's dignity, purpose and health whilst protecting our planet and its future. A system that eliminates competition and hierarchy built on truths that are more conducive to a healthy understanding of what it is to be a human being.

STOP AGAIN

TAKE ANOTHER BREAK

TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AROUND
YOU

BREATHE SOME MORE

LISTEN TO EVERYTHING

PLEASE GO OUTSIDE AND TAKE A
WALK

FEEL THE BARK OF A TREE

LOOK AND BREATHE AND FEEL
MUCH MORE

AND COME BACK ONLY WHEN
YOU FEEL READY TO START
AGAIN.

NO PRESSURE.

**SEVEN ETHICAL
BELIEFS FOR A
COLLABORATIVE
ALGORITHM TO
FIGHT THE SEVEN
MISBELIEFS OF
THE
COMPETITIVE
ALGORITHM.**

We need to believe in a different set of beliefs to make them come true. This is the gambit. Beliefs are not true because they are etched in stone somewhere but because enough people believe in them to be true. To change society we need to change the set of beliefs at its heart. And we do this by choosing the beliefs we want to believe in, beliefs that should give us an ethical standard that would give rise to a world, a life, that is not based on exploitation and competition. These are the ethical beliefs of the collaborative algorithm, a set of beliefs aimed to upend, dethrone and defeat the beliefs of the competition algorithm.

ETHICAL BELIEF #1

**We do not need
privileged leaders
who are winners.**

**We need humble
leaders that lead
off stage.**

Just because we need people that use their experience and expertise to take responsibility for organizing others and direct the community to find solutions and resolve problems doesn't mean that these people need to be privileged and be given more intrinsic human value than others. Individuals that are of sound spirit and mind have always dedicated themselves to great causes all throughout human history without wanting to or needing to become rich and almighty. It is only the egomaniacal narcissists who have done so and they have hijacked the very idea of leadership. We do not need that to run communities. And strong functional communities may help each other run the world.

Our so-called liberal
democracy is an
absolute sham and it
is time we tried
something else. A
more communal
and authentic
democracy without
privilege.

A democracy hijacked by the elite and completely dominated by the relationships between politicians and the captains of industry is NOT A DEMOCRACY AT ALL.

All the teachers teaching kids in schools that the governments of 'Western' countries are representative democracies where the will of the people is being respected are simply lying to the face of children.

It is only the will of captains of industry and warmongers that is respected in our so called democracies and unless we start trusting only politicians that do not have privilege nor want privilege we will never get out of this toxic leadership style.

**We start with
finding the right
leaders in our
communities,
leaders that stay
away from
privilege and that
work against
privilege.**

In every community, any community, there is only one kind of right leader. The leader that desires to abolish inequality. The leader that is willing to give up their own privilege and guide others with such privilege on how to give it up. This is the leader that is first and foremost spiritual and mentally sound and is born out of both necessity and community. The leader that the people turn to and say 'we need your help' not the one that comes forward and says 'I can save you'. A leader that is believed in by others more than they believe in themselves. That is the only leader that is not a narcissist. A leader that is ready to lead by caring and loving. A leader that is able to mother.

ETHICAL BELIEF #2

**There are no
losers.**

**Everyone finds
dignity and
purpose in
community.**

In essence there is nothing that makes one person a loser and the other a winner. It is the system we live in that frames us as such, though this reality could be changed if we want to change it. We need to choose our own value system with which to value people and not the value awarded to us within this system of exploitation. No one is a winner, and no one is a loser. Everyone is a human being that struggles to understand their value and find their purpose. This may only be done in community. Only in community may we truly understand our value and find purpose. A resilient community of interdependent people provides the necessary support for everyone to have a meaningful life.

If everyone grows
in safety to find
purpose in
community with
meaningful activity,
then no one will
need to recourse to
privilege and
entitlement to
safeguard their ego.

In such a community there will still be leading figures but these would not be fixed and would not have any entitlement or privilege, they simply take on certain responsibilities at a time when they are the most fit to actually do so, and if there are others that are also fit for this responsibility then that responsibility is shared, no need to compete and choose a winner, hence no need for losers Yet this may only be achieved if all the members of the community stop believing in winners and losers and work together to bring into being a different world, a world where everyone has safety, dignity, purpose and meaning without having to win a competition. No more competition, no more losers.

ETHICAL BELIEF #3

Romantic Love is
not the most
important love.

Love shared in
community is the
real foundation of
human life and
meaning.

The romantic ideal that separates a couple from the rest of the community should be dethroned. The mountain of evidence available which shows us how disastrous it is to put our hopes for human completion and success on romantic love is simply unavoidable but most of us still insist on dismissing it all just because the notion of that romance which will save us is too sweet to put to rest. The love of a community, the love found in an entire village, is what truly sustains human life. Having the singular partner is a sweet part of it but it should not be dreamt of as salvation, because it is not. This is another false dream sold to us by those that profit from the dissolution of community.

**We need to step
away from beliefs
that separate us and
make us compete,
including the belief
of Romantic Love as
the ultimate
panacea that saves
the couple from the
world.**

The arts, theatre, movies, novels etc. all have had their hand at convincing us of the power of Romantic Love and its centrality in giving our life meaning. A lot of behaviours need to be unlearned for this misbelief to be dethroned. This means we need to open up our minds and hearts to the possibility of a non-possessive love, a love that does not isolate, a love that can be shared and that involves the many. This is the only way towards a kinder world. In a world where we consider the possibility of loving so many more people around us instead of hoarding that one word to our private 'winners', is a world where we are open to kindness without calculation.

**The
redefinition
of love takes
practice and
yes,
heartbreak.**

Fear is what keeps most of us locked in the same old scripts that have been handed down to us. Fear of heartbreak, fear of pain. Most of the time fear comes across as ignorance and bigotry as people are so quick to judge and stigmatize anyone who tries to do relationships differently. But in truth, on most occasions, underneath that vehemence lies a horror. So many are afraid of losing that one thing which stops them from being total losers, their lovers, that they do not realize how much more they already have and could have with community in their life.

It's true that we all need love but not the one shown on TV.

ETHICAL BELIEF #4

**Doubt and
faith are as
important as
certainty and
knowledge.**

We should not be afraid of the unknown but embrace it and allow our values to take us forward into dark places. We need to defeat the fear of saying 'I don't know.' Live by our limits without having to make up certainties for the sake of a false security or to prop up our egos. We cannot have relationships without doubt and faith. In fact, those that attempt to build relationships on certainty, on most occasions, end up having none, or are still immensely disappointed. To have a community one must sustain these strong bonds even when doubt is present. The doubt needs to be faced and accepted, and faith is found to bridge over it.

**We must learn
how to walk
through the
chaos blindly
but holding
each other's
hands.**

This is the only way to truly deal with the chaos that always lies ahead. Things are simply too complex to be predictable enough for us to move safely into the future with certainty. So, it is even more urgent that we elevate doubt and faith in our life. A life that embraces the limits of our knowledge with more humility and expresses doubt without reservation is a life lived closer to the truth of our complex and unpredictable reality.

**This also means that we
must change our
relationship with truth.**

We have to submit to the possibility that we may never know the truth but also to the possibility that truth is not what we need to build a better world.

The scientific method is unquestionably one of the pillars of human development. Yet it is NOT our salvation. If it were, we wouldn't be in this terrifying mess right now.

What could save us is ethical beliefs about humanity. Beliefs about how we may live better human lives in community. These ethical beliefs need to be allowed their expression in doubt and faith without recourse to any science or religion attempting to establish them as indisputable truths, thus turning them into new dogmas.

ETHICAL BELIEF #5

The planet is never a prize, it cannot be owned, exploited and destroyed.

We must all live on this planet and enjoy its fruits in a manner that ensures future generations will be able to enjoy it too.

We have simply exploited the planet enough. This is a hard choice to live by since we literally live inside a very robust and intricate system that exploits the planet and everyone on it at every single level. But in a community of like-minded people, it is possible to start living with what already exists, what we already have exploited and extracted without having to exploit and extract more. Yet there is also an immaterial dimension to this belief that will also have a positive effect on the community. One needs to see what happens when we jettison our notion of private property and become willing to share more our resources.

Can't we learn to live
with much less?

Haven't many before
us lived with much
less for far longer
already?

*True Freedom is not
the Freedom to have
more.*

It's very hard for many to imagine that they could live a life without finding a McDonald's outlet in the middle of London or Paris but that was the reality for hundreds of years and people lived, loved and thrived. I'm picking on food for an obvious reason; it is one of the essential human needs that we have turned into a huge planet destroying industry. Whether it is with the planetary cost of the meat industry, not to mention the suffering caused to millions of animals, or the pollution due to export and packaging practices, we consider so many things as impossible to live without that we forget how humanity has done just that. We did live without all this for a very long time.

The only way we can live with much less is with more sharing and less waste.

We need to live in communities of people that know each other intimately and depend on each other for daily needs instead of the individualist convenience we are so addicted to in today's world.

If we were to do this everything would change. Think about it.

How would our relationships change? How would our habits change? How would the pacing of our daily activities change? How does our perspective of others who still insist on exploiting and extracting and owning the planet change?

Today we believe that our ability to use the available technology so that we buy whatever we need to live on at the touch of a button and it is delivered for us at home where we may eat whatever we like on our own, without the need of anyone's help, as some form of great freedom.

But is this the freedom we want if it is destroying our planet?

What freedom will we have once our planet becomes uninhabitable?

Our notion of freedom needs to be radically challenged. Individualism has bred in us the worst possible definition of freedom.

The freedom of convenience where all we ask is: *what am I free to do?*

And we see everything within our immediate bubble of consequences within a system of insipid laws that guarantee more than ever the generation of monetary profit. This is pure death. And the fear of collectivism for the sake of egotistic individualist ideologies is going to lead us to absolute destruction.

Saving our planet is inextricably linked with our notion of freedom.

**We should be
free to LIVE on
the planet not to
EXPLOIT it.**

**And this WE is
the WE of
yesterday, today
and tomorrow.**

**Only a
freedom that
we may
guarantee
our children
is a true
freedom.**

**This change in
perspective would
change everything.**

**Including the
understanding of
our role on the
planet and our place
in nature.**

ETHICAL BELIEF #6

We have to submit to the possibility that we are not as in control of ourselves as much as we think we are.

Hence, we must be much more forgiving and dedicate much more time to becoming aware of what we do and why we do it.

Dethroning free will changes the way we judge and understand people. This is not a total abdication of all responsibility as some might suggest. But it is a change in perspective on what makes us who we are. Without our constant reliance on free will and control, we have to face the complexity of all our situations and understand better all the conditions that make us who we are. We need to understand better why people take the actions they take and the decisions they take beyond banal one-word explanations such as

because they're lazy,

or they're greedy,

or they're evil etc...

**There is no such
thing as a one-
word explanation
to human
behaviour, ever.**

**The explanation
is always
complex.**

Human behaviour is always layered with multiple influences, always part of long chains of events. And not all these determining events are even visible or known but we must live with this ignorance and still somehow assume a modicum of responsibility. A sober responsibility where one should not automatically judge and punish or even worse, execute, with a belief in an individuated free will justifying it all. Such a change in perspective will also bring about other important changes linked to the other misbeliefs talked about in this book. Since the lack of a justifying free will would put everything into immeasurable doubt, leading to much more sensitivity, kindness and generosity.

**A dethroned
free will
leads to less
privilege and
less
entitlement.**

This understanding of the determined human behaviour will also help us remove privilege and entitlement. Even if there were winners, they are not deserving of that much extra praise since they were simply born at the right time and the right place with the right genes and the right parents to lead them onto the path that would make them winners in this very specific world. *There is no such thing as a superhuman being who lifted himself by their bootstraps out of poverty and became a billionaire.* That is simply a total myth. No body exists in a vacuum; everybody lives in a world with others around them that either support them or they can exploit.

And once we realize how determined human choice really is we would be in a position to completely eradicate all those companies that abuse and exploit human weakness for profit with the justification of individual choice. Don't be a fool in believing that there is anyone in Silicon Valley who believes in free will. They tell you that you have to be strong and that you have free will whilst they develop all the technologies that will exploit the fact that your will isn't that strong at all. They study what determines your every move, and they use that data to control your life. *Our pride is their weapon.*

**But this also
means that
our
educational
systems need
to change.**

It's not possible to have a school for a new world existing inside the old world. There are too many pressures on schools that are completely under the control of the neoliberal powers and the so-called democratic governments. Including, and probably even worse, universities. But we can build a counter school within our communities, a school that protects our children from all the damage that is done to them in school. Preparing them to survive long enough in this world to help build the new one.

**This cannot be done with
stigmatizing, competitive,
individualistic methods where
numbers control the value of our
children's worth.**

Children need to be
educated with true
care in a village
where community
members allow
them to become
who they are meant
to be in due time
and with shared
skills.

Where children grow up to understand the importance of working together to create and sustain communities.

Instead of working from one examination to the next in order to get a better paying job than their classmates.

Our educational systems are rotten at their very core with the seven misbeliefs just like our civilization is, so we shouldn't be surprised why students are becoming stupider and angrier. And why the number of mentally unstable and unhealthy teenagers keep spiralling.

And the horrible truth is that NONE of it is their fault!

**We spiritually and
culturally deform
our children,
make them
morally sick, and
then tell them that
it is their fault
because they do
not listen.**

Only a complete change in the way we understand human nature and human behaviour could lead to the emergence of a truly ethical system for the raising, caring and education of children.

ETHICAL BELIEF #7

And finally, we have to stop believing in nature as some form of answer or explanation to stop attempts at changing human behaviour.

Everything in existence is natural including change.

All human behaviour is natural and all human behaviour can change.

And finally we can stop saying 'but nature' whenever a conversation goes in a direction we do not like. Without dethroning the nature argument none of the above could actually be practiced. I bet you yourself thought 'but that's impossible, it goes against our nature' for most of the above. That is the in-built resistance we have been programmed with to stall change and make change impossible by using nature as a conversation stopper. **We cannot love more people because it is not in our nature to share love, we cannot collaborate because it is in our nature to compete, we cannot share our property because it is in our nature to be protective, etc etc etc.**

**Nature is not the
immutable,
inflexible,
singularly
universal thing
we believe it is.**

And we need to make an effort to start being more real with nature and stop altogether the habit of using nature as an argument by expanding the very definition of what is nature.

Everything permitted by our laws of physics is nature.

Every constant and every variation is natural. If it weren't it wouldn't even exist. This accounts for every single behaviour of ours. Our cathedrals and our football stadiums are as natural as every bird nest and every beaver dam. So is our culture. So is our language. So is everything we write and say and do together. It is in our nature to do so. We are not only a product of nature but nature itself in constant action.

Can you imagine
how much
suffering is
alleviated if we
stop judging
human
behaviour as
natural or
unnatural?

There is a very distinct ethical aspect of suspending this use of nature for judgement. So many people have historically been traumatized, tortured and killed simply because they have been judged as unnatural. And this remains today. Building a society on such a loaded definition of nature brings an untold amount of hurt and suffering into that society. If nature is used as a judgement and a ruler than there will be always room for those that are defined as outside the boundaries of nature, hence unnatural. Those people will always have to suffer. Changing our belief in nature would also change our society and the way it treats minorities and all those who do not fit in.

**Nature is
never a
reason to do
or not do
something.**

**Nature
simply is.**

Change is also as unavoidable as nature. Change is a fundamental aspect of nature. Everything in nature will eventually change, including human behaviour. And, yes, just like there was once a human society without capitalism and then came a society with capitalism, we may once again, maybe starting now, build a human society with another system. Anyone who convinces you that change is not possible is simply wrong. Change is not only possible it is constantly happening and the real question is are you going to be a part of that change or not? Are you going to have a say in which direction that change happens or will you simply be its victim?

**Seven ethical
beliefs to
perform into
being
another
human
nature.**

These seven ethical beliefs about our human nature would help us behave in a very different way, in a revolutionary way.

Today we are constantly fighting governments and corporations to stop them from wreaking havoc in our lives, and we shouldn't stop, we should indeed keep fighting governments and corporations.

But we never address enough the day-to-day behaviours and beliefs that bring those very governments and corporations into existence.

The revolution needs to be an internal revolution too and the **storyteller** needs to be at the heart of it.

STOP AGAIN

TAKE ANOTHER BREAK

TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AROUND
YOU

BREATHE SOME MORE

LISTEN TO EVERYTHING

FEEL EVERYTHING

PLEASE GO OUTSIDE AND TAKE A
WALK

LOOK AND BREATHE AND FEEL
MUCH MORE

AND COME BACK ONLY WHEN
YOU FEEL READY TO START
AGAIN.

NO PRESSURE.

**A Storyteller
with Faith in
Community,
Awareness,
Freedom &
Love**

The reality sustained by the seven misbeliefs of the competition algorithm was mediated by storytellers and performed into being by the audience. It is storytellers that infuse their tales with these codes that run deep inside people's minds, but it is also the very structures and contexts in which the stories are told and followed that make people accept and practice the behaviours of the competition algorithm. For a new algorithm to be made reality we need new stories and these new stories need to be told and shared in a way that dissolves the audience performer divide and rebuilds community with a new creative spirit. A community that dances around the fire.

It is time we break
down the barrier
between life and
theatre and realize
that we are already
performing reality
into being every
day.

*Now we must
perform a new one.*

But what do I mean by **perform** here? I'm using the word perform here more in parallel with how philosophers such as Judith Butler use the word rather than how it has been used more popularly in online culture. For the most part, on social media, when someone is accused of performing a behaviour the implication is that they are inauthentic, that what they're doing is fake and done only to attract attention or gain respect in a manipulative way. The typical example would be of the man reading a feminist book in a park to attract female attention though he is not in any way truly invested in the feminist cause. This is considered performative hence inauthentic.

What if we need to think beyond the limits of authenticity? What if some things enter our reality, literally come into existence, exactly during and through performance?

Our fixation with authenticity is simply the cousin of our obsession with truth. The need to find a fundamental stable certainty about someone's nature that we can judge as their authentic self just like we need to find fixed truths about our reality. Yet most of human nature is not authentically found within any individual human being. Yes, the individual has a brain and that organ encodes a huge list of possible behaviours, but you can never look into a person's brain and tell exactly what behaviour they're going to perform next. Only once done, once acted out, can we trace back the impulses and understand what brought it into being.

Beliefs function in a similar way: only once a person behaves in a specific manner can we understand their belief and this belief is brought into the world in action through that very behaviour. Before that moment it is simply another story. Once performed it becomes reality.

Take the example of money and commerce. Money is a total fiction. The printed paper itself does not have the value it is prescribed and this value changes. So how does it actually function? How do we actually use it if we know that its value is not real to begin with? *We don't use it because it is real. We make it real by using it.* Once we take the story of what money is, the fictional value we apply to it, and we perform that story, we give a coin to someone in return for something, we are literally performing money into reality. If everybody had to start believing today that money is totally valueless and everybody stopped accepting it as currency, money would stop existing.

How much of our humanity is real only when it is performed into being? I'd say all of it. Because our physical existence is not what makes us human. But the meaning we create in performance as we go about our daily lives is. And when you put together the daily performance of millions of people all at once you get an overwhelming reality that seems to have no beginning and no end and exists as hard as the rocks and the trees and the sea. But it is still all a performance.

This explains why we also live so much in constant contradiction. Why we might say we believe in something but also still perform behaviours that totally oppose what we say we believe in. Our beliefs inside our heads are still not as real as the reality in performance. And it takes a lot of conditions that need to be met, conditions found in this reality created by all of those around us that are both constantly experiencing and performing this reality for us to experience, in here, all the conditions need to be aligned for us to be able to perform a different belief into being.

**This is why we need community and
why we need storytellers in
community.**

**But not
any kind
of
storyteller**

The storytellers that will help us perform into being another reality, another human nature, can only be storytellers that themselves are engaging in the fight of the seven ethical beliefs against the seven misbeliefs. There is no direct prescription of what stories one needs to write although there are definitely stories we should start avoiding. But the focus needs to be on the storyteller and their presence in community instead of on the story. The right story will simply emerge from the storyteller that is already doing all the work. And what do I mean by the right work? A storyteller that is already struggling to live with the collaborative algorithm.

**A storyteller that
has Faith in the
possibility of a safe
Community that
strives perpetually
for the growth of
our shared
Awareness, Love
and Freedom.**

One cannot simply prescribe what such a storyteller would write but there are stories that have already been written too many times. We need to avoid these stories simply because they are foundational for the competition algorithm and its seven misbeliefs. These stories are not just individual stories but, in a sense, broader genres that have very intrinsic tropes. Tropes that go against community, that keep perpetuating wrong ideas about our intellect, the way we love and what is freedom. We cannot start living in a new world if we keep writing the stories of the old one. Especially when we know that such stories keep enabling unethical behaviours and unjust realities.

**We need to
avoid the
story of the
individual
dreamer.**

This ethical storyteller needs to attack the problem of individualism starting by avoiding the story of the individual dream. How many times have we been told that we should pursue our dreams? That it's noble to do so even? But our dreams are corrupt if they are individualistic and material. Only the dream of a better, kinder, shared world is a virtuous dream. That is the only dream worth having. A dream that is shared, a dream of something which doesn't exist yet and we need to struggle together to bring into existence. Any other dream, I dream to be celebrated, I dream to be recognized and rewarded, I dream to give this to my family etc. all of these are nothing but corrupt dreams. Why?

Because these are
built on the
individualistic
foundation of me
and not others. *I
need to achieve.*

This automatically
pits us into
competition.

The dream is also corrupt because it doesn't actually change anything or improve anything for anyone. The system remains the same. And as you struggle to achieve you enable the competition algorithm, feed into it even more egotistic energy, to reach your individual goal. How many plays, how many movies, how many stories keep recycling this notion of the individual character with a dream, the character that needs to beat all odds to achieve their goal? This goes back to the winners and the losers. A fundamental trope in so many stories that we need to start avoiding so we may focus more on dreaming and achieving in community. How can we dream together?

**We need to
avoid stories
about the power
of Romantic
Love and
coupling as
salvation.**

How many stories have been written that keep repeating over and over again the toxic notion of the one true love that will be your salvation? How many stories keep perpetuating notions of jealousy and possession as romantic and passionate? How many times do we have to see characters who see themselves as incomplete and lost because they do not have a romantic partner that gives them meaning?

Not only have these stories been written too many times already but they are truly inherently harmful to society.

We keep perpetuating tropes about romance and love that make people feel sorry for themselves and dissatisfied with their lives because they do not have what is being shown on stage.

In truth their meaninglessness stems from a much bigger problem. It is the entire reality they live in, this competitive capitalistic world, that is the problem. Finding a serious lover will not solve it. The romantic story that keeps pushing the normative-cis-monogamous-couple as the ideal standard of love and fulfilment is the perfect distraction from reality giving people a dream that will ensure more radical dreams remain at bay. And the irony is that this dream is also disappointing! It is a total fabrication, a romantic ideal meant to save us which is in fact impossible to hold on to if it were to exist for longer than the two hours it might survive on stage.

How can we show the love we can
find in a village amongst the
people we struggle with to build a
better world?

A love that does not separate the
lovers from the rest of the world
but makes them a stronger part of
it, with more love to share and not
less.

A love that does not breed
competition, where people are
willingly ready to share their
homes and beds and ensure no one
is left alone and cold outside.

Isn't this even more romantic and
idealistic than our TV fantasies?

**We need to avoid
stories that keep
perpetuating the
image of the
singular genius
intellectual
solving
everyone's
problems.**

We have all seen the stories that exemplifies the one genius, always in contrast to all of his peers, always having the ideas that nobody else could have and saving the day (or creating a nuclear weapon...) Not only is this depiction of the genius always false simply on the basic premise that a story is never able to truly capture the collective effect of all those around that genius and all those that came before that genius for those ideas to materialize through that specific individual but most of the times this genius is also an asshole. So we get to see another narrative where we should be grateful for the existence of egomaniacal assholes We have truly have had enough of such stories.

**All intellectual
advancement is
collective. No
human being
exists in a
vacuum, separate
from their peers
and from history.**

**How can we show characters that are
always becoming more aware
through their struggles together?**

As characters struggle against the forces surrounding them, within and without, they need to become aware of what they are truly doing and why.

Instead of the stoic sharp intellects of modern heroes and anti-heroes we can show how we have no clue of what we are doing, how controlled and effected we are by everything around us.

**How growth, a growth in our
mindfulness, a growth in our
awareness, can be discovered through
everyday struggle and not the
singular moment of genius.**

We need to discover how to become more and more conscious of ourselves and what makes us 'us', in an ever-oppressing world that wants to shape us and exploit us *ad infinitum*.
Not be shown egotistic superior intellects to make us feel small and ignorant and ready to give up the reigns to those who are better.

Everyone's consciousness needs to be expanded, everyone's intellect.

This is not only integral for survival but is in itself an essential part of life:

We are more alive the more aware we become.

And to achieve this we need to reveal all the traps, all the ideas and the programs that hold us back from expanding our awareness; dogmatism, bigotry, intolerance, authoritarianism, violence, fear, greed, all the worst aspects of human nature that keep everyone
STUPID.

**We need to avoid
stories where
freedom is a given
and privileged
characters act as if
there are never
any serious
consequences to
their actions.**

What is freedom? Free from what? What does freedom mean today and what did it mean a hundred years ago? Are they the same? Is freedom to sell and buy whatever you want and say whatever you want, truly freedom? Are we ever free from the limits of our bodies and our minds? Are we ever free to truly imagine things beyond this world? Playwrights have been writing about freedom since time immemorial and yet we cannot stop writing about freedom. What we need to stop writing is stories where freedom is not questioned, where freedom is taken for granted and characters act with immense will and agency as if hindered by nothing ever. This is a fairytale we cannot afford.

**We need to
avoid stories
where faith is
belittled, and
doubt is
shown as
weakness.**

What if community, love, awareness, freedom are all only possible if we have faith in them? What if the limits are so material and so oppressive that only a leap of faith into the possibility of community, of love, of awareness and of freedom might help us come close to these experiences in life? How Can we write about faith without falling into the typical science versus religion traps? How many stories glorify the man of action who has no doubt? Or stories that keep presenting ideal worlds run by strict scientific knowledge that has explained and commanded everything beyond any doubt? Stories where faith is turned into something fantastical or ignorant. We desperately need something else.

**What I'm
saying here is
not that we
should all be
writing the
same things.**

But that there are aspects of life that are indeed much, much more important than others and that is where we should be shining our light. Especially if we want to be revolutionary. If we want to bring some form of change. Becoming more aware of the conditions that are giving us the horrible results of the world we are currently living in and allowing people to consider alternatives, another way of doing things, other ways of being, is integral to the creation of artistic experiences that not only have aesthetic standards but are also built on ethical standards. Some stories simply do not need to be told again. And the ethical storyteller would know this.

**To be an ethical
storyteller means
to know what not
to write about
even more than
what to write
about.**

The ethical storyteller is the one that is struggling to live an ethical life on paper as much as in their everyday activities. This is the storyteller that we need for today's world. We need to be ethical storytellers in our constant fight against the the misbeliefs that are shaping our competitive, destructive reality. And we need to do this in conflict with all the other storytellers, all the ones that are writing stories attuned to this world instead of the next one. But the content of these stories is only a small part of the struggle. As I've been arguing since the start of this book we need to look at the method of delivery itself, not only the story but also the theatre.

A storyteller in a
community of
storytellers, a
performer in a
community of
performers, a
world where life
and theatre are
one.

Which brings me to the how
theatre could be experienced
differently, beyond the stage, away
from the divide of the performer
and the audience. How theatre
might not remain theatre anymore
and become a part of life that is
truly being lived in the here and
now.

Instead of the special moment
where we step out of life to see
another on the stage we may
practice something that brings us
all into the new world off stage.

We need to move from the theatre
company to the not theatre
community to see the difference.

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FEEL EVERYTHING

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WALK WITH A FRIEND.

LOOK AND BREATHE AND FEEL
MUCH MORE

AND COME BACK ONLY WHEN
YOU FEEL READY TO START
AGAIN.

NO PRESSURE.

From

Theatre Company

to

Not Theatre

Community

Let's go back to performance. We started this thought process by asking what is theatre and what is its purpose, but we still haven't delved deeper into what is happening on stage. We have identified how the live element is what separates theatre from everything else, how having living people bringing a story alive in front of a living audience is what gives theatre its power and potential, but what else is happening here? When the performance comes alive on stage, when those characters are saying what they say and doing what they do to each other, what is really happening there? What makes a very effective performance compared to a lesser one?

**Great characters
on stage make
us feel things.
This is the goal
of every
performer. But
how does this
truly work?**

Audience members relate to characters, saying, 'I saw myself' in that character, or I empathized with that character, the classic reflection of emotions that leaves one enthralled after a strong theatre experience. But this focus on character might very well be deceiving. It's true that as individual human beings we connect with the struggles of other people but on stage you do not actually have individual human beings, and neither do you in life. The characters of a performance are coming to life in a world not a vacuum, not some neutral white background, and it is only within the context of a world that these characters can come to life, be understood and be empathized with.

**On stage not
only
characters
are
performed
but an entire
world...**

...and whatever is left blank, any gaps in this world left unexplained, then the audience will fill in the gaps with its own knowledge or assumptions. But no character may be understood, their intentions and motivations may be recognized and believed, within a vacuum. I'd say no character may even actually exist within a vacuum. The world around a character is what supports a character into existence. A character has beliefs, has an upbringing, has memories that have happened within a world. Has an environment, both physical and cultural, full of rules and taboos and power structures, and the existence of character is brought to life only in reaction to all of this.

Playwrights need to write a whole world into existence for their characters to be performable. The more fantastic and removed from our daily life this world is, the more work the writer has to do.

In period works or works happening in fantastical settings, the playwrights need to ensure that all of these are clearly explained and clearly evident for the audience to grasp what is going on, since the world of two hundred years ago or years in the future will have gaps that the audience cannot fill in with its contemporary assumptions. All the details of the world need to be as performed as if we're performing character. One gets help from the more obvious elements of set, backdrops, costumes, music etc. All of these bring into existence a world, but then there are the more personal details, accents, phrasing, the language details that suggest class and background.

The power
dynamics between
characters are also a
performed aspect of
the world in which
the characters are
set: how do they
address each other?
Who can do what to
whom?

Who can wield violence? Who cannot? Who is following the norms and the rules of the world, who isn't? All of this is in the performance, in such a way that you may not make the distinction between what comes first, is it the world that supports these characters or the characters that are bringing the world into being? Why is this distinction so hard to make? Because the world is a performed world, and in an effective work of theatre both character and world are performed simultaneously. Not even the actors know the distinction, as they give rise to both their individual characters but also do their part to build the world in which the other characters are living in.

This is not true only for the stage. This is how reality itself works. We perform our world into existence as much as we perform ourselves into existence according to the world's rules within all of our physical and mental constraints.

Just like characters on stage, we believe in rules and norms and according to those rules and norms we perform, we behave by the rules or we break those rules, and we build the world around us as much as it builds us. The distinction between us and our world is illusory and individualism perpetuates this illusion, another central part of our world that we perform into existence every day. We are told that we are individuals and we have individual rights, and the world is a place we need to succeed in and compete in and hence, we behave like individuals that need to compete to succeed in the world.

**But this is
not
essentially
true.**

How can I say that? We can see it all around us, so how isn't it true?

Think of the performance on the stage. We can see it as an audience for the illusion that it is, we can look at it and know that it is a fabrication. But on stage it is not. For the duration of the performance those actors have to perform characters that believe their world to be true and behave by its rules to convince us, the audience, it is true.

This is literally what we do in real life. We believe the world to be true and so we act like it is and it creates us as much as we create it.

But if we're all
performing, who's
the audience in
real life?

Ourselves.

We perform to
convince ourselves
that what we
believe in is true.

So yes, it is true as much as we believe in it, but it is also a total fabrication just like the world on stage. The world is a make-believe world. It simply feels like it is not for two reasons. 1) because it has been performed into existence for many generations and the scripts are now hidden. Though they are still there, still scripts, given to us in school, in family, at work etc. Scripts that have been handed down from one generation to the next, one government to the next and we perform them into being as much as it shapes us into the characters that we are. And 2) because the consequences of this performance are real. You die on stage you wake up at the end of the performance. But...

...if you get hurt,
wounded, maimed
or die in this
performance we call
reality, you die for
real. Pain is the only
true thing that
separates our living
reality from the
stage.

But just because you are in pain doesn't mean that what caused it was not a performance. This is what brings the ethical factor into the equation. On stage there need be no ethics for the fictional characters because the pain caused to them is not being felt by the actor performing but the pain caused to an individual in the lived reality is a real pain. This is both what makes our life precious but also absurd.

How many people, whole communities, whole countries are brutally maimed and killed in horrible wars and genocides just so that those in power may keep performing their script?

When men in power of one country tell the people of another country, “*An old book said your land belongs to us and you are not truly people as much as we are, so we may kill you all and take your land*”, isn't that a script, a story, being performed into existence?

I'm aware that this might sound pessimistic or even reductive to some. Calling our world a performance might feel like I'm reducing the hard truth of our reality into a meaningless fiction that we cannot trust. But, just because something is a fiction doesn't mean it is meaningless and we have to keep in mind that whether the reality is considered as performed or not, the consequences are still physical and fully suffered by all of us. That can never be meaningless. **Thinking of our reality as performed instead of encountered should not change its value.** What we are changing is our understanding of its nature, our conception of how it works. And there's a very bright upside to it all.

**If the world
is performed
than we can
change the
world by
changing our
performance.**

If we rewrite our scripts, we may actually perform another world into existence and we may become other characters. We need to break the fourth wall once and for all, recognize how what is happening on stage is also happening in our day-to-day life, there is just much more people involved, the scripts have been handed down for far longer, and there are consequences that can't be avoided.

**But it is all still a
performance that we are
fully involved in.**

**Boal was
already onto
this when he
told us that the
Theatre of the
Oppressed is a
rehearsal for the
revolution.**

His intention to democratize the stage involved, amongst other things, bringing people onto the stage for them to practice the performance they may take back into their everyday life. His methods and exercises are still excellent and should still be practiced. They give us an opportunity to communicate with each other about life situations that may only be understood or expressed in their full reality using direct performative methods. But we can take all this a step further and realize how the off stage is a performance as much as the onstage, a performance that has real consequences. This is why we are not rehearsing anymore.

Once we drop the distinction between performance on stage and real-life off stage, we realize that there are no more rehearsals. This is all performance, this is all real, there are always consequences.

In our everyday performance, the consequences reach far and wide, and effect both those close to us and strangers who might be on the other side of the planet. Especially in today's interconnected digital sphere where a video filmed in London or Los Angeles might have an impact on people watching it in Japan or Turkey. We do not know the extent of the impact of our performance. We do not know the influence our participation in this daily world building has. What feelings, motivations, intentions are we instigating in others around us with the world we enable by whatever we are saying, doing, sharing in public?

What codes are we
repeating? What
norms are we
enabling and
promoting?

How are we being
shaped into who we
are by the
competition
algorithm without us
knowing it?

But now that we DO KNOW
of this algorithm, now that we
are AWARE of its influence in
our lives, how about we STOP
maintaining, reifying, this
competition algorithm in our
daily behaviour?

How about we stop
performing this competitive,
individualistic, exploitative
world into existence and
START performing into being
something else?

But you cannot do it alone.

So, what if we think not of the theatre company that is performing on stage for an audience, but of the not theatre community that is performing a new world into being for itself and others?

This book is an attempt to lay the theoretical groundwork for such a community. We need beliefs and beliefs can be written and chosen by a group of people just like a script can be written and chosen by a theatre company. The attempt here is to bring into focus a set of beliefs that would bring into existence a world which makes collaboration and compassion its central truths and not competition and exploitation, like what we have now.

A community that is self-aware and is bringing about a new world intentionally, not blindly, as it expands its awareness through doubt and study.

A community that understands the limits of its freedom yet struggles every day to understand and practice freedom.

A community that understands the centrality of love and faith in its existence, how only love and faith may hold its members together beyond cynical individualistic and competitive norms, to share and dream together the other world being performed into existence.

A shared dream for a real role in the world, a world that gives all of us value and purpose without having to compete and exploit others to find such value and purpose.

In all of this, stories will remain central.

In a community where collaboration and compassion form the core pillars of its functioning, the aesthetic value of the story being told, and even of the performance or the artwork so to speak, will never be valued higher than the ethical dimension giving rise to such a story.

Does this mean that writers and artists and performers who are trained and skilled become irrelevant?

Not at all. When someone gives up their privilege, they are not losing their value, they are simply gaining a value that respects the community instead of a value that exploits it and manipulates it.

**The skilled
storyteller is there
to help and guide
and show the
unskilled without
ever creating a
barrier for who
can or cannot go
on stage.**

Preferably there isn't even a stage. But a circle and the storyteller, performer of the day may rise out of the community and present to the community what they need to express, what they need to show for the community to discuss, to understand, to react to and engage with. This could be an actual performance or simply the presentation of a text and group reading of what that person has prepared. This is not a production but a sharing. A work that is shared for the community to engage with but not to judge aesthetically. The writer or performer is not there to be told whether their work is effective or not or how it could be improved. Not at all. They are there to be heard.

Once aesthetic standards are dethroned in favour of the ethical standards of the community, how brilliant the work is aesthetically, becomes a secondary concern.

Of course, it is still a joy to read and perform theatrically effective drama! I'm not urging everyone here to share things that have no structure or no effect whatsoever. No, there still needs to be an effort to communicate well and to present a story in a way that will be effective enough for the community to understand and feel it's concern. But this is not the primary and ultimate objective. In a not theatre community, the objective remains the life of the community itself. To engage with reality as is presented, understood and recreated by the members of the community as they both reflect on their world and work towards another one.

**In a Not Theatre
Community everyone is
the artist, the
storyteller, the
performer and the
audience all at once.
And everyone should be
guided in the necessary
skills to be effective but
not to gain privilege, but
to be able to enjoy the
practice even more.**

A community that values everyone's need to tell their story and express their experience of the world around them, is a community that would champion the arts, performance, dance, drawing, film making, all forms of creative expression, throughout the entire childhood and life of its members. *A healthy community ensures that its children are never stopped from practicing performance and creative expression.* Children should be thought to dance and sing and tell stories and made to practice these skills all throughout their life, for hours every week, without exception, all the way into early adulthood until they may choose themselves how and what to express.

Today's world does its utmost to kill this in our children, as soon as possible, telling them that only the very rare and special ones may end up becoming great dancers, great singers, great performers...

...and so that should be reserved to the very few willing to commit their life to such practice (and having parents that may pay for such training). We breed generation after generation that look at performers and artists as special elitist celebrities instead of the human beings that they are, human like everyone else, having the ability to express themselves like everyone else, and should be valued like everyone else.

**There is no need for
celebrities in a world
where everyone is being
given human value and
purpose and voice.**

In a community where everyone has grown up dancing, and singing, and performing and writing and telling stories, and making movies, generation after generation, the creative expression of the people becomes an integral part of their everyday life, a consistent source of beauty, thought, feeling, conversation woven in the very fabric of the community as much as eating and building homes and caring for the weak and loving.

No one is left out of this creative expression and no one takes the pedestal from everyone else.

**This is what I'm calling
dancing around the fire.**

This is the community that brings dancing around the fire back into its life. But this can never truly happen in a society that keeps championing the competition algorithm.

Individualism and hierarchical structures of domination and exploitation breed resentment, cynicism, hopelessness and destroy communities. We need to build communities that resist all that at their foundation.

The values and beliefs I'm trying to suggest here are meant to be a foundation that may unite all the fights, all the struggles of our time.

The fight against capitalism and
the materialist, individualist,
exploitative way of life.

The feminist fight against sexism
and homo and trans phobia.

The fight against racism and
colonialism and the movements to
decolonise our culture and
societies.

The fight against obligatory
monogamist practices and the
obligatory nuclear family, and the
movements to respect and
recognize alternative relationship
structures, anarchist, polyamorist
and other.

The fight against fascism of all kinds and the movements to abolish policing and curb state violence.

The fight against war and genocide and the movements to make our governments accountable and truly peaceful and democratic.

And, of course, the fight for our planet, to save it from annihilation, respect it and grow on it in a truly loving way.

The fight to end exploitation, of everything and everyone, and give everything and everyone dignity, value and purpose.

**How can one do
all of this? How
can one bring all
these fights
together into
one? Is this
possible?**

If all of these remain a hundred separate fights, attempts at reform in a world that doesn't know any other, it will forever remain an impossible dream. But there's another way to acknowledge and fight all of this.

We do not need to fight a hundred fights, but one fight.

We need to fight the system, change the system and all else follows.

But what is the system?

It is **not** bureaucracy, it is **not** the governments, it is **not** the banks, it is **not** the markets, it is **not** elections, no, it isn't, *though it also is*, but it still truly isn't.

Why?

**Because one
needs to look at
the foundation of
the system, and
the foundation of
the system lies
within us and
our communities.**

The foundation of the system is the codes we allow to motivate us. The beliefs that are ingrained in us. Household by household, town by town, the values that run our daily life is the system. These values move the behaviours that we perform every day, these behaviours give rise to a world, the world is codified, structured, institutionalized and passed on. We become the system. The system we are living in today is what I believe to be running on what I have called the competition algorithm, the seven misbeliefs that motivate all our behaviours into performing the world we have today into existence.

**Change this
algorithm, build
another
community,
motivate other
behaviours, and
another system
will be possible.**

Yes, the protests have to keep going. Yes, the dirty work in the streets can never stop. Yes, we are also activists and artists and lovers and builders. The system will not be changed only by who we vote for or how many we are when we protest, but by how we live every day with each other, how we perform and why, what we write and for whom, and yes, also how many we are when we protest and who we vote for. But it is all connected, and it all needs a foundation, a foundation that should be found in a community built on beliefs that will give rise to another set of human truths and a way of life that is truly ethical above all else.

**A way of life
with ethical
standards
that rise
above its
aesthetic
standards.**

And let's never forget that we need another world, not only because we have the ability to imagine and perform into being a better one, but also, more urgently, because this one is very clearly ending, whether we like it or not. The collapse of our current civilization, the capitalist civilization, founded on liberal, individualist values, the civilization that champions competition and exploitation, is running itself into the ground and destroying our very planet along the way. There is a mountain of evidence, published research and now, daily events showing how untenable this mode of existence is.

The rising world temperatures are out of control, geopolitical tensions are escalating daily, genocides are being perpetrated right in front of our eyes, surveillance technologies are omnipresent to monitor our every step and monetize our every desire and artificial intelligence is making it impossible for us to know what reality is anymore.

Isn't this enough to convince us that we need a fundamental change?

Yet nothing seems to be able to stop any of this, even though millions around the world cry every day for all of this to stop.

Why?

Because this is all the result of the system of beliefs that is integral to the civilization we have built. **This IS how this world runs.** The result is very clear: more billionaires are created annually. The system is functioning. This civilization is doing what it was meant to do. Exploit and destroy everyone for the sake of the champion few that will become richer and richer, until everyone else is gone.

Expecting this system to hold the answer to its own symptoms is like expecting a disease to cure itself.

We will not stop exploitation, war
and genocide, poverty, and
environmental and political
collapse unless we actually change
the way we live.

And we will not be able to change
the way we live unless we change
our individualist dreams.

And our dreams are fuelled and
controlled by the entertainment
industries and the aesthetics
around us,
by theatre,

THE theatre,

THE THEATRE IN EVERYTHING.

We all have to
play our part in
this but as people
that wish to
inspire others
with our art we
have an even
higher moral
obligation.

We need to be the ones that show how competition can be eliminated, how aesthetic standards can be dethroned, how beliefs can be changed. We can be the ones who promote another way of life to perform a new world into being. We need to be the ones that start the dance around the fire and bring the rest of the community in,

with our writing,

with our conversations

and with our relationships.

Deep down we all know this is a dream worth fighting for...

**But our cowardice
keeps stopping us.**

**We are cowards
because we are afraid
of losing popularity,
of losing followers, of
losing viewers and
readers, of our
businesses losing
clients, of our egos
losing face in a world
of winners and
losers...**

How many so-called artists have never said a single word against capitalism?

Not a single word on the socials against the genocide in Gaza?

Not a single word in public against the paedophiles in power?

How many are still afraid of saying in public:

I'm a feminist.

I'm an anarchist.

I'm a socialist.

I'm a communist.

I'm anti-fascist.

I'm anti-capitalist.

Free Palestine!

**Why all this
cowardice?**

**Is popularity
truly that
important?**

Or are we afraid of
being called
hypocrites?

Terrified that all these
movements and ideals
show us ethical
standards we believe
are unreachable and
hence, once again,
we're afraid of failure
and losing face?

Or are we still afraid of
history?

Still fearing that waving
a flag will also have us
accused of the sins of its
past lives?

Or maybe we're just
afraid to be anything
else than money-
making cynical bastards
who don't care.

**But if we do care
then we need not
be afraid.**

**Because when we
wave a flag, we
can stand by its
values and also
learn from its
lessons.**

LIVING IN
CONTRADICTION
IS NOT
HYPOCRISY.

BUT NOT TAKING
A SIDE IS SIDING
WITH THE
ENEMY.

THOSE THAT WALK
WITH NO FLAG ARE
WAVING AN
INVISIBLE ONE.

THE FLAG OF THE
STATUS QUO.

THE FLAG OF
NEOLIBERAL
CAPITALISM.

I'm not instructing you to start waving any of these flags here. Not at all. I'm just pointing out the cowardice of the artist. For there are many cowardly writers and performers and directors out there and yes, you and at times I may be two of them.

**But if there ever was a time
for courage and bravery, this
is it.**

And it takes courage and bravery to say

*I'm going to try something different.
I'm going to try something that will
most likely fail, but I will try it
anyway, because it is ethical to do so
and I have faith.*

Our second big
hurdle beyond our
own cowardice is
the problem every
artist and writer and
theatre maker has
been dealing with
since ever: how do
we win over rich
people?

Rich people are clearly a fundamental problem in our current civilization. Understanding how their existence undermines the lives of everyone else is crucial, and unless they devote themselves to their communities and truly support others altruistically, they will remain the biggest threat to community. A community may only thrive if the luckiest amongst its members give up their privilege and their resources to share everything with those around them. It is these people that may hold the key to the future. It will be the rich that will have to give everything they have for the sake of the future world unless they truly want to remain blind and callous and...

**be the heroes
sitting upon
the golden
throne on
top of a
mountain of
death.**

Unless the rich give up everything they have for the sake of the communities around them, they will one day have to accept the monstrosity that they truly are. Now of course, by rich, I do not mean someone who has a couple of houses (even though that person also has a lot to share already) but we're clearly talking here about the millionaires and the billionaires who keep making more and more millions through the capitalist system, meaning, directly or indirectly, through the exploitation of others and the planet. These people are the only ones who may bring immediate changes to the system from on top and it is our job to try and convince them from the bottom.

Of course, you
are right to ask,
why should
they? Why
should they give
up their privilege
and riches?

**For 2
reasons.**

Reason 1:

Ultimately, the only reason they are so rich is that they got lucky inside a system of competition and exploitation. Only by exploiting people and the resources of our planet could anyone become a billionaire. This has got nothing to do with hard work. Ever. That, in itself, is already enough to declare that they have no right to be as rich as they are.

Reason 2:

If they have at least one eye open, they should recognize how they will be forever remembered as destroyers of life on earth and hopefully that's not the legacy they want to leave behind. Although we know that some of them want to destroy life on earth and hope to create a new life form to replace us so that they are remembered as its gods. These are the true villains of our age.

But our job is to convince all of these people otherwise. We need to show them how they could truly change the system and show them that things could be different for so many people, if only they shifted their goals from individualist dreams to building communities. We need to show all the lucky ones in our worlds, the ones that have the most resources and power, that another human world is possible and we are already performing it into being.

We must do our best to show them this **because we need their help.**

Now, just for some perspective...

as of this writing
there's an estimate
of **3,028 living**
billionaires, globally
and rising. And
there's over **2.3**
million individual
millionaires.

*That's A LOT of
billionaires and
millionaires.*

These are all individuals that could bring huge change to life on earth if they realized what responsibility they have and what damage they are causing with the extraction and exploitation processes they invest in to keep making their millions. Bringing even a small percentage of these to the cause of changing this system once and for all would bring untold compassion into the world and fan the flames to birth a new world founded on the collaborative algorithm and not the competitive one. I understand that it is not easy to convince someone that they shouldn't exist, but this is the reality we have to engage with and our mission if we are to change and protect life on earth.

**In an ethical
world, super-
rich people
with
privilege
wouldn't
exist.**

But let's be clear here, I am not advocating for any form of violence towards rich people. Asking rich people to give up their privilege is as violent as asking common people to pay taxes. When I say rich people shouldn't exist, I'm not saying that they should be dead. I'm saying that they should be normal people with the same dignity and resources and support in communities as everyone else. I do not condone any violence done to any individual. In a world where the leaders are not winners and do not carry any extra privilege, there simply will be no place for those that hoard wealth whilst they control the livelihoods of everyone else.

**But isn't this all
too idealistic?**

A fairy tale?

**It is only a fairy
tale within our
current reality of
the competition
algorithm.**

The world that is in existence right now has been born exactly like this. People started believing in a set of beliefs, built their communities around those beliefs, the rich and resourceful became convinced of those beliefs and hence they financed and supported the communities that gave rise to the world that favoured their further ascendance.

Yet the beliefs they chose and the behaviours they promoted gave rise to an unethical world that prioritised aesthetic standards and competition. A world that shall destroy the planet and life as we know it.

What I'm
suggesting here not
only is possible but
has already
happened before.

But we had no clue
at all what we were
doing and now
we're suffering the
results.

**I'm suggesting we do it all over again
but with more awareness and with
the possibility of better results.**

We have learnt a lot over the past two hundred years, yet we keep behaving as if we have learnt nothing at all. We need to stop being afraid because of previous failures and accept the fact that what we have today is also an absolute failure and we need a more compassionate and kinder world. I'm sure the usual liberal defenders will attack everything I'm saying here with their usual examples of how socialism and communism have failed, since those are the systems that come closest to a world founded on collaborative values like I'm suggesting.

**Yet those
previous
attempts were
still plagued
by internal
competition
and violence.**

The urge to build and defend empires has always been at the heart of every system so far. Today we know better. Today we understand better how worlds are born and die. Here's also why I'm talking about community, not country, not the planet, but local. We do need a state of some sort, but that is not the concern of this book. Also, if there are enough communities that share the same principles and values then they would be able to form that kind of superstructure in line with their values. At this point we need to exploit what little freedoms we have left to come together in our daily lives within the current system and practice something new.

**We need to find and
practice the values
of a new world in
our small pockets of
existence before we
even dream of
national and
worldwide
movements.**

**We need to come
together in our
communities and
start living now in
the world of
tomorrow before
this one ends in
total destruction
and death.**

**We need to
recognize how the
world we are living
in is a world we are
performing into
existence, and we
can perform
another one if we
organize ourselves
enough.**

**We need to perform
a new world into
being by dropping
the misbeliefs of the
competitive
algorithm and start
living according to
the ethical beliefs of
the collaborative
algorithm.**

We need to find the
courage to stop
fixating on ourselves,
our looks, our health,
our age, our
romances, our work
and dedicate our
lives to something
bigger where
another kind of
healing is possible.

**We need to strive
for awareness,
freedom and love as
never-ending
struggles that push
us forward through
the collapse of the
current civilization
into the next.**

**We need to find all
those that agree with
this and bring them
together to share
stories and engage
with everyone's
concerns for the sake
of a future world that
values ethics above
aesthetics.**

**We need to move
away from the
stage, break the
cycle of competition
for the spotlight,
dissolve the
dichotomy and
dance around the
fire at the dawn of a
new world.**

**With faith in
community,
awareness,
freedom and love.**

But neither writing this book
nor reading this book is
anywhere near enough. We
need to meet, we need to
practice, and we need to write
and read much, much more.

Appendix 1

What would a Not Theatre
Community event look like?

A Not Theatre community event would look like a ritual more than anything else.

The organization of the event is directed through a discussion on how to minimize the practice of the seven misbeliefs and how to maximize the practice of the seven ethical beliefs.

It is always a gathering that needs to take a long time, minimum a day, and preferably close to nature, though I'm aware that that's not always possible.

Not Theatre community events should be a regular part of the community's

life so the closer this happens to the community's regular habitat the better.

In this gathering there is always time for reading, writing, performing, sharing and conversation.

The conversation is held within the context of the constant Not Theatre wider concerns: community, faith, awareness, freedom and love but this should not limit in any way what members want to express or question.

Skilled members of the community are always there to guide unskilled members that seek guidance, but no privileged decisions are ever taken on the basis of skill or aesthetic standards.

Members of the community present their work to the others, either through reading or performance and the community reflects on it in writing and has a conversation in reaction to what was presented.

Members of the community may also choose to present something they did not write but that they believe to be of relevance to the community.

There should be time for new writing to happen and time for theatre games. The works of Augusto Boal and Keith Johnstone are good starting points for this.

There is always time for sharing food and dancing and there is always time

for members to seek help or counsel on personal issues.

There is always time for the members to pay attention to each other, be in each other's presence and honour the intimacy between them.

None of this is DOGMA. Merely my own pragmatic imagining of a Not Theatre community event as per my experimentation so far. Preferably groups find their own understandings and practices for what a Not Theatre event could be in their community as long as the three pillars of Not Theatre remain in sight – the seven misbeliefs, the seven ethical beliefs, and faith in community, awareness, freedom and love.

Appendix 2

Readings

As I'm sure you have noticed throughout this book I have avoided as much as possible the typical referencing systems used in academic texts or your typical non-fiction writing. This is not because my ideas do not cross with those of others or I haven't borrowed anything from the works I have studied. On the contrary, everything here is a direct consequence of everything I have ever read, seen, experienced or done in my life all rolled into one. No idea is completely original, yet no idea is delivered untarnished or unwarped by my own understanding. Therefore,

what I would rather do is tell you where I have found most of my own foundations across different fields of study and urge you to read them and read about them as much as you can.

My main theatre theorists are Bertolt Brecht, Antonin Artaud and Augusto Boal, though I have also been influenced by Jerzy Grotowski, Peter Brook and Keith Johnstone.

In philosophy and critical theory my main influences have come from Mary Midgely, Herbert Marcuse, Michel Foucault, Frederic Jameson, Judith Butler and Slavoy Žižek.

In education I hold in very high regard Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich and bell hooks. And on the subjects of love and

faith, once again bell hooks and the great James Baldwin are must reads.

I also find extremely important the works of the late David Graeber, who crosses the fields of anthropology, history, activism and economics.

For issues on mental health and the scientific understanding of behaviour my go to are Gabor Maté and Robert Sapolsky. And if you are to add a psychoanalytic perspective to it I would suggest Darian Leader.

On issues of economics there's of course the classics of Marx and Engels, but closer to us there's Mark Fisher, and yet, closer still, I would heartily recommend Yanis Varoufakis, Grace Blakeley and George Monbiot.

Final Note

Thank you for reading this far. You might agree with me more now than you did at the very start, when I said how this is a work of folly. It is. It is truly insane to write such things with any confidence. Yet this is what is needed in our times. We need to be foolishly idealistic in our beliefs and build something pragmatic and maybe even compromised on top of that idealism. **In community.** We don't all have to agree on everything. And everything is there to be questioned and challenged, but there needs to be another start, another attempt at coming together over something. This is such an attempt. And if you do want to come together then let's meet. Feel

free to find me and find others who have read this book and would like to try something else.

Not all might be lost yet. We're still here. We still might be able to find another way to live, others have done so before us. Another life with another theatre at its heart is still possible.

Let's try.

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**STOP
AGAIN**

**TAKE
ANOTHER
BREAK**

**TAKE
ANOTHER
LOOK
AROUND
YOU**

BREATHE

SOME

MORE

**LISTEN TO
SOME BIRDS,
PEOPLE,
TRAFFIC,
EVERY
THING**

**PLEASE GO
OUTSIDE
AND TAKE
A WALK**

FEEL THE
BARK OF A
TREE, DIG
YOUR HANDS
INTO THE
SOIL AND
DIRT, TOUCH
A WORM

**LOOK AND
BREATHE
AND FEEL
MUCH
MORE**

**AND COME
BACK ONLY
WHEN YOU
FEEL
READY TO
START
AGAIN**

**NO
PRESSURE**

THIS IS NOT THEATRE

THIS IS SOMETHING ELSE

STOP TAKE A BREAK TAKE A

LOOK AROUND YOU BREATHE

LISTEN FEEL TAKE A WALK

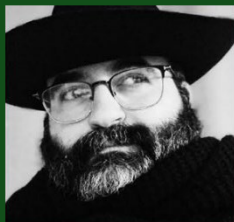
LOOK AND BREATHE AND FEEL

SOME MORE COME BACK ONLY

WHEN YOU FEEL READY TO

START AGAIN

NO PRESSURE



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