

Booth Owner:

You there—

Most honored audience...

Just—ever closer!

Step right in, just ever closer... just ever closer!

Listen!

Look!... Marvel!

Today we present to you something that, according to the regulations of law and church, is permitted only to audiences over eighteen.

You have never seen this before! You won't see this in Africa, not in Asia, not in Australia—only in America and in Europe!

Homunculus, German bear-man!

Devours rats and mice alive before the eyes of the esteemed public!

The German hero! German culture! The German manly fist! German strength! The darling of elegant audiences!

Crushes stones into pulp! Drives nails through the thickest skull walls with his bare hands!

Strangles thirty-two people with two fingers!

Whoever sees him must flee! And whoever flees must die by his hand!

You must have seen him if you want to say you've seen Europe!

But you'll see even more with us! You'll see surprises that I neither will nor can reveal by lifting delicate, transparent petticoats here.

So—step right in!

Today you pay no mark, you pay no fifty pfennigs—today, since we expect a mass turnout, you pay thirty pfennigs per head.

Just keep coming in! First come, best seats!

(Bell ringing.) Cash desk! Cash desk!

Narrator in soundscape:

Once there was a man. No special man. No leader. One from the masses. A worker, a friend of mine.

At twenty he married. He had met his wife at the factory. They were a fine couple.

When the great “heroic war” broke out, they drafted him—as an infantryman. He had no children; the wages weren’t enough.

While he was still at home, he loved his wife—of course. But only out there in the field did he believe he truly saw her as she was.

So good... so kind... his heart grew warm when he thought of his wife. He always thought of her.

Gradually a great wish rose in him: a child! No—two... three... four... five children!

Forgotten was what life in a worker’s family is really like when there are many children.

What did we know of life, of nature, of the earth, of the forest? What kind of life were we living?

It was a substitute life—but not life! A machine life!

Once, in battle, he was shot. A home-front wound, he thought, and he was happy.

When he woke in the hospital, he felt his body. He felt a bandage on his belly.

Aha, he thought, a belly wound.

Then he heard a voice from the neighboring bed:

“Our eunuch is waking up too. He’ll be amazed when he sees how they fixed him up.”

Do they mean me? he thought. Why do they say eunuch?

He lay stiff, quickly closed his eyes again—like one closes one’s eyes when something unpleasant is coming.

He did not sleep that night. The next morning he learned the truth.

First he bellowed—bellowed for days... like a stabbed boar...

But suddenly he noticed that his bellowing had become a shrill whistling.

And then he fell silent.

He wanted to think of his wife. But whenever he tried, he closed his eyes again and lay stiff, as if unconscious, as he had on the first day after the operation.

He wanted to hang himself. He lacked the courage.

He came home. I observed him. I observed his wife. I saw how he suffered.

Performance 1:

G1:

You poor little bird... my little companion...

What was an animal's pain to me before? An animal—well then.

You wring its neck, you stab it to death, you shoot it. So what.

When I was healthy, all that seemed necessary to me.

Now that I am a cripple, I know: it is monstrous!

It is murder of one's own flesh—worse than murder! Torture while alive!

But before! How blind the healthy human being is!

Do you not feel how a great darkness falls over us?

A little creature, a being of the earth, like you, like me—just now still rejoicing in life...

Don't you hear it every morning? That is joy in the light...

And now—now—it sits in night. Always in night.

How they have ruined us, you and me. Humans did this. Humans.

If you could speak, you would call devils what we call humans!

I want to play fate. Because people would point at me like a clown, knowing how things stand with me—

because the heroic shot of a cursed creature made me a miserable cripple... a laughingstock.

I want to play fate—a fate kinder than mine.

For I... I love you...

Smack! A red spot on the stone wall... a few feathers fly...

Over!

A thought—and everything totters!

Had they shown me someone like myself earlier, I don't know what I would have done.

There are circumstances in which one does not know what one would do—so little does one know oneself.

Perhaps I would have laughed... perhaps I would have laughed!

And they? Do you know what they will do?

Performance 2:

G2:

Far from home, on guard,

I stand day in, day out,

The rifle in my arms,

Lonely am I, alone.

I think of old times,

Of my dear parents' house,

Where all were gathered inside

For the sweet evening meal.

And I think of my girl—

Ah, she is no longer good to me,

She lies in another's arms,
Because it pleases her there as well.

And the king has called,
And we march to France,
And I, young blood, must die
If I am struck there.

A bullet flies from behind
Into my faithful breast,
In the enemy's cool earth
I lie dead and think of you.

I would write you a letter
If I were still alive,
But I cannot write to you
If I am struck dead.

G8:

My life never belonged to me.
When I was small, I always waited for life.
Later I saw it from afar.

But when I wanted to reach for it, I suddenly thought that my hands were coarse and dirty,
and life seemed to go about in silk dresses—so I no longer dared pull my hands from
beneath my apron.

Why should everyone see my hands?

Today it seems to me as if life itself were dirty, and not worth reaching for.

One cannot find one's way.

Just now it is bright, then again pitch-dark night...

I pity humankind so.

What a man he was before the war—blooming life!

But today—only brooding remains.

He quarrels with God and quarrels with people.

And when he looks at me, I feel he wants to look through me completely, as if I were a thing and not a person.

And sometimes I fear him... sometimes I cannot stand him... sometimes he disgusts me!

Performance 3:

G3:

There will be summer and stillness in the forest...

Stars, and walking hand in hand...

There will be autumn and withering in the leaves...

Stars—and hatred!—and fist against fist!

How colorful the asters are! How good the colors feel!

It was beautiful, our wedding feast... our wedding night... very beautiful.

There was peace. And then there was war...

You said you were proud of me for serving in the guard.

And when I went to war, you wept.

Did you weep for joy that I served in the guard?

What hopes we had—hopes as colorful as asters.

But when in the war asters bloomed somewhere in a garden and people fired shells into the garden, the color was over.

It is the same with plants as with animals, and with animals as with humans—no difference.

Performance 4:

G4:

I am the master, not the machine!

You must make that servant feel that you are the master!

Be a man, and then you are the master!

The people want to see blood! Blood!

Whoever sees him must flee! And whoever flees must die by his hand!

The German hero! The German manly fist! Homunculus!

Since the thought was there—the dreadful thought—it hunts me, hunts me...

I hear voices... faces bare their teeth at me...

A gramophone sits on my neck, like an uncanny beast, bellowing its music into my ears:

Ridiculous! Ridiculous! Ridiculous!

And then suddenly I see you...

You stand in a room, all alone, at the window, while I walk below in the street...

You hide behind the curtain... your lungs puff up, your belly shakes with laughter...

You couldn't do that to me—could you?

You wouldn't laugh at me... would you?

Performance 5:

Shouldn't one laugh at someone who claims to be the strongest man and yet is no man at all?

G5:

Since my wound in the war, I myself think I am a little confused in my thinking...

Every morning when I get up, it takes tremendous effort to bring order, with a few words, a few thoughts,

into everything inside me that attacks me, breaks in on me, gropes me.

Life is so strange—so much presses in on one that one does not understand, does not grasp, that one even fears...

One sees no meaning at all...

One wonders whether one can grasp life at all—

whether that is not like trying to empty an ocean,

or like trying to understand oneself—one cannot.

In the morning, when one gets up, there is chaos inside, and when one goes to bed at night, there is chaos again...

G6:

Let us ask God the Lord for forgiveness for the suffering we inflict on one another;

that we neglect and forget one another;

that we do not understand and cannot endure one another;

that we speak evil and are often filled with rancor and bitterness;

that we cannot forget.

Let us pray for forgiveness for all the sins that humans commit against one another in their helplessness.

I cannot get over what has happened; constantly I have it before my eyes, cannot come to terms with it,

but I also see clearly how loveless I become toward myself and toward others.

I know that your love overcomes everything, that it alone is valid for us and calls our rebellion into question.

More than stating this, I cannot yet do; help me further.

Again and again, grant us life as an undeserved happiness, day by day and for all time.

Glory be to the Father, glory be to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as in the beginning, so now and always, forever and ever. Amen.

G5:

So... I will try to explain myself more clearly.

We have so many invalids since the war—what will become of them?

G6:

They will of course be fed, clothed, supported by society, and then they can live just as happily as other people.

G5:

If, for example, someone has no arm?

G6:

He gets artificial arms. If he can work, he is assigned light work.

G5:

And if someone is sick in his soul?

G6:

He is sent to a sanatorium. The sick are treated with love—they are treated well, treated like human beings.

G5:

I do not mean those who are ill in the head or brain... I mean those who are healthy and yet sick in their soul.

G6:

That does not exist! Whoever has a healthy body also has a healthy soul. Human reason tells us that.

G5:

Then another question. If someone who was in the war—for example—had his sex shot away... what would happen to him in the new society?

G6:

If I am to answer you... materialistic science, as far as I know, does not recognize this problem.

The human being is happiest when he does not think about such things.

These are sophistries! Those to whom such things happen are simply victims...

The proletariat has a right to victims.

A rational humanity produces a happy existence.

Performance 6:

Narrator:

What do we see of one another? You sit there and I sit here. I see you—but how?

I see a few gestures and hear a few words. That is all.

We see nothing of one another... we know nothing of one another.

He must have gone through hell! He must have bled—bled and bled!

That he could live was a miracle.

But one day he came to me, and I noticed at once—he looked more beautiful.

One does not say that of a man, but it was so.

He seemed rich, happy.

And the reason? His wife did not despise him, did not hate him, did not mock him.

She was a healthy woman and he a sick man—yet he knew she loved him, despite everything.

She loved—how shall I say it—his soul.

I have become ridiculous through my own fault.

When I should have resisted, back when the mine was ignited by the great criminals of the world—called statesmen and generals—I did not.

I am ridiculous like this time—sadly ridiculous.

This time has no soul. I have no sex. Is there a difference?

What do you know of the torment of a wretched creature?

How you would have to change to build a new society!

You fight the bourgeois and are bloated with his arrogance, his self-righteousness, his hardness of heart!

One hates the other because he belongs to another party sect, swears by another program.

No one trusts the other. No one trusts himself.

No deed that does not suffocate in quarrel and betrayal.

You have words—beautiful words, holy words—of eternal happiness.

They are good for healthy people!

You do not see your limits—there are people for whom no state and no society, no family and no community can bring happiness.

Where your remedies end, our need only begins.

Chorus:

There stands the human being alone.

There opens an abyss called: Without comfort.

There arches a heaven called: Without happiness.

There grows a forest called: Mockery and scorn.

There surges a sea called: Ridiculous.

There chokes a darkness called: Without love.

Who helps there?

Final Scene:

You are healthy. A sick person has no place here on this earth as it is arranged—where each counts only for what he is useful for.

I walked through the streets—I saw no people, only grimaces.

I came home—I saw grimaces and need—senseless, endless need of the blind creature.

I wander madly in the dark... I hurt myself... I fall... everything is sore on me... how it hurts!

I am so afraid of life—alone! Alone in life! Alone in a forest full of wild animals!

No one is good. Everyone gnaws at your heart...

I have no strength left—the strength to fight, the strength to dream.

Whoever has no strength to dream has no strength to live.

I have become seeing! I see to the very bottom—the naked bottom.

I see the people! I see the time! The war is back!

People murder one another amid laughter!

Wax is in their ears—wax kneaded from laughter and scorn.

All seeing becomes knowledge, all knowledge suffering.

We are in a web... a spider sits there and will not let us go.

She has spun us in. I can hardly move my head. I no longer understand life.

Where is the beginning and where the end? Who can say that in a spider's web?

If things stand thus, who has the right to judge another?

Everyone is condemned to judge himself.

Redemption! Redemption! On all the roads of the world they cry for redemption!

We are one spirit, one body. And there are people who do not see this—and others who have forgotten it.

In the war they suffered, hated their masters, obeyed, and murdered—then forgot everything.

They will suffer again, hate their masters again, obey again, murder again.

Such are human beings. And they could be different if they wanted—but they do not want to.

Every day can bring paradise; every night, the deluge.