

## 21 POINTS TO THE PHYSICISTS

1. I don't start out with a thesis but with a story.
2. If you start out with a story you must think it to its conclusion.
3. A story has been thought to its conclusion when it has taken its worst possible turn.
4. The worst possible turn is not foreseeable. It occurs by accident.
5. The art of the playwright consists in employing, to the most effective degree possible, accident within the action.
6. The carriers of a dramatic action are human beings.
7. Accident in a dramatic action consists in when and where who happens to meet whom.
8. The more human beings proceed by plan the more effectively they may be hit by accident.
9. Human beings proceeding by plan wish to reach a specific goal. They are most severely hit by accident when through it they reach the opposite of their goal: the very thing they feared, they sought to avoid (i.e. Oedipus).
10. Such a story, though it is grotesque, is not absurd (contrary to meaning).
11. It is paradoxical.
12. Playwrights, no less than logicians, are unable to avoid the paradoxical.
13. Physicists, no less than logicians, are unable to avoid the paradoxical.
14. A drama about physicists must be paradoxical.
15. It cannot have as its goal the content of physics, but its effect.
16. The content of physics is the concern of physicists, its effect the concern of all men.
17. What concerns everyone can only be resolved by everyone.
18. Each attempt of an individual to resolve for himself what is the concern of everyone is doomed to fail.
19. Within the paradoxical appears reality.
20. He who confronts the paradoxical exposes himself to reality.

21. Drama can dupe the spectator into exposing himself to reality, but cannot compel him to withstand it or even to master it.

---Friedrich Dürrenmatt

"Tragedy presupposes guilt, despair, moderation, lucidity, vision, a sense of responsibility. In the Punch-and-Judy show of our century, in this backsliding of the white race, there are neither guilty nor responsible individuals any more. No one could do anything about it, and no one wanted to. Indeed, things happen without anyone in particular being responsible for them. Everything is dragged along and everyone gets caught somewhere in the sweep of events. We are all collectively guilty, collectively bogged down in the sins of our fathers and of our forefathers. We are the children of our forebears. That is our misfortune, but not our guilt; guilt today can exist only as a personal achievement, as a religious act. Comedy is the only thing that can still reach us. Our world has led to the grotesque as well as to the atom bomb, and so it is a world like that of Hieronymus Bosch whose apocalyptic paintings are also grotesque. And yet, the grotesque is only a way of expressing in a tangible manner, of making us perceive physically the paradoxical; it is the form of the unformed, the visage of the faceless world. And just as our thinking today seems to be unable to do without the concept of the paradox, so also art and our world, which still exist only because the atom bomb exists: out of fear of the bomb."

---Friedrich Dürrenmatt

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