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# *In the Shape of the Marred.*

A lyric hypothesis on the ontological and metaphysical nature of violence and its relationship with humankind.



## *AFFLUX.*

Violence is one of the fundamental forces that define life itself.

Not a single aspect of our transient existence is untouched by violence. From the first painful act of being born to the sharpness of every subsequent experience. We are thrust into a world where all are brought into existence through rapture and suffering. As we draw our first breath in, we curse the wind that gives it.

The cycle of violence is neither isolated nor incidental; to us, it has shaped the cosmos itself. Ancient cosmogonies often revolved around this complex paradox, and civilizations have either centred their perceptions of physical existence by embracing bloodshed as a fundamental truth of existence or, more rarely, have attempted to avoid it.

I recently came across some of Michel Serres's reflections (Serres. M. 1995. *Angels, a Modern Myth*) about angels as “fluxes”—personifications of everything that moves, breaks, and recomposes in a sempiternal flow, like winds carrying particles of all that exists. These messengers take the guise of motion itself, which, by physical principles, encompasses everything. Thus, Serres designs a peculiar narrative through which the figure of the angel is born anew. Neither abating their otherworldly presence nor dissipating their power. The French thinker turned them into more alluring figures; he turned them into Nature itself.

Because of the open question that defines the relationship between violence, suffering, and sensory perception, interactions with objective reality become possible only as our nerves agonize against everything that touches them. Whether it's the sharp edge of a knife, a loved one's lips seeking the corner of your mouth, or the pleasant sting of a spring breeze charged with pollen that my naked eyes can see, each encounter is part of an eternal frenzy. The scent is vibrant, and the image of bees fluttering in and out of a blossom is sweet. Now part of an ocean, now of the Earth or a person's immune system. Ejected, absorbed, transformed.

Still, your nerves scream.

According to Serres, anything that flows, moves, and creates flux is an angel, a divine messenger, and therefore a symptom of God's will. In this scenario, deities could have always existed as nature itself, with human imagination unfairly laying claim to them. Ironically, the joke is on me for adopting a narrative grounded in a believer's perception of reality.

Raised in a thoroughly secular (perhaps even aggressively atheist) environment within a Catholic country, religious imagery always stirred a curious yet obscure fascination within me. God was too abstract for me to grasp and far too demanding for me to accept. Abiding by his canons was never an option. Saints were humane yet almost judgemental in their martyrdom; piety never caught my interest.

But the angels were different.

Angels exhumed lore around their appearances, their existence greater than anything my imagination could conjure. For years, the stimuli around me appeared to conspire to nourish a fascination with these figures, one I did not question nor even directly research. Religious items, ubiquitous yet subtle, adorned the Italian landscape of my childhood. My dream of becoming a zoologist. Dark silhouettes emerging from the inkblots on my therapist's table. The name of my grandfather. An irrational phantasy of flying, not into the sky but somewhere. Somewhere. My interest bloomed in the dark, and when I mixed it with the philosopher's theories, magic happened.

Motion. Friction. Transformation. Dissolution. Dancing. The turmoil of life. Angels all along.

Yet something felt off. I put my head outside the window on a cold morning to feel the ripples of existence, the gusts of messengers swirling wherever I looked. Holy envoys, carrying celestial poetries and dark secrets, delicately caressed my cold cheeks, stealthily kissed my lips, and traced their fingers along my spine, causing it to shiver.

I recoiled in disgust.

These angels, these fluxes, were dirty. Something got in the way of poetry, and instead of feeling enlightened, I felt defensive.

What was this recoil? Was it just a reaction to my inner turmoil, or was there something larger at work, something cultural? An association, or rather a rejection of the divine as we traditionally understand it. Something snapped. And the sky fell on top of me.

These fluxes, eternally moving, never static, constantly reincarnated in a new shape, always with us, within our reflections and actions. A thought struck me: what if these angels, these fluxes, were not unlike the phenomenon of violence itself?

It is easy, almost instinctive, to associate violence with evil and wickedness, to assign it the role as the antithesis of goodness. But what if this instinct and this cultural bias has swayed us? What if violence were not the product of wickedness but something more complex? Something divine.

Could violence be a form of divine language?

Waves of shivers fall down my spine, I feel the prospect of a looming task echoing in my stomach. So tiring, so monstrous, yet so very needed. The commitment of any dance is most essential behind its first few steps.

My eyes are shut; with my mouth open...

## *INFLUX.*

...I heave a long breath.

The inherent complexity and vastity of violence as a phenomenon are evident, and rightly so.

One of the reasons for the difficulty is that we are particularly used to discuss the most concrete personifications of violence, such as acts of aggression, crime, war, but we seldom examine its metaphysical nature. Perhaps this is because people find it frustrating to invest ludicrous amounts of time on things they cannot sensory perceive and, to be even more frank, immediately possess. It is not alluring.

How does one even begin a conversation about a phenomenon so imposing, so constant, so terrifying? The challenge in its scale, its persistence; its power. The great German scholar Hannah Arendt noted in her essay *On Violence* (1969) that there is a shocking lack of literature focusing on the metaphysic nature of violence, over an exaggerated, almost whimsical, stemming from the darkest humour, number of documentations and reflections on war and warfare, two of men's favourite things in this whole wide world they crave to scorch.

Firstly, a quick reflection on violence.

Violence stretches across history. It is timeless, ubiquitous, its form shapeless, its reach infinite. Violence is not confined by any war nor any sharp edge; it flows across the fabric of existence, seeping into all those breaths.

If one were to gather these elements and descriptions without the initial prompt, would one not think about the Otherworldly, the Divine?

They do share several similarities, which is what led me to believe that whatever we associate with this Divine must be designed of the same material as Violence. Two cloths of the same canvas. But this conversation had the potential to turn awry, to derange itself. First, I am not attempting to glorify violence, but the opposite: I want to dismantle it. The only way to efficiently dismantle anything is to understand how it works.

Second, violence is such a tough topic, that one cannot discuss it without at least grazing the surface of some of the most disturbing and dark things humanity has allowed to happen and actively perpetrated. One cannot, for example, not mention wars and fascism. One cannot silence slaughters and genocides. One cannot morally allow the bloodshed to be left out of the conversation, because omittance is an insidious danger and brethren to violence itself as it leads to forgetting, and the bridge between oblivion and the horrors is built overnight.

I have the disadvantage of not being a scholar, but it is through this lack of formal induction that I will analyse this topic in a way that logic alone could not. An entirely analytic investigation of such a metaphysical phenomenon seems somewhat deranged. Logical thinking cannot convey these abstract terrors.

Adorno famously claimed that in the aftermath of the Holocaust, poetry itself had become impossible (Žižek, S. *Violence*. 2008), a reflection of how unimaginable horrors defy the capacity of language. Žižek counters this by claiming that it is *factual* prose that has been interdicted, not poetry. Violence cannot be fully captured, he says, through sterile facts. It necessitates *truthfulness* that factual accuracy simply does not convey.

Under these universal circumstances, the poetic prevails. Art and the poetic have always been about expressing the inexpressible (Žižek, S. *On Violence*), they are perfect to convey the vastness of something as metaphysically abject as violence. It is precisely the lack of clarity, the bewildered narrative, and the difficulty on the part of the listener to make sense of what they are being told, that manages to capture and convey the gravity of what has happened. Its opposite, that is a clinical vivisection of violent events and actions, can turn into yet another form of violence by cross-contamination.

Therein lies the catch.

If one ought to converse about violence, one must leave hard logical thinking behind, which plays in my favour. I always preferred stories to reality anyway.

This idea would demand the formulation of something on such a vast (universal, perhaps?) scale that it could be considered a Cosmology. To do so, that is, if we are to attempt to formulate a hypothesis on the origin of violence, then I believe one ought to attempt to reason in a way that is not logical, not critical. Perhaps, even, not dictated by the stiff structures of that very scientific thinking upon which our modality of life stand. After all, progress, our sempiternal attempt to move forward to keep the system from collapsing by tarnishing other powers is a form of violence in itself. I must take as a reference mode of explanations that predates contemporary trains of thought. I ought to predate Rousseau's Illuminist theories, perhaps taking Immanuel Kant's critiques of intellect and distinction between sensible reality (*phenomena*), that which we can perceive, and the layer of reality where things truly exist which we cannot perceive (*noumena*). It is not enough; I must strain my synapses further back in time.

This is where Serre's angels come into the play. As I began to think about the characteristics of violence and its personifications, I leaped: I associated the manifestation of violence with Serre's descriptions of angels, vessels of divine truth, as the flowing of all-natural elements. This association might appear farfetched but the flowing of natural phenomenon has always been associated with the otherworldly, both negatively and positively. Anthropology's superstar Jane Goodall has claimed (*Bill Moyers Journal: Jane Goodall.*), after observing primates interact with each other and their natural environments, that the feeling of marvel and deep awe primates feel when admiring majestic natural elements, such as mountains and waterfalls, can explain the origin of humankind's universal feeling of infinity and almightiness we associate with Gods.

*But infinity does not belong to this finite reality.* Even the universe will one day perish. Although we might have perceived this presence in front of such majestic sights since before the marvels of anthropocentric evolution, the essence of this feeling cannot be of this world precisely because of its absolute properties. However, this proves that it has been with us since before we even were *Homo Sapiens Sapiens* in an impressive proof of time.

The natural flowing that permeates all that exists manifesting something not of this reality and, precisely because of its metaphysical residence, is bestowed of all the characteristics that existing things lack, called forth Plato's Demiurge in my mind.

Plato's Demiurge represents the metaphysical force that brings the universe into existence (*arche*) and in a similar way, violence could be viewed as a primordial force from which our social and political system are shaped. The Demiurge's function in a platonic system was not merely that of a birthing force but it was also similar to that of Serre's angels: a motorial function. All real things were "moved", as in existed and kept in balance, by the *love* the Demiurge exhumed, intended as an actual force permeating reality. Initial speculations on the Demiurge believed it to be a quintessentially positive force of creation, but I believe notions of goodness or its complementary should be left out of any conversation centring on the genesis of reality. Only cold neutrality (indifference?) could marry otherworldliness. Of course, there is also to say that the idea that some positive force is constantly looking after us is medieval at its best, and whether we use elements of the platonic structure to articulate points of this dissertation, it does not mean I am wedded to Platonic thoughts in general. His ideas were, after all, incredibly anthropocentric (as all forcibly were until Galileo Galilei).

The questions remain: in this scenario, what would the relationship between violence and this other realm be? What is the relationship with the angels I opened this document with? A cosmogony must be devised.

I want to conjecture that there exists another plane where absolute forces reside. If there were such a place, then violence, as a phenomenon exhibiting many such absolute characteristics, would be a product of this kingdom.

My hypothesis, carefully devoid of cold, factual reasoning, is that violence is a component of these absolutes, residing in another realm. Infinity, ubiquitousness, timelessness, shapelessness; they reside on a plane where they are one and only. This metaphysical conglomeration splits itself only to manifest in our reality.

The reason as to why we, from the finite realm, can perceive these absolute from this other plane of existence is simply because the two planes are not entirely severed.



As these concepts would not exist without human cognitive abilities, it seems appropriate to assume that the two spheres are not neatly split but have probably elements of each other within themselves. The infinite into the finite, and vice versa; *there are exchanges*. That is why Goodall's subjects were awe-struck by the vastness of natural landmarks. Through this procedure, infinite concepts retain their divine role in human affairs, and by tasting the finite, this plane can keep altering its properties, evolving, and advancing, similarly to capitalism's instrumentalization of warfare to keep its mechanisms from collapsing.

All absolutes bleed into our reality, but interactions with violence are much more advanced than simple glaring; they are interactive. Why is that?

Because violence *is* an interface this absolute reality uses to interact with living organisms. Because violence *is* a divine language.

Violence does present itself and interact with flora and fauna, yet it is only through the parallel relationship between cognitive abilities and these absolutes that it can evolve. The more complex the cognitive abilities, the more violence can reinvent itself and spread. That is why it has thrived in any civilization across time: through the most varied constructs (economical, socio-political, geographical, scientific, biological, systemic, etc.) it can advance, renew, always in a new design to catch us off guard. Thus, the cycle of violence will never end, and because of its origin and ancestral connections, so will all the absolutes. However, here comes the exchange: violence might move humankind, but through us, *it* retains a state of motion, which is transferred to other absolute forces, because without our collective thoughts, they would cease to exist. Violence is used by this absolute realm to reinvent itself within human minds, to not fall into the oblivion that is the human ability to forget.

True, among these forces we have been historically charmed by infinity, a fascination entwined with the genesis of religion and experiences of godliness, which are shared human experiences. But if anyone were to even scratch the surface of religious history, they would quickly realise these various creeds and their institutions have relentlessly used this very feeling of godliness to justify and perpetuate some of the most heinous acts ever committed by our species. No set religious belief is free of responsibility from bloodshed.

Regarding human interactions, violence has always worn a crown.

The violence that slips into our reality retains many metaphysical traits whilst adapting to human surroundings. Its ubiquitousness and shapelessness allow it to freely stream in a constant state of flux parallel to human affairs and thoughts: it adapts to new social dynamics, socio-political systems (warfare in particular), and systems of thoughts whilst shaping them and their progression. It flows from above us (the socio-political and economic structures), around us (psycho-social relations), and finally into us (the psychological sphere). Like air. In this form, in this eternal flux before embodied phenomena, violence *is* Serre's angel.

What guises can these angels adopt to mingle with us?

Out of the vast number of possible categorizations, I find Zizek's (*Violence*, 2008) distinction between objective and subjective violence, that is violent acts performed by individuals usually towards other individuals, and objective violence, which is the invisible, ubiquitous phantom that dwells in the very structure of society as it is and in interpersonal relationships, to be brilliant. With it, I can clarify some of the earliest ramifications of violence on our finite reality.

To Zizek, *Objective* violence, taking after Hegel's *objective* excess as the reign of abstract universality imposing its law mechanically uncaring for its subjects (Zizek), is its abstract and ubiquitous manifestation. It is the very foundation of nowadays' society and has very likely been the concrete of all that came before us, as all formal legitimacies are grounded on substantial illegitimacies. Power is built on blood. Taken to its extremes it becomes the systemic violence inherent to capitalism necessary in aiding the hegemony of the status quo. Because of its near-metaphysical presence in socio-political structures, this type of violence has, for example, made the usage of violence in politics as a platitude. Until recently, no one questioned its presence, with Sontag affirming: "...most people will not question the rationalizations offered by their governments for starting or continuing a war. It takes

some very peculiar circumstances for a war to become genuinely unpopular. (Sontag. S. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. P.32)”.

That which comes from the top will very likely manifest itself as a tool of oppression specifically designed to deal with internal political turmoil. Violence is nowadays less popular on an international scale simply because the means of warfare have long outreached their initial purpose, namely victory, in favour of collective annihilation, replacing the duality of victor and defeat with an insidious international stalemate between wealthier countries. Interestingly, the German scholar noted how this ambivalent possession of means of mass destruction among wealthy states does not equate to an absolute advantage towards poorer ones as technical superiority becomes futile in guerrilla wars (p. 10). Additionally, the apocalyptic properties of such weapons mean that if such countries were to gain even a single warhead, they would automatically become able to weigh in on this silent conflict, this truce of ours, swaying possible beyond the capacities of larger nations. Thus, the relationship between power and violence can and has been flipped, as has the dynamic between small and great powers. Peace became an extension of war (Arendt. H. 1969. *On violence*.).

Within the flux, a storm is brewing.

The ramifications of objective violence are not limited to the international geopolitical sphere; they spill over into the realm of social dynamics too, designing tools of social oppression and maintenance of the status quo such as *normality*. I must also mention *fascism* as an authoritarian hybrid political system that openly exploits both subjective and objective violence to silence dissent and to impose the dominion of a figure/political party and its ideologies over a mass.

*Subjective* violence, on the other hand, is based on *subjective* excess, which is the irregular and arbitrary exercise of whims that is constantly supplementing the objective one. It is experienced as such against a background of zero violence and is composed of violent actions committed by individuals: aggressions, assaults, riots, etc. It is the one we can perceive clearly in our daily lives as it is a physical manifestation (Žižek. S. *Violence*).

What is incredibly interesting about an analysis of subjective violence is that it possesses an ambivalent nature, with qualities of a double-edged blade: when in the hands of socio-economic systems, it can become a tool of oppression and of

preservation of the existing state of affairs, wherein in the hands of oppressed social substrata it can become a surprising instrument of rebellion and retaliation against those very systems it serves so efficiently. *Mutatis mutandis* says Žižek (Žižek. S. Violence. Pp. 31) as he explains the dialectical “coincidence of opposites” for which the actualisation of a notion at its purest coincides with its opposite. Therefore, I find it plausible to say that if violence is the main tool to perpetrate oppression on behalf of a system, then it can also become a tool to retaliate on behalf of the oppressed subjects. Subjective violence *is* a weapon against objective violence. It can interrupt the flow of capitalistic everyday life. Subjective violence is capable of interrupting culture, as an institution of power in the hands of the status quo to preserve its hegemony, by shattering its status as a universal means of mediation, interrupting the flow of capitalist routines. Additionally, Ferrarotti (Ferrarotti. F. At the roots of Violence) claims that acts of subjective violence grant whoever commits them visibility, which becomes particularly vital when it is perpetrated by social substrata that are being tarnished and purposely erased by the status quo. Violence can bring them back into existence, and to quote the Italian sociologist: “Any act of violence is more efficient than ten thousand petitions”.

The ethics and connotations of violence-born visibility are another subject altogether, as it would necessitate an in-depth analysis of the emergence of ethnic and religious fundamentalisms and terrorism, which are forms of ultra-subjective violence (Žižek). Socially, consequences of subjective violence can be perceived within the structures and dynamics of social groups, where violence becomes a social glue that cements a sense of identity of individuals concerning their social circle. This dynamic promotes group identification within its members who, by engaging in violence on behalf of the group, remove social and psychological barriers set against committing aggression for the sake of achieving the group’s objectives with which they now identify. Because violence begets violence, those individuals who commit said actions against their will on behalf of a group will be more likely to commit them in the future, expanding the cycle (Littman. R. Levy Paluck. E. *The Cycle of Violence*. 2015). In these cases, violence turns into a supreme proof of loyalty and love from an individual towards a group (Ferrarotti. *At the Roots of Violence*. Pp.38. *The Hypnosis of Violence*. Pp. 67). This process has been investigated in depth by Arendt herself as she studied Nuremberg’s trial against Nazi officials, discovering that they were ordinary people led by their inclination towards

obedience and strong group identification to commit genocidal acts (subsequently coining the banality of evil [Arendt. H. 1969. On violence]).

Most scholars argue that violence, in any of its forms, is inherently negative. However, following my research, I find myself questioning whether anything in our existence can truly be reduced to an absolute stance. In this finite reality, even phenomena with alien origins are not fixed. Everything is prone to motion, to change, and nothing is entirely severed from everything else. Rather than accepting this restrictive view, I believe there are contexts, such as certain BDSM practices, where violence can become a means to fulfil complex cognitive and emotional needs.

As Finnish philosopher Timo Airaksinen notes (Airaksinen. T. *A Philosophical and Rhetorical Theory of BDSM*. 2017), these methods rely on what is medically called *active algolagnia* (finding pleasure in causing pain), *passive algolagnia* (finding enduring pain pleasurable), and witnessing. Because of their unique structures and properties, such as their reliance on consent and trust, the writer claims that they stand out as a phenomenon of their own, as they can channel violence into the fulfilment of complex cognitive needs and forms of pleasure. Because of this Airaksinen's hypothesis is not based on rationality but rather on an epic structure: *the hero's quest*.

To better understand how violence can serve a fulfilling function, I will now turn to Airaksinen's analysis of the S/M relationship between the "top" and the "bottom". In these practices, passive subjects seek a higher cognitive pleasure, namely *glory*, which *de dicto* (what one thinks of their desire) does not involve suffering but *de re* (what they get) does. *I want glory (de dicto desire); to obtain glory, I must perform heroic deeds; heroic deeds require excruciating suffering, therefore, to obtain glory I must suffer (de re desire)*. Hence, violence becomes instrumental in experiencing self-fulfilment.

On the other hand, the position of an active subject (or “top”) in consensual S/M is more ambiguous. Their *de dicto* goal is to serve the bottom, yet their very dominance entails that they do not want to serve anyone, as they would otherwise lose their status as heroes. Serving becomes the *hardship condition* they must endure to achieve their desires. Their *de re* goal is not domination for its own sake, but rather to generate pleasure and care, which counter their *de dicto* sadistic goals (Airaksinen.T.). The sadistic pleasure sought by the top is not sensory but cognitive and complex; it is not enthralled by sensory experiences but rather from the crystal-thin state of balance encompassing belief, control, respect, and power that it requires for sustainment. Thus, in consensual play, their satisfaction depends not merely on their immediate physical arousal but on the accomplishment of said composite cognitive goals. As with the bottom, the top’s essence is inherently heroic because of the hardship conditions they must endure. They may find fulfilment, such as personal power, social respect, and other characteristics that align with their heroic narrative, only by rising above the many contradictions intrinsic to their role.

## *EFFLUX.*

Following this analysis of violence, obvious questions emerge: What is its opposite? And if violence is a divine language, what are we supposed to do with it?

Let me make it clear: I am not trying to set up some Manichean system of opposites, but rather to understand a complex continuum.

My first instinct when asking about the opposite of violence was to think of peace.

Peace, pacifism, they sounded ideal. They are human inventions (Ferrarotti. F. *At the Roots of Violence*), fragile and limited; easily broken. That is exactly what makes them look like a perfect counter. Yet the more I think about it, the less peace seems like the answer.

Peace is often thought to be the absence of war, but as I mentioned earlier by referencing *On Violence* by Arendt, the post-WWII geo-political situation has made clear that peace is now a prolongation of war under different means. Secondly, whenever a political figure or nation talks about peace one cannot but wonder where their gall could come from, as all mentions of peace I can recollect came from some of the wealthiest powers on this planet and were often used to justify interventions of different kinds in multiple more disadvantage nations. Additionally, the “peace” coming to life in contemporary political contexts appears to be based on blissful but actively pursued ignorance about the state of the world. Thirdly, peace lacks a fundamental metaphysical trait to rival violence: because a state of peace as the lack of any conflict has never been achieved, peace is not concrete; it has never been on the physical plane and cannot counter violence. All is tainted in violence. So, what is its opposite? Is there none? Is Zizek’s *mutatis mutandis* all we get? Are we just going to keep spiralling downward into this vortex?

All these questions appear to have no answer; as soon as I think about them, they dissolve...



Whatever.

I'm tired of listening to solipsistic opinions shouted at me from the high thrones of academia. Why would I listen to the thinkers who told me to distrust intellectuals? What makes them different? Surely their seats, up in the clouds of intelligentsia from which they gaze at us all, are suspiciously similar. These people seem to detach themselves from our reality, from our suffering, sheltering their lives by rationalizing violence. Silly. As Sontag, one of the few politically and humanely active thinkers, reminds us, whenever we try to rationalize the place of humanity and consciousness in this wide universe, we fall prey to a dangerous cynicism regarding the inevitability of our badness, which is just an easy way out of assuming responsibility for one's actions. In researching and writing this piece, I forgot myself. I forgot that I was not interested in the apathetic logic of those intellectuals; I forgot what I wanted to stand for.

I have stopped the noise; these claims are mine:

Violence is endless, almighty, shapeless, infinite, ubiquitous, indestructible. Then whatever is not violence ought to have opposite characteristics: something breakable, finite, limited, weak, with flesh that rips and tears that flow. Does this description not call forth the shape of any person? Could it be that the best antithesis for violence is humankind and its emotional capacities and spirit? What the opposite of violence might remain an open question, but we must pursue all the possibilities regardless.

Violence might be what lies behind the veil of Maya, but regardless of morality, I think it belongs to humankind as much as humanity does. Our essence is not as simple as being put in a straight line with only two extremes to swing from.

This phenomenon has divine qualities; then, we must focus on all ungodly things.

The futile, the fragile, the marred, the broken. Ours is the realm of insignificant things. Their lightness, their fragility, can only aid us.

But I also believe in human intellect, disobedience, spite, and—more than anything—empathy. Emotionally, we know that violence cannot be the answer we are looking for, as we share the same burden of existence as every other creature, and we feel for them as they feel for us. We all bear the weight of the universe. So, what if violence is a divine language? Can we not do like the Brits and refuse to speak any language but the one we choose?

And these annoying angels, thirsty flies, aiming for your wide-open eyes, preventing you from seeing the exact shade of azure that is today's sky. Fuck them all.

If violence is a universal phenomenon, individual kindness can be a form of revolt. If it is an expression of the divine, then focusing on what is characteristic of humankind is a strategy. Let us be spiteful. Let us overthrow aggression and chase after pacifism, which is as meaningless and fragile as we are. Let us laugh together in a frenzy.

Besides, disobedience in the face of a deity is more compelling than abiding by its whims.

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