

the boy's mother to the psychiatrist: "If you knew God, you'd know about the devil," who literally in the horse's mouth plagiarizes Jesus ["I am suffering for the sins of the world; I will save you"]. The father makes the same analysis of the case but comes to a diametrical conclusion: "Religion's at the bottom of all this." The psychiatrist sees his dilemma: he can remove pain, but only at the cost of destroying passion.

Inauthentic integrations, demonic in their partiality and perversion, have been stock-in-trade since the classic dramas of Greece and Japan. This thinksheet is about a 1974 British play, Peter Shaffer's "Equus," currently (1975) in NYC. The thinksheet is written to encourage (1) seeing the play and (2) "doing theology" and group discussion of it thereafter. Have a theater party that features not just what goes into your mouth immediately thereafter, but also what comes out.

1. IDEA-GENESIS: The playwright's friend told of "a highly disturbed young man," in recent English life, who committed a crime that "lacked, finally, any coherent explanation....a dreadful event," the stabbing-blinding of six horses in a fit of explosive rage. "I knew very strongly that I wanted to interpret it in some entirely personal way. I had to create a mental world in which the deed could be made comprehensible." So note first the artist as theologian: as "the ocean" is not just the water but also the basin, so the chaos-creating/releasing events of personal and public life, "the formless waters," the tohu-b'-bohu of Gen.1, must--I speak of a necessity that is both upper-cortical and lower-visceral, a double-coiled anangke--must be contained in the basin of the mind ["made comprehensible," lit. grasped-together] in a Personal way even when the cosmic ["world"] construct had to be made out of whole cloth["I had to create"] (for our artist could get no more details on the case except that neither the psychiatrists nor the court could domesticate the horror into "coherence"). Theology endeavors to provide a particular community of faith with a coherent way of seeing and understanding the world; and since coherence demands comprehensivity, the plausibility [believability] of a theology is most tested at points where chaos like a tidal wave exceeds the bounds of daily cosmos. All personal, cultural, and specific [homo-sapiens] growth depends on creative response to these challenges from chaos, which is its bright-divine side; its dark-demonic side appears when, instead of creative response, human beings stop short of the new pain of fresh integration and settle for the old pain in the form of false meaning-constructs, inauthentic integrations. ["There is a way which seems right,...." Pr.14.12, 16.25.]

2. Creative-integrative resolution of crisis occurs when this upper-coil "theological" (comprehensive) need for coherence [RATIONALITY] is met along with, instead of over against and at the expense of, the lower-coil vital need for commitment [PASSIONALITY]. In "The Exorcist," a 14-year-old girl's mother forbids her Christianity, so via the ouija board Raggs becomes demon-possessed with "Captain Howdy." In "Equus," a 12-year-old boy's father forbids him Christianity (in the form of a Crucifix painting), so via a horse picture [placed "exactly" where the Jesus picture had been] Alan becomes demon-possessed with "Equus." To accent this humanity-abhors-a-commitment-vacuum theme, each of these parents is atheist, reminding us of Jesus' saying about more demons than before in the swept house....Rationality [in "Equus," the psychiatrist's problem-solving orientation substituting for life-living] in our culture, dominated as it is by the upper coil, only seems more integrated than passionality [the boy whom the psychiatrist is envious of, for knowing both passion and worship [commitment]. Alienated from God-passion-worship-commitment, the psychiatrist who needs an alienist [and who has wistfully ritualized his alienation by fancifulizing ancient Greek pagan worship and by daily touching the passion god ("I touch my Dionysos statue ["every morning"] for luck")]: "I envy him [i.e., the boy, now 17, having just committed the crime] for his passion"...."Whose power pulls me out?"---- "Can you think of anything worse anyone can do than take away one's worship? Worship is the core of his life! With my body I thee worship." [This after, in boy-and-girl naked scene, the boy's impotent because thinking-seeing not skin but hide, not girl but horse.]

3. Sensing (a) his own lack of integration and (b) that the boy's case calls for a priest-counselor rather than just an analyst, the psychiatrist complains that "the fundamental questions" don't, but should have, a place in the counseling room. So

4. THE MESSAGE: "Life is only comprehensible through...worship," which brings pain: accept the pain: its your own! Integration dimensions in the play: divine/demonic, reason/passion, "normality"/worship, analysis/commitment.