

Dear --
3 May 20

As you suggest the question for drama now is what is reality ? In the end I think we probably cant unravel reality. But we can ask how it -- and not just us -- work. But to do that we still have to ask what it is -- and drama is the ultimate way of asking. Because of course asking the question, and displaying it, is an essential part of reality. We are not human if we dont ask it. We become automata conscious of everything except ourselves -- and therefore unconscious of the meaning and real consequences of what we do. You are a teacher. Children have an extraordinary relation with reality. By "what" they dont mean what most adults mean by what, they mean "why." Its their question and its often bathed in tears. Drama also uses what to ask why. Our present society asks only "how" and increasingly why becomes cash. Corona virus is a perfect example which we try to reduce to how. That is, we make *why* structural, another what. Then *what* is like asking why is there such a thing as nature.

But here the necessary why is why the virus spreads so rapidly and de-socialises our antiquated modern society -- we cant even walk on the street outside your house. Its because of the world economy. We are addicted to travel because we are not at home in our homes. And manufacturers "out-source" as many of the components of their product (say a car) as they can. The manufacturers get them made abroad by labour that is cheaper than what is paid to the users of the car in the manufacturers' own country. And profit can be made on all movements of the manufactured whole or parts. A globe cant literally stand on its head, but metaphorically it can and the capitalist system is an example: it stands the world on its head. Of course the gap between "foreign" labour and "domestic" user closes when the foreign labour finds it has industrial power. Trump wants the origin of the virus to be in some secret military laboratory. Really the virus originates in China because it is a new rampant capitalist society. It has not yet developed the social structures that cushion older capitalist states, that maintain everything through ideology. China instead of using ideology to seduce its people into compliance and obedience must use repression and censorship. Censorship is not as invisible and powerful as lies. An openly repressed society lacks self-knowledge because it is forced to submit -- and then social reality becomes "raw," dangerously exposed to reality and truth in the way ideologised societies are not. In ideologically petrified societies people believe the ideology and play with the mechanical toys of capitalism to distract them from a haunting fear and shame of being manipulated. In the extreme the fear and shame are reified into malignant

fossils of fascism.

I remember watching a beggar in a side street close to the peoples' Tiananmen square in Beijing. The beggar was both exposed and yet strangely also both invisible and haunting -- a living spectre in a society that was lost in a cultural void. China was becoming the leading and most schematised capitalist society. Mythologies are deep within ideologies because they seek holism. This is so with Capitalism. But now you cant reduce a society, East or West, to passive industrial slavery without creating a hodgepodge ideology of vulgarised Freudism and Darwinism. The Bread and Circuses of capitalism cant do it, instead they create the inner panic I describe above. This is also why Stalinism and its maniacal distortion of Marxism failed. The cause of the problem is that nature has no ideology but humans have. Ideology is a bogus form of humanism and is incompatible with human culture. Greek drama put its actors in masks in an effort to make the meaning of the human face and its participation in social structure visible, it combined the immobile with the animated, the individual with the moral. The mask is the site of longing.

Politically Trump is scared of China not because it is communist but because it is capitalist and ironically has all the advantages of the late-starter. For example, it can still manipulate the social situation without desperately manipulating the voting system. In capitalism (and in Stalinism) lies become a form of truth, they appear to have (and to that extent may have) the transparency of truth. Capitalist society, East and West, is run on Bread and Circuses. In politics, for a time the difference between the real and circuses need not always count. That is why the human tragedy changes into farce and why when reality asserts itself (usually bread is eventually more necessary than circuses) the farce must turn into fascism, which is the tragic form of farce. The quiz-question for Capitalism is how Trump ever got elected. He must become more and more contradictory and out of rational control as the tragedy turns into farce. His protege Boris Johnson is a mask with a tin megaphone. Like a school team captain he stands at the side lines and cheers on the race to the cliff edge: "Come on Chaps and Chapesses we can do it!"

For a time ideologies may have the power of myth. But Post-Trump-and Johnson the apples on the tree are black.

The task of modern drama is to peel the wallpaper off the human face.

All the best, Edward.