Goals of Theater of Cruelty

- Create change in society by exposing the Cruelty of God, and by extension Society, and eliminating it, as like an exorcism
  - Such change may be the destruction of oppressive systems and structures which we impose onto the masses
- Force the Spectators to confront these Cruelties by shocking them through a visceral “attack on the senses,” inducing a trance which renders the Spectators vulnerable to the depictions of Cruelty through a unification of Text, Image, Gesture, and Sound
- Artaud defines Cruelty as the inherent suffering experienced in life, as created by our God, and that if we change our notions on God, we also eliminate our own Cruelty

Life of Artaud

- From Marseilles, France
- Studied acting in the workshop of Charles Dullin
- One of the leaders of the Surrealism movement until his ejection for his Religiosity and Mental Illness.
- Spent his late teenage years in and out of sanatoria, with treatment leading to a laudanum addiction
- Spent 9 out of the last 10 years of his life institutionalized following a disastrous adventure through Ireland.
- Believed that he was killed by his mistreatment in the asylums
- Also believed that he was carrying the weight of the whole world’s Cruelty, which is why he thought he suffered so much

Process of Theater of Cruelty

- Theater should be performed surrounding the Spectators
- Every word and action is composed of unified Word, Tone, and Gesture
- Theater should be metaphysical, like alchemy, in which the actors are stand-ins for reagents.
- Additionally, Theater should sweep through the audience “like a plague,” drastically changing them inside, without damaging the structure.
- Gestures are to transcend realism, and should instead reflect a higher, “cosmic” meaning.

Impact of Artaud

- Peter Brook
- Peter Weiss, Marat-Sade
- Immersive Theater
- Sarah Kane, though this is more of a convergence in concepts, as both made theater with visceral images based on their own experiences with Mental Illness

Bibliography