

Natsu Nakajima

Kokoro: Mind-Heart-Spirit

Emotions, feelings, sensations, responsiveness

A long time ago Kazuo Ohno warned me that “in theatre, emotion is a weapon. But, in both traditional dance and butoh, you shouldn’t expose your emotions too easily”.

For theatre, which focuses on humans and human relationships, it is fine to say that expressing emotion is a lifeline without which theatre would not be possible. But in butoh we dance with ‘the nameless body’ and the emotions we express are human and raw. What’s more, because displaying emotion is a very powerful act, often whilst we are displaying emotions, the body is neglected and naked.

In Hijikata Tatsumi’s butoh-fu dance, we make many facial expressions. This can be a danger, as when those who dance butoh abroad mimic facial expressions. Because ‘face’ is directly linked to ‘emotion’, if you express through your face without training, you will end up exaggerating emotions. When I think of facial expressions, I am immediately reminded of Ashikawa Yoko, an excellent dancer, who treated her face as just one part of the body and trained it the same as when moving her limbs. Even when she made faces, she was able to move quickly from A to B, dryly, without letting her emotions drag her down.

However, when I say that butoh expression is dry, mechanical or inorganic, I would also say – as Kazuo Ohno did – that there are metaphorical expressions such as ‘a man like iron’ or ‘silence like water’ which rather than being expressed in a visual and figurative way as in German expressionism, should be felt. I think you need to feel a ‘man like iron’ and imagine the ‘silence like water’ with your body, in order to become them. Because the sensations, responsiveness and feelings that are happening in the body are working sufficiently, they are not at all inorganic expression, but they are moist and watery.

The ‘feeling of dancing’ is becoming more and more important to me as I get older. Recently I’ve been muttering to myself increasingly that it isn’t enough to simply have the ‘feeling of dancing’. Without a dancing *kokoro*, dance can be neither born nor established.

Karada, body, emptiness

When he was old, the late Jaques Mayol lived on the Boso Peninsula, where he dove into the sea and practiced Zen meditation. As a few of the best divers have said, when you reach a depth of about 100 metres, “it is as if you are melting away; you feel as if you are



Natsu Nakajima with Jerzy Grotowski and Kazuo Ohno with his family, *Tradition and Founders of Traditions*, Odin Teatret's 30th anniversary, Holstebro, Denmark, 1994. Photo: Fiora Bemporad

a part of the ocean; it is extremely quiet, and you feel yourself expanding”.

Dance includes the same feeling and the state of-being that Mayol described: this is equal with DANCE itself! Although not always in the same way, I have experienced something like this several times whilst dancing. Mayol said that “diving, even though it is a competition, is a way to learn about yourself, to learn about nature, to expand and yourself”. He also said, “the body becomes empty, and mindless, and full of joy, and free”. I think this fits with what Kazuo Ohno said, that “if there is a macro-cosmos, the body is a micro-cosmos”. When the body reaches a deep place, it enters a kind of *zanmai-kyo*, a state of deep concentration achieved through meditation, and then everything is alright. We can forgive everything. Whatever we do seems natural; this is what we call to be free! What is technique? Don't do this; don't do that! It might be another mirror of a complex opposite of ecstasy!

The late Shuntaro Matsuyama, an Indian philosopher, once taught me what is known in Indian philosophy as *alayashiki*, the deepest region of the body called the unconscious, which is probably what Noguchi Seitai's *katsugen* exercise, also known as unconsciousness exercise, is about, as well as *zazen* (zen meditation), yoga, and so on. It is said that the *alayashiki* is a realm that remains even after the death of the body, but the oldest memories of mankind, such as the *jomon* mind, which is the DNA of the ancient layers of our body-mind, also belong to it. But even that DNA is in danger now...