

**Marginal Voice, Marginal Body:
The Treatment Of The Human Body in yhe Works of Nakagami
Kenji, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Salman Rushdie**

by
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MARGINAL VOICE, MARGINAL BODY:
THE TREATMENT OF THE HUMAN BODY IN THE WORKS OF
NAKAGAMI KENJI, LESLIE MARMON SILKO, AND SALMAN RUSHDIE

A Thesis in
Comparative Literature

by

Noriko Miura

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ABSTRACT

In examining the work of three “ethnic” writers (Nakagami Kenji is Japanese *burakumin*, Leslie Marmon Silko Native American, Salman Rushdie an Indian living in England), this project studies the literary depictions of the ways in which the body is portrayed and used as a space for cultural and ideological inscription. The major issues addressed involve gender, race, and ethnicity as forces which become visible through the socially constructed body.

In the works of Nakagami Kenji, Salman Rushdie, and Leslie Marmon Silko, bodies cry out the silence to overwhelm the torturer. They all share a concern with the loss of land which induces migration, a weakened sense of identity, and hybridity. Each author uses the body of his/her protagonist as the site to inscribe the consequences of such loss, along with the criticisms against the dominant system and ideology of society. In each case, an emerging discourse of the body forges the power of the margins to resist and subvert any claims of hegemonic control.

The section on Kenji’s novel *Wings of the Sun* includes an investigation of the *burakumin*, its historical and cultural origin, and how it is excluded from the structure of Japanese society, before moving to an examination of how Kenji’s texts create a space for the *burakumin* within the “Body Without Organs” of advanced capitalism. The chapter on Rushdie’s *Shame* shows how the novel uses the bodies of its protagonists as allegories of the violence and conflict within multi-ethnic, post-colonial Pakistan. The analysis of Silko’s *Ceremony* involves the conflict between Native-American and Euro-American cultures in their varying treatments of the body.

Much has been written in the last decade about literary representations of the body. This work has stressed that the body is a conceptual category produced by specific discursive operations that can be analyzed and described. Emphasis on the discursive construction of the body facilitates our understanding of the human condition represented in literature or in other cultural products, and in the case of these three authors posits the body as the site of alternative “logics” for dealing with the realities of post-colonial situations.

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Chapter One

FROM PLATO TO A DESIRING MACHINE VIA ZEAMI: VIEWS OF THE BODY IN EAST AND WEST

1.1 Objectives and Method

Changes in the global economy, as well as in territorial maps induced by colonial or imperial invasion cause flows of migration and consequent transformation of landscapes. The separation of the body from the land results in modifications in the way one perceives the body. Many so-called postmodern authors write of their concern with the loss of the land, and attempt to recover this loss by using the body as a site to inscribe their resistance and to forge a power to overcome disintegration. The objective of this study is to examine the systems by which the displaced may subvert any assertion of hegemonic control and emerge as new subjects.

How we view our body is deeply rooted in our cultural and traditional heritage. As a way to build the basis for my discussion of the literary treatment of the human body, I shall start by outlining the evolution of major discourses on the body in Western as well as Eastern traditions, with a focus on the relationship between body and mind. I will first delineate the philosophical and religious inquiry into the body. I choose to summarize the theories of Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes, because they are representative figures who took principal roles in the development of the philosophy of the body in the Western tradition.¹ My next step will be to examine how the

¹The problem concerning the union of body and soul is treated by a number of critics. J. R. Zurcher writes a strong critique of dualism, using Aristotle to posit the soul as the form of the body. He examines dualism in Greek philosophy, Christian thought, and the modern philosophy of Descartes. He attempts to

body is perceived in the Eastern tradition, drawing on examples from Taoism and Zen Buddhism.

The second half of this chapter starts with Zeami (1363-1443), the master of *nô*, the medieval drama of Japan, who cultivated the theory of the body in the East into an aesthetic discourse. Zeami is a key figure, as his dramaturgy has influenced, to a certain extent, the modern European theater and its approach to the human body. Antonin Artaud and Roland Barthes, the focus of the following section, used Zeami-like approaches to the body in order to critique a European culture infected by Western metaphysics. Both Artaud and Barthes represent a trend among Western intellectuals who have come to realize the shortcomings of Cartesian dualism, and have started to look into Eastern philosophy and religion, which traditionally espouses development or formation of the self through bodily cultivation. As a result, the discourse of the body has acquired new significance as a conceptual operation to encode one's view of or criticism against a given culture and society.

Taking their cue partly from Artaud's work, Deleuze and Guattari developed a theory of the body responding to colonial and hegemonic control. Here, the discourse on the body shifts its focus from body-mind relationship to that between body and land. I shall conclude this chapter by exploring the possibility of a new approach to the body, using the theories of Deleuze and Guattari who provide us with viable ideas connecting the body and the

solve the soul-body distinction by grasping human nature in its spiritual essence. J. R. Zurcher, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1969). *Body and Mind: Past, Present, and Future*, edited by R. W. Rieber (New York: Academic Press, 1980) approaches the relationship between the human body and mind from different perspectives. Among others, Margaret D. Wilson's essay "Body and Mind from the Cartesian Point of View" discusses the historical roots of the Cartesian dualism and its opposition to Aristotelian philosophy (35-55). I have drawn primarily on these texts for my outline of the Western mind-body debate.

colonial maps. They offer highly useful and advantageous analytical tools for examining the relationship between the body and land.

1.2 Philosophical and Religious Inquiry of the Body, East and West

It is generally understood that the Western tradition interprets body and mind as two completely different entities. Plato, for example, embraces a mind-body dualism, relating the soul to the realm of divine, in touch with purity, eternity, and immortality, and the body to the human and mortal. Aristotle, on the other hand, somewhat doubts the separability of soul from body. He dismisses as unnecessary the question of whether the soul and the body are one. Descartes, however, overturns Aristotelian philosophy that posits the unity of body and soul as the two parts of our nature. He separates the soul, as the thinking substance, from the body, the extensive substance.

The Platonic image of man is composed of two radically opposed parts: a perishable body and an immortal soul. In the *Phaedo*, the soul is considered as a single, simple, and indestructible entity which constitutes the essence of humans (*Phaedo*: 72d-77a; 79c-81b). This Platonic dualism presupposes the prior existence of the soul before the birth of the body. The soul, divine and immortal, is dragged down into the region of the mortal by the body which uses it as an instrument of perception. Thus, the soul is only temporarily attached to the body, and its real home is with the eternal. When the soul and the body are united, the soul is to rule and govern, the body to obey and serve. Nevertheless, the body, with its desires and lusts, has the power to influence its immortal sovereign. Especially when the soul is held fast by the corporeal, fascinated by the body and by its desires and

pleasures, the soul is led to believe that the truth exists in a bodily form and to avoid intellectual principles. Thus, the union of body and soul is problematic, because the body can contaminate the purity and wisdom of the soul.

In the *Phaedrus*, Plato further analyzes the soul according to its distinct function: it is associated with reason or the rational principles; the body, on the other hand, with the irrational or appetitive faculty. The reasonable and immortal part is located in the superior region of the human being, the head, whereas the inferior part of the soul resides in the body which is also subdivided into two parts: the docile and intelligent part, in the breast; and the rebellious and violent, in the abdomen.² The figures of the charioteer and the two steeds appear to delineate these three different attributes (*Phaedrus*: 253c-256d). There is no doubt that the charioteer represents Reason or Intelligence, and the white steed symbolizes spirit, which can be brought to the side of reason. The black steed indicates the principle of desire which potentially brings disharmony and disorganization to the soul. At the same time, it also represents the dynamic quality of the soul which, if properly controlled, can perform an important function; to unify the body and mind. This indicates the more vigorous and passionate function of soul that makes the body move forward, and which stands apart from its docile and spiritual quality.

Although the Platonic association of mind and body is problematic, with the possibility of the body's soiling the immortal soul, Plato attempts to explain the interaction between the soul and the body. Plato recognizes one of the functions of the soul to be its operative forces, which may ultimately unite the spirit and the source of life. However, the union of the soul

²See J. R. Zurcher, pp. 20-21.

and the body is not materialized, as these two entities are clearly separated, as the ruler is from the ruled.

Contrary to Plato, Aristotle affirms that the soul is inseparable from the body. The Aristotelian treatment of the mind-body relationship differs from Plato's in that Aristotle deals not only with human beings, but with plants and animals as well. Also, while the Platonic construction of the human is composed of two oppositional elements, soul and body, its Aristotelian counterpart is the combination of form and matter. Nevertheless, Aristotle basically agrees with Plato that the soul constitutes the essence of organisms that remains unchangeable, while the body undergoes transformations. Aristotle, furthermore, relates the soul to dynamic sources of activity that move and arrest living substances.

In *On the Soul*, Aristotle begins by examining the nature of all living substances, proceeding to the higher organisms and ultimately to the human soul (*On the Soul*, Book II, Ch. 1: 412a6-413a10). Fundamental to Aristotle's analysis of substances is his distinction between form and matter, which are necessary constituents of every living creature. Matter is incapable of separate existence and is considered to be a mere potentiality (*Physics*, Book II, Ch. 1: 192b8-193b12). All reality associated with matter depends on its capacity for receiving form. Parts of a living body, such as organs, flesh, and bones, are its matter: they cannot exist or fulfill their functions independently; but have only potential. Form, on the other hand, is the principle of determination, which realizes itself in matter to constitute the material. Form renders intelligible the characteristics and structure of the organism concerned.³ Thus, form is never separable from matter: the intimate union of the two is necessary to produce any living substance.

³Michael Durrant, ed., *Aristotle's De Anima in Focus*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 6.

Aristotle then applies this dichotomy of form and matter to that of soul and body: soul is identical to form, and body to matter. The body does not exist without the soul, which gives the body form. The soul is the form or the essence of the living being, by virtue of which the living being is what it is. Aristotle attributes three major functions to the soul: nutritive; sensitive; and rational (*On the Soul*, Book II, Ch. 2: 413a20-414a4). What differentiates humans from other living substances and makes them superior beings is their fulfillment of the rational function, which is related to the power to think. Whereas other psychic powers perish with the body, the intellectual capacity alone can exist independently. At this point, Aristotle adopts the Platonic dogma of the immortality of the soul. Although the union of body and soul is affirmed, the soul still dominates the body.

Descartes was the first to analyze the mind-body relation systematically in the context of the “modern” mechanistic, materialist theory of nature. Cartesian dualism separates mental states such as trains of reasoning from physical states pertaining to the body. Both Plato and Descartes regard a human being as composed of two oppositional entities. Nevertheless, their approaches to the body-mind dualism are essentially different. For Plato, the body represents the appetitive, chaotic desire, while the mind's function is to bring order and harmony to such avaricious impulses. Thus, the concordance between mind and body amounts to the recovery of one's true self. On the other hand, the Cartesian union of body and mind produces self-reflexive awareness. It makes one aware of the body or the idea of union. Union is the source of a perplexity from which it is important to free oneself. Whereas the Platonic treatment attempts to harmonize two different principles, the spirit and the source of life, the Cartesian union does not

present such a dynamic quality, but only exists in self-reflexivity or awareness.

Descartes also overturns the Aristotelian conception of body-mind relations. For Aristotle, the soul is the principle of life, whereas for Descartes, it is the principle of thought. Thus, while Aristotle explicates natures of all different animals and plants as sharing the same characteristics as humans, Descartes denies the continuity between the human thinking function and other animal functions. Furthermore, Descartes regards the body as machine or "extension," which is spatial and divisible. In the Aristotelian view, the body has the dynamism of growth, motion, and arrest. Descartes thus attempted to break away from traditional values and laid the basis for the modern notion of subject as the thinking principle. The body is merely the mind's tool. The focus on the thinking subject consequently cuts off bodily interaction with others and with nature.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, some European intellectuals attacked Cartesianism and tried to recover the body as a mediator between self and other, as well as culture and nature. Nietzsche was the forerunner of this movement, who identified Self with the body and espoused the idea that the body is a stronger self than the spirit.⁴ Emmanuel Levinas added a new dimension to the philosophy of the body by interpreting the body as a site where the encounter between self and other takes place.⁵ Later in this chapter, I will discuss the theories of Antonin Artaud and Roland Barthes who, like Nietzsche and Levinas, reinterpret the mind-

⁴"Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, and unknown sage--whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he is your body." Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated with a preface by Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Penguin Books, 1978); p. 34.

⁵Jacob Mekin's essay "In the Flesh: Embodiment and Jewish Existence in the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," *Soundings* 76:1 (Spring 1993): 173-187 analyzes how Levinas envisions the inter-personal dimension of bodily existence, incorporating the Jewish tradition to individual experience.

body relationship, and who find in the Eastern approach to the body a way to destabilize the Western dualism.

The Western approach to the body, as we have seen so far, presupposes some form of dualism. The Platonic view is based on the soul-body dichotomy, while Aristotle espouses that of form and matter. Descartes sets up the binary opposition between the mental and the physical represented by the mind and body. Aristotle is more sympathetic to the union of the two different entities than the other philosophers. Nevertheless, he does not go far enough to abolish the dualistic mode, but observes the mind and body as different aspects of the same substance. Still, the Aristotelian approach seems more consistent with the Eastern view that stresses the non-duality of body and mind, as well as of subject and object. Although dissimilar in various aspects, the Eastern perception of the body, as expressed in Taoism and Zen Buddhism, advocates the non-dualistic mode reconciling the gap between body and mind, exterior and interior.

For Plato, the body, with its desires and lusts, is an obstacle undermining the spiritual quest for knowledge and eternity. On the other hand, in Eastern thought, the inner truth can be only known through one's body. This idea reverses the supremacy of mind over body. The fundamental concept which underlies Taoism, Zen Buddhism, and theories of artistry in Japan alike is that of "cultivation," *shugyô* or training of the spirit by means of the body. *Shugyô* is a word of Chinese origin which practically means to pursue the way of Buddha and regulate one's conduct. Yuasa Yasuo states that "cultivation" accounts for the philosophical uniqueness of Eastern thought:

[P]ersonal "cultivation" (*shugyô*) is presupposed in the philosophical foundation of the Eastern theories. To put it simply, true knowledge cannot be attained simply by means of theoretical thinking, but only through the utilization of one's total mind and body. Simply stated, this is to "learn through the body," not the brain. Cultivation is a practice that attempts, so to speak, to achieve true knowledge by means of one's total mind and body.⁶

According to Yuasa, personal cultivation is stressed in the schools of Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as in Chinese Taoism, and furthermore, a similar tendency can be found in Confucianism.⁷ Likewise, Zeami emphasizes artistic discipline or training as a form of cultivation. Zeami espouses the idea that art is embodied through cultivated training, and that one comes to understand an art through one's body. Zeami compares an artistic mind to a flower, and a bodily technique cultivated through training to a seed:

You should keep in mind the various types of performance through "perennial training" from the age of seven. After you carry your diligence to the extreme, and exhaust all your faculties, know that this flower cannot be lost. The mind that penetrates this is the seed of the flower, first know its seed. The flower is the mind and its seed the technique.⁸

This statement indicates the idea that the body, as a seed, is essential to the attainment of supreme art, a flower. This reverses the Platonic thought which presumes the prior existence of the soul before the body. The ultimate accomplishment of artistic performance presupposes the cultivation of techniques through the body, without which the true art will never be born. Al-

⁶Yuasa Yasuo, *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, ed. Thomas P. Kasulis, trans. Nagatomo Shigenori and Thomas P. Kasulis, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 25-26.

⁷Ibid.

⁸*Zeami Zenchiku in Nihon shisô taikēi*, vol. 24 (Iwanami Shoten, 1974), pp. 36-37.

though the perfection of art is associated with spirituality, it is necessary to know the body for its achievement. Only after the correct bodily technique is acquired will the beauty embodying the artistic ideal blossom. This sequence reverses the Western mind-body hierarchy.

In addition to the idea of cultivation, the way of envisioning the human body constitutes the uniqueness of Eastern thought. Focusing on Taoism, Kristofer Schipper summarizes three ways of envisioning the body, which can be applied to the Eastern tradition in general.⁹ The first is a theological approach, tied to the notion of divinity and to the belief that every point or subdivision of the body is animated and inhabited by a god or a spirit. The second approach is empirical and is the origin of many Eastern arts and sciences such as acupuncture and herbal medicine. The third is a figurative or conceptual approach: body as symbolic vision. The idea that the way we view the human body is intimately related to our cosmology or world view is also advocated by such anthropologists as Mary Douglas.¹⁰ Visions of the body as a symbolic land or country reflect the cosmological and social systems of a given culture. Furthermore, this symbolic connection of the body with landscape suggests the interdependence of the inner world and the exterior world, the mental experience and the physical experience, as well as the microcosm of the human body and the macrocosm of the universe.

Another major difference from the Western tradition is the East's treatment of the essence of the human being: the concept of soul, self, or subjectivity. For Plato, the soul represents immortality, and is capable of

⁹Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, trans. Karen C. Duval, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 103-104.

¹⁰In *Natural Symbols*(New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), Mary Douglas states that the symbols based on the human body are used to express different social experiences (xii).

existing independent of the body. In the Aristotelian view, the soul is a substance or a form of a natural body, which has a dynamic quality to animate the body and realize its potential. Descartes postulates the subject that functions autonomously as its own criterion of truth. On the other hand, the Eastern tradition is known for the insistence on non-self or the abandonment of self.

It is generally accepted that this denial of self in Eastern thought is related to a belief in the impermanence of things, the idea that everything is in flux and every existence is illusory. However, Brahmanical tradition, which originated in India, conceives reality on the pattern of an inner core or soul (*âtman*), an immutable inner core which is unrelated or only loosely related to an outer region of impermanence and change.¹¹ The notion that, while the soul is imperishable, the outer form is subject to change and decline, corresponds to the body-mind dualism of Plato and Descartes. Buddhist tradition, however, embraces the denial of such existence (*ânatman*). Dôgen (1200-1253), the founder of the Japanese school of Sôtô Zen Buddhism, instructs us to cast aside the mind that says, "this is good and that is bad," and to forget the preconceptions that mind is thought and perceptions. For him, mind is plants and trees, and plants and trees are mind. Thus, he denies the Cartesian idea of mind as thinking principle; understanding Buddhism is possible only by casting aside the mind that thinks and speculates. The following account shows Dôgen's idea on the body-mind relationship in association with bodily cultivation:

Is the Way attained through the mind or through the body? The teaching schools say that, since body and mind are identical, it is attained through the body. Yet since they say that body and mind are identical, it is not explicitly stated that the

¹¹T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1960), pp. 10-11.

Way is attained by the body. In Zen, the Way is attained by body and mind. If you contemplate Buddhism with the mind alone, not for ten thousand *kaplas* or a thousand lives can you attain the Way. But if you let go the mind and cast aside knowledge and intellectual understanding, you will gain the Way. . . . Therefore, if you cast aside completely the thoughts and concepts of the mind and concentrate on *zazen* alone, you attain to an intimacy with the Way. The attainment of the Way is truly accomplished with the body.¹²

Dôgen thus rejects attempts at understanding the Way by means of intellectual speculation. Speculation as a mode of self-conscious thinking does not bring attainment of the Way, for it requires the self or ego-centered attachment, which blocks identification with the Way.

Dôgen's privileging of the body over the mind leads to the ideal of a non-dualistic state in which all the distinctions between self and other, between subject and object, between the interior world and the exterior world, and between mind and body collapse. This non-dualism is the ultimate goal for cultivation in Eastern philosophy, and is described in a number of Eastern religious and aesthetic texts. For example, the non-duality of action as *wu-wei* or inaction is one of the major concepts of Taoism. In the *Lao Tzu*, *wu-wei* indicates that things transform themselves because Tao takes no action or leaves everything alone.¹³ In the *Chuang Tzu*, the focus is both on the denial of purposeful action and on the rejection of agency. Burton Watson explains *wu-wei* as: "a course of action that is not founded upon any purposeful motives of gain and striving. In such a state, all human actions become as spontaneous and mindless as those of the natural world. Man becomes one with Nature, or Heaven, as Chuang Tzu calls it, and merges him-

¹² Dogen, *Shobogenzo zuimonki* (Tokyo: Dogen zenshi kenkyukai, 1929), 85-86; trans. Reihô Masunaga, *A Primer of Sôtô Zen: A Translation of Dôgen's Shôbôgenzô Zuimonki* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press), p. 47.

¹³ Wing-Tsit Chan, trans. *The Way of Lao Tzu (Tao-te Ching)* (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.), p. 166.

self with Tao, or the Way, the underlying unity that embraces man, Nature, and all that is in the universe.”¹⁴ In other words, non-dual action requires that there be no self-consciousness in the agent, which differentiates the agent from the act. The subject is completely absorbed into the action, forgetting the sense of bodily self. Likewise, Dôgen instructs students to separate themselves from concepts of the Self and to free themselves from attachments to the body (Masunaga, 62). David Loy argues that this non-dual action is achieved by eliminating one's intention, that is, by acting without attachment to some projected goal to be obtained from the action, in which case the agent can simply be the act.¹⁵ In this way, one can transcend the dualism between self and other, and subject and object.

1.3 Zeami's Theory of Artistry

The idea of non-dual action also plays an important role in Zeami's theory of artistry. Zeami incorporates two opposite methods: imitation and becoming. Imitation means realistic and conscious reproduction of gestures and facial expression, while becoming indicates unconscious assimilation of the actor into the emotions of the character:

If you have attained a certain art rank in the field of *monomane* [imitation], you will not think of imitating an object of *monomane*; if you have mastered *monomane* and reached the stage at which you can get into the skin of your part, you will not think of imitating an object of *monomane*. If you reach such a stage and make a thorough study of interestingness, *hana* will be sure to appear.¹⁶

¹⁴Burton Watson, trans. *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 6.

¹⁵David Loy, *Nonduality* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 106.

¹⁶Zeami, *The Fushikaden*, trans. Shohei Shimada, (Tokyo, 1975), p. 90.

When the actor is completely absorbed into the character, he will forget his intention to imitate, and let the emotions of the character move his own body with their own force. Thus, the actor transcends subject-object dualism and achieves non-dual action.

Another important concept in Zeami's theory is *riken no ken*, genuinely objective perception that is only made possible by eliminating one's insistence on the self.¹⁷ *Riken* refers to the view of the actor as observed by the audience. On the other hand, the view which the actor himself sees is *gaken*. When the actor learns to become the object of his performance, he can also cross over the boundary between the inner and outer. He sees not only his own internal image of himself, but also grasps his own internalized outer image, sharing the same view as the audience. In other words, one's conscious observing self disappears, and one sees one's own figure from the outer perspective. Here, the difference between self and other, subject and object disappears, and two distinguishing worlds merge into one. Also, I would like to point out that the non-duality here comes less from abandoning the self than from fusing, by means of theatrical performance, multiple subjectivities of the actor, the character, and the audience. This non-dual state is regarded as the highest achievement in the Eastern tradition.

To sum up, the Eastern view of the mind-body relationship is different from the West in at least three major principles. First, the mind-body hierarchy is reversed in the Eastern tradition which stresses that enlightenment comes through the body. Thus, the East is free from a philosophy of self-consciousness as it exists in the modern West, in its idea that the mind dominates the body. Second, in relation to the first principle, the concept of self or subjectivity is rejected and denied as an obstacle to enlightenment.

¹⁷See Tanaka Yutaka, pp. 124-125.

While Cartesianism attempts to reify the sense of self, Eastern thought leads to the evaporation of it. This elimination of the self is ultimately connected to the third principle, non-dualism. The ideal relationship between body and mind does not produce any hierarchy: there is no ruler or ruled. The mind is body, and the body is mind. Here, physical objects in the visual world coincide with mentally visualized objects. Major thinkers of Eastern philosophy advocate this non-dual state as its foremost accomplishment.

1.4 Antonin Artaud's Theater of Cruelty

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), who exerted a profound influence on the modern and post-modern theater, explored Oriental culture to develop his idea of imaginary theater. Criticizing the Occidental theater and its psychological tendencies, Artaud applauds the theater of the Orient as a non-verbal, metaphysical, and ritualistic form of the theater that uses the body as its principal means of expression. Artaud criticizes a Western civilization which, affected by Cartesianism, upholds the strong, integrated subject as its primary achievement and espouses the dichotomy of body and mind as well as of nature and culture. He uses the discourse of the body as a means to encode his criticism against the Western culture that privileges mind over body.

The theater of cruelty, inspired by the Oriental theater, represents Artaud's struggle to destroy Cartesian dualism and bring back the bodily interaction with others or with nature. It aims at creating the non-dual state of total annihilation that overturns the distinction between inside and outside, collective and individual, and physical and mental. This non-duality is, however, not the goal of Artaud's imaginary theater, but the transitional state that leads to the creation of another form of dualism and hierarchy between the ruler and the ruled. This is fundamentally different from the Oriental philosophy and religion that attempts to abolish any kind of dualism or hierarchy. Despite his effort to transcend the body-mind distinction, Artaud is still trapped in the monotheistic tradition and cannot completely abolish the dualistic mode.

Le Théâtre et son double (The Theater and Its Double) reveals the most striking and provocative aspects of Artaud's dramaturgy.¹⁸ Artaud starts off with his criticism of the modern concept of culture by attacking the view that exalts culture above human life. For him, culture is not a sophisticated form of art but is related to human instinct, which creates the force to live and move forward:

*Il faut insister sur cette idée de la culture en action et qui devient en nous comme un nouvel organe, une sorte de souffle second : et la civilisation, c'est de la culture qu'on applique et qui régit jusqu'à nos actions les plus subtiles, . . .*¹⁹

We must insist upon the idea of culture-in-action, of culture growing within us like a new organ, a sort of second breath; and on civilization as an applied culture controlling even our subtlest actions, a *presence of mind*.²⁰

Artaud's culture is a sort of organic principle that lies at the source of human action. In this sense it is comparable to the Dionysian quality of the soul that moves and arrests living substances, described by Plato and Aristotle. Cartesianism stresses the intellectual function of the soul as thinking principle and disregards its vigorous aspect that potentially brings disharmony but can perform an important function. Artaud attacks a civilized man who can only act and think in terms of systems, and blames modern thought that transforms nature into mere material reality reconstructable by human intellect.

At the same time, his idea of culture, not as a system of valuation or judgment, but as an innate mechanism by means of which we organize and determine our behavior, seems extremely original and striking. It is widely

¹⁸Antonin Artaud, *Théâtre et son double* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938).

¹⁹Antonin Artaud, *Oeuvres complètes, tome IV*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), p. 13.

²⁰The translation is by Mary Caroline Richards. *The Theater and Its Double* (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p. 8.

accepted now by a number of influential anthropologists, including Clifford Geertz, that culture is an organic principle of life, rather than a sophisticated form of art. Geertz defines cultures as: “an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.”²¹ Thus, from within different disciplines, both Artaud and Geertz affirm that culture is inseparable from human life as well as from human nature, and imply that culture is often wrongly institutionalized and associated with power.

The fundamental difference between the two is that, while Geertz asserts that culture, open and public, exists equally in the common life of post-industrial society as well as in so-called primitive or tribal societies, Artaud reproaches modern civilization for its lack of culture and looks instead to aboriginal societies. Artaud adores their totemic mode of thinking, which sees animals, plants, and other objects of nature as signs conveying the hidden forces of universe. For Artaud, culture is a sort of mythical magnetism which draws the universe to earth. At the same time, culture is connected to a human action, and it is an organic, physical system inside the human body. Western civilization, however, separates nature and culture, and transforms nature into mere material which can be remade and remodeled freely by human will. Consequently, the interactive communication between nature and a human being is interrupted, and the magical force of the universe is lost. Artaud advocates his theater of cruelty as a means to revive true culture by releasing one's latent dark forces and stirring up one's

²¹Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretations of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 89.

"shadows." Thus, Artaud's theater redeems the body that has lost its magical connection to the cosmic forces, and restores the true sense of life.

In shaping his "theater of cruelty," Artaud exercises the idea of non-duality on many levels. In the Eastern tradition, non-duality is the ultimate goal, achieved only as a result of vigorous cultivation to abandon any sense of self-consciousness. On the other hand, for Artaud, non-duality is a transitional state of emptiness and annihilation that should be overcome through the body. Although Artaud resolutely attacks Cartesian dualism, he cannot fully transcend the dichotomy between God and mankind, and between Ruler and ruled.

The non-dual state is described in the account of a dream vision by Saint Remys, the viceroy of Sardinia, that foretold the outbreak of the plague in 1720. The vision itself violates the boundary between reality and dream. The plague presented in his dream enfolds another form of non-duality, between the inner and the outer. In addition, there is the opposition of the Oriental plague and Western civilization, which ultimately results in the destruction of social and hierarchical order, and the following non-dual stage.

Artaud introduces the concept of plague as a critique of Western civilization both practically and metaphorically. The plague overthrows all kinds of dualism, turns the society upside down, reveals the corruption hidden under its surface, and exposes its internal chaos:

Sous l'action du fléau, les cadres de la société se liquéfient. L'ordre tombe. Il assiste à toutes les déroutes de la morale, à toutes les débâcles de la psychologie, il entend en lui le murmure de ses humeurs, déchirées, en pleine défaite, et qui, dans une vertigineuse déperdition de matière, deviennent lourdes et se métamorphosent peu à peu en charbon. (19)