

THE SOUL MEANNING IN ANCIENT NATIVE CULTURE FROM OAXACA-MEXICO.

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ABSTRACT.

In the present paper we show data relative to the language and thinking from ancient prehispanic people living in the place now called Oaxaca, Mexico. We point to the magic conception of man in these cultures. Also there are some parallelism between old Mexican and Greek cultures. Two of them are the archaic and naturalistic conception of the soul and the violent arrive of a different approach . One with a mentalistic conception.

About where and when were the origins of scientific psychology or the authentic behaviorism, we got a known answer, it starts with Aristoteles and others ancient men during the fourth century before Christ. Of course, Aristoteles didn't think on a science called psychology, but in his biological work his researches on the organism activities included, besides reproduction and metabolic mechanism, psychological behavior like sensations, memories, imagination, thinking and dreaming. Notably emphasis in this phenomena was the consideration of them as a way in which plants and animals interact whit the objects conforming their surrounding.

The naturalistic point of view, typical of the Greek psychology was a definitive effect of his relative security about his political and economic conditions, which come to be turned off for other very different science and social living. The glorious Athenas civilization open the way to Alexandria culture and it was in Alexandria were spirit and mentalism have originated on western European culture (Kantor, 1971).

The intention in evaluating the roll of the "soul" concept in Oaxaca native thinking is feed with our interest for connecting this conception with the features of archaic naive scientific thinking, the one who started the history of western psychology.

This aim take us to do a bibliographic inquiry of available material and to the documental report of it which let us begin with the systematic study of the evolution of a kind of psychology in the south of Mexican territory.

Doing this work we find very little interest in the literature for searching these topics. The information we got was taken from books on Sociology, Anthropology an Literature.

As a main resource we visit several times the Central Library of the State Government, specially the hall on special issues in local topics. There we made our notes that now take us to the next comments.

THE SOUL IN GREEK CULTURE.

There are different approaches to describe the evolution of psychology. By so doing, we can identified diverse kind of schools, theories, systems and ages or time periods. Nevertheless, with all this diversity, it

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is possible to isolate the features of the archaic psychological thinking, initial or naïve, which was postulated in western culture when asking about the nature of the soul.

For antique Greeks (first doing this reflections), the two distinctive features of the soul was movement and sensation. Some others point to the capacity of promote movement as the principal and more important function of the soul.

Taken this as a starting thinking framework, Democrito argument on the soul as a kind of internal fire or hat. Anaxagoras sustains that “mind” is the origin of movement and define the soul as the source of that movement. By his own, Empedocles thinks on the soul as the meeting of all elements, conceding to each one of the elements a soul by it self. Philosopher Tales de Mileto believe that soul is in some sense the cause of all movement when considering owner of a soul the magnet stone, doing the iron move.

In a similar way Heraclito system call for the soul as a inner begin, emanation and cause of all others elements. Taken his turn Alcmeon says that the soul is immortal because the constant movement it has. In the same line Socrates, one of the most wise man in that time, believe in a unique essence of everything as an original principle of creation in nature, he also believe in soul transmigration.

Aristoteles, a great synthesizer of the thinking at the epoch, told us that men lives because of the soul. Soul was the origin of live and movement and also the cause for sensing and thinking by an organism.

A naturalistic conception based on their own experience was the characteristic of this time.

THE SOUL IN OAXACA'S ANCIENT NATIVE CULTURES.

Oaxaca State in Mexico is a place were different ethnic groups share. All of them interested and owners of a rich culture. The vestige of his philosophical thinking, however, remind lost in time. So, there are the Mixtecos and Zapotecos groups as the more outstanding and the cultural rescued more lookers.



Fig. 1. Oaxaca location in Mexican territory.

The Zapoteca culture, on a first place, has a solid philosophical foundation. At first it was supported in concrete ideas taken from nature, similar with those postulated by Greeks presocratic thinkers in the sense of looking for the principal element of things.

Before Spanish conquest Zapotecas people lived at Oaxaca valley in Zaachila and Mitla cities. They have a rich literature that flourish on the epic poems about glorious deed of seniors from the “Binniza” race. The

old Zapotecas and Mixtecos took religion from the cult of natural elements and they were revered in different ways, by showing them in the form of sculptures, stone contours and obelisks.



Fig. 2. God Mitlantecutli jewel in solid gold.

One relevant ritual derives from the Nahoia myth of Quetzalcoatl (feather snake) talking about to be born again. They also believed in a superior being, endless and incorporeal who were the origin of all in universe.

Old Zapotecas used the word “guenda” as an element of his magical discourse. Every man have a kind of double, an animal who share characteristics with the individual. This animal is called “guenda” and his live is close related with the person, in such a way that every happen to the animal also happens to man. Legends told of witches in his animal form building palaces and churches in only one night. They was the “Binniguenda”, not visible entities.



Fig. 3 Monte Alban ruins in Oaxaca.

By the other side, Mixteca culture sign their origin (cloud’s people) with a myth about Gods coming from two strong trees at side of Apoala river. So, the river water rice the trees and from them grow the first man and woman. In a similar way other ethnic groups like Chinantlecos, Triquies, Yalaltecos and Mazatecos also include stories and myths related with the soul and the cares from keep it healthy and the rituals when some one died. All they considered dead and born as a continuous event.

With the arriving of Spanish Conquest and the introduction of Catholicism the concept of soul in natives was change and take the direction to worries about salvation of the soul and relate it with celestial and divine entities.

Actually, soul, spirit, “guenda” (for the Zapotecas), fire, water, earth (for the presocratics), are still present as a historical psychological terms.

Nevertheless, nowadays we can find in zapoteca language some expressions like “nisa” (water) and “yu” (earth) which form part of the words referring that elements in spell. The expression “bi” also minds “soul” and we can find it in every name of living being.

Finally, there are a parallelism between Anaximenes notion of the soul as air with Zapoteca concept of “bi” .

Outstanding, “nisa”, “yu” and “bi” are key expressions for the generation of all other words in zapoteca language.



Fig. 4. Actual inherit of Zapoteca people in Oaxaca.

THE ANALYSIS OF VERBAL BEHAVIOR.

Culture is a verbal community who share reinforcement contingencies. Anthropological speaking could be said that a group of people develop together language characteristics, myths and rituals. Also have common dressing, coking, working and other costumes.

Language usually contains terms referring to causes of behaving and like all others expressions cut be subject of a functional analysis (Skinner, 1957). Leigland (1996) consider tree advantages for the functional analysis of psychological terms: (1) that would help to clarify the mentalistic verbal practices of ordinary language by relating the relevant terms to controlling conditions, (2) it show the relevance of behavior to traditional psychological and philosophical problems and (3) would extend the methodological practices of the functional analysis of verbal behavior. Of course one have to be clear on the intentional criticism (Leigland, 2002).

To understand the meaning of a word we can take the pragmatic view and look meaning in terms of the function of thought to produce habits (Peirce (1992) or make explicit the reinforcement contingencies that control the emission of verbal responses (Skinner, 1945).

In this essay we presented some of the setting conditions in old Zapoteca language that conduce to verbal speech nowadays still in use.

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