

The Philosophical Footprints in Carlos Castaneda's Books Outside the Teachings of Don Juan's area

Elika Baghaie

Abstract: Carlos Castaneda was an American author who graduated from the University of California at Los Angeles with a PhD in Anthropology. As he said in his books, he made several trips to the Southwest to collect information on the medicinal plants used by the Indians of the area. But during one of his trips he visited a white-haired old Indian who diverted him or changed his scientific investigation and named him Don Juan. He rarely spoke in public, except toward the end of his life, and he gave very few interviews. And he claimed in *The Teachings of Don Juan* that in fact, Don Juan disclosed very little about his personal life too and all he said was that he had been born in the Southwest in 189; that he spent nearly all his life in Mexico; that in 1900 his family was exiled by the Mexican government to central Mexico along with thousands of other Sonoran Indians; and that he lived in central and southern Mexico until 1940. Thus, as Don Juan had travelled a great deal, his knowledge may have been the product of many influences and although he regarded himself as an Indian from Sonora, I was not sure whether to place the context of his knowledge totally in the culture of the Sonoran Indians.

[Elika Baghaie. **The Philosophical Footprints in Carlos Castaneda's Books Outside the Teachings of Don Juan's area.** *Life Sci J* 2013;10(2s):5-10] (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 2

Keywords: Philosophical Footprint; Carlos Castaneda; Teachings; Don Juan

Introduction

Carlos Castaneda was an American author who graduated from the University of California at Los Angeles with a PhD in Anthropology. As he said in his books, he made several trips to the Southwest to collect information on the medicinal plants used by the Indians of the area. But during one of his trips he visited a white-haired old Indian who diverted him or changed his scientific investigation and named him **Don Juan**.

Carlos Castaneda wrote a series of books that described his arduous training and associated awareness-expanding experiences under the guidance of Juan Matus and Genaro Flores from 1960 to 1973. Starting with "*The Teachings of Don Juan*" in 1968 and ending with "*The Active Side of Infinity*" in 1998 he published 12 books.

Carlos Castaneda was very protective of his privacy and until recently little was known about him outside what was learned from his twelve books.

As he answered to a question about his obsession for ambiguous personal life this way: With reference to photographs and personal data, the other three disciples of Don Juan and me follow his instructions. For a shaman like Don Juan, the main idea behind refraining from giving personal data is very simple. It is imperative to leave aside what he called "personal history". To get away from the "me" is something extremely annoying and difficult. What shamans like Don Juan seek is a state of fluidity where the personal "me" does not count. He believed that an absence of photographs and biographical data affects whoever enters into this field of action in a positive, though subliminal, way. We are endlessly accustomed to using photographs, recordings and biographical data, all of which spring from the idea of personal

importance. Don Juan said it was better not to know anything about a shaman; in this way, instead of encountering a person, one encounters an idea that can be sustained; the opposite of what happens in the everyday world where we are faced only with people who have numerous psychological problems but no ideas, all of these people filled to the brim with "me, me, me." (Daniel Trujillo Rivas, 1997)

He rarely spoke in public, except toward the end of his life, and he gave very few interviews. And he claimed in *The Teachings of Don Juan* that in fact, Don Juan disclosed very little about his personal life too and all he said was that he had been born in the Southwest in 189; that he spent nearly all his life in Mexico; that in 1900 his family was exiled by the Mexican government to central Mexico along with thousands of other Sonoran Indians; and that he lived in central and southern Mexico until 1940. Thus, as Don Juan had travelled a great deal, his knowledge may have been the product of many influences and although he regarded himself as an Indian from Sonora, I was not sure whether to place the context of his knowledge totally in the culture of the Sonoran Indians.

Although initially his books were considered works of anthropology, but five years after the first one was published, critics such as **Joyce Carol Oates** began to consider them fiction.

Critical Questions

What's the deal with Carlos Castaneda and *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*? Did Castaneda ever go to Mexico and eat peyote with an old Indian? Are any of his books true? Or is the whole thing completely made up? Are his books reality or influences of hallucinogens? are these

as Carlos Castaneda claimed pure Indian Yaky tutorials or ideas taken from what was said above? Is there an Indian yaky who is named don Juan or he is a lie which has made by carlos Castaneda?

Enigma of a Sorcerer as an Undeniable Reality

Though many people dismissed Castaneda as a fraud, an equal amount followed his teachings religiously; however, several prominent believers mysteriously left the Castaneda enlightenment scene after his death in 1998. But anyway It should be mentioned that in the questions and their answers should never be forgotten that If not pure, but his practical trainings had been unique influence which no one had before. And in addition before check up these questions I should remind one point that whatever are the answers of these questions its no difference the performance and repeatability will pure and unique and they were the first practical eucations which are introduced by carlos castaneda and it's the reality that we should not never forget. One day I asked these questions of one of my friends and he answered it s same that if he saw don Juan or not because if he didn't see him we can believe that carlos Castaneda is himself don Juan and his teachings are only Practical philosophy, anthropology until yet.may be it is why Carlos Castaneda never claimed Juan Matus to be a shaman and yet the actual existence of don Juan has been disputed by a handful of critics who claim his practices and beliefs are inconsistent with his alleged identification as a Yaqui shaman. In Journey to Ixtlan, Juan Matus is quoted as saying "No one knows where I am really from or who I am for certain", so in effect the statements in regard to Juan Matus' lineage are not applicable.

To this day, any way no one really knows the real Castaneda, but its enough to believe by his books he is one of the most mysterious men of the last 50 years.

First Sign outside the Realm of Don Juan's Teachings

What needs to be more focused on in Castaneda's books is the author's writing process, which exists since from the beginning of getting acquainted with Don Juan till when NagualJuanwent, which turned Castaneda to a new Nagual. Without any exaggeration, It seems that the writing process of the books might be a symbol of the fact in which these works have been made both in his first books, especially his first book: "the Teachings of Don Juan" in which one is faced with an absolutely a mature character who is completely stranger with the mystic traditions, and talks about his mistakes and his personal mentalityfrom the perspective of an ordinary manthroughout the book. Then in the book named

"The Eagle's Gift," before remembering what he has seen in the other world, he has to remember to complete his responsibility as a leader for the group whom he is responsible to guide, we are faced with a mystic who looks at everything absolutely impersonally, and mostly tries to remember. There is no glance of the personal ideas of a Western anthropologiststudent. Therefore, the reader is faced with more stories and events, which are difficult to be experienced. Finally, in the book named "the Wheel of Time" or in the book named "Magical Passes", which are written based on the absolute Carlos's decision, and against Don Juan's willing, we are faced with effective Nagual who has selected a functional method to find the way to wisdom, and shuns any personal interpretation and imagination. Through reading or acting the same movements, the reader faces with miracles to lean, even if it is too difficult to believe in them; therefore, he experiences a unique world, which has the capacity to be changed at the levels of the their energy. Thus, although the closing section of the book might be similar to the Yoga movements, it is unique in the functional effectiveness in a different way, and it can be regarded as an independent work that is presented in a different way by Nagual, and is the heritage of the modern way of ancient school of Indian Yaqui. However, it should be accepted that if there is any effect of the other's notions and schools in the Castaneda's work, they should be found in his early works, and it should be accepted that every social man is the reader of others' notions, some of which have been accepted, and some of which have been kept in his ego, and he sometimes uses them to solve some problems, until he gets mature intellectually. It is just like using such tools as a protractor, a pair of compasses, and a set-square in Maths, or using telescopes to discover the new stars, and it does not hurt the fact that we know a theoretician or an astronomer unique. Undoubtedly, Carlos Castaneda has also been unique in unique expressing the human's power detection or their functional anthropologist philosophy.

Anyway, it seems that Carlos Castaneda had some notions in mind before reaching the level of Nagual, and has used them as the basis of interpretation in the modern way with which he is faced. One of the most significant of those notions is paying attention to the symbols and colors, and using the five senses (sight, taste, hearing, touch, smell) is to describe the condition many people have problems to interpret or accept. From his early experiences in the new way, which he has been measured by Don Juan, he has expressed the phenomenon of colors, and the fact that they have been his tools to do his job. As an example in his first book "The Teachings of Don Juan" in explaining the place of power that is the

prerequisite for him to be accepted in the Indian Yaqui's way, he writes: At that moment don Juan came out and went around the house to the chaparral. He came back and stood at the door. I felt utterly dejected, and I wanted to say something nasty to him and leave. But I realized that it was not his fault; that it was my own choice to go through all that nonsense. I told him I had failed; I had been rolling on his floor like an idiot all night and still couldn't make any sense of his riddle. He laughed and said that it did not surprise him because I had not proceeded correctly. I had not been using my eyes. That was true, yet I was very sure he had said to feel the difference. I brought that point up, but he argued that one can feel with the eyes, when the eyes are not looking right into things. As far as I was concerned, he said, I had no other means to solve this problem but to use all I had - my eyes.... After an interval the darkness around me changed. When I focused on the point directly in front of me, the whole peripheral area of my field of vision became brilliantly coloured with a homogeneous greenish yellow. The effect was startling. I kept my eyes fixed on the point in front of me and began to crawl sideways on my stomach, one foot at a time. Suddenly, at a point near the middle of the floor, I became aware of another change in hue. At a place to my right, still in the periphery of my field of vision, the greenish yellow became intensely purple. I concentrated my attention on it. The purple faded into a pale, but still brilliant, colour which remained steady for the time I kept my attention on it. I marked the place with my jacket, and called don Juan. He came out to the porch. I was truly excited; I had actually seen the change in hues. He seemed unimpressed, but told me to sit on the spot and report to him what kind of feeling I had. (Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan*, pp. 10-11)

Most of the seeing men work and live among the colors and with the assistance of colors, and they think: "whether they know or they do not know, a system of colors, their applications, and a colorful philosophy, i.e. the symbolism of colors occupied them and their minds. It is impossible to recognize something without the color. Colors, right or wrong, are regarded as the source or the motivation of some emotions and sensorial, mental, or even cognitive reactions. (Wittgenstein, 165).

On the other hand, some beliefs and biographies, or as Carlos believes, justifiable trainings of Don Juan have some similarities with some of the traditions, and ancient regulations of some of the Eastern societies such as using some powerful things such as corn and the ways of its use to eliminate another man, or the style of pounding plants and herbs to which there are some references in the ritual of transferring evil in societies and abandoned tribes, or

the ritual of pounding, and making ready and grinding the Holy plants in some of the Eastern, Indian, and European ancient religions.

The Effects of Philosophical Theories of Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (26 April 1889 – 29 April 1951) in the Books of Carlos Castaneda

In his early philosophy, Wittgenstein has an opinion: "the language of vocabularies creates the possibility of meaningless combination of the vocabularies. However, the language of picture does not give us the possibility to imagine something meaningless, i.e. putting the words side by side may follow a correct structural rule, but it may not turn to a meaningful proposition; therefore, the pictorial propositions own content and meaning, and the propositions that do not own any picture are not meaningful. (Wittgenstein, 1978).

Wittgenstein's above-reasoning is something which was accepted by Castaneda. Don Juan has criticized him many times for his way of interpretation. He named it the everyday awareness. In fact he believed that the direct interpretation of meaning, the original fact of the cognition he was going to teach to Castaneda was heightened awareness.

Sorcerers, therefore, divided their instruction into two categories. One was instruction for the everyday-life state of awareness, in which the cleaning process was presented in a disguised fashion. The other was instruction for the states of heightened awareness, such as the one I was presently experiencing, in which sorcerers obtained knowledge directly from intent, without the distracting intervention of spoken language. Don Juan explained that by using heightened awareness over thousands of years of painful struggle, sorcerers had gained specific insights into intent; and that they had passed these nuggets of direct knowledge on from generation to generation to the present. He said that the task of sorcery is to take this seemingly incomprehensible knowledge and make it understandable by the standards of awareness of everyday life. (*The Power of Silence*, 11)

Yet, as Wittgenstein believes morality is a theory about the advancement of life; so that the human lives happily; and since the world is unchangeable, so the way to look at the world should be changed to achieve the goal. (Notes, 8.5.16).

According to Wittgenstein another similar world should be created: a happy world where since the things are observed from another perspective is different from the unhappy man's world. It can be claimed that Wittgenstein believed in such an ability in art when he was noting (1914-1916). Explicitly he believed that "life is serious, and art is happiness."

There is a fact in this image which states that the destination of art is beauty, and beauty is the thing that creates happiness (Notes 10. 21. 16). Therefore, some believe that morality and aesthetics are interwoven with their interconnection with the happy world and happy life. The destination of morality and the destination of a good life is living happily, and art creates the necessary tool to achieve the goal. Art results in beauty, and beauty is the cause of happiness. To live with ethics, one should live in the present, relinquish the wishes, and accepts the world as it is. Seeking hopes means seeking future and escaping the present. In fact, morality and aesthetics are the Wittgenstein's suggestions about the eternal present. In order to be happy, you have to agree with the world. It means to reject the future and live in the present. The present that is eternal and lasts forever. (Notes, 7.9.16)

As the author believes, it is something similar to Carlos's statements in his books "The Eagle's Gift" and "The Fire From Inside. "

The Nagual told me that for a human being sadness is as powerful as terror," la Gorda said. "Sadness makes a warrior shed tears of blood.The Nagual had learned in his life the intent of hundreds of things. But Silvio Manuel went to the source itself. He tapped it. He didn't have to learn the intent of anything. He was one with intent. The problem was that he had no more desires because intent has no desire of its own, so he had to rely on the Nagual for volition. In other words, Silvio Manuel could do anything the Nagual wanted. The Nagual directed Silvio Manuel's intent. But since the Nagual had no desires either, most of the time they didn't do anything." (The Eagle's Gift, 73-77)

Or in the book "The Fire From Within" he has written about the Nagual's farewell: "As Genaro told you, the old seers were dreadful men," he said, rubbing his eyes. "There was something they tried to avoid at all costs: they didn't want to die. You may say that the average man doesn't want to die either, but the advantage that the old seers had over the average man was that they had the concentration and the discipline to intend things away; and they actually intended death away." (The Fire From Within, 111-112)

Then he continues and says: "They succeeded in intending death away," he said, pronouncing his words with extra care. "But they still had to die." "They're still alive to this day, isn't that so, Genaro?" don Juan asked. "Absolutely," Genaro muttered from an apparent state of deep sleep. (The Fire From Within, 111-112)

If we look at the history of this concept of the historical background, we will conclude that the meaning of eternity has been written in the concept of

"Amurdad" in Avesta about 1200 B.C. was also an absolutely possible thing for the human.

It seems that any discussion of the functional similarities of the training philosophical meanings with Wittgenstein have been made clear almost with these concepts. However, one should consider that this is only one side of these similarities, and if we search more, we find more.

One Sample of the Similarities of the Eastern Traditions with the Teachings of Don Juan

In the ancient India, a plant people believed is the Ancient Haoma, and the eternal drinking was made from was turned to an intoxicating essence, and was drunk in the remembrance of the nature and the world reconstruction. This ceremony is compared with the significant process of animism, thus, the filter with which the essence of this plant is refined is a symbol of the sky. The essence poured in the water and the essence is a symbol of the Sun, and its golden color is similar to the lightening that is created during the compression stage, and it is even compared with a cow, and the essence that enters the water is a symbol of a herd of cattle. The Haoma is a symbol of rain, storm, Sun, and fertilization. In Iran, the ritual of Haoma is a part of the great ritual of Yasna. To sacrifice Haoma, the Zoroastrian priest sits on his knees. Then they grind the herb of Haoma, and pass its essence from a filter that is made of the Holy cow's hair, so that they combine it with the Holy water. This ritual is long, complicated, and full of symbolic behavior. Haoma is ground in four stages that is a symbol of arriving Zarathustra and his three savior sons. The sainted water is poured on it for three times, which is a symbol of three stages of creating rain, i.e. vapor, creating clouds, and pressing them in the form of rain. During this ritual, the pound is beaten for three times that is a symbol for presenting the Good Deed, Good Thought, and Good Word. Therefore, the mythological context (reference to the saviors), and the celestial context (creating rain) get complete with the moral context that is the characteristic of the Zoroastrianism. Although, the prayers are read in Avesta, and few people understand it, people all believe that thought, the source of any deed, should be kept pure. (Hinnells, 1975: 181-182).

Regarding this relative awareness told about the extraction, it is possible to refer to the Castaneda's first book "Teachings of Don Juan" and be faced with a relative similarity with a ritual is called "To tame the devil's weed."

He said in his book: one should start from the first part of the root, which owns to the one who has dug out the weed....Don Juan placed it inside a small, white, cotton bag....He sat there on the floor with his legs crossed, and with a round mano began to mash

the root inside the bag. He worked it over a flat slab which served as a mortar. From time to time he washed the two stones, and kept the water in a small, flat, wooden dugout basin. As he pounded he sang an unintelligible chant, very softly and monotonously. When he had mashed the root into a soft pulp inside the bag, he placed it in the wooden basin. He again placed the slab mortar and the pestle into the basin, filled it with water, and then carried it to a son of rectangular pig's trough set against the back fence. He said the root had to soak all night, and had to be left outside the house so it would catch the night air (el sereno). "If tomorrow is a sunny, hot day, it will be an excellent omen," he said..... (Trainings of Don Juan: 24-25).

Now, if we compare these two parts, we will find out that in addition to the biography, the style of sitting down, and whispering, and using the mano to smash, as well as emphasizing on the sunny weather show that there is an undeniable similarity between these two descriptions. However, this is not the style that the same similar instruction used to work the same everywhere, and result in a similar function without imitating one from another in every region, or it has been Carlos's observations from the ritual, which has made him to write such remarks and biographies, just similar to what used to be done about the ancient Haoma, and is still done in such rituals as "Seeking for Rain"

It is useful to refer to another outstanding point as well that is talking about another similarity between the human-plant named Haoma in the Zoroastrian Holy book, Avesta, and such human-plant as peyote exists in Carlos's writings. Although in Avesta, almost everything including goddess of water, fire, earth Are described like the princes, but the humanoid description of Haoma is completely different, and it mostly has the form of a human or a twofold creature that sometimes has the either the form of a human or a plant, rather than a separate existence from the material existence, and it is just like Carlos's meeting with peyote.

At the foot of one boulder I saw a man sitting on the ground, his face turned almost in profile. I approached him until I was perhaps ten feet away; then he turned his head and looked at me. I stopped - his eyes were the water I had just seen! They had the same enormous volume, the sparkling of gold and black. His head was pointed like a strawberry; his skin was green, dotted with innumerable warts. Except for the pointed shape, his head was exactly like the surface of the peyote plant. (Trainings of Dan Juan: 43).

Conclusion

Regarding the above-mentioned facts it seems that there are some similarities between the traditions, opinions, and beliefs before Carlos, or in the other word, the publishing of the Indian, Don Juan Matus, which are undeniable. However, three issues should be considered here. In fact what Carlos has expressed as new Naugual have been undoubtedly affected by two other facts in addition to the fact we are looking for to verify or reject. First, Carlos expressed the books with his descriptive language on the lack of which both Wittgenstein and Don Juan have focused, and we are undoubtedly faced, to understand these facts as I like to, and considering this language, and the mental borders and data shaped inside his society, and it is Don Juan's main problem to train the sorcerers. Carlos talked about them in his books as well. In fact if we call what Carlos believed as facts, we will be forced to make these abnormal facts in the form of these similarities for our own minds, unless they are called some unreal stories, or we are looking for another Nagual. The second point is that if these similarities should only show the imitative side of Carlos's books, or if they are claims on the truth of the statements, and the practical function, and even their abnormalities; for example, when Carlos claims that he visited the man named Peyote, if we put this claim beside the thousand-year fact that we describe the Hamoa plant in Avesta sometimes in the shape of a man or plant, and if we judge fairly, it means that we have confirmed the Carlos's statements, claims rather than telling lies and copying. Anyway, the practical function and the truth of many of these claims turned evident for many either through the same style or for the first time by his books, and it is just the third point that is the fact that although has been existed before, either Carlos has discovered them or he has learned from others, does not make any change in the fact that what he has said in his books, the truth of which has been verified to us contrary to their unnatural nature, have been transferred to us by him, and it is the fact whose founder, Carlos, did not have any partner.

Bibliography

1. Castaneda, Carlos. The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge, University of California Press, (1968), 196 pp. United States.
2. Castaneda, Carlos. A Separate Reality, Simon & Schuster, (1971), 272pp, United States
3. Castaneda, Carlos. Journey to Ixtlan. Simon & Schuster, (1972), 268pp, United States
4. Carlos, castaneda, Tales of Power, (1974). <http://aquakeys.com/toltec/power-of-silence-by-carlos-castaneda>

5. Castaneda, Carlos, *The Second Ring of Power*, (1977). <http://aquakeys.com/toltec/power-of-silence-by-carlos-castaneda>
6. Castaneda, Carlos, *The Eagle's Gift*, 1981. Washington Square Press. United States. 320 pp.
7. Castaneda, Carlos. *The Fire From Within*, (1984). Orchard Books. 340 pp. United Kingdom
8. Castaneda, Carlos. *The Power of Silence*, (1987). <http://aquakeys.com/toltec/power-of-silence-by-carlos-castaneda>
9. Castaneda, Carlos. *The Art of Dreaming*, (1993). <http://aquakeys.com/toltec/power-of-silence-by-carlos-castaneda>
10. Carlos, Castaneda, *The Wheel of Time: Shamans of Ancient Mexico, Their Thoughts About Life, Death and the Universe*, (1998). <http://aquakeys.com/toltec/power-of-silence-by-carlos-castaneda>
11. Carlos, Castaneda, *The Active Side of Infinity*, (1999). <http://aquakeys.com/toltec/power-of-silence-by-carlos-castaneda>
12. Hinnells, John. R., *Persian Mythology*. Hamlyn Publishers, (1975),
13. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Notes*, (1385). Saad, Tehran.
14. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, (1978), «Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Sychology and Religious Belief", Basil Blackwell,Oxford.
15. Rivas, Daniel Trujillo, *Uno Mismo*, 1997, Chile and Argentina, <http://www.cleargreen.com/english/purpose/interviews.cfm>.

12/22/2012