

MISTICISM AND RATIONALITY: WORKS OF CARLOS CASTANEDA AS REFLECTION OF A CONFLICT OF WORLD OUTLOOKS

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Abstract: This article is aimed at considering the teaching of a shaman of the Indian tribe Yaqui don Juan Matus as described by Carlos Castaneda, with a view to his interaction with the world outlook of the modern civilization, and the research tasks are set. For exact determination of the methods, the research objects are revealed. There are primary sources, which are the works of Carlos Castaneda, and which state the teaching of don Juan. In view of this, the methods, which were used in the research, are mentioned and briefly characterized: historical and logical methods, the method of studying primary sources, an axiological method. It is noted that don Juan's world outlook, in terms of traditional philosophic concepts, cannot be named as the "system" notion. Attention is paid to a substantial difference between approaches to the world perception, which were accepted within the modern philosophy and the teaching in question. Proceeding from the primary sources, the notions were sorted out, which are forming the basis of the world view, as don Juan saw it: unusual reality, strength, a man of knowledge, nagval, tonal and others. Obstacles are shown, which prevent man from perceiving the "special reality". Changes were reflected in the mode of life of the man of knowledge, who started to perceive the unusual reality, peculiarities of functioning of consciousness of an individual, who learns the teaching in question. It is stated that the teaching of don Juan, which is set out by Carlos Castaneda and which is considered in terms of the world view of the Western culture, reveals a conflict of world outlooks, essence of which consists in a confrontation of fundamentally different foundations, which form the personality in different cultures of the authority of a tradition in the European culture and the "sum of personal strength" in the culture of the tribe Yakui. There is noted a contradictory attitude to Carlos Castaneda's works within the scientific and philosophical approach. There is given an author interpretation of the meaning of creative legacy of a thinker, who tried, via a contact with another world view in the modern world, to lay the groundwork for perceiving other cultures and civilizations, building the dialogue with them.

Keywords: magic, shamanism, esotericism, world outlook, world view, don Juan's teaching, cognition, mode of life.

1. INTRODUCTION

Carlos Castaneda does not belong to those philosophers, whose works are broadly covered in different philosophic dictionaries, encyclopedias and textbooks. He is, probably, one of the most mysterious philosophers of the second half of the XXth century. As a matter of fact, he is our contemporary. The thinker died in 1998. But the exact date of his birth is unknown, they say that it is 1925, 1926, 1931 and 1935. Among the Western thinkers of the XXth century, Carlos Castaneda is notable for his esoteric orientation. He denies that, likely other philosophers, states a philosophic system or a world outlook, while emphasizing that

he only sets out the world view of a Mexican Indian Yaqui don Juan Matus. Carlos Castaneda believes that he was one of the Teachers of humanity. The philosopher himself wrote that for the first time he met don Juan in 1960 as a student of University of California. [5, p. 8-10]. Our brief research is aimed at considering the teaching of don Juan Matus, as described by Carlos Castaneda, with a view to possibility of his interaction with the world outlook of the modern civilization. The consciousness of Carlos Castaneda himself is an excellent example of this interaction. He, in his works, describes his feelings and thoughts in detail, which are related to gaining the knowledge, with which don Juan Matus familiarized the author for five years. When we use the word combination “modern civilization”, we, above all, mean the Western civilization of the XXth – the beginning of the XXIst century. It is well known that the civilization conceded, among other things, an irrationalistic and modernistic approach to the world. The first task of the research boils down to revelation of key concepts describing a “special reality” in the content and volume as they are set out by Carlos Castaneda, who characterizes the teaching of don Juan Matus. The second task is a characteristic of the main ways of perceiving this reality, or a contact with it, and a characteristic of the main obstacles, which usually arise in a way of a person, who tries to perceive this special reality. The third task of our research is revelation of the practical meaning of Carlos Castaneda’s works in the modern world, which is permeated with global links, where different cultures, civilizations and world outlooks have something in common and are interacting contradictorily.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The object of the research, which we conducted, is the work of the American philosopher Carlos Castaneda, where he, as he himself said, sets out the world view of one of the shamans of the Indian tribe Yaqui don Juan Matus. The research object is the underlying concepts characterizing the “special reality”, which is a core of don Juan’s world outlook. In this case, the works of Carlos Castaneda are primary sources. In connection with that, for revelation of the objective basis of the research, the authors used a method of studying the primary sources. This method makes it possible to show originality of the researched culture and mentality of its representatives. The research used the historical and logic methods, which make it possible, in aggregate, to reveal the main content of key concepts on the researched problem, after considering the stages of their formation and establishing the interrelations and interdependences between those concepts. This research also used the axiological method, which made it possible, while considering the analyzed material, to open the forms and ways of the value-based designing by the subject of life attitudes and aspirations, the motivation of justification and condemnation of what is going on, the determination of moral dominating ideas of behavior.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The works of Carlos Castaneda in Russia became accessible to many readers in 1990s. This circumstance, in the aggregate with an original manner of writing and unusualness of the research object, led to the fact that the works of this thinker were studied insufficiently in this country. Many authors pay great attention to an esoteric aspect, which, undoubtedly, is an integral part of the works of Carlos Castaneda, while ignoring a philosophic constituent part of his works. [1, 2, 9, 14, 15] In terms of the problem considered, some literary research, which develops an idea of constructivity of the dialogue between different art consciences, is also of importance to the authors. [3] The use of works, whose authors analyze the philosophic and theological aspects of the teaching of Carlos Castaneda, was of importance in terms of developing a methodology of the research and determining its main avenues. [10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20] A number of Russian and foreign studies covers the analysis of a role

and place of the ethnographic material in the works by Carlos Castaneda. [17, 19] The foreign researchers also pay attention to an anthropologic constituent part in the research of the outstanding thinker of the XXth century, while paying attention to the fact that the works of Carlos Castaneda signified an important stage of development of the modern anthropology. [21, 22]. This brief literature review showed that in the aspect of a conflict of the world outlooks, contradictions between the rationality and mysticism, which is of interest to the authors, the works of Carlos Castaneda is practically unstudied.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

When starting a talk about a world view, the authors inevitably face a question: can this world view be called a system? In the interpretation, where the authors often use the concept “system” within the philosophy, the material, which was studied by Carlos Castaneda, was not a system. It did not stay within the concepts, with which the Western philosophers often operate. However, this did not mean that the teaching of don Juan did not have an internal logic. The author acknowledged that the teaching had the internal logic. But the order and sequence, in which the knowledge was transferred, is incomprehensible, without a specific training, for a representative of the modern Western civilization, who is accustomed to comprehending the world in terms of rationalism. Here don Juan himself said that only very few things in the world can be explained by this way. [6, c. 141] He also emphasized that the world perception was not his direct sensuous or rational comprehension. There is always a barrier between the person and the world, which is called the “world description” in don Juan’s teaching. [7, c. 49] An usual consequence of that is the man’s recollections about the perceived images of the world. It is they that are the content of our life. We, when using the words of don Juan, only keep recollecting what we perceived.

Significant differences in perceiving the world do not end here. But not only revelation of those differences is of importance for the authors. It is necessary to clarify why don Juan’s world view came into severe contradiction with the world outlook of any Western intellectual of the XXth (and even the XXIst) century. Firstly, a way of perceiving the world was essentially other. In this case we used the term “world” and not the “reality” for a reason, while implying a broad interpretation of the phenomena, which appear in our consciousness. Don Juan spoke about living in an unusual reality rather than about perception of what is around us. [5, c. 17] Its creator is a creature called Meskalito, which allows the person to overcome the borders of a usual reality. Characteristics of a particular world as well as Meskalito itself are indefinite: stability, singularity, lack of agreement. [5, p. 244] As regards Meskalito itself, Carlos Castaneda, referring to don Juan, noted that the form of that creature is changing and it is unpredictable. Different people as well as the same person can apprehend it differently in different situations. Perception of the unusual reality signified the appearance of the “man of knowledge”.

Conductors to the unusual reality for a trainee were special plants, which helped, as the Teacher saw it, the person to find the strength, wisdom and understanding of the correct mode of life. Those means are combined in a specific sequence, through which the state of changed consciousness is achieved. Carlos Castaneda calls them states of the unusual reality. In terms of the teaching of don Juan, that was a reality and not hallucinations. More than that, it even helped to open the unusual aspects of the everyday reality. And all the events, which the person apprehended in such a state, were considered as quite real. [6, p. 11] But in literature there is a point of view that Carlos Castaneda mistook the taking of hallucinogenic plants for the main methods of the world perception by the Indians Yaqui. [4, p. 349] Earlier the authors said that without finding the strength it is impossible to comprehend the unusual reality. This notion has a broad interpretation and means not only the ability to carry out physical actions, movements, to be active, but, as the Teacher sees it, this is energy, might,

power. The research of this notion is covered in a separate book by Carlos Castaneda, which is called “Fairy tales about strength”.

While interpreting those notions, don Juan shows the basis of the world view, which he teaches Carlos Castaneda. “We are, - the Teacher says, - glowing creatures. ...And only **personal strength**¹ is of importance for glowing creatures. But if you ask me what the personal strength is, I will answer that my explanations will not explain that to you”. [7, p. 13] The further statements make it clear that the strength is the ability to control the thinking, or “to stop one’s internal dialogue”, according to the Teacher’s terminology, and a special technical skills of the body control, and the ability to differ the knowledge from other things, which are around us. Thus, the personal strength and not the authority of a tradition and public opinion, like in the West, is the basis, on which the teaching of don Juan is based.

Don Juan himself keeps emphasizing a critical difference between his world view and the understanding of the reality, which exists in the modern civilization, he deliberately wants to separate himself and his world outlook from it. Therefore, in order to understand “his” world, a person should break away from the commonplaceness, which is around us, and to break himself/herself from it. But the person meets four natural enemies on his/her way. The first one is the fear. Don Juan expressed a way of overcoming the fear by means of the verb “*not to run*”. The further explanations make it clear that the person must overcome all the difficulties compliantly, which he/she faces. [5, p. 85-87] The second enemy is the clarity, which dissipates the fear, but it blinds the person at once. On the one hand, the clarity instills confidence into a person in his/her knowledge and strength. But the confidence, which is caused by the clarity, creates an illusion of might in the person’s consciousness. That’s why it is dangerous. To gain a victory over this enemy, it is necessary to know that the clarity is illusive. The third natural enemy is the strength. Don Juan believes that the strength is the most fearsome enemy, since the person rarely notes that the strength is not only an advantage, but it can cause serious damage. The strength is won only by means of understanding that, as a matter of fact, it does not belong to the person in reality, and it can never belong to the person. The person must foster self-possession in himself/herself, without which the strength turns into an illusion. And the last, the fourth enemy is the old age. The Teacher notes that nobody can withstand this enemy, but the person can postpone his/her defeat. The old age is dangerous because it causes an overwhelming desire to have a rest and to become oblivious, it cradles with weariness. To postpone appearance of this state, the person must shake off weariness.

It is necessary to realize and to comprehend those obstacles and only then to start destroying the integrity of the world outlook, which is habitual to the person. This is achieved by means of such a property of the unusual reality, which Carlos Castaneda calls with the concept “discrepancy”. In his interpretation the discrepancy is the impossibility to adequately describe the unusual reality within the notions and ideas, which were formed in the usual world. [6, p. 15] But the task of a trainee at the second stage of comprehending the new world view consists in the development of the ability to adequately interpret the magical conceptual blocks of the unusual reality. In order to achieve that, it is necessary to destroy one’s confidence that our description of the world, which is based on common sense, is unambiguous and final. The moment the pupil comes to realize this circumstance, a particular sensuous interpretation of what was seen, a particular way of apprehending the everyday things are appearing.

What is the difference between this particular sensuous interpretation and our everyday interpretation of the world? The usual sensuous interpretation is a statement that something definite – a table, a tree, a house, a person, etc. exists. A vision of a particular reality implies, above all, the acknowledgement of the fact that the things, which we perceive,

¹ Highlighted by the authors of the article.

are not the same. The special vision implies not just a statement that an object exists, but a revelation of its essence. For example, a common person can be perceived as strength, which seeks to make plants work for itself, since the person considers them as his/her allies, which help him/her to penetrate into the special reality. And when perceiving in our usual world vision those things just as a person, whom we met, or as a plant, which we saw, we feel the reality only vaguely, but we do not perceive the essence of the things. [6, p. 46-48].

It appears that the reality, which was opened to Carlos Castaneda, in comprehending the teaching of don Juan, is a specific wisdom and a psychotechnical attitude. Interpretations of this reality are very relative and diluted; their quantity is quite great. But here another important circumstance is revealed – it is possible to “enter into” this reality only if the pupil has mastered particular art of the world vision. And apart from the particular vision, the man of knowledge must have a particular ability to “stop” the world. As previously noted, the perception itself of essence of the objects implies their original interpretation. So, it appears that perception of this particular reality is a thinking process and not a sensorial perception process. Don Juan says that the subject’s thoughts about the object are more important and weightier than perception of the object itself. But then another question appears – in what measure does our empirical ego take part in the vision process? It is difficult to answer this question, since the person deals with the particular reality in the changed state of consciousness. Let’s risk supposing that in this case the empirical ego ousts the visible object. In this state the “man of knowledge” is free from the load of stereotyped assessments of the world. The world itself, as don Juan sees it, is imagined as only one of its possible descriptions. In everyday life we are guided by only one of them. The energy of our ego, which makes other visions and world descriptions possible, is blocked by the daily routine and becomes inaccessible for us, it, as Carlos Castaneda wrote, “is pushed out of the reach by circumstances of our everyday life”. [8, p. 9].

The authors believe that they have to touch upon another important circumstance: development of this teaching leads to double consciousness. So, Carlos Castaneda admits that as he was penetrating into don Juan’s teaching more and more deeply, a voice sounded more and more loudly in him: “...Inside me another voice sounded, which was heard from a long way off, it was distant and next to unheard. In the heat of my internal dialogue I could hear somebody said that it was too late for me to turn back. As a matter of fact, it was neither my voice nor my thoughts; somebody unknown said that I had gone to don Juan’s world too far and from then on I needed that world more than the air”. [8, p. 15] And don Juan confirms to his pupil that it is a voice of the other consciousness. He says that every person has two consciousnesses. The first consciousness, which resembles a little voice, is our consciousness, it introduces the peace, order and sense” into our existence, and the other consciousness is something coming from without, which brings us “conflicts, internal arguments, doubts, a sense of hopelessness”. There is always a conflict between those two consciousnesses. But not each person is able to realize the conflict of two consciousnesses, since it is transcendent to our usual world. According to don Juan, only magicians can realize and comprehend this conflict. [8, p. 18] Of course, such a dualism is very dangerous for our existence. We conflict with the usual everyday world, with our world outlook, when relying on which we orientate ourselves in the external world. Carlos Castaneda realizes that and he notes that don Juan’s teaching became very dangerous for his idea of reality. Existence in those circumstances deprives the person of his/her confidence in the fact that the everyday reality guarantees our existence. Maybe, are the guarantees of our existence based on a hidden existence, which is opened to us in the changed states of the consciousness?

The reflection itself about the world outlooks conflict is a sign that the person started to be immersed in an esoteric teaching, but at the same time, this shows that he/she is at the initial stage of its comprehension. Later on, in order to remove this contradiction, it is necessary to switch over from reflection, “thinking” to the vision. And gradually, the person, who

started to practice magic, comes to realize that the usual life and the usual world are not for him any longer. The noncontinuous flow of thoughts, which is formed in our consciousness in regard to any things and processes, which we face in our daily life, cannot be a conductor to a “separate reality” for us, and, therefore, it is necessary to give up this flow of thoughts. It is necessary to give up the previous mode of life too, if the person, who started to comprehend the unusual reality, wants to survive.

Within a new mode of life, a new attitude to the death appears. Having realized the frightening nature of knowledge, the person understands that the death on the way of this realization is not a frightening circumstance. On the contrary, it is a faithful fellow traveler, an irreplaceable partner. The death is always side by side and it is the main factor turning the knowledge into the energy. Due to the death the knowledge becomes a real strength. The man of knowledge must realize the death, since without this realization he is not able to turn his time in the earth into a magic strength. The Teacher explains that the death realization is not a simple concern about the possibility to die. This concern is peculiar to usual people living with day-to-day hassles, but it gives those people nothing, it only can make them withdraw into themselves. Realization of one’s own death is achieved through estrangement. Don Juan explains that the estrangement is not reclusion, it is not retirement from the world. In his interpretation the estrangement is a clear realization that the death follows the person in tracks and the man of knowledge must understand it will allow him to cling to nothing, so he “tries everything, while attaching himself to nothing”. [6, p. 167] This realization of the death has a practical way out. In particular, the understanding appears that the person himself/herself chooses one or another decision within a life situation and he/she is responsible for his/her choice fully, without regret. Decisions made by such a person are always irreversible, they are not revised since the death does not give him/her any time to display his/her particular attachments to something. This impels a warrior², who realized the death, to plan his life strategically, and forms his ability to choose the best things.

As a matter of fact, this is efforts to express (as far as possible) the discourse of don Juan by means of the comments, which are habitual for us, that the death makes the person focus on himself/herself. This, in its turn, leads to the fact that it becomes an obstacle to comprehending the special reality. In order to remove this obstacle, it is necessary to form a thought about the indifferent attitude to the death. The estrangement appears on the basis of indifferent attitude.

The next important constituent part of the new mode of life consists in becoming the man of action. This means that the person must live by the action and not by a thought about the action. In this connection the Teacher calls upon to worry what he/she will be after cessation of the action, in the smallest degree. On the way of receiving the knowledge the person becomes a warrior, because he goes to the knowledge as if he would go to the war – with the fear, respect, with absolute confidence. Any other approach to receiving the knowledge is a mistake. If the person observes those rules fully, then he/she will be mature enough to carry out the actions. And he/she will carry out all the actions without thinking about it. The man of knowledge is able to carry out an action and to disappear, without thinking about its results. The man of action, the man of knowledge is a warrior. He must fight and must not surrender, he must get over his fear, he must not retreat and complain. The art of a warrior consists in finding a balance between two feelings – admiration that you are a person and horror that you are a person. The sense of such assessments can be understood on the basis of a thesis about existence of another reality and other ways of perceiving it. Within such an approach to the world, it is reasonable to believe that there are other possible worlds with

² In the talks between don Juan and Carlos Castaneda, which the authors consider, the term “warrior” is often used by the teacher to call the person, who started to perceive the special reality.

other ways of their perception. And therefore, don Juan's teaching itself is acknowledgement of plurality of available existence.

But here we again come into a serious contradiction with traditional cultural values, which are established in the Western civilization. As a matter of fact, traditional values of a person of the Western world are denied and, as it can be seen from the above, there are denied integrity and uniqueness of the personality, self-assessment, perception of the reality, and believing that the reality, in which the person lives, is the only possible. Don Juan pays attention to the fact that in the everyday reality, in which the human history is developing, our existence is entangled with thoughts of other people, but we must get rid of the other people's thoughts.

Within this new mode of life, the person also takes a new image of the universe. While building the image, don Juan uses the notions "tonal" and "nagval". He calls everything, which the person can describe with words, with the notion "tonal". "Nagval" is what we cannot describe. This everlasting and crucially indescribable basis is the creator of the world. Relying on one's own mental convictions is senseless in perceiving the nagval. It is not perceived with the mind. When we are born, our mind is adjusted to the verbal description of the reality, so the nagval cannot be perceived by the mind. The bodily sensations, feelings, thoughts, which are the basis of the human ego, are in a nagval hypostasis before our birth. Then all of that is united together with a "spark of life". Only sorcerers can use the nagval in their purposes. The ability to use this base increases the person's possibilities very much.

To all appearances, this teaching does not try to explain the supernatural abilities of the men of knowledge. Its sense should be looked for in the ways and possibilities of the person's perception of the world. When speaking about the tonal and the nagval, don Juan, as a matter of fact, shows that perceiving the world, the people deceive themselves. The self-deception consists in the fact that while calling the things by means of certain words the people hope that this thing will correspond to its verbal mark. We create schemes, build the world models, while relying on those verbal marks. But we make a serious mistake, when believing that our actions and the schemes, which we are building, are forming the world. This is a great illusion of the person. For us the world is always a riddle, it cannot be perceived. The person realizes that and he/she tries to perceive what cannot be perceived, and to reveal secrets of the world. However, this is vain efforts. For the person the world will always be mysterious, and it must be apprehended in this way, we must not entertain illusions that we are able to perceive the world.

The world, which is full of mysteries, combines with the person. But we should remember about plurality of the available existence. If a person wants to join another reality, this joining will not be just its contemplation. While perceiving the other reality, the person must learn some rules, which would orient him/her to making responsible decisions. In this case, the responsibility means that the person is ready to die, when persisting in his/her decisions.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The title of this article says that Don Juan's teaching in question, which is translated by Carlos Castaneda in his books, reflects the conflict of the world outlooks. The authors said several times in the article about the serious contradictions between Teacher's world view and the world view as well as the ways of perceiving the world, which are traditional for a representative of the modern European civilization. Generalizing all the foregoing, the authors will try, in conclusion, to reflect the essence of the conflict, seeing that with the eyes of the people, which deal with the esoteric reality. Within our research, those people are don Juan and Carlos Castaneda. An European person, when perceiving the world, relies on the authority of cultural traditions. In a sense, traditions convince the person that, as a part of

the great culture, he/she is potentially immortal. Realization of his/her potential immortality makes the person irresponsible, since he/she takes any his/her decision as absolute, final and invariable. It is possible to regret those decisions, or to cast doubt upon them, but the decisions cannot be changed. This leads to additional burden on the human ego of the representative of the European civilization by means of such concepts as “public recognition of merits”, “self-respect”. On the other hand, there is an opposite issue, which is called the “other reality”, about which Carlos Castaneda writes, when translating don Juan’s teaching. Within the other reality the above-mentioned notions lose any sense, since here the person is a sum of the personal strength and not a result of mastering the cultural tradition. This sum, and not traditions, determines the whole life of the person. We have to take traditions into account, since a conflict with them gives rise to serious problems in relations with the society, disapprobation by the public, rejection from the society. Within the special reality the person does not master a tradition. He/she perceives the essence of things. The person is open since he/she is not protected by the tradition. This openness, exposure, in perceiving the special reality, produces the fear, which the person must get over with determination and courage of a warrior.

Attitude to Carlos Castaneda’s works is contradictory. There is a view that he brought anything new neither in the philosophy, nor in the anthropology, not in the ethnology. In this connection it is noted that one of the important achievements of Carlos Castaneda consists in the fact that firstly he, having dealt with another vision and understanding of the world, tries to state his personal experience of contacts with bearers of this world outlook which is exotic for the Europeans. Secondly, it seems that Carlos Castaneda tries to do the impossible thing – to translate the description of this unusual reality into a universal language of philosophy, or, even broader, the European culture. He tries to create original prospective models, which make it possible to theoretically reconstruct don Juan’s teaching. And, finally, the last question: what does it matter for the world outlook of the Europeans, for the European culture? We believe that there is a heuristic point consisting in the possibility to penetrate into another, diametrically opposite world outlook. This possibility is of extreme importance in our world with a lot of global ties, since it lays the groundwork for perceiving other cultures and civilizations, and for building a dialogue with them. The dialogue, understanding of the other world outlook are major means of the mankind’s survival in the modern contradictory world. Thus, when reflecting the conflict of world outlooks in his works, Carlos Castaneda lays, by means of his works, the groundwork for overcoming the conflict through understanding of the other, opposite view of the world.

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