Summer 6-6-1951

Indigenous Philosophy in the Valley of Mexico

John F. Newcomer

Recommended Citation

Newcomer, John F.. "Indigenous Philosophy in the Valley of Mexico." (1951). https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/phil_etds/23

NEWCOMER — INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHY

INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHY
IN THE VALLEY OF MEXICO

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Philosophy
University of New Mexico

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
John F. Newcomer

Newcomer

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of the University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

E F Castetter
DEAN

6/4/51
DATE

Thesiscommittee

H G Alexander
CHAIRMAN

Archie J Bahm

Frank C Hibben

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD

This study has been undertaken in the hope of helping to open new avenues of research in both philosophy and anthropology, avenues that have heretofore been largely overlooked. It has used as an example the pre-Conquest culture-complex of the Valley of Mexico. It is not intended to be an exhaustive exposition of every aspect of that complex, for that would take it out of the realm of philosophy and too far into that of anthropology. It is rather an examination of the salient features of Aztec culture in a philosophical light. It begins with a discussion of primitive philosophy in general based on the thesis that philosophy is a universal activity of man's mind rather than a given product of it. The remainder of the study is largely an attempt to show that the indigenous peoples of the Valley of Mexico were well beyond the primitive not only in their material culture but in their philosophical thought as well.

"*All men by nature desire to know*."

Aristotle (980^{a}22)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

William James, quoting Chesterton, once said that it is more important for a landlady to know a prospective lodger's philosophy than his income.[1] Unfortunately, most students of primitive society have taken the opposite view, focussing virtually all of their attention on the "income" of cultures; that is, on their material or outward aspects. In justification of this attitude they maintain that the "prelogical" mentality of primitives renders them incapable of philosophy, at least as it is known to the "more advanced" European culture.[2] One purpose of the present study is to show that such a restriction of the meaning of philosophy is detrimental both to a proper understanding of any culture and to the expansion of the horizon of philosophy itself.

Although authorities do not agree on the relative merits of the products of man's mind, they seem to be in general agreement on the idea that its potentialities are

---

[1] William James, Pragmatism, p. 3.

[2] Charles Roberts Aldrich, The Primitive Mind and Modern Civilization, Ch. VII. Franz Boas, The Mind of Primitive Man, pp. 219-20. Radoslav A. Tsanoff, Ethics, p. 9. See also his The Ways of Genius, p. 56.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

William James, quoting Chesterton, once said that it is more important for a landlady to know a prospective lodger's philosophy than his income.[1] Unfortunately, most students of primitive society have taken the opposite view, focussing virtually all of their attention on the "income" of cultures; that is, on their material or outward aspects. In justification of this attitude they maintain that the "prelogical" mentality of primitives renders them incapable of philosophy, at least as it is known to the [illegible] European culture.[2] One purpose of the present study is to show that such a restriction of the meaning of philosophy is detrimental both to a proper understanding of any culture and to the expansion of the horizon of philosophy itself.

Although authorities do not agree on the relative merits of the products of such thinking, they seem to be in general agreement on the idea that the potentialities are

---

[1] William James, *Pragmatism*, p. 3.

[2] Charles Roberts Aldrich, *The Primitive Mind and Modern Civilization*, Ch. VIII. Franz Boas, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, pp. 219-20. [illegible] "[illegible]", [illegible] p. 5. See also his *The Ways of [illegible]*, p. 5[illegible].

everywhere the same.[3] One of these potentialities is the capacity for reflective thinking. All men, including children, attempt to relate their various experiences to one another. This attempt is, in effect, what Clark Wissler refers to as the "Reflective Response."[4] The relation of one idea or remembered experience to another is involved in any invention,[5] whether it be an artifact, a god, or even a word; for language itself is a product of the reflective thinking of men, since it amounts to nothing more nor less than a relator of experience.[6] And the fact that every known culture, however "primitive," has a fully developed language[7] serves to corroborate Wissler's view that "it is natural to think reflectively."[8]

In relating human experience the mind puts a relatively strange item of that experience in terms of other, more familiar items. This, in the last analysis, is what is meant by "meaning," and is what will here be held to be

---

[3] Boas, op. cit., p. 220. Alexander A. Goldenweiser, Early Civilization, p. 400. William James, Some Problems of Philosophy, p. 15. Paul Radin, Primitive Man as Philosopher, p. 5. Tsanoff, Ethics, p. 9; The Ways of Genius, pp. 56-7. Clark Wissler, Man and Culture, p. 274.

[4] Ibid., pp. 274-8.

[5] Ibid., p. 277.

[6] Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, p. 83.

[7] Ibid., p. 84n.

[8] Wissler, loc. cit.

everywhere the same.[3] One of these potentialities is the capacity for reflective thinking. All men, including children, attempt to relate their various experiences to one another. This attempt is, in effect, what Clark Wissler refers to as the "Reflective Response."[4] The relation of one idea or remembered experience to another is involved in any invention,[5] whether it be an axe-head, a god, or even a word; for language itself is a product of the reflective thinking of men, since it amounts to nothing more nor less than a relation of experience.[6] [illegible] known culture, however "primitive," has a fully developed language[7] serves to corroborate Wissler's view that "it is natural to think reflectively."[8]

In relating human experience the mind puts a relatively strange item of past experience in terms of other, more familiar items. This, in the last analysis, is what is meant by "relation," one in which will give [illegible]

---

[3] Boas, op. cit., p. 228. Goldenweiser, A., Early Civilization, p. 400. [illegible] Some Problems of Philosophy, p. 13. Paul Radin, Primitive Man as Philosopher, p. 5. [illegible], p. 4; The Science of Language, pp. 56-7. Clark Wissler, Man and Culture, p. 87.

[4] Ibid., pp. 27-8.

[5] Ibid., p. 279.

[6] Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, p. 93.

[7] Ibid., p. 94.

[8] Wissler, loc. cit.

the basis of all philosophy. The search by a child for the "meaning" of a new word, and the quest by a philosopher for the "meaning" of the universe are essentially the same. Both are attempts to find the familiar in the unfamiliar. The differences between them are more of _degree_ than of kind. Thus while the child's search is motiviated principally by "instinctive" curiosity, that of the philosopher is carried on at a more self-conscious or "purposive" level. Again, while the child seeks only a specific meaning to meet his immediate need, the philosopher pursues móre all-inclusive, more "ultimate" meanings. And "The continual pursuit of meanings--wider, clearer, more negotiable, more articulate meanings--is philosophy."[9]

This definition of philosophy makes "primitive" man as much a philosopher in relation to his own realm of experience as Socrates and Kant were in relation to theirs; for, as Clyde Kluckhohn has said: "Speculation and reflection upon the nature [_i.e._, "meaning"] of the universe and of man's place in the total scheme of things have been carried out in every known culture."[10] The difference between the "primitive" and the "civilized" mind lies not, then, so

---

[9] Langer, _op_. _cit_., p. 239.

[10] F. S. C. Northrop, editor, _Ideological Differences and World Order_, p. 356. See also H. B. Alexander, "Philosophy (Primitive)," _Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics_, 1922, IX, p. 844a.

much in the nature of their thought processes as in the terms in which the meanings accepted by their respective cultures are expressed.[11] "Understanding" consists of seeing a relatively unfamiliar item of experience "in terms of" a more familiar or "definite" item. That which is regarded as definite, or "already defined," and thus basic to an understanding of further experience differs from one culture to another. Continues Kluckhohn:

> Every people has its characteristic set of "primitive postulates." As Bateson has said: 'The human individual is endlessly simplifying and generalizing his own view of his environment; he constantly imposes on this environment his own constructions and meanings; these constructions and meanings are characteristic of one culture as opposed to another.'[12]

The "primitive postulates" most characteristic of primitive cultures are the bodies and feelings of the members of those cultures. Thus primitive man sees his universe

---

[11] This is not meant to imply that "terms" and "processes" are altogether externally related. Of course there can be no processes without terms and vice versa. And, to be sure, the nature of the terms manipulated by the mind may have some influence upon the process of manipulating them. Yet the process of inventing such an implement as, say, the bow and arrow, or even the fist axe, must have involved the relating or bringing together in some primitive mind of separate images; regardless of the "phenomenological structure" of these images. This "synthesizing" activity of the mind is here maintained to be everywhere basically the same. Again, "imitative magic," whereby, for example, some primitives attempt to bring rain by pouring water upon the ground, seems to involve some kind of "if-then" proposition, however unconscious of it its formulators might be. "It is not primitive logic, so far as there is any, that differs from ours, but primitive apperception." (W. T. Bush, "Concerning the Concept of Pattern," The Journal of Philosophy, 37:113-34, February 29, 1940, p. 116.)

[12] Northrop, loc. cit. See also Langer, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

in terms of his own anatomy and projects into it his own attitudes.[13] Of course, this is not to say that "civilized" man does not do the same thing. Indeed, "finger, palm, hand, foot, and pace are all measures still in use, and the decimal system itself is but the mathematical apotheosis of our ten-digited hands."[14] And:

> Only to recall the great number of poetic metaphors likening unfamiliar nature to the familiar form and action of man is to see how inevitable is this way of thinking; and in our vocabularies there are numberless compounds on "head" and "mouth" and "arm" and "hand" and "foot" which have long since lost their metaphorical feeling yet remain to attest the fact that man's frame and motion give his first great measures of the cosmos.[15]

What is it, then, that actually distinguishes "primitive" from "civilized" thought? According to Radin, it is "the written word and the technique of thinking elaborated on its basis."[16] Says Langer: "A conception is fixed and held only when it has been embodied in a symbol."[17] And

---

[13] Alexander, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 845a. For Cassirer, the most important postulate in this connection is human <u>activity</u>. See Ernst Cassirer, <u>Language</u> <u>and</u> <u>Myth</u>, p. 41.

[14] Alexander, <u>loc</u>. <u>cit</u>. It is believed that the mathematical system of the ancient Mexicans was vigesimal because they counted on their toes as well as on their fingers.

[15] H. B. Alexander, "The Great Mysteries of the North American Indians," (unpublished manuscript), Ch. III, p. 14.

[16] Radin, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 387.

[17] Susanne K. Langer in her Translator's Preface to Cassirer, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. ix.

the "written word" provides man with a set of symbols in which to "embody" his concepts. To be sure, the spoken word also provides such symbols, but these, to be preserved, must be memorized in their entirety by each succeeding generation. The great amount of time required to memorize an oral tradition leaves comparatively little room for its enrichment. Furthermore, the richness of such a tradition can never exceed the capacity of a people's memory. A written language, on the other hand, requires the memorization by a given generation of only a comparatively small number of "key" symbols. Once any member of a literate society has learned those symbols, he becomes the "heir of the ages"; that is, there is opened to him an often vast treasure house of accumulated intellectual wealth. And with less of his time taken up by the task of memorization, he is freer to devote his mental endeavors to increasing that wealth.

A written language, moreover, better enables a people to preserve its abstractions for future generations, who, in turn, manipulate them to form ever more elaborate abstractions. True, pre-literate man does abstract from his experience, but his abstractions remain at a "concrete" level; that is, he does not completely "disembody" an idea as the Greeks were so fond of doing. He may transfer or interchange parts of "concrete" objects, as in the case of the "winged bulls" of ancient Mesopotamia or of the "feathered serpent" of the New World; but he does not hypostatize such a the "written word" provided man with a set of symbols in which to "embody" his concepts. To be sure, the _spoken word_ also provides such symbols, but these, to be preserved, must be _memorized in their entirety by each succeeding generation_. The great amount of time required to memorize oral tradition leaves comparatively little room for its enrichment. Furthermore, the richness of such a tradition can never exceed the capacity of a people's memory. A written language, on the other hand, requires the memorization by a given generation of only a comparatively small number of "key" symbols. Once any member of a literate society has learned those symbols, he becomes the "heir of the ages"; that is, there is opened to him an often vast treasure house of _accumulated_ intellectual wealth. And with less of his time taken up by the task of memorization, he is freer to devote his mental endeavors to increasing that wealth.

A written language, moreover, better enables a people to preserve its _abstractions_ for future generations, who, in turn, manipulate them to form even more elaborate abstractions. True, pre-literate man _does_ abstract from his experience, but his abstractions remain at a "concrete" level; that is, he does not completely "disembody" an idea as the Greeks were so fond of doing. He may transfer or interchange _words_ of "concrete" _objects_, as in the case of the "winged bulls" of ancient Mesopotamia or of the "feathered serpent" of the New World; but he does not hypostatize such a "fleshless" idea as, say, their "isness." The reason for this "concrete" nature of primitive thought may lie in the source of its symbols. Writing, on the one hand, provides its possessors with an ever-increasing heritage of symbols in which to "embody" their ideas. As succeeding generations add to this heritage they come more and more to draw their symbols of expression from it rather than from "concrete" experience. Thus their language becomes ever more "remote" from such experience; that is, ever more abstract. An oral tradition, on the other hand, can transmit only a limited number of symbols. Consequently, pre-literate man must to a great extent turn anew every generation to immediate experience for his symbols. Thus his thought, using non-literal, "concrete" symbols, is characterized as "metaphorical"[18] or "poetic,"[19] even dream-like[20] or mystical,[21] rather than "abstract," "analytical," or "literal."

A partial explanation of the transition from metaphorical to literal thinking might be found in the change of emphasis that occurs in a given symbol through habitual usage.. A metaphor is a symbol which, because of some

---

[18] Cf. Cassirer, op. cit., Ch. 6.

[19] Tsanoff, The Ways of Genius, p. 56.

[20] Langer, Philosophy in a New Key, p. 121.

[21] H. B. Alexander, L'Art et la philosophie des Indiens de l'Amérique du nord, p. 110.

resemblance between its primary referent and a secondary one, is used to symbolize the latter. If such a symbol is used exclusively and over a considerable length of time to convey its "secondary" meaning, it eventually loses its original "primary" significance altogether. What was originally a "secondary" referent thus becomes "primary"; and what was once a metaphor becomes a "literal" symbol, or rather acquires a new "primary" referent. Of course, it might be argued here that a purely oral tradition could permit the "literalizing" of metaphors, and hence allow primitive thought to become "literal." Yet this "metaphorical versus literal" difference between "primitive" and "civilized" thought appears also to be one of degree rather than kind. Thus it is not a complete lack of "literal" symbols that characterizes a pre-literate people, but rather a high degree of dependence upon "metaphorical" symbols. And an abundance of "literal" symbols by no means frees a people from the use of metaphor.

The "systems" that primitive man erects with his "concrete" ideas take the form of myths, and the "laws" governing such systems are the often capricious wills of the anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, or "composite" gods that people those myths. The "poetic" character of myth, however, does not make it any the less philosophical. Myth "is the primitive phase of metaphysical thought, the first

embodiment of <u>general ideas</u>."[22] And, according to Boas, "'Mythology,' 'theology' and 'philosophy' are different terms for the same influences which shape the current of human thought, and which determine the character of the attempts of man to explain the phenomena of nature."[23]

Furthermore, the human mind being essentially lazy or "pragmatic," most thinkers have accounted <u>only</u> for as much experience as they felt it necessary to explain. Consequently, so long as the myths of primitive man "explain" to his satisfaction the universe as he sees it he continues to regard them as "true." And no less is this the case with the "science" of "civilized" man, which is essentially one of the forms that philosophy, as defined above, has taken in modern times.

> We must remember that the entities used in a science are abstractions from experience. And only a certain group of experiences are regarded as relevant. The entities with which a science works, and in terms of which it tries to account for the particular set of phenomena it is investigating, are all composed out of certain selected bits of our total experience. And they are composed as economically as possible. Scientific concepts are never any richer than they need be for the particular purposes for which they are designed.[24]

In illustration of this, Sullivan points to the concept of the atom used in the development of the kinetic theory of gases. Then, to all effects and purposes, the

---

[22] Langer, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 163.

[23] Boas, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 222.

[24] J. W. N. Sullivan, <u>The Limitations of Science</u>, p. 105. In philosophy "proper," "Ockham's Razor" or the Law of Parsimony is an example of this.

atom actually <u>was</u> a solid particle of "matter."[25] But this picture of the atom is now "known" to have been only a "myth." Yet who is to say that science's <u>present</u> picture is not a myth also? "Even now the atom is only as complicated as is necessary to explain the phenomena of spectra."[26] Thus, no matter how "sophisticated" man becomes, when confronted with the unknown he is "reduced" to the state of a "primitive," being forced to use myth and metaphor in his "hypotheses." Philosophy, then, if not the same in subject matter, is and has been at all times and places essentially the same in <u>method</u>. As William James puts it:

> Philosophy in the full sense is only <u>man thinking</u>, thinking about generalities rather than about particulars. But whether about generalities or particulars, man thinks always by the same methods. He observes, discriminates, generalizes, classifies, looks for causes, traces analogies, and makes hypotheses. Philosophy, taken as something distinct from science or from practical affairs, follows no method peculiar to itself. All our thinking today has evolved gradually out of primitive human thought, and the only really important changes that have come over its manner (as distinguished from the matters in which it believes) are a greater hesitancy in asserting its convictions, and the habit of seeking verification for them whenever it can.[27]

Judged on this basis, primitive man <u>is</u> seen to be a philosopher, differing from Greek thinkers not in native

---

[25] <u>Ibid</u>.

[26] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 106.

[27] James, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., pp. 15-16.

atom somehow was a solid particle of "matter."[25] Thus this picture of the atom is now known to have been only a "myth." Yet who is to say that science's present picture is not a myth also? "Even now the atom is only as explicated as is necessary to explain the phenomena of spectra."[26] Thus, no matter how "scientific" man becomes, when confronted with the unknown he is "reduced" to the state of a "primitive," being forced to use myth and metaphor in his "hypotheses." Philosophy, then, if not the same in subject matter, is and has been at all times and places essentially the same in method, as William James puts it:

> Philosophy in the full sense is only man thinking, thinking about generalities rather than about particulars. But whether about generalities or particulars, man thinks always by the same methods. He observes, discriminates, generalizes, classifies, looks for causes, traces analogies, and makes hypotheses. Philosophy, taken as something distinct from science or from practical affairs, follows no method peculiar to itself. All our thinking today has evolved gradually out of primitive human thought, and the only really important changes that have come over its manner (as distinguished from the matters in which it believes) are a greater hesitancy in asserting its convictions, and the habit of seeking verification for them whenever it can.[27]

Judged on this basis, primitive man is seen to be a philosopher, differing from Greek thinkers not in nature

---

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., p. 104.

[27] James, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

intellectual ability but rather in his view of what constitutes the basic "postulates of understanding." To be sure, the Greek view that these postulates should be "natural," lifeless objects, or, as Plato would have it, their ideal "forms," and that the universe is governed by impersonal laws, was a unique and important contribution to civilization; profoundly influencing the thought patterns of Western European culture down to the present day. But the point being stressed here is that that view was basically one of the "thoughtways" of Greek culture and that it is not necessarily the only key to the secrets of the universe. To cite but one example, the Hopi Indians use as basic "postulates of understanding" not things but events.[28] Furthermore, the Hopi view of time "is . . . subtle, complex, and ever-developing, supplying no ready-made answer to the question of when 'one' event ends and 'another' begins."[29] This view strikingly resembles some of the fundamental principles in the metaphysics of Henri Bergson, whose challenge of the validity of the Greek "postulates" is not to be taken lightly.[30]

---

[28] B. L. Whorf, "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language," in Leslie Spier *et al*., editors, *Language, Culture, and Personality*, p. 84. "The Hopi microcosm seems to have analyzed reality largely in terms of *events* (or better 'eventing'). . . ."

[29] *Ibid*., p. 88.

[30] See, for example, his *L'Evolution Créatrice*.

intellectual ability but rather in his view of what constitutes the basic "postulates of understanding." To be sure, the Greek view that these postulates should be "neutral," lifeless objects, or, as Plato would have it, their ideal "forms," and that the universe is governed by impersonal laws, was a unique and important contribution to civilization; profoundly influencing the thought patterns of Western European culture down to the present day. But the point being stressed here is that this view was basically one of the "thought-ways" of Greek culture and that it is not necessarily the only key to the mysteries of the universe. To cite but one example, the Hopi Indians use as basic "postulates of understanding" not "things" but events.[28] Furthermore, the Hopi view of time is ". . . vibrating, complex, and ever-developing, containing no ready-made answer to the question of when 'one' event ends and 'another' begins."[29] This view strikingly resembles some of the fundamental principles in the metaphysics of Henri Bergson, whose challenge of the validity of the Greek 'postulates' is not to be taken lightly.[30]

---

[28] B. L. Whorf, "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language," in Leslie Spier et al., editors, Language, Culture, and Personality, p. 84. "The Hopi microcosm seems to have analyzed reality largely in terms of events (or better 'eventing'). . . ."

[29] Ibid., p. 88.

[30] See, for example, his L'Evolution Créatrice.

Finally, a study of the philosophy of primitive man, as indeed also of "civilized" man, is essential to a full understanding of the whole of his culture; for in the long run, his philosophy determines how he will "spend" his "income." Thus Kluckhohn says:

> Culture or group life-ways do not manifest themselves solely in observable customs and artifacts. There is much more to social and cultural phenomena than immediately meets ear and eye. If the behavioral facts are to be correctly understood, certain presuppositions constituting what might be termed a philosophy or ideology must also be known.
>
> . . . .
>
> Some of these assumptions are made explicit in the lore of the folk; others are tacit premises which the observer must infer by finding consistent trends in word and deed.[31]

The remaining chapters of this study will be devoted to a search for such assumptions in the "words and deeds" and in the "lore of the folk" who inhabited the Valley of Mexico prior to the arrival there of the Spanish conquerors. These indigenous people were organized politically into a number of small "city-states" joined precariously together by loose military alliances. The Tenochcas, or Aztecs, of Tenochtitlan happened to be militarily and politically dominant in Mexico at the time of the Conquest, and their name has been applied to the civilization of these tribes taken as a whole.[32] Further, this civilization was not

---

[31] Northrop, _op. cit._, pp. 357-9.

[32] George C. Vaillant, _Aztecs of Mexico_, p. 76.

Finally, a study of the philosophy of primitive man, as indeed also of "civilized" man, is essential to a full understanding of the whole of his culture; for in the long run, his philosophy determines how he will "spend" his "income." Thus Kluckhohn says:

> Culture or group life-ways do not manifest themselves solely in observable customs and artifacts. There is much more to social and cultural phenomena than immediately meets ear and eye. If the behavioral facts are to be correctly understood, certain presuppositions constituting what might be termed a philosophy or ideology must also be known.
>
> . . . .
>
> Some of these generalizations are made explicit in the lore of the folk; others are tacit premises which the observer must infer by finding consistent trends in word and deed.[31]

The remaining chapters of this study will be devoted to a search for such assumptions in the "words and deeds" and in the "lore of the folk" who inhabited the Valley of Mexico prior to the arrival there of the Spanish conquerors. These indigenous people were organized politically into a number of small "city-states" joined precariously together by loose military alliances. The Tenochcas, or Aztecs, of Tenochtitlan happened to be militarily and politically dominant in Mexico at the time of the Conquest, and their name has been applied to the civilization of those times taken as a whole.[32] Further, this civilization was not

---

[31] Northrop, op. cit., pp. 357-8.

[32] George C. Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, p. 76.

developed by these peoples but built upon the material and intellectual remains of much earlier cultures and upon elements borrowed from peoples as far south as Central America. Yet it was about "Aztec Civilization" that most of the Spanish chroniclers wrote, and, hence, to it that this study must be devoted.

developed by these peoples but building on the material and intellectual results of such earlier cultures and upon elements borrowed from peoples as far south as Central America. Yet it was these "Aztec Civilization" that most of the Spanish chroniclers wrote, and hence, to it that this study must be devoted.

CHAPTER II

THE RAW MATERIALS

The Land

If philosophy is the ordering or defining of one's universe, it might be well at this point to describe the one that presented itself to, or better, as will soon be seen, menacingly challenged the peoples who developed the northern phase of Middle American civilization. That "universe," the Central Plateau of Mexico, may perhaps best be characterized by one word: violence. "Violent are the contrasts, the colour, violent the landscape and storms. . . ."[1] An immense uplift, it was even formed violently when some ancient cataclysm split Mexico in two along a jagged line running from Cape Corrientes on the Pacific to the vicinity of Vera Cruz on the Gulf of Mexico. Through this great rift rose, among others, five magnificent volcanoes: the Nevado de Toluca (Tzimantécatl), Ajusco, Popocatépetl, Ixtaccíhuatl, and Malinche to form a towering, castellated wall between the Central and the Southern Plateaus.[2] Between the Central Plateau and the Pacific coastal plain stretches the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental. To the east, separating the Plateau from the Gulf coast, rises the Sierra

---

[1] Stuart Chase, Mexico: A Study of Two Americas, p. 22.

[2] Lesley Byrd Simpson, Many Mexicos, p. 3.

CHAPTER II

THE RAW MATERIALS

The Land

If philosophy is the creating or defining of one's universe, it might be well at this point to describe the one that presented itself to, or better, as will soon be seen, menacingly challenged the peoples who developed the northern phase of Middle American civilization. That "universe," the Central Plateau of Mexico, may perhaps best be characterized by one word: violence. "Violent are its contrasts, the colors, violent the landscape and its . . . .[1] An immense uplift, it was even formed violently when some ancient cataclysm split Mexico in two along a jagged line running from Cape Corrientes on the Pacific to the vicinity of Vera Cruz on the Gulf of Mexico. Through this great rift rose, among others, five magnificent volcanoes, the Nevado de Toluca (Xinantecatl), Ajusco, Popocatepetl, Ixtaccihuatl, and Malinche to form a towering, cataclysmic wall between the Central and the Southern Plateaus.[2] Between the Central Plateau and the Pacific coastal plain stretches the rugged Sierra Madre Occidental. To the east, separating the Plateau from the Gulf coast, rises the Sierra

---

[1] Stuart Chase, *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas*, p. 34.

[2] Lesley Byrd Simpson, *Many Mexicos*, p. 3.

Madre Oriental. Thus isolated by high mountain ranges, this lofty universe is itself broken by smaller ones into huge basins. One of these basins, at the southeastern end of the Plateau, is known as the Valley of Mexico. Lying in the western shadow of the soaring cones of Popocatépetl and Ixtaccíhuatl, its floor is over seven thousand feet above sea level. This high altitude combines with the low latitude to provide the Valley with an average annual temperature of 60.1 degrees Fahrenheit. Since the Valley of Mexico is not a true "valley" but a closed basin, its water courses, instead of draining it, filled the lowlands in ancient times to form a series of connected lakes covering over one-sixth of the Valley's total area of 1700 square miles.[3] These lakes, incidentally, gave the Valley of Mexico its ancient name, Anahuac, which means: "Near the Water." Its generally agreeable temperature, abundance of water, and fertile volcanic soil help explain why this natural basin served as the focal point of the long sequence of cultures that flourished on the Central Plateau.

This comparative pleasantness, however, was overshadowed by the violence that is the rule in Mexico. Earthquakes were common,[4] and in at least one instance the

---

[3] Fred A. Carlson, Geography of Latin America, pp. 425-31.

[4] Alfred M. Tozzer, "The Value of Ancient Mexican Manuscripts in the Study of the General Development of Writing," Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1911, pp. 493-506, p. 501 n2.

Madre Oriental. Thus isolated by high mountain ranges, this lofty tableland is itself broken by smaller ones into huge basins. One of these basins, in the southeastern end of the Plateau, is known as the Valley of Mexico. Lying in the western shadow of the towering cones of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, its floor is over seven thousand feet above sea level. This high altitude combines with the low latitude to provide the Valley with an average annual temperature of 60.1 degrees Fahrenheit. Since the Valley of Mexico is not a true "valley" but a closed basin, its water courses, instead of draining it, filled it up in ancient times to form a series of connected lakes covering over one-tenth of the Valley's total area of 1,200 square miles.[3] These lakes, incidentally, gave the Valley of Mexico its ancient name, Anahuac, which means: "near the water." Its generally agreeable temperature, abundance of water, and fertile volcanic soil help explain why this natural basin served as the focal point of the rising succession of cultures that flourished on the Central Plateau.

This comparative pleasantness, however, was overshadowed by the violence that is the rule in Mexico. Earthquakes were common,[4] and in at least one instance the

---

[3] Fred A. Carlson, Geography of Latin America, pp. 425-31.

[4] Alfred M. Tozzer, "The Value of Ancient Mexican Manuscripts in the Study of the General Development of Writing," Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1911, pp. 493-506, p. 501 n2.

ancient inhabitants were threatened by volcanic eruption. Evidence of this may be seen at Cuicuilco south of Mexico City where a lava flow, now known as the Pedregal, partially engulfed an "Archaic" pyramid. Beneath this same flow at Copilco have been found human bones and artifacts.[5] Furthermore, the rivers of Anahuac, instead of providing a steady flow of irrigation water, served mainly to raise the level of the lakes in the rainy season, often causing disastrous floods.[6] Elsewhere on the Plateau the rivers, if less dangerous as bringers of floods, were just as useless as sources of irrigation water; for most of them flow out of man's reach at the bottoms of <u>barrancas</u>, great erosion-cut gullies hundreds to thousands of feet deep.[7] Thus it was that the civilization that developed here was based not on the rise and fall of rivers, as was the case in Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China, but on <u>rainfall</u>. Unfortunately, the rainfall on the Central Plateau is extremely undependable. Some "rainy" seasons bring little if any rain, while others may bring devastating floods. Moreover, unpredictable frosts may destroy as much as fifty, and in rare cases one hundred per cent of the crops. "There is

---

[5] George C. Vaillant, "History and Stratigraphy in the Valley of Mexico," <u>Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1938</u>, pp. 521-30, p. 529.

[6] Carlson, <u>op. cit</u>., p. 432.

[7] Simpson, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., pp. 5-6.

ancient inhabitants were threatened by volcanic eruption. Evidence of this may be seen at Cuicuilco south of Mexico City where a lava flow, now known as the Pedregal, partially engulfed a ceremonial temple. Beneath this same flow at Copilco have been found human bones and artifacts.[5] Furthermore, the rivers of Anahuac, instead of providing a steady flow of irrigation water, served mainly to raise the level of the lakes in the rainy season, often causing disastrous floods.[6] Elsewhere on the Mexican Plateau, rivers, if less dangerous as bringers of floods, were just as useless as sources of irrigation water, for most of them ran out of men's reach at the bottoms of barrancas, great stream-cut gullies hundreds to thousands of feet deep. Thus it was that the civilization that developed here was based not on the rise and fall of rivers, as was the case in Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China, but on rainfall. Unfortunately, the rainfall on the Central Plateau is extremely undependable. Some "rainy" seasons bring little if any rain, while others may bring devastating floods. Moreover, unpredictable frosts may destroy as much as fifty, and in rare cases one hundred per cent of the crops. "Thus if

---

[5] George C. Vaillant, "History and Stratigraphy in the Valley of Mexico," _Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1938_, pp. 521-30, p. 529.

[6] Carlson, _op. cit._, p. 4.

[7] Stimson, _op. cit._, pp. 3-4.

rarely any such thing as a 'normal' season for the Mexican farmer."[8] Thus:

> The Mexican's life, so often uprooted by famine and pestilence, by erupting volcanoes and devastating floods, leaves him painfully aware of that portion of the universe where human devices are powerless and human efforts are of small avail. . . .[9]

And even as the comparative stability of the terrain and climate of the Nile Valley may have had something to do with a certain optimism of the ancient Egyptian,[10] so the instability of the Valley of Mexico may have been at least partially responsible for the pessimism of the ancient Mexican. His cynical world-weariness is reflected in the following passage from a "Lamentation" which seems almost a burlesque of the Twenty-third Psalm: "Where shall my soul dwell? Where is my home? Where shall be my house? I am miserable on earth."[11]

The People

Those tribes that were culturally dominant in Mexico

---

[8] Ibid., p. 7.

[9] May Marsh, "Mexico by Sight and Insight," The American Scholar, 5:71-7, January, 1936, p. 75.

[10] Walter Pach, "The Greatest American Artists," Harper's Magazine, 148:252-62, January, 1924, p. 256b. ". . . the stability of natural phenomena in Egypt induced the ideal of eternal existence which characterizes the Egyptian from first to last."

[11] Daniel G. Brinton, Ancient Nahuatl Poetry, p. 79. Quoted in Margot Astrov, The Winged Serpent, p. 310.

at the time of its discovery by the Spanish were only the heirs, or rather the usurpers, of a high civilization developed by much earlier peoples. This civilization began hundreds[12] to perhaps thousands[13] of years before the Christian era when nomadic hunting tribes on the Central Plateau adopted the cultivation of maize.

The importance of this cereal to Mexican culture, from ancient times down to the present day, can scarcely be over-emphasized; for, as Zelia Nuttall has said, "The history of the development of maize is inseparable from the history of the origin and development of civilization on the American Continent. . . ."[14] First of all, its discovery provided those early nomads, indeed most of the ancient inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere, with the prime requisite of civilization: a <u>storable surplus</u> of food.[15] This surplus not only permitted the large population and economic specialization that accompany civilization, but also made possible a "non-producing" class of nobles, officials, and priests, all with that sedentary leisure which is at least one of the essentials of "non-

---

[12] George C. Vaillant, <u>Aztecs of Mexico</u>, pp. 26-27.

[13] Herbert J. Spinden, <u>Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America</u>, facing p. 254.

[14] Zelia Nuttall, "The Aztecs and their Predecessors in the Valley of Mexico," <u>Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society</u>, 65:245-55, 1926, p. 255<u>n</u>.

[15] Chase, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 25.

at the time of its discovery by the Spanish were only the heirs, or rather the usurpers, of a high civilization developed by much earlier peoples. This civilization began hundreds[12] to perhaps two thousand[13] years before the Christian era when nomadic hunting tribes on the Central Plateau adopted the cultivation of maize.

The importance of this cereal to Mexican culture, from ancient times down to the present day, can scarcely be over-emphasized. As Zelia Nuttall has said, "The history of the development of maize is inseparable from the history of the origin and development of civilization on our American Continent. . . ."[14] First of all, the discovery provided those early nomads, indeed most of the ancient inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere, with the prime requisite of civilization: a constant surplus of food.[15] This surplus not only permitted the large population and certain specialization that accompany civilization, but also made possible a "non-productive" class of nobles, officials, and priests, all with that necessary leisure which is evidently one of the essentials of "non-

---

[12] George C. Vaillant, Aztecs of Mexico, pp. 28-29.

[13] Herbert J. Spinden, Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America, 1928, p. 51.

[14] Zelia Nuttall, "The Aztecs and their Predecessors in the Valley of Mexico," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 65:245-55, 1926, p. 254.

[15] Chase, op. cit., p. 25.

essential" thought. But in becoming the foundation of their civilizations, maize assumed the role of lord and master over the ancient Americans. So complete was its dominance that an early Spanish chronicler was led to write:

> If one look closely at these Indians he will find that everything they do and say has something to do with maize. A little more and they would make a god of it. There is so much conjuring and fussing about their corn fields that for them they will forget wives and children and any other pleasure, as if the only end and aim of life was to secure a crop of corn.[16]

A still closer look would have shown that writer that the Indians did indeed make a god of maize. And Alexander, elaborating on the same quotation, says:

> It is not only, as the chronicler noted, that the Indian's whole life is engrossed in the welfare of his fields; but even more that the patterns of his thought and his conception of the world turn pivotally upon the life-sustaining cereal.[17]

It may have been, as Spence maintains, that Mexican religion was nothing more than a vastly elaborated rain cult,[18] yet behind it all was the silent but eloquent demand

---

[16] Daniel G. Brinton, <u>Annals of the Cakchiquels</u>, p. 14. Quoted in Hartley Burr Alexander, "The Great Mysteries of the North American Indians," (unpublished manuscript), Ch. 4.

[17] <u>Ibid</u>., Ch. 4, p. 22.

[18] Lewis Spence, "The Origins of Mexican Mythology," <u>The Edinbrugh Review</u>, 232:342-60, October, 1920, p. 358. "Mexican religion . . . . first and last was nothing more than a vastly elaborated rain-cult, similar in its general tendency to that still prevalent among the Pueblo tribes of New Mexico and Arizona, yet broader in outlook, of a higher complexity, and productive of a theology and an ethical system of greater sophistication and scope."

for water by the maize plant. And the bloody human sacrifices associated with the worship of the sun, though intended directly to "nourish" that deity, had as their ultimate ostensible aim the bringing of its life-giving rays to the corn.

> Thus for the aboriginal peoples of America the domestication of maize was the initial key for the whole pattern of a human civilization and the vivid coloring of a unique philosophy of life. Expanding north and south from its Middle American beginnings, this culture marginally encountered and mingled with the warrior-creeds of the braves of the Thunderbird. . . ; but within its own native center, the whole complexion of thought had been for so many tens of centuries hued from the grain-fields that men had no imagination outbordering them.[19]

After a long period of development in the hands of the "Archaic" or "Middle" Cultures, that phase of the New World's maize complex occupying the Valley of Mexico reached its zenith in the civilization of the "Toltecs."[20]

> The general characters of Toltec civilization, as tradition shows it, are those recorded by Sahagun [in the Historia general, X. xxix. I.] The Toltec were clever workmen in metals, pottery, jewellery, and fabrics, indeed, in all the industrial arts. They were notable builders. . . . They were magicians, astrologers, medicine-men, musicians, priests, inventors of writing, and creators of the calendar. They were mannerly men, and virtuous, and lying was unknown among them. But they were not warlike--and this was to be their ruin.[21]

---

[19] Alexander, op. cit., Ch. 4, p. 51.

[20] Vaillant, op. cit., Ch. III.

[21] Hartley Burr Alexander, The Mythology of All Races, vol. XI, p. 106.

Such magnificent structures as the "Pyramid of the Sun" and the "Temple of Quetzalcoatl," both at the great ceremonial center of Teotichuacan, show that the Toltecs were more than "notable" builders. They were accomplished architects, a fact which indicates that they were philosophers as well; for, according to Vasconcelos, "'Wherever there has been architecture there has also existed philosophy.'"[22]

Whether the Toltecs actually invented their pictographic system of writing and their calendar or acquired them from other peoples is still being debated; but the fact that they had them gives their culture still more of the attributes of civilization. Their writing, in fact, had passed beyond the purely pictographic or "representational" stage, and was approaching a phonetic or "rebus" system similar to that of the hieroglyphic writing of ancient Egypt.[23] In time this system may have developed into

---

[22] José Vasconcelos, *Historia del Pensamiento Filosófico*. Quoted in Samuel Ramos, *Historia de la filosofía en México*, p. 6. "'Dondequiera que ha habido arquitectura ha existido también filosofía. En el reino de las Bellas Artes, la arquitectura corresponde al momento de los sistemas en el desarrollo del pensamiento. Y no se llega a construir con gracia y ligereza, con majestad y armonía, mientras no se conquista en lo espiritual, el orden armónico y sólido de una doctrina filosófica coherente y comprensiva.'"

[23] Vaillant, *op. cit.*, p. 207. See also Spinden, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-27. In treating *Aztec* writing and speech at this point of the discussion, which belongs more properly to the *Toltecs*, it is assumed that the cultural descendants of the latter added little to their intellectual heritage.

an alphabet, but as it stood at the time of the Conquest it could express neither general nor abstract concepts.[24] Philosophically speaking, therefore, the ancient inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico were "pre-literate." Their oral tradition, however, was remarkably well suited, as will soon be seen, to philosophical expression. "Classical Aztec," the dialect of the Valley of Mexico at the time of the Conquest, is a member of the Uto-Aztecan stock of American Indian languages. It is a highly inflecting language employing both prefixes and suffixes. Its vocabulary is divided into well-marked parts of speech somewhat similar to those of Indo-European.[25] Aztec is, at least potentially, very much a "philosopher's language" because of its great capacity for the derivation of parts of speech from other ones. "In fact the extent of derivation and the huge vocabulary built up out of a small number of roots is perhaps the outstanding characteristic of Aztec."[26] True, its abstractions so derived seemingly never escaped the "taint of concreteness" seen, for example, in the substantive derived from the adjective "white," which does not mean "whiteness" but, vaguely, "something white."[27] But its very capacity

---

[24] Vaillant, loc. cit.

[25] Benjamin Lee Whorf, "The Milpa Alta Dialect of Aztec with Notes on the Classical and the Tepoztlan Dialects," Harry Hoijer et. al., Linguistic Structures of Native America, pp. 367-8.

[26] Ibid., p. 389.

[27] Ibid., p. 376.

an alphabet, but as it stood at the time of the Conquest it could express neither general nor abstract concepts.[24] Philosophically speaking, therefore, the ancient inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico were "pre-literate." Their oral tradition, however, was remarkably well suited, as will soon be seen, to philosophical expression. "Classical Aztec," the dialect of the Valley of Mexico at the time of the Conquest, is a member of the Uto-Aztecan group of American Indian languages. It is a highly polysynthetic language employing both prefixes and suffixes. Its vocabulary is divided into well-marked parts of speech very similar to those of Indo-European languages. It is, at least potentially, very much a "philosopher's language" because of its great capacity for the derivation of parts of speech from other ones. "In fact the extent of derivation and the huge vocabulary built up out of a small number of roots is perhaps the outstanding characteristic of Aztec."[25] Indeed, its abstractions so derived certainly never escaped the "taint of concreteness" when, for example, in the substantive derived from the adjective "white," which does not mean "whiteness" but, vaguely, "something white."[27] But the very capacity

---

[24] Vaillant, *loc. cit.*

[25] Benjamin Lee Whorf "The Milpa Alta Dialect of Aztec with Notes on the Classical and the Tepoztlan Dialects," Harry Hoijer et. al., *Linguistic Structures of Native America*, pp. 367-8.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 389.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 376.

for derivation might eventually have enabled the indigenous philosophers of the Valley of Mexico to overcome even this limitation; for:

> . . . in power of coining new words the language in classical times must have had few equals on the globe. Its vocabulary then was enormous, and pre-Conquest culture had already developed an extensive system of religious, philosophical, and similar 'abstract' terminology.[28]

Returning to the Toltecs proper, they were overcome and dispersed in the early part of the thirteenth century A.D. by the Chichimecs, nomadic marginal tribes of the Central Plateau.[29] These peoples established dynasties in various "city-states" throughout the Valley of Mexico. A few of them, the most outstanding of which was Texcoco on the eastern shore of Lake Texcoco, retained some of the glories of Toltec civilization. Nezahualcoyotl, the famed "philosopher-king" of Texcoco, will be discussed at some length later. The Tenochcas, or true "Aztecs," who built the island-city of Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City) in Lake Texcoco, had achieved military and political dominance in the Valley of Mexico shortly before the arrival there of the Spanish conquerors.[30] Although Aztec civilization was not a true "civilization" politically speaking, its rival factions did have common cultural patterns. Those patterns,

---

[28] Ibid., p. 368.

[29] Spinden, op. cit., p. 203.

[30] Vaillant, op. cit., Ch. V.

for derivation might eventually have enabled the indigenous philosophers of the Valley of Mexico to overcome even this limitation; for:

> . . . in power of coining new words the language is classical and must have had few equals on the continent. Its vocabulary then was enormous, and pre-Conquest culture had already developed an extensive system of religious, philosophical, and similar 'abstract' terminology.[28]

Returning to the Toltec groups, they were overcome and dispersed in the early part of the thirteenth century A.D. by new Chichimecs, nomadic marginal tribes of the Central Plateau.[29] These peoples established dynasties in various "city-states" throughout the Valley of Mexico. A few of them, the most outstanding of which was Texcoco on the eastern shore of Lake Texcoco, retained some of the glories of Toltec civilization. Nezahualcoyotl, the famed "philosopher-king" of Texcoco, will be discussed at some length later. The Tenochca, or true "Aztecs," whose city the island-city of Tenochtitlan (now Mexico City) in Lake Texcoco, had achieved military and political dominance in the Valley of Mexico shortly before the arrival there of the Spanish conquerors.[30] Although Aztec civilization was not a true "civilization" culturally speaking, its several factions did have common cultural patterns. These patterns,

---

[28] Ibid., p. 309.

[29] Johnson, op. cit., p. 262.

[30] Vaillant, op. cit., Ch. 8.

together with the natural phenomena of their universe, the ancient inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico unified by a thought system that may be termed a philosophy. That philosophy is the subject of Chapter III.

together with the natural phenomena of their universe, the ancient inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico evolved a thought system that may be termed a philosophy. This philosophy is the subject of Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

THE FINISHED PRODUCTS

Cosmogony

Man, like nature, "abhors a vacuum," although man applies his abhorrence in the realm of his own thought. Of course, rationally speaking, he cannot "think in a vacuum," for his ideas are like steppingstones, each one being essential to the reaching of another. Yet even in their "intuitive" insights most men eschew both spatial and temporal emptiness. They may talk about and make use of such concepts as "nothingness" and "infinity" in mathematics, but they usually avoid them in drawing their mental pictures of the universe. The ideas of a totally empty and limitless outer space and a "time before the beginning and after the end" are not only logically uncomfortable to man; they are terrifying. In brief, man does not feel "at home" in his universe until he has "captured" it in the net of his thought; until he has "wrapped it up" in a more or less neat mental package. That this value in man usually leads him to draw in his mind what may be a false picture of reality has long been pointed out to the Orient by its mystics and, in recent times, to the Western world by such

outstanding thinkers as Bergson[1] and Whitehead.[2] Nevertheless, seeming to prefer immediate mental comfort to "ultimate truth," most men of both the old and the new worlds have set spatial and temporal limits to their respective universes.

These limits, some of which are involved in any cosmogony, are made up of the most familiar items of a people's experience. Since the most familiar item in the experience of the ancient Mexicans, with the possible exception of their own bodies and feelings, was corn, it is no wonder that they, along with most of the other peoples of the New World, developed a "maize-cosmogony."[3] There were among the various Mexican peoples several versions of the creation of the world; yet all of them followed a generally consistent pattern. This pattern, in contrast to the Biblical account, featured several, usually five, creations rather than one, and emphasized destruction rather than creation. Each creation was named after the sun, who was giver of life to the corn. The first "Sun" was devoured by a jaguar. A hurricane destroyed the second. The third was brought to an end by a rain of fire, and the fourth by a flood. The fifth, or present "Sun," is to be destroyed

---

[1] E.g. in his L'Evolution Créatrice.

[2] Science and the Modern World, Ch. 1.

[3] Hartley Burr Alexander, "The Great Mysteries of the North American Indians," (unpublished manuscript), Ch. 4, p. 35.

outstanding thinkers as Bergson[1] and Whitehead.[2] Nevertheless, seeming to presume immediate mental contact with "ultimate truth," most men of both the old and the new worlds have set spatial and temporal limits to their respective universes.

These limits, some of which are involved in any cosmogony, are made up of the most familiar items of a people's experience. Since the most familiar item in the experience of the ancient Mexicans, with the possible exception of their own bodies and families, was the sun, it is no wonder that they, along with most of the other peoples of the New World, developed a "solar-cosmogony."[3] There were among the various Mexican peoples several versions of the creation of the world; yet all of these followed a generally consistent pattern. This pattern, in contrast to the Biblical account, featured several, usually five, creations rather than one, and emphasized destruction rather than creation. Each creation was named after the sun, who was giver of life to the earth. The first "sun" was devoured by a jaguar. A hurricane destroyed the second. The third was brought to an end by a rain of fire, and the fourth by a flood. The fifth, or present "sun," is to be destroyed

---

[1] E.g., in his L'Evolution Créatrice.

[2] Science and the Modern World, Ch. 1.

[3] Hartley Burr Alexander, "The Great Mysteries of the North American Indians," (unpublished manuscript), n. d., p. 35.

by an earthquake.[4] This emphasis on destruction seems to reflect both the violence of Mexico and the pessimism of its people. As for the creation of man himself, it is significant that in at least one Mexican myth the gods, after trying unsuccessfully to mold men from clay and carve them out of wood, fashion the first "true" men of maize.[5]

Spatially, the ancient Mexicans held two "world-views," one vertical and the other mainly horizontal, which were basically similar to those held by their "cultural cousins" to the north and south. The vertical universe consisted of three main levels. The uppermost level, or sky-world, was itself divided into thirteen sublevels. Of these the top four were the invisible realm of a hierarchy of gods; the remainder being occupied Ptolemaic-wise by the stars, sun, and other visible celestial phenomena. The lowest of the three principal levels was the underworld. Known as Mictlan, the Place of the Dead, it had nine sub-levels, the lowermost of which was inhabited by the God of Death. The middle level of the vertical universe was the terrestrial world of mortal beings. It was this level that the Aztecs ordered horizontally by their second world-view, a "cult of the quarters."[6] This view divided the

---

[4] Herbert J. Spinden, Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America, pp. 232-3.

[5] Alexander, op. cit., Ch. 4, pp. 36-7.

[6] Spinden, op. cit., pp. 233-4.

by an earthquake.[4] This emphasis on destruction seems to reflect both the violence of Mexico and the pessimism of its people. As for the creation of man himself, it is significant that in at least one Mexican myth the gods, after trying unsuccessfully to make men from clay and carve them out of wood, fashion the first humans from *maize*.[5]

Spatially, the ancient Mexicans held two 'world-views,' one vertical and the other mainly horizontal, which were basically similar to those held by their 'cultural cousins' to the north and south. The vertical universe consisted of layers, with the top, or uppermost level, or sky-world, was itself divided into thirteen subdivisions. Of these the top four were the celestial realm of a hierarchy of gods; the remainder were occupied Ptolemaic-like by the stars, sun, and other celestial phenomena. The lowest of the three principal levels was the underworld. Known as *Mictlan*, the Place of the Dead, it had nine sub-levels, the lowermost of which was inhabited by the God of Death. The middle level of the vertical universe was the terrestrial world of mortal beings. It was this level that the Aztecs ordered horizontally by their second world-view, a "cult of the quarters."[6] This view divided the

---

[4] Herbert J. Spinden, *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*, pp. [illegible].

[5] Alexander, *op. cit.*, Ch. [illegible], pp. 86-7.

[6] Spinden, *op. cit.*, pp. [illegible].

surface of the earth into four regions, each lying in one of the four cardinal directions from a fifth region, the middle. Two more regions, one in the zenith and the other in the nadir, completed the picture, which, strictly speaking, was not planar but spherical.

This geometrical interpretation of the universe is reflected in the remarkable calendar of the Mexican peoples. Of it, Alexander says:

> The Mexican calendar is one of the most extraordinary inventions of human intelligence. Elsewhere the science of the calendar is a lore of sun, moon, and stars, and of their synodic periods; in the count of time astronomy is mistress, and number is but the handmaiden. In the Mexican system this relation is distinctly reversed: it is number that is dominant, and astronomy that is ancillary.[7]

Moreover, the numbers that dominate the Mexican calendar are derived from terrestrial rather than celestial measurements. The twenty-day "month" of this calendar could plausibly have been derived from the total of man's fingers and toes; and the other key numbers, four, five, six, seven, nine, and thirteen, from the "cult of the quarters."[8] Continues Alexander:

> Man in the Middle Place of his cosmos; . . . foursquare with the Quarters. . . ; counting his natural days by his natural digits: this is the image which makes most plausible our explanations of the peculiarly earth-tethered calendar of the Mexicans. . . .[9]

---

[7] Hartley Burr Alexander, The Mythology of All Races, vol. 11, pp. 96-7.

[8] Ibid., p. 97.

[9] Ibid.

However, this dominance of their calendar by number and geometry should not be taken to mean that the Aztecs held a static view of the universe. On the contrary, it was to them, perhaps above all else, a continuously unfolding cosmic drama; the various world-epochs or Suns being the "acts," the gods playing the leading roles, and the calendar serving as the "script."

> . . . it is natural for the human inagination to form all of its temporal conceptions into a single dramatic unity--a World Drama, with its Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Judgement;or a Cosmic Evolution from Nebula to Solar System, and Solar System to Nebula.[10]

Metaphysics

The above view of the universe indicates that the Aztecs looked into it, or rather behind it, for more than what appeared on the surface. The search for a deeper, more "ultimate" reality underlying the phenomenal world is metaphysics. Of course, the Aztecs, as did the American Indian in general, accepted uncritically the reality or at least the importance of the phenomenal world to the extent that they concerned themselves with carving from it a material culture.

> But certainly the physical cannot mean for the Indian what latterly it has come to mean for the Occidental of the Old World. It is not a material labyrinth, as for us it is, in which the soul of man has been incidentally trapped, but it is rather a

---

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

However, this dominance of their culture by number and geometry should not be taken to mean that the Aztecs held a static view of the universe. On the contrary, it was to them, perhaps above all else, a continuously unfolding cosmic drama; the various world-epochs or "Suns" being the "acts," the gods playing the leading roles, and the calendar serving as the "script."

> . . . it is natural for the human imagination to form all of the separate conceptions into a single dramatic unity--a World Drama, with its Creation, Fall, Redemption, and the eventual Cosmic Evolution from Nebula to Solar Systems, and Solar Systems to Nebula.[10]

Metaphysics

The above view of the universe indicates that the Aztecs looked into it, or rather behind it, for more than what appeared on the surface. The search for a deeper, more "ultimate" reality underlying the phenomenal world is metaphysics. Of course, the Aztecs, as did the American Indian in general, accepted unqualifiedly the reality or at least the importance of the phenomenal world to the extent that they concerned themselves with developing to a material culture.

> But certainly the physical cannot mean for the Indian what latterly it has come to mean for the Occidental of the Old World. It is not a material labyrinth, as for us it is, in which the soul of man has been incidentally trapped, but it is rather a

---

[10] Ibid., p. 105.

> sense-born phantasm, as Plato also held it to be. Nothing is more obvious in Indian thinking than his belief that the Powers are the realities, and that shapes and functions of things are primarily the exercise of these powers. . . . In the language of our own metaphysics, the Indian is an idealist, not a materialist.[11]

Thus in the cosmic drama of the Aztecs, the principal players were not mere anthropomorphic deities, but rather personified forces or "powers"; and the action of the drama was the interplay of these forces. For example, Ometecutli, the "First Cause" of the Mexican universe, was regarded not as a man-god in the Hebraic sense, but as a a creative "principle."[12] This principle was also known as the "Twofold One,"[13] and in this role resembled the Yang and Yin, or male-female generative principle of Chinese philosophy. Still another name, Tloque Nahuaque, "Lord of the With and the By, Lord of the Close Vicinity,"[14] reveals even more of the highly abstract nature of this deity.

---

[11] Alexander, "The Great Mysteries of the North American Indians," (unpublished manuscript), Epilogue, pp. 3-4.

[12] Salvador Domínguez Assiayn, "Filosofía de los Antiguos Mexicanos." Quoted in Samuel Ramos, Historia de la filosofía en Mexico, p. 14. "'En la alta teogonía náhuatl, Ometeuhtli no era un hombre, sino un principio astronómico, físico y espiritual.'"

[13] Alexander, The Mythology of All Races, v. 11, p. 88.

[14] Frances Gillmor, Flute of the Smoking Mirror, p. 157 n. 23. Of Tonacatecutli, with whom Tloque Nahuaque was also identified, Seler says: "'His ideal was the outcome of philosophical speculation, of the need of a principle of causality.'" (Quoted ibid.) A further indication of the abstractness of Tloque Nahuaque is the fact that he was not represented by any image. (Ibid., p. 142.)

> sense-born pantheon, as Plato also held it to be; Nothing is more obvious in Indian thinking than his belief that the Powers are the Realities, and that shapes and functions of nature are primarily the examples of these powers. . . . In the language of our own metaphysics, the Indian is an idealist, not a materialist.[11]

Thus in the cosmic drama of the Aztecs, the principal players were not mere anthropomorphic deities, but rather personified forces or "powers"; and the action of the drama was the interplay of these forces. For example, Ometecuhtli, the "First Cause" of the Mexican universe, was regarded not as a man-god in the Hebraic sense, but more a creative "principle."[12] This principle was also known as the "Twofold One,"[13] and in this role resembled the Yang and Yin, or male-female generative principle of Chinese philosophy. Still another name, Tloque Nahuaque, "Lord of the Nigh and the Nigh, Lord of the Close Vicinity,"[14] reveals even more of the highly abstract nature of this deity.

---

[11] Alexander, "The Great Mysteries of the North American Indians," (unpublished manuscript), Phillips, pp. 3-4.

[12] Salvador Dominguez Assiayn, "Filosofía de los Antiguos Mexicanos," quoted in Samuel Ramos, Historia de la Filosofía en México, p. 14: "... la idea de su numen, Ometecuhtli no era un hombre, sino un principio astronómico, físico y espiritual."

[13] Alexander, The Mythology of All Races, v. 11, p. 58.

[14] Frances Gillmor, Flute of the Smoking Mirror, p. 157 n. 23. Of Tezcatlipoca, with whom Tloque Nahuaque was also identified, Seler says: "His identification was the outcome of philosophical speculation, of the need of a principle of causality." (Quoted ibid.) A further indication of the abstractness of Tloque Nahuaque is the fact that he was not represented by any image. (Ibid., p. [illegible])

Apparently meant to convey the idea of omnipresence, this name may indicate that Aztec ideas were tending toward monotheism and, more remotely, toward pantheism or even monism; for a deity whose influence is everywhere comes in time to overshadow more specialized gods, and should such a deity be regarded as a causative force (as *Tloque Nahuaque* was) it is an easy step for a people who regard "powers" as the "ultimate" realities to regard them as aspects or emanations of one "first power." Further evidence of such a tendency in Mexican thought is the fact that *Ometecutli* had absorbed several other gods that formerly had been worshipped separately. Among these was *Huehueteotl*, the "grandfather of the gods."[15] Another was the Chichimec god *Yoalli Ehecatl* or the "Night-Wind," described by Sahagun as: "'God invisible, impalpable, beneficent, protector, omnipotent, by whose strength alone the whole world lives, and who, by his sole knowledge, rules voluntarily all things.'"[16] Finally, even the mighty *Tezcatlipoca*, "'Creator of Heaven and Earth,'" was included.[17] From this, Dominguez Assiayn concludes that the Aztecs had

---

[15] Domínguez Assiayn, *op. cit.* Quoted in Ramos, *loc. cit.*

[16] Quoted in Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

[17] *Ibid.*

Apparently meant to convey the idea of omnipresence, his name may indicate that Aztec ideas were tending toward monotheism and, more probably, toward henotheism or even monism; for a deity whose influence is everywhere comes in time to overshadow more specialized ones, and should such a deity be regarded as a generative force (as Tloque Nahuaque was) it is an easy step for a people who thought "powers" as the "ultimate" realities to regard these as aspects or emanations of one "first power." Further evidence of such a tendency in Mexican thought is the fact that Quetzalcoatl had absorbed Ehecatl, the wind god, who formerly had been worshipped separately. Another instance was Huehueteotl, the "grandfather of the gods."[15] Another was the Chichimec god Yoalli Ehecatl or the "Night-Wind," described by Sahagun as: "'God invisible, impalpable, beneficent, protector, omnipotent, by whose strength alone the whole world lives, and who, by his sole knowledge, rules voluntarily all things.'"[16] Finally, even the mighty Tezcatlipoca, "Creator of Heaven and Earth," was included.[17] From this, Dominguez Assiayn concludes that the Aztecs had

---

[15] Dominguez Assiayn, op. cit. quoted in Reese, loc. cit.

[16] Quoted in Alexander, op. cit., p. 87.

[17] Ibid.

actually arrived at monism.[18]

Values

Although the ancient Mexicans may have been "idealists" metaphysically speaking,[19] there is abundant evidence that in their philosophy of values they were largely materialistic. This materialism stems apparently from their pessimism regarding the survival of human values. The Aztecs did believe in a "heaven," but it was reserved for the comparative few who died in sacrifice, battle, or childbirth.[20] For the majority of the people life beyond the grave was a dismal, colorless affair similar to that of the departed Greeks in Hades. The Aztec view of the underworld is expressed in the following words recited by the ancient priests over the dead:

> Our son, thou art finished with the sufferings and fatigues of this life. It hath pleased our Lord to take thee hence, for thou hast not eternal life in this world: our existence is as a ray of the sun. He hath given thee the grace of knowing us and of associating in our common life. Now the god Mictlantecutli and the goddess Mictecaciuatl have made thee

---

[18] Domínguez Assiayn, *op. cit.* Quoted in Ramos, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15. "'Por más que aplicaran diversos nombres para expresar su idea, afirmaron categóricamente la existencia de una causa única, cuyo nombre más completo era Yoalliehecatlosteestezcaltlipoca.'" On this same subject, Ramos remarks: "Los aztecas eran monistas, creían en la existencia de una causa única de la cual todas las demás cosas eran sus manifestaciones." (*Ibid.*, p. 14.)

[19] Alexander, "The Great Mysteries of the North American Indians," (unpublished manuscript), Epilogue, pp. 3-4.

[20] George C. Vaillant, *Aztecs of Mexico*, p. 172.

> to share their abode. We shall follow thee, for it is our destiny, and the abode is broad enough to receive the whole world. Thou wilt be heard of no longer among us. Behold, thou art gone to the domain of darkness, where there is neither light nor window. Never shalt thou come hither again, nor needst thou concern thyself for thy return, for thine absence is eternal.[21]

Moreover, the frequent wars, famines, earthquakes, floods, and other disasters that plagued the ancient Mexicans led them to question the value of even their earthly existence. Thus they composed such prayers as the following:

> O god all powerful, who gives life to men and whose name is Titlacaoan, do me the favor to grant me what I need to eat and drink and to enjoy your tranquillity and delight, because I live in dire affliction and need in this world. Have mercy because I am so poor and sparsely clad, and I work to serve you, and in this your service I sweep, clean, and light the fire in the hearth of this poor house, where I am awaiting what might be your pleasure to ordain me. O, let me die at once and thus end this troublesome and miserable life, so that I may rest and my body may be at ease.[22]

Another prayer, which shows that Aztec pessimism was not restricted to the impoverished, was repeated by the priest officiating at the coronation of a king:

> Perchance, deeming myself worthy of his high employ, he will think to perpetuate himself long therein. Will not this be for him a dream of sorrow? Will he find in this dignity received at thy hands an

---

[21] Bernardino de Sahagun, Historia general de las cosas de Nueva Espana, Book III, App. 1. Quoted in Alexander, op. cit., Ch. 8, p. 4.

[22] Bernardino de Sahagun, A History of Ancient Mexico, p. 178. Quoted in Margot Astrov, The Winged Serpent, p. 309.

> occasion of pride and presumption, till it hap that he despise the world, assuming to himself a sumptuous show? Thy Majesty knoweth well whereto he must come within a few brief days--for we men are but thy spectacle, thy theatre, serving for thy laughter and diversion.[23]

From all this, it is small wonder that so much of the thought in Aztec poetry resembles that of the Rubaiyat. Furthermore, the following "quatrains" show that ancient Mexican poets expressed their Epicureanism fully as eloquently as Omar himself. One, a "Lamentation," begins:

> I lift my voice in wailing, I am afflicted, as I remember that we must leave the beautiful flowers, the noble songs; let us enjoy ourselves for a while, let us sing, for we must depart forever, we are to be destroyed in our dwelling place.[24]

Another, often quoted by Montezuma, counseled:

> Rejoice in the green freshness of thy spring; for the day will come when thou shalt sigh for these joys in vain; when the scepter shall pass from thy hands, thy servants shall wander desolate in thy courts, thy sons and the sons of thy nobles shall drink the dregs of distress, and all the pomp of thy victories and triumphs shall only live in their recollection.
>
> The goods of this life, its glories and its riches, are but lent to us, its substance is but an illusory shadow, and the things of today shall change with the coming of the morrow. Then gather the fairest flowers from thy garden to bind round thy brow and seize the joys of the present ere they perish.[25]

The gruesome human sacrifices that played so

---

[23] From Sahagun. Quoted in Alexander, The Mythology of All Races, v. 11, p. 63.

[24] Astrov, op. cit., p. 310.

[25] Ruth Moore Morriss, "Food for the Gods," The Mentor-World Traveler, 22:24-7, 68-70, September, 1930, p. 26a.

important and extensive a part in the ritual of the Aztecs[26] might seem at first glance to indicate that these people placed little or no value on human life. But such an interpretation would be inconsistent with the meaning of the word "sacrifice," which implies the reluctant giving-up of a highly prized possession of the present in the hope of gaining thereby some greater good in either the immediate or remote future. In the case of human sacrifice in Mexico, the "greater good" was, according to one interpretation, rain; the rain so essential to the growing of maize. If this view is correct, then the sacrifices were part of a "blood covenant" between the Aztecs and their gods in which the former agreed to offer up their most precious possession, their own lifeblood, in exchange for rain from the latter.[27] Another source maintains that the gods, having sacrificed either themselves or their own sons for the sake of mankind, demanded like sacrifices from man himself.[28] Whichever view was actually held by the Aztecs could have been the ideological mask of a deeply rooted sadism or of the purely

---

[26] Human sacrifice in the New World was by no means limited to the Valley of Mexico. See Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough (1 vol. abridged edition), pp. 431-8.

[27] Lewis Spence, "The Origins of Mexican Mythology," The Edinburgh Review, 232:342-60, October, 1920, pp. 358-9.

[28] Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Historia de la cultura en la América hispánica, pp. 19-20.

important and extensive part in the ritual of the Aztecs might seem at first glance to indicate that these people placed little or no value on human life. But such an interpretation would be inconsistent with the meaning of the word "sacrifice," which implies the voluntary giving-up of a highly prized possession of the present in the hope of gaining thereby some greater good in either the immediate or remote future. In the case of human sacrifice in Mexico, the "greater good" was, according to one interpretation, rain; the rain so essential to the growing of maize. If this view is correct, then the sacrifices were part of a "blood covenant" between the Aztecs and their gods in which the former agreed to offer up their most precious possession, their own lifeblood, in exchange for rain from the latter.[27] Another source maintains that the gods, having sacrificed either themselves or their blood for the sake of mankind, demanded like sacrifices from mankind.[28] Whichever view was actually held by the Aztecs could have been the ideological basis of a deeply rooted custom or the purely

---

[26] Human sacrifice in the New World was by no means limited to the Valley of Mexico. See Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough (1 vol. abridged ed.; 1940), pp. 431-5.

[27] Lewis Spence, "The Origins of Mexican Mythology," The Edinburgh Review, 252:342-63, October, 1930, pp. [illegible]

[28] Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Historia de la cultura en la América hispánica, pp. 19-22.

economic motive of solving the problem of overpopulation, which continues to plague Mexico even today. But regardless of their real motives, their apparent need for "rationalizing" such conduct, plus their assurance to its victims of an exalted place in the heavens, indicates that the ancient Mexicans esteemed not only human life but, to some extent, human personality. They further demonstrated this by these their own words, spoken before a new-born child:

> Little son and lord, person of high value, of great price and esteem! O precious stone, emerald, topaz, rare plume, fruit of lofty generation! be welcome among us! Thou hast been formed in the highest places, above the ninth heaven, where the two supreme gods dwell. The Divine Majesty hath cast thee in his mould, as one casts a golden bead; thou hast been pierced, like a rich stone artistically wrought, by thy father and mother, the great god and the great goddess. . . .[29]

Further, human sacrifice among the Mexicans had its opponents, even in the ranks of the "vested interests." For example, Quetzalcoatl, the deified prophet-king of the Toltecs, taught that true sacrifice was spiritual and personal rather than physical and vicarious.[30] In later times, King Nezahualcoyotl of Texcoco held similar views, worshipping the "Lord of the With and the By," whose cult required neither temple nor offerings.[31]

---

[29] Quoted in Alexander, op. cit., p. 69.

[30] H. J. Spinden, "What is Civilization?" The Forum, 74:162-71, 371-9, August, September, 1925, p. 375.

[31] Gillmor, op. cit., p. 142.

Finally, the omnipresence and omniscience of this purely spiritual deity made him feared by wrong-doers, who called upon him in their confessions. To Tezcatlipoca, one of his many forms, they prayed:

> Thou art invisible and impalpable, and we believe that thy gaze doth penetrate the stones and into the hearts of the trees, seeing clearly all that is concealed therein. So dost thou see and comprehend what is in our hearts and in our thoughts; before thee our souls are as a waft of smoke or as a vapour that riseth from the earth.[32]

Ancient Mexico, like ancient Egypt, had had its "Dawn of Conscience."

Art

The importance assumed by art in Aztec civilization is shown in the following words by Stuart Chase:

> No other race that I can call to mind allowed so wide a disparity between the simple bread with which they fed their bodies and the arts by which they nourished their souls. . . . Even today, Mexican Indians have only a rudimentary development of the so-called instinct of acquisition, and a very sophisticated development of artistic appreciation as reflected in their craftsmanship.[33]

In ancient Mexico this sophistication was embodied not only in an imposing architecture and sculpture, but in an impressive literary tradition. Because of the limitations of Aztec writing this "literature" was oral, but a

---

[32] Quoted in Alexander, <u>op</u>. <u>cit</u>., p. 64.

[33] Stuart Chase, <u>Mexico</u>: <u>A Study of Two Americas</u>, p. 37.

Finally, the omnipresence and omniscience of this purely spiritual deity were professed by wrong-doers, who called upon him in their confessions. To Tezcatlipoca, one of his many forms, they prayed:

> Thou art invisible and impalpable, and we believe that thy gaze doth penetrate the stones and into the hearts of the trees, seeing clearly all that is concealed therein. So dost thou see and comprehend what is in our hearts and in our thoughts; before thee our souls are as a wisp of smoke or as a vapour that riseth from the earth.[32]

Ancient Mexico, like ancient Egypt, had had its "Dawn of Conscience."

Art

The importance assumed by art in Aztec civilization is shown in the following words by Stuart Chase:

> No other race that I can call to mind affords so wide a disparity between the simple bread with which they fed their bodies and the arts by which they nourished their souls. . . . Even today, Mexican Indians have only a rudimentary development of the so-called instinct of acquisition, and a very sophisticated development of artistic expression as reflected in their craftsmanship.[33]

In ancient Mexico this aesthetic sensibility was embodied not only in an imposing architecture and sculpture, but in an impressive literary tradition. Because of the limitations of Aztec writing this "literature" was oral, but a

---

[32] Quoted in Alexander, op. cit., p. 64.

[33] Stuart Chase, Mexico: A Study of Two Americas, p. 37.

number of examples, transcribed soon after the Conquest, have survived. The Aztecs were much concerned with poetic eloquence; and at the "Academy of Music" in Texcoco bards from many parts of the "Empire" competed with one another.

Even in their myths the ancient Mexicans demonstrated that talent for brilliant analogy which is perhaps the basis of all great literature. Thus to them the Milky Way was, in one myth, the skirt of the goddess Citlalicue; in another, it was the white hair of Mixcoatl, God of the Zenith. And the stars revolving around Polaris were the players in a celestial ball game.[34] In the myth of the birth of Huitzilopochtli his victory over his hostile brothers, the Centzonuitznaua or "Four Hundred Southerners," is seen as the "putting to flight of the stars" by the rising sun. His blue shield is interpreted as the sky; and the balls of featherdown tipping his arrows as cloud-symbols.[35]

This same literary ability, plus their Epicureanism, is reflected in both the religious and secular poetry of the Aztecs. An example of their religious poetry is the following hymn to Xipe Totec:

Thou night-time drinker, why dost thou delay?
Put on thy disguise--thy golden garment, put it on!

My Lord, let thine emerald waters come descending!
Now is the old tree changed to green plumage--
The Fire-Snake is transformed into the Quetzal!

---

[34] Alexander, The Mythology of All Races, v. 11, p. 98.

[35] Ibid., p. 60.

number of examples, transcribed soon after the Conquest, have survived. The Aztecs were much concerned with poetic eloquence; and at the "Academy of Music" in Texcoco bards from many parts of the "Empire" competed with one another.

Even in their myths the ancient Mexicans demonstrated that talent for brilliant analogy which is perhaps a hallmark of all great literature. Thus to them the Milky Way was, in one myth, the skirt of the goddess Citlalicue; in another it was the white hair of Mixcoatl, God of the Zenith. And the stars revolving around Polaris were the players in a celestial ball game.[34] In the myth of the birth of Huitzilopochtli his victory over his hostile brothers, the Centzonuitznaua or "Four Hundred Southerners," is seen as the "putting to flight of the stars" by the rising sun. His blue shield is interpreted as the sky; and the balls of featherdown tipping his arrows as cloud-symbols.[35]

This same literary ability, plus their Epicureanism, is reflected in both the religious and secular poetry of the Aztecs. An example of their religious poetry is the following hymn to Xipe Totec:

Thou night-time drinker, why does thou delay?
Put on thy disguise--thy golden garment, put it on!

My Lord, let thine emerald waters come descending!
Now is the old tree changed to green plumage--
The Fire-Snake is transformed into the Quetzal!

---

[34] Alexander, The Mythology of All Races, v. 11, p. 98.

[35] Ibid., p. 60.

It may be that I am to die, I, the young maize-plant;
Like an emerald is my heart; gold would I see it be;
I shall be happy when first it is ripe--the war-chief born!

My Lord, when there is abundance in the maize-fields,
I shall look to thy mountains, verily thy worshipper;
I shall be happy when first it is ripe--the war-chief born![36]

Another is the following passage from the epic poem *The Song of Quetzalcoatl*:

And they led me to a valley,
To a wondrous fertile valley,
To a vale of many flowers,
Where the dew, with glittering splendor,
Hovered over all the landscape.
There a multitude of blossoms,
Clothed in garments of the dewdrops,
Scattered round their rainbow glory.
And they spoke and said unto me:
"Gather blossoms where thou willest!
May they gladden thee, O singer,
That thy gifts may bring rejoicing
To the nobles, thy companions."[37]

A secular example is this eloquent little love song:

I know not whether thou hast been absent:
I lie down with thee, I rise up with thee,
In my dreams thou art with me.
If my eardrops tremble in my ears,
I know it is thou moving within my heart.[38]

But to the ancient inhabitants of Anahuac art was more than a source of aesthetic enjoyment; it was a kind of language in which they expressed their religious and philosophical ideas. This symbolic function of art is

---

[36] After Seler. Quoted in *ibid*., pp. 76-77.

[37] John Hubert Cornyn, *tr*., *The Song of Quetzalcoatl*, p. 73.

[38] Daniel G. Brinton, "Native American Poetry," *Essays of an Americanist*, p. 295. Quoted in Astrov, *op. cit*., p. 316.

especially important to a people such as the Aztecs with less than a fully developed system of discursive writing. Moreover, the fact that Mexico's hieroglyphic codices were the possession of only the wealthy and priestly few made art the only "reading" available to the many. Thus the pyramids and temples of the Aztecs were designed to be, like Europe's cathedrals, "sermons in stone."

> The number of steps leading to a temple, its proportions, and the sculpture . . . are all symbolic things, exactly determined by priestly calculation. The modern student of aesthetics sees in the shapes employed by the old builders and sculptors a beautiful sense of design, a deep conception of form. The ancient Mexican saw in them a kind of writing in which every detail had the significance which letters and figures have for us. Thus, the forked tongue of the serpent, found only on temples or sculptures of the planet Venus, refers to the double appearance of the orb as the star of the evening and of the morning.[39]

This example shows that art employed as language is capable of expressing "synthetic images" that are not altogether dissimilar to the abstract images of philosophy.[40] Another example of this is the celebrated "feathered serpent" motif in Mexican architecture and sculpture. Here in a single image are united the underworld, symbolized by the snake; and the heavens, whose messengers are the

---

[39] Walter Pach, "The Greatest American Artists," Harper's Magazine, 148: 252-62, January, 1924, p. 254b.

[40] Hartley Burr Alexander, L'Art et la philosophie des Indiens de l'Amérique du Nord, p. 15. ". . . dans les aperçus que nous obtenons au moyen de l'art, nous trouverons des images synthétiques qui ne sont pas tout à fait dissemblables des images abstraites de notre métaphysique."

especially important to a people such as the Aztecs with less than a fully developed system of discursive writing. Moreover, the fact that Mexico's hieroglyphic codices were the possession of only the wealthy and relatively few made art the only "reading" available to the many. Thus the pyramids and temples of the Aztecs were designed to be, like Europe's cathedrals, "sermons in stone."

> The number of steps leading to a temple, its proportions, and the sculpture . . . are all doubtless things, exactly determined by priestly calculation. The modern student of aesthetics sees in the masses employed by the old builders and sculptors a powerful sense of design, a deep conception of form. The ancient Mexican saw in them a kind of writing in which every detail has the significance which letters and figures have for us. Thus, the forked tongue of the serpent, found only on temples and sculptures of the planet Venus, refers to the double appearance of the orb as the star of the evening and of the morning.[39]

This example shows that art employs a language capable of expressing "aesthetic images" that are not altogether dissimilar to the abstract images of philosophy.[40] Another example of this is the celebrated "feathered serpent" motif in Mexican architecture and sculpture. Here in a single image are united the underworld, symbolized by the snake, and the heavens, whose denizen are the

---

[39] Walter Pach, "The Greatest American Artists," Harper's Magazine, 149: 252-62, January, 1924, p. 254.

[40] Hartley Burr Alexander, L'Art et la philosophie des Indiens de l'Amérique du Nord, p. 19. ". . . dans les aperçus que nous obtenons par moyen de l'art, nous trouvons des images symboliques qui ne sont pas tout à fait dissemblables des images abstraites de notre métaphysique."

birds.[41] Again, the great Calendar Stone of the Aztecs depicts in one sweeping view both their spatial and temporal ideas of the universe.[42] Thus in ancient Mexico, ". . . scientific, aesthetic, and religious values. . . functioned together harmoniously, the one reinforcing the other. . . ."[43]

In addition to expressing their cosmogonic and metaphysical ideas, the architecture and sculpture of the Aztecs reveal much of their character and values. In them are seen, for example, the ancient Mexican's patience and his devotion to, or fear of, his gods. The temple-pyramids of the Valley of Mexico reveal these traits not only by their tremendous size but also by their stratified construction, which resulted from the Aztec belief that they must be completely refaced every fifty-two years. Aztec sculpture reveals the same patience and devotion in the extremely intractable media, such as obsidian and crystal, from which the ancient craftsmen carved it, using only stone tools. Further, in the "forbidding and gloomy"[44] qualities of this sculpture can be discerned the pessimism of its creators.

---

[41] Ibid., p. 27. "Ce serpent unit dans une seule image l'idée du monde inférieur dont les messagers sont les serpents . . . et l'idée du monde supérieur dont les oiseaux sont les hérauts."

[42] Vaillant, op. cit., pp. 163-4.

[43] F. S. C. Northrop, The Meeting of East and West, p. 18.

[44] Vaillant, op. cit., p. 162.

And finally:

> When one has to some extent recovered from the astonishment caused by the size of the Mexican monuments and by the skill needed for their execution by a people so primitively equipped, the sense of their meaning begins to form in one's mind, and one sees that the true wonder of this art is its intensity--its bare, direct statement of the idea. From the pyramid down to the tiniest bit of crystal or jade there is the same characteristic of essentialness. . . .[45]

This concern for "essentialness" would seem to reflect a philosophical turn of mind.

Nezahualcoyotl

Into virtually every culture, no matter how fettered by tradition it may be, are born certain individuals who personify and even surpass its highest attainments. Such a personality was Nezahualcoyotl, who reigned over Texcoco, the "Athens" of the Aztec empire, half a century before the coming of the Spanish.[46] The story of his life closely parallels that of the Biblical David;[47] but an even more striking resemblance is to be seen between his philosophical achievements and those of the Pharaoh Ikhnaton of ancient Egypt. Both arrived at an enlightened monotheism. Both attempted to reform the religious practices of

---

[45] Pach, op. cit., p. 257b.

[46] Alexander, The Mythology of All Races, vol. 11, p. 109.

[47] Ibid. A detailed biography of Nezahualcoyotl is in Frances Gillmor's Flute of the Smoking Mirror.

And finally:

> When one has to some extent recovered from the astonishment caused by the size of the Mexican monuments and by the skill needed for their execution by a people so primitively equipped, the sense of their meaning begins to form in one's mind, and one sees that the true wonder of this art is its rationality—its bare, direct statement of the idea. From the pyramid down to the tiniest bit of crystal or jade there is the same characteristic of essentialness.[45]
> . . .

This concern for "essentialness" would seem to reflect a philosophical turn of mind.

Nezahualcoyotl

Into virtually every culture, no matter how fettered by tradition it may be, are born certain individuals who personify and even surpass its highest attainments. Such a personality was Nezahualcoyotl, who reigned over Texcoco, the "Athens" of the Aztec empire, half a century before the coming of the Spaniards.[46] The story of his life closely parallels that of the Biblical David;[47] but an even more striking resemblance is to be seen between his philosophical achievements and those of the Pharaoh Ikhnaton of ancient Egypt. Both arrived at an enlightened monotheism. Both attempted to reform the religious practices of

---

[45] Zach, *op. cit.*, p. 259b.

[46] Alexander, *The Mythology of All Races*, Vol. XI, p. 109.

[47] *Ibid.* A detailed biography of Nezahualcoyotl is in Frances Gillmor's *Flute of the Smoking Mirror*.

their subjects. Both failed.

In his thirst for knowledge, Nezahualcoyotl was a veritable Aristotle. He delighted in the study of natural phenomena; making numerous astronomical observations, and acquiring considerable knowledge of plants and animals. His investigations into the causes of things may have been responsible for his monotheistic views. He deplored the human sacrifices of his times and attempted unsuccessfully to abolish them in his kingdom.[48] But above all, Nezahualcoyotl was a great poet. His compositions were honored in Texcoco's famed Academy of Music, the arbiter of elegance and good taste in poetry, music and the dance for all Mexico.[49] In his magnificent poems are seen not only his own highly advanced ideas but also all of the melancholy worldliness so characteristic of Aztec thought in general. In one, for example, he says:

---

[48] From Clavijero. Quoted in Ramos, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6. "'. . . en nada se deleitaba tanto Netzahualcoyotl como en el estudio de la naturaleza. Adquirió muchos conocimientos astronómicos, con la frecuente observación que hacía de los astros. Aplicóse también al conocimiento de las plantas y de los animales. . . . Investigaba atentamente la causa de los fenómenos naturales y esta continua observación le hizo conocer la vanidad de la idolatría. Decía privadamente a sus hijos . . . que el no reconocía otra divinidad sino el Creador del Cielo. . . . Prohibió los sacrificios de víctimas humanas; pero viendo después cuán difícil es apartar a los pueblos de las antiguas ideas en materia de religión, volvió a permitirlos, prohibiendo, sin embargo, otro sacrificio que el de prisioneros de guerra.'"

[49] Cornyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-61.

their subjects. Both failed.

In his [illegible], Nezahualcoyotl was a veritable Aristotle. He [illegible] in the study of natural phenomena; making numerous astronomical observations, and acquiring considerable knowledge of plants and animals. His investigations into the causes of things may have been responsible for his monotheistic views. He [illegible] the human sacrifices of his times and tried unsuccessfully to abolish them in his kingdom.[48] But above all, Nezahualcoyotl was a great poet. His compositions were honored in Texcoco's famed Academy of Music, the arbiter of elegance and good taste in poetry, music and the dance in ancient Mexico.[49] In his [illegible] poems are seen not only his own highly advanced ideas but also all of the melancholy worldliness so characteristic of Aztec thought in general. In one, for example, he says:

---

[48] From Clavijero, quoted in [illegible], op. cit., pp. 5-6. "'. . . no solo se deleitaba tanto Netzahualcoyotl como en el estudio de la naturaleza, adquirió muchos conocimientos astronómicos, con la frecuente observación que hacía de los astros. Adquirió también el conocimiento de las plantas y de los animales. . . . Investigando atentamente la causa de los fenómenos naturales y esta continua observación le hizo conocer la vanidad de la idolatría. Decía privadamente a sus hijos . . . que él no reconocía otra divinidad sino el Creador del Cielo. . . . prohibió los sacrificios de víctimas humanas; pero viendo después cuán difícil era apartar a la nación de los antiguas ideas en materia de religión, volvió a permitirlos, prohibiendo, sin embargo, otro sacrificio que el de prisioneros de guerra.'"

[49] Garibay, op. cit., pp. [illegible].

1.

The sweet-voiced _quetzal_ there, ruling the earth, has intoxicated my soul.

2.

I am like the quetzal bird, I am created in the one and only God; I sing sweet songs among the flowers; I chant songs and rejoice in my heart.

3.

The fuming dewdrops from the flowers in the fields intoxicate my soul.

4.

I grieve to myself that ever this dwelling on earth should end.

5.

I foresaw, being a Mexican, that our rule began to be destroyed, I went forth weeping that it was to bow down and to be destroyed.

6.

Let me not be angry that the grandeur of Mexico is to be destroyed.

7.

The smoking stars gather against it; the one who cares for flowers is about to be destroyed.

8.

He who cared for books wept, he wept for the beginning of the destruction.[50]

"Communing with himself upon the fate of Empire," he said:

> Abundance of riches and varied pleasures, are they not like culled flowers, passed from hand to hand, and at the end cast forth stripped and withered?
>
> . . . .
>
> Today we possess the abundance and beauty of the blossoming summer, and harken to the melody of birds,

---

[50] From D. G. Brinton, _Ancient Nahautl Poetry_, p. 123. Quoted in Astrov, _op_. _cit_., pp. 314-15.

> where the butterflies sip sweet nectar from fragrant petals. But all is like culled flowers, that pass from hand to hand, and at the end are cast forth, stripped and withered![51]

"The vision of death strikes across all ages and all peoples. But was it ever drawn in more dramatic phrases than in another . . . poem of Nezahualcoyotl?"

> All the earth is a grave and naught escapes it; nothing is so perfect that it does not fall and disappear. The rivers, brooks, fountains, and waters flow on and never return to their joyous beginnings, they hasten on to the vast realms of Tlaloc and the wider they spread between their marges the more rapidly do they mould their own sepulchral urns. That which was yesterday is not to-day; and let not that which is to-day trust to live tomorrow.
>
> The caverns of earth are filled with pestilential dust which once was the bones, the flesh, the bodies of great ones who sat upon thrones, deciding causes, ruling assemblies, governing armies, conquering provinces, possessing treasures, tearing down temples, flattering themselves with pride, majesty, fortune, praise and dominion. These glories have passed like the dark smoke thrown out by the fires of Popocatepetl, leaving no monuments but the rude skins on which they are written.[52]

Yet in the face of all of this pessimism which was his cultural heritage, Nezahualcoyotl achieved a profound insight that recalls the famous words of Socrates spoken to comfort his friends in his death cell:

> <u>And thou, beloved companion, enjoy the beauty of these flowers, rejoice with me, cast out fears, for if pleasure ends with life so also does pain.</u> . . .[53]

---

[51] Alexander, op. cit., pp. 110-11.

[52] Spinden, op. cit., p. 375, and Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America, p. 240.

[53] Spinden, "What is Civilization?" p. 374.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the evidence presented in the foregoing chapters, the ancient inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico can hardly be judged as "primitive," either materially or philosophically. They had all of the material requisites of civilization but beasts of burden and the wheel.[1] Their philosophical concepts, if not yet highly abstract, were at least "on the way" to becoming so. Certainly their "Lord of the By" demonstrates this; for here is an example of the "making of a noun out of a preposition," of abstracting an "incorporeal," positional concept and hypostatizing it. How far beyond this level of abstraction they had passed may never be known. The ideas of a people often surpass the ability of its language to express them;[2] and this was especially true in the case of Aztec writing, which, though having arrived at a "phonetic" stage, was not yet flexible enough to record the highest flights of the Mexican imagination. Furthermore, the

---

[1] That the ancient Mexicans were acquainted with the principle of the wheel is indicated by the recent discovery in their domain of wheeled pottery figurines presumed to have been toys.

[2] F. S. C. Northrop, editor, Ideological Differences and World Order, p. 358. "As Whitehead has remarked, 'Human life is driven forward by its dim apprehension of notions too general for its existing language.'"

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the evidence presented in the foregoing chapters, the ancient inhabitants of the Valley of Mexico can hardly be judged as 'primitive,' either materially or philosophically. They had all of the material requisites of civilization but beasts of burden and the wheel.[1] Their philosophical concepts, if not yet highly abstract, were at least not [illegible] to be [illegible] so. Certainly their "Flower and Song" [illegible]; for here is an example of the 'making of a noun out of a proposition,' of abstracting an [illegible] concept and hypostatizing it. How far beyond this level of abstraction they had passed may never be known. The ideas of a people often surpass the ability of its language to express them;[2] and this was especially true in the case of Aztec writing, which, though having arrived at a 'phonetic' stage, was not yet flexible enough to record the highest flights of the Mexican imagination. Furthermore, the

---

[1] That the ancient Mexicans were acquainted with the principle of the wheel is indicated by the recent discovery in their domain of wheeled pottery figurines presumed to have been toys.

[2] F. S. C. Northrop, editor, Ideological Differences and World Order, p. [illegible]. [illegible] 'Human life is driven forward by its dim apprehension of notions too general for its existing language.'"

highest intellectual achievements of the Aztecs were, as in all other cultures, made and understood only by a small minority. And it was mainly this segment of the Mexican population that the Spanish missionary fathers "appropriated" for their use in proselytizing the others. Thus many of the philosophical ideas that might have been preserved in a word-of-mouth tradition were lost when those intellectual leaders were educated in the ways of European culture. This class of Aztec society had long been supplied with the leisure that is one of the principal requisites of full-time speculation. Perhaps, then, the "Academy" of Texcoco, which was devoted primarily to the cultivation of the fine arts, was more like its Athenian namesake than is now realized.

Yet while much of Aztec thought has been thus irretrievably lost, perhaps much that might still be recovered has been overlooked by investigators in the past. Scholarship is of necessity an abstractive process, its devotees focussing all of their attention on isolated aspects of a field of study. Thus the early Spanish chroniclers, steeped in Medieval theological concepts, ransacked New World ideas for analogies with their own Christian beliefs. Likewise in modern times, anthropologists have investigated largely the material aspects of indigenous Mexican culture. And philosophers, assuming that the Aztecs could have no

philosophy worthy of the name, have almost completely ignored them.

However, a recent crescendo of interest in the nature of language has led to an investigation of its possible origins and, hence, of primitive thought in general. Two products of this trend are Ernst Cassirer's _Die Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen_ (_The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms_) and his _Sprache und Mythos_ (_Language and Myth_). Another is Susanne Langer's _Philosophy in a New Key_. Among the more strictly anthropological works devoted to primitive thought are Paul Radin's _Primitive Man as Philosopher_ and Clyde Kluckhohn's article in Northrop's _Ideological Differences and World Order_. Northrop himself, in the same work and in his _Meeting of East and West_, stresses the importance of understanding the world-views of other cultures. But as for ancient Mexican thought in particular, few scholars have treated it _as_ philosophy. In the United States, one of these few has been Hartley Burr Alexander. In Mexico itself, where one might expect interest in this subject to be more widespread, the story is the same. What are apparently the only two works dealing exclusively with Aztec philosophy, one by Samuel Ramos and the other by Salvador Domínguez Assiayn, are merely brief articles.

In particular, the purpose of the present study has been to help extend this trend further into the field of philosophy worthy of the name, have almost completely ignored them.

However, a recent renaissance of interest in the nature of language has led to an investigation of its possible origins and, hence, of primitive thought in general. Two products of this trend are Ernst Cassirer's *Die Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen* (*The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*) and his *Sprache und Mythos* (*Language and Myth*). Another is Susanne Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key*. Among the more strictly anthropological works devoted to primitive thought are Paul Radin's *Primitive Man as Philosopher* and Clyde Kluckhohn's article in Northrop's *Ideological Differences and World Order*. Northrop himself, in the same work and in his *Meeting of East and West*, stresses the importance of understanding the world-views of other cultures. But as for ancient Mexican thought in particular, few scholars have treated it *as* philosophy. In the United States, one of those few has been Hartley Burr Alexander. In Mexico itself, where one might expect interest in this subject to be more widespread, the story is the same. What are apparently the only two works dealing exclusively with Aztec philosophy, one by Samuel Ramos and the other by Salvador Dominguez Assiayn, are merely brief articles.

In particular, the purpose of the present study has been to help extend this trend further into the field of

Mexican antiquities. In general, it has been to help make philosophers more anthropological in their interests and anthropologists more philosophical in theirs. Finally, it is hoped that it will inspire in those who read it some of the enlightened humility expressed in the following prayer spoken by an Aztec chieftain upon his election:

> Grant me, Lord, a little light,
> Be it no more than a glowworm giveth,
> Which goeth about by night,
> To guide me through this life,
> This dream which lasteth but a day,
> Wherein are many things on which to stumble,
> And many things at which to laugh,
> And others like unto a stony path,
> Along which one goeth leaping.[3]

---

[3] Lesley Byrd Simpson, Many Mexicos, p. v. (Original in italics.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS

Aldrich, Charles Roberts, *The Primitive Mind and Modern Civilization*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931. 249 pp.

Alexander, Hartley Burr, *L'Art et la philosophie des Indiens de l'Amérique du Nord*. Paris: Editions Ernest Leroux, 1926. 118 pp.

————————, *Latin-American* (vol XI of *The Mythology of All Races* [13 vols.] edited by Louis Herbert Gray), Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1920. 424 pp.

Alexander, Hubert Griggs, *Introduction to Logical Thought and Expression*. [n.p.] 3rd ed., 1949. 61 pp.

————————, *Time as Dimension and History*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1945. 134 pp.

Alvarado Tezózomoc, Hernando, *Crónica Mexicana*. México: Editorial Leyenda, S.A., 1944. 545 pp.

Astrov, Margot, ed., *The Winged Serpent: An Anthology of American Indian Prose and Poetry*. New York: The John Day Company, c. 1946. 366 pp.

Bancroft, Hubert Howe, *The Native Races of the Pacific States of North America*, 5 vols. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874-1876.

Benedict, Ruth, *Patterns of Culture*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1934. 291 pp.

Boas, Franz, and others, *General Anthropology*. Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, c. 1938. 718 pp.

————————, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, (revised ed.) New York: The Macmillan Company, c. 1938. 285 pp.

Brasseur de Bourbourg, M. L'Abbé, *Histoire des Nations Civilisées du Mexique et de L'Amérique-Centrale Durent Les Siècles Antérieurs a Christophe Colomb*. 4 vols. Paris: Arthus Bertrand, Editeur, Libraire de la Société de Géographie, 1857-9.

Brasseur de Bourbourg, Charles Etienne, *Quatre lettres sur le Mexique*. Paris: F. Brachet, 1868. 463 pp.

Brenner, Anita, *Idols Behind Altars*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, c. 1929.

Brinton, Daniel G., *American Hero Myths*. Philadelphia: H. C. Watts & Co., 1882. 251 pp.

__________, tr., *The Annals of the Cakchiquels*. Philadelphia: Brinton's Library of Aboriginal American Literature (Number VI), 1885. 234 pp.

__________, *Essays of an Americanist*. Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1890. 489 pp.

__________, *The Myths of the New World*. 3rd ed., Philadelphia: David McKay, 1905. 360 pp.

__________, *Religions of Primitive Peoples*. New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, c. 1897. 264 pp.

__________, *Rig Veda Americanus, Sacred Songs of the Ancient Mexicans, With a Gloss in Nahuatl*. Philadelphia: D. G. Brinton, 1890. 95 pp.

Campos, Rubén M., *La producción literaria de los aztecas; compilación de cantos y discursos de los antiguos mexicanos, tomados de viva noz por los conquistadores y dispersos en varios textos de la historia antiguá de México*. México: Talleres Gráficos del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía, 1936. 464 pp.

Carlson, Fred A., *Geography of Latin America* (revised ed.) New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1943. 566 pp.

Casas, Fray Bartolomé de las, *Historia de las Indias*. México: Imprenta y Litografía de Ireneo Paz, 1877. 2 vols.

Caso, Alfonso, *Thirteen Masterpieces of Mexican Archaeology*. (tr. by Edith Mackie and Jorge R. Acosta.) Mexico: Editoriales Cultura y Polis, 1938. 131 pp.

Cassirer, Ernst, *Language and Myth* (tr. Suzanne K. Langer.) New York: Harper & Brothers, c. 1946. 103 pp.

Castillo Ledón, Luis, *Antigua literatura indígena mexicana*. Mexico: Imprenta Victoria, 1917. 61 pp.

Chase, Richard Volney, *Quest for Myth*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, c. 1949. 150 pp.

Chase, Stuart, *Mexico: A Study of Two Americas*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931. 338 pp.

Colum, Padraic, *Orpheus: Myths of the World*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930. 327 pp.

Cornyn, John Hubert (tr.) *The Song of Quetzalcoatl* (2nd. ed.). Yellow Springs, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1931. 207 pp.

Denison, Thomas Stewart, *Morphology of the Mexican Verb Compared with the Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin Verb, also Morphology of Mexican Abstract Nouns*. Chicago: T. S. Denison, c. 1910. 31 pp.

Frazer, Sir James George, *The Golden Bough; a Study in Magic and Religion* (3rd. ed.), New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935. 12 vols.

_______________, *Aftermath; a Supplement to the Golden Bough*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937. 494 pp.

Gamio, Manuel (director), *La Población del Valle de Teotihuacán*. México: Dirección de Talleres Gráficos, Dependiente de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1922. 3 vols.

Gillmor, Frances, *Flute of the Smoking Mirror; A Portrait of Nezahualcoyotl Poet-King of the Aztecs*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1949. 183 pp.

Goldenweiser, Alexander A;, *Early Civilization: An Introduction to Anthropology*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922. 428 pp.

Henríquez Ureña, Pedro, *Historia de la cultura en la América hispánica*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica (Colección Tierra Firme 28) Segundo edición, 1949. 237 pp.

Hewett, Edgar L., *Ancient Life in Mexico and Central America*. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, c. 1936.

Hoebel, E. Adamson, *Man in the Primitive World*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, inc., 1949.

Hoijer, Harry, et. al. Linguistic Structures of Native America. New York: Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology (Number Six), 1946. 423 pp.

James, William, Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking. (New Impression). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913. 309 pp.

___________, Some Problems of Philosophy: A Beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911. 237 pp.

Joyce, Thomas Athol, Maya and Mexican Art. London! "The Studio" Ltd., 1927. 191 pp.

Jung, C. G. and C. Kerényi(tr. R. F. C. Hull), Essays on a Science of Mythology. New York: Pantheon Books, c. 1949. 289 pp.

Kroeber, A. L., Anthropology. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, c. 1923. 523 pp.

___________, and Waterman, T. T., Source Book in Anthropology. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, c. 1931. 571 pp.

Langer, Susanne K., Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art. New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1948. (c. 1942), 248 pp.

Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien (tr. Lilian A. Clare), Primitive Mentality. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923. 458 pp.

___________, The "Soul" of the Primitive. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928. 351 pp.

Lowie, Robert H., Primitive Religion. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1925. 346 pp.

Lumholtz, Carl, Unknown Mexico. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902. 2 vols.

Malinowski, Bronislaw, Magic, Science and Religion, and Other Essays. Glencoe, Illionis: The Free Press, 1948. 327 pp.

___________, Myth in Primitive Psychology. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.. 94 pp.

Mason, Otis T., The Origins of Invention. London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1895. 419 pp.

Hoijer, Harry, _et. al._ _Linguistic Structures of Native America._ New York: Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology (Number Six), 1946. 423 pp.

James, William, _Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking_ (New Impression). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913. 309 pp.

__________, _Some Problems of Philosophy: A Beginning of an Introduction to Philosophy._ New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911. 237 pp.

Joyce, Thomas Athol, _Maya and Mexican Art._ London: "The Studio" Ltd., 1927. 191 pp.

Jung, C. G. and C. Kerényi (tr. R. F. C. Hull), _Essays on a Science of Mythology._ New York: Pantheon Books, c. 1949. 289 pp.

Kroeber, A. L., _Anthropology._ New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, c. 1923. 523 pp.

__________ and Waterman, T. T., _Source Book in Anthropology._ New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, c. 1931. 571 pp.

Langer, Susanne K., _Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art._ New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1948. (c. 1942). 248 pp.

Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien (tr. Lilian A. Clare), _Primitive Mentality._ New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923. 458 pp.

__________, _The "Soul" of the Primitive._ New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928. 351 pp.

Lowie, Robert H., _Primitive Religion._ London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1925. 346 pp.

Lumholtz, Carl, _Unknown Mexico._ New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902. 2 vols.

Malinowski, Bronislaw, _Magic, Science and Religion, and Other Essays._ Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1948. 327 pp.

__________, _Myth in Primitive Psychology._ New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1926. 94 pp.

Mason, Otis T., _The Origins of Invention._ London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1895. 419 pp.

Morley, Sylvanus Griswold, *The Ancient Maya*. Stanford University: Stanford University Press, c. 1946. 520 pp.

Motolinia, Fr. Toribio de Benavente O, *Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España*. México: Editorial Salvador Chavez Hayhoe, 1941. 320 pp.

Murdock, George Peter, *Our Primitive Contemporaries*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934. 614 pp.

Northrop, Filmer Stuart Cuckow, editor, *Ideological Differences and World Order, Studies in the Philosophy and Science of the World's Cultures*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949. 486 pp.

______________, *The Meeting of East and West, an Inquiry Concerning World Understanding*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946. 531 pp.

Prescott, W. H., *The Conquest of Mexico*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922. 2 vols.

Radin, Paul, *Primitive Man as Philosopher*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1927. 402 pp.

Ramos, Samuel, *Historia de la filosofía en México*. México: Imprenta Universitaria, 1943. 187 pp.

Recinos, Adrián, Delia Goetz, and S. G. Morley, *Popol Vuh; The Sacred Book of the Ancient Quiché Maya*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950. 267 pp.

Ross, W. D. (tr.), *The Works of Aristotle*, vol VIII, *Metaphysica*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928.

Sahagun, Fr. Bernardino de, *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España*. México: Editorial Pedro Robredo, 1938. 5 vols.

Seler, Eduard, ed., *The Tonalamatl of the Aubin Collection*, Published at the Expense of his Excellency the Duke of Loubat. Berlin and London: 1900-1901. (English Edition by A. H. Keane.)

Simpson, Lesley Byrd, *Many Mexicos*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1941. 336 pp.

Spence, Lewis, *The Myths of Mexico and Peru*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, [n.d.]. 367 pp.

Morley, Sylvanus Griswold, *The Ancient Maya.* Stanford University: Stanford University Press, c. 1946. 520 pp.

Motolinia, Fr. Toribio de Benavente O., *Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España.* Mexico: Editorial Salvador Chavez Hayhoe, 1941. 320 pp.

Murdock, George Peter, *Our Primitive Contemporaries.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936. 614 pp.

Northrop, Filmer Stuart Cuckow, editor, *Ideological Differences and World Order, Studies in the Philosophy and Science of the World's Cultures.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949. 486 pp.

____________. *The Meeting of East and West, an Inquiry Concerning World Understanding.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946. 531 pp.

Prescott, W. H., *The Conquest of Mexico.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922. 2 vols.

Radin, Paul, *Primitive Man as Philosopher.* New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1927. 402 pp.

Ramos, Samuel, *Historia de la Filosofía en México.* Mexico: Imprenta Universitaria, 1943. 167 pp.

Recinos, Adrián, Delia Goetz, and S. G. Morley, *Popol Vuh: The Sacred Book of the Ancient Quiché Maya.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950. 267 pp.

Ross, W. D. (tr.), *The Works of Aristotle*, vol VIII, *Metaphysics.* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928.

Sahagun, Fr. Bernardino de, *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España.* Mexico: Editorial Pedro Robredo, 1938. 5 vols.

Seler, Eduard, ed., *The Tonalamatl of the Aubin Collection.* Published at the Expense of His Excellency the Duke of Loubat. Berlin and London: 1900-1901. (English Edition by A. H. Keane.)

Simpson, Lesley Byrd, *Many Mexicos.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1941. 336 pp.

Spence, Lewis, *The Myths of Mexico and Peru.* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, (n.d.). 367 pp.

Spier, Leslie, A. Irving Hallowell and Stanley S. Newman, editors, *Language, Culture, and Personality; Essays in Memory of Edward Sapir*. Menasha, Wisconsin: Sapir Memorial Publication Fund, 1941. 298 pp.

Sullivan, J. W. N., *The Limitations of Science*. New York: The New American Library (Mentor Books), c. 1933. 192 pp.

Thompson, John Eric, *Mexico Before Cortez; an Account of the Daily Life, Religion, and Ritual of the Aztecs and Kindred Peoples*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933. 298 pp.

Torquemada, Fr. Juan de, *Monarcuía indiana*. México: Editorial Salvador Chavez Hayhoe, 1943. 3 vols.

Tsanoff, Radoslav A., *Ethics*. New York: Harper and Brothers, c. 1947. 385 pp.

______________, *The Ways of Genius*. New York: Harper and Brothers, c. 1949. 310 pp.

Tylor, Edward B., *Primitive Culture*. Boston: Estes & Lauriat, 1874. 2 vols.

Vaillant, George Clapp, *Aztecs of Mexico; Origin, Rise and Fall of the Aztec Nation*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1941. 340 pp.

Vasconcelos, José, *Historia del Pensamiento Filosófico*. Ediciones de la Universidad Nacional de México, 1937. 578 pp.

Verrill, A. Hyatt, *Old Civilizations of the New World*. New York: Tudor Publishing Co., 1938. 393 pp.

Whitehead, Alfred North, *Science and the Modern World: Lowell Lectures, 1925*. New York: The New American Library, 1948 (First Pelican Mentor Books Edition). 212 pp.

Wissler, Clark. *The American Indian* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, 1922. 474 pp.

____________, *Man and Culture*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1923. 371 pp.

B. PERIODICAL ARTICLES

Alexander, Hartley, "The American Indian: Poet and Pragmatist," *Nation*, 126:641-3, June 6, 1928.

Buckman, John Wright, "Everyman a Philosopher," *The Hibbert Journal*, 33:549-56, July, 1935.

Bush, W. T., "Concerning the Concept of Pattern," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 37:113-34, February 29, 1940.

Cornyn, John Hubert, "Lost Literature of the Aztecs," *Bulletin of the Pan American Union*, 62:382-7, April, 1928.

Domínguez Assiayn, Salvador, "Filosofía de los Antiguos Mexicanos," *Contemporáneos*, Núms. 42-43, 1931.

Faure, Elie, "Réflexions sur l'art méxicain," *L'Illustration*, 183:613-15, December 31, 1932.

Herskovits, Melville J., "Dramatic Expression Among Primitive Peoples," *The Yale Review*, NS 33 No. 4:683-98, June, 1944.

Hocart, A. M., "What is Primitive?" *The Hibbert Journal*, 18:378-83, January, 1920.

Lowie, Robert H., "The Inventiveness of the American Indian," *The American Mercury*, 24:90-3, September, 1931.

__________, "Primitive Skeptics," *The American Mercury*, 29:320-3, May, 1933.

Marsh, May, "Mexico by Sight and Insight," *The American Scholar*, 5:71-7, January, 1936.

Morris, Ruth Moore, "Food for the Gods," *The Mentor-World Traveler*, 22:24-7, 68-70, September, 1930.

Oliver, W. Donald, "Knowledge, Myth, and Action," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 44:5-11, January 2, 1947.

Pach, Walter, "The Greatest American Artists," *Harper's Magazine*, 148:252-62, January, 1924.

Parsons, Talcott, "The Theoretical Development of the Sociology of Religion; a Chapter in the History of Modern Social Science," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 5:176-90, April, 1944.

B. PERIODICAL ARTICLES

Alexander, Hartley, "The American Indian: Poet and Pragmatist," Nation, 126:641-3, June 6, 1928.

Buchman, John Wright, "Everyman a Philosopher," The Hibbert Journal, 33:5[illegible]-58, July, 1935.

Bush, W. T., "Nonsense: The Concept of Pattern," The Journal of Philosophy, 37:113-34, February 29, 1940.

Gorayn, John Huberts, "Some Literature of the Aztecs," Bulletin of the Pan American Union, 62:362-7, April, 1928.

Domínguez Assiayn, Salvador, "Filosofía de los Antiguos Mexicanos," Contemporáneos, Nos. 42-43, 1931.

Fauré, Élie, "Réflexions sur l'art primitif," L'Illustration, 183:613-15, November 21, 1931.

Herskovits, Melville J., "Aesthetic Drives Among Primitive Peoples," The [illegible], 2:68-93, June, 1934.

Hocart, A. M., "What Is Primitive?" The Hibbert Journal, 18:378-83, January, 1920.

Lowie, Robert H., "The Intuitiveness of the American Indian," The American Mercury, 2:90-3, September, 1924.

______, "Primitive Skeptics," The American Mercury, 29:320-5, May, 1933.

Meron, Ray, "Mexico by Sight and Insight," The American Scholar, 5:71-7, January, 1936.

Morris, Ruth Moore, "Food for the Gods," The Mentor-World Traveler, 22:25-7, 69-70, September, 1930.

Oliver, W. Donald, "Knowledge, Myth, and Action," The Journal of Philosophy, 44:5-10, January 2, 1947.

Pach, Walter, "The Greatest American Artists," Harper's Magazine, 148:258-62, January, 1924.

Parsons, Talcott, "The Theoretical Development of the Sociology of Religion: A Chapter in the History of Modern Social Science," Journal of the History of Ideas, 5:176-90, April, 1944.

Rembao, Alberto, "Prehispanic Religion in Modern Mexico," *The International Review of Missions*, 31:163-71, April, 1942.

Spence, Lewis, "Human Sacrifice in Old Mexico," *The Hibbert Journal*, 22:97-102, October, 1923.

__________, "The Origins of Mexican Mythology," *The Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal*, 232:342-60, October, 1920.

__________, "Religion and War in Antiquity," *The Hibbert Journal*, 38:497-504, July, 1940.

__________, "Sorcery and Witchcraft in Old Mexico," *The Hibbert Journal*, 34:580-91, July, 1936.

Spinden, Herbert Joseph, "What is Civilization?" *The Forum*, 74:162-71, 371-9, August, September, 1925.

"Toys on Wheels Made in Mexico Long Before Carts," *Science News Letter*, 53:7, January 3, 1948.

Vaughan, James N., "Hypothesis and Myth," *The Commonweal*, 29:314-17, January 13, 1939.

C. PARTS OF SERIES

Castillo, Cristóbal del, *Fragmentos de la obra general sobre historia de los mexicanos escrita en lengua náhuatl por Cristóbal del Castillo á fines del siglo XVI*. (Tr. Francisco del Paso y Troncoso) Florencia: Tipografía de Salvador Landi, 1908. 64 pp. (Vol V, Biblioteca Náhuatl)

Dibble, Charles E., *Codex Hall. An Ancient Mexican Hieroglyphic Picture Manuscript*. Santa Fe, New Mexico: Monographs of the School of American Research, Number 11, November 1, 1947. (University of New Mexico Press.)

Radin, Paul, "The Sources and Authenticity of the History of the Ancient Mexicans," *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology*, vol. 17, No. 1, pp. 1-150, June 29, 1920.

Spinden, Herbert J., *Ancient Civilizations of Mexico and Central America*. New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1948. 271 pp. (Handbook Series No. 3, Third and revised edition.)

Whorf, Benjamin Lee, "The Milpa Alta Dialect of Aztec with Notes on the Classical and the Tepoztlán Dialects," *Linguistic Structures of Native America*, New York: Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, Number Six, 1946. Pp. 367-97.

D. PUBLICATIONS OF LEARNED ORGANIZATIONS

Nuttall, Zelia, "The Aztecs and their Predecessors in the Valley of Mexico," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 65:245-55, 1926.

____________, "The Fundamental Principles of Old and New World Civilizations," *Archaeological and Ethnological Papers of the Peabody Museum*, vol. 2, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, March, 1901.

Sapir, Edward, "The History and Varieties of Human Speech," *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1912*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913. Pp. 573-95.

Tozzer, Alfred M., "The Value of Ancient Mexican Manuscripts in the Study of the General Development of Writing, *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1911*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912. Pp. 493-506.

Vaillant, George C., "The Aztecs, Their Cultural and Historical Position in Middle American Archaeology," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 86:320-2, 1943.

____________, "History and Stratigraphy in the Valley of Mexico," *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institution for 1938*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1939. Pp. 521-30.

E. ENCYCLOPAEDIA ARTICLES

Alexander, Hartley Burr, "Philosophy," (Primitive), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1922, IX, 844a-46b.

Gardiner, Alan H., "Philosophy" (Egyptian), Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, 1922, IX, 857b-59b.

F. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

Alexander, Hartley Burr, "The Great Mysteries of the North American Indians." Unpublished manuscript.