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The nature of man

as presented in

Psychology, Philosophy and Tradition

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Psychology

Psychology is the science which studies the human soul and the human behavior as well as the factors and causes that influence them. Psychology, which has been an independent science since the middle of the 19th century, is associated with philosophy as all sciences are.

Adler (Alfred Adler, Vienna 1870-1937 AD), who founds the school of individual psychology, believes that humans can become conscious of their behavior, which is determined by hereditary factors as well as by their environment-social, historical and natural.

Carl Jung (Carl Gustav Jung, Kesswil Switzerland 1875-1961 AD) was influenced from Freud's work on *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which he considered to be the most complete attempt that has ever been made to comprehend the riddle of the unconscious. By the term "unconscious" he meant the unknown land in the inner world of humans, in other words the region which is not lightened by the

conscious mind. He named that part the ‘personal unconscious’, but he also proposed that certain properties, which humans do not experience individually but they inherit, come from the “collective unconscious”. The “collective unconscious” is formed from instincts and archetypes. It is the active imagination of humans that creates communication bridges between the conscious and the archetypes of the unconscious. Moreover, Jung strongly believed that the religious feeling should be cultivated as it constitutes the foundation of the individual world. Also, he stressed the point that the collapse of the religious beliefs is often followed by the collapse of the personality.

Erich Fromm (Erich Fromm, Frankfurt Am Main 1900AD-1980 AD) refers to the views of Homer, Socrates and Plato on dreams in his work. Dreams express either the rational forces of the cultivated man or the irrational forces that are found within the brutal and wild part of the man’s personality¹.

Philosophy

Plato (428-348 BC) believes that humans are composed of the mind, the soul and the body and that the human soul is composed of three parts, the rational, the spirited and the appetitive. According to Plato, the spirited part of the soul, which is characterized by bravery and passion, was set nearer the head, between the midriff and the neck, so that it might listen to reason and bridle desire (*Timaeus* 70 a-c). On the other hand, the appetitive part of the soul, which desires food, drinks and whatever is imposed on it by the nature of the body, was set between the midriff and the navel farther from the core of decisions so

¹. Fromm, Er., *Η Εξεχασμένη Γλώσσα*, Μπουκουμανι, Athens, 1975, pp.120-124.

Homer, *Οδύσσεια*, Diachronikes Ekdoseis, Athens 1998, p.240.

that it may cause the minimal noise and the minimal distraction to the rational part of the soul (*Timaeus* d-e).

Plotinus (204-270 AD) believed that the human soul may transcend its lower nature, by hard and constant effort, by the pursuit of virtue, by catharsis and by the realization of the conceived world and ecstasy, and unite through mind (*'nous'*) with the One.

Iamblichus (3rd/4th century AD) believed that while descending to the natural world, the human soul acquires various defects but it is able to return to the realm of the mind, from which it initially came.

Proclus (410-485 AD) considered the priestly art of *theurgy* (literally 'divine-working' meaning performing certain rites) to be capable of connecting the human soul with the One and ensure its salvation. For Proclus it is through the power of prayer and the recital of sacred hymns of praise that the religious feeling is reinforced and the man is spiritually elevated.

Ramon Lull² (1232-1314 AD) and **Dante** (1265-1321 AD) claimed that the human soul should be purged from the seven deadly sins - pride, envy, wrath, sloth, greed, gluttony and lust- so as to harmonize its divine nature with its human one.

Giordano Bruno (1584-1600 AD) in his work *The Ash Wednesday Supper* fosters the cultivation of the philosophy which harmonizes the heart with the mind and strength with wisdom.

Eastern Philosophy The philosophical schools of Samkya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa and Uttara Mimamsa appeared during 300 BC – 650 AD. The school of Samkhya establishes the notions of Porusha, the spirit of the universe, and Prakriti, the spiritual matter of the universe. Prakriti is composed of three essential characteristics, Sattva, Rajas

²Llull, R., *To vivlio tis Iposinis*, Govostis, Athens, pp. 121-122.

and Tamas. It is from the influence of Porusha over Prakriti that the universe and mankind are created³.

Tradition

Ancient Egyptians reported seven distinct bodies of the human: Khat, the physical body whose preservation is obligatory; Ank or Khaibit which expresses the vital energy that gives motion and life to the physical body; Kha meaning the revitalizing and reproductive energy that gives shape to the physical body; Ab or Ib which is the centre of the human memory and imagination; Ba which is the human conscience, closely connected with Ab and depicted as a human-headed hawk; Akh or Hou which is the spiritual soul of the human-the spiritual light- and is symbolized with the phoenix of Heliopolis; Sahou which is the spiritual body, meaning the god within the human. Moreover, the Egyptians named the spiritual power of the man Sekhem and the man's secret name, his identity, Ren⁴.

The Aztecs believed that Teotihuacan, their legendary homeland, was the birthplace of the Fifth Sun. The legend tells that the city existed from the time of the fourth sun. However, it was at one time destroyed and its people vanished with it. Then the gods fell into deep despair, because there were no people to honor and worship them. A new human race had to be created, but a sun was needed to fill the centre of the sky during the day and a moon to dissolve the darkness of night. But no god wanted this responsibility⁵...

³ Fikas Yannis, *Philosophia, World, City, Man*, Nikas, Athens, 2013.

⁴ Schwarz, Fernand, *Symbolique de l' Egypte*, Huitieme jour, Paris, 2006, pp. 88-89, 156-157.

⁵ Soustelle, Jacques, *The Aztecs*, Kardamitsas, Athens, 1997, pp. 108-109

One of the celebrated emblems of the Aztecs, the Sun Stone, was discovered towards the end of the 18th century. It has a diameter of 3.6 meters and it weighs 25 tons. The stone is engraved with various hieroglyphics in an order of eight homocentric circles. The outer circle symbolizes the starry galaxy, the supreme limit of expansion of the human conscience. The sun-god who is in the centre of the stone symbolizes the creation of the Fifth Sun. In the second circle there are four rectangular shapes that symbolize the different ages through which mankind saw consecutive but incomplete creations⁶.

In the work of Hesiod (8th/7th century BC) *Works and Days*, the human evolution is symbolically described through the myth of the Five Ages. According to this myth, the successive 'races' of mankind are: the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Bronze Age, the Heroic Age and the Iron Age. The first race of humans was molded by gods and they lived like gods. They were happy without any pain or sorrow. In the end, they became good daemons, saviors of the mortals upon earth, guardians and wealth donors. The second race - the Silver Age - was molded by gods in a different way. Their infancy lasted a hundred years and the adolescence only a few years. The humans of that race were characterized by boldness, disrespect and hubris. According to the myth, they became daemons of the underworld. The humans of the third race - the Bronze Age - were destroyed by their own violent ways in wars. The fourth race - the Heroic Age - who was molded by Zeus, was a race of glorious warriors who died in fair and glorified wars. The fifth race - the Iron Age - is the present one who strives to acquire material things on earth and is led to extermination; they will lose every moral value and will abolish the concept of justice⁷.

Tibetan texts, *the Tzian Stanzas*, which became known in the West by Blavatsky, refer to the evolution of the world and of man. According to these texts, the world, the entire universe, is the

⁶ Townsend, Richard F., *The Aztecs*, Stachy, Athens, 1999, pp. 142.

⁷ Hesiod, *Erga kai Imeres*, Zitros, Athens, 2001, pp. 97-107.

expression of a great vital energy that penetrates the multiple forms of the world minerals, plants, animals, humans and the gods. This course in time is called evolution and it follows upward spiral movement. The world and its history, according to these texts, are a long-lived organism, a great living being⁸.

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⁸ Fikas Yannis, *Texni kai Politismos tou arxaïou kosmou*, Karakotsoglou, Athens, 2005, pp.146-147.