

The Status of Reason and the Critique of Anti-Rationalism in Carlos Castaneda's Mysticism

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Received: 17/05/2025

Accepted: 26/09/2025

Introduction

Contemporary nature-centered mysticisms, such as the Native American mysticism of Carlos Castaneda, are formed with a focus on connection with the force of nature and without reliance on divine teachings. A prominent feature of this mysticism is its hostile stance toward rationality. While in Islamic mysticism, teachings are supra-rational and reason is not suspended in the advanced stages of the path, Castaneda's teachings appear to be based on fundamental anti-rationalism. This position has dangerous epistemological consequences. The aim of this article is to analyze the place and role of reason in Castaneda's intellectual system and critique it based on Islamic foundations. This research has been conducted using a **critical-analytical method** through the study of Castaneda's primary works (such as *The Teachings of Don Juan*, *The Power of Silence*) and within the framework of Islamic thought.

Components of Castaneda's Native American Mysticism

This mysticism has a unique conceptual system. The "**nagual**" is a guide and master with extraordinary energy who serves as a conduit between the seeker and "**Intent**." "**Intent**" is the boundless force of existence and the source of peace and knowledge; by connecting with it, one attains perception ("seeing"). "**Spirit**" is an indescribable force that sustains the world and may use trickery to guide the seeker. The ultimate goal is to achieve "**sorcery**," which is the ability to see the "essence of the world" (filaments of energy) and connect with its ultimate source, the "**Eagle**." The Eagle is the inconceivable source of all energy, determines the fate of beings, and cannot be pleaded with for mercy.

The Nature, Purpose, and Place of Reason in Castaneda's Mysticism

In this mysticism, **reason** is equated with "thinking" – a descriptive system based on past cultural agreements that only reveals appearances and is the main obstacle to perceiving the "essence" of the world. In contrast, "**seeing**" as immediate, unmediated perception is the goal of the path. Therefore, the place of reason is

completely negative and marginal, and as an obstacle to the path, it must be suspended. The practical strategies for this anti-rationalism are:

- **Use of Hallucinogenic Plants:** Plants like peyote and mushrooms are considered "teachers" and personal "allies," serving as means to acquire knowledge and suspend ordinary reason.
- **Controlled Folly:** Achieving a state where nothing in the world matters, thereby eliminating the need for reasoning and judgment.
- **Acting from the Heart:** Emphasis on action without thought, guided solely by the heart, so that thought before or after action has no place.
- **Trickery:** Legitimizing the use of deception by the nagual (master) and the spirit to guide the seeker, indicating the invalidity of intellectual honesty.

Examination and Analysis of Castaneda's Native American Mysticism (Critiques)

The main critiques of this mysticism stem from the consequences of its fundamental rejection of reason:

1. **Lack of a Criterion for Validation:** By suspending reason, any mystical claim (which primarily stems from drug-induced illusions) is placed beyond critique and evaluation. This mysticism offers no criterion to distinguish real discovery from imagination.
2. **Confrontation with Reason and Intellect:** Instead of demonstrating the complementary nature of sources of knowledge (such as reason and intuition), this mysticism places them in inherent opposition and introduces reason as the enemy of true knowledge.
3. **Suspending Reason and Promoting Illusion:** Relying on drugs to acquire "knowledge" not only fails to create true knowledge but, by damaging the perceptual apparatus, traps the individual in illusions and ultimately leads to absolute skepticism.
4. **Artificial Conflict between Reason and Heart:** Creating a false dichotomy between reason and heart, whereas in the Islamic perspective, the two complement each other. Reason can prepare the groundwork for the path and regulate the results of intuition.

Conclusion

The examination of Castaneda's teachings shows that his Native American mysticism is **inherently anti-rational**. In this system, reason is targeted as the enemy of the path using dangerous tools like drugs and the promotion of ethical irresponsibility. This approach has three fundamental flaws: First, by rejecting reason, it removes any possibility of evaluating mystical experiences. Second, by creating a false dichotomy, it deprives humans of harmoniously utilizing their cognitive faculties. Third, by relying on illusion, it distances the individual from reality and leads them into skepticism. Therefore, this mysticism not only fails to open a path to truth but, by denying the criteria of cognition, provides a platform for misguidance.

Keywords: Reason, Native American Mysticism, Anti-Rationalism, Carlos Castaneda, Mystical Critique.