

# Aztec Thought and Culture

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- **Where is your Heart?**

What does your mind seek?

Where is your heart?

If you give your heart to each and every thing,  
you lead it nowhere: you destroy your heart.

Can anything be found on earth?

(p. 4-5)

- **Truly do we Live on Earth?**

Truly do we live on earth?

Not forever on earth; only a little while here.

Although it be jade, it will be broken,

Although it be gold, it is crushed,

Although it be quetzal feather, it is torn asunder.

Not forever on earth; only a little while here.

(p. 7)

October 9, 2010

- **Aztecs: The People of the Sun**

The Aztecs were transformed by their beliefs in 5 eras or Suns into “a people with a mission. A chosen people who believed their mission was to side with the sun in the cosmic struggle, to side with goodness to ascertain its triumph over evil, and to give to all of humanity the benefits of the victory of the forces of light over the powers of night.”

(p. 36)

October 12, 2010

- **In Defense of a Way of Life**

by Conquered Peoples, 1524

Our Lords, our very esteemed Lords:  
great hardships have you endured to reach this land.

Here before you,  
we ignorant people contemplate you....

And now, what are we to say?  
What should we cause your ears to hear?  
Perchance, is there any meaning to us?  
Only very common people are we....

Through an interpreter we reply,  
we exhale the breath and the words  
of the Lord of the Close Vicinity.  
Because of Him we dare to do this.  
For this reason we place ourselves in danger...

Perhaps we are to be taken to our ruin, to our destruction.  
But where are we to go now?  
We are ordinary people,  
we are subject to death and destruction, we are mortals;  
allow us then to die,  
let us perish now,  
since our gods are already dead.

...

Calm and amiable,  
consider, oh Lords,  
whatever is best.  
We cannot be tranquil,  
and yet we certainly do not believe;  
we do not accept your teachings as truth,  
even though this may offend you.

Here are the Lords, those who rule,  
those who sustain, whose duty is to the entire world.  
It is not enough that we have already lost,  
that our way of life has been taken away,  
has been annihilated.

Were we to remain in this place,  
we could be made prisoners.  
Do with us as you please.

This is all that we answer, that we reply,  
to your breath, to your words,  
Oh, our Lords!

(p. 63-67)

- **Poetry is “the Only Truth on Earth”**

Our priests, I ask of you:  
From whence come the flowers that enrapture man?  
The songs that intoxicate, the lovely songs?

Only from His home do they come, from the innermost part of heaven,  
only from there comes the myriad of flowers....  
Where the nectar of the flowers is found  
the fragrant beauty of the flower is refined....

They interlace, they interweave;  
among them songs, among them warbles the quetzal bird.

(p. 77)

- **Inspiration is a Gift from Heaven**

The flowers sprout, they are fresh, they grow;  
they open their blossoms,  
and from within emerge the flowers of song;  
among men You scatter them, You send them.  
You are the singer!

(p. 77)

- **Is There any Truth to Man or is He Merely an Illusion?**

The divine spark in man's heart transforms him into an artist, a poet, or a sage.  
With this gift man is capable of making things divine.

(p. 105)

October 16, 2010

- **Life after Death**

*To my skeptical friends*

Meditate, remember the region of mystery;  
beyond is His house; truly we all go  
to where the fleshless are, all of us men;  
our hearts shall go to know His face.

(p. 129)

Beyond is the place where one lives.  
I would be lying to myself were I to say;  
"Perhaps everything ends on this earth;  
here do our lives end."

No, oh Lord of the Close Vicinity,  
it is beyond, with those who dwell in Your house,  
that I will sing songs to You, in the innermost of heaven.  
My heart rises;  
I fix my eyes upon You,  
next to You, beside You,  
Oh Giver of Life!

(p. 133)

- **Lucy's Message to the World:**

Let us consider things as lent to us, oh, friends;  
only in passing are we here on earth;

tomorrow or the day after,  
as Your heart desires, oh, Giver of Life,  
we shall go, my friends, to His home.

(p. 124)

October 24, 2010

- **Purity of Heart was an Ideal of Nahuatl Education**

Even if he were poor and lowly,  
even if his father and his mother were the poorest of the poor....

His lineage was not considered,  
only his way of life mattered....

The purity of his heart,  
his good and humane heart....

His stout heart....

It was said that he had God in his heart,  
that he was wise in the things of God.

(p. 142-143)

- **Don Quixote's Advice to his Grandchildren:**

Act! Cut wood, work the land,  
plant cactus, sow maguay;  
you shall have drink, food, clothing.

With this you will stand straight.

With this you shall live.

For this you shall be spoken of, praised;  
in this manner you will show yourself to your parents and relatives.

Someday you shall tie yourself to a skirt and blouse.

What will she drink? What will she eat?

Is she going to live off of the air?

You are the support, the remedy;  
you are the eagle, the tiger.

(p. 148)

October 25, 2010

- **Elizabet vs Jealousee**

The good feather artist is skillful,  
is master of herself; it is her duty  
to humanize the desires of the people.

She works with feathers,  
chooses them and arranges them,  
paints them with different colors,  
joins them together.

The bad feather artist is careless;

she ignores the look of things,  
she is greedy, she scorns other people.  
She is like a turkey with a shrouded heart,  
sluggish, coarse, weak.  
The things that she makes are not good.  
She ruins everything that she touches.

(p. 171-172)

- **My Teachers are Toltecs**

The good painter is a Toltec, an artist;  
he creates with red and black ink,  
with black water....

The good painter is wise,  
God is in his heart.  
He puts divinity into things;  
the converses with his own heart.

He knows the colors, he applies them and shades them;  
he draws feet and faces,  
he puts in the shadow, he achieves perfection.  
He paints the colors of all the flowers,  
as if he were a Toltec.

(p. 172-173)

- **Elizabet?**

Who am I?  
As a bird I fly about,  
I sing of flowers;  
I compose songs,  
butterflies of song.  
Let them burst forth from my soul!  
Let my heart be delighted with them!

(p. 181)